

SOCIAL EDUCIRCATION PROJECT

SOCIAL EDUCIRCATION EXPERIENCES AND IDEAS FOR A GOOD PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT. 2014-2016

SOCIAL CIRCUS FEATURES

- Social circus makes circus possible for everyone in a group context that focuses on inclusion (people with disabilities, language issues, people in difficult situations, people with different social and cultural backgrounds,...). Circus can be used as a tool to answer the different needs of people, as a tool for group binding, as a tool for personal, motor and social developments... The skills that can be learned through circus can be used in everyday life.
- It has pedagogical, personality-developing and community-building effects. This sort of motion programme has the advantage that the participants grow to like it easily.
- In social circus, people can learn from each other's experiences as they go along.
- It can build united groups, which play, work and support each other, and removes them from negative circumstances of their reality.
- With different objectives- including having fun- people feel part of something, are able to play together, and show what they can achieve ... This makes social circus close to social work and community work.
- Using tools of circus, entertainment, art, and fun to enrich kids and youth with fewer opportunities. Healing power of social circus with pedagogy and education is a way to help kids and youngsters at risk.
- Social Circus is becoming more and more not just an idea, but a movement. A movement of developing certain ideas & skills in a community, society, the world. These ideas & skills are inclusive, helping groups of people who may or may not suffer under the circumstances of a society, learn awareness and try to create a friendly and fair environment with a good code of ethics. The Circus is the perfect base for it, because you work with your body, soul and mind all at the same time and through that strengthen yourself as an individual and also as part of a group.
- The Social Circus Instructor or Community worker has the function of a role model and therefore can have a lot of impact on the people he or she is working with. He or she knows a lot of games, to not only bring fun in his/her classes, but to use this as a medium of transporting a code of ethics. All of the described is saturated with a massive amount of creativity, countless possibilities in its execution and, of course, fun.

WHAT DID PEOPLE LEARN WITHIN THE WORKSHOPS?

- We not only had to meet with our team in connection with circus techniques but also for other team-building purposes.
- The structuring of a social circus organisation and the roles within it. To work in groups in order to adapt the skills and knowledge to suit the needs and abilities of the user group. Ethics, communication, roles, boundaries, safety and more through a series of theory, and many games and practical exercises due, in part, to the geographical spreading of the participants.
- That a daily show and tell is a good end to the session providing a sharing, fulfilling confidence booster, which is very important if the purpose is to make a final show.
- Is not as important to teach circus techniques as to teach games about how to use them, like clowning, magic tools, aerial possibilities for handicap people, the voice as part of a tool set to form and establish

strong groups and an atmosphere of unity, how to use the adaptive juggling, toys, and tools creatively, sensory dance. Furthered my understanding of the purpose of social circus; to offer people the opportunity to take control, to move differently, to be creative, expand social skills.

- How to cross borders.
 - How important it is to be flexible in working with different people and its possible handicaps. To be patient and follow the tempo of them.
 - How to break an exercise into different steps and games so people can grow with a lot of success, experience, and to challenge them in every step forward. Make it fun for them and for oneself, play with them, discover things together, enjoy every smile and every sparkle in their eyes and everyone will have a wonderful experience.
 - How thankful the patients (children, people with disadvantages...) are, they are happy with small things, we can learn a lot from them too, they support each other very well and they let everyone participate, without hesitating.
 - Not to make so many assumptions or prejudices (for eg. working with prisoners)
 - Teaching with non-verbal communication, without speaking, just using social circus tools and games.
- how to work with an international group and that it takes a lot of patience, planning, determination to make something like this happen.
- Participants basically learnt that they like to work with social circus and people, and they want to keep learning furthermore.
 - Further develop self-ability to take stories onto circus equipment and express ideas in the air. New way of moving- slowly, really feeling own equipment, really connecting.
 - To work in a safe environment, the importance of circle time at the beginning and end of the session and to create solutions on immediate problems.
 - Circus is an artistic expression which can be used to express emotions and feelings.
 - The potential for isolation within a group - how and why it can happen - which is extremely useful, because it allows us to empathise better with people who struggle with problems.
 - Teaching teachers, it is important to let the participants experience what it is like, rather than show them how to do it. Powerful pedagogic lesson in this that will help across the board with self teaching: it is better to enable people to struggle and to support them to move through that struggle, rather than to avoid struggle by simply showing people how it's done.
 - How powerful a tool can self skills be and open senses, to consider the impact of this on others or how you can functionally benefit others to develop a greater sense of confidence and self esteem. This could help from anything enabling greater creative expression to assisting with employment opportunities.
 - Developed oneself and my own ideas about social circus through a week-long experience sharing knowledge, life experiences and discussions with others.
 - Learnt about other social circus initiatives in Europe and met wonderful people implementing them!
 - About the attitude of the circus trainer or social worker in the circus groups. The boundaries of the roles of the social worker and the trainer. The role of the community worker or the social circus instructor - the significance of this work on improving a society and for that to connect with people with the same interest.

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- To trust. We exist to discover and to share.
- To manage community events, and how to divide responsibilities in a big group and make decisions which are normally made by less people.
- The importance of creating a safe and secure group-atmosphere, which includes introduction, rituals, clear rules, guided well-thought workshops and proper flexibility.
- The impact circus can have on the mentality and reality of handicapped people. How circus can work as a tool to inspire, transform, include, bring joy on so many levels. Through circus games and circus skill-sharing and developing, can be created some extra sense of community and humanity.

WHAT IMPACT DID SOCIAL CIRCUS HAVE ON THE CLIENTS? AND THEIR ORGANISATIONS?

1.- With disabled children:

The project was absolutely a positive experience for the participating disabled children. They were able to perform, which gave them a sense of achievement and focus. It opened a whole new world for them. We have had amazing feedback from play workers, social workers and parents saying that they have seen a level of engagement, creativity and focus from our workshop participants that they had never seen before. Everyone was able to be involved, they had no restriction. It was a physical and creative outlet for the children, the assistants and teachers noticed them using muscles that they don't usually want to move because it was like doing physiotherapy exercises without even knowing that they were doing exercises due to the circus atmosphere and games. We saw confidence grow in some children as the week went on and we began to develop relationships with them!

Great emotional eruptions. Opening new points of view. New type of relations.

They could choose what they wanted to do and we did it with them together, adapted it to them and making it varied if needed.

Opened their mind about circus work. That it's not just about doing something extraordinary, or impossible. It is about the atmosphere, the joy, what we bring to their life. Because we believe that there is no such thing as impossible. The organisation now has a good example of the sensibilities of this work.

2. With people in prison:

The impact was immense.

Social circus was introduced as a possible happening in this special place. The overall influence had a peaceful, creative and uniting character and it had a positive influence on the social aspects of the prison. The circus workshop gave the inmates the possibility to overcome some boundaries and in this way it was a very positive ventilation for the frustration to not be able to overcome those physical boundaries that kept the inmates in this place. It took them outside of their routine. In the beginning the prisoners were a bit closed with the foreign participants but later on there was a lot of contact and there was the vision of a company, they were surprised about themselves, what they could achieve. The progression each day and the huge progression overall could be seen. They found new strengths in themselves and the ability to feel a little pride and self confidence.

We all (participants, trainers and inmates) work at the same level and position, and we tried to approach them without prejudices, not seeing them as prisoners but as human beings, who want to learn, to play, to be part of a group and forget their problems for a while. They gave us massive respect from the first day. The administration could see the benefit, the prison guards backed this up with feedback : "the inmates are excited to get out of bed" indeed, some prisoners joined in an activity for the first time since they were in prison and also benefitted because of the good, enthusiastic atmosphere and the group dynamics.

3. With refugees in a refugee camp

The refugee families that we interacted with- adults and children alike- both gained a lot from our very small but significant contact. To bring a smile, even for such a short time, to people who are in desperate need, struggling to survive, is a valuable and important thing to achieve. Respite, even for a small amount of time, is so helpful and gives the feeling that perhaps there is a light at the end of a very dark tunnel. I think the people who run the camp- UN officials and volunteers alike were very happy to have our help as well. They need continued support. What we did was a mere drop of happiness in a huge, ever-expanding ocean of despair.

4. With the public of the Social Circus Performance

The public of Thessaloniki who came to see the show was sensitized. We were able to portray the seriousness of the European Refugee Crisis in an extremely watchable show, which made people really think about what is happening on a personal level, and I hope that with our help in spreading the word that perhaps more people will join in and help those in need.

The show gave goose bumps to the audience and made them feel for a short while what it's like to be a refugee.

5. With Roma and Gypsy women

We spent time with two different groups of women to practice some games and exercises with voices. The social impact was strong, there was a clear interchange between the Social Educircation teacher/ beneficiaries and the groups of women we worked with. The organizations were happy with the project.

Overall, we gave them an enjoyable, memorable experience but with more workshops, the women would really benefit in increased confidence and trust of new people. This would work if the workshops were designed as mother/baby workshops, so that the children were integrated more as the women brought their babies along to the workshops. It is an empowering experience to share music and playful exercises, rhythm with people from different cultures of the disadvantaged and vulnerable target groups that social circus projects usually are working with, so it is exciting for the organisation to be reaching out in this way. The Gypsy women felt really comfortable until the end of our workshop, and one of them sang in front of us. I hope that the Gypsy women felt equal, at least, it was a good first step, we planted a seed in them, they felt a connection, starting to dare to open up in unknown groups.

The activities we went through can be adapted to different age and social groups, joint to other circus or

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dramatic activities or independently as a workshop of giving confidence and reflection to a tool (voice) we use every day in communication but mainly without much awareness.

6.- With the refugee kids in an urban area:

It was totally successful, because we had a lot of youth involved in the workshop, and adult guests at the Friday closing show.

It was so good to see the change in the youth from Monday to Friday. They felt like a group. Youth who were seen performing in the show by other youth got a new type of respect. Even the youth-workers were surprised by the positive change in them. It improved self esteem, self knowledge, skills of expression, socialization and so on.

Showed that they could achieve new things even though they've lost so much. Making them forget for some time about their condition and make them equal.

Kids already talk about circus, they all want to get involved, so it was nice for them to meet a bunch of caring people from all around the world, and knowing that they can come and learn skills if they want. They will make friends with people from other countries. It's very important not to stay in a closed community of people from your own country when you are in a new place, and it's amazing for them to be welcomed like this by people who live in that place. We all know circus is not just about skills, we are a big family and they must be so happy to join in and to feel welcomed. Skills-wise they have been doing back flips in the streets with their mates, now they get to perform, and for the little ones coming to a space in a circus tent is magical, having some physical space around them is actually something that hasn't happened to them in quite a while as they live in a hotel with 1000 other people.

It helped build further their sense of community: taking care of, helping, being patient with and supporting each other. The youngest children were able to develop their social and physical skills. Developing their motor skills and body awareness. Learning to share, wait, work together, games, and rules. The parents were fast trusting toward us, even helping out and very proud of their children. The older children learned similar things, but the impact was very much more on their attitude and self-image. They were very surprised how much joy and positive energy they gained from the workshops. It transformed them during the workshop into something other than just 'refugees', they were and are part of the circus. With the need for focus, technique, creativity, perseverance, community, in order to achieve success, circus offered their minds something totally different to be occupied with than their present situation.

7. With the youngsters:

The impact was, positive self-esteem, empathy, communicative competence, success, perseverance, creativity and fun, brain developed, streamlined body.

The most important impact is its social effect, that the socially marginalized and excluded youngsters can experience in the group that they belong somewhere, and can make mutual relationships. It's also had a strong effect on their self-evaluation.

They had the freedom to try out a whole array of new games, skills and disciplines in a safe, supportive and adaptive environment with a group of practitioners from different countries. The meeting of new and exciting

people was a fun challenge which was mutually beneficial. The clients not only had a lot of fun and enjoyment, they also learnt new and innovative ways of movement, acrobatics, aerial using a variety of equipment some of which was adapted to suit the needs of the clients, for example putting a strap on the aerial hoop. The adaptive juggling toys were very successful. It was an empowering experience as everyone had a chance to perform and therefore to shine in the show which was very entertaining and well received by a very appreciative and raucous audience. The organisation seemed extremely happy with the workshops. They were pleased with these ground-breaking, door opening opportunities which gave the young people new confidences and a taste of exciting, new skills that could increase possibilities which would have both a physical and emotional enhancement. They were helped to understand the joy of making kinetic activities mixed with games. For them usually there is a routine to work on these things, when you present it like a game it changes everything and makes it fun to learn.

They got a life-changing/ enriching experience they will hold dear for the rest of their lives. They could experience new things about themselves and about the possibilities of expression.

Everybody went back home carrying a lot of experiences that has affected all of us in the most positive of ways.

Connecting, accepting, working in a creative way.

DIFFERENT FORMATS OF SOCIAL CIRCUS AND SPECIFIC TARGET GROUPS BY COUNTRIES

Hungary

Our sending organization, the Hungarian Juggling Association, holds Social Circus programmes for disadvantaged people and young Romanis. In this topic we have held programmes for youngsters coming from SOS Children's Home of Szeged. We regularly go to events and teach the use of juggling tools for adults with different mental and physical disabilities. Moreover this is the semester that we hold lessons for people with dyslexia, attention disorders, and vision and hearing impairments. We do this in consistent weekly, free, open access outdoor circus skills workshops, usually with at least 3 instructors using object manipulation, equilibristics, aerial and acrobatic skills, dance, music, costume making and visual arts.

The Hungarian Juggling Association has various social circus projects, from event days to long-term projects, focusing on mentally disadvantaged, Romany, and youngsters living in disadvantaged/ poor areas. In Artemisszió we are working with Romany youngsters on projects using the tools of social circus and applied/ community drama. In our country it is not clear if our government will welcome refugees in this new crisis situation or not. We have worked with refugees in the past. If there is some financial application to donate to this group, our organisation plans to apply and win this source.

UK

Social Circus is still a relatively new concept in the UK. In England, it is less acceptable to touch children, so circus with youth poses some challenges due to the fact that it requires people to climb on other people whilst working in an acrobatic manner. Social Circus definitely exists, and National Centre For Circus Arts

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in London is researching it. We in Bristol run the Invisible Youth, where we work with children from differing Ethnic Minority backgrounds, and Nofitstate Circus in Cardiff often run projects working with Roma and other traveller-background children. With the ever-growing European crisis however, I do believe that there is a huge calling for this work to be continued. Many of our colleagues are working to take aid to refugees in Calais, and The Invisible Youth took a trip last November to take circus shows and equipment to the children in Calais. The Invisible Youth mostly focus on regular work in a playground, however there are occasional workshops for charities that we host. We have been working with youth from Ethnic minority backgrounds in an adventure playground every Sunday for the last 4 years. We also travel to Calais and Dunkirk to run workshops, perform little shows and have built a playground there as well. Circus is frequently used as a tool to inform the public of ideas or news, especially in England.

Spain

In Comunidad Valenciana (Spain) there are four circus associations who work with social circus in small projects. In Spain in general, social circus is promoted by circus schools or other circus associations. They use their own spaces to work in collaboration with local schools, but it is not very common to develop these kinds of workshops outside of these places.

Up until, and including, now we have "circo en familia", lessons for parents with their children playing with the trainer through circus materials- aerial, balls and hoops. In Spain there are a lot of small social circus projects but they are not consolidated.

Belgium

In our weekly circus lessons we have children with ADHD, autism and dyspraxia. Our circus school participates in many different social projects. During the last three years there has been a circus camp for teenagers with mental disabilities, and projects working with blind participants. In general we (Cirkus in Beweging) work in two formats. 1) We try to embed 'people in social contexts' in our normal lessons, holiday classes, workshops, and 2) We go to specific places to do social circus with kids or adults, eg the prison, the neighborhood organisation. Cirkus in Beweging started a circus-course this year for 'OKAN'-participants (language classes for newcomers in Belgium). Cirkus in Beweging included the 'OKAN'-participants and refugee teenagers in the international youth circus festival it hosted from the 8-12th August 2016.

Germany

In Berlin we have a relatively strong social circus network. Cabuwazi and other circus organisation are placed in Berlin. Cabuwazi works with disadvantaged kids across Berlin, and also with the refugees, particularly now. We deliver free drop-in sessions at a local playground. We are there regularly and the young people are able to drop in and out of sessions and receive attention, training and encouragement without being obliged to reach a target or goal, or stay for an allotted time. We also run more committed projects at the Playground where we create a show over 3 or 5 afternoons. We offer free trips to shows to inspire the young people and offer them opportunities to experience culture and travel they wouldn't usually be able to afford or access. We also run more focussed classes and offer a percentage of free places to students from

limited financial backgrounds. Cabuwazi refugee circus: CIRCUS BEYOND BORDERS F.E. this was a special training for teachers. Social circus in prison is not a completely new thing in Germany but there are hardly any publications or notifications of past projects. So overall it has not been introduced to a wide range of officials or the society in general.

Greece

Our social circus projects reach three different target groups on a weekly workshop basis.

1. Psychiatric patients in the psychiatric hospital of Thessaloniki and in special shelters, 2. Male adult prisoners in the main prison facility in Thessaloniki, 3. Unaccompanied mistreated children and youth living in a shelter.

Through Kids in Action and other organisations, social circus exists in various formats. Social Circus in prison, social circus in psychiatric facilities, with Roma children, with refugees and other minorities and of course with a lot of work on the street.

Czech Republic

Cirqueon is part of different social circus networks, our trainers are specialized in "blind circus trainings", but also work with people with special needs continually during the year. We also have a lot of to do with Gypsy minority groups, and there are organisations working with them that cooperate with circus artists from our organisation. We also work with groups in the children's psychiatric centre. The last one was a fixed group with 20 sessions, culminating in a show at the end.

HOW TO INTRODUCE SOCIAL CIRCUS WITH SPECIFIC TARGET GROUPS IF THIS STILL DOESN'T EXIST IN YOUR COUNTRY

Great ideas from partners of the seven different countries :

- I would really like to research creating assisted aerial equipment. I think it is very easy for us to approach local schools for children with disabilities.
- We could go to a school for children with disabilities and do workshops there, or let them come to our training space. There should always be teachers of the children in the space!
- As the introduction of projects, evaluation and the passing on of acquired knowledge is part of our Erasmus duties this will happen automatically in all partner organisations. I imagine we will introduce it with a lot of motivation still carrying the positive memories of the success of the project.
- I would love to have a short introduction in a prison setting for other colleagues, to have such a workshop to experience as what I have experienced. I think we need a slow partnership to develop over time as - Cirkus in Beweging has done over 2 years teaching juggling...
- I want to take the example to the department of social pedagogics. Sharing this experience with my colleagues, doing research on social projects in Czech prisons. Maybe there is a similar organisation working in some of the prisons; I would start with these contacts, introducing the project.

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- With a proof investigation of existing social circus project in EU with the support of international and local organisations with a professional team of circus teachers who start the project.
- We could encourage the children that we work with to think about racism and migration and teach them the same techniques that we learned to create a show.
- We have been discussing the possibilities of introducing a weekly workshop to local refugee groups, however funds are limited, as is people-power. I would like to look into gaining funding to support this.
- Starting with a good team of social circus trainers; trying to have a strong collaboration between circus associations and institutions; doing more projects using public spaces, bringing circus everywhere; working in collaboration with other circus groups (from other centres and other countries)
- I think besides the Roma group we will be able to use these activities in diverse target groups of social projects, as they have a great potential to be combined with other elements and tools of non-formal education, theatrical methods and other creative approaches. The work we learnt isn't solely applicable to one specific target group, but to a wide demographic and so can be introduced and used with pretty much any target group, regardless of age, ability, gender, or ethnicity. The scope for positive effect is clear, whether such a methodology is used to teach breathing, relaxation, singing, acting, voice projection, general communication, public speaking, etc.
- We will start making actions in refugee camps starting from 2 April, which is the social circus day. Also in our festival (ATHENS CIRCUS FESTIVAL) 17-20 June that is being held in the centre of Athens and has free entrance, we will give information and workshops about social circus.
- Firstly, to talk with the government and to the only centre of refugees that we have in Valencia, (there are only 2 centres of refugees in Spain), and trying first to enter the space, and then take them to specific circus spaces.
- This is a hard question and it needs a lot of consulting with the social circus action group members.
- We want to make a group of clowns to visit the camps that are located around Thessaloniki.

HOW TO USE AND SPREAD THE KNOWLEDGE ON SOCIAL CIRCUS IN THE FUTURE?

- We would like to show the group-building activities to the Peer Helping group of the University in order to be able to help more effectively the students with disabilities and to minimize their feeling of lagging behind the others. We would like to contact more rehabilitation groups with whom we can reach more children with problems and we can spread the technique that we learnt during Social Educircation.
- We will host a presentation, but also continue to work regularly in Bristol and to share our learnings with the people we meet and work with.
- First of all we will speak of our experiences this week in a meeting with other circus teachers of our school to spread the things we learned. We are going to build the shuffle board of Quat and explain how to use it so the other teachers can use it too. I also want to try things that I learned in weekly lessons, but I want also to participate more in the social circus of our circus school and I would like to participate in another international workshop. In that way I can collect more knowledge and tools for doing social circus.

- Thanks to the Hungarian Juggling Association we could come to this project and in a meeting we will share our experience and observations. We would like to use the different techniques and games in our own programme as well. We think that the good atmosphere is very important among the people we work with so we will definitely apply the team-building games that we have played here every morning.
- talk to all colleagues -facebook -make an amazing document to spread through all social circus organisations in EU -website Educircation
- I am in the process of contacting people in Bristol who run other Social Circus projects. We have many colleagues who are part of the Performers Without Borders projects that happen in Nicaragua and India each year, and I have been talking to them about their projects. We just did a fundraiser show for the Calais trip where we spoke to the local community about the ever-growing issues the world is facing, and about the important work we are doing in Social Circus. There I met a lady who has been working with refugees in Malta for the past 5 years. She is in London studying how to deal with PTSD. 15 years ago she was in Salvadore, Brazil, working with street children in a circus and fully believes in the positive impacts that Social Circus can have on people in need. We spoke at length and have agreed to meet up again to further our discussions.
- I think the best way to spread it is by doing projects like these and constantly bringing back new skills and confidence in the subject. Starting little projects on the side to keep the practise going.
- I have already asked the university course leader where I work whether there is any chance for creating European exchanges. I am making a short film next week, which will be to some degree in response to the workshop, in which I am working with a choir of people.
- By applying skills learnt to the work I already do. By demonstrating these skills. By passing them on to other practitioners, or by applying them in classes or within performances.
- In my hospital clowning I already started to use my voice in a different manner and also with youth groups I am doing much more humming and opening up exercises with the voice...
- We would like to train some of our youth to become social circus trainers for other kids and youngsters from the camps and the region of Mardin, Turkey.
- I will organize workshops for staff pedagogical and social workers especially for people who work with socially maladjusted people. I will work with young juvenile delinquents using circus pedagogics.
- One of the really impressive things the trainer shared with us is an online platform of Cirque Du Monde with games, exercises, plannings ... This I will certainly use to spread information. We also shared information, books, dates of festivals, ... All these things can easily be used to spread the word of social circus.
- I think one of the best things is the exchange of knowledge which can be done through international projects, exchanges and meetings of people...these are times when the "magic" is rising.
- I'll make a report about it for the website of Educircation and Circus in Beweging. I'll present my experience of the workshop to my fellow-teachers and assistants at the next meeting. I'll tell everybody about it, share pictures and movies of the workshop on facebook, post them to relevant groups. I'll get in touch with people who work with refugees in order to look for possibilities to start our own projects. Everything I learned influences my day to day practice as a circus-teacher, especially in my social circus-projects, just as my previous exchanges. Except from this, and maybe most importantly, I've made new good friends and contacts in the network of circus-inspired people who believe that 'circus' (in the largest sense of the word) can spark social happiness. Through this interaction and by implementing as many social circus-projects all over the world as possible, the succes of it will spread itself.