

ORGANISING A MULTIDISCIPLINARY FESTIVAL:

RETHINKING GOOD PRACTICES

Projet Erasmus +
Festivals. Pas de deux européen, économique et culturel

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INTRODUCTION

The main objective of the Pas de Deux project was to look at and compare the professional practices of two festivals: MigrActions in Paris, and VolterraTeatro in Volterra, Tuscany, to find the most effective practices and those that would be applicable and useful for the organization of other small live performance festivals. The information collected was then used to create a handbook detailing the methods used by the other festivals as a guide to creating a new festival in Ponta do Sol, in Madeira, Portugal, under the leadership of Travessias Culturais and Crossing Productions, directed by Isabel Ribeiro. The first incarnation of this festival, called *Travessuras Culturais*, was presented from February 2 to 5, 2017, with events concentrating on the town of Ponta do Sol, and three conferences offered in Funchal, the administrative capital of the island, two of which were streamed in Ponta do Sol.

Information was collected from the previous two festivals, in addition to material from the inaugural run of *Travessuras Culturais*¹. This consisted of interviews with the teams in charge of the festivals, and observations made during the 2016 iterations of the previous two festivals. Afterwards, an online questionnaire was also used to compile the information, drawing on answers gathered from the answers of participants in 96 other festivals.

The Methodology of the Inquiry

Presentation of the two principal theatres

The common point between the two theatres that participated in the project is that they were both created by small parent theatres with precarious economic situations.

One half of the duo is the Theatre of the Oppressed, formed in 1986, whose home is in an old furniture factory of 382m². Converted into a theatre in 1995 by the artistic team, directed at the time by Augusto Boal. Following problems with the mounting of *Iphigénie en Tauride* because of monetary issues and a lack of cohesion with the company, Rui Frati took over the direction of the company in 1998 so that it could continue benefiting from help from the DRAC. The theatre seats about 90 people. MigrActions was developed in 2008 as a way for the theatre, which specializes in forum theatre, to open its doors and play host to a number of international artistic companies. By inviting theatre and dance companies and music and voice ensembles, they foster artistic, generational and cultural exchange within the art world. One of the sources of inspiration was the Year of Brazil in France in 2005, and the experimentation with an *off* festival with the creation of a musical about *bossa nova*. The most important source of revenue for the company comes from the sale of specifically tailored forum theatre performances about situational conflicts specifically asked for by cultural centres, social centres, different kinds of schools, businesses, and community centres. The 12th district of Paris (where the theatre is located) provides subsidies of between 2000 and 5000 euros for the organization of the festival, which has yet to develop a delocalization

¹ With the help of Mathieu Feyrn doctorate of info and communication at the university of Avignon and Vaucluse.

of performance venues aside from the theatre that houses the company. The Theatre of the Oppressed co-produces with the companies they host, and evenly split all proceeds.

The permanent administrative team of the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed is composed of an artistic director, and administrative director, an accountant, a person in charge of development, a manager, and someone in charge of the box office. Public communications/ relations are handled by someone doing their year of civil service, and an intern. The artistic direction of MigrActions is threefold, bringing together Rui Frati (the artistic director of the Theatre of the Oppressed), Isabel Ribeiro, and Toninho do Carmo who focus more on the music programming side of the festival.

The other partner is the Carte Blanche, founded in 1987, which directs la compagnia della Fortezza and the VolterraTeatro festival. La compagnia della Fortezza was created in 1988 by Armando Punzo after working with Gruppo Internazionale L'Avventura and Grotowski's research on the subject of the direction of an experimental theatre in the prison of Volterra. The company is centred around bringing theatrical activities to prisons so that prisoners can be seen by the audience without the focus being on the physical and symbolic marks of incarceration. They are considered employees during the run of each performance. Their work focuses on a specific theatrical language and not expressly the reintegration into society of the prisoners. The nation's recognition of the aesthetic qualities of experiences has been translated into the acquisition of the status "Centro Nazionale Teatro e Carcere" for Volterra Prison after an accord with the minister of justice, the town of Volterra, the region of Tuscany, the province of Pisa and the "Ente teatrale italiano"². Armando Punzo has won multiple Ubu prizes for his directing in 1991, 1993, 2004, 2010, 2014, and was nominated for the same in 2003, 2008 et 2011.

Carte Blanche has been co-directing the VolterraTeatro festival since 1996, and took over full direction in 2000. In 2013, the town of Volterra changed its public services team, and announced it was offering a lower subsidy, at only 65 000 euros with TVA and 53 278 euros without TVA. At the same time, territorial collectives have been disengaged from financing the festival since 2010, with the most significant being the town of Volterra, while the region of Tuscany stabilized its contributions as part of an attempt to expand the festival. The companies that are part of the festival benefit from a licensing agreement with the price adjusted to fit the budget of the festival. Traveling expenses are taken care of by the companies, but room and board are taken care of by the festival.

The permanent administrative team for Carte Blanche is composed of an artistic director, an administrative director, a general coordinator/ secretary, another administrator, and accountant. A dramaturg and someone in charge of project development are on shorter contracts, and a person in charge of reinforcement and communication is hired short term during the festival.

² The ETI was put in place in 1942 and dissolved in 2010

Methods Used in the Case Studies

The general principle of the project was to interview the artistic and administrative directors as well as the administrative and technical teams for both festivals about their professional practices regarding their strategic and organizational visions. The characteristics of the festival were previously identified so as to have an understanding of how the festival was established, its history, an assessment of activities surrounding the programmed shows, the spaces used, performances since 2010, and the financial accounts for both the festival and its parent company. The typology of the personnel based on their contracts as well as their placement in the hierarchy, with their missions defined by the positioned record were also defined.

The semi-directive interviews were constructed around eight principal themes:

- Professional career before working with the organization, and the evolution of their place on the team
- Objectives attributed to the festival in terms of programming, territorial planning, public relations, volunteers, hosting of invited artists according to the philosophy of cultural action, artistic sensibilities, and charts taken from previous iterations of the festival,
- How the time and energy of the parent theatre is split between the regular activities of the theatre and the specific presentation of the festival, the sources of professional motivation
- Questions on the methodology of the project, the preparation of tasks with a degree of planning for adaptation to unforeseen contingencies and balance sheets,
- The criteria for making decisions and taking risks,
- The analysis of competencies used in past projects, organizational learning, and the capitalization of knowledge and know-how,
- Strategies and tactics for constructing relationships and partnerships with public and private financing, as well as with links to non-artistic establishments as a way to broaden their audiences
- Channels explored for ways to increase the attractiveness of the festival to the audience and other interested parties, particularly through communication

According to the method³, the interviews were interpreted through a complete global analysis in order to understand the positions and work methods of different people. The information given about professional practices, conditions for achieving objectives and the obstacles encountered have been used in the theme of this guide. The figures and data expressed during interviews have been cross checked with data available in the balance sheets and financial accounts. For the Theatre of the Oppressed the interviews concerned the artistic director, the administrator, the person in charge of project development, the accountant, the technical director, an actress from the company, and an intern in charge of communications; for

³ Charmaz K., *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. London: SAGE 2006; Corbin J., Strauss A.L., *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Gatts: SAGE, 2015.

Volterra Teatro, the artistic director, the administrative director, the general coordinator, the administrator, the dramaturg, the person in charge of European project development for the parent company (Carte Blanche), the technical director, the person in charge of communications, and the person in charge of hosting the companies for the festival were interviewed. For Travessuras Culturas, the interviews were with the artistic director, the coordinator, the administrator of the festival, the coordinator of Crossing Productions (co-producer of the festival) as well as volunteers for coordination, photography, and technical assistance.

The method of the questionnaire

The question distributed online and put on the Pas de Deux website was divided into eleven sections:

- The identity of the festival with questions about the year it was created, where it was held, how long it lasted, its legal status, its budget, the hierarchisation of the artistic domains, the amount of influence the artists had, and their principle objectives,
- The criteria and people responsible for the programming,
- The development of the audience with the hierarchisation of their objectives, demographic targets, cultural actions, the existence of participative creations, changes in attendance, whether or not they used public surveys,
- Organizational techniques based on the performance spaces, communication between the programmed teams, and the planning of tasks,
- The administrative organization surrounding artistic contracts, budgetary management, work relations, and training given to personnel,
- Internal and external communication methods
- The hierarchisation of professional partners and the conditions for the cooperation of the financing and development of audiences,
- The weighing of the roles given to volunteers and the conditions they work in,
- How the shows are financed, the hierarchisation of sources of revenue, public subsidies, and their evolution,
- The hierarchisation of actions taken to reduce the environmental impact,
- The end of the festival with organized events, charts, and all documents archived.

The year in question was 2015, as the questionnaire was put online in November of 2016. The questionnaire was also given to the teams of MigrActions and VolterraTeatro, so that comparisons could be made between both the two theatres participating in the Pas de Deux project, and other theatres that responded.

The dichotomous variables were noted 1 if the response was positive, 0 if it was not. A digital Likert scale was proposed for most of the questions concerning the prioritization of objectives and the ways they were achieved as a way to limit the bias of the final average number when it was assumed that the distance between each answer was the same (for example: in between not important/ somewhat important and important/ very important). The questions that used ranking were only for artistic programming and sources of revenue. Ordinal variables are an important way to get rid of a synthetic view on the hierarchy of

objectives, choices about choosing and financing shows, the politics of developing an audience and communications, without asking for significant research from the person responding. However, the numbers attributed reflect the narrative identity of the festival, as it is understood by the person responding without us being assured the exact reality of weight factors in the implementations of the festival. Open questions about good practices in the different spheres of action were also posed, which made it easier to understand and make use of the information given.

Sample of the Quantitative Study

The objective here was to address multidisciplinary festivals that had a significant theatrical and or choreographic program. An internet search, as well as information given by the regional agencies and the regional management for cultural affairs on festivals in France, and the European Festival Association (EFFE) about information on festivals under the label EFFE helped to create a database of 356 festivals⁴ that corresponded with the characteristics of festivals that were not dominantly musical.

The process of communicating both electronically and on the telephone allowed for the responses of 96 festivals- 27% of the original 356. Based on their nationalities, the festivals of ten countries were over-represented given the framing data, with the Netherlands in the middle (table 1.1a). The festivals of nine other countries were under represented (1.1b).

Table 1.1a - Festivals over-represented in the sample based on country

Country	Croatia	Spain	France	Denmark	Germany	Portugal	Serbia	Italy	Greece	The Netherlands
Responses	3	1	38	3	9	6	2	11	7	3
Databases	5	2	84	7	21	16	6	34	23	11
% respondant	60	50	45,2	43	42,9	37,5	33,3	32,4	30,4	27,3

Table 1.1b - Festivals under-represented in the sample based on country

Country	Belguim	Cyprus	Austria	Finland	Poland	Estonia	Bulgaria	Czech Republic	Romania
Responses	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Databases	21	5	6	6	10	11	11	14	14
% respondant	23,8	20	16,7	16,7	10	9,1	9,1	7,1	7,1

⁴ This foundation is composed of 84 French festivals. For other countries, they are represented as such : 34 from Italy, 23 from Greece, 21 from Belgium and Germany, 20 for Hungary, 16 from Portugal, 14 from Czech Republic and Romania, 11 from Bulgaria, Estonia and the Netherlands, 10 from Poland, 9 from Ireland, 8 from Malta, 7 from Denmark, 6 from Austria, Finland and Serbia, 5 from Cyprus and Croatia, 4 from Lithuania and Slovakia, 2 from Spain and Slovenia, 1 for Luxembourg. UK festivals did not participate.

There was no response from seven countries (Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovakia, Slovenia).

Table 1.2- Number of sections on the questionnaire treated by the respondents

Sections	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Number of responses	24	10	8	4	3	1	3	2	4	7	30

The responses to the questionnaires were for the most part partial. Only 30 festivals responded to all the sections, while 27 responses were limited to one section (table 1.2). This limits the possibilities of a significant overall use of the information, but it allows for the acquisition of complementary information.

Among the 77 responses about their budget, 16 festivals declared a budget below 20,000 €, 10 with a budget between 20,000 and 49,999 €, 12 with a budget between 50,000 and 99,999 €, 14 with a budget between 100,000 and 250,000 €, and 23 with a budget above 250,000 €. Three budgetary categories, with equal numbers of respondents, were constructed to analyse the eventual effect of the size of the festival: less than 50,000 € (26 responses), 50,000 to 250,000 € (26 responses) and above 250,000 € (23 responses).

The average age of the festivals is 18 years. It is proportionally inverse to the size of the festival, with a run of 16 years for festivals that have a budget of less than 50,000€ and 25 years for those who have a budget above 250,000€.

In 2015, the average amount of time spent preparing for a festival was 9.9 months, and the duration of the festival was 11,4 days. These lengths were also positively correlated to the size of the budget, going from 7,25 months and 6,6 days respectively for the smallest festivals to 12,5 months and 16,7 days for the biggest.

The percent of the budget made up of grants has been estimated at 56,5% on average and increases with the size of the festival, going from 47,5% for small festivals to 57,6% for the medium festivals, and 64,6% for the big ones.

Table 1.3 - distribution of festivals based on status (%)

Status	Association	Municipal	Public Establishments	Commercial	Cooperative
Ensemble	79	9,2	4	5,3	2,6
< 50K€	88,9	0	3,7	7,4	-
50 à 250K€	76,9	15,4	0	3,85	3,85

> 250K€	69,6	13	8,7	4,35	4,35
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Associations are the predominant status for the festivals, and is especially so if the budget is lower. Municipal authority is the second status on average, and only concerns festivals that have a budget of over 50 000€. The status of commercial company concerns more small festivals, while the recourse to a cooperative company, the least frequent, augments with the size of the festival (Table 1.3).

Table 1.4- Intensity score⁵ for scheduled artistic genres

Genre	Théâtre	Danse	Arts de la marionnette	Conte	Cirque	Arts rue	Rock	Musiques monde	Musique classique
Note	1,84	0,91	0,53	0,4	0,6	0,63	0,43	0,56	0,6

Corresponding with the sample, the two arts scheduled the most are theatre and dance. Circus and street arts occupy the next place, with their levels being close to those of classical music, jazz, and world music (table 1.4). The intensity of dance and circus arts augments with the size of the festival going from 0,67 and to 0,3 respectively, when the budget is less than 50 000€ and to 1.14 and 0,95 when the budget is more than 250 000€.

The question of the importance of the scheduled artists according to influence leads to the classification of national influence in the first rank (average score of 2,1) and the regional and international scales to an almost equivalent average. The importance of the artists with national and international influence in the scheduling augments with the budget level of their spending on regional artists.

Links to cultural politics

Because these organizations are part of the world of subsidized performance, when reflecting on their professional practices, the evolution of the politics surrounding culture must also be taken into account, as well as assuring the continued existence of weaker artistic enterprises.

The Evolution of Cultural Policy Paradigms

The justifications for public intervention in the arts have been developing since the 1950's. Through the 1960s, the priority was given to artistic acculturation projects for a large audience to meet with artistic excellence criteria in an attempt to homogenise the culture of the nation-state⁶. Multiple critics⁷ underlined the ineffectiveness of the attempts to reduce the inequality in the demographics of audiences. At the same time, one of the ideals of a cultural

⁵ The question asked respondents to classify the three most programmed artistic domains. The score of 3 was awarded for the field ranked first, the score of 2 for the field ranked second, the score of 1 for the third place, and the score for other areas not mentioned.

⁶ David C. Throsby, Glen A. Withers, *The Economics of Performing Arts*, London: Edward Arnold Publisher, 1979; Philippe Urfalino, *L'invention de la politique culturelle*, Paris, La Documentation française, 1996.

⁷ Pierre Bourdieu P., Alain Darbel, *L'amour de l'art*, Paris, Minuit, 1966 ; William Baumol W., William G. Bowen, *Performing Arts - The Economic Dilemma*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1966.

democracy, based on an anthropological idea of the plurality of cultures, exercised a constant pressure on public powers as a way to legitimize an enlarged support of cultural activities above and beyond the scholarly arts in local territories.

Since the mid 90s, the “creative industries” rhetoric in national and local cultural politics has been seeing an acknowledgement of multiculturalism and new economic justification: the positive effects of artistic activities for the stimulation of productive innovation and more flexible work relations. However, the distribution of public subsidies still depends on an appreciation of aesthetic qualities by a committee comprised of professional experts and cultural journalists. The economic advantages that come from the attractiveness of the most well known artists are carried on the benefits of the diversification of cultural activities supported by the public powers.

This evolution of the justifications used by cultural politics resonates with literature about the cultural economics of festivals, centred on the calculation of the direct, indirect and induced effects of regional economic activities. As territorial collectives frequently look to promote festivals with the goal of reinforcing social and civil links to the construction of the image of the city⁸, the cultural economists take into account the cultural value as another justification for audience interventions (in the favour of a good audience). Recently, the European Association of Festivals⁹ assigned three principal roles to live performances: favourise the international circulation of artists by acting as a middleman between producers and diffusers, support artistic innovations (against artistic sclerosis), and reinforce cultural diversity. The festivals also play a role of professional sociability, particularly favourable for the creation of or reinforcement of networks of cooperation and exchanges of debates on questions of aesthetics and cultural politics. One of the key questions is about the economic and cultural conditions and if they are sustainable enough for the festival to develop.

In referring to the Unesco Convention on the promotion and protection of the diversity of cultural expression (2005), the protection, promotion, and preservation of cultural diversity are considered long lasting principles of development (article 6). The preservation of access to cultural diversity assumes the construction of an intergenerational and intragenerational equality, the encouragement of the creative process, and the equality of genres¹⁰. Culture can also be considered as a pillar added to the economic, social and political pillars of durable

⁸ Ruth Towse, *A textbook of cultural economics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010; Bruno S. Frey, “Festivals” in Ruth Towse (ed.), *A Handbook of Cultural Economics. Second Edition*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011, p. 216-219.

⁹ European Festivals Association, *Europe for festivals. Festivals for Europe. The guide 2015-2016*, Tielt, Lannoo Publishers, 2016.

¹⁰ David Throsby, *The Economics of Cultural Policy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 195; COST, *Culture in, for and as Sustainable Development. Conclusions from the Cost Action IS1007 investigating Cultural Sustainability*, Jyväskylä: European Cooperation in Science and Technology, 2015, p. 24.

development, notably by the recognition of the equal importance of all cultures¹¹ or patrimonial value, and local cultural objects and practices.¹²

The question of sustainability

Sustainability is another subject that needs to be discussed. This idea can be distinguished from development in order to identify a set of values that promote social equality, and not economic prosperity as their principal goal¹³. The majority of European festivals are managed by non profit associations. Their principal objective is to develop artistic and cultural activities with budgetary limits. The value of companies depends a lot on an appreciation of aesthetic qualities by the people in charge of the programming, and cultural journalists. There is, however a systematic constraint, which is that of producing new shows to get the attention of professional experts as a means to create a better reputation with corporations and media. Because the capacity of subsidized cultural establishments is less than that of the production of performances, it results in an intensification of interorganizational concurrences. Also, the uncertainty of quality leads to consumers concentrating their attention and purchases on shows that have the most talented artists, according to Rosen¹⁴, or the most well known by a mechanism of social mimicry without evaluating their talent, according to Chung and Cox¹⁵. Consequently, the inequality of revenue is much more prominent than in economic sectors. The number of poor employees is much more prominent. In 2005, 25% of the lowest paid employees shared 1% of the available revenue, and the 10% of the best paid employees 32% of the revenue of a live performance, as opposed to 5% and 32% of respective revenues for the private sector¹⁶. A recurrent challenge, particularly for small organizations like the Theatre of the Oppressed, and Carte Blanche, is to assure financial sustainability for their activities without compromising their artistic missions and their non lucrative valeurs.

Cooperation can be seen as a counterforce to the destructive concurrences, susceptible to making the budget of artistic organizations more sustainable¹⁷. The sharing of artistic and administrative locations, materials and manpower can be a way of reducing the costs of production but also a way of producing and making use of the motivations of the implied personnel. The visions, values and beliefs that are shared within an artistic, technical and administrative team can have an effect on the long-term engagement of both volunteers and employees in spite of economic precarity.

¹¹ John Hawkes, *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability. Culture's Essential Role in Public Planning*, Victoria: The Cultural Development Network of Victoria, 2001; Jean-Michel Lucas, *Culture et développement durable. Il est temps d'organiser la palabre*, Paris, Irma, 2012.

¹² Luc Boltanski, Arnaud Esquerre, « La "collection", une forme neuve du capitalisme. La mise en valeur économique du passé et ses effets », *Les Temps Modernes*, 679, 2014, p. 3-51.

¹³ COST, *op.cit.* p. 23.

¹⁴ Sherwin Rosen, "The Economics of Superstars", *The American Economic Review*, 71 (5), 1981, p. 845-858.

¹⁵ Kee H. Chung, Raymond K. Cox, "A Stochastic Model of Superstardom: an Application of the Yule Distribution", *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 76 (4), 1994, p. 771-775; "Consumer Behavior and Superstardom", *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 27 (2), 1998, p. 263-270

¹⁶ Jean-Michel Charpin et al., *Rapport sur le bilan du plan de professionnalisation et de structuration du secteur du spectacle vivant et enregistré*, Paris, IGF-IGAS-IAF, 2008, annexe I, p. 17.

¹⁷ Philippe Henry, *Un nouveau référentiel pour la culture ? Pour une économie coopérative de la diversité culturelle*, Toulouse, L'attribut, 2014.

One of the objectives of this methodological guide is to use the examples of the two festivals who managed to continue every year in a somewhat sustainable fashion despite budgetary obstacles, to analyse the degree of effectiveness of the professional practices in regards to the two festivals. In what way does this positioning favorise the creation of values added to the aesthetic, cultural, social and economic domains? How do the parties responsible for the festivals understand the added economic and cultural value? In what way does the practice of learning by practicing help the efficiency of the project and provide a counterbalance for systematic obstacles encountered in the development of the project.