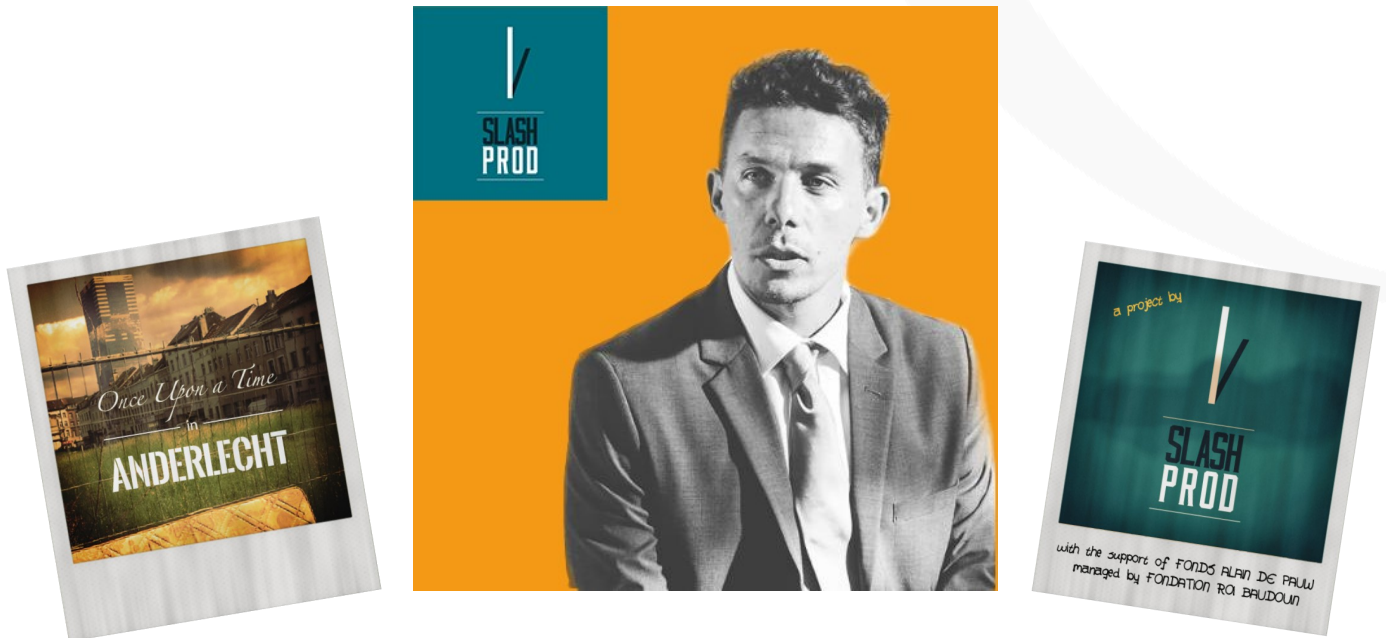


## INTERVIEW

### How does a young entrepreneur use smartphone video making help the cultural sector?

ENCATC spoke with Alessandro Cozzutto, the creator of an innovated idea that helps people to film and edit videos using only a smartphone. We learned what it's like to run new a business like the *Once upon a time in Anderlecht*, what impact or influence can this project have on the cultural sector *and* what is the most difficult challenge to getting started.



**ENCATC:** What is *Once Upon a Time in Anderlecht* and where did you get the idea?

**Alessandro Cozzutto:** *Quatia* is a project funded by the Roi Baudouin Fondation ("Fonds Alain De Pauw") and is about filming and editing videos using only a smartphone. On one side, I use my smartphone to collect video-portraits of common people that live in this peculiar area of Brussels. On the other side, I teach groups of kids this amazing new frontier of video making.

The idea came while walking all in, around, and outside Brussels. I have noticed how many communities exist here and how little they know one other. I think that if you want to know somebody, you have to give him or her the opportunity to introduce him or herself. Videos are the most effective form of

communication. And smartphones are the most accessible tool for video making.

**ENCATC:** What impact or influence can this project have (or is having) on the cultural sector?

**Alessandro Cozzutto:** Smartphone video making can help the cultural sector optimise its shrinking resources, for sure! On the project's website you can find and download for free our manual of smartphone video making. We want people that work in the cultural sector, as well as those who work in the European institutions, to stop being afraid of going out of the box: DO IT YOURSELF! Sometimes you cannot do it all by yourself: a good website or good video require the intervention of a professional.

However, in many other occasions you simply need a smartphone, a lot of patience, and a bit of creativity.

**ENCATC: How do you see your project having an impact on major political developments such as UK's EU referendum?**

**Alessandro Cozzutto:** The Brexit is the dramatic consequence of a majority of people not having the right or the possibility to speak for themselves. Because of a cynical – and by no means wrong – political calculation by David Cameron, the UK as well as continental citizens were forced whether to take the side of bureaucratic Brussels or to despise the democratic value of international union. However, people's opinion on this subject is much more diverse.

We all want a better European Union, don't we? So, what can a common citizen do? Well, I can take my phone and describe what better union I have in mind. That does not change the world, but it forces me to frame a political idea and to be accountable for it! Anyone, even my mother, can use a smartphone to record a video and speak out. Each contribution to social dialogue, even the smallest ones, can help fight the indifference that is so typical of modern cities, in Europe and elsewhere. This form of dialogue is pivotal because social exclusion explains violence and terrorism much better than religion or any other 'culturalist' thesis.

**ENCATC: What is your educational and professional background?**

**Alessandro Cozzutto:** As the long and boring answers that I have given so far may suggest, I have a PhD in Political Science and International Relations. However, I am much more interested in sharing rather than accumulating knowledge. So, after defending my dissertation, I have gathered my passions and launched my own business: "Slash Prod," an out-of-the-box communication agency. Digital communications have the power to connect people, which embodies not only a deep political message but – more importantly – a deeply revolutionary political meaning.

**ENCATC: What skills do you have that you think have been particularly useful for you to successfully launch Once Upon a Time in Anderlecht and carry it forward?**

Once upon a Time in Anderlecht is a side project, so I had to make a lot of noise, mostly by myself, in the

time that was not taken by our clients. I guess that my technical skills made all this possible. However, a project like this is not about making a bunch of cool videos. It's more about building relations of trust and intimacy with the people to whom you ask to share his or her personal story. And from this point of view, I think one can only improve.

**ENCATC: What had you wished you had known before you started this project?**

**Alessandro Cozzutto:** When I wrote the project, I thought that the opportunity of learning how to make cool videos with a smartphone would have been a self-evident reason to join the initiative. However, I soon realised how difficult it is to get people's true attention when one wants to take new forms of communication out of a strictly technical domain.

**ENCATC: For the project, how did you go about getting startup funds and how did you use them?**

**Alessandro Cozzutto:** I have started working on this project after getting the support of the Roi Baudoin Foundation. They are amazing, they fund every year a lot of social and cultural projects. Without them, I would have never had the possibility to give my time to such a challenging project.

I recommend anyone in Brussels to start looking for funds via this kind of institutions or similar ones in their own countries. I also tried with other institutions and companies, because I wanted to increase the project's impact, and I will try again now that the project is almost over, as it's easier to "sell" a cultural project once that it is made rather than when it is still a piece of paper only.

**ENCATC: What was the most difficult challenge to starting the project and how did you overcome it?**

**Alessandro Cozzutto:** Well, when I wrote the project, I thought of smartphones for filming, not for editing. I was not aware of the existence of smartphone applications for video-editing yet, so I was afraid that I would have not been able to find enough laptop computers for all participants! And once I found out about these apps, the challenge became to find the participants! Lucky me, now I can count on the support of local associations (Casi-uo, Beeldenstorm, Boutique Culturelle), institutions (the Fine Arts Academy and the Resistance Museum Anderlecht), and even a member of the European Parliament, [Angelika Mlinar](#).

**ENCATC: What advice would you give to others looking to start their own project?**

**Alessandro Cozzutto:** I would say that starting is the most important step. I have lost so many battles since I have started freelancing, but each loss gave me the necessary knowledge and expertise to overcome more important battles that came afterwards.

Beginning is always tough, failing even more, but isn't it just pathetic to spend all your life copying someone else??? Isn't our life simply too short to avoid trying??? So, my advice is to refrain from looking for good reasons, convenience, or social approval of what you want to do. If you feel that this is the right thing to do, just do it. And in case failure comes, just embrace it. Losers are the new winners.

**ENCATC: What keeps you motivated and going?**

**Alessandro Cozzutto:** We all have dream jobs in mind. My dream job was some vague idea of creativity and freedom, rather than money or reputation. Once Upon a Time in Anderlecht was an audiovisual-sociological experience that I was really keen on doing, because of my background and because – like many others – I could anticipate Charlie Hebdo's attack way before it took place. One year before, I have launched this crazy digital campaign called "House of Cats," which was the European version of House of Cards with cats in the place of Kevin Spacey, because I thought it was a good way to make fun of the Eurobubble [\[watch the trailer\]](#)

Do you want a dream job? Make it true, then! People wonder: "what should I do with my life?". As a European, I read the answer in our common history. People like Albert Camus or Pier Paolo Pasolini told us to revolt against a system that says you cannot be happy without a stable job, and that you cannot have a stable job if you are not obedient and respectful. Our common history keeps me motivated. Our human destiny keeps me going.

See some examples here: [www.facebook.com/SlashProd/videos/](http://www.facebook.com/SlashProd/videos/)



## Once Upon a time in Anderlecht

The project addresses small groups (3-5) of teenagers from Anderlecht and aims at teaching them basic notions of video making via smartphone. The acquired skills will allow them to collect the point of view of the older generations with respect to the last 50 years of change in the neighbourhood. A website will turn the raw material in a digital historical archive of the city's life and transformations. Subject to availability of additional funds, the raw footage will allow Slash Prod to edit a professional 15/30-min documentary of the initiative and additional communication with the goal of promoting the circulation, the impact, and the copyright-free replica of the project.

For young European professionals, Midi station is the low cost arrival to the capital of the continent, for many people who live in Brussels it is the departure to Paris or London. For some, what is beyond the station can always become a real estate exploitation, for others what is beyond can be discovered thanks to the mediation of arts, sport, and habits, rather than rhetoric and filters. Turkish and Moroccan communities have filled the red brick buildings where the families of Italian miners used to live, but the logic of biases and the lack of encounter can cross generations. The project aims at giving young and less young people concrete tools that allow them to tell themselves, out of filters, the neighbourhood history. For this history would tell the present of this city. That would be a great achievement already.

In a complex modern city, such as the capital of Belgium and Europe, multiple identities live together, most of the times on the basis of a mutual indifference. Video making is the most powerful instrument to talk - within today digital environment - about life beyond the digital world. If the core of this communication project lies in Anderlecht, its motivations and main goal is to reach and connect people beyond any geographical, social and cultural division line.



Learn more and read the description of Quatia here: [www.slashprod.eu/](http://www.slashprod.eu/)