



Social Circus in France



Definition of Social Circus http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Circus

Social Circus refers to the growing movement toward the use of circus arts as mediums for social justice and social good. It uses alternative pedagogical tools to work with youth who are marginalized or at social or personal risk.

- The Social Circus "recognizes and values the role of art and culture as powerful agents in the education of at-risk youth, producing knowledge, and promoting the interchange of ideas and experiences, impacting society and the public organizations responsible for youth education."
- With rigorous training, interpersonal dialogue and expression, and the acquisition of goals through dedication, the social circus has the ability to alter the lives of at-risk youth. Autonomy, solidarity, self-esteem, physical-fitness, communication, and adaptability are some of the skills learned and practiced.
- While a career in the circus is one possible future to the youth who participate in the social circus, it is not the purpose. Rather, the objective is to increase self-awareness, individuality and collective unity, self-discipline and many other values through a pedagogical alternative in order to transform the vision and capabilities of at-risk youth.



Social circus in France: a new idea

- Although a lot of circus experiences involving social impact took place the last twenty years, social circus in France is a rather new idea
- French contemporary circus grew as a new art form
- The specific regime for the unemployment of the artists doesn't recognize social artistic work
- Since the establishment of the Ministry of Culture (1959), art and social action have been strictly separated. Until some years ago, artistic work on a social field has been considered as not an arts form
- Mentalities have been slowly changing the last years for 3 reasons:
 - increasing social exclusion asking for new answers
 - cultural exclusion of the French cultural model
 - recognition of artistic education as a medium for social inclusion



Social Circus experiences in France

- La Batoude, Beauvais, circus project developed by a Social Centre in a disadvantaged area <http://www.labatoude.fr/>
- L'AFCA, Aire-sur-Adour, leading institution concerning circus for people with special needs <http://www.afca-cirqueadapte.net/>
- Balthazar, Centre Régional des Arts du Cirque, social circus projects with gypsies communities <http://www.balthazar.asso.fr/>
- Le Cirque D Marches, Drôme, <http://cirque-d-marches.com/>
- L'Art d' En Faire, Ardèche, <http://lartdenfaire.over-blog.com/>
- The Serious Road Trip - Connexion Humanitaire Française, international projects involving circus and street arts <http://www.tsrt-chf.org/>
- Le Chapiteau d'Adrienne, circus group was founded in 1984, in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, <http://www.chapiteau-adrienne.fr/>
- Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde – Centre des Arts du Cirque Sud de Seine, <http://lepluspetitcirquedumonde.fr>



Politique de la Ville: the French model for social action

- **Politique de la Ville** does not mean, as a literal translation might suggest, the urban policy for a city as a whole, but is rather the policy for 'disadvantaged neighbourhoods' with difficulties in the areas of housing and urban environment and in the socio-economic fields of employment, academic success, health, public order and security and urban services.

- Some Figures from Goliath 2008 (professional guide for Circus and Street Arts), concerning support from the Urban policy to circus projects involving disadvantaged areas :
 - **9 professional groups**
 - **43 Performing Arts Centres (production and diffusion)**
 - **23 Festivals**
 - **22 Circus Schools**



The Development of Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde and the impact on the local community

Founded in 1992, Le Plus Petit Cirque Du Monde (PPCM) - Centre des Arts du Cirque Sud de Seine is an independent non-profit organisation that develops and promotes circus and urban arts (hip-hop, freestyle, graffiti) in the field of :

- Youth circus
- Social circus
- International exchanges
- Street performances, partnerships with professional artists,
- Vocational training for trainers

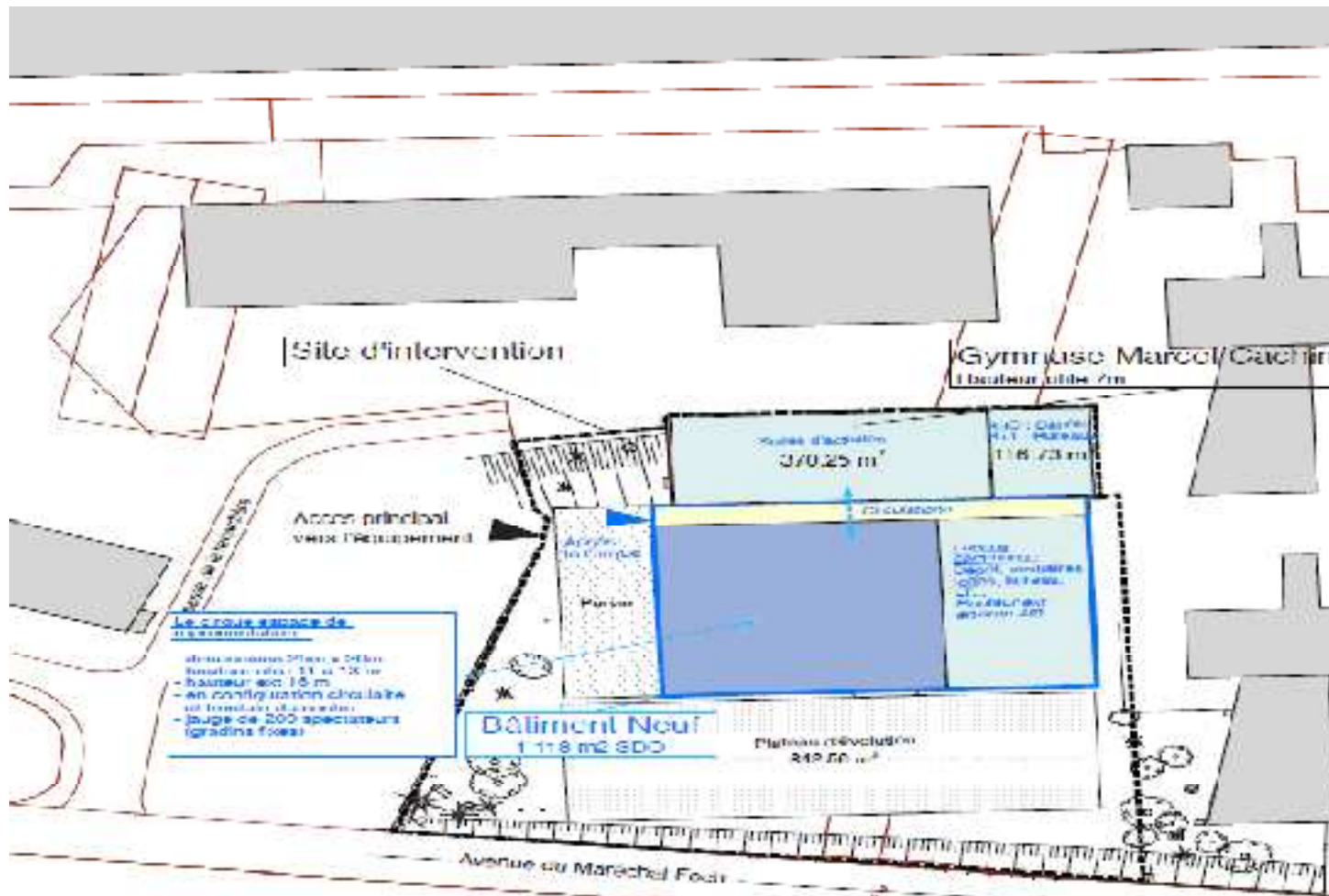




Our actual equipment (570m²) is located in Bagneux (a close suburb in the South of Paris), in the heart of a disadvantaged area.



- A new building of 1850m², with a venue for 300 persons (financed by different partners: Community of towns “Sud de Seine”, local government, Greater Paris Region “Ile-de-France”) is planned to be build for September 2013 at the same place where we work now.



The Origins

PPCM was born thanks to a group of people of our local community having a passion for the universal values and language of circus and wanting to develop a participative cultural project in this disadvantaged area characterised by :

- high unemployment
- more than 50% of public housing
- school failure
- addiction and drug problems
- high percentage of immigrants





The Values

PPCM's identity has been outlined at the border between the social and the artistic field. This position was difficult to maintain, because, for several years, there was in France a strict separation between art and the social field. Our values have been defined through a democratic process and aim to combine art with social and intercultural work :

- Promote the cultural development of our area across a democratic access to artistic practices, social diversity, opening up of the disadvantaged neighbourhoods, cultural, artistic and international exchanges
- Establish an independent Cultural Centre focused on circus and urban arts as artistic practices in educational and social purpose
- Maintain excellence and creativity of our artistic, educational and social actions in order to ensure the adequacy of our services with the needs expressed by the inhabitants
- Ensure that the dynamics of this project will respect the values of solidarity and sustainable development



The Missions

Our missions intend to answer the challenges of social culture of today and tomorrow thanks to an innovating articulation between:

- an artistic and cultural project aiming to the diversification of the target public and new interactions between the inhabitants, the artists and their works
- artistic and educational actions intended to make the access to the cultural practices more democratic and more participative
- accompaniment of young artists and training of the professionals of artistic and educational actions
- an active involvement in European and international exchanges and networks in order to create new opportunities for the young people, improve the qualifications of our teams and launch new methods and projects
- a territory of establishment located in a disadvantaged urban area, demanding a close cooperation with other local bodies and organisations

A leading position

In 2010, Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde is:


- One of the most important place for artistic practices in the field of youth circus (650 children, young people and adults participating in the artistic activities)
- 2 200 children and young people and 2 400 hours of interventions in 35 school and social circus projects located in 18 suburb towns in the Greater Paris Region
- An audience of 3.200 persons (big top, full air, Theatre Victor Hugo in Bagneux, Theatre of Châtillon...)

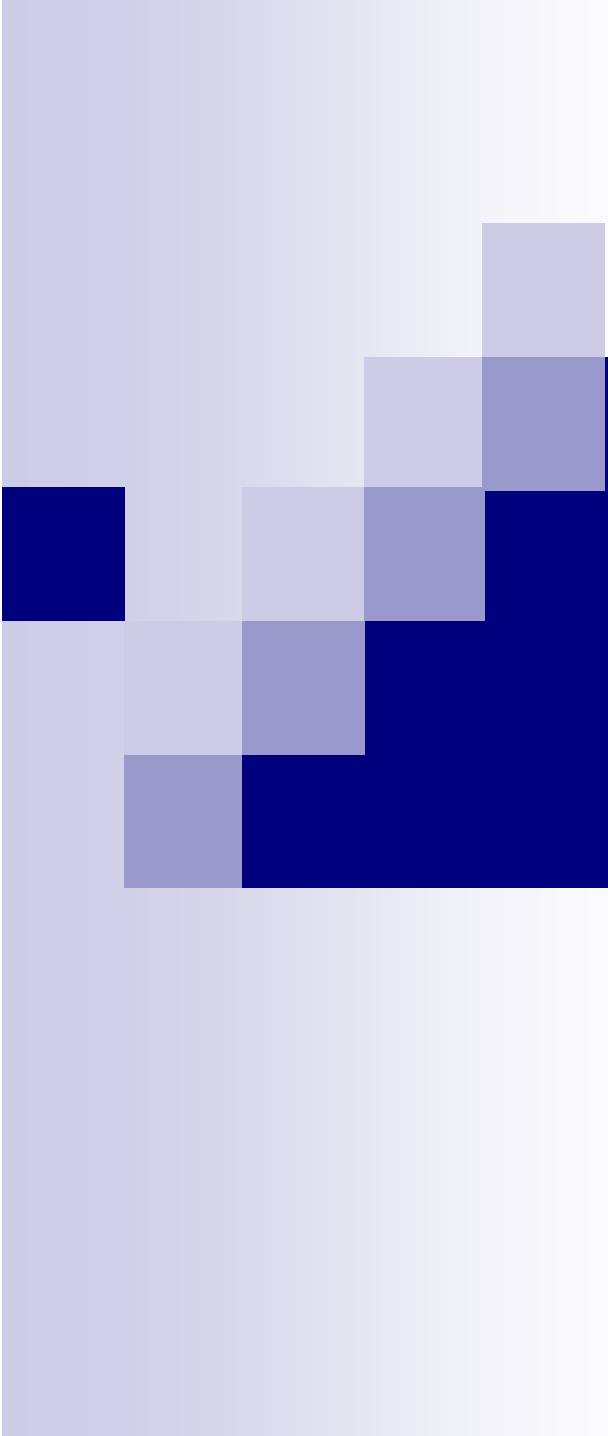




Governance model

- **Our governance model intends to contribute to the development of a project of social and interdependent economy integrating culture, education and popular art forms (circus and urban arts) in a territorial approach of sustainable development.**
- The organisation is governed by a Board elected by the annual General Assembly and a Director.
- The strategic plan of development of our Centre is inspired by similar projects developed in Europe and Latin America. It integrates a strong potential of economic viability, an important shutter of social utility and a catch in consideration of the environmental factors: evaluation of the social impact, creation of job opportunities for people living in our area, professionalization, diversification of the financial resources in order to guarantee a better sustainability of the actions.

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- **Our economic figures are in constant progression:** A budget of 607 000€ for the year 2010 : 58% of subsidies and 42% of own resources (artistic actions and educational projects); an increase of 30% compared to the budget of the previous year and of 62% compared to 2008
 - **We employ the equivalent of 12 full time jobs**, 8 full-time stations created in 3 years. 5 of our employees are living in our very close local area.
 - **A diversification of the financial partners:** The Community of Southern Agglomeration of the Seine (50 000€), Town of Bagneux (23 000€ and 52 227€ for the voluntary contributions in kind), Region Ile-de-France (9 000€ for the Social Animation of the Districts and 45 000€ for Employment), the Social action for Families (29 000€), the Ministry for the Culture (20 000€), Europe (54 000€), Ministry of Youth and Social cohesion (37 000€), the local government (19 700€).
 - **The own resources are coming from two main fields:**
 - -Artistic and educational activities for children, young people and adults paying an annual fee (115 000 € in 2010, 10% of increase in 1 year);
 - - Artistic and educational activities in schools, social centres and other public and local bodies (110 000€ in 2010, 12% of increase in 1 year)



Some examples of social circus projects





Circus and Urban Arts

- Started in 2008, this project aims to link circus and urban arts (hip-hop, graffiti, freestyle juggling). Extremely close by their contents, these two fields and their crossings appear to be particularly relevant: Circus arts offer a frame and the educational methods, a philosophy and a long tradition of intercultural experiences, when urban arts allow a renewal of artistic practices, coming directly out from the steaming creativity of young people often considered as marginal.
- The project is financed by the Ministry of Culture and the programs for social cohesion.
- **Activities:**
 - **Regular Hip-hop and Free Style classes for the Production group of our youth circus (once a week)**
 - **Weekly Hip-hop classes (twice a week) for young people of our community**
 - **Workshops with professional hip-hop dancers (Cie E.GO)**
 - **Preparation of performances crossing hip-hop and circus**
 - **European Training for Trainers in June (since 2009)**
 - **Hip/Cirq/Hop Festival in June**





Circus In School

- This project started in October 2008. Children and young people who live in our area have very few access to arts and culture. Bringing Circus to the schools of our area allows to work with children and young people that have no activities outside their school.
- These projects are financed by the Region, the Urban Policy, our own resources and a private foundation
- **Activities:**
 - **Weekly Circus workshops for primary schools (1h15minutes per class, during a year).**
 - **Artistic Project « The Blagis district dreamed by the children”, linked to the regular circus workshops, with the collaboration of an artist from a mime company.**
 - **Weekly Circus workshops for secondary lever pupils facing school failure (1h30minutes per group during 4 months for each group; three different groups in a year).**





Solidarity Circus / Cirque de Quartier

- This project is the oldest social project of PPCM aiming to bring circus and artistic practices to the children, young people and the families of our local community. Started especially through open air outreach activities, the project has grown considerably, since two years, and becomes a regular activity in the gymnasium.
- This project is mainly financed by the Town of Bagneux and Urban Policy
- **Activities :**
 - **“Cirque de quartier” : open and for free regular circus workshops, five times a week, mixing publics and concerning children, teenagers and their families. The two of these projects are running with the collaboration of “social” partners (a social centre and a leisure centre.)**
 - Open air circus workshops during holidays (from April to October).**
 - Holidays circus camps.**



The Impact on the local Community

- About 600 children, young people and adults participate to our regular activities (charge free)
- More than 1 200 hours per year
- Participation in all local events (Street festival, open air markets...)
- Good results on different levels ; self-development, self-confidence, social inclusion, social diversity
- A new survey in 2011, will give us more information about the opinions of our participants
- A new building by 2014 that will contribute to the changing of the image of our local area



Difficulties

- **Direct communication with the target public**
- **Funding for the administrative tasks**
- **Fitting to the needs and demands of the inhabitants**
- **Fitting to the needs and demands of the partners**
- **Lack of experienced circus trainers with the necessary capacities in order to conceive and run social circus project**
- **Lack of space for the development of our activities until the construction of the new building**



The impact of international cooperation



CARAVAN

CARAVAN is an international non-profit association set up under the Belgian Law. The aim of CARAVAN is to improve the quality of youth and social circus throughout Europe through the following objectives:

- - Contribute to the improvement of the quality of circus arts teaching with a formal and non-formal educational purpose in Europe;
- - Promote the importance of the inclusion of artistic practices, including circus arts, in the education of young people throughout Europe;
- - Support personal development of young people, create pathways and promote their confidence to engage with each other across Europe



Presentation of the 8 Members

- **L'Ecole de Cirque de Bruxelles** (Brussels, Belgium), www.ecoledecirquedebruxelles.be a pioneer in training for circus teachers in Europe.
- **Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde** – (Bagneux, France), www.petitcirque.org, one of the schools that introduced social Circus in France.
- **Circus Elleboog** (Amsterdam, The Netherlands), www.elleboog.nl, the oldest youth and social circus in Europe (since 1949)
- **Circus Cabuwazi** (Berlin, Germany), www.cabuwazi.de, a leading youth and social circus schools in Europe, active since 1994 with five Big Tops
- **Sorin Sirkus** (Tampere, Finland), www.sorinsirkus.fi, leading organisation in Youth Circus in Finland recognized by the Finnish Ministry of Education
- **Belfast Community Circus School** (Northern Ireland, United Kingdom), www.belfastcircus.org, pioneer in youth and social circus for the last 25 years, linking young people from different sides of the community.
- **Zaltimbanq'**, Ecole de Cirque de Luxembourg (Luxembourg), www.zaltimbanq.lu developing new social circus projects
- **Ateneu Popular Nou Barris** (Barcelona, Spain) www.ateneu9barris.net using for more than 30 years cultural and artistic action as a tool for social development



The impact of international cooperation

- **Develop new methods (Leonardo Partnership)**
- **Exchange ideas, skills, knowledge**
- **Observe, compare and improve social work**
- **Motivate young participants, volunteers, trainers and employees**
- **Give more value to social work**
- **Get extra recognition on a local, regional or national level**
- **Work more**
- **Get short-term funding for international projects**