

A COOKBOOK FOR CULTURAL CO-PROGRAMMING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD THEATRE

This guidebook is the result of the research process “A New Audience” that was developed in the large-scale Creative Europe project “Mapping, a map on the aesthetics for early years”. Drawing from experiments of cultural co-programming taking place in the frame of the project, the book intends to provide a practical toolkit for those individuals who, according to their diverse social and cultural roles, are entrusted with the important task of nurturing the imagination of young spectators.

Giuliana Ciancio and **Luisella Carnelli** known for their international engagements, are not only colleagues but also close friends, having shared research journeys and field experiences together. United by common values and a profound dedication to the artistic and creative realm, their collaborative efforts have underscored the significance of international cultural cooperation and active participation in contemporary societies.

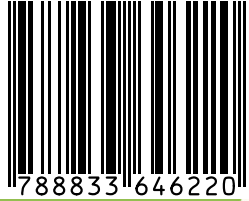
A COOKBOOK for Cultural Co-Programming in Early Childhood Theatre

by Giuliana Ciancio and Luisella Carnelli



10 €

ISBN 978-88-3364-622-0



9 788833 646220

**A COOKBOOK
FOR CULTURAL CO-PROGRAMMING
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD THEATRE**

All rights reserved.
The texts are the property of the individual authors.
© Giuliana Ciancio, Luisella Carnelli

graphic design
Francesca Nerattini

illustrations
Andrea Raviola

© 2023

publication within the European project
Mapping. A Map on the Aesthetics of Performing Arts for Early Years
www.mapping-project.eu

supported by
Creative Europe, EU Culture sub-programme

editorial project by
La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi
Teatro per l'infanzia e la gioventù
www.testoniragazzi.it



published by
Edizioni Pendragon
via Borgonuovo 21/a
Bologna - Italy
www.pendragon.it

A COOKBOOK for Cultural Co-Programming in Early Childhood Theatre

by Giuliana Ciancio and Luisella Carnelli

INDEX

7	Introduction: playing cultural participation
9	Methodology
11	Toolkit
13	Ingredients: selecting and inviting the participants
14	The cooks: setting the tone
16	The kitchen: setting the stage
18	Assembling the ingredients: preparing the workshop
19	Cooking over low heat: managing the workshop
22	Plate up: documentation and implementation
27	Conclusions
32	Mapping. A Map on the Aesthetics of Performing Arts for Early Years

Introduction: playing cultural participation

This guidebook intends to provide a **practical toolkit** that draws from experiments of **cultural co-programming** in the frame of the large-scale Creative Europe project *Mapping, a map on the aesthetics for early years*. While our primary focus lies on young spectators (aged between 0 and 6 years) and their families, the true beneficiaries of this guidebook encompass a wide range of individuals including educators, teachers as well as artists and cultural professionals. In a few words, the beneficiaries of this guidebook are those individuals who, according to their diverse social and cultural roles, play the function of **'caregivers'** entrusted with the important task of nurturing the imagination of young spectators.

The concept of **'play'** - and its transformative power - is at the heart of this guidebook. 'Play' can serve as a powerful tool for fostering multifaceted **social interactions** across a wide array of social and cultural settings. According to Martha Nussbaum (2015) 'play' allows people to navigate the spectrum of human experiences and provides a lens through which social interactions can be examined with-

in a broader societal context. It creates a space where both children and adults can exercise control, experience emotions such as grief, hunger, loneliness, and love, and partake in imaginative journeys (Winnicott 2005). As Nussbaum has pointed out, 'play' and culture serve as the *'potential spaces of imaginative possibilities.'* These intermediary domains, positioned between private and external realities, are where we experience these social relations alongside an awareness of the diverse elements that make up our world.

Building on the potential of 'play,' this guidebook aims to present a **practical toolkit** designed for fostering the social interactions that underpin various forms of cultural co-programming. It shares the empirical insights derived from the collaborations among different **caregivers** in **six distinct contexts** (Italy, Germany, Greece, Romania, Spain, and Sweden). Our foundation is rooted in the belief that **cultural participation** is a right, but also a duty that requires clear roles, spaces for dialogue and conflict. It calls for a willingness to share power in order to facilitate access for people from different social,

cultural and economic backgrounds (Negrier 2020).

According to the strategies of **audience engagement** and **audience development** observed in the Creative Europe programme over the years, **cultural participation** in this guidebook is understood first and foremost as a **qualitative hu-**

man relationship (Carnelli 2022; Ciancio 2022).

It can start in small arenas of exchange, where the diversity of cultural expressions is a first need to satisfy. It can evolve, taking on more substantial forms and conquer more consistent shapes. It can change thanks to a commitment to 'play'.

Methodology

Our 'empirical journey' emerged from cultural investigations, meetings, testing of ideas and, above all, the collaborative efforts of many people who have experimented with sharing their cultural points of view. It started from the assumption that a cultural programme is not an 'ivory tower' where the artistic director expresses her/his taste, but on the contrary, the realm where various **social and cultural interactions** contribute to the construction of new aesthetics for the theatre of new generations.

We began our empirical path by conducting **in-depth interviews** with key stakeholders such as artists, educators and cultural practitioners, asking them about their roles in particular communities. Based on the initial findings, we designed a **workshop**. This aimed to bring together the different stakeholders mentioned above together with parents (and in some cases policy makers). Our aim was to bring together the various '**caregivers**' who are directly or indirectly involved in cultural programmes for early years audiences.

The workshop was first tested **in 2019 at the Visoni Festival in Bologna**, a re-

nowned platform for new-generation performing arts stages. Here, we conducted two different **workshops** - one for children aged 0-3 and another for the 3-6 age group. These sessions allowed us to: (a) gather insights from the exchanges of the participants; (b) better understand the key questions to ask; (c) engage participants in shared discussions; (d) and craft the tools to facilitate these multi-level interactions.

Building on the lessons learned from the Visoni Festival, we created a **practical guide** for the cultural professionals involved in the field test. Our original plan was to carry out immersive fieldwork, facilitated by us, across **five experimental arenas** after the Bologna experience (Artika Theatre Company | Athens, Greece; Helios Theater | Hamm, Germany; Ion Creangă Theatre | Bucharest, Romania; Teatro Paraíso | Vitoria, Spain; Teater Tre | Stockholm, Sweden) in order to capture local dynamics. However, the outbreak of COVID-19 forced us to adapt the original idea. We moved to online ethnography and developed an **online role-play** involving all the project partners in the different roles (the parents, the cultural mediators, the

teachers, etc.). This virtual setting allowed us to adapt and enrich our workshop format, making it more precise and effective. It also helped us to show our methodology in practice to all the partners and - in a *learning by doing approach* - to share ways of managing interactions between different caregivers in local settings.

After the live trials and the online adaptation, the toolkit gradually took shape. Between 2021 and 2022, the five project partners led the local workshops. This time without our facilitation but using the methodological guidelines that we tested together beforehand. These included collaborative workshops, discussions, feedback sessions which have formed the backbone of our methodological approach. The five local workshops gave us insights into the **flexibility, adaptability and scalability** of our initial idea. By using a first 'cultural prototype' in their own cultural contexts, the partners adapted it to their organisational and curatorial aspects. In doing so, this tool has been a way for capturing some of the evolving needs of young audiences and their caregivers in diverse cultural realms.

In light of the results of these five workshops, we have seen that this **cultural prototype** can work towards **accumulation**. In our understanding this means that cultural professionals can use it: (a) to deepen cultural and social interactions; (b) to understand cultural programming as a live arena of **negotiation**; (c) to individualise **new ways of participating** in the cultural experience (by considering concrete changes of time, space, duration and cultural infrastructures, services and accessibility in their cultural programmes); (d) to **explore new aesthetics**. Furthermore, this co-creative space has shown also its potential to navigate the present and to raise awareness of the impact on the social and

cultural fabric of the rapid changes we are witnessing since the 2008 crisis (wars, new global settlements, refugee emergencies, climate change, local and global protests, etc.).

Therefore, this guidebook aims to distil the results of this journey into a **user-friendly format**, resembling a **cookbook**, complete with straightforward rules, specific procedures, and guidance on: (a) how to facilitate interactions among the diverse 'caregivers'; (b) which are the questions to pose at the beginning of a discussion; (c) the tone of voice to adopt; (d) the approach to elicit; (f) how to include in the flow a variety of different voices. Embracing the transformative potential of 'play,' our methodology **incorporates play-centred activities** throughout the cultural co-programming process. 'Play' serves as a unifying theme that allows participants to explore various dimensions of cultural co-creation. It fosters creativity, imagination, and emotional engagement, and provides a dynamic framework for interaction and learning.

We hope that this toolkit will equip cultural operators to engage in a qualitative way with a certain number of different stakeholders, to address emerging challenges, and contribute to enriching the cultural experience for the various players around it. Furthermore, we hope that the practical experimentation with the toolkit and the delivery of the workshops could generate a process of awareness around the aesthetics we produce when trying to foster **cultural pluralism**. This means to emphasise the active participation of individuals from different backgrounds in the public sphere, aiming to create a dynamic and inclusive society that values diversity as a source of enrichment and innovation.

Toolkit

This toolkit aspires to be a tool, a sort of **guiding compass**, for operators, mediators, cultural organisations, artists who want to challenge themselves in co-creative and shared decision-making processes. It is not meant to be an exhaustive exploration of the complex theme of co-programming, with its countless nuances and implications. Instead, it offers a pathway forward, a **practical example** of how to implement a tangible activity, and a means to nourish a **spirit of collaboration** within a cultural organisation or a cultural institution. It serves as an **interpretative framework**, shedding light on a term that, in its simplicity, encompasses ethical choices and a web of interconnected values. What's more, it can take on various forms and adaptations.

This toolkit draws its inspiration from the rich tapestry of both theoretical insights and practical experiences we gathered during the *Mapping* project. *Mapping*

was an adventure that challenged organisations to embrace a trial-and-error approach, learning from both their missteps and their remarkable achievements. Crucially, it doesn't aim to be a **ready-made recipe book**. Instead, it provides signposts for action. We believe that participatory activities resonate deeply with human nature, especially in these challenging times where the importance of sharing power in decision-making has never been more evident.

Our toolkit is a **gesture of sharing**, rooted in the belief that each person can find their unique path. It's a journey, and just like any journey, it may have steep inclines, unexpected detours, or smooth highways. The driver, in this case, is you, the reader. You decide when to accelerate, when to slow down, when to pause, or when to take a shortcut.

Are you ready to play?
Let's start!

Ingredients:

selecting and inviting the participants



To kick start our journey, let's carefully curate the lineup for our workshops, starting with the **selection of the participants**. You have a couple of options: you can opt for two workshops, one tailored to the 0-3-year-old age group and the other for children aged 3-6, or you can choose to host a single workshop catering to the full 0-6 age range. The decision is yours. In assembling your workshop ensemble, aim for a maximum of 12 participants, strategically divided as follows:

1. Families

- Theatre/festival lovers (2)
- Occasional attenders (2)
- Non attenders (2)

2. Practitioners

- Artists (2)
- Teachers (2)
- Staff Members (2)

In case you will conduct two workshops, it is preferable to have different participants for each.



ALERT

Exercise diligence during the selection process by engaging individuals from **diverse backgrounds**, including:

- varied social and **cultural** backgrounds (and, if possible, age groups)
- different **nationalities**
- a range of **involvement levels in cultural and theatrical activities**

And remember, there's no shame in seeking assistance!

But who should you turn to for help? Think about reaching out to educators, mediators, social assistants, local networks, community centres, and independent cultural hubs for valuable support and collaboration.

Last but certainly not least, consider geographical diversity. Opt for participants residing in various areas of the city; resist the temptation to solely select individuals from the theatre's immediate vicinity or the city centre, those who are easy to reach and with whom you are familiar. Be ambitious and challenge yourself. Don't limit your choices to those readily accessible; strive to engage individuals who might not typically cross your path.

The cooks:

setting the tone

In your workshop you always need 1 **moderator** and 1 **rapporteur**.

a) The moderator

Our workshop's **head chef**, the moderator, plays a pivotal role in orchestrating our culinary journey. Their responsibility is to expertly guide the discussion, cultivate an engaging and inclusive atmosphere, and steer us towards our desired outcomes. To achieve this, the moderator skilfully employs **active listening**, **incisive questioning**, and adept **management of group dynamics**. These qualities are the secret ingredients for extracting the most valuable insights from our participants.



Here's a breakdown of what a moderator **does**

- **Set the tone:** the moderator begins the session by welcoming participants and creating a comfortable, non-judgmental atmosphere.
- **Explain purpose:** they clarify the purpose of the workshop, the confidentiality of responses, and the expected duration.
- **Encourage participation:** they encourage all participants to share their thoughts and opinions, ensuring that no one dominates the conversation.
- **Manage dynamics:** they maintain group dynamics, ensuring that the discussion remains respectful and focused.
- **Address dominant participants:** if one or more participants dominate the conversation, the moderator redirects the discussion to involve quieter individuals.
- **Stay neutral:** they remain impartial and avoid expressing personal opinions or bias.



Here's a breakdown of what a moderator **does NOT do**

- **Push participants:** they don't force participants to contribute or share their opinions.
- **Interrupt the discussion:** they refrain from interrupting the flow of

the discussion unless necessary to maintain order or redirect the conversation back to the topic at hand.

- **Directly call on individuals:** they avoid directly singling out participants to speak. Instead, they use subtle invitations or non-verbal cues to encourage contributions.
- **Express value judgments:** they remain impartial and refrains from expressing personal opinions or value judgments about the topics being discussed.
- **Dominate the conversation:** they do not dominate the discussion or overshadow the participants. Their role is to facilitate and guide, not to monopolise speaking time.
- **Provide solutions or answers:** they do not offer solutions or answers to the questions or challenges raised during the discussion. Their goal is to elicit responses and insights from the participants, allowing the group to collectively explore ideas and generate valuable input.
- **Show favouritism:** they treat all participants equally and avoid showing favouritism or bias towards any individual or group within the focus group.
- **Make assumptions:** they do not make assumptions about the participants' experiences, beliefs, or perspectives.



ALERT

Actively listen: they pay close attention to what participants are saying, identifying key points, trends, and contradictions.

- **Non-verbal cues:** they also observe non-verbal cues, such as body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice, to gauge participants' reactions.
- **Keep on schedule:** they ensure that the discussion stays within the allocated time frame, allowing for breaks if necessary.
- **Recap insights:** at the end of the session, the moderator may recap the main insights and themes discussed during the focus group.

b) The rapporteur

The primary role of a rapporteur is to meticulously record the unfolding events during our meeting or event. This entails adeptly transcribing discussions, capturing presentations, and noting down the salient points raised by our participants. They also capture the essence of the event through photography or recording. They maintain impartiality and objectivity without expressing personal opinions or bias in the summaries.

They refrain from injecting personal opinions or biases into summaries. Instead, they strive to provide an accurate and comprehensive account of the proceedings, ensuring that the essence of the discussions is faithfully preserved without distortion or misrepresentation.

The kitchen:

setting the stage

Creating the right setting is essential to ensure a productive and comfortable space. The setting needs to be a comfortable space with a welcoming space including coffee/the water, glasses, and some sweets.

- **Welcoming environment:** the chosen venue should provide a warm and inviting atmosphere, with comfortable seating arrangements. Consider adding some soft furnishings, such as cushions and cosy chairs, to make participants feel relaxed and at ease.
- **Refreshments:** offer a selection of beverages, including coffee, tea, and water, along with refreshments like pastries or snacks. Having glasses readily available ensures participants can stay hydrated throughout the session.



CHECK LIST

To facilitate a smooth and productive workshop, it's important to have the following items on hand:

1. **Privacy disclaimer:** start by addressing privacy concerns in compliance with GDPR regulations. Provide a clear disclaimer explaining that all information collected will be analysed collectively and used exclusively for research purposes. This helps participants feel assured about data confidentiality.
2. **Recording equipment:** ensure you have appropriate recording equipment, such as audio or video recording devices, to capture the discussion accurately. This allows for later analysis and reference.
3. **Stationery:** provide participants with essential stationery items, including blank sheets of paper, flip boards, post-it notes, and an array of colourful markers. These tools empower individuals to jot down key points, brainstorm ideas, or create visual aids during the discussion, promoting active engagement

If you opt for an online workshop, take care to establish an intimate virtual setting that facilitates easy sharing and interaction among participants.



DIGITAL TIPS

When conducting virtual workshops, consider the following digital tips for a more engaging and effective online experience:

- **Set-up a fade-in time:** create a welcoming atmosphere by allowing participants to enter a virtual waiting room with soothing background music. This gradual entry can ease participants into the virtual space.
- **Establish clear rules for interaction:** provide participants with guidelines for online etiquette and interaction. Ensure everyone understands the rules to maintain a respectful and productive atmosphere.
- **Embrace silence:** don't rush discussions, and don't be afraid of moments of silence. Participants may need time to gather their thoughts and contribute at their own pace.
- **Encourage chatbox interaction:** in addition to verbal communication, offer participants the option to use the chat box for questions, comments, or discussions. This allows for multiple forms of engagement.
- **Utilise interactive tools:** explore interactive platforms like Mentimeter, Jamboard, Padlet, or Miro to visualise insights, gather feedback, and encourage collaboration. Sample templates can be provided to enhance engagement.
- **Consider graphic storytelling:** if possible, incorporate instant graphic storytelling to visually capture key points and ideas during the session. Graphic summaries can aid in summarising discussions and making complex topics more accessible.

These digital tips will help create a dynamic and inclusive virtual workshop environment.

Assembling the ingredients:

preparing the workshop

To assemble your workshop participants, consider various pre-production methods to extend your invitations effectively. Some options include:

- **Open call:** announce the workshop openly through platforms or websites where potential participants can easily access the information.
- **Direct contact:** reach out directly to individuals who may be interested, either through personal contacts or professional networks.
- **Direct mailing:** send personalised invitations via email or physical mail to potential participants.
- **Social network:** utilise social media platforms to create event pages, share information, and engage with a broader audience.
- **Local associations, Independent Cultural Spaces, NGOs:** collaborate with local organisations and cultural entities to spread the word and reach diverse communities.
- **Word of mouth:** encourage participants to invite others through personal recommendations and word-of-mouth referrals.
- **Seek help from friends:** enlist the support of friends, colleagues, and partners to assist in promoting the workshop and expanding the reach.

By employing these pre-production methods, you can effectively gather a diverse group of participants for your workshop.



ALERT

- Explicitly state the **aims** of the workshop
- Clearly specify the **duration** (about 2 hours) but ask people to arrive 15/10 minutes in advance for a welcoming session with coffee, tea and cake.
- Consider providing a **reward** to participants for their generosity in contributing to the discussion and sharing their free time with you. This could include incentives like free tickets, discounts, books, coupons, promotional codes, or gift vouchers.
Begin inviting participants well in **advance**, ideally one to two months before the workshop, and send reminders a few days before to ensure their participation.

Cooking over low heat:

managing the workshop

Step 1

Let's introduce ourselves: describing the Personas



Timing: 15 minutes

- Pay attention to set-up the **timing** accordingly with the number of participants!
- Participants are divided into **pairs**.
- Each pair has a total of 4 minutes to introduce each other, with 2 minutes dedicated to each participant (the moderator keeps track of the time).
- Each participant has 1 minute to present their partner to everyone.

Questions to answer:

- Where do you come from?
- Where are you based?
- What do you do in your life?
- What are your passions?

Step 2

What do you expect to find in a theatre or festival?



Timing: 30 minutes

(5 minutes for individual brainstorming, 25 minutes for group discussion)

The moderator initiates the second part of the session by inviting participants to reflect on their expectations or desires when attending a theatre or festival with their children. These expectations can encompass various aspects related to the experience. Participants should consider the following topics:

- **Timing and duration:** What is the ideal time to attend performances and shows with your kids?
- **Spaces:** What features or amenities would you like to find in a family and kid-friendly theatre or festival venue?
- **Programming:** Do you expect only shows, or do you desire additional activities?
- **Collateral activities and enclosed (container):** What do you need or wish for before and after the show to enhance your overall experience?

Participants have **5 minutes** to individually brainstorm their thoughts and write them on post-it notes.

The moderator collects these post-it notes and displays them on a flipboard.

Subsequently, the moderator begins clustering the notes based on similar themes and initiates a **25-minute** group discussion among participants.

This exercise aims to uncover a range of expectations and desires regarding family-friendly theatres and festivals, encouraging participants to think comprehensively and creatively about their ideal experiences.



ALERT

Invite your participants to think out of the box, to think of everything! Whether to concrete things (changing table?! The cotton candy machine?! The balloon ride?!) and to all the aspects that make their experience enjoyable (to be greeted with a smile?!)

Step 3

Build your festival / season / activity / proposal



Timing: 60 minutes

In this third step the task is to find 1 action/activity/proposal together with the participants. A concrete proposal that can renew the festival/theatre according to the sharing taking place in the previous steps.

Three are the phases here:

1. **Brainstorming:** all the participants share and present their ideas (**10 minutes**). The ideas or suggestions are written on post-its and placed on a keyboard (you can also use digital keyboards).
2. **Convergent phase:** the moderator clusterizes (create homogenous groups of ideas) and then collects the ideas around 2 or 3 main activities/topics/suggestions (e.g. workshops; outdoor activities; gadgets/memorabilia...). The result is discussed among the participants (**20 minutes**).
3. **Selection and development of 1 activity (30 minutes).** The group has to define together one main activity that can be implemented in the frame of the theatre season, festival, etc. The show is one of the possibilities, but not the only one. You could invite the participants to think about desires/needs/aspirations/dreams. The participants have to find their own way to individuate a solution and to agree on that. Remember less is more sometimes: one radical action is more than enough.



ALERT

Don't be too direct.

Leave the space to the discussion (conflict needs to be managed not silenced). Think out of the box!

Facilitate the negotiation, invite people to express their desires, to think out of the box, to imagine also activities that they consider meaningful for their daily life.

Remember that specifically in this last step the votes of the majority is not an option. The discussion has to lead to a shared idea which will be informed of the different voices around the table.

Better discuss and find a common terrain (even if it could require more time).

Step 4

Say goodbye



Timing: 15 minutes

Before concluding the session, take your time to thank all the participants and say goodbye.

Plate up:

documentation and implementation

Effective documentation is a cornerstone of our workshop process. It serves as a comprehensive record of our discussions, insights, and participants' valuable contributions. We prioritise recording the entire meeting to capture the richness of our conversations. Our reports meticulously distil the main comments, ideas, and proposals, ensuring that the essence of our discussions is preserved in a structured format. Additionally, photographs taken during the workshop, whether individual portraits or group shots, help us remember the faces behind the ideas and foster a sense of shared accomplishment. Documentation not only **safeguards** our **collective knowledge** but also **facilitates the implementation of strategies** and insights generated during the workshop, enabling us to translate ideas into action.

The Report has to include 3 sections as follow.

1. Let's introduce ourselves: describing the Personas

In this section, we provide a comprehensive overview of the diverse personas who actively participated in our workshop. Each participant contributes a unique perspective, and these portraits aim to capture the richness of their backgrounds and experiences.

Key details included:

- **Picture:** a visual representation of the participant.
- **Name:** the participant's name.
- **Age:** age group or specific age, if available.
- **Nationality:** the participant's nationality or cultural background.
- **Target audience:** whether they belong to the family, staff member, educator, or other categories.
- **Composition of the family** (if any): information on their family structure or dynamics, if relevant.
- **Cultural behaviours:** insights into their cultural preferences, practices, or behaviours.
- **Relation with the theatre:** their connection with the world of theatre, including whether they are lovers of the arts, regular attenders, or non-attenders.
- **Passions:** personal interests and passions that shape their perspectives.

These portraits provide a holistic view of each participant, offering valuable context for understanding their contributions and viewpoints.

2. What do you expect to find in a theatre or festival?

In this section, we encapsulate the invaluable insights gained during the second round of discussions. Participants openly shared their expectations, desires, and suggestions regarding theatres and festivals, enriching our understanding of what makes these cultural spaces engaging and welcoming for families and young spectators.

Key elements included:

- **Desiderata, suggestions, desires:** participants' expressed desires and wishes for their ideal theatre or festival experience. These encompass various aspects, from logistics to content and overall enjoyment.
- **Areas for improvement:** insights into what participants feel could be enhanced in the theatre or festival experience. This section highlights constructive criticism and opportunities for growth.
- **Direct participant quotes:** to provide a genuine and direct perspective, we incorporate quotes from participants, allowing their voices to be heard.
- **Non-judgmental documentation:** we emphasise our commitment to impartial documentation, presenting all suggestions — both positive and negative — without judgement or bias. Every viewpoint contributes to the collective wisdom of the group.
- **Photographs of post-it notes:** visual representations of the blackboard covered in post-it notes capture the collaborative effort and creative input of the participants during the discussions. This section offers a comprehensive overview of participants' expectations and suggestions, providing valuable insights into creating more family-friendly and engaging theatre and festival experiences.

3. Build your festival/season/activity/proposal

In this section, we consolidate the rich and diverse ideas shared by participants during the third and final round of discussions. The aim is to collectively shape a **concrete proposal** that can rejuvenate and invigorate the theatre season, festival, or activity, guided by the insights gathered in the preceding discussions.

Key elements included:

- **Ideas shared by participants:** we capture all the creative and innovative ideas put forth by the participants, showcasing their wealth of perspectives and imaginative thinking.
- **Main clusters of activities/suggestions:** highlighting the major thematic clusters and overarching suggestions that emerged from the discussion, this section provides an overview of the key directions considered for the proposal.

- **Key debate elements:** outlining the specific aspects that were the focus of debate and deliberation among participants. This includes the central themes and critical considerations that shaped the proposal.
- **Final proposition:** the culmination of the participants' collective dialogue results in a concrete proposal designed to enhance the theatre season, festival, or activity. This proposition reflects the diverse voices around the table, taking into account different perspectives and aspirations.
- **Participant quotes:** to bring a personal and human dimension to the proposal, we incorporate quotes from participants. These quotes convey their thoughts, ideas, and motivations.
- **Unbiased documentation:** we maintain our commitment to impartial documentation, presenting all suggestions — whether positive or negative — without judgement. Every input contributes to the collective creativity of the group.
- **Photograph of post-it notes:** visual documentation in the form of a photograph of the blackboard covered in post-it notes preserves the collaborative effort and creative input of the participants. It serves as a visual testament to the co-creation process.

This section synthesises the dynamic and creative process of shaping a family-centric festival, season, or activity proposal. It reflects the diverse perspectives and imaginative ideas of the participants, resulting in a proposal that can inspire and enrich cultural experiences for families and young spectators.



Conclusions

Potential strength, weaknesses and prêt-à-porter tips

Throughout our empirical journey, we have tested the toolkit in various cultural and social contexts, specifically within the field of theatre for new generations. This testing process revealed the capacity of this toolkit to facilitate multifaceted modes of interaction among caregivers, peers, professionals, and stakeholders hailing from heterogeneous backgrounds. In its own way, this toolkit looks like a possible **means for entering the intricate fabric of social dynamics**, and to some extent, for interrogating **power relations**, both internal and external, within cultural organisations or institutions.

From the practical application of the toolkit, the reports generated and feedback from partners, we identified several **potential strengths** and distinguishing characteristics: (a) it appears to be **flexible** and **adaptable** enough for replication in various contexts; (b) it provides a level of **scalability**, namely it can be applied to different organisations with different scales, purposes, attitudes, and goals; (c) it is an open **methodology** that confers agency to its users, allowing them to tailor it to their

exigencies by modulating the intensity of its application.

However, we are also aware of **potential limitations** associated with the toolkit. For instance, contrary to our intentions, there is a risk that it might limit the diversity of cultural representations. This could happen if this toolkit is used in a hierarchical top-down manner where only a few people (consciously or unconsciously) guide the discussion and make the decisions. In a way, this could remind us of some of the dynamics that the philosopher Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci 2014) put under the umbrella of the theory of hegemony. **Hegemony** is the dominance or control (that could be exercised with various intensities) that a particular group or class has over society's culture, beliefs, and values. It's not just about political or economic power but also about influencing how people think and what they consider 'normal'.

For example, if the input in the application of this toolkit predominantly comes from white, middle-class, well-educated cultural consumers, and if these people are relegated in a sort of top-down consultation, the risk is of reinforcing **social reproduction**. The latter stands for reproducing

pre-existing power dynamics without profoundly changing cultural representation of a context and shaping cultural programs based on specific cultural coordinates thereby limiting long-term pluralism.

In short it's a matter of **pluralism**. Nowadays, among of the significant challenges for many cultural organisations or institutions there are some aspects we would highlight such as: (a) to ensure **diversity** in the cultural processes, encompassing aspects such as gender, cultural and economic backgrounds, and more; (b) to take safe the **agency** of the people when engaging in transversal cultural participatory approaches; (c) to create the **space** for performing some of the outcomes coming from the application of the toolkit.

We want to be clear, we are not proposing a revolutionary approach. Our suggestion is to be aware about the potentialities but also of the risks that the toolkit can offer. We see diversity and the agency of people's participation among the important pre-conditions to bear in mind when approaching this toolkit. These cannot be separated with the testing of some outcomes coming from the application of the toolkit. Of course, we are aware that there are numerous intersities in the use of this tool and this guarantees its effectiveness, scalability and replicability. These intensities depend on individuals' willingness, desires, and needs to transform their environments; the capacity to collectivise cultural needs; and hence the willingness to join hands in favour of pluralistic development.

And so once again it is all up to you, the reader: you have to decide what intensity you want to use.

Prêt-à-porter (common) tips

Let's delve into the highlights emerging from the results coming from the six workshops across European space. They have shown some commonalities. Mainly, in all these contexts it has been expressed the

need to create welcoming, enriching, and age-appropriate theatre experiences for children and their caregivers. Key take-aways include suitable performance hours, practical enhancements, the creation of engaging play spaces, and the development of workshops and interactive elements. To give some examples:

Time

- **Shorter performances:** keep performances concise, not exceeding 30 minutes, to align with the attention span of young children.
- **Weekend shows:** consider scheduling shows during weekends to accommodate families.
- **Ideal timing:** opt for show timings after 10 am or after 5 pm to align with the schedules of young children and families.

Space

- Provide a space where children can **play freely with objects** seen in the performance or engage in drawing or messy play.
- Consideration for **special needs:** recognize that children with special needs may prefer to sit further back to avoid overwhelming interactions.
- Include **toys** in the foyer and child-friendly access routes.
- **Engaging play corner:** provide a designated play area to engage young children before or after the show starts to maintain their interest and curiosity.
- **Bar for children:** consider establishing a theatre bar selling fruit, bars, and organic drinks.
- **Set design exploration:** explore opportunities for set design experiences before or after performances to enhance engagement and creativity.
- Create **sensory pathways** and **experiences** for children.

Accessibility

- **Physical accessibility:** ensure easy access for strollers and provide baby-tailored entry points, along with facilities for breastfeeding.
- **Adequate facilities:** ensure that the venue has sufficient and well-maintained facilities, including restrooms, rest areas and baby feeding room.
- **Age group information:** clearly communicate the target age group for the performance while considering other age ranges.
- **Affordable prices:** offer affordable ticket prices and consider package deals or subscriptions for multiple activities or days.

Experience

- **Theatre tours:** offer theatre tours to familiarise children with the theatre and its rules.
- **Actor interaction:** actors welcoming or saying goodbye to children in the audience.
- **Integrated meals:** integrate meals into the theatre experience, such as magical picnics.
- **Takeaway memory:** provide mementos like postcards to help children remember and discuss the performance.
- **Character meet-and-greet:** offer opportunities for children to meet one of the characters from the performance before entering the theatre to reduce anxiety.
- **Simple tools for engagement:** provide tools like topic-related cards before the show and "didactical" objects for reflection after the performance.
- **Personalised visit for first attenders:** trained staff hosts newcomers.
- **Valuing touch-sensitive experiences:** recognize the importance of touch-sensitive experiences in the development of young children.

Furthermore, it was also pointed out that in terms of approach, it's crucial to adopt **multidisciplinary strategies** to enrich the cultural experience for young audiences and their families. This involves integrating performances with preparatory workshops or activities that can be consistently offered throughout the season, creating an immersive journey for attendees. Additionally, considering multidisciplinary visual art spectacles that incorporate elements like dance, light, props, and sounds can further engage and captivate young minds. Moreover, emphasising the role of adults as focused and composed companions is essential to setting positive examples for the young attendees, contributing to a wholesome and enriching theatre experience.

Unlocking the potential transformative role of diversity in co-programming

The workshops have also shown the impact of social interactions on innovation in cultural co-programming. This endeavour has sought to initiate **dynamic cross-sector collaboration**. This open and dialectical dialogue have encouraged participants to voice their aspirations and desires, transcending immediate feasibility. In a certain way, it has replaced the traditional separation of design and implementation phases, often conceived as two separate phases, with a playful and nimble approach.

Trying to be more specific, we noticed some recursive suggestions emerged in different contexts:

- A heightened focus on the **educational aspects of cultural (co-)programming** has been proposed. It has been stressed that the educational realm can move out from its traditional supportive role and engage in a mutually beneficial exchange with the artistic domain, (which is not an easy goal to reach). There has been a growing realisation of the need for tailored training opportunities for educators, emphasising artistic

methodologies. Similarly, it has arisen a need to dedicate training programmes to cultural professionals, for enriching their pedagogical knowledge.

- Participants have expressed a desire to establish a sense of **continuity between daily life and the artistic experience**. This has led families, artists, cultural programmers, and cultural mediators to propose events like parades, promenades, or outdoor seasons. In some instances, these collaborative efforts have prompted the formulation of concrete strategies for implementing such activities, including integrating social networks, communities, and local stakeholders.
- The concept of considering the **city as a family and kids-friendly stage** has emerged. This has entailed the development of communication strategies, the establishment of touchpoints within the city, and the use of public spaces for workshops or different activities to shoot down psychological and social barriers.
- The idea of a family and kids-friendly city has extended to creating **services** that accommodate **diverse family structures** (such as single-parent or LG-BTQ+ families) and their varied cultural backgrounds, including mixed couples, second-generation immigrants, and migrant communities. This perspective underscores the importance of addressing their cultural needs to ensure their inclusion in the cultural mainstream.

In summary, these examples illustrate how an initial need, when explored through conversation and social interactions, can evolve into a more intricate concept. These instances demonstrate how the coexistence of diverse stakeholders (parents, cultural professionals, mediators) fosters dynamics of **collective intelligence** that are typically characterised as (a) **generative** (where

one idea sparks another), (b) **ameliorative** (favouring better ideas over lesser ones), and (c) **accumulative**, as the final proposal surpasses the sum of individual contributions. Consequently, the artistic experience acquired a sense of unique quality while remaining rooted in everyday life, thanks to the ongoing interaction among diverse spheres: the family, artistic creation, and the realm of education.

Final thoughts, embedding the change: from exception to rule

To you, the reader, who has had the patience to follow us this far, the authors wish to deliver a concluding thought: we were indeed animated by the desire to provide a practical toolkit for cultural operators and professionals interested - like you - in engaging with more innovative strategies of cultural co-programming. Our intention has been to identify straightforward yet precise roles and procedures that can assist those seeking to initiate a challenge and gradually transform their operational context. The motivations for such transformation can vary, including a desire to address limitations on freedom of expression, introduce pluralism into cultural programs, gain awareness of social dynamics, and stay informed about social, economic, and political changes and their impacts on daily life.

The guidebook we have developed, primarily serves as a **source of suggestions**, a means to break the ice, facilitate connections between diverse people, share needs, and, from this foundation, generate new ideas that can serve the evolution of aesthetics in theatre for new generations. In a sense, we view this process, particularly the workshops, as temporary “safe spaces” where various voices can contribute to change.

Furthermore, for the toolkit and its application to be effective and transformative, they cannot remain isolated actions but

should seamlessly **integrate into an organisation's ongoing efforts**. This entails fostering different dynamics of interaction between the cultural venue and its presence within the community. The workshops, perhaps **scheduled every 6 to 8 months**, serve as crucial milestones for continuous discussions, ensuring that all voices, needs, cultural behaviours, and intercultural nuances translate into tangible outcomes.

This is a **long-term endeavour**, starting with these initial yet pivotal steps. Small and seemingly simple challenges can have a transformative impact, leading to creative intersections. After all, a cultural program constitutes a complex and holistic system

REFERENCES

Arnold, N. R., & Kay, T. (2017). *Theater Design: Managing Complexity and Enriching Experience*. Routledge.

Bollo, A. Da Milano, C., Gariboldi, A. and Torch C. (with the collaboration of Luisella Carnelli, Goran Lars Karlsson, Carla Schiavone, Natalie Georgadze) (2017), *Study on Audience Development: How to Place Audiences at the Centre of Cultural Organisations*, <http://engageaudiences.eu/files/2017/04/Final-report-NC-01-16-644-EN-N.pdf>.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford University Press.

Calvano, G., Carnelli, L., Zuliani, E. (2022), *Making Culture in Common: A handbook for fostering a participatory approach in the performing arts*, Édition de l'Attribut; Toulouse.

Ciancio, G., (2022). “For a co-imaginative politics: between emotional clusters and political decisions. An empirical observation of the Creative Europe Program.” In *Rise of the Common City: On the culture of communing* edited by T. Lijster, P. Gielen & L. Volont, 180 – 193. Brussels: ASP Editions.

of cultural, artistic, and socio-political actions, inseparable from the broader societal context.

Recognising that this guidebook represents just one of many possibilities for approaching cultural co-programming, we strongly advocate for its utilisation within a long-term perspective. Our hope is that this playful tool can provide an accessible format for bringing together diverse voices, allowing them to express their intentions and aiding many in establishing the coordinates for actively contributing to the creation of an inclusive and pluralistic cultural realm — **a potential space of imaginative possibilities** - where to play together.

Gielen, P. and Lijster, T. (2017). “Art and Civil Action. Cultural Organizations in the European Civil Domain.” In *visual ethnography* 6, no. 2: 21-47.

Gramsci, A., (2014). *1929-1932. Quaderni dal Carcere* edited by Valentino Gerratana. Edizione Critica dell'Istituto Gramsci. Torino: Einaudi Editore.

Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing Management*. Pearson.

Negrier, E. (2020). “Introduction”. In *Cultural Policies in Europe: A participatory Turn?* Edited by Felix Dupin-Meynard & Emmanuel Negrier in collaboration with Lluís Bonet, Giada Calvano, Luisella Carnelli, Elettra Zauli. 11-27. Toulouse: édition de l'Attribut.

Nussbaum, Martha C. (2015). *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*. Belknap Pr.

Winnicott, D. (2005). “Transitional objects and transitional phenomena”. In *Playing and reality*. 1-34. Abingdon: Routledge.

Zask, J. (2011), *Participer: Essai sur les formes démocratiques de la participation* (Lormont: Le bord de l'eau).

Mapping. A Map on the Aesthetics of Performing Arts for Early Years

Mapping has been supported by Creative Europe, the EU programme that, with its Culture sub-programme, next to the Media strand, co-finances performing arts, visual arts, cultural heritage, and museums, selecting projects for both children and adults.

The Mapping partnership is formed by theatres, cultural institutions and artists who have established a deep relationship with early years over time, and who are willing to offer their specific know-how in developing this piece of Research.



The partnership is spread across the entire territory of the European Union, involving **18 partners from 17 European countries.**

La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi (coordinator) and **Bologna Children's Book Fair-BolognaFiere**, Italy / **Artika Theatre Company**, Greece / **Auraco**, Finland / **Baboró International Arts Festival for Children**, Ireland / **HELIOS Theater**, Germany / **Kolibri Színház**, Hungary / **Lutkovno Gledališče Ljubljana**, Slovenia / **Polka Theatre**, United Kingdom / **Stichting de Stilte**, Netherlands / **Teater Tre**, Sweden / **Teatr Animacji w Poznaniu**, Poland / **Teatro Paraíso**, Spain / **Teatrul Ion Creangă**, Romania / **Théâtre de la Guimbarde**, Belgium / **Theatre Madam Bach**, Denmark / **Toihaus Theater**, Austria / **Ville de Limoges**, France.

