

[Introduction]

Welcome to “Cultura Circular” in Conversation, an audio interview series exploring art, culture, ecology and climate change. Can you imagine festivals in Latin America and the Caribbean standing out not only for their creativity, but also for their positive impact on the planet and the cultural connections they foster? This is exactly what we promote through the “Cultura Circular” programme, developed in collaboration between the British Council and Julie’s Bicycle. We begin with a short introduction to the project by María García Holley and Graciela Melitsko Thornton, followed by a conversation between Paola Moreira Blasi and the organisers of two festivals that offer opportunities for ecological and social transition through music and film.

Joining us on this journey are Beatriz Cisneros Contreras, from *Mi Primer Festival* in Lima, Peru, and Oliver Knust Restucci, from *Fluvial Valdivia* in Chile. And now, over to María. Thank you very much, and see you soon.

[María]

Welcome to “Cultura Circular” in Conversation, a space to explore how culture and sustainability can transform festivals and artistic practices in Latin America, the Caribbean and the United Kingdom. I’m María García Holley, Director of Arts and Culture for the British Council in the Americas and the Caribbean. “Cultura Circular” was born in the post-pandemic context, when festivals were seeking to regain their vitality after the global pause, while also facing the inescapable challenge of climate change.

This programme connects in-person, digital and hybrid festivals in the region with the United Kingdom, fostering a cultural exchange that goes beyond the artistic. Through expert mentoring, financial support, and the integration of sustainable practices, “Cultura Circular” encourages new ways of creating and experiencing culture with environmental responsibility. With over 110 festivals in 75 cities, we have woven a network of projects committed to sustainability and innovation.

Thanks to the training and support provided to our partners, we promote better practices to reduce the environmental impact of the cultural sector. In this podcast, we’ll explore the experiences, challenges and inspirations of those who are transforming the cultural landscape. Join us on this journey.

[Graciela]

Thank you very much, María. I’m Graciela Melitsko Thornton, speaking from Julie’s Bicycle in London, a non-profit organisation working to mobilise the arts and culture sectors around the climate, nature, and justice crises. Specifically in “Cultura Circular”, our role focuses on designing activities such as training, mentoring, and network collaborations, supporting festivals in their environmental actions. I’m very happy to be able to share, through these audio interviews, the experiences of some of the festivals that took part in this programme’s activities—festivals that undoubtedly combine creativity with care for the environment, and that

promote new practices, marking milestones in the building of an alternative future, both ecologically and socially.

We invite you to listen to them. Many thanks, and see you soon.

[Paola]

Hello, how are you? I'm Paola, and I welcome you to a new episode of "Cultura Circular" in Conversation.

This time, I'm joined by Beatriz from Peru and Oliver from Chile. A warm welcome to both of you. How are you?

[Oliver]

Hi, how are you all?

[Beatriz]

Hello, very well, very well. Here from Lima, Peru.

[Paola]

It's a pleasure to have you with us. Thank you for joining.

[Oliver]

Many thanks to "Cultura Circular" for having us.

[Paola]

Oliver, to begin with, we know that the name of your festival reflects a special connection with nature. So, could you tell us where *Fluvial* takes place, what it's about, and what its main mission is?

[Oliver]

Well, *Fluvial* takes place in the city of Valdivia, which is the capital of "Los Ríos" region in southern Chile, in Northern Patagonia.

It's where Patagonia begins—it's a very green, university city, and as the region's name suggests, "Los Ríos" (The Rivers), and the festival *Fluvial* is hosted in a city crisscrossed by many rivers and canals. The city's identity is deeply tied to water. There's a lot of nature, culture, tourism—adventure tourism, hiking, bird photography. It's home to a large wetland with a vast bird reserve.

So, when we first conceived the festival, we didn't think of it as a commercial music festival selling tickets, but rather as a music market aimed at showcasing Chilean musical talent and the state of the industry, to support the export of music that's slightly beyond the emerging stage—what we call “export ready”. Thanks to funding from the Chilean government and some private partners, we are able to bring in buyers, stakeholders, and opinion leaders from around the world to participate in the conference and training sessions, and also to see nearly 40 bands per edition, so they can programme them in their own festivals or license them for their catalogues. So *Fluvial's* main mission is to promote the export of Chilean music and foster exchange with other countries and cultures.

More than a festival, it's a platform for artists, communities, and change-makers to come together. And well, the name *Fluvial* reflects our connection with the rivers, natural cycles, and the flow of ideas too, because it's a festival where we want people to reflect, to think—there are many conversations, working groups, beyond just panels. We've launched initiatives that have taken years and have shaped agendas—for example, around sustainability or in relation to Indigenous peoples and First Nations as well.

[Paola]

And from everything you've shared with us, what social and artistic aspects would you highlight?

[Oliver]

Artistically, it's the opportunity for bands that don't yet have the means to invest or try to tour abroad on their own to have a platform where buyers or opinion leaders can see them here in Chile.

So it's a much smaller investment they have to make, and it's a platform where they're not only performing but also have several opportunities to connect with decision-makers, through business meetings and various forms of informal networking. For example, there's one activity that takes place on a catamaran—a boat that sails through Valdivia's canals for about three hours, carrying all the opinion leaders on board, and during that ride, other bands perform as well. We've created this experience, and we already have many tangible results because we measure the projected business outcomes after each festival. *Fluvial* has become a launching platform for bands that have managed to take that leap abroad.

And socially speaking, well, this takes place on Mapuche territory, which is the most significant and largest Indigenous group in Chile. *Fluvial's* co-director and partner, Marcelo Godoy, is an anthropologist who lives in Valdivia and has longstanding ties with local communities. Six years ago, we launched an initiative called *El Águila y el Cóndor* (“The Eagle and the Condor”), with support not only from Chilean funding but also from Canada and other countries. It's a space where we try to ensure that the independent music industry receives and supports First Nations musicians so they themselves can attend festivals or conferences abroad that are specifically focused on Indigenous cultures. And sustainability intersects here as well with the social dimension, because we've worked a lot with ancestral knowledge—wisdom that already existed

long before today's modern movements to save the planet; for them, it was already an integrated part of life.

So these areas overlap—in the panels, in the many videos or short films we've made, and in relation to the land itself. Hosting it in Valdivia doesn't make *Fluvial* a Valdivian festival; it's a Chilean one. But we chose to hold it here precisely because of the values that this territory brings. We propose a kind of eco-social vision, where nature and culture are not separate but go hand in hand. And we hope that the reflections and studies coming out of *Fluvial* won't just measure carbon emissions, for example, but will also consider the triple impact generated by a sustainability perspective—placing the social dimension at the heart of art and culture.

[Paola]

It's clearly a very comprehensive and complex project you're working on.

Beatriz, in your case, tell us where *Mi Primer Festival* operates from, and what the main social and artistic focuses are.

[Beatriz]

Well, *Mi Primer Festival* is a film festival for children, young people, and communities in Peru. The audience we work with is mainly children, some of whom live in situations of social exclusion. So, with that focus, the educational aspect was actually what pushed me, as the festival's director, right from the beginning to ask myself: "What can I do with what I've studied?"—which was film. It came from a desire to contribute to better education—education that is inclusive and accessible. And I thought, "Well, the tool we have is cinema, audiovisual media, and new technologies"—which the children love. So, starting from there, we create artistic pieces, animations using a handmade technique called *stop motion*, and we create stories, using storytelling as a technique. We've fused *storytelling* and *stop motion* to create short productions that, within the festival, last around 45 seconds. This year, for example, the theme was once again the environment—which they are very, very aware of, even more than adults.

We're based in Lima, but we also travel to other provinces. Lima itself is enormous—it has 12 million inhabitants. So the festival usually has around 10 venues in different districts, and we apply the same methodology and the same theme in each, but how it's expressed in each community is very different. There's a lot of centralisation, so, for example, in a Shipibo-Conibo community—originally from the Amazon—the environmental theme has one set of issues. A community from Ayacucho (in the Andes) that is now living in Lima has another, and yet another coastal or urban community has different ones again. We apply the same method, but each community makes it their own, shaping it around their specific challenges. For example: "One day I went to the river and it was red. Why was the river red?" or "Why are turtles no longer laying eggs on this beach?"—each child brings their own perspective. And we upload all of these creations to a YouTube channel where they share their experiences.

So it's about creating a club, a community—it's a union between education and art, specifically audiovisual and cinematic art, with a strong focus on education, particularly because of the age group we work with. But we don't only work with children; we also work with their carers, teachers, and all the adults interested in creating content for young audiences. It's a progression—as the name *Mi Primer Festival* suggests: it's likely their first film festival, their first experience, the first time they see a film on a giant inflatable screen. These are firsts. Our team includes therapists, psychologists, and educators—we're not just audiovisual professionals. And anything can be a trigger—especially for parents bringing their children into a space like this. The last thing they want is for something to happen, particularly something emotional. But very serious social issues often emerge, especially in communities, and we need to know how to respond to them.

[Paola]

You were talking about this idea of building community, and I wanted to ask if you've noticed that, through the children, adults have become increasingly involved in sustainability issues, for example.

[Beatriz]

Yes. Yes, absolutely. In fact, this year has been particularly interesting because of a workshop we call *Luciérnaga*, which combines *storytelling* with *stop motion*. It's no longer just for children—we've made it intergenerational. So instead of adults simply observing, which is what usually happens in these workshops—parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, the accompanying adults, they often spend three hours waiting around and chatting—they now all join in. Everyone participates, and everyone becomes a child again, right? So it's wonderful from that perspective, because it gets them actively involved, and that's when I think true awareness happens—not just through talking or reflecting, which is good, but through active reflection, through doing something, and then reflecting afterwards.

For example, the animations we've made with grandparents and children have been incredibly enriching. Grandparents, of course, bring deep wisdom, and children bring incredible playfulness and energy, so they balance each other out. For the grandparents, seeing a *stop motion* animation they helped create—something they may never have imagined doing—is a moving experience. Their faces light up in awe when they realise they've just made a film in three hours; they're overjoyed. And they also bring that narrative support—they provide the voices, the voice-overs—while the children are often very excitable, so the grandparents bring a certain calm that gives the story strength, structure.

I think this is something we're really seeing works powerfully—exactly as you mentioned—to get adults more actively involved, to spread the enthusiasm, so they don't remain passive observers or just caretakers. We're all in it together—we're all part of the change.

[Paola]

Oliver, I'm curious to know how the festival's focus on nature and climate has evolved...

[Oliver]

I think the festival's evolution has involved bringing in the ancestral wisdom of Indigenous tribes, which intersects with memory and with the identity of the territory. We also mentioned that we try to maintain an integrated perspective—what we call an eco-social approach. But at the same time, in practical terms, for people who may want to understand how things actually developed, we took advantage of many opportunities that at first seem far-off, but if you reach out and propose collaborations, things really start to move forward.

At the beginning, we didn't even have the resources or funds to implement a sustainability area. What made a big difference was reaching out to the university—specifically, the Austral University of Chile, the largest university in the south of the country, which is based in Valdivia. They helped us with a strategy through their Centre for Environmental Studies, called CEAM, and later through a unit in the university that manages all of its waste. That gave us a bit of institutional backing, which allowed us to approach the municipality and, together, we began implementing initial actions around recycling and waste management.

We already had a funded impact study in place that originally measured things like economic activity and the tourism impact of the festival based on how much of the city was occupied. That's when the light bulb went off—we realised we could start integrating environmental impact measurements as well, since we already had university teams collecting data. And because we were working with tourism, “without even meaning to,” as *El Chavo* would say, we found we already had data on transport, emissions, and the delegates arriving from abroad. All of that was in spreadsheets we were already using, so we started integrating it. Little by little, I think we've now conducted four or five studies, and each one has gradually included a larger sustainability chapter.

This has helped us to attract more funding, and eventually *Cultura Circular* launched its programme in Chile. That was the moment when we were able to apply for more significant resources—not just to measure, but to actually start mitigating and developing a more comprehensive strategy, something more medium-term, looking toward the future.

[Paola]

And for you, Beatriz, how has the festival evolved in terms of sustainability? What are the key aspects of the projects you're currently developing?

[Beatriz]

In addition to content creation, which is all based on environmental themes, one innovation has been the use of *PeliSolar*, which is a solar-powered mobile cinema. Up until last year, we had ten venues spread across Lima. What this innovation has allowed is for us to reach four venues in low-income areas where electricity is unstable. In previous years, for example, the inflatable screen would deflate because of power fluctuations. But this year we were able to visit that community with the solar system in place—a completely clean projection—and it sparked a lot

of conversation, and still does, at every level. I think it's very important, not only for the children, but especially for the adults.

I believe this has a broader and more sustainable impact because it generates many new ideas. People say, "We could make music with this," or "We could put on a theatre performance." Suddenly, everyone becomes creative, and I think that's really beautiful—that people don't get frustrated, but rather want to see how they can contribute from their own space and keep moving in the same direction.

[Paola]

And in the context of everything you've shared, what environmental challenges would you say a megacity like Lima is facing?

[Beatriz]

Many—traffic, the number of cars, noise pollution, water pollution. Peru is vast, but Lima specifically is beautiful, located right by the sea with a stunning Pacific coastline. But if you zoom in, you realise that oil has damaged a number of beaches in the north of Lima and in other parts of Peru too. So yes, there's very serious work to be done with private companies, starting with holding them accountable. One thing we've worked on a lot is promoting the use of bicycles or car sharing. So let's come together to make this a bit more sustainable.

[Paola]

Now Oliver, let's talk about your journey toward sustainability. Why did you decide to focus on this topic? Was there a personal moment of revelation that motivated you? What was it like?

[Oliver]

Look, on a personal level, it's always been more of an intuition—it wasn't initially about sustainability, but rather that I've always felt a strong connection to nature. What I love most is travelling through it, experiencing it firsthand—being immersed in nature. I love flora, fauna, lakes, the sea... so when you see, as Beatriz was saying, things happening that hurt the ecosystem, it hurts me too—I feel it in my gut, quite literally.

So when there's a chance to take action—and music has such a powerful communicative force—it made sense. The work didn't start with *Fluvial*; it began by seeing international experiences through the industry body we're part of, which Graciela also mentioned: *IMICHILE—Industria de Música Independiente de Chile*—which brings together more than 70 independent record labels in Chile. We're part of a global network called *WIN*, the *Worldwide Independent Network*, where we were on the board for a long time—and still are, actually. That's where we learned from our British counterparts, *AIM*, the *Association of Independent Music*, who had various sustainability initiatives and were connected with *Julie's Bicycle* and the movement *Music Declares Emergency*.

During these board meetings and conferences in London, we approached *AIM* and *Julie's Bicycle* to see how we could be part of the movement and bring it to Chile. But above all, we felt the most important task was to translate it into Spanish—and adapt it. Many of the guidelines were very European in focus.

So we did a translation and what you might call a “Latin-Americanisation”—trying to frame it within our own reality, more typical of developing or so-called third-world countries. That’s when you start to realise you’re not alone—that many other countries are doing the same. And then, beyond the personal drive or concern, you see there’s a community of people with shared interests, all rowing in the same direction, and that small actions can indeed start to form a movement for change, step by step.

[Paola]

And in this context, how much did the *Cultura Circular* programme influence the work and practices you’re carrying out at the festival?

[Oliver]

It had a huge impact—because for the first time, we were able to bring in a key figure from the international music industry who isn’t just a sustainability scholar, but (or still is) the director of the record label *Ninja Tune*, which has been a major musical reference for over 30 years. He’s the director and more than that, the label itself is a benchmark for having an outstanding, impressive sustainability policy. Thanks to that, we were able to build an alliance with the AIM trade body, and this gentleman—Peter Quicke—came to Chile. Not only did he attend *Fluvial*, but he spent more than 10 days visiting lakes, mountain ranges, and national parks. He gave us two sessions—first a talk, then a more hands-on workshop—where he outlined, step by step, how things are done in Europe, both in the UK and through *Impala*, which is the European association of independent labels.

On the final day, he also connected with Indigenous communities and ran a kind of mindfulness workshop. For him, it was also an eye-opening experience, because Europeans don’t really have tribes with such a deep connection to the land. He was very moved by it all, and we’ve maintained a warm and friendly relationship ever since—he’s a really lovely person.

That was the first thing. We wouldn’t have had the funds to bring someone like that without the programme’s support. Then there were the concrete actions—footprint measurement, mitigation strategies, and, on top of everything to do with waste management, we managed to eliminate single-use plastics for the first time, which was huge.

The learning community element—through the workshops—was key. There were three activities, which of course have a cost. Beyond having Peter here, producing them also came with costs, and *Cultura Circular*’s support really helped. And I think one of the most impactful elements, both in terms of communications and carbon footprint reduction, was sustainable mobility. We did something that, honestly, I still don’t know how we pulled off—we ran a train from Santiago to Antilhue, which is the station closest to Valdivia, around 800 kilometres away. It

was packed with delegates, musicians, DJs—and although the report doesn't yet give the final figure, it's estimated that we reduced emissions by about a third compared to flying or using private vehicles.

On top of that, the train turned into a party—it took about 15 hours, and the dining car became a bar. There were DJs spinning vinyl, acoustic performances, a table for accreditation—the networking started right there. In terms of learning community and environmental and territorial education, we also hired a waste management service called *Circula*, which educated people on recycling at each disposal point. There was a monitor, and a short introduction to how to sort waste and what's behind all the environmental practices being implemented at the festival.

[Paola]

Beatriz, tell us a bit more about these innovative proposals like the use of solar energy during your tours. I'd love to know how this initiative works in more detail, and how the *Cultura Circular* programme has helped drive these ideas forward.

[Beatriz]

It's the first "van" with a mobile solar system in Peru. The idea came about at least two years ago. Like Oliver said, it also has a personal side to it. During a trip to the Amazon with the festival, we arrived with all our equipment—and there was no electricity.

It was a place we could only reach after five hours by boat, and the only available energy came from petrol or diesel poured into a generator. For me, it felt a bit contradictory—to go all that way to carry out educational and cultural activities for the community, for children, women, artisans... and at the same time, we were literally polluting. That was the spark that made me think: what can we do to change this?

So we started looking into solar-powered formats around the world, and came across a network called *Solar World Cinema*, which started in the Netherlands. We connected with them, and also spoke to colleagues in Mexico and Brazil who have been doing solar cinema for over ten years. We spent about a year researching. And when the opportunity with *Cultura Circular* came up, we saw it as the perfect match—to carry out the festival and really turn it into a *Cultura Circular* format. The project developed alongside the festival, really—they're like sister projects: *PeliSolar* and the festival. So the idea is that this new project supports the festival and also serves any other needs in the community.

When we arrive with the van—which has two fixed, rigid solar panels on the roof that can tilt to adjust to the sun's angle—inside, there's an inverter that converts solar energy into electricity. It's essentially a power source, and from there, we have batteries to store the energy.

That's basically the photovoltaic solar system. And then, when you go into a community, you can speak with the local councils and say: "Look, this is something you can implement too." The challenge in creating the solar van was finding sponsors who would support it. Everyone thought it was a lovely idea—but they couldn't picture it. So, thanks to funds like *Cultura Circular*

and others that support sustainability, we were able to make it a reality—because otherwise, it would've been too difficult to pull off.

I believe it opens up possibilities, and it's thanks to international institutions that have this broader vision of how to make sustainable projects possible. Because in countries like Peru, people often don't believe in it—they just can't see it.

[Paola]

Was that the biggest challenge you faced?

[Beatriz]

Yes, definitely. And for this—well, I studied film, I'm not an environmental engineer—but still, to be able to have conversations at the right level, I completed a diploma in Circular Economy and Sustainability. It helped me feel more confident and better understand what we were facing, because it's not a simple project—you need to take steady steps. But I trust that it's necessary. And as cultural organisations, it's on us—we have to do it.

[Paola]

You've been committed from the very beginning, no doubt about it.

Oliver, a few minutes ago you mentioned the initiative you're part of, *Music Declares Emergency*. Could you tell us a bit more about it?

[Oliver]

Well, *Music Declares Emergency* was an international movement that existed before we implemented it at *Fluvial*. What's interesting is that we used this brand to introduce all of our sustainability actions.

So, for example: "Music Declares Emergency presents: the carbon footprint calculator for your event" or "Music Declares Emergency presents: the communicative power of artists for sustainability." So we used a brand that was attractive and already came with a powerful international campaign slogan—"No Music on a Dead Planet." It had already gained a lot of strength in the Anglo campaign, and we translated it into Spanish. I think that helped boost the initiative within *Fluvial*. In general, people in the industry already recognise it.

We've also been able to access educational and training funds for sustainable practices within the creative industry, which has been very useful. And *Fluvial* only happens once a year, right? But the campaign can keep circulating and sharing information all the time.

[Paola]

Within this initiative, what aspects would you highlight as innovative?

[Oliver]

I think what this initiative does best is breaking actions down according to the different sectors or models within the music industry. So *Music Declares Emergency*—whether the Spanish or English edition—offers examples and action points depending on your role.

If you have a small office, do these things—it gives you a list. If you run a recording studio, do these things—another list. If you're organising a large-scale festival, start here—yet another set of guidelines. If you're a musician, recycle your nylon guitar strings—simple as that. It even gives very short, easy suggestions. And you can choose to do what's within your reach—or not.

I don't know if it's that innovative, to be honest. I think its innovation lies in how practical and accessible it is. That's where I see the real value of the campaign.

[Paola]

Beatriz, which communities are you currently working with, and what's your particular approach to building those relationships?

[Beatriz]

For the past five years and continuing today, we've been working with a *Shipibo-Conibo* community from the Amazon who now live in Lima. And, well, the trip I mentioned earlier gave us the opportunity to visit their original territory and see the challenges they face firsthand—mainly related to land, deforestation, and energy issues. After returning, we've continued working with this community throughout the year. They're always a festival venue, but we also run a range of workshops. We work a lot with women—particularly with women artisans.

It's a community that produces a lot of textile crafts and murals. We work with teenage girls as well. So there's music, but because we come from the audiovisual world, we also make music videos.

Our focus has always been the story—where is the story? And this year we've opened up to a new Andean community. It's a community from the interior of Peru, from Ayacucho, who were victims of the internal conflict caused by terrorism in the 1980s. Some of the families moved to Lima and established this community.

They face a different set of challenges—not so much environmental, but more about memory and trauma. Again, we focus heavily on teenage girls, also because of the high rate of teenage pregnancy. The younger children are always amazing—so full of energy and very proactive. They've even started urban gardens in a very arid area. But we also see a more socio-political dimension, which is about working with these young women, these mothers—understanding what tools they need.

[Paola]

And from your perspective, what do you think could help the audiovisual and festival sectors in Peru adopt sustainable practices more broadly?

[Beatriz]

Well, festivals—not just film festivals—attract large audiences. They have real power to bring people together, and they require a lot of effort. I think, little by little, we're realising that festivals are packed with activities, but we need to think of sustainability as a cross-cutting theme that runs through all aspects of the work. Not just environmental sustainability, but also economic sustainability, social sustainability, and long-term sustainability.

It's not easy, but it's about partnering with projects, people, and organisations who share the same values. That's one way we can become more sustainable—by supporting each other. A true win-win.

[Paola]

Oliver, to wrap up—what are the next steps on your path toward an eco-social transition?

[Oliver]

Concretely, we need to consolidate our international partnerships and share our methodologies. One of the main goals is to promote the Santiago–Valdivia cultural train, which had a big impact in terms of numbers and enormous potential in terms of communication.

We also want to distribute reusable bottles with storytelling and co-branding, as a way to permanently eliminate single-use plastics from the festival.

Another objective is to position *Fluvial* as a model for the Global South and for the *Los Ríos* region in terms of best practices. It's also essential to integrate the personal and the collective as core pillars of the transition—in that sense, the eco-social approach we've discussed. And we believe that training initiatives shouldn't only focus on technical aspects; they should also include a layer of introspection.

Finally, we want to start a real impact mitigation process with the aim of making *Fluvial* a carbon-neutral event in the medium term. We believe that if we take things step by step and give ourselves a reasonable timeline, we can get there.

[Paola]

Thank you so much, Beatriz and Oliver, for such an insightful and valuable conversation. It's been a pleasure to hear your experiences and all the amazing work you've been doing through your festivals. Wishing you all the best in what's to come.

[Oliver]

Thank you very much, a big hug.

[Beatriz]

Thank you.