

**EUROPA CINEMAS AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION LAB**

***HOW TO MAKE THE CINEMA EXPERIENCE MORE ATTRACTIVE?  
Key Strategies to Develop Audiences in the Digital World***

**Seville, Wednesday 14 - Saturday 17 November 2018**

**Day 1 - Wednesday 14 November**

Europa Cinemas held its third Innovation Lab in the frame of the 15<sup>th</sup> Sevilla European Film Festival. Looking at ways of developing audiences in the digital world, the question at the core of the Lab was: How to Make the Cinema Experience More Attractive?

Led by **Maeve Cooke** (Director **Access>CINEMA**), **Javier Pachón** (President of **Cineciutat** and **Cinearte**) and **Olle Agebro** (Exhibitor **Fyrisbiografen**), the Lab welcomed 40 participants from 15 different countries.

The Lab was opened by **Olimpia Pont Chafer** representing **José Luis Cienfuegos**, the festival's director. She insisted on the importance for the festival to host the Europa Cinemas' innovation Lab which is in line with its aim to share European Cinema in the best possible way. Then **Serge Toubiana**, president of **Unifrance**, welcomed the participants and expressed his support to Europa Cinemas' work.



The Europa Cinemas General Director, **Claude-Eric Poiroux**, ended the welcoming session with a reflection about the assets of the network which is all about creating desire for films. He paid tribute to the diverse programming of the network members and their ability to accompany their screenings with activities and mediation. For him, the Labs are an ideal time to realize that what one does is useful for another. Meeting up and taking a few days to be together and share makes us progress and move forward.

The day ended with a funny exercise in which one participant should introduce another participant by telling the strongest point and the main challenge of the cinema his / her peer was representing. We heard about loyal and solid teams, great spaces, collaboration with schools and local institutions, loyal audiences, strong identities but also, about complicated locations within cities, challenging spaces (too big or too small), difficulty to attack young and diverse audiences, lack of financing and visibility among others.

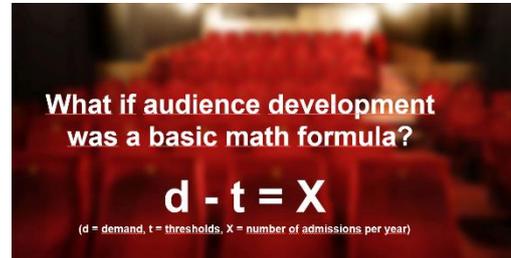


## Day 2 – Thursday 15 November

The second day's sessions focused on two core elements in cinema exhibition equation: audiences and content diversification.

### SESSION 1: Knowing Your Audiences

**Olle Agebro** whose cinema recently received the Europa Cinemas Innovation Prize, explained how he managed to increase its attendance by 50% in a very short lapse of time by developing a data driven strategy with tests to understand audiences. They did 60 different tests with programming and marketing strategies to discover patterns in audiences' behaviour. In addition, they advertised on digital platforms and discovered that you can have instant feedback and keep the data very easily to use it to enhance your work in the future.



For Olle, one should "Take the mindset of digital optimization and adapt it to soft data". At his venue, simply having volunteers chatting with the audience and falling the glass of the entrance booth were revolutions to bring audiences closer to the cinema. He suggested to his peers to go to their cinemas every day as it was the first time and find tiny features to be changed that would improve the visitors' cinema experience.

**Marvin Wiechert** exposed how **Yorck Kinogruppe** is working with Movio and Vista, two cutting edge technology softwares to understand audiences. He explained the virtues of these technologies in audience segmentation in developing more targeted and relevant marketing campaigns, he also



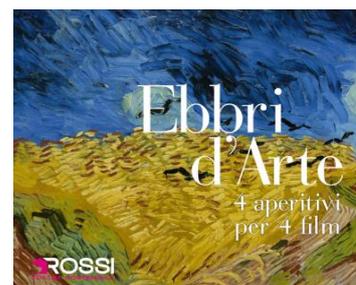
explained the importance of curating carefully and personalizing the offer. For him, machine learning tools can only amplify existing behaviour trends or patterns and in Yorck Kino, they want to surprise their audience and develop new audiences for a diverse cinema.

The conclusion of the session was that any approach to better understand one's audiences is very important whether through the help of consultants, apps or surveys, this approach prove being essential and very useful in a long term audience development strategy.

### SESSION 2: Audience Building Through Campaigns and Events

**Lee Shelton** from **Curzon** cinemas shared his experience with the promotion scheme of Varda's and JR *Faces Places* documentary. He invited exhibitors to reach out to other associations to build beautiful campaigns around the release of a film in order to increase the visibility of the film and to reach a wider audience using the partner's existing network and influencers.

**Jon Michelena** from cinema **Cartoon's** urged cinema teams, as small as they may be, to connect with audiences by sharing problems with them or simply by involving them in a celebration or in the day to day cinema life as he did with Cartoon's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. For him, get togethers like Labs are places where one gets a lot of ideas and energy. These events are what differentiate a cinema linked with its community.



**Eleonora Russo** from cinema **Visionario** in Italy agreed with Jon and explained how they create gateways between cinema and other forms of art through amplified evenings with testing experiences and diners made with local producers and in warm hosting conditions.

### SESSION 3: Europa International and Europa Cinemas Joining Forces

During the afternoon and for the first time, Europa Cinemas' exhibitors met with the Europa International sales agents during a panel with **Maeve Cooke**, **Sylvie Larroque** (*l'Atalante*) and **Jean-Christophe Simon** (*Films Boutique* and president of **Europa International**), moderated by **Javier Pachón**. In this session the exhibitors could learn the main activities and challenges of the sales agents and share with them their main difficulties to access to certain films. One problem evoked repeatedly was a reciprocal lack of dialogue between exhibitors and distributors which results in a lack of insight about a city or region "context".



### SESSION 4: How Can Cinemas Diversify Content?

In the same vein, the afternoon continued, **Isabel Moir** gave a speech on the functions of **ICO** in the UK. With a varied scheme to support exhibitors (trainings, previews presentations, packages with tools to better communicate and Marketing advice and material), the organization's mission is to develop an open, challenging and thriving film sector in the UK. **Sylvie Larroque** explained how the cinema *l'Atalante* managed to create a circuit of partners with producers, sales agents, distributors and subtitling companies, to distribute Spanish Basque films in the French Basque region.

Finally, **Laurent Van Wanbeke**, from **Galleries** in Belgium, explained the cinema strategy to distribute the film *A Voix Haute*. For him, as for the other speakers, the most important challenge is to build partnerships in order to be able to build a strong campaign and support the financial burden when distributing a film.

### Day 3 - Friday 16 November

The main topic of the day was the engagement of exhibitors to diversify their audiences through events and programming.

### SESSION 5: Renewing and Diversifying Audiences

**Nina Milošič** of **Mestni Kino Ptuj** in Slovenia explained some of her tactics to cleverly engage young audiences. For her, the attention to details was the key to succeed with children. Some basic installations exploited with creativity and care could trigger imagination and impress the young guests, her example of a shelter for kids in the ticket sales booth, to allow them to buy themselves their cinema tickets, was very well welcomed by the participants.

In **Arsenal Kinobetriebe** in Germany, **Dieter Betz** and his team imagined ways to get young audiences engaged in "Retrocinema". Young people can choose between three classics and modern rendition of the film posters are designed to promote the selected film.



Then **Alison Kozberg** from **Art House Convergence**, raised one of the core issues of the day which was the acknowledgement of the unavoidable political, social and educational weight of cinema and therefore of the responsibility of exhibitors to be conscious of the power and impact their programmes may have in their communities. In an era of fake news and alternative facts and coming from the conservative Deep South in the US, Alison elaborated ways of animating the cinemas' programming in which images were powerful tools for inclusion and education.

Followed the presentation of **Olle Agebro** who was inspired on his grandmother's weakness for knitting to reach new niche audiences. We can draw three lessons from his "Niche Audience Manifesto": involve in each step of the Design Process a target group that doesn't visit the cinema to help you reach the target audience, have a high quality distinct 1 sentence concept easy to understand and original to make the specific audience excited about it, organise the best possible screening because first impressions are the most important ones.



One of the eminently practical categories of the innovation Labs is the Workshop entitled "**A problem shared is a problem halved**" **Milagros Merino** from **Cinema Palma** was the first one to benefit from some tips of the Lab participants to offset the lack of space in her venue and organize community-building events: use the space of trendy nearby locations and be empowered by partnerships. As to **Christos Ringas** of **Athinea** in Greece, he caught a lot of participants' attention by laying out the challenges of open air cinemas in his country. Their main problem is to make the spaces sustainable even though the cinemas are only open on summer.

#### SESSION 6: Building Loyalty

The afternoon session was moderated by **Olle Agebro** who reminded the exhibitors that while reaching out to new audiences is very relevant, building loyalty is also an essential and challenging goal.

**Simon Blaas** from **Cinema Middelburg** in the Netherlands and **Wiktoria Pelzer** of **Stadtkino** in Austria brought some food for thoughts for our think tank with their "Filmchoice" and "Wiederstandskino" programmes.

The first initiative entices "ordinary" non-experts inhabitants of the city to introduce screenings at the cinema and be part of the marketing campaign writing reviews and giving interviews to the press which allows members of the audience to have "their 5 minutes of fame". Wiederstandskino is a film programme with a strong commitment face to the right-wing government. "Cinemas are places to meet people (it is different than watching on computers). We have the possibility to reach a lot of people so one should use this to promote diversity and understanding" contends Wiktoria.

Post of the day winner, **Antoni Vilalta Seco** of **Il Cinema del**

**Carbone** then got on stage and provided some great tips to maintain a great loyalty scheme. For he is very important to learn the taste of your audience but don't stick to it completely because cinemas should balance between the comfort zone screenings with a more risky programming and animation,



which will always be a source of learning and development. Another important tip was to always have a dialogue element with the audience in the everyday cinema life.

The final part of the day put the whole group in an active position as small teams were formed to reflect upon 3 main topics: loyalty cards, how to take real advantage of one's equipment and how to create genuine inclusion within your theatre. The groups presented at the end their initiatives or ideas to overcome this challenges.



During the “**A problem shared is a problem halved**” workshop **David Garcia** of **Cines Verdi** got some good recommendations to improve in the use of Verdi's loyalty card. The reliance on a modern and user friendly digital platform, “Friends” screening

for the owner of the loyalty scheme and building partnerships with local companies to diversify the offer, seemed to be good directions to look at.

#### **Day 4 - Saturday 17 November**

The last day of the Lab revolved around presentations on the use of marketing, social networks and programming to assert one's identity and the optimisation of resources and spaces.

#### **SESSION 7: Marketing – Storytelling**

It is the Lab leader **Javier Pachón** who launched the session on how to communicate in a fresh and genuine way, mastering the art of quality storytelling on social networks, because if we don't adapt to the new way people consume, and be “the friend they want to hear”, we're not going to attract the audience's attention. This opening intervention was completed by the illustrations of **Roméé Swaab** whose enthusiastic team personalised content for social media. For instance, they did a stop motion video for the release of *Isle of Dogs* with toys and a miniature reconstitution of their theatre!



**Tobias Jong** also added to the subject with his demonstration of the Studio Ghibli retrospective which was organized in his **Lab111** theatre. According to Tobias, one should always take advantage of the beautiful aesthetics of films to communicate and associate them to the brand of your theatre to create genuine graphic tools. From another perspective but, in the same storytelling vein, at the **Cinemateket i Bergen** in Norway, **Aida Liliana LiPera** organised a « doggie screening » another way to strongly communicate and offer niche audiences a unique experience. Finally, at the **Rex Cinema**, **Mustafa El Mesaoudi** oversees the first podcast created by a cinema operator in Germany. They use it as a way to further communicate and create stronger links with the audiences thought content.

#### **SESSION 8: Making the Most of Our Resources**

**Javier Pachon's** second presentation for the panel « Making the most of our resources » presented the **Cineciutat's** management strategy with a sort of non-hierarchical team organisation based on participation and empowerment of teams and represented figuratively by self-contained circles founded on trust and communication. An impressive and thought-provoking occurrence of self-analysis for an internal organisation modelling!

The attendees of this 4<sup>th</sup> day also heard about the fundraising strategy of the first cooperative bar-cinema Zumzeig in Barcelona, launched thanks to crowdfunding. **Albert Triviño Massó** explained that the team management is horizontal and participatory, which enables everyone to have equal weight and importance in the decision making, to be helpful towards one another but at the same time responsible and autonomous.



In the last workshop “**A problem shared it’s a problem halved...**”, the cases of **Francesco Palma** and **Jon Michelena**, reflected about fundraising and optimizing resources in very tiny institutions. Many ideas were suggested to them: Furnishing cheaply and ingeniously through partnerships with bigger theatres, social institutions or local companies and sponsoring systems with companies or individual customers like selling the screening rooms’ seats to the audience, dedicating one screening room to a product, among others.



#### SESSION 9: Surgery Slot Session - From Spaces to Places

A focus was also given to new projects of spaces becoming “places”. **Chris De Zeeuw’s** bold and refreshing **Lab-1** project went from being a nomadic alternative venue to a single building of “underground” and crossing arts cinema. **Miriam Groenen (Filmhuis de Keizer)**, **Sylvie Larroque (L’Atalante)** and **Simon Blaas (Cinema Middelburg)** also highlighted the specificities of their new buildings which often adapt well to their city environment or on the contrary, offer a striking contrast. They had the opportunity to share their questions and challenges and to receive advice from their peers for their new projects.

#### SESSION 10: Debrief and Return Strategy

When asked to identify the most inspiring and striking ideas they heard over the past 4 days, the participants mentioned many things, first of all, the initiative of the Lab which in itself provoked the desire to create an exchange between exhibitors, and as they said, “here I discovered that other exhibitors in Europe share the same problems and that together we can find better solutions”. Second, we heard reflections about the identity and the importance to share the mission statement with the team and the audience and to truly reflect it in the programming and the cinemas’ communication; about audience development and building loyalty with communication and marketing strategies through social media storytelling and niche programming with ideas such as targeted newsletters or personalised posts and breakfast in pyjamas screenings for kids.



The little attentions like the tiny furniture for children or the knitting concept revealed that small things can also have big and positive impact. Finally, we heard the lesson about thinking outside of the box as the challenge to improve every day. In the end, one could borrow and twist Paul Auster’s words: « identity is in the details ».

**Irene Angel Echeverri, Charlotte Wensierski, Maxence Delamare.**