

PRACTICAL GUIDE
FOR
CONTRIBUTING
CONTENT
TO THE
DIGITAL
COLLECTION
OUTCAST EUROPE



INTER ALIA

Civic Action Meeting Point

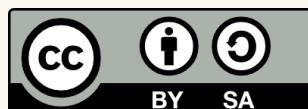
Practical Guide
for Contributing Content
to the Digital Collection
Outcast Europe

Inter Alia
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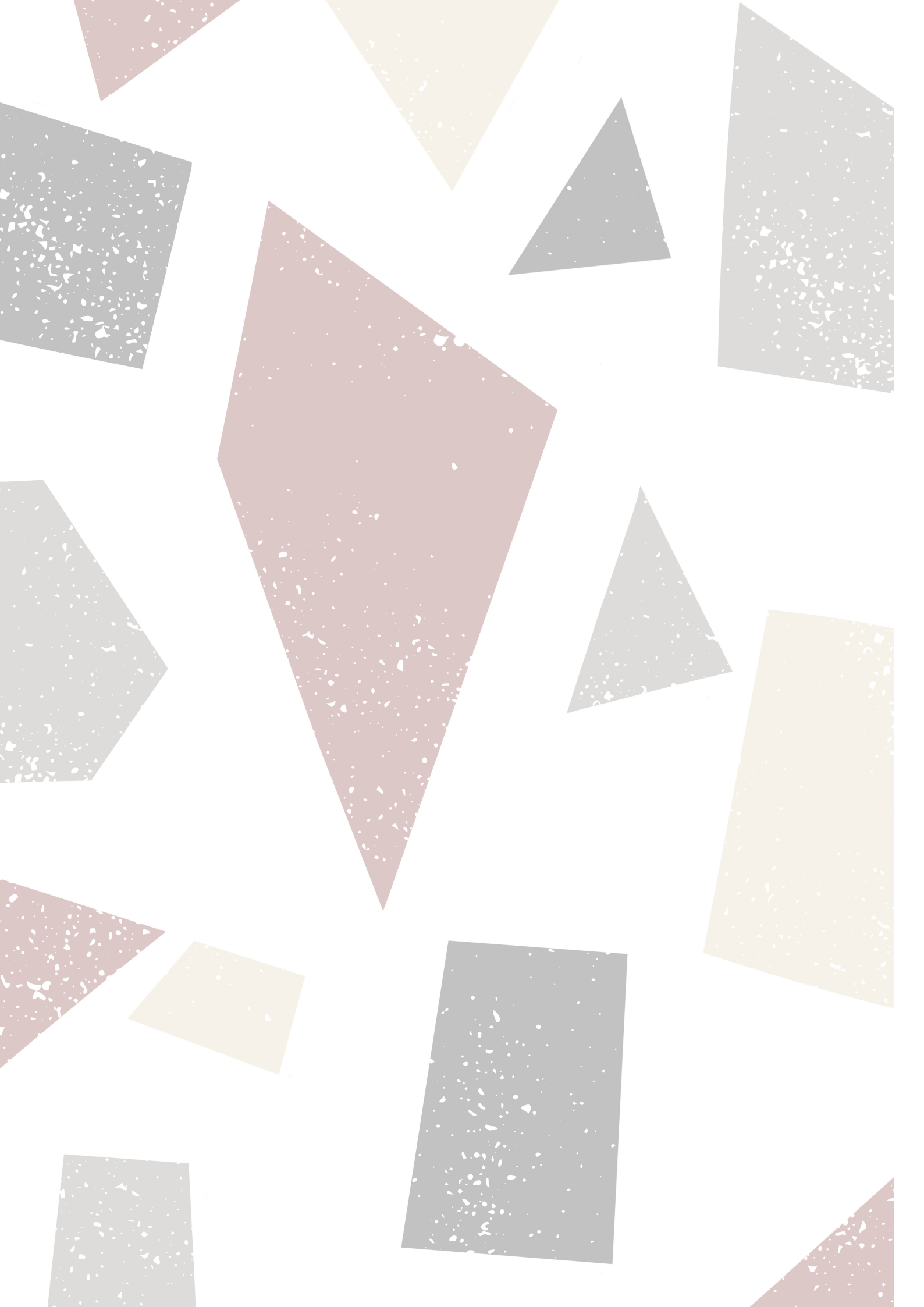
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THE DIGITAL COLLECTION OUTCAST EUROPE

The digital collection Outcast Europe (<https://outcasteurope.eu>) is a thematic collection that brings together content related to migratory and refugee experiences, including the digital copies of the material objects gathered during the homonymous project, which was co-financed by the programme Europe for Citizens of the European Union, and sponsored by the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports.

The Outcast Europe project (<https://archive.outcasteurope.eu>) was implemented from September 2017 to February 2019 by the following non-profit organisations:

- Inter Alia (Athens, Greece)
- Uspelite (Sofia, Bulgaria)
- International Organisation for Migration Hungary (Budapest, Hungary)
- Youth Alliance Krusevo (Skopje, North Macedonia)
- Organisation for Aid to Refugees (Prague, Czech Republic)
- Vojvodina Civic Center (Novi Sad, Serbia)

During these two years, a group of approximately 30 people (staff members and volunteers), in cooperation with collectives and citizens across and within Europe, gathered objects and stories of migrants and refugees in relation to the following historical events:

- Greece: Asia Minor Catastrophe (1922)
- Bulgaria: Fall of the Socialist Regime (1989-1990)
- Hungary: Hungarian Revolution of 1956
- North Macedonia: Gruevski Regime (2006-2016)
- Czech Republic: Prague Spring (1968)
- Serbia: Yugoslav Wars (1991-2001)

In the framework of this participatory-crowdsourcing project, more than 100 objects were gathered and presented in physical exhibitions that took place in all 6 countries, culminating in the final exhibition organised by Inter Alia, in Athens (Greece).

This exhibition took place from 4 to 27 October 2018 in Bageio Hotel (Omonia square), under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports, and with the support of 8 communication sponsors, including the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation. The exhibition was enriched with side-activities

(music and poetry nights, book presentations, and screenings of short films), and ended with the conference “Prospects and Challenges from the Migrant Crisis”, attracting more than 1200 visitors from various cities and countries, and promoting the inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral dialogue on the topic of migration and enforced movement.

Before the organisation of the final exhibition, Inter Alia digitized the collected objects for both the printed catalogue of the exhibition and the website of the project.

In addition, in the spirit of open access to knowledge and culture, but with respect towards the European citizens who lent their objects and narrated their stories, Inter Alia published most of the digital copies and their metadata under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial - ShareAlike 4.0 license,* to promote their free reuse for non-commercial, research and educational purposes.

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Starting from the current migration crisis, and exemplifying the personal and familial stories of European citizens who were forced to flee during the recent past, the Outcast Europe project focused on microhistory as a complementary way of understanding the migratory and refugee experiences, highlighting both their similarities and their differences, and offering motives and stimuli for self-reflection. Moreover, the project proved that migration is an important element of European history, memory and heritage. And from this standpoint, the digital collection Outcast Europe contributes to the reframing of the phenomenon per se, while shedding light and bringing together different cultures and people.

ABOUT THIS PRACTICAL GUIDE

Based on the outcomes and conclusions of the Outcast Europe project, Inter Alia decided to encourage: (a) the continuous enrichment of the digital collection with objects and stories of migrants and refugees, and (b) the continuous expansion of the themes and the geographical routes that the collection covers and presents. In light of this decision, Inter Alia deemed useful and necessary to redevelop the existing website, and -at the same time- to enrich the collection with additional historical, social and cultural information, and (re)frame it with thematic exhibitions and e-learning activities.

The website was redeveloped and enriched from October 2020 to June 2021, in the framework of the digital culture project “(Re)Collecting Outcast Europe”, with the economic support and under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports. The project was implemented in cooperation with the digital media enterprise PostScriptum, which -due to its expertise in the fields of digital culture and cultural management as a participatory process- developed and embedded the suitable digital and crowdsourcing tools for the continuous enrichment and reuse of the collection by different groups of people.

Currently, the digital collection Outcast Europe provides various functionalities for contributing new content (i.e. digital copies of material objects, and descriptive / documenting information about them). This new content must be compliant with certain guidelines of aesthetic quality and scientific validity, and a few basic legal and ethical principles. This is why Inter Alia also deemed useful and necessary to write, translate and publish this practical guide to familiarise -all those who want to contribute content to the digital collection- with the processes of digitisation and documentation of material objects (whether 2D or 3D), and encourage them to do so with the means and skills they already have.

The technological developments have changed our relationship with (digital) culture. From one hand, smartphones, social media, and other interactive tools (available on the World Wide Web) provide us with new opportunities and possibilities to participate and create cultural content. On the other hand, free or open access to multiple sources of information provide us with the ability to critically assess the information we get, and consequently, to enrich and improve the existing digital cultural content. This means that the participatory possibilities and opportunities, offered by the new Information Communication Technologies (ICT), have transformed us from passive receivers to active creators of cultural content.

Every day, we all create cultural works (such as photographs, videos, audio recordings, texts etc.), and distribute them on the World Wide Web: on websites, blogs, social media, photo / video sharing platforms, and digital repositories (such as Wikipedia and its sister projects). Sometimes, these works seem trivial and unimportant to be characterised as works of culture, knowledge or cultural heritage. However, this doesn't mean that we can't create and contribute cultural content of high quality. The potential is there and we can make good use of it, as long as we keep in mind some pieces of practical advice and a few simple techniques such as the ones included in the guide.

This practical guide is for people and collectives who own material objects related to personal and familial stories of migratory or refugee experiences, and who wish to contribute them to the digital collection Outcast Europe. But, it can also be used by educators in formal and non-formal education who wish to encourage their students or trainees to learn more about the phenomena of migration and enforced movement, through tracing, digitizing and documenting the objects and stories of their families, friends and acquaintances.



DIGITISATION OF MATERIAL OBJECTS

The digitisation of a material object (whether 2D or 3D) is the technical process of creating a digital copy of it - in other words, its photographing or scanning.

Equipment

Nowadays, we don't have to own an expensive photographic camera or a professional scanner to create high-quality digital copies of objects. Smartphone cameras are of extremely good quality, and we can also use the scanner apps, many of which are provided and can be downloaded for free.

Lighting

Good lighting is essential to photograph or scan any object in focus. When shooting indoors, images tend to be dark, while when taking photos outdoors, sunlight might "burn" the photographs, making them look too pale. Most smartphones have white balance and ISO settings, so the best thing to do is to use these auto options. Moreover, it is important to know at every time where the source of light is (e.g. the sun or a lamp). Because, if we stand in front of a source of light, we will end up ruining the digital copy by casting shadows on it.

Composition

There are many composition types and rules, which we can follow to take interesting and fascinating images. However, in order to create a digital copy as an historical document, it is better to adopt a simple composition, placing the object in the centre of the frame. In addition, it is advisable to photograph or scan the object in front of a monochrome and neutral background (white, grey or black) in order for the viewer to focus on the object itself.

Processing

Sometimes, we need to process a digital copy (to align the image, crop it, or improve its brightness and contrast). On the World Wide Web, there are many, free photo and image processing softwares and applications that we can use to improve our digital copies (even automatically). However, it is preferable not to apply filters on them. In order for our images to be useful in research and education as historical evidence, they need to be as true and accurate copies of the originals as possible. In addition, it is preferable not to apply watermarks, signatures, or date and time stamps on the digital copies, since these elements alter their content, and discourage

people from reusing them. The information that identifies a person, a collective or an institution as the source of a digital copy, and describes the time and place of creation can be written and published separately as documenting information.

Saving

After the completion of image processing, we can save the digital copy we created in our mobile phone or personal computer. The best thing to do is to save the digital copy as a coloured image, with the highest resolution possible, in JPG or JPEG format. In addition, before sharing the copy on the World Wide Web, it is preferable to delete our personal data from the image file. Nowadays, photographic cameras, smartphones and other devices store information related to images known as EXIF data. Such information are, for example, the date, time and place of photo shooting or scanning, the type of the device used to create the digital copy, and the name of the owner of the device. The process of deleting such information from an image file depends on the device used and its operating software. But it is a very easy process, which can be done with the use of simple instructions and tools that are available on the World Wide Web.



DOCUMENTATION

The documentation of a digital copy and its content (i.e. the material object that it depicts) is the process of recording some basic information about the object and its digital copy, as well as the narration of the story related to it.

Title of the object - digital copy

The title of an object and its digital copy depends on the type of the object itself. For example, books, artworks and popular industrial products have specific titles or names - and most of the times, we can trace such information by doing a simple search on the World Wide Web. However, other types of objects, such as handmade creations, personal and familial photos, manuscripts and public documents (e.g. letters, postcards, private agreements, passports, etc.), don't have specific titles that describe them. In these cases, we have to think of brief descriptive titles for them, taking into account the type of the object (e.g. diary, photo, ticket, etc.), its material (e.g. ivory comb), its usage (e.g. jewellery box), the culture of origin, or the era of its creation (e.g. Bulgarian costume, dowry agreement of the year 1900).

Creator / Manufacturer of the object

The creator or manufacturer of an object depends, once again, on the type of the object. Books, artworks, and popular industrial products have specific writers, creators, and manufacturers respectively - and most of the times, we can trace such information by doing a simple search on the World Wide Web. In the case of handmade creations, personal and familial photos, manuscripts and personal documents, the creators are specific persons, whom we might know or not. In any case, even if we know a creator (personally or otherwise), there is always the possibility that (s)he wishes to remain anonymous. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration and respect such preferences or requests for anonymity during the process of documentation, i.e. before publishing the creator's identity on the World Wide Web.

Time and place of creation / manufacturing of the object

If we manage to trace the creator or manufacturer of an object, it is easy to trace the time and place of its creation or production. Of course, sometimes it isn't possible to identify the exact year, or the exact place of creation or production (e.g. 1902, Athens). But, even in these cases, it is possible to define the historical era or the geographical area (e.g. beginnings of the 20th century, Greece).

Provider of the object / digital copy

In the case of the digital collection Outcast Europe, the providers are the individuals and the collectives that contribute content to it. The providers of the objects and of their digital copies might be the same people or not. In any case, there is always the possibility of providers who wish to remain anonymous as well. Their preference for anonymity must also be respected when providing the digital copies and their documenting information - i.e. before their publishing on the digital collection.

Description of the object

The description of the object (which the digital copy depicts) presents information related to its form, usage, mode of production, content or interpretation - i.e. it includes all the information that characterise the object, and probably distinguish it from others. This description helps: (a) researchers and educators to evaluate if the object is useful to them as historical evidence, and (b) people with visual impairments to have better access to the digital collection.

Story of the object

In the case of the digital collection Outcast Europe, the narration of the story related to an object is considered to be its most important documenting information. After all, it is these stories that make this collection an interesting source of information and knowledge for the phenomena of migration and enforced movement, not the objects themselves. However, if we want to contribute content to the digital collection Outcast Europe, we don't need to have professional writing skills. Everyday, we tell many different stories, even in the context of our most simple, oral conversations with relatives, friends, colleagues or acquaintances. Therefore, we do have storytelling skills, and we can describe simply what makes an object so important to us or to the person who gave it to us, which memories it brings to mind, and how it got to belong to our possession. Just like we would narrate this story to a friend or a relative.

Tone of Voice

Whenever we publish information and stories on the World Wide Web, we are able to address many different people at the same time. But we are unable to know if they understand our writings and how they interpret them. This means that we can't provide them with more information and clarifications to avoid or control any misunderstandings. Therefore, whenever we contribute information and stories to the digital collection Outcast Europe, it is important to use a welcoming and polite tone of voice, and never use insulting and aggressive words or phrases. In addition, it is preferable to write short and clear statements, use active instead of passive voice, provide specific information, and avoid complex and unnecessary jargon.



PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA

When we publish personal and familial stories on the World Wide Web, we can't control who might read them, or how other people might reuse them. Therefore, the best thing to do is to publish only the information we can share with everyone, i.e. the information that isn't too personal or sensitive. Additionally, it is important to protect anonymity -both our own and of others-, even when we don't consider it necessary. Lastly, when we want to publish objects and stories entrusted to us by our family members, friends or acquaintances, it is necessary to have their explicit -and preferably written- consent to do so.



INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AND LICENSES

Every time we create a cultural work (e.g. photo, video, audio recording, text, etc.) we are -automatically but for a limited timeframe- the owners of the intellectual property rights of this work (i.e. of its copyright). As copyright owners, we can grant certain permissions, allowing others to reuse our work freely and legally for various purposes (research, education, artistic creation, even commerce).

As far as the digital collection Outcast Europe is concerned, Inter Alia has published most of the digital copies of the objects collected during the homonymous project, and their descriptive information under the terms of the CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license, to permit their free reuse for non-commercial, research and educational purposes.

Inter Alia suggests to all of us who wish to contribute content (digital copies and information) to the digital collection Outcast Europe, to publish it under the terms of the same license, as long as the original objects don't fall under copyright law, or copyright has expired.

In case the original objects are copyrighted, we need to have the explicit -and preferably written- consent of the copyright owner(s) to digitise the objects and publish the copies online under the terms of the CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license. In addition, we need to be the copyright owners of the digital copies we want to contribute to the digital collection, meaning that we have to be the ones who created them. Otherwise, we need, once again, to have the explicit -and preferably written- consent of the copyright owner(s) to do so.

It is important to note that the Creative Commons licences can't be revoked. As soon as a cultural work (analogue, digitised or born-digital) is published under the terms of a Creative Commons licence, it can be reused freely (under the terms of the license) until the expiration of copyright. The inspirers of the Creative Commons licences included this provision into their legal text to ensure the 'openness' of the cultural content for the further development of knowledge and culture, and consequently, for the prosperity of societies.

By publishing the existing and contributed content of the digital collection Outcast Europe under the terms of the CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 licence, we contribute to the open movement, its vision, mission, and goals. However, if we don't want to grant reuse permissions for our own content, we don't have to contribute images, information and stories to this digital collection. We can simply browse and explore the collection, which is equally important.



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