

Policy Brief

Creating a “critical mass” for the arts and creative sector after the pandemic

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Summary of the research

The Re-inventing the Live Event project involved quantitative and qualitative surveys and documentation of an arts festival held in Wales in June 2021. The arts festival was organised and pursued following Covid-19 restrictions. Audience and artists questionnaires followed the events. All events were filmed.

The following features applied:

- Local scope: for Gwynedd and Anglesey
- Small scale events: max 30 people
- Variety of indoor and outdoor and digital events
- Usage of unusual venues and spaces
- Broad offer to everyone’s taste (film, music, performance art, dance, exhibition, workshops, poetry readings)

Findings

Artists worked with experimental formats, responded to specific sites. Sites and small audiences triggered new forms of intimacy and sense of community, even though social distancing etc. were in place. Audiences felt safe and confident to get involved with unfamiliar formats.

Audiences expressed that they felt inspired and want to have more opportunities for engaging in small scale events unique to the local community but still of high standard. Audiences also expressed to engage with other arts events in the future.

For monitoring audience loyalty further small scale events were developed and pursued after the festival. Members of audiences from the festival returned, thus demonstrated loyalty – a new critical mass for the arts after the pandemic.

Bottom line: Small scale events are more likely to attract a diverse audience and to create loyal audiences. This will help to create a critical mass and sustain the arts and creative sector in challenging times.

Policy recommendations

- Relax the audience number metric for evaluating arts and decisions on arts funding.
- Establish mindset for sharing audiences instead of competing for audiences.
- Established venues of large scale to implement communication structures in support of small scale arts (e.g. announcement boards).
- Develop funding schemes for artists working in these small scale areas. This includes to avoid expectations for growth and expansions.

- Give arts practitioners and stakeholders confidence in future funding independent on audience numbers.

Key findings

- Small scale events increase audience loyalty
- Audience loyalty supports creating critical mass

Further information

Visit: <http://re-inventing-live-events.bangor.ac.uk/index.php.en>

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