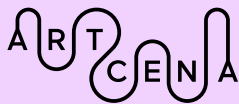**CS LAB**

AN INSIGHT INTO CO-DESIGN & DESIGN THINKING METHODOLOGY

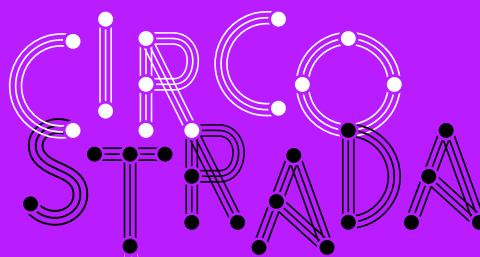How can we work together in an efficient, innovative and harmonious manner? What thoughts can foster the success and sustainability of a project? Following the CS Lab#2, a workshop held in Fossano (Italy) on June 29th 2017, this publication presents a set of tools based on the concept of Co-design and Design thinking. These are processes that imply a collective dialogue, creativity and the inclusion of multiple perspectives, resulting in innovative solutions based around common values and narratives. This publication describes a "hands-on" and practical approach, built on the implementation of specific tools and a methodology favouring the human, applied to the context of the production of circus and street arts.

This report was written by Andrew Bullen and edited by Circostrada

CIRCO STRADA
European Network Circus and Street ArtS

ARTCENA

Since 2003, Circostrada Network has been working to develop and structure the fields of circus and street arts in Europe and beyond. With more than 100 members from over 30 countries, it helps building a sustainable future for these sectors by empowering cultural players through activities in observation and research, professional exchanges, advocacy, capacity-building and information.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PARTNERS

Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

MINISTÈRE
DE LA CULTURE

ARTCENA

MIRABILIA

On 29th June 2017, in the course of the Circostrada General Meeting and Mirabilia Festival in Fossano, members of the Circostrada network participated in a Co-design / Design thinking[1] workshop, led by Andrew Bullen and prepared together with Janine Huizenga from Creative Cooperative, as part of the CS Lab work group. This report aims to present a general overview of the workshop, its methodology, results and conclusions, and also present the tools in such a way that they may be used again, either by the participants of the workshop or by those who were not able to participate directly, but who would also like to explore the potential of Co-design and Design thinking.

[1] Co-design and Design thinking are not synonymous. Co-design is a collaborative process, in the course of which participants also use aspects and tools of the Design thinking methodology.

Aim of the Workshop

The aim of the workshop was to enable Circostrada members to work together more effectively and innovatively in a way, which would also help define and promote their future goals within their own organisations and the overall network. Because of the open and collaborative nature of Co-design, there was also an implicit understanding that this methodology and practice could also be used for the same benefits with other stakeholders, such as artists, audience, government or educators, in the production of circus and street theatre.

Context: Follow-on from the Scenario Planning Workshop

This CS Lab event in Fossano followed a previous Scenario Planning workshop, which was held in May 2016. Scenario Planning is an analytical and strategic planning method, developed primarily by the Shell company, targeted towards enabling organisations to plan for the future on the basis of a broad examination of future trends, variables, relative certainties and uncertainties. In general, such a Scenario Planning workshop follows a formal sequence:

- Decide on key thematic area or question
- Set time and scope of analysis
- Map trend and driving forces
- Find key uncertainties
- Identify extremes: build xy-diagram
- Build and narrate the scenarios (2x2 matrix)
- Evaluate and test scenarios, research, develop decision process

During the May 2016 CS-Lab workshop, participants noted several driving forces and variables, which were considered significant for the future of circus and street theatre production. These included such factors as driving forces:

- Digitisation
- Climate change
- Aging population
- Violent geopolitical context

Variables / Uncertainties

- Labour deregulation
- Legal and safety constraints
- Right-wing government
- Citizen empowerment
- Long distance cooperation and mobility (technology)
- Less human interaction (technology)
- Technical ubiquity
- Energy crisis
- Intergenerational knowledge sharing / less formal educational system
- Life-long learning
- Local economy / global economy
- Diversified incomes resources / fewer long-time jobs

It should be noted that the uncertainties often contain extreme opposites i.e. labour deregulation against more legal and safety constraints on account of the violent geopolitical context or more long-distance cooperation against less human interaction as a result of technology. It is within the axes of these extremes that possible scenarios are created as a basis for future strategic planning.

While the Scenario Planning method and the Co-design / Design thinking methodology have different aims and use quite different tools, it is also possible to use the future trends and variables identified in the Scenario Planning process as aspects of research which may be considered when creating the solution-oriented Co-design future scenarios.

Co-design / Design thinking: principles and methods

Co-design / Design thinking is a strongly inclusive, formal method of creative collaboration to build innovative solutions for an improved future.

Co-design / Design thinking is a strongly inclusive, formal method of creative collaboration to build innovative solutions for an improved future. Fundamental principles of Co-design may be defined as follows:

● Co-design / Design thinking is a strategic choice and influences an organisation's strategy

● Co-design / Design thinking implies the participation of all key stakeholders and is inclusive

● Co-design / Design thinking implies that all stakeholders are "active and creative agents" rather than mere beneficiaries or users

● Co-design / Design thinking implies multiple perspectives

● Co-design / Design thinking implies collective dialogue and collective creativity

● Co-design / Design thinking implies shared ownership, process and outcome

● Co-design / Design thinking implies shared values

● Co-design / Design thinking implies a shared narrative

● Co-design / Design thinking implies a shared "language" and "voice"

As opposed to the broad strategic base of the scenario planning method, the Co-design / Design thinking approach is more immediate and solution-focused. By considering both present and future conditions and parameters of an issue, specific "pain points" or issues may be identified and alternative solutions may be explored simultaneously.

The Co-design / Design thinking methodology is a process of building up ideas, values and perspectives, more focused around the "human", empathy, intuition and inspiration rather than the purely analytic, functional or rational. The "flow" of the process is built around the following structure:

The Co-design / Design thinking methodology is a process of "building up" ideas, values and perspectives, more focused around the "human", empathy, intuition, and inspiration rather than the purely analytic, functional or rational.

● Explore: empathize / research / understand / define - stakeholders, needs, aspirations

● Create: ideate / brainstorm / envision / narrate

● Prototype: building and testing

In the following chapter, the individual tools are described for the exploration and creation phases within this process, and the use and results of the individual tools within the Fossano workshop are discussed.

For the purposes of the workshop, the participants formed groups of four members. All the exercises, except for the ice-breaker, were performed within the groups.

Fabulous Beasts ("ice-breaker")

Fabulous beasts is a classic "ice breaker" exercise. Such an exercise is designed as an informal means of introducing all the participants to each other, promoting "out of the box" creativity and a positive attitude towards effecting change. The exercise also encourages the active participation of all, the sharing of ideals, and thus leads naturally into creative group work. As such, it is an ideal opener for a Co-design / Design thinking workshop. It is also a simple exercise, which is always easily understood by participants who are sometimes still nervous or apprehensive at the beginning of the workshop, and, despite the "serious" sharing of ideals, generally generates humour and a creative spirit:

● The participants are asked to draw on a post-it a picture of herself/himself as a fabulous beast

● The pictures also make clear the supernatural and magical powers which she or he would possess. They also list these powers

● All the participants then present their individual "beasts" to the whole group, describing their powers (if not obvious in the drawings) and saying how they would use these powers to change the world

The Fabulous Beasts exercise worked well in opening up the Fossano workshop, producing some imaginative monsters, strong ideals and ingenious magical powers.

One interesting question, which arose, was whether it is useful to use this exercise with a group of people who already know each other, for example colleagues within an organisation. The answer would almost certainly be "yes", as co-workers often have no insight into the ideals, creativity or imagination of their colleagues.

Example from a Fabulous Beast exercise in Tbilisi, Georgia
© Creative Cooperative

Appreciative Inquiry

The first group exercise was an "Appreciative Inquiry". This exercise, developed initially by David L. Cooperrider, focuses on the reflection and inquiry of the participants as to the best of "what is" in their experience, before imagining what "could be". This ensures a positive approach towards an issue, by examining what has already been successfully achieved, rather than focusing on the negative aspects of a problem. In the same way as in a Socratic dialogue, participants are encouraged to see the potential for a solution within their own experience and knowledge rather than having to consult external sources.

The Appreciative Inquiry can be carried out in the following way:

● The teams divide into pairs

● Each participant interviews her or his partner regarding their best experience in a particular domain, and which factors made this experience so special and successful

● Each participant then relates briefly to the plenum the best experiences of their partners, and the decisive factors for those experiences

● The results are reviewed to determine whether there are any shared decisive factors in creating a strong experience of success with the particular domain

Within the Fossano workshop, the Appreciative Inquiry questions were as follows: What was the best circus/street arts production you have ever seen? Why?
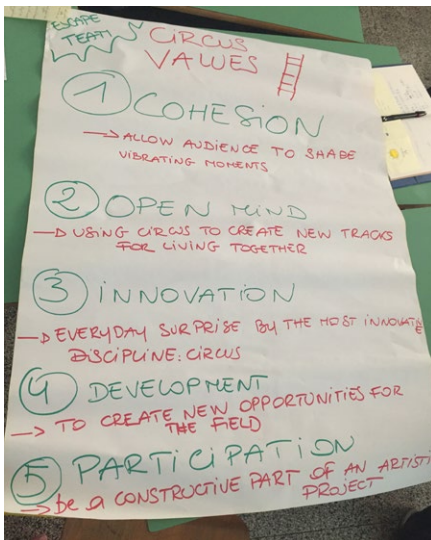
The answers were enlightening. Following is a summary of some of the main reasons, perceived by the participants, for a strong and successful circus or street arts production experience:

● Simple but at the same time powerful

● Strong audience participation

● Creation of new relationships between producers, artists and audience

● The power of stories and narrative, both for the artists and audience

● The power of location

● Addressing big questions with humour

Nuage Vert: an often cited and typically inspiring example of strong experiential impact in the area of awareness in environmental protection - simple yet powerful.
©HeHe

Value Ladder

© Chloé Béron

Strong shared values within any project or organisation create a shared belief, trust, passion, and commitment. They form the basis and touchstone for the creation of a shared vision, and consequent sustainability in a team with diverse perspectives and experiences.

The value ladder is a tool, which can be used effectively to negotiate and define shared values within a team. The exercise is used in the following way:

● Each member of the team of 4 writes down her or his 5 main values around their task, project, or organisation

● The team then splits into 2 pairs. Each pair will then have 10 values between them. Each pair then negotiates until they agree on 5 values, which they both share

● The team then comes together. As two pairs, they will have 10 values between them. The team members then negotiate until they agree on 5 values, which they all share

● The team then prioritises these values from 1 to 5 in order of importance

● The team then presents these values to the other participants in the workshop, explaining the reasons for their choice and the significance of each value

Strong shared values within any project or organisation create a shared belief, trust, passion, and commitment. They form the basis and touchstone for the creation of a shared vision, and consequent sustainability in a team with diverse perspectives and experiences.

Within the Fossano workshop, the teams were asked to write down their values in producing circus or street arts.

The teams negotiated and defined their values as follow:

ESCAPE TEAM

● Cohesion
Allow audience to share vibrant moment

● Open Mind
Using circus to create new tracks for living together

● Innovation
Everyday surprise by the most innovative discipline: circus

● Development
Create new opportunities for the field

● Participation
Be a constructive part of an artistic project

THE MED TEAM

● Flexibility

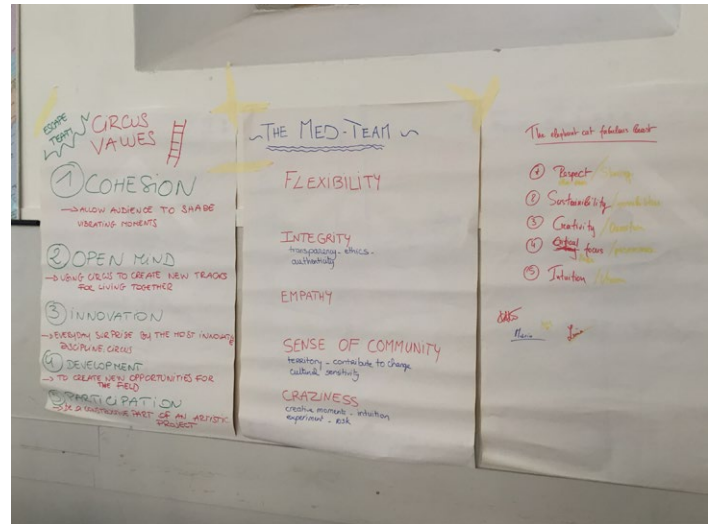● Integrity
Transparency - ethics - authenticity

● Empathy

● Sense of community
Territory - cultural sensitivity

● Craziness
Creative moments - intuition - experiment - risk

© Chloé Béron

ELEPHANT/CAT/FABULOUS BEAST TEAM

● Respect

● Sustainability

● Creativity

● Critical focus

● Intuition

Stakeholder Mapping

Any project or organisation generally has multiple stakeholders, who either contribute to, or are affected by the work of that organisation. Ultim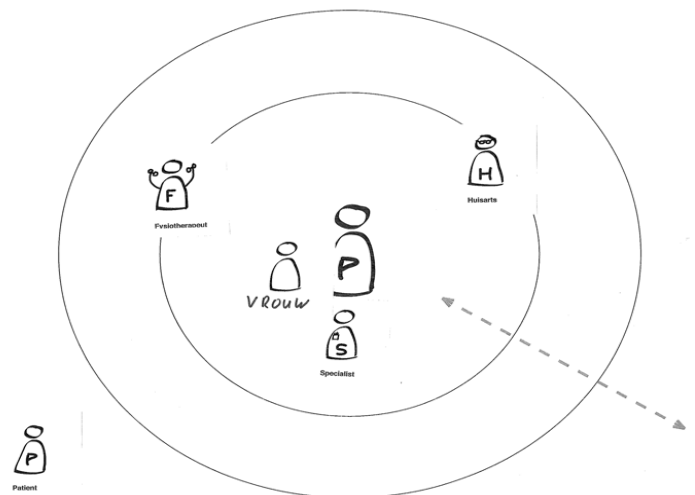ate success and sustainability of any development venture therefore means understanding all stakeholders, their identity, roles, needs and significance for any project in progress.

Ultimate success and sustainability of any development venture therefore means understanding all stakeholders, their identity, roles, needs and significance for any project in progress.

In the Stakeholder Mapping exercise, the teams create a visual representation of the stakeholders involved, their distance from the central group and their inter-relationships. The teams are given the following instructions:
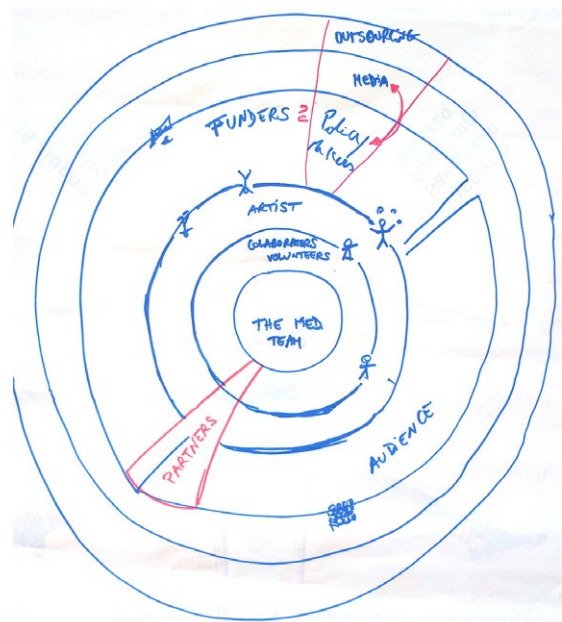
● Define and map your stakeholders, both internal and external and make the connections: How are they linked? How do they impact and influence each other and your work? Explore the interests and priorities of your stakeholders.

● In which stage of your work and creative process are they important? What will they bring and get back?

● How could you "trigger" these people into collaborating? What would be the mutual benefits for both sides?

The diagram shows a simple stakeholder map for a hospital patient's circle of trust, with relative proximity of spouse, specialists, physiotherapist, and family doctor
© Waag Society

In the Fossano workshop, the teams defined their stakeholders and their relations in the following way:

© Creative Cooperative

© Creative Cooperative

In addition to the Stakeholder canvas, other forms of mapping were mentioned, which can be used effectively in the Co-design process. These included memory mapping and emotional mapping, both very useful for recording the emotive impact of a particular situation or location.

Examples of emotional and memory mapping from a Co-design workshop in Seine-Saint-Denis
© Creative Cooperative

Persona

Before a narrative can be built around a target group, a "persona" must be created to represent that group. Otherwise, the group remains a vague stereotype, with no real human identity or characteristics. Although a persona is a fictional character, it is based on observations, research and interviews with an existing person or several persons who represent the specific target group.

These representative characteristics are captured in 1-2 page descriptions that include behavior patterns, goals, skills, attitudes and environment, with a few fictional personal details to bring the persona to life.

As the focus of this workshop was to enable circus and street theatre producers to work more creatively and effectively, we focused on the persona of the producer. Given more time, we could have focused on other target groups, such as the artists, audience or sponsors.

A representation of the ESCAPE team's persona, as a basis for a narrative around the circus or street arts producer, is show below:

Persona of Céline

- Age: 46
- Sex: female
- Marital state: in partnership
- Place of birth: small city

Before a narrative can be built around a target group, a "persona" must be created to represent that group. Otherwise, the group remains a vague stereotype, with no real human identity or characteristics.

- Residence: big city
- Cultural background: other artistic disciplines
- Education: high level
- Profession: circus producer
- Personality traits: hard worker, passionate
- Interests and/or active hobbies: music, yoga, cooking
- Motivation (in life, what drives him/her): artistic creation, recovering from not being artist herself
- Aims in life (what does he/she aim to achieve?): change something
- Needs (does he/she have specific wishes/needs?): be useful
- Skills (does he/she has unique skills?): convincing power
- Difficulties / Frustrations (physical, psychological, social, cultural, economical): no physical skills
- Behaviour (character, moods, relations): curious, sensitive, open-minded
- Media usage (mobile, smart phone, computer, TV, other): smartphone, computer, classic use

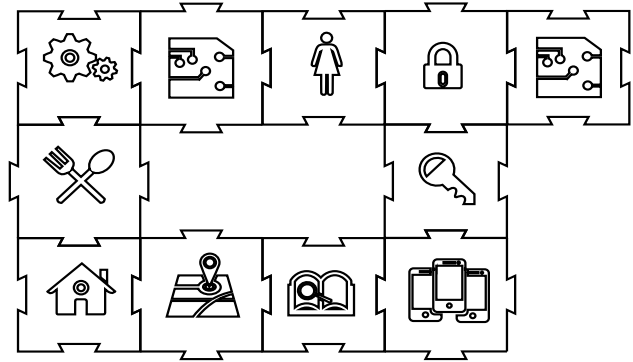With the creation of the personae, the workshop effectively ended, as we had simply run out of time!

Nevertheless, a description of the two final exercises is included in this report, in order to provide a complete overview of the tools, which can be used with the process.

Day in the Life / Journey

A "day in the life" or "journey" is a scenario in which you describe a typical day in the life of your persona, more particularly in relation to her or his challenges. What is her/his experience: what is a positive experience that day, what goes wrong (why and when), or is it a continuous difficulty in their daily lives?

This story then allows the participant to pinpoint and define challenges, difficulties or frustrations in the daily lives of their organisation or target group so that they can subsequently create design possibilities and interventions to address these issues.

This story then allows the participant to pinpoint and define challenges, difficulties or frustrations in the daily lives of their organisation or target group so that they can subsequently create design possibilities and interventions to address these issues.

Visual icons can also be used to prompt and encourage the narrative creation
© Creative Cooperative / Waag Society

Storytelling is a powerful means of expression. For those participants, who are unused to creating stories around their personae, Creative Cooperative has developed the use of visual icons to facilitate the narrative process. Over time, a large collection of icons has been developed, ranging from more general emotions or situations, to specific icons sets around such areas as the environment, transport or inclusive living. Of course, these visual icons need not be used in all cases; some teams are quite capable of creating excellent narratives without aids. The icons can and should be used as additional prompts. The creation of both visual and written narratives should be encouraged.

Example of a day in the life / journey around education
and opportunity, presented by a team in Cairo, Egypt
© Creative Cooperative

Future Scenarios / Storyboarding

After the "Day in the Life" or "Journey" narrative, the participants, through collective brainstorming and "how might we" questions regarding the particular issues, move to a future scenario which:

● Addresses the challenges / pain points faced on a daily basis

● Integrates the needs, aspirations and trends around the target group and stakeholders

● Shows the positive impact of proposed improvements in the future

For this exercise, a six-panel storyboard is generally created (although more panels can be used), describing in narrative sequence the future scenario with your proposed improvements or solutions. Again, the visual icons may be used to prompt the narrative.

CONCLUSIONS

The workshop closed towards 7pm, having made full use of the ca. 4 hours available. Generally, we would recommend 2 to 3 days for a full workshop to produce tangible results, which can be developed and implemented. However, despite the short and intense nature of the workshop, good results were achieved - best practices noted, common values negotiated and defined, stakeholders and their relationships identified, the traits of the persona of the circus producer discussed and described. The basis was laid for a well-founded narration of the challenges and "pain-points" of the participants in their work as circus and street arts producers, and the subsequent creation of future scenarios solutions, which would address needs and aspirations for the future. Co-design / Design thinking offers an inclusive, solution-oriented, and pragmatic way forward.

A complete set of tools is now available for the process. This palette can be extended further to include additional mapping exercises to deepen empathy and understanding, cultural probing for greater insight into group practices and dynamics, and even Socratic dialogues to strengthen the multi-perspective approach. We recommend that the tools are now used and practiced further, both to strengthen more effective cooperation within the circus and street art producer community and also to include partners, such as artists, audience, politicians, sponsors and educators within the future-oriented creative collaborative process.

Co-design / Design thinking offers an inclusive, solution-oriented and pragmatic way forward.
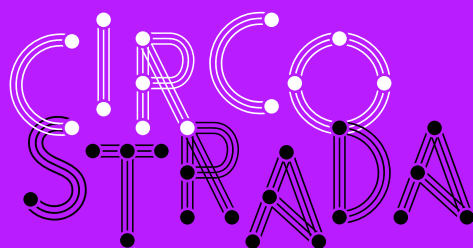
July 2017

CS LAB

Find all the publications by Circostrada as well as many other online resources and news from the network and its members on:
www. circostrada.org

CIRCO STRADA

European Network
Circus and Street ArtS