

# Best Practices Guide





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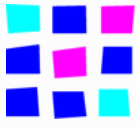
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# Table of contents

<u>INTRODUCTION.....</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Altrocioccolato Festival.....</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Citizens' café (Café Citoyen).....</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>La Source – A Youth-Led Space for Cultural Mediation, Participation and Social Engagement.....</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>RAP MUSIC'ALL.....</u>	<u>26</u>
<u>Young Jazz from VENO'S (Młody Jazz z VENO'S).....</u>	<u>35</u>
<u>Case studies – Key Conclusions.....</u>	<u>43</u>
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS.....</u>	<u>44</u>



# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to your guide to best practices in cultural mediation. If you're holding this document, it's because you have a desire to create, to bring people together, and to have a real impact on the world around you.

Here, we're not going to give you grand theories. We've selected concrete projects that have been successful. Why? Because to invent the future, there's nothing better than drawing inspiration from those who have already taken the plunge.

## **Why is this guide for you?**

Cultural mediation is much more than explaining a work of art to an audience. It's a true engine of social entrepreneurship. In a world that's changing at breakneck speed, this document is here to give you the keys to success.

## **The idea?**

To show you how to transform a creative intuition into a solid project, capable of lasting and, why not, becoming your future career.

- From idea to action: discover how a simple intuition became a solid project.
- Boost your skills: cultural mediation is also social entrepreneurship. It's the best way to learn how to manage a team, communicate effectively, and become more employable.
- Change the game: discover strategies for building connections, mobilising your community, and bringing culture to unexpected places.

## **What awaits you inside this brochure...**

... are five inspiring case studies - projects that actually worked and evolved over time. Whether through urban art or community projects, these case studies are here to show you that it's possible and, above all, to give you clear guidance for launching your own initiatives. Explore, pick ideas, and most importantly: make these methods your own to create your own high-impact project!



# ALTROCIOCCOLATO FESTIVAL



## BASIC FACTS

### **Country/city/local context:**

Città di Castello (Umbria, Italy)

### **Who implemented it?**

Umbria EquoSolidale – Founded in 2005, Umbria Equo Solidale (UES) association has worked closely with the Umbria Regional Government in both a political and technical capacity. UES coordinates and promotes the educational and training initiatives of its member Fair Trade shops.

### **When?**

2005 – present, usually held on the last weekend of October.

### **Resources & funding:**

Funded by Banca Etica, Città di Castello Municipality, Umbria Regional Government. In collaboration with Altraeconomia, Boteguita, Lautoradio, Monimbò Perugia, Bufalini Scuola di Arti e Mestieri, Piano Terra, Equo Garantito, Ponte Solidale, Monimbò Terni. Powered by volunteers.



## STARTING POINT: CONTEXT & PROBLEM

Altrocioccolato is a cultural event that, for over 20 years, has brought together projects related to Fair Trade and the solidarity economy, starting from cocoa and fair trade chocolate and expanding to broader themes such as sustainability and the protection of food systems and the environment. Organised by Umbria EquoSolidale, the festival takes place in a public urban space and is deeply rooted in the local area, involving associations, volunteers, producers, artists, and citizens.

From the perspective of organisers and young people, the local social and cultural context is marked by a growing interest in ethical consumption and environmental sustainability, especially among younger generations. At the same

time, these topics are often perceived as distant, complex, or abstract. Global issues such as exploitation in cocoa supply chains, environmental damage, and economic inequality are rarely connected to everyday choices or to local cultural life. Opportunities for young people to actively participate in cultural and social initiatives are limited, and cultural activities are often disconnected from scientific knowledge and social issues.

These challenges were identified through the organisers' direct experience in fair trade projects, long-term collaboration with producers and solidarity economy organisations, and ongoing conversations with local residents, volunteers, and participants. Observations during events and workshops also highlighted the difficulty of engaging wider audiences using traditional communication formats.

Altrocioccolato was created to respond to this gap. Instead of offering formal lessons or traditional exhibitions, the festival adopts an informal and participatory approach. Food, games, music, workshops, and social moments become tools to connect global challenges with local experiences.

By transforming public space into a shared environment for dialogue and interaction, Altrocioccolato creates an accessible and engaging way to address sustainability, strengthen community ties, and involve young people as active participants rather than passive audiences.

## IDEA & GOALS

The main goal of Altrocioccolato is to raise awareness of fair trade, sustainability, and social justice through an inclusive and participatory cultural event.

### **Specific objectives include:**

- Helping people understand the cocoa and chocolate supply chain and promoting ethical and sustainable consumption.
- Encouraging dialogue between producers, citizens, volunteers, and artists
- Involving young people in cultural and social activities through active participation.
- Experimenting with informal, creative forms of education to address sustainability and cultural diversity.

Altrocioccolato is connected to the idea of social entrepreneurship, as it combines economic activities (selling products) with social and educational goals. Profit is not the main aim; instead, the focus is on social value, fairness, and community benefit.

At the same time, the festival acts as a form of cultural mediation. It helps people understand complex topics by translating them into everyday experiences, using simple language, practical activities, and shared moments.

## **STEP-BY-STEP: HOW IT WAS MADE**

### **Step 1: Preparation**

The preparation phase of Altrocioccolato begins several months before the festival. The first specific actions include defining the annual theme, selecting the location in the public urban space, and designing a programme that combines fair trade, sustainability, culture, and social interaction.

Umbria EquoSolidale is responsible for the overall coordination of the festival, including programme design, contact with producers and partner organisations, and logistical planning. Volunteers and partner associations contribute ideas and practical support.

The tools used during this phase include:

- In-person coordination meetings with organisers and local associations.
- Planning workshops to shape activities and educational content.
- Mapping of local producers, artists, and organisations aligned with fair trade and sustainability values.

### **Step 2: Building the team & partnerships**

Participants, volunteers, and partners are selected through existing networks of Umbria EquoSolidale and open calls shared locally. Partners include fair trade producers, solidarity economy organisations, artists, scientific educators, and local associations.

Young people are motivated to get involved through an informal and welcoming approach: volunteering is presented as an opportunity to learn, socialise, and actively contribute to a meaningful event. The festive atmosphere, shared meals, and collaborative tasks help create a strong sense of belonging.

Intercultural and intergenerational cooperation is central to the festival. Producers from the Global South interact with local citizens, volunteers of different ages work side by side, and children, adults, and elderly people participate together in games, workshops, and cultural activities.

### **Step 3: Implementation**

During the festival, a wide range of activities takes place, including:

- fair trade chocolate tastings
- stands with sustainable food products and handmade objects
- educational and scientific workshops
- traditional wooden games
- a shared canteen for volunteers
- evening concerts with local musicians
- street artists' performances

#### **Several methods are used:**

- Cultural mediation, by linking local everyday life with global issues such as cocoa supply chains and sustainability
- Non-formal education, through workshops, tastings, games, and direct interaction rather than formal lessons
- Social animation, using music, art, food, and play to create an open and participatory public space

Young people play an active role as volunteers and co-organisers. They support logistics, welcome participants, help run activities, and contribute to the atmosphere of the event's atmosphere. While strategic decisions remain with the organising association, young volunteers are involved in practical decision-making and problem-solving during the festival.

### **Step 4: Adaptation & problem-solving**

As a public outdoor event, Altrocioccolato faces challenges such as weather conditions, logistical constraints, and managing large and diverse audiences. Some activities may attract more participants than expected, while others require adaptation to different age groups.

When something does not work as planned, organisers and volunteers adjust activities on the spot, for example by changing schedules, simplifying workshop formats, or redistributing volunteers where needed. Decisions are often made collectively during the event through direct communication among organisers and volunteers.

This flexible and adaptive approach allows Altrocioccolato to respond to unexpected situations while maintaining a welcoming, inclusive, and educational environment.



Chocolate, photo by [Elena Leya](#) on [Unsplash](#)

## RESULTS & REAL IMPACT

Altrocioccolato has generated tangible and long-lasting results at both individual and community level. Over the years, the festival has involved a high number of participants, including citizens, volunteers, producers, artists, and organisations, transforming a public urban space into a lively and inclusive meeting point. Each edition hosts multiple activities such as workshops, tastings, concerts, and performances, as well as stands run by fair trade and solidarity economy producers. The strong and continuous participation demonstrates the relevance of the initiative and its capacity to attract diverse audiences.

However, the most significant results are qualitative. The festival has contributed to increasing awareness of fair trade, ethical consumption, and sustainability by making these topics accessible and concrete. Participants are not only informed but emotionally and practically engaged through direct experience. As a result, attitudes towards consumption, food choices, and global responsibility are challenged and often reshaped. Altrocioccolato also fosters dialogue between people who might not usually meet: producers from the Global South (countries that are generally characterised as developing, less developed, or economically disadvantaged, often sharing histories of colonialism and seeking greater

political autonomy. local citizens, volunteers of different ages, artists, and educators. These encounters have led to the creation of new relationships and collaborations among local actors and organisations.

For young people, Altrocioccolato represents more than a cultural event. It offers an opportunity to take an active role in a real-life project and to experiment with participation, responsibility, and teamwork. Young participants and volunteers are recruited only by word of mouth, they are involved in organising activities, welcoming the public, managing logistics, and supporting workshops. Through this involvement, they gain confidence, a stronger sense of agency, and greater awareness of social and environmental issues. Many young people experience, often for the first time, the feeling that their contribution matters and that culture can be something they help build, not just attend.

For the local community, Altrocioccolato has helped reinforce social bonds and a sense of belonging. Public space is temporarily transformed into a shared environment where dialogue, cooperation, and exchange take place naturally. The festival strengthens the visibility of local associations, fair trade organisations, companies and solidarity economy projects, helping them connect with new audiences and clients. It also contributes to a broader cultural shift, encouraging citizens to see sustainability and ethical consumption as part of everyday local life rather than distant global issues.

Participants, especially young people and volunteers, acquire a wide range of skills that are relevant for their future education and careers. These include teamwork, communication, problem-solving, organisational skills, and the ability to interact with diverse audiences. They also develop transversal competences such as intercultural awareness, civic engagement, and critical thinking around sustainability and social justice. These skills are particularly valuable for professional paths in the cultural, social, educational, and environmental sectors, but also transferable to many other fields.

Overall, Altrocioccolato demonstrates how a local cultural event can produce real social impact by combining participation, informal education, and cultural mediation, generating change that goes beyond the duration of the festival itself.

## **WHY IT WORKED: SUCCESS FACTORS**

The success of Altrocioccolato is rooted in a combination of clear values, strong local engagement, and innovative methods of cultural mediation:

- **Strong connection to the local context:** the festival grows out of existing relationships with local associations, producers, volunteers, artists, and citizens, ensuring relevance, trust, and continuity.
- **Consistency between values and practices:** principles such as fair trade, sustainability, and solidarity are not only communicated but also embodied in every aspect of the event, strengthening credibility.
- **Use of multiple languages and approaches:** food, play, music, science, and art are combined to engage different audiences and learning styles, making complex global issues accessible and engaging.
- **Active involvement of volunteers and young people:** participants are not passive helpers but active contributors, fostering ownership, motivation, and skills development.
- **Informal and welcoming learning environment:** public space is transformed into an open, relaxed setting where learning happens through experience and interaction rather than formal instruction.

Altrocioccolato's innovative approach lies in using everyday activities, such as eating, playing, and celebrating, as tools for cultural mediation and education. This experiential and interdisciplinary method allows global issues like sustainability and fair trade to be explored in a concrete, human, and emotionally engaging way.

Many elements of Altrocioccolato can be easily adapted elsewhere: working with local artists and organisations, combining culture and sustainability, using public space as a place of dialogue, and creating informal, participatory learning environments. The model shows that effective cultural mediation does not require large infrastructures, but clear values, local partnerships, and creative use of available resources.

## LESSONS LEARNED & ADVICE

The case study confirms that people learn more effectively when they are actively involved. Sustainability and heritage become meaningful when they are experienced through participation rather than only explained. Informal settings, everyday activities, and direct interaction help transform abstract topics into shared and memorable experiences.

A key mistake to avoid is treating participants as passive audiences instead of active contributors. Another risk is applying formats that are not adapted to the

local context, which can reduce relevance and engagement. Underestimating the role of mediation and facilitation may also limit the project's impact.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **For young initiators:**

Start from your local context and use simple, accessible activities. Involve peers early, share responsibilities, and be open to learning through experimentation.

### **For organisations and institutions:**

Invest in participation and cultural mediation. Involve young people from the beginning and support non-formal and interdisciplinary approaches.

### **For local partners:**

Work collaboratively and build on existing networks.

Combining different perspectives and forms of knowledge strengthens both the project and the community.



## EXTRA: TOOLS & INSPIRATIONS

- [Altrocioccolato website](#)
- [Altrocioccolato Instagram](#)



## BASIC FACTS

### **Country/city/local context:**

All of Belgium

### **Who implemented it?**

Grassroots initiatives, local NGO, volunteers, local authorities, and grant-giving foundations

### **When?**

Ongoing

### **Resources & funding:**

Local authorities, grant-giving foundations, NGOs' own funds (membership fees, donations, etc.)

## STARTING POINT: CONTEXT & PROBLEM

Belgium is a beautiful country dotted with very small villages and towns. These charming settings consist of several (hundred) households, a main square, a town hall, a school, a few other public buildings, and a café. Café, which plays a pivotal role in the community's social life. Many of them are called 'café citoyen' [citizens' café]. But it is much more than just a name. Behind 'café citoyen' stands a whole philosophy of celebrating and highlighting everything that is local: food, people, and culture. What is even more interesting is that many of the cafés citoyens are run by members of the local community.

Most of the cafés were created for the same reason: people living next door didn't know each other, and there was nothing happening in the area. They respond to one of the basic human needs: living in community and having a sense of belonging. In a local community they are places where people get to know each other, do things together, share their knowledge and skills, and have fun.



## IDEA & GOALS

Although cafés citoyens in Belgium operate on similar principles and share many characteristics, each has specific adaptations to its local context. This is why, in this guide, we present it as a general concept, including examples and experiences from several organisations across Belgium. Thanks to that, you'll get a better idea of what the citizens' cafés are, what spectre of activities they offer, and what their 'business' model is.

### **The main goal:**

To create a convivial place where people of all ages could meet and spend time together within a very small community.

### **Specific goals:**

- promote local products and farmers
- adapt to the community needs and expectations
- organise the cultural life of the community
- provide space to develop their skills, hobbies and interests
- engage the community members in the co-creation of the place as volunteers

Cafés citoyens combine social entrepreneurship, cultural mediation and sustainability. They actively engage local communities in the ongoing co-creation of this space, they organise karaoke nights, board games sessions, multiple workshops, concerts and so on. They strongly advocate for local products, from buying at regular markets to using and serving food and drinks made with locally raised ingredients.

If citizens' cafés didn't exist, many Belgian towns would be left without any meeting space.



## STEP-BY-STEP: HOW IT WAS MADE

### **Step 1: Preparation**

To organise a citizens' café, you need a space, people, and, of course, some funds. In the case of the café citoyen, these are usually local authorities that make the premises available to the organisation or group willing to open such a place. The space doesn't have to be big. It typically comprises one or two rooms, some outdoor space, and backstage areas (e.g., kitchen corner, toilets, storage room).

Initiators are most often local NGOs or groups of citizens that begin as grassroots initiatives. They're volunteers willing to do something for their community.

To raise funds to arrange the space, they often apply to grant-giving organisations. One of the biggest in Belgium is called Roi Baudouin Foundation [The King Baudouin Foundation]. Within the framework of one of their grant programmes, 'Vis mon village!' [Live my village!] they can get up to 5000 (five thousand) euros for their initiative.

### **Step 2: Building the team & partnerships**

The citizens' cafés are very democratic and open spaces. They invite everyone who wants to support their actions to cooperate. Some of them engage right away, from day one. But some of them join the team later on. First, they come as guests to meet neighbours and friends; then they become regular visitors; and finally, they decide to join. It is a very open format.

However, it requires constant cooperation mainly between major actors - the organisation running the café, local authorities and, in some cases, grant-giving organisation. Usually, cafés citoyens have one full-time employee and a group of volunteers helping to run the place. Speaking of partnerships, we cannot ignore locally based farmers, brewers, family companies, artists, etc., with whom the cafés also develop cooperation step by step.

### **Step 3: Implementation**

The social cafés are community-based initiatives made by them and for them. This is why they adapt their services, opening hours, and other facilities to the community's needs.

- Most of the cafés are open only several times a week for a few hours. For example, on Wednesday and Friday from 3 to 5 PM.
- They offer drinks and food made of local products. The prices are very friendly. Some cafés don't have fixed prices; they offer two or three different prices, and it's up to the customer to decide how much they pay.
- Cafés organise events, animating local cultural life. Some of them are regular, for example, a book exchange/board game session every last Thursday of the month. Some of the events, like concerts, are occasional. Remember! Each social café is unique, as it adapts its activities, opening hours, and general concept to the local community's needs.
- Everybody is welcome, either as a visitor or as a volunteer.

#### **Step 4: Adaptation & problem-solving**

The most fragile element of the social cafés is funding. They build their activities upon volunteers' commitment and engagement. But there must be at least one person working full-time to keep everything on track. The spectre of closure has already loomed over several cafés due to a lack of grant funding. In one case, thanks to the citizens who stood in defence of that place, local authorities found the resources to cover the café's employee's salary.

#### **The most important thing to know before starting a similar project:**

- Remember: It is not a restaurant. It is a social space. For people and by people. It doesn't have to be open 24/7.
- Find a few allies who will help you make the first steps.
- Begin at your own pace. You don't have to offer an infinite number of activities. Two or three are enough.



Women drinking coffee in a café, photo by [Deividas Dravininkas](#) on [Unsplash](#)



## RESULTS & REAL IMPACT

### **Specific results:**

- Inhabitants of small communities have a place where they can meet and ‘do something’ for pleasure.
- Enforced local connections.
- Enforced local active citizenship and entrepreneurship.

### **What changed:**

- People make new acquaintances. They get to know each other, for example, with neighbours with whom they didn’t have a chance to talk for the past few years.
- Giving more value to local products.
- Citizens’ activation – both as creators of their space and participants of venues organised there.



## WHY IT WORKED: SUCCESS FACTORS

- It is created by the community for themselves.
- It is not another fancy, chic, expensive place.
- A very democratic environment.
- Focused on sustainability.

### **What MUST happen for the project to succeed:**

- The initiative must not be income-oriented.
- It needs support from local authorities and grants.
- It must focus on people and their needs, and adapt when needed.
- It must be transparent in terms of values, finances, etc.
- Diversification of funds: grants, donations, sales, etc.



## LESSONS LEARNED & ADVICE

Cafés citoyens learn us that grassroots initiatives based on volunteering can evolve into long-term projects serving the whole community.

One of the biggest pitfalls when initiating a project is the desire to have everything occur simultaneously. However, this is not possible due to multiple factors, such as the budget or the number of people involved. It is natural that

things evolve over time. Begin with the simplest thing: create a place where people can meet. Get to know them, their need, strengths, talents, and skills. Ask them if they'd like to join your initiative, or organise something for them – a chess tournament, a fashion show, a plant-based culinary workshop or a book exchange. Don't rush. Give time to yourself and your community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Be honest and natural in everything you do. People will feel that.
- Make a plan for how you see your initiative in five years from now. It will help you begin and take the next steps.
- Engage diverse people – their perspectives and skills will help you see or do the things you would not be able to do.

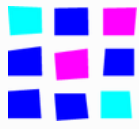
### **If you are doing a similar project, start with:**

- Writing down your ideas. Put them in order: What must happen at the beginning, and what can wait.
- Getting to know other, similar projects. Talk to people engaged in them.
- Getting to know the local community and its needs a bit better.
- Doing basic research on potential stakeholders: who might support you and with what resources.
- Checking the funding possibilities: grant application? Crowdfunding? Something else?

## EXTRA: TOOLS & INSPIRATIONS

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# LA SOURCE – A YOUTH-LED SPACE FOR CULTURAL MEDIATION, PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT



## BASIC FACTS

### **Country/city/local context:**

Saint-Nazaire (Loire-Atlantique, France)

### **Who implemented it?**

The City of Saint-Nazaire (Youth and Citizenship Department), in close cooperation with local youth workers, cultural actors and young people aged 15–25, who were directly involved in the design and governance of the space.

### **When?**

Co-design phase: 2016–2017

Opening to the public: April 2018 – Ongoing initiative

### **Resources & funding:**

- municipal funding (City of Saint-Nazaire)
- youth policy budget
- support from local partners (youth organisations, cultural institutions, civic services)
- in-kind contributions (expert facilitation, training, mentoring)



## STARTING POINT: CONTEXT & PROBLEM

Before the creation of La Source, young people in Saint-Nazaire identified several challenges:

- a lack of accessible, welcoming spaces where young people could meet freely and develop projects
- fragmented access to information (employment, mobility, culture, citizenship)
- limited opportunities for young people to actively shape local cultural and civic life
- youth participation is often reduced to consultation rather than real decision-making

At the same time, the Municipality wished to strengthen youth engagement, social inclusion and cultural participation, particularly for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

La Source emerged as a response to these challenges: a physical place designed with young people, offering them resources, autonomy and visibility, while positioning them as actors of cultural mediation and social innovation.

### **Practical question:**

What happens when young people are not only beneficiaries of policies, but co-creators of public spaces and cultural initiatives?

## **IDEA & GOALS**

### **To create a youth-friendly, youth-led space where young people can:**

- access information and support
- develop individual or collective projects
- engage in cultural, civic and social initiatives
- experiment, create and learn by doing

### **Main objective:**

To empower young people by giving them real responsibility in the design, governance and activities of a multifunctional youth space.

### **Specific objectives:**

- strengthen young people's sense of agency and self-confidence
- encourage cultural participation and mediation led by young people
- support youth-led initiatives, including social and cultural entrepreneurship
- promote inclusion, diversity and equal access to opportunities
- develop transferable skills (communication, project management, teamwork)

### **What if this project had never happened?**

- Young people would have remained passive users of services.
- Cultural and civic initiatives would have been designed for young people, not with them.
- Many youth-led projects would never have emerged or reached visibility.
- Young people would not have gained practical experience in event organisation.
- Promotion and teamwork.



## STEP-BY-STEP: HOW IT WAS MADE

### **Step 1: Participatory design**

Following the Youth Forums and Consultations, young people were invited to:

- identify their needs and priorities
- imagine the functions of the future space
- contribute ideas for layout, atmosphere and activities

Workshops, group discussions and collaborative sessions allowed young people to shape the identity of La Source from the start.

### **Step 2: Co-construction of the space**

Young people participated in:

- defining different zones (project rooms, relaxation areas, resource centre)
- designing flexible and accessible spaces
- setting values and rules of use

During this period, professionals in charge (architects, youth workers, inclusion experts) acted as facilitators rather than decision-makers.

### **Step 3: Launch and programming**

Once opened, La Source developed:

- open access periods for informal use
- project incubation and mentoring
- cultural and civic activities initiated by young people
- exhibitions and public presentations of youth projects

Young people remained involved in programming and the daily life of the space.

### **Step 4: Continuous adaptation**

The space evolved according to:

- feedback from young users
- emerging social and cultural needs
- new forms of engagement (digital, environmental, artistic)

### **Key insight:**

Flexibility and trust were essential for sustainability.



Photo by Pouick44 on Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://commons.wikimedia.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

## RESULTS & REAL IMPACT

### **Key results:**

- Thousands of young people welcomed since 2018.
- Strong participation of young people from diverse backgrounds, including disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- Dozens of youth-led projects supported every year (cultural, social, civic).

### **Impact on the local community:**

- increased self-confidence and autonomy
- development of soft skills: communication, organisation, mediation, teamwork
- first experiences in project management and cultural entrepreneurship
- greater engagement in local cultural and civic life

### **Impact on youth development:**

- a visible and accessible youth hub in the city centre
- stronger links between youth, institutions and cultural actors
- recognition of young people as legitimate contributors to public and cultural life



## WHY IT WORKED: SUCCESS FACTORS

### **What contributed to the success of the project:**

- real co-construction, not symbolic participation
- a physical space combined with human support
- strong anchoring in local youth and cultural policies

### **Good practices that can be used elsewhere:**

- Trust in young people's capacity to decide and act.
- Clear values: inclusion, openness, experimentation.

### **Innovative elements:**

- youth-led governance of a public space
- cultural mediation emerging from youth initiatives
- integration of information, culture and civic engagement in one place



## LESSONS LEARNED & ADVICE

### **Conclusions from the project implementation:**

- Participation must be meaningful to be effective.
- Young people engage more when they feel ownership.
- Cultural mediation can be a powerful tool for empowerment and employability.
- Flexibility is essential for youth-oriented spaces.

### **Recommendations for replication:**

Start by listening to young people's real needs:

- Create a safe and welcoming environment.
- Combine freedom with supportive mentoring.
- Accept experimentation and possible failures.
- Ensure long-term institutional commitment.

### **Transferability:**

The La Source model is highly transferable:

- Adaptable to different cities and cultural contexts.
- Scalable according to available resources.
- Relevant for youth centres, cultural hubs and civic spaces across Europe.

It provides a strong example of youth-led cultural mediation as a driver of inclusion, employability and social innovation.



## EXTRA: TOOLS & INSPIRATIONS

- [La Source - website](#)

A decorative icon consisting of three horizontal bars in cyan, blue, and magenta, followed by the text 'BASIC FACTS' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

## BASIC FACTS

### **Country/city/local context:**

Verdun-sur-Garonne (Occitanie region, France)

### **Who implemented it?**

ADENS Association, Fab Lab Dynamik branch

### **When?**

October to June, with one event in June each year since 2024

### **Resources & funding:**

IDJ (Idée de Jeunes) grant, Verdun-sur-Garonne Town Hall, and self-financing. Other local and institutional partners also contributed to this success, including the CAF (Family Allowance Fund).

With a total budget for the 2024 season of €5,230.

A decorative icon consisting of three horizontal bars in cyan, blue, and magenta, followed by the text 'STARTING POINT: CONTEXT & PROBLEM' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

## STARTING POINT: CONTEXT & PROBLEM

### **What's the story?**

In this rural commune in southern France, as in many others, the cultural offering is generally not extensive, and, for teenagers, it is often designed by adults for young people.

### **The challenge here?**

The young people wanted to turn the tables. Approximately 30 young people transformed themselves into cultural entrepreneurs to demonstrate that urban cultures (rap, slam poetry, graffiti, and fashion) have a place everywhere, even in the countryside.

The challenge was to move beyond the role of 'consumer' and become producers of their own projects, while developing soft skills that aren't always taught

in schools. They aimed to be active citizens in their community and to host a public event that provided direct access to culture.

## IDEA & GOALS

### **What were they aiming for?**

Main objective of the initiative:

Reclaiming the territory: Making the village vibrate to the sound of rap and taking over the public space (the Garonne). Introducing disciplines that are little known in these areas, which are often far removed from this type of cultural activity.

### **Specific objectives:**

- **Learning by doing:** from a basic idea to the concrete realisation of a project, mastering the entire production chain (budget management, logistics, safety). Drawing inspiration from resource people to develop skills (initiative, organisational skills).
- **Sustainably undertake:** use the 'Upcycling' fashion to link creativity and ecology in the reuse of recycled materials (2024 edition), appeal for donation or loan of equipment (by [Happy Culture](#), the festival committee and the town hall of Verdun-sur-Garonne), and the recovery of second-hand objects.

### **Link to mediation:**

The project is grounded in peer mediation. Young people create tools to reach other young people, thereby breaking down the usual barriers posed by cultural institutions. The aim is to offer a flexible event (day and/or evening).

## STEP-BY-STEP: HOW IT WAS MADE

The project followed an agile and structured methodology, divided into 4 phases:

### **Step 1: Preparation**

The crew (Structure): Approximately 10 planning and follow-up meetings were held every Friday evening. Initially monthly, then weekly. These meetings usually took place at the ADENS premises, with support from the local Fablab Le Dynamik branch, which provided access to resources for tasks that the young people couldn't handle on their own, such as certain administrative procedures. Separate teams were created: programming, logistics, communications and

budget, partner relations, and coordination of participating artists. ‘Even if it’s not always easy, this regularity is the key to staying motivated and not giving up along the way’ – says one of the project managers.

## **Step 2: Building the team & partnerships**

Unite the team: The distribution of roles for each person happened naturally, based on the skills each person was able to contribute and the time they could dedicate to it.

Cash (Financing & Pitch): In order to obtain funding, four young people (two girls and two boys) defended the project before the ‘[IDJ](#)’ jury (1st and 2nd edition). ‘Pitching your project in front of professionals makes you more responsible and makes the adventure feel real. You step out of your comfort zone, but you’re so satisfied when you reach the goal you set together’ – says one of the project managers.

The Build (Co-creation):

- **Upcycling Workshops:** Thanks to the recovery of fabric scraps and about ten sessions to create a fashion collection from A to Z, a great fashion show was produced in an ethical fashion approach (1st edition in 2024).
- **Field communication:** Let’s go! Eight half-days to cover the village with posters and flyers. This remains a traditional means of communication that shouldn’t be overlooked, in addition to social media and other online platforms.

An appearance on the local radio station [Radio Asso](#) also helped disseminate information to a wider area, reaching all towns and villages in the Tarn-et-Garonne department.

Participation in the Castanet Open Mic event allowed two young people to present the project and recruit artists for the Rap Music’all event, while another served on the jury.

## **Step 3: Implementation**

- **D-Day:** Setting up an interactive village run by young people. With the participation of other existing structures and partnerships with local associations, such as ‘Tour de jeu’ and the town’s festival committee, to provide additional activities for the public:
  - a relaxation area with wooden games
  - an open mic showcasing local talent
  - participatory workshops: podcasting, visual arts with a collaborative mural, and music creation

- concerts featuring mostly local rap artists
- food available

- **Detailed schedule:**

Event day: Saturday, June 15, 2024 (1st edition)

Morning:

- venue preparation. Setting up stands and decorations
- setting up equipment for entertainment and performances
- dress rehearsals for artists and parade participants
- informal meal for organisers, volunteers, and partners

Afternoon:

- launch of activities.
- 4 p.m., event opens to the public
- open stage: a space for young talent to express themselves (slam poetry, rap, dance)
- interactive booths: a collaborative art mural was created throughout the day, allowing visitors to contribute to a collective artwork
- 6 p.m., fashion show. Presentation of textile creations made by the young participants. A moment to celebrate their work, in front of a mixed and intergenerational audience.

Evening:

- 8 p.m., concerts featuring young local and regional artists
- festive closing with musical performances and participatory activities

#### **Step 4: Adaptation and problem solving**

Despite some unforeseen challenges during the preparations and on the day itself, the cohesion and responsiveness of the youth team enabled them to overcome each obstacle, transforming these challenges into valuable lessons for future editions of Rap Music'all.

#### **Key takeaways:**

- **Prioritise purpose over planning:** define a clear objective rather than trying to plan everything.
- **Foster experimentation:** create a climate of trust where mistakes are accepted as learning opportunities.
- **Encourage involvement:** share decision-making power more widely, even if it disrupts the existing organisational structure.
- **Build a network of allies:** find mentors and partners to benefit from their experience and resources.

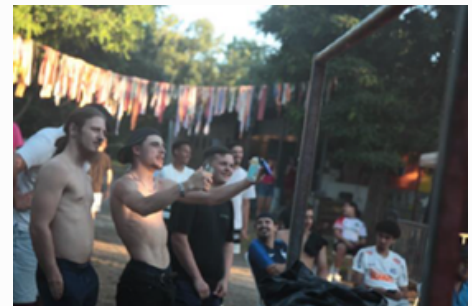
- Prioritise quality over quantity: work at your own pace, focusing on a few essential activities and avoiding the need to manage everything. For example, catering was outsourced.



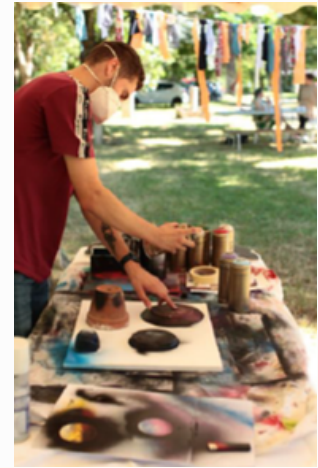
From left to right: Louise (volunteer), Emma (resource person, ADENS association) and Milan (volunteer), photo by ADENS, Fablab Le Dynamik



Festival posters, ADENS



On this page: Participation in the Castanet Open Mic, photos by ADENS, Fablab Le Dynamik



Above: Introduction to graffiti and participatory mural, photos by ADENS, Fablab Le Dynamik



Game booth association Game tower, photo by ADENS, Fablab Le Dynamik



Poetry Writing Workshop, photo by ADENS, Fablab Le Dynamik

## RESULTS & REAL IMPACT

### **In numbers:**

350 participating visitors, 35 young volunteers who organised the event, 12 groups on stage, 10 fashion designers trained.

### **Social Impact:**

Enhanced intergenerational dialogue (elected officials, business owners, and young people working hand in hand). Attracting people from all socioeconomic backgrounds, senior citizens, and families to the festival. Very positive feedback from the local community, and the event is now held annually.

### **Employability:**

Participants acquired skills in project management, public speaking, negotiation with technical partners, and budget management. It's a turnkey experience for a future CV or micro-enterprise. A boost for future personal and professional projects.



## WHY IT WORKED: SUCCESS FACTORS

The success of this project demonstrates that, beyond technical expertise, constant adaptation and empathy are the essential foundation of any cultural mediation. By remaining attentive to everyone's needs and cultivating a spirit of mutual support, the team was able to transform constraints into opportunities and successfully complete this project. This proves that the human element is the most powerful driving force behind collective creation.

Here are some of the contributing factors to success:

### **The Real Pitch:**

Presenting to a jury isn't just an administrative step; it's an exercise in self-confidence. This required significant preparation, especially mental preparation.

### **The Win-Win Partnership:**

Leveraging the expertise of local stakeholders (the Town Hall, Happy Culture) to secure logistics without sacrificing autonomy.

### **Horizontal Collaboration:**

Young people make the decisions, adults facilitate (resource persons).

### **The 'Staff' Style:**

Creating personalised T-shirts and posters strengthened the team and projected an immediate professional image.

Freedom: The young people contributed continuously or occasionally.

This freedom of participation for the youth fostered a sense of unity.



## LESSONS LEARNED & ADVICE

Our 'best practices' recommendations:

- **Distribute roles:** Don't let one person do everything. Having a manager for each area prevents burnout.
- **Mistakes are learning opportunities:** A weather or technical problem? That's when you learn the most about crisis management.
- **Anticipate technical issues:** Sound systems and soundchecks always take longer than expected. Plan for a 'buffer time'.
- **Mix the arts:** Blending arts and culture, music, fashion, and theatre allows you to reach audiences who wouldn't have come for rap alone.
- **Focus on:** the core missions and use external providers for certain tasks.

**Bonus checklist for the young cultural entrepreneur:**

- **The concept:** What's your idea? Define it in a simple sentence.
- **The team:** Find your allies and set a regular meeting time (e.g., Friday evenings).
- **The budget:** List everything (e.g., sound system, refreshments, marketing, artists). How much do you need?
- **The pitch:** Prepare your proposal to convince the town hall or partners.
- **The communication:** Create a strong visual. Flood Instagram, but also put up posters on the street.
- **The day:** Prepare an hour-by-hour schedule. Who does what at 2 p.m.? At 6 p.m.?

Testimonies from 3 young volunteers who organised the event:

Milan:

'Initially, I joined this project because I love rap and street art culture, and I'm curious to learn about the different professions within this field. What appealed to me most was seeing an idea come to fruition, evolve, and improve. I also really enjoyed actively participating in the project and acquiring new skills, such as digital communication (poster design), clothing printing, and computer vectorisation'.

Louise:

'I love rap culture, and I wanted to discover new projects. I enjoyed seeing the process and appreciated being part of a group.

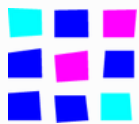
I was able to discover many initiatives in my town and the surrounding areas, thanks to the external speakers. I was able to develop my critical thinking skills and distinguish between good and bad ideas'.

Lizéa:

'I wasn't familiar with this event at all, but through my parents, who are members of the ASENs association and told me about it, I was inspired to participate.

This project taught me to be more open-minded and to improve my social skills, and to be more open to people. I did theatre for a while, and that really helped me take on the role of announcer on stage and throughout the festival.

I also helped out at the refreshment stand, and now I feel truly capable of doing it in a different context'.



# YOUNG JAZZ FROM VENNO'S (MŁODY JAZZ Z VENNO'S)



## BASIC FACTS

### **Country/city/local context:**

Silesia (Poland)

### **Who implemented it?**

A non formal group of young musicians fascinated by jazz. At first, it was just a few young musicians, but in subsequent stages, the group grew to include jazz enthusiasts from different generations, cultural animators, etc.

### **When?**

2016, 2017, 2018

### **Resources & funding:**

- financial support by ARTeria Foundation
- organisational support by Private Music School VENNO'S STUDIO
- support from partners and guest musicians, cultural institutions and others



## STARTING POINT: CONTEXT & PROBLEM

The Young Jazz from VENNO'S project was created in Silesia, a region where music has always played an important role. It was here that Poland's first academic jazz programme was established, and jazz and improvised music are an important part of the local identity.

Young musicians noticed several problems. Firstly, they lacked a space where they could perform regularly and develop artistically. Secondly, they had few opportunities to meet and play with musicians of the older generation.

Thirdly, young people rarely had the opportunity to have a real impact on cultural events in their area.

In response to these needs, they decided to create their own initiative – one that was open, collaborative and improvisational. The project was not only intended to

enable them to perform, but also to strengthen young people's sense of agency and encourage the local audience to actively participate in culture.

Most of these young musicians were students of VENO'S STUDIO Music School, and they were the 'heart' of the project. Over time, the initiative became linked to International Jazz Day (more at <https://jazzday.com/>) – an event organised by UNESCO that promotes dialogue, diversity and music creation around the world.

### **Practical tip: How can you identify a similar problem in your area?**

- Talk to young artists, your friends, musicians or people involved in culture: ask them where and how they can showcase their talents.
- Check if there are events that are really created by young people, with young people, and not just for young people.
- See if different generations have the opportunity to meet and work together, or if they tend to operate separately.
- Pay attention to empty spaces: a lack of concerts, jam sessions or places to freely express oneself is often a sign that there is a real need for change.

## **IDEA & GOALS**

The idea for the project arose from a simple question: why shouldn't young musicians create their own space for playing, meeting and learning from each other? The inspiration came from both local jazz traditions and the international context of UNESCO's International Jazz Day.

### **Main objective of the initiative:**

To create an initiative where young musicians can develop, gain stage experience and learn how the artistic environment works 'behind the scenes'.

### **Specific objectives:**

- learning cooperation and responsibility for joint activities
- developing improvisation and musical dialogue skills
- strengthening self-confidence and a sense of agency
- building relationships with the local community and older generation musicians.

The project combined social action, culture and education. Young participants co-created open cultural events that had artistic, educational and social value. In this way, they became a 'link' between the region's jazz tradition and a new audience, implementing UNESCO values such as dialogue, respect and creativity.

## What if this project had never happened?

- Young musicians would not have had the opportunity to perform regularly in front of an audience.
- There would have been no natural encounters and collaboration between young and experienced musicians.
- Jazz could have remained 'music for the initiated' rather than a living form of dialogue with the local community.
- Young people would not have gained practical experience in event organisation, promotion and teamwork.

## STEP-BY-STEP: HOW IT WAS MADE

### Step 1: Preparation

At the beginning, an informal group of young musicians associated with VENO'S STUDIO was formed. They participated in joint learning and music creation, discussed what they wanted to do, in what form they wanted to perform, and how to divide responsibilities. They met for rehearsals, discussions, and consultations with mentors.

### Step 2: Building a team and partnerships

Over time, more people joined the project, including both young musicians and more experienced artists.

The young people were motivated by the opportunity to perform, have a say in events, and work directly with mentors. The collaboration was intergenerational and based on playing and improvising together, as well as preparing concerts and events.

### Step 3: Implementation

The project included working meetings, rehearsals, concerts, jam sessions and special events, such as:

- [The first official performance](#) was presented as a part of an international event - the WinJAZZ project co-financed by the Italian Ministry of Culture on 4 December 2015 in Katowice, video: <https://youtu.be/dn78Vd1g8Bo>.
- Expansion of the band's repertoire and line-up.
- [Original concerts](#) (e.g. during the opening of KURORT QULTURY on 24 September 2016, video: <https://youtu.be/pImwFp3AfEA>).
- Co-creation of International Jazz Day celebrations.
- Intergenerational events, such as the 'PRZYJAŹŃ&JAZZ' (FRIENDSHIP&JAZZ) concert in 2018, which became an example of an

intergenerational stage bringing together young instrumentalists, school friends and a group of mature musicians in one joint musical event.

A range of cultural mediation, arts education and social animation methods were used in the implementation of the project. These included:

- learning by doing
- workshops with mentors
- intergenerational dialogue based on improvisation
- creating space for direct contact with the audience
- integration of different musical styles and experiences in the form of an open jam session

These events also served as a tool for building the cultural capital of the local community through access to live jazz music, promoting UNESCO values related to freedom, creativity and intercultural dialogue, and developing the social skills of the participants. Improvisation – a key element of jazz – acted as a mediator: it taught listening, cooperation and responding to others, and allowed young musicians to express their own creative identity.

The role of the young participants was crucial to all activities. They initiated ideas, created the repertoire, including references to Silesian tradition and the jazz repertoire of Polish artists, co-organised events, including, for example, [video invitations](https://youtu.be/jeoX9kl3-fQ) (<https://youtu.be/jeoX9kl3-fQ>) and decided on the [artistic character of the concerts](https://youtu.be/6Hu4ZXseHRA) (2017: <https://youtu.be/6Hu4ZXseHRA> 2018 - <https://youtu.be/8MYaqCUFMIY>). They became animators of cultural life, co-creating a space for meetings, education and dialogue. Their presence on stage – surrounded by mentors and the audience – symbolised the natural continuity of the Silesian musical tradition and its transmission to future generations.

#### **Step 4: Adaptation and problem solving**

Organisational and artistic challenges arose during the activities. The team adapted the format of the events on an ongoing basis, learned from their mistakes and responded to the needs of the participants and the audience.

#### **The most important things to know before starting a similar project:**

- You don't need to have a plan for everything – it is more important to have a clear 'why' and to be open to the process
- Create a safe atmosphere – remember, that you can try, make mistakes and learn from them

- Give all participants a real say in decisions – even if it means more chaos at the beginning
- Find at least one mentor or partner who will support the project with their experience and organisational resources



Festival posters, Young Jazz from VENOS



On this page: Photos from events, photos by Mateusz Paszek



## RESULTS & REAL IMPACT

### **Key results:**

- regular performances, including as part of international initiatives
- development of stage, improvisation and organisational skills
- creation of a multi-generational music community
- promotion of UNESCO values related to dialogue and diversity

### **Impact on the local community:**

- Greater access to live music and cultural education.
- Integration of residents and strengthening of local identity.
- Building a positive image of the region based on the tradition of music-making.

### **Impact on youth development:**

- Development of soft skills (communication, cooperation, organisation).
- Increased self-confidence and sense of agency.
- Experiences that increase career opportunities in the cultural sector and creative industries.
- Artistic portfolio of young artists was developed.

### **Practical reflection: Which effect was the most surprising?**

The biggest surprise was how quickly relationships based on trust were built between participants of different generations. Improvisation meant that differences in age, experience or style ceased to matter – what mattered was listening to each other and responding to the music.

This shows that well-designed artistic activities can naturally bring people together.



## WHY IT WORKED: SUCCESS FACTORS

### **What contributed to the success of the project:**

- a safe and open space for experimentation
- regular activities that gave a sense of continuity
- support from partner institutions
- combining education with real artistic practice

### **Good practices that can be used elsewhere:**

- bringing together young and experienced musicians
- work based on improvisation
- open jam sessions available to everyone
- leaving space for creativity and shared responsibility among young people

### **Innovative elements:**

- Using jazz as a tool for dialogue.
- Combining local musical tradition with the global UNESCO initiative.
- Strengthening young people's skills through real organisational tasks.

### **What MUST happen for the project to succeed?**

- Young people must have real responsibility, not just the role of executors.
- Activities should be regular, not one-off.
- There needs to be space (physical or symbolic) where they can operate freely.
- Partners must trust young people and allow them to make decisions.
- The project should be open to change and development during its course.

## **LESSONS LEARNED & ADVICE**

### **Conclusions from the project implementation:**

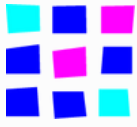
- Long-term activities are key to creating sustainable communities.
- Practical experience supports young people's development more than theory.
- UNESCO values become real when they are put into practice.
- Partnership cooperation strengthens the quality and scope of the initiative.

### **Recommendations for organisers:**

- Focus on the process, not just the end result.
- Create opportunities for young people to collaborate with more experienced artists.
- Involve the local community in an open and accessible way.
- Leave room for spontaneity, creativity and improvisation.
- Ensure a simple, clear message that is understandable to everyone.

### **If you are doing a similar project, start with...**

- Talking to people who really want to take action.
- Small, realistic actions (e.g. one event).
- A clear division of responsibilities.
- Creating a space for meeting and working together.
- Accepting that not everything will turn out perfectly the first time.



## CASE STUDIES - KEY CONCLUSIONS

The case studies presented in the previous section show that culture, heritage and the mediation based on them are not the domain of institutions or professionals. Many of them begin with (young) enthusiasts who see their community's needs and have the courage to act.

Whether through a citizens' café, a youth-led cultural space, a music initiative, or a participatory festival, all projects discussed in this publication began with a simple idea rooted in local realities and a desire to bring people together.

### **Learning by doing**

Engagement in grassroots and local cultural mediation projects helps develop invaluable skills, such as communication, teamwork, organisation, creativity, and problem-solving. And it's not a VR simulation or book theory. Cultural mediation projects are a real responsibility in the real world.

### **Rome wasn't built in a day**

The case studies highlight that perfect conditions are not required to get started. Successful initiatives grew step by step. They adapt to challenges, participants' needs, and changing circumstances. In one word: they evolve. What is really important is to have a clear purpose, a supportive network (peers, mentors, local partners), and the flexibility to learn from mistakes.

### **Engaging heritage**

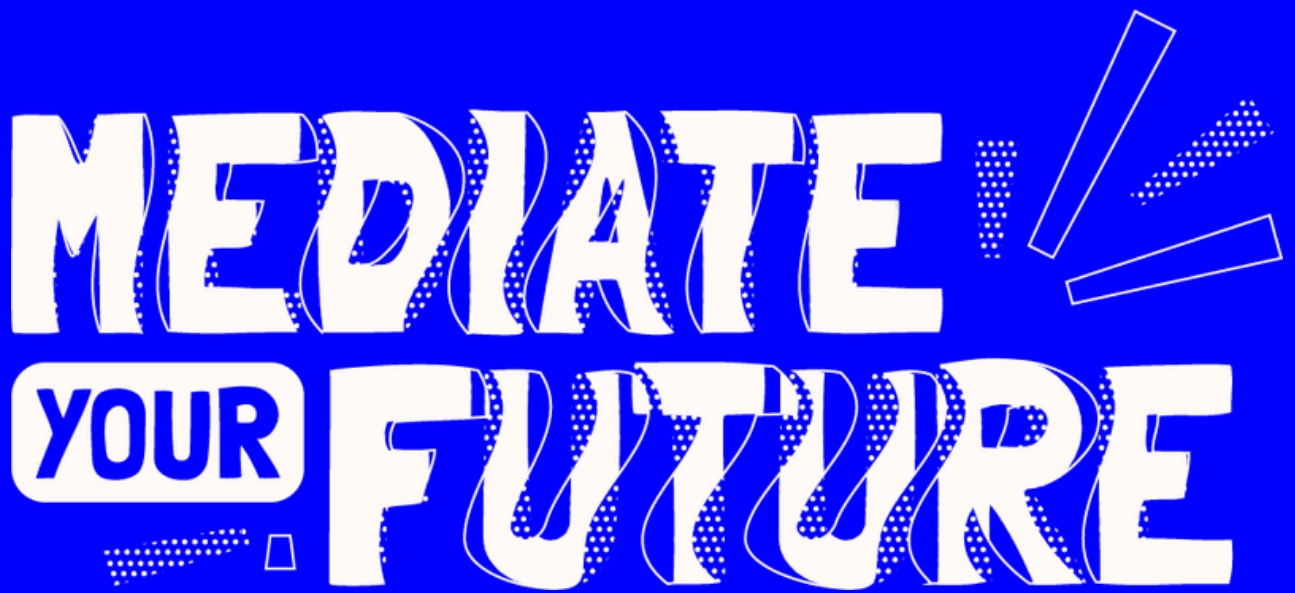
Remember that cultural mediation can be a powerful means of connecting heritage, creativity, and social change. Even complex topics, such as sustainability, identity, or local history, can be turned into accessible, engaging activities that enable (young) people to become active cultural actors in their communities.





# RECOMMENDATIONS

The best practices collected in this booklet show that successful cultural mediation projects combine participation, clear planning and a strong connection with local contexts. These are general recommendations drawn from the case studies presented in this booklet; more specific advice is provided at the end of each case study.

- Start from real contexts and needs as shown by initiatives such as Café Citoyen in Belgium.
- Design projects collaboratively by involving young people as active contributors and decision-makers, as demonstrated by the youth-led approach of La Source.
- Encourage young people to become cultural producers, like RAP MUSIC'ALL.
- Create spaces for experimentation and exchange as Young Jazz from VENO'S
- Connect complex topics to everyday experiences, like the Altrocioccolato Festival.
- Engage local stakeholders early on.
- Document and communicate activities and outcomes.



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