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STRONGER ARTS
AND CULTURAL
ORGANISATIONS
FOR A GREATER
SOCIAL IMPACT

CREATIVE
LENSES
CASE STUDY
**LE PLUS
PETIT CIRQUE
DU MONDE**

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Interviewee Eleférios Kechagioglou, Director

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Creative Lenses is a four-year project, running from 2015 to 2019, that seeks to make arts and cultural organisations more resilient and sustainable by improving their business models and developing their long-term strategic and innovation capacities.

To find out more about Creative Lenses and its publications, visit www.creativelenses.eu



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CREATIVE LENSES PARTNER ORGANISATIONS



LE PLUS PETIT CIRQUE DU MONDE (PPCM)

Centre des arts du cirque
et des cultures émergentes

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Location | Bagneux, France |
| Website | www.lepluspetitcirquedumonde.fr |
| Vision | Developing an economic and social vision of the performing arts, as a force driving individual and community changes and positive social, economic and urban transformation in disadvantaged areas. |
| Organisation type | Association (non-profit, charity) |
| Main activities | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Social: bringing people together across the community through art to create positive change2. Artistic education: teaching circus (through an amateur school, training for pre-professional students, training for disabled people etc.)3. Artistic research, experimentation and production: hosting artists' residencies, supporting young talent and encouraging artistic innovation, producing local as well as international artistic projects, and presenting shows including an annual festival – Hip Cirq. |

Introduction

1992 - PPCM was created by inhabitants from Bagneux, a suburban town close to Paris, France, sharing circus arts and urban culture, to transform daily life, the future of children and neighbourhoods.

1998 - The administrators and Kader Belbachir, the first permanent member of the association, created holiday centres training young people in circus arts near their homes. They also developed the first 'Baby Circus' classes for children under 4 years old.

2007 - Appointed director, Eleférios Kechagioglou launches an international focus for PPCM working with partners such as the European network CARAVAN, a network of circus schools with social vocation.

2011 - PPCM expands its projects for community groups across Bagneux e.g. within prisons. Work starts building a venue as a home for the company and a resource for the community.

2015 - Inauguration of the new spaces as part of the Hip Cirq Festival.

Key income streams

1. Earned income (35%) – e.g. fees for those attending the artistic school (families on high annual incomes pay, others don't), from activities such as workshops, and from audiences for performances.
2. Public funding (50%) – from traditional arts subsidy, but also from urban regeneration grants, social development funds, EU funding etc.
3. Private subsidy (15%) – this tends to have a philanthropic rather than a sponsorship focus to support their social activities. Subsidy comes largely from corporate foundations such as SCNF Foundation. This is an area of expansion at PPCM, focusing on establishing three-year grant relationships.

Turnover 2017

EUR 1.8 million

Surplus/deficit 2017

Surplus EUR 43,723

Number of employees and volunteers

80 employees that represent 32 full-time equivalent because of the number of artists involved. Putting aside artistic contracts, they have 15 part-time and 25 full-time, and 2 volunteers.



The drivers for change

There have been three core drivers for the growth and development at PPCM:

1. Change designed to enhance their social vision: 40,000 people live in Bagneux, an area that is underprivileged with 75% in public housing. There is an ongoing need to evolve and grow, to produce new services to support the socio-economic development of the area.
2. Change designed to retain artistic quality: a few years ago, productions would have had 9-10 week runs. The cost of producing has escalated, and it's now only feasible to have 4-5 week runs, PPCM needed to find alternative ways to finance high-quality artistic productions.
3. Change designed to drive financial sustainability: PPCM realised that it was no longer viable to assume that public funding alone will always continue to subsidise this kind of work. There was a need to diversify income streams to future proof the organisation.

The solution

There is no gap between artistic work and communities at PPCM. They don't produce work for the community, they work with them. Showing work in progress, developing young creatives, building relationships overtime. Art is the tool that brings people together. This has built trust and support. It is enabling them to identify and develop relevance, not waiting for the public to come

to the venue, but facilitating change and making genuine links across the community.

In turn this has made them highly desirable partners for a range of other organisations and funders. PPCM has become a highly networked organisation. It works with partners across many industries and sectors to broaden its reach and enhance its impact. This includes work with schools (and special needs schools), universities, prisons, other arts and cultural organisations, corporate companies, etc.

The implementation

1. Establishing a home for the company: building a venue that is central to the community has been an essential part of the company's development. This provided visual evidence that change was occurring. They can now 'host people at our place'. There is an open-door policy and anyone can come in, any time, to use the foyer, to meet for coffee and connect with others. This took 6-7 years to realise including attracting funding.
2. Developing the team: there is a collaborative, entrepreneurial approach to ensure that artistic development is combined with community facilitation, education, and social development. There is a voluntary Board of Directors including people from the local area.
3. Developing the organisational culture: PPCM see their role as facilitators and enablers. This requires a certain type of personality and skillset. Recruitment and training practices were adapted to identify the right mix of people, including

looking outside the arts e.g., to people who had previously worked in areas such as social business. This brought in essential skills such as financial skillsets, as well as bringing in different perspectives, broadening the horizons of the team and inspiring new ways of thinking and working.

4. Ambition: PPCM has adopted a start-up mindset. A target of 50% growth felt ambitious until they realised that this was a tiny aim in comparison to start-up organisations. An international focus has enabled them to think big, for example they are currently developing activities with partners in the Caribbean asking how their model of incubating and facilitating artistic experiences might enable socio-economic benefits for people there.

The results

PPCM not only produces high quality artistic experiences, it also adds value to communities.

Establishing the venue was a turning point. They are no longer just a cultural organisation, but are now a place within the community, enabling them to provide activities and community space in an area that previously had very little.

Their work has social, economic and physical impacts for people:

- enabling opportunities that local people would not have otherwise had, opportunities to be an audience, to participate, to learn, to connect, to find work (there are 25 permanent

- members of staff including 7-8 from the local area),
- providing opportunities for physical exercise and fun,
- providing access to high quality circus arts, hip hop dance, and emerging urban practices,
- enabling social mixing with people travelling to attend performances and workshops,
- boosting the image of Bagneux, and developing a sense of pride in the area that was unimaginable 10 years ago.

Evidencing the impact of the organisation is an area that PPCM would like to expand over the coming years. Evaluation studies, as well as personal stories and photos from their projects provide evidence of the social, economic and artistic impacts, enabling them to reach out to new partners and new funders.

The vision is now to work on new growth, to be an activator of socio-economic change, creating an eco-system that helps pay the investment back in the community. PPCM are considering alternative forms of finance to make this happen including social investment funding for a project establishing a circus school within a local high school, developing a social start-up incubator, etc.

Lessons Learnt and Advice

'See the reality'

Don't wait for funding cuts, search for inspiration now, try things, test things, work out what works and what doesn't, adapt your business model before any cuts happen.

'Adopt an external focus'

- Join international networks such as Trans Europe Halles and IETM (international network for contemporary performing arts) to inspire and be inspired, gain new feedback, energy and ideas,
- See cross-sector collaboration as the future, don't limit yourself, establish partnerships looking across and beyond the cultural sector,
- Consider whether you can save costs and bring in new skills by delivering some parts of the business with others,
- Ask what services can we deliver in this area? Who might benefit? What companies and people might want to get involved in making that happen?'

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julie Aldridge is a consultant specialising in business planning, marketing strategy, and organisational development. She works with a diverse mix of clients from across the arts, heritage and cultural sector. Supporting leaders and teams to devise new strategies to achieve their ambitions during a time of rapid change. Prior to becoming a consultant, Julie was Executive Director of the Arts Marketing Association (AMA) for well over a decade.





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