
COMMON BODY/IES CHARTER

CIRCOSTRADA CHARTER ON THE COMMONS

Introduction

The Circostrada Charter on the Commons is the result of a collaborative process between members of the Common body/ies internal committee, with support from the Circostrada coordination team, and facilitated externally by Chiara Organtini.

Developed over the course of 2023-2024, the Charter sets out the initial parameters for the network - as well as its affiliate members and all actors involved in its activities - to take concrete and measurable actions that enhance the solidarity and mutuality of Circostrada's resources and membership. In doing so, the Charter lays the groundwork for an ongoing open dialogue about our shared responsibility for a stronger and generous community of performing arts professionals. The network strongly stands in favour of shared-responsibility between all players from the field and will strive to foster solidarity, mutuality, and reciprocity within its international ecosystem.

The network focuses on the commons as a means of fostering collaboration, equitable access, and sustainable management of resources related to contemporary circus and outdoor arts, in order to stimulate innovation and collective growth. Being part of a larger capitalistic system, Circostrada is aware of the utopia of being a fully democratic community and a collective with equal rights. However, in recognition of the ongoing injustices and disparities inherited from colonial and geopolitical history, the network is vigilant to not reproduce harmful power relations in its international collaborations. It will strive to foster a common ground and a culture of reciprocity through its governance, programmes, and activities. The commons should be inherent to any network and must be at the heart of Circostrada's objectives.

The suggestions and best practices presented in this Charter shall be recognised and approved by all members, artists, festival organisers, participants, and other guests involved in Circostrada's programme of activities. As a European network, however, Circostrada appreciates the great diversity of political environments and cultural contexts that its members operate within. This analysis also implies an understanding that its members have varying levels of access to information and necessary public infrastructure, and that meeting our defined goals carries an unequal burden for some actors.

The Circostrada Charter on the Commons is a work in progress. The internal Common body/ies Committee will meet annually to assess the network's progress according to the stated objectives, and to enrich the content of the Charter.

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1. Sharing resources

What to focus on:

- Facilitating the dissemination of best practices across various domains including production, project management, programming, distribution, and stakeholder communication
- Establishing a secure and collaborative platform for knowledge sharing to foster a culture of innovation and holistic sustainability

What can the network do about it:

- Enhance the resources section of our network website, focusing initially on toolkits and funding guides
- Diversify content and perspectives by incorporating a broader range of toolkits and practices, while considering the varied profiles of our members, from small organisations to large institutions, to avoid perpetuating unequal power dynamics
- Foster a culture of reciprocity among members by creating time and spaces where partners can mentor and support each other, promoting solidarity, and collectively addressing operational gaps

2. Connecting space and developing (transnational) bridges

What to focus on:

- Connect or reconnect (post covid) global areas (Europe, Africa, America, Asia, Australia)
- Disseminate regionally what we learn in the international dimension
- Acknowledge differences and enforce solidarity (among artforms, organisations, individuals)
- Break the “bubble”: learn to create bridges with people from diverse backgrounds

What can the network do about it:

- Forge partnerships with existing international networks to facilitate increased interaction, connection, and knowledge sharing both within and outside the EU
- Invite members to bring awareness and facilitate, in their countries, the dissemination of Circostrada initiatives and resources
- Foster interdisciplinary collaboration by breaking down “silos” and promoting exchanges with other fields and networks
- Extend invitations to groups of organisations based in the same country to join as a consortium (no legal body needed) in case they do not meet individual admission criteria (rules set by the network)
- Supplement physical mobility with regular and accessible online meetings and events, open to both members and non-members, to provide consistent opportunities for connection and collaboration.

3. Publicness

What to focus on:

- Engage in critical reflection on the civic use of artistic practices
- Assess the impact of these practices on the communities and territories of our members
- Recognise and leverage the significance and influence of cultural policies

What can the network do about it:

- Engage members to foster cultural engagement beyond traditional enthusiasts through processes of co-creation and co-ownership and encourage their audiences to be active participants
- Highlight cultural practices that utilise public spaces strategically to promote social change, while counteracting urban gentrification
- Enhance facilitation skills and tools to attune to emergent needs and priorities within communities and audiences
- Advocate for an evaluation framework that emphasises on qualitative indicators, to avoid falling into the trap of solely quantitative metrics, recognizing the limitations of a data-centric culture

4. Artistic development and creative processes

What to focus on:

- Supporting emerging needs and questions in artistic production
- Fighting precarity in the field
- Redefining programming and producing as sustainable and integrated
- Encouraging and supporting projects that are outside any public support or markets
- Understanding that treating culture as a product takes away its political power

What can the network do about it:

- Highlight new formats and collaborative approaches as a horizontal system, fostering communities of interest that include artists and organisations
- Encourage collaboration with artists on equal footing, overcoming hierarchical structures by establishing protocols, contracts, or access arrangements that prioritise their needs and voices
- Introduce practices as long-term residencies that immerse artists in the local context, facilitating the exchange of practices and the creation of extended formats beyond traditional performances
- Strengthen performing arts ecosystem where partners collaborate to develop joint touring projects or exchange visits for the same artists, moving away from the paradigm of exclusivity and national premieres toward collective growth and collaboration

5. Communication

What to focus on:

- Strengthen external communication efforts to convey identities and values of the network effectively to external stakeholders.
- Enhance internal communication channels to facilitate seamless information flow and collaboration within the organisation.

What can the network do about it:

- Enhance online communication accessibility, especially in alignment with the Circostrada Diversity Charter, by incorporating neurodivergent communication tools, insights from artists with disabilities, and against eurocentric approaches.
- Diversify communication formats to broaden audience reach and engagement, such as written publications, blog articles, podcasts and video interviews.
- Implement comprehensive online resources about contemporary circus and outdoor arts, leveraging existing archives such as Circostrada's with expanded coverage of national contexts and potential translations into multiple languages (through digital tools).
- Strengthen internal connections through regular digital meetings and small group discussions aimed at fostering knowledge sharing without too strict agendas.
- Explore a "rotation" system where members take turns managing social media communication channels, promoting a shared ownership model and diverse perspectives.

6. Resources

Informative website, encyclopaedic and multi perspectives

- www.onthecommons.org/about-commons/index.html
- iasc-commons.org/about-commons/

Current development oriented mostly to cultural ecosystem

- culturalfoundation.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Commons.-From-Dream-to-Reality.pdf
- ccqo.eu
- casco.art/activity/pascal-gielen-and-nico-dockx-commonism-a-new-aesthetics-of-the-real/
- www.researchgate.net/publication/343385764_When_Commons_Becomes_Official_Politics_Exploring_the_Relationship_between_Commons_Politics_and_Art_in_Napels

Practical tools for organisations to rethink themselves according to commons

- www.reinventingorganizations.com
- ccqo.eu
- adriennemareebrown.net/book/emergent-strategy/
- www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fgxrd

Internal Common body/ies Committee members

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ELEONORA ARIOLFO - Federazione Nazionale Arti in Strada
RACHEL CLARE - Crying Out Loud
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ARTUR GHUKASYAN - High Fest
MATTEO GIOVANARDI - Dinamico Festival
MARIA GIULIA GUIDUCCI - Ass. Tutti Matti per Colorno
KATE HARTOCH - Circus City
ANTONIA KUZMANIC - ROOM 100
JARKKO LEHMUS - CIRKO – Centre for New Circus
TELMA LUIS - Imaginarius
LUCY MEDLYCOTT - Irish Street Arts, Circus & Spectacle network (ISACS)
JULIA SANCHEZ AJA - CEDACIRC / MICC
HEIDI JOHANNE ENGSIG - Helsingor Teater/Passage Festival
MICHIKO TANAKA - Setouchi Circus Factory
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External experts

CHIARA ORGANTINI - Lavanderia a Vapore
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