

The impact of a festival of traditional culture and arts on urban and community development.

Key findings from the research of the Re:tradition – Jagiellonian Fair audience, Lublin, Poland

Aleksandra Koltun, PhD (Research to use // Badania do działania, aleksandra.koltun@gmail.com), Anastazja Szuła, Oskar Adamus, Małgorzata Klimkowska

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The findings presented below are drawn from two sources: quantitative – two identical audience surveys, conducted in 2017 and 2023, and qualitative – interviews with selected members of festival audience who attended it at least three times, conducted in 2024.

Full research report can be found here: warsztatykultury.pl/badania/

For more information on the festival: retradycja.eu



The composition of the audience of Re:tradition – Jagiellonian Fair has not changed between 2017 and 2023 in any fundamental way. Among those attending the festival, the majority are still women (64.5% vs. 31% men), middle-aged and young (the average is about 37 years old), with higher education (68.2%), satisfied with their economic situation (63% of respondents described it as "good" and "very good"). Approximately half of the audience lives outside of Lublin (46.1% declared living in the city). Almost every tenth person (9.6%) comes from a foreign country, including 6.7% from Ukraine.

Over the years, the changes have occurred in relation to the age and place of residence of festival attendees, as well as assessments of their own material situation. Of the four festivals we studied, only Re:tradition saw a decrease in the average age of those attending (from 40.5 in 2017 to 37.4 in 2023). There was a clear increase in the participation of foreigners (from 1.5% in 2017 to 9.6% in 2023), as well as of people not living in Lublin (from 40.6% in 2017 to 50.3% in 2023). Assessments of one's own material situation have worsened, with the percentage of those satisfied falling from 74.9% in 2017 to 63.0% in 2023.

More than half of people not living in Lublin declare that their arrival in the city is linked to participation in Re:tradition – Jagiellonian Fair. At the same time, the deterioration in economic sentiment between 2017 and 2023 did not fundamentally affect the declared level of consumption of various goods and services unrelated to the festival itself. Compared to 2017, there was an increase in interest in catering and hotel services (almost double in the case of hotel room rentals, declared by almost 23% of visitors in 2023). Almost half of non-residents declared that they intend to spend three days or more in Lublin. Slight decreases in interest were recorded for renting rooms in hostels, buying souvenirs, guided tours of Lublin and museums.

Re:tradition – Jagiellonian Fair is a source of pride among the residents of Lublin, as well as an important element of the city's positive image in the eyes of visitors. Lubliners treat the festival as an excellent opportunity to show the city to friends and family from all over Poland; people with no connection to Lublin organise nationwide "reunions" on this occasion.

In the eyes of visitors, Re:tradition is closely intertwined with something they perceive as the essence of "Lublinness": the beauty of the Old Town, the cosiness and the cultivation of old traditions (which, in turn, is much less visible in many other areas of Poland).

The survey results do not show that Re:tradition is still rebuilding audiences after the pandemic (the percentage of people who were at the festival last in 2019 was found to be very low).

In 2023, the 'returning' audience accounted for 55.2% of the total, with around 28% of people having been to Re:tradition – Jagiellonian Fair at least three times, and more than 10% having been at least six times. The percentage of people who were at Re:tradition for the first time was 39.4%. Compared to 2017, there is a trend towards an increase in the proportion of newcomers.

The results of the research clearly show that the 'old' audiences as well as the location of the festival in a publicly accessible urban space play the key role in attracting 'new' audiences.

The two most important motivations behind returning to Re:tradition – Jagiellonian Fair are the desire to meet with folk artists and creators in the festival's unique atmosphere of closeness and openness, and the curiosity for new experiences and discoveries. For those who come to the festival regularly, the most important thing is to exchange experiences and learn specific skills directly from professional creators. It is then the mutual curiosity and the shared work of the hands, the feel for materials, and the love of beauty that builds an intimacy that is incomparable to any experience outside the festival.

Participants in Re:tradition – Jagiellonian Fair most often attended the festival with their spouses or partners (45.1% of people). More than a third of respondents attended Re:tradition with their children (35.2%) – most often with one.

Re:tradition is also an opportunity to maintain contacts with people the respondents do not see on a daily basis. This applies both to people living in Lublin and to people from distant regions of Poland. From the point of view of social sciences, such "loose" contacts with people outside the close social or family circle play a key role in the formation of individuals' social networks.

Re:tradition – Jagiellonian Fair keeps traditional art and culture alive and thriving. As our research shows, thanks to the festival people discover the richness and diversity of folk art and culture. Others, thanks to the lessons learnt from folk artists and participation in workshops, learnt previously unknown techniques and skills, which they later used to make their own crafts. It was not uncommon for them to pass these on to others later, from their own children to the attendees of activities at local centres for culture.

For many people, contact with folk art and culture is associated with spiritual experiences, above all a sense of continuity with the past and a responsibility to uphold tradition. Such feelings are extremely important in terms of a sense of belonging to cultural communities at both local and national levels.

79.9% of those surveyed said they would like to attend the festival the following year; 94.1% said they would recommend the festival to their friends.

At the same time, the qualitative study shows that the regular participants of Re:tradition – Jagiellonian Fair feel the constant 'shrinking' of the festival: a decrease in the number of exhibitors and the variety of countries they represent, a concentration on a smaller space, an absence of bands that played in different spaces of the city. The changes in the Re:tradition programme are mainly due to the decreasing funding that is being allocated to its organisation. Continued underfunding threatens to undermine the quality of the festival and, as a result, losing its audiences.