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social circus booklet

Circus in discomfort zones



Social circus with refugees and asylum seekers as a tool for social change

“Circus in Dis-Comfort Zones” is the report of a three-day International Meeting devoted to social circus actions and projects involving asylum seekers, displaced people and refugees.

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Damit das Leben junger Menschen gelingt.



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I. Introduction

Why this booklet

This booklet is the result of a three-day International Meeting devoted to social circus actions and projects involving asylum seekers, displaced people and refugees. Its goal is to share our experiences, discussions, questions and reflections. We would like to identify a starting point from which future work, partnerships and research may develop. We aim to raise awareness about an increasingly important topic in today's Europe, as well as to support social circus trainers operating in contexts of cultural diversity. There, work is badly needed to negotiate tensions, cultivate belongingness, and build meaningful situations as well as relationships for the purposes of social change.

Thus, this text has no pretensions of providing easy solutions, recipes, guidelines or instructions for trainers. Rather than a manual, it can be seen as a report of the meeting, and as a way to share ideas springing from everyday life and work within a fast-changing, complex reality. We hope to add a first piece of a much broader and composite puzzle, to which other social circus trainers, instructors and researchers may contribute in the future.

Who we are

The meeting was facilitated by two trainers and mediators from Cirque du Monde, the Cirque du Soleil's social circus program. The participants are nine social circus trainers from the following organizations: AltroCirco (Italy); Cabuwazi (Berlin); Zirkus Giovanni (Bamberg); Circus Magenta (Finland); Circusplaneet vzw (Belgium).

For more information on these organizations, please refer to section 8 of this document.

The panel was not meant to be representative of the social circus movement worldwide. Adopting a simpler and less ambitious approach, participants were chosen based on the international connections our group has built over the years. We also owe a massive thank you to Cirque du Monde for its networking and training work. During the meeting, trainers and other professionals tried to address a need voiced by social circus instructors from all over Europe. Here, the recent peaks in migration flows have increased the need to work in intercultural settings and with people seeking asylum, for the purposes

of social inclusion, personal and community development. During the meeting, a first step was taken towards a broader conversation which, in the

future, will hopefully be much more detailed and effective.

We do acknowledge that the presence of many others would have been extremely helpful. We recognise that the absence of representatives of the group addressed by this specific branch of social circus (displaced people, asylum seekers and refugees) is particularly problematic. We also understand that their voices, views and direct experience of migration or displacement is to be included in future work, through direct contribution and participation.

However, as we mentioned before, our goal was to bring together a meaningful number of people to discuss shared concerns and ideas. This document is by no means meant to be exhaustive as per all the topics, information, problems and skills which can emerge when dealing with such a delicate and complex issue. Nor is it meant to be representative of the voice of people who were not present.

We considered extensively whether to put in writing the ideas emerged during the meeting. Any written text, and especially official publications, can be taken as a presumption of authority or expertise, or as an imposition of voice. However, despite the limits we were confronted with – of time, resources, vision and knowledge - we hope that this text can also be seen as a way to open up discussions. We wish to capture feedback, critiques and suggestions, and ultimately to gain new insights.

How we did it

The meeting was facilitated by two trainers from Cirque du Monde. They employed their skills and expertise to spark participants' dialogue on their knowledge, competences and main concerns as per their work with refugees, displaced people and asylum seekers. Participants from the meeting boast a wide range of experiences, having worked both in their own countries and abroad, in camps where people fleeing war zones live. The meeting consisted primarily of group work, discussions, and conversations during which stories and anecdotes, games and activities were shared. Participants were enabled to identify key, common issues, problems and hypotheses about effective responses, based on first-hand involvement.

Participants accepted to step in a 'creation zone', which often brought them outside of their comfort zone. They were urged to address issues and problems for which no easy fix can be found. In a way, the meeting itself represented a case of intercultural work, as a diversity of needs, views, languages, expectations, methods, experiences and contexts of reference was the base of the conversation. This booklet is the result of the notes taken during the meeting by an 'observing participant'.

Structure of the booklet

The booklet is structured as follows: section 2 specifies the contexts and ethical issues experienced by the participants in the Meeting. Section 3 provides the working definitions of the key terms and concepts employed in the booklet. Section 4 focuses on the risks and limits of social circus work with refugees and asylum seekers in the contexts specified in section 2, and in particular on the issue of the emotional safety of the professionals involved, and on the blurred definition of the concept of trauma. Section 4 ends with a few practical suggestions for social circus trainers and instructors dealing with situations in which emotional safety plays a pivotal role. Section 5 identifies some of the ways in which circus may be helpful in contexts of displacement, transit or attempt to start a new life in a reception country. Finally, section 6 reports some of the tools and reflections developed through group-work during the Meeting, in order to identify needs, goals, and suggest activities for social circus workshops, and for training for trainers.

2. Social circus stories

The following extracts aim to present the contexts in which the meeting participants work. It is important to bear in mind that the following reflections are based on specific situations: they by no means aim to cover the whole range of conditions, problems and backgrounds involved in social circus work with refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people. In fact, what follows is based on our circus experiences and may only be generalized to the extent that the people involved in other contexts consider appropriate.



Sirkus Magenta in Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan

Topi Hurtig, Sirkus Magenta

Social Circus Context

We, a team of 4 trainers from the Finnish social circus association Sirkus Magenta arrived in the Zaatari refugee camp in March 2013, only three weeks after receiving information that the project proposal for Finn Church Aid (FCA) was accepted. Upon entering the camp, the FCA compound and the small dirty circus tents, we remembered well the security training given by FCA's head of security, and prepared for any kind of violent confrontation.

Zaatari refugee camp

In March 2013, the Zaatari refugee camp was home to over 150,000 Syrian refugees, mostly from the southern part of Syria. It is a closed camp - once refugees enter, they will not be able to travel to and from the camp without permission - and getting a permit is a long and complex process. The camp is located in an open desert field, where temperatures range from under 0°C in Winter to over 40°C during the Summer months. Life in the camp in 2013 was dangerous and miserable. Water was scarce, as was the barely edible food. Our car was routinely stoned while driving in the camp. People were frustrated and angry.

Goals of Social Circus in Zaatari

FCA had started the circus activity under their psychosocial support program a few months before. The aim was to combat apathy in youth aged 15 to 24. Apathy in a refugee camp can have bad consequences. In addition to severe psychological issues, it may cause substance abuse, violence and even radicalisation. As a matter of fact, Zaatari turned out to be a fruitful recruiting ground for warring sides, including radical and terrorist groups. Child marriage and human trafficking were commonplace.

Circus experiences

The FCA compound was a rather well kept zone. It included two metal cabin containers, used as office, a filthy concrete toilet structure and the two circus tents - one for female use and the other for male use. Barely high enough to walk on stilts, the space with jigsaw puzzle flooring which could fit comfortably a maximum of 20 students. The first task was to find participants to get the circus classes started. Initially, one of the biggest challenges was conquering the community's acceptance. Nobody knew what circus is and people were sceptical. Some thought that "inappropriate" activities were carried out (there was laughter and joyous screaming), especially in the girls' circus tent. Scheduling the activity was frustrating too - youth under 17 must go to school to attend lessons, and girls and boys go to school at different times of the day.

By working hard and thanks to the help of the enthusiastic participants, who would recruit their peers, the classes were finally started. We settled for having two male groups: boys aged 15 to 17 and 18 to 26, and two classes for girls and women. Students were enthusiastic, friendly and interested in everything. The girls were particularly eager to simply run and play for, due to the local traditions, they were unable to do so in their everyday life. As mutual respect grew, the circus activity became very successful. The day would start with students lining up outside the FCA compound, but unfortunately only 20 per group would be able to join the workshop. The tents were filled with sweat and laughter.

Rules were created together with the students. There was structure. There was a safe, non-violent space. Magenta's Team 2 arrived in May and continued what Team 1 had started. Skill levels continued rising. After a July Ramadan break Team 3 arrived in August with a new task - to ensure the sustainability of the circus activity. The aim was to choose and train trainers, picked among the most gifted and suitable participants. Before this could happen, however, we had to face many complications. Thankfully, the training for trainers eventually began with 3 young women and 2 young men.

A different reality

Sometimes students fought each other. Sometimes some were angry with the Magenta trainers. Some lied compulsively. Some never smiled. Some students would leave and come back. Usually we never found out why. Some left to join the war in Syria. Some married at the age of 15 and the new husband forbade them to attend circus. Often juggling balls became hand grenades, clubs became missiles. News from home concerning death of a cousin or uncle were handled with a shrug.

It is very difficult as an outsider to understand the life refugees live and the traumas they suffer. We often questioned what we were doing there. What do people need the most - circus or proper housing? Clean water and food? Safety? Safe return to their home?

Now

The circus in Zaatari is a real circus school. It is famous in the camp and lessons are now held in a circus hangar with capacity for over 100 students. The circus has brought joy and laughter for hundreds of young girls and boys, women and men. Dedicated students rise from the ranks to become assistant trainers, then, finally, trainers. Some dream of starting a circus school once they get back to Syria. Unfortunately these skilled circus artists and trainers are not able to visit other schools, neither in Jordan nor abroad. Sirkus Magenta visits them every year, bringing in new tricks, fresh motivation and support.

Abraham

Abraham is an exceptionally gifted young student who attended the Zaatari circus school in 2013. He then left to go back to war-torn Syria. There, in his ruined hometown, he has started a freerunning club. The club has a FaceBook page that we follow with pride - sometimes they post flashy videos of Abraham leading a group of youngsters over ruined walls and buildings, doing flips and corks.



Social Circus Training for Trainers in SirkHane Iraq Social Circus School, Duhok Refugee Camp, North Iraq Kurdistan Region

Rafael Jack Sánchez Mc Guirk, AltroCirco

Context

I am a social educator and social circus trainer from *Circo Corsaro* Social Circus School in Naples. Simultaneously, I am a member of AltroCirco – a project for the development of social circus in Italy. In March 2017 I was invited to visit and lead a trainers' training in a refugee camp in North Iraq. I arrived in Duhok's Refugee Camp in Kurdistan on March 15th, 2017. I was going to live with a family from the camp while leading a three-week training for local trainers, dealing with social circus pedagogy and circus techniques.

Duhok – Khanke Refugee Camp

Duhok's Refugee Camp is located in North Iraq Kurdistan Region. The camp hosts more than 5.000 Yazidi families, who have been living there for more than three years. They arrived to the camp after fleeing their houses, forced by Jihadist terrorists who had been attacking their villages and communities in Mount Sinjar since August 2014. Life conditions in the camp are extreme: refugees live in plastic tents, the average temperature is 40 degrees, people have limited access to running water and electricity, there are no clean personal hygiene areas, no where to go, no work opportunities and, essentially, no hope. Families are under heavy pressure, living extremely precarious lives. They suffer from the war-induced trauma stress, from desolation and general depression. Alcohol abuse is also becoming a problem among young male adults and teens, and needs to be dealt with. The daily life of the refugee camp leaves children and teenagers in a very vulnerable situation.

Goals of SIRKHANE IRAQ

Sirkhane Iraq is a very small circus tent in which you can barely do a summersault! Located in the Refugee Camp, next to the coordinator's family tent, Sirkhane trains children and teenagers in circus skills like juggling, clowning, acrobatics and balance. Circus offers children and teenagers an environment free from alcohol abuse and violence. It shows children another reality, it provides a space in which they can feel free, they can make friends and be together. Under the circus tent, as they play and learn, they also create healthier dynamics which help combatting the apathy and hopelessness of the camp. Circus brings joy and happiness to many other children in the camps, too. Students from the circus school often perform for children of their own camp or other neighbouring camps in Kurdistan. Sometimes, the circus offers temporary work opportunities to young circus artists who perform for other organizations and sociocultural events.

Circus experiences

On March 15th, 2017, I was welcomed by a family in the Khanke Refugee Camp in North Iraq Kurdistan Region. My mission in the camp was to lead a two-week training programme focussing on social circus for young local trainers. My plan was to live with a refugee family and develop my work during the day time. Sirkhane would provide the family with some money for my food and accommodation, an Iraqi sim card and a 4G internet card for any emergency contact. A coordinator from the local organization introduced me to the family, the circus space and participants, and drew up a schedule for me. Once everything was arranged, I was left to my own

devices in the camp.

My work didn't start as I had planned and imagined. I had designed a programme based on an experiential learning methodology in which young local trainers and I would study some important pedagogical and psychological concepts of the social circus method. But none of that was possible: the circus space was too tiny, trainers didn't understand English; the only person who actually did speak some English was illiterate. All that made it very difficult for me to do any conceptual work or provide any theoretical support. The local trainers who I was to lead were youths who had very basic circus and teaching skills. Meanwhile, there were dozens of children and teenagers hoping to learn circus from me.

Following my initial plan was impossible even though I tried to act in many different ways: first, I used non-verbal communication and led all circus lessons so as to use myself as a "model". Second, I organised extra workshop and searched for English speakers in the camp who could help me to convey at least some key concepts. I thought that, after all, being a social circus trainer myself, I embodied all the main concepts. Unfortunately, the young circus trainers weren't really interested in the concepts, methods and strategies I was trying to share with them. They were only interested in learning juggling tricks for themselves, and could not be bothered to acquire new teaching and leadership strategies.

I felt stressed and powerless because I wasn't able to work as planned and achieve what I had set out to do. In addition, living in the camp made me aware of the many hardships and penuries that need to be addressed there. As a result, I felt the responsibility to take action.

I finally came to the conclusion that the best thing I could do was to forget about all my conceptual theory and just teach circus in a more open way so everybody could participate. I also took some time to observe and actively listen, so as to re-define and re-orientate my work.

Now

Sirkhane is still giving joy and happiness to many refugee children in Iraq. Majed, who is the head of the circus project, is working with a team of young circus artists from other camps around Kurdistan, in order to establish connections and multiply the impact of the project. International Volunteering is momentarily paused because of war conflicts next to the border, but Sirkhane created an online platform so that organizations, trainers, educators and many other people from inside and outside the camp can share tricks, strategies, methodologies or other information.



Social Circus with refugees at Cabuwazi Berlin

Tobias Lippek, Cabuwazi

Context

A year ago, a container village for temporary housing for 500 refugees was built next to the CABUWAZI circus ground in Berlin-Altglienicke/Germany. On the first arrival day, CABUWAZI members who were next to the container village organized a four-day circus festival. That the dates of the circus festival and the opening of the container village happened to be on the same day was coincidental. Before the first show of the festival started, a group of 30 dressed up circus artists knocked on the door of the container village. After a 20-minute chat the security staff opened the doors and the circus artists entered the container village. 15 minutes later a party started in the container village. At the end of the party approximately 120 inhabitants from the container village followed the circus artists to the CABUWAZI grounds where the festival was about to begin. The big top was fully crowded and after the show, one could see nice and peaceful encounters with all members of the community.

A few days later some kids who had trained for several years at CABUWAZI came by and told us: “if the refugees will stay, I can no longer come to CABUWAZI, our parents have just told us.”

Shortly after the opening of the container village, the proportion and the complexity of the community building-issue was manifested. Many conflicts emerged in the neighbourhood in the meantime. In peripheral urban areas of Berlin, many container villages for refugees are scheduled for building. Those areas have a need for initiatives to bridge gaps in the involved communities.

Now, one year after opening the container village there is a great interconnection on the CABUWAZI circus space. People of all ages and from all social backgrounds interact happily.

Despite the potential for conflict, every day, all the involved experience peaceful encounters within the circus space. Those encounters are a triumph over the dividing forces in society.

Context

In May 2017 CABUWAZI opened a new tent location in the heart of Berlin, at the old airport in Berlin Tempelhof which is nowadays an open park for everyone. CABUWAZI Beyond Borders has now found a home in CABUWAZI Tempelhof, while it still continues projects in other venues, such as public social centres. Right next to the new tents, a container village is being built as a temporary home for refugees. The Berlin municipality assigned to CABUWAZI the task of carrying out cultural work with the youth living in the refugees' accommodation. CABUWAZI Beyond Borders will focus on including children from the container village into the ongoing circus activities. On top of that, it has already started new evening trainings, which are specifically aimed at young adults, refugees and Berliners alike. The atmosphere in these trainings is so powerful and enthusiastic that we cannot wait to see what will come out of it in the final shows! So far, we are already very happy that people from all over the world were enabled to create strong bonds, based on shared ideas, in a space where cultural, linguistic and religious differences do not matter.

Goals of Cabuwazi Beyond Borders

The project „CABUWAZI Beyond Borders“ is based in Germany's capital, Berlin, and targets young refugees, providing them with an opportunity to take part in circus activities.

In the beginning of 2015 the project started organising one to two-week long circus initiatives. These activities took place in different accommodations for refugees all over the city and offered daily and weekly circus courses too, in the same locations. Shortly after, CABUWAZI Beyond Borders started cooperating with schools and youth and family centres. By doing so we would ensure that circus trainings would take place in public spaces, enabling young refugees to meet their peers from Berlin and to get to know the area they lived in better. While training on different circus disciplines – such as acrobatics, juggling, trampoline and balance – children and teenagers feel free to explore and emboldened as for their personal and social capabilities. Besides the development of body and mind the participants gain and improve their German language skills, too. In that regard, CABUWAZI Beyond Borders offers circus weeks with a special focus on learning the German language.

The circus activities always end with a fantastic final show, where participants present their new artistic skills to an audience consisting of friends, families, neighbours and schoolmates. Some of the shows take place in different CABUWAZI tent locations too. That enables participants to feel the magic of circus even more.

Alongside the regular circus activities for and with young refugees, CABUWAZI Beyond Borders takes part in various festivals in Berlin as well as in other German cities. The next exciting steps will be an inclusive trip for young adults to the European Juggling Convention in Lublin (July 2017) and in August a circus camp for refugee youth.

The team of CABUWAZI Beyond Borders consists of three coordinators and around 30-40 circus trainers who are supported by German, European and international volunteers and interns. The trainers' team was recently integrated by a group of young adult refugees. We are particularly proud of that, because they provide a great deal of support and because they bring in the refugee's perspective. Over all, the team is very proactive and together they take part in regular workshops and seminars about racism and discrimination, flight and trauma, communication, etc. They can count on single and group supervision to ensure they are well in these difficult working conditions.

All of the described circus activities are financed with public and private money. Many of the activities are funded by „Zirkus macht stark“ (circus makes you strong) and „Paritätischer Gesamtverband“ which are financed by the program „Kultur macht stark“ (culture makes you strong) of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Besides that, different foundations like the „Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband“ and „Foundation Rotary Club Berlin“ fund the project as well as companies and private persons who support it by donating money to CABUWAZI Beyond Borders. CABUWAZI Beyond Borders activities involve more than 150 refugees every week. They bring refugees and Berliners together in open and inclusive trainings.

By opening circus activities to young refugees, we want to create a space and a time where people can meet and get together, so relationships can be built in an unconventional way, beyond the borders of the German asylum seeking system. We believe in differences as a synonym for variety, which in turn we see as useful potential and competences to lay the foundations of a good life for everyone.



Social Circus with unaccompanied minor refugees in Zirkus Giovanni Bamberg (Germany).

Volker Traumann, Zirkus Giovanni Bamberg

Context

The Don Bosco youth centre in Bamberg is part of a worldwide network of Don Bosco facilities where children and young people in emergency situations are looked after. These Don Bosco facilities operate in 130 different countries. In Bamberg, we are currently (June 2017) looking after 70 German children and young people and 50 unaccompanied minor refugees, in healing and therapeutic residential groups. The Zirkus Giovanni belongs to the Don Bosco youth centre and has its own circus tent at the heart of the facility. There, we provide integrative circus offers for the young people from all over the city and from the residential groups.

The permanent threat of deportation

In every refugee group, live ten predominantly male adolescents. About 40 per cent of our young people is from Afghanistan. The remaining 60% is from Syria, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Benin, Togo, Ghana and Senegal. Syrian and Eritrean refugees have a greater chance of recognition. Ghana and Senegal, on the other hand, are currently regarded as “safe countries of origin” in Germany. Although Afghanistan is not considered a “safe country of origin”, some regions of Afghanistan are considered pacified. Thus, the Federal Government believes that young Afghan refugees can flee into the refugee regions of Afghanistan. A deportation at the age of 18 is therefore very probable for this youth. The Bavarian police decided to send twelve planes of refugees back to Afghanistan in 2017. A plane every month. The anxious fear of tomorrow’s deportation is largely spread among the Afghan youth. We also accompany young people to the so-called “hearing” of their case to the Central Foreigners Office. Based on our experience, we wouldn’t deem these hearings as very pedagogical and age-appropriate. Decisions made by decision-makers are partly arbitrary and they heavily depend on who is the decision-maker.

School and work

If the young fugitives have problems at school, they have to take an intelligence test or performance test to be classified. This test is in German, but does not take into account language barriers. The result of the test is often very bad and corresponds to the result of young people with learning disabilities. This is very frustrating for many refugees.

Many come from families with a high educational level. In Germany, this “suddenly seems to be worth nothing”.

We sometimes hear the sentence, “here, I am considered as if I were a dog.”

Young people aged 16 to 18 attend a vocational school. However, they do not receive any professional preparation. All they can do is take the secondary school leaving certificate. An internship permit or work permit is provided only when they are granted the status of refugee. Young people from Afghanistan, Senegal, the Balkans and Ghana can neither work nor do an internship.

Feeling sick

Many suffer from idleness. Many become lethargic, lack motivation and show severe mood fluctuations. This leads to depression, aggression and fear of deportation. These conditions add to previous traumas and psychosomatic issues. These sometimes lead to post-traumatic disorders, which in turn manifest themselves as sudden screaming or absence. In some cases, refugees are unable to sleep and have headaches. The partial depressive mood and frustration of the groups is often burdensome for the employees: some of them quit after a year or two.

Living among Germans

Refugees feel the prejudices of some Germans. In German cities, anti-refugees demonstrations are held, which increases refugees’ unease. However, in Bamberg the “pro refugees” movement is strong too, and it is taking a particularly firm stance against the deportation of Afghans. Sometimes our mentors go to the demonstrations with the young people. There, the youths can feel the solidarity and sympathy of many locals. We consider the rejection that some young people experience as a great danger, which could radicalise them.

Money and family

Often, the male refugees are the oldest sons of the family and keep in contact with the family they had to abandon. They feel the duty to take care of their family, financially too. The inability to fulfil this perceived duty puts them under great pressure, triggering anxiety. Each teenager receives a fixed pocket money each month, which is also intended for clothing. At the age of 18, for example, they receive 104 Euro. We help the young people to save money, but not for their families. This is not possible. The youths’ goal is to

have saved 500 Euros as per the day of their 18th birthday. By German law, at this time, they have to leave our residential group. Without money, housing and work they have very difficult starting conditions. The 500 Euros are also intended to pay for a lawyer to assist them throughout the asylum seeking procedure.

Goals of Zirkus Giovanni Bamberg

In the circus, as we observed, young fugitives are very open and motivated. Here the burden of everyday life becomes somewhat lighter.

Because of the special life situation, we try to implement the following principles in the circus:

- **Recognition and appreciation:** An important word that the young people use over and over is “respect”. They do not experience recognition and appreciation in Germany as they do in their own country. Our circus work goal is to let them experience themselves as something positive. Success stories are very important to them. Recognition and appreciation should also be given by trainers, other participants and the audience.
- **Together with German adolescents:** the participation of German peers is very important for integration. The residential group is like an island where young refugees seek and need opportunities to interact with the young people from the country where they want to live.
- **Coming into action:** The everyday life of young refugees is often determined by waiting and doing nothing. They often experience a lot of frustration due to language barriers at school, waiting for interviews or deportation after a rejection. Through the circus, the youths go back to action and actively participate in life.
- **A fear-free, playful space:** Daily life is often characterized by problems and oppressive thoughts. As a counter-balance, the circus tent should offer a fear-free, playful space, in which fun and positive experiences are at the forefront.
- **Self-Design:** In everyday life, young fugitives have little room to design their own ideas. They have little scope for action and decision-making on many things and their lives are often determined by others (e.g. asylum application). They feel helpless. We, on the other hand, want to give them a lot of room for co-determination, creativity and autonomous planning in the circus. We believe that refugees have a great need for self-organization and should be seen as someone who can take their lives into their own hands.

3. Key words and working definitions

In this section, we will clarify the specialised terms employed in the booklet, concerning both international migrations and social circus. While our goal is not to explain legal, political and social issues in depth, it is important to keep in mind that many of the problems faced by migrants in their daily lives – such as the lack of documents to work, access health and education, and travel freely - are due to the international regulatory system for migrations and asylum seeking. UNHCR acknowledges art as “a powerful advocacy tool to communicate stories” and channel voices, as well as a “vehicle for self-development and personal expression” (Parater 2015).

Through art, creative and effective ways to raise awareness and unleash potential may be found and developed.

For these reasons, the broader (legal, geo-political, cultural) context cannot be overlooked if art is to be used effectively as a means for social change.

Recent migration flows and the ‘refugee crisis’

Since the early 2000s, the Central Mediterranean route – from North Africa to Southern Italy and Greece – has become “the main avenue for irregular mixed migration flows towards the EU” (Pastore 2016). According to IOM (2017a), more than 350.000 migrants and refugees arrived in these countries by sea in 2016, while dead and missing migrants amounted to at least 5000. In 2017 (until May 14th), 53.912 arrived to Europe by sea, and 1.316 are already missing or dead (IOM 2017b).

There is a nexus between these numbers and the political crises and wars in North African and Middle-east countries, which started with the fall of the Tunisian and the Libyan regimes at the beginning of the 2010s, although the majority of people arriving to Italy seem to come all the way from sub-Saharan countries such as Nigeria, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Gambia (IOM 2017b).

At a national and European level alike, recent arrivals have become a highly political matter, affecting relations among EU member states. The economic crisis and the recent terroristic attacks have intensified polarisation, turning migration into an issue of national security in most European states. Moreover, migration governance and asylum seekers’ relocation strategies have sparked tensions and political fragmentation among Member States.

In Italy, for instance, the ‘refugee crisis’ and the growing difficulties asylum seekers face to relocate from Italy to other EU states (Pastore 2016) are now a tool for xenophobic and anti-Europe electoral campaigning, which

is popular across the political spectrum. This heightened social tension has recently reached a peak in the country: NGOs helping migrants to reach the country safely and rescuing them at sea were accused of smuggling people through the Mediterranean sea.

Anti-migrant and Islamophobic discourses and practices are becoming acceptable and mainstreamed all over Europe.

According to the European Network Against Racism Shadow Report, anti-migrant political discourses – often reproduced by mainstream and social media - and exclusionary migration policies “are having a disproportionate impact on racialised migrants. Migrants are increasingly the targets of racist violence and speech; and face discriminatory policies and attitudes hindering their access to the labour market” (ENAR, 2016: 1). In several countries, far-right parties and groups are growing and “setting the tone of the debate on immigration, particularly related to Muslim migrants” (ibid). For instance, in Germany, 1031 right-wing motivated crimes targeting asylum accommodation were registered in 2015 and 988 in 2016, a massive increase compared to the 199 reported in 2014.

Finally, within the frame of counter-terrorism policies, migrants’ criminalisation is going hand-in-hand with ethnic profiling: European border police is increasingly targeting people of colour and those who look ‘non-European’ more than white people. Cases of people reporting foreign nationals and Muslim migrants “due to alleged ‘suspicious behaviour’ or suspicion of radicalisation” (ibid: 3) are worryingly multiplying.

Migrant

Migrants move from their countries of origin to other countries, either permanently or for long periods. That is due to a variety of reasons, including searching for a better life by means of a better job, education, family reunion, etc. Unlike refugees, technically, they do not flee from direct threats of persecution or death, and face no impediment to return to their home countries. In addition, while refugees are protected by international agreements, countries refer to their own immigration laws and policies to deal with migrants (UNHCR 2016b).

Refugee

According to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, the term refugee applies to any person who, “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself

of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” (UNHCR, 2010: 14). Subsequently, this definition was expanded by international instruments, “to persons fleeing the general effects of armed conflict and/or natural disaster” (OHCHR 2017b).

A crucial requirement to gain the legal status of refugee is to cross an international border. That is why countries deal with refugees and asylum seekers both through national legislation and international law. Like UNHCR (2016) specifies, countries have specific responsibilities as for the protection of anyone seeking asylum on their territories or at their borders. According to EU law, residence permits for those entitled to the refugee status last three years. On the other hand, they only last for one year for people who qualify for subsidiary protection. During these periods, refugees and people under international protection are generally allowed to live and move anywhere within the Member State which has granted them asylum. Refugees and those granted subsidiary protection also have the right to take up employment, to be self-employed, and to access vocational training under the same conditions as nationals (FRA 2014). The acquisition of full citizenship remains instead a responsibility and prerogative of each Member State.

According to the UNHCR Global Trends report on forced displacement (UNHCR 2016a), there were 21,3 million of refugees worldwide at the end of 2015 – more than half of them being children under 18 - and **over 65 million people in need of protection and assistance as a consequence of forced displacement**, including refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum-seekers. An estimated 12.4 million people were newly displaced due to conflict or persecution in 2015 only. In the same year, **Syria remained the world’s largest source country** of refugees, with over 4.9 million people. **Turkey was the largest refugee-hosting country worldwide**, with 2.5 million refugees, followed by Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia and Jordan.

Asylum seeker

Asylum seekers flee their countries in the attempt to receive international protection and a ‘legal’ status – including identity and travel documents - in another country. The EU law concerning asylum seekers refers to different Directives, Charters, Conventions and Regulations. Moreover, the national and the European level overlap and this generates confusion, slow procedures and difficulty to access reliable information, fostering violations.

The Dublin Regulation determines which Member State is responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged by a third-country national or a stateless person (FRA 2014). In order to establish their entitlement to protection and the state where their request should be processed, an interview with each applicant is typically required.

The criteria range, “in hierarchical order, from family considerations, to recent possession of visa or residence permit in a Member State, to whether the applicant has entered EU irregularly, or regularly” (European Commission 2017). However, most of the times this responsibility is attributed to the Member State where the (usually irregular) entry was first registered. For this reason, many of them, willing to reach other European countries, attempt to avoid registration in the country where they first arrive. This is, for instance, the case of many asylum seekers who reach the shores of Italy and then try to cross the French border in Ventimiglia, or to get to Britain through Calais.

Moreover, although asylum seekers “have no legal duty to claim asylum in the first EU state they reach, [...] the “Dublin” regulation stipulates that EU member states can choose to return asylum seekers to their country of first entry to process their asylum claim” (Open Society Foundations 2016).

Asylum seekers must generally wait at least for a few months – depending on the length of administrative procedures - before their application for refugee status is accepted or rejected by the reception country. Under EU law, asylum seekers are allowed to remain in the member state where their claims are pending “until a decision by the responsible authority has been made” (FRA, 2014: 43).

This implies control and limitations to their freedom of movement. In fact, not only are registered asylum seekers not allowed to cross international borders, but social benefits generally depend on compliance to residency restrictions and other obligations in the reception country. In addition, in some situations, asylum seekers may be detained. For instance, they may be detained to determine or verify their identity or nationality, elements of the asylum application, and their rights to enter the territory (FRA, 2014: 148). Moreover, asylum seekers may be detained in case of risk of absconding (EUR-Lex 2017; European Commission 2017).

States can differentiate between nationalities when granting or denying access to their territory. In Italy, for instance, certain African nationalities, such as Nigerians, “are systematically prevented from formally claiming asylum in hotspots, and instead are directly issued a formal ‘refusal’ order” (ENAR, 2016: 3). Moreover, although Member States should also bear in

mind “that international and European human rights instruments prohibit discrimination, including on the ground of nationality”, they are “normally also permitted to attach differentiated conditions to such entry or residence such as stipulating that there should be no access to employment or no recourse to public funds” (FRA, 2014: 181). Thus, although EU law requires Member States to grant access to the labour market to asylum seekers at the latest nine months after their application, full residence rights may remain far from being achieved.

Internally Displaced person

According to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, presented to the Commission of Human Rights in 1998, and applied as a standard by “an increasing number of States, United Nations agencies and regional and non-governmental organizations” (OHCHR 2017a):

“internally displaced persons (also known as “IDPs”) are “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border.

[...]

Persons forcibly displaced from their homes who cannot or choose not to cross a border, therefore, are not considered refugees, even if they share many of the same circumstances and challenges as those who do. Unlike refugees, these internally displaced persons do not have a special status in international law with rights specific to their situation”. (OHCHR 2017b)

Therefore, a key point concerns the merely descriptive nature of the term “internally displaced person”, which does not correspond to a legal status and is considered an issue of national sovereignty: “it is the Governments of the states where internally displaced persons are found that have the primary responsibility for their assistance and protection. The international community’s role is complementary” (OHCHR 2017b).

This is important because the very government in charge for protecting IDPs is sometimes responsible for their displacement. This places these people among the most vulnerable in the world. According to (UNHCR 2017a) in 2014 38 million people became displaced due to crises in Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Nigeria, South Sudan and Syria, which accounted for 60 per cent of new displacements worldwide. In Syria, at least 40% of the population suffered displacement.

Refugee Camp

Refugee camps are places where refugees settle and are cared for by international organizations such as UNHCR. Protection includes safety from being returned to the place they fled, access to asylum procedures, and measures to ensure that human rights are respected while they wait for a longer-term solution. In principle, camps only represent a temporary solution to forced displacement: refugees should be enabled to be included, to work and to enjoy their rights and freedoms in their hosting communities (UNHCR 2017b).

In Europe, neighbourhoods or blocks of apartment buildings where high numbers of refugees live in close proximity are sometimes called refugee camps.

Unaccompanied minor

In the European Union, “an unaccompanied minor, as defined by Directive 2011/95/UE, refers to a minor who arrives on the territory of an EU Member State unaccompanied by an adult responsible or who is left unaccompanied after he or she has entered the territory of the Member States” (Dimitrova-Stull, Penas Dendariana, and Jurviste 2016).

According to UNICEF (2017), some 25.800 unaccompanied or separated children arrived to Italy by sea in 2016, that is, more than twice as many as in 2015. They account for 91 per cent of all the migrants and refugee children who reached Italy’s shores in 2016. This group is particularly vulnerable, as these children “find themselves alone in a totally unfamiliar environment”, and the system is failing to protect them. Among the six specific actions UNICEF advocates for in order to protect and help displaced, refugee and migrant children, social circus may effectively contribute to keeping them “learning and giving them access to health and other quality services” as well as to combating “xenophobia, discrimination and marginalization”.

Social Circus

The booklet adopts the working definition of social circus and other related terms provided by Cirque du Monde and reported below:

“Social circus is an innovative social intervention approach, which uses the circus arts - [including various circus techniques such as juggling, acrobatics, stilts, unicycle, trampoline, etc., as well as theatrical and clown acting] - as a tool for fostering the personal and social development of at-risk individuals. It targets various at-risk groups living in precarious personal and social

situations, including street or detained youth and female survivors of violence. The primary goal of this approach is not merely to learn circus arts. Rather, it's designed to help participants achieve personal and social development by nurturing their self-esteem and trust in others, teaching them social skills, inspiring them to become active citizens, and helping them to express their creativity and explore their potential.

Social circus is a powerful catalyst for creating social change, because it helps marginalized people to assume citizenship within a community and enrich that community with their personality” (Cirque du Soleil, 2014: 97).

Social circus instructor

Circus artist or teacher “whose main role is to teach various circus disciplines to social circus workshop participants” (Cirque du Soleil, 2014: 13).

Social, community or youth worker

“Social intervention expert who generally comes from the local organization or community that houses the project and whose main role is to work with the community participants, whom he assists in their personal and social development during social circus workshops” (Cirque du Soleil, 2014: 12).

Social circus trainer

“Professional who teaches circus instructors and community workers the basic or advanced concepts of social circus” (Cirque du Soleil, 2014: 99).

4.Risks and limits

During the International Meeting, after much discussion and sharing our experiences, a main concern and issue emerged: **what are the mission, the vision and the limits of a social circus instructor's actions in these contexts?** The underpinning of this question is related to the instructors' awareness of the risks and pitfalls of their work, and to their capability to exert control on them.

Social circus instructors are often involved in challenging work and contexts. In the case of refugees, displaced people or asylum seekers, they often do pioneer work which stretches beyond their safety zone. Social circus instructors need to rethink the tools and methods used in other contexts, when not to create their own tools from scratch. To do so, they are required to change their views and habits, even themselves. On the other hand, social circus with refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people leads instructors to deal with complex social factors and power relations, which may turn circus into something which is much more than recreation and leisure.

At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that actions within a social circus framework have many limits and may entail risks for social circus workers and the people they engage with. It is important to remember the different needs of those who take part in social circus activities. It is vital that social circus instructors pay constant attention to who is defining needs and goals, since, like a famous saying tells us, “*what you do for me, but without me, is against me*”.

Moreover, instructors have limited and specific competences and goals. We should all bear in mind that they are not supposed, nor are they able, to respond to all their target group's needs. There are limits to what they can do to help, both as professionals and as humans. These limits are dictated by personal safety issues, time and resources constraints, as well as individual powerlessness – at least in the short term – when confronted with the weight of history, culture and society. For these reasons, social circus is particularly effective when carried out within a broader system, such as a network of institutions, professionals and projects.

The diversity of contexts and problems presented in sections 2 and 3 above **makes it difficult, if not impossible, to outline common guidelines and identify across-the-board solutions for social circus projects with refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people.**

Moreover, not only does each project often differ from all others, but diversity can be found within a single project as well. People have different backgrounds, stories, family support, living conditions. Different views, goals, tastes. Different legal status. For instance, they might live in a transit zone temporarily, or remain stuck in a country that they want to leave. They may have reached their final destination, have long-term projects and may be looking for opportunities to start their new lives. They may be detained or experiencing residence and mobility restrictions, and they might be frustrated or desperate due to the lack of possibilities and resources. They may live in safe areas or war zones, camps, urban or rural contexts.

These different situations determine different needs, such as learning a language, studying, finding a job, sorting out papers or finding ways to travel elsewhere.

Circus may not always be helpful in addressing specific needs, but social circus studies and experiences prove that it can create meaningful situations for both individuals and communities, favouring social change through cascade effects.

Emotional safety

One issue emerged as central for social circus instructors and other professionals working with refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people: the need to look after both the participants' and their own emotional safety.

On the one hand, instructors must strive not to create unachievable expectations about things they are not able to deliver. They should keep a reflective attitude and stick to their professional, organizational and personal ethics. Instructors, trainers and organisations may act as models and references, and may be seen as representative of broader phenomena or countries. A misperception of their role and goals may thus occur.

As such, positionalities within social hierarchies and power relations, and the complexity of reality, must be acknowledged. Reductionist views and impositions of voice are to be avoided. ***Instructors should be aware of their ethnocentric perspective. When choosing the lenses through which they look at the world, they should opt for the least judgemental, trying to remain open to unexpected outcomes and different views.*** Moreover, people may have the wrong perception of what circus is. When that is the case, social circus workers need to find ways to explain that, for example, animals are not involved, or that the physical and moral integrity of the participants will not be threatened or undermined.

On the other hand, ***if instructors do not look after their own physical and emotional safety in the first place, it will be very hard to help others out of vulnerable situations.*** Depending on the circumstances, it might be better to avoid cases which tap on issues beyond the available expertise and resources. Social circus instructors should be careful, for instance, when they ask personal questions about the participants' backgrounds, stories and traumas. Moreover, ***if serious ethical or emotional issues arise, instructors should take the time to find professional help.***

What is trauma?

For the participants, the capability to feel emotionally safe may be an issue because they may have gone through traumatizing events:

“Trauma is defined as an event that is life threatening or psychologically devastating to the point where persons' capacities to cope are overwhelmed. Trauma may change brain structures related to memory and emotion, as well as brain circuitry. Following trauma, individuals relive the traumatic event, fragmented memories arise unexpectedly, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dysregulation occurs, and there is avoidance of reminders of the event”.

(Gilgun & Sharma, 2008: 8)

In this sense, ***trauma includes a process which is not limited to the traumatizing event itself, but extends to the narrative developed about it by the person involved.*** Identity is continuously constructed and reconstructed in relation to one's interpretations and representations of experiences, which in turn are influenced by social, cultural and community contexts. In this sense, the latter determine the consequences of a traumatizing event, hence they must be acknowledged and taken into account.

It is important to remind that the perception and definition of 'trauma' and 'traumatizing events', or 'hard' living conditions - the soils of suffering and acceptance - vary depending on life trajectories, views, and contexts. Some things can be traumatizing for one person while they are not necessarily so for another. People get used to living conditions and phenomena which may be considered unacceptable by others. As social circus workers, we should avoid judgement and definitions which do not fit the project's context.

While therapy is not the main goal of social circus, trauma is there and it must be kept in mind that “Persons involved with children who have experienced trauma require a great deal of psychoeducation.” (Gilgun & Sharma, 2008:

10). Moreover, groups participating in social circus often have “specific needs that require an in-depth understanding of the realities they face” (Morelli & Lafortune, 2013: 65). Social circus may engage instructors, artists or other professionals who do not necessarily boast such an education, knowledge and expertise. Therefore, **they need to work with and be supported by therapists and social workers who possess the right skills to deal with traumatised people. Community workers should be involved too, for they can give continuity to projects which last only shortly.**

On the one hand, instructors need support to acquire reflective tools and knowledge, which will enable them to acknowledge and question their own assumptions, views, attitudes, goals and values as they remain open to change. On the other hand, they must bear in mind their own strengths and previous successes, so that they can overcome difficulties.

5. How can circus help?

The strength of social circus resides in the powerful opportunities it offers to develop resilience and attachment to life. It encourages people to value individuals' uniqueness and to respect the specificities of their cultural, social and community context.

Like Cirque du Soleil's Social Circus Trainer's Guide suggests, it is important to engage with "those who have survived trauma or are going through a difficult period in their lives" as well as "with their resources", and avoid focusing "solely on their wounds and the potential consequences" (Morelli & Lafortune, 2013: 65).

Social circus can thus provide resilience support. It makes room for those external factors which can empower a participant by fostering a change of perspective, as well as the de- and re-construction of meanings and identities. Creativity, fun, humour, challenge, belonging, constructive relationships, participation, emphasis on uniqueness and talent, normalization of failure, appreciation of diverse knowledge and skills, are all features and effects of social circus through which it can effectively offer opportunities. Some of the ways in which circus can be helpful in contexts of displacement, transit or attempt to start a new life in a reception country are identified below.

Confidence, motivation, active and constructive attitude

Like the stories of section 2 show, life in a refugee camp can be highly stressful and depressing, as living conditions may be hard, and opportunities limited or absent. Problems range from apathy to the incapability to fulfil one's desires, to take important steps in life, or to support one's family and community (for instance by providing them with an income and a safe home, looking after children and parents, studying, getting married, etc.). These issues can cause depression, despair, distress, rage, and 'radicalisation'.

Circus in these contexts can provide a source of vital energy, enthusiasm, motivation, even though just for a limited period and within a circumscribed space. Circus can cast a light on a different aspect of life, which is playful and fun. By doing so, we interrupt bad habits and harmful routines in which violence is the daily bread.

For instance, one of the social circus trainers who took part in the Meeting, spoke about the positive effects of social circus on adults. As he pointed out, in breaks between TV programs showing images of war, adults were able

to watch their children playing and having fun. He also noted that social circus had a positive impact on children as well. Social circus enabled them to shift from a life torn by loss, killing and kidnapping, to gathering for the sole purposes of being together, celebrating, laughing and learning fun tricks. Moreover, the benefits on brain development of a circus activity like juggling may compensate for the damage caused by trauma, by improving data processing, awareness about one's options, and decision-making skills.

Safe space

Social circus opens a space free from violence and threats. ***The rules, the peaceful conflict-resolution mechanisms and the out-of-the-ordinary activities entailed by circus, allow to find different ways to interact and communicate with others with a friendlier and more trusting attitude.*** It provides a space where emotions and feelings can be expressed in a freer way, and a new perspective on one's life or upsetting episodes can emerge. This in turn presents a positive, empowering example which can affect the entire community.

Moreover, instructors have the important role of representing a (calm, stable, continuous, safe, smiling) reference in contexts of high instability, aggression, precariousness, lack of control on one's life and future.

Structure and routine

Social circus projects foster healthy habits through physical exercise, tasks, rituals and routines which structure everyday (or weekly) life. It may even open up opportunities of employment and – through informal education – it improves the possibilities to access formal education or gain formally recognized credentials.

Information

Social circus can provide information about other useful services as well as the confidence needed to understand and use them. Through workshops and shows, ***it can increase awareness on human and children's rights, and on the importance of every individual's participation and unique contribution to the community's life.*** Social circus can show how important it is to take part in processes where everyone's views and opinions are taken into account. In the environment created by social circus, everyone's voice can make a difference, changing participants' life experiences. Through circus it is also possible to teach, learn or improve other skills, such as language.

Community and social relations

Social circus provides occasions of peaceful encounter with other groups. These encounters can happen during workshops, performances, parades, celebrations and can be witnessed by the entire community, fostering a cascade effect.

Moreover, circus can support the family system. In Berlin's camps, for instance, parents need time to attend language courses, to seek a job, or to handle administrative procedures. Once the parents' confidence is gained, circus can provide a safe space where they can leave their kids. Additionally, ***circus activities can provide means to work with the entire family to rebuild family roles and family relationships based on trust, affection, and love.***

Conquering dignity and deconstructing stigma

Like Volker Traumann explains in section 2 above, one of the main grievances of Bamberg's Unaccompanied Minors is disrespect. They feel mistreated by the authorities, which do not consider them as people with ideas and capable to make decisions. Sometimes they go through very humiliating experiences, such as sitting school entrance tests in German, in which they achieve the same results of German people with mental disabilities, without having the same problems.

In this sense, ***it is important to work with society as a whole, rather than just with migrants. The ultimate goal should be finding ways to expand the impact of social circus beyond the workshop, to the entire community and society.***

In order to do so, ***instructors and project managers may try to establish connections with other groups from the same area, building networks, organizing events or activities which engage – at the same level – locals and migrants. In this way, peer education can be fostered, the local community can be educated to interculturalism, and fear is challenged. Thanks to a greater appreciation of cultural diversity, trust and more welcoming attitudes can be built.***

Circus employs extraordinarily powerful tools (the body, games, fascinating apparatuses, risk, music, etc.). Ways to leave concrete, durable and visible marks (such as pictures, drawings, letters, memories, etc.) may be found and developed by social circus instructors.

6. Practical tools and activities

In this section, we report some of the tools developed through group-work during the Meeting, in order to identify needs, goals, and suggest activities for social circus workshops, and for training for trainers.

The first part is devoted to tables which can be useful both for planning and evaluation. While we tried to identify and address a wide range of needs, once again it must be kept in mind that social circus instructors bear no obligations to meet every single need of the participants. Each need is linked to a social circus goal, and, in Table 1 and 3, to a reason why social circus may be employed to achieve such goals. Table 3 also includes suggestions of activities and actions to be undertaken.

In the second and final part, we look at some ideas and tools which may apply to a training for trainers who want to work with displaced people, refugees and asylum seekers.

Social circus workshops

Table 1 Context: refugee camp in the Middle East, long term project

Need	Goal	Reason
Employment	Provide a path to become a trainer, artist, organiser, etc.	Employment can be a driver of self-esteem, and a proof of one's worth
Safety (emotional and physical)	Create a safe space	No violence can happen in a safe space with a specific structure, respect, safe adults
Education, learning	Facilitate non-formal learning and connect with schools and add motivation	Resilience can be strengthened when hard living conditions prevent access to formal education
Belonging	Give space and facilitate group creation and expression	Reconstruct a social identity

Health	Activation	Less passivity, more active attitude towards one's wellbeing, less alcohol or drugs abuse, less loneliness.
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Table 2 Context: first reception centre, 1-4 months of staying

Needs	Goals
Education to interculturalism for the local reality	Break stigma, stereotypes Develop awareness that diversity is richness and an opportunity rather than something to fear
Be useful for the new community	Enhance the potential of each culture (e.g. dancing skills, music, etc.)
Cultural encounters in safe place	Create moments to share competences with locals

Table 3 Context: Unaccompanied minors (U.M.), accompanied minors (A.M.) and parents; people waiting for asylum or having recently being granted the status of refugees. Urban space, in Europe.

Target	Needs	Goal	Reason	Actions and place
U.M., A.M.	Learn language	Access to learning process through fun activities, speak about myself, my needs and wishes	Become an active part of the community, communicate, be autonomous	Regular circus workshops teaching body parts, colours, other words.
Parents	Having time to learn habits, language, fulfil administrative tasks, etc.	Build trust with the parents	They may not trust outsiders enough to leave their kids and therefore it might be difficult to follow language classes	Workshops for children from time to time, reach-out projects in camps, parks, or other public spaces to get in touch with the parents
Parents	Having time to learn habits, language, fulfil administrative tasks, etc.	Give the parents free time	If they have to take care of the children they will not have time to “integrate”	Regular classes for children so that they can follow longer courses

<p>U.M. and society at large</p>	<p>Gain respect Empowerment</p>	<p>Improve feeling of being respected, successful, de-label, fight radicalism and anger, overcome trauma.</p> <p>Foster inclusion, resilience.</p> <p>Break stigma.</p>	<p>U.M. often don't feel intelligent in school, no professional expectations, feel labelled and not respected</p> <p>Situation of marginality and exclusion.</p>	<p>During the workshops, create situations in which youth can participate, be active players.</p> <p>Give workshops to mixed groups.</p> <p>Give youth roles as assistants, co-trainers, helpers.</p> <p>Organise shows for a mixed audience.</p> <p>Creation processes</p> <p>Shows that talk about the stories of refugees, make their voices hearable.</p>
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Parents and U.M.	Networking, improve education and professional training and work opportunities, improve access to health care, law and administrative help, etc.	Being familiar with local services	Often mobility is limited by lack of knowledge and of access to knowledge. Awareness about rights and citizenship is limited.	Provide information in collaboration with other services, diversify the activities, improve connections with other organizations and professionals
U.M. and A.M.	Being seen in public spaces, visibility.	Get in touch with part of the society which would not normally see and know you.	Break stigma, change the angle of perception.	Shows for a mixed audience, workshops in which they have a 'leading' or important role Show telling stories of the refugees
Families	For A.M. to regain the trust of the parents	Make the parents see the children in a new light	Parents had to protect the children for a long time and don't see their potential, creativity, etc.	Shows for the parents

Families	Improve quality of relationships, rebuild them, strengthen relations based on affect and love	Support family relations based on quality of attention, affect, playfulness (go beyond the priority of safety and protection)	Often dealing with families that went through violence and conflict	Intergenerational workshops
Young children	Access to a safe space (to explore, choose, have fun, have a structure and limits)	Give rules, limits, opportunities to have fun, freedom, distraction, personal development	Often don't have this space or haven't had it for a long time	Workshops, open activities in public spaces, access to shows, festivals, etc.

Trainings for trainers: tools and keywords

Mice game (gioco dei Topi)

- Step 1:** In pairs, a person stands in front of another, one of them (1) has to touch the hand of the other (2), who always changes position and height.
- Step 2:** a third person (3) comes in, standing behind (1) and touching always different parts of his/her body, which (1) has to name as precisely as possible (for instance “left toes”, “forehead”, “right elbow”, etc.)
- Step 3:** a fourth person (4) comes in, standing at the side of (1) and asking very simple questions such as “what colour is your t-shirt?”; “how old are you?”; etc.
- Step 4:** a fifth person (5) comes in, standing at the remaining side of (1), and asking very difficult question such as presidents’ of capitals’ names, philosophical and ethical issues, etc.
- Goal:** getting a feeling of how distressful, uncomfortable and frustrating it can be when tasks you would normally be able to achieve, and information you would normally be able to process, become overwhelming as a consequence of trauma or difficult life conditions.
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Vulnerability and encounter

Vulnerability and encounter were identified as two keywords which could lead trainings for trainers willing to work in contexts of displacement or forced migration.

Experiencing vulnerability implies getting out of one's comfort zone, facing limits and losing control over the situation. Many activities could fit this goal, such as having to perform very "normal" tasks while having body constraints. Role games can be used to experience lack of freedom and safety, and reclusion.

In order to prepare trainers for challenging cultural encounters, games and activities should aim at a change of perspective and loss of control.

The real encounter starts when we are open to mediation, negotiation, surprising outcomes, and do not try to impose our views or role.

Flexibility

Trainers should learn how to maintain a flexible attitude, to deal with the diversity of contexts and people they might encounter (different age, gender, ethnicity, language, sexuality, socio-economic backgrounds, which may generate "minorities within minorities"), and with unfulfilled expectations.

In precarious contexts, the right conditions and materials to teach circus techniques safely are often lacking. The ability to maintain a positive attitude while finding the appropriate actions, modifying the initial goals if needed, can prove extremely helpful.

In addition, flexibility opens up spaces for sharing and, as such, for unexpected insights into others' competences, knowledge, and personalities. This in turn casts a light on the importance of every participant's contribution, of local knowledge and of culturally relevant ways to do circus and art.

7. Conclusions

This booklet shows that circus offers powerful tools to foster meaningful cultural encounters and social transformation. On the one hand, social circus projects can provide tools to build knowledge and share useful information about public services, administrative procedures, and other 'official' means of inclusion and support. In other words, within social circus projects, information can be shared as per the acquisition of means to fulfil 'basic needs'.

In addition, workshops can be the space where the local language is learnt, social and personal skills are developed, and cultural exchange takes place.

On the other hand, social circus relies on the notion that every individual has a potential as well as the right and need to develop it. In this sense, it expands the notion of deprivation and violence while it adds to the concept of life itself. As a matter of fact, diversity is viewed as "a strength, rather than an obstacle" (Desanghere 2016: 9). Social and cultural change, as well as new and fluid identities and subjectivities, are normalised. Social circus attaches great importance to fun, art and the individual's expression in human life. Finally, it frames openness and listening as skills whose acquisition is absolutely key.

Rather than offering ready-made solutions, recipes, guidelines or instructions, the goal of this work is to provide suggestions as well as food for thought based on the experiential knowledge, ethical dilemmas, practical questions, solutions and applications shared by the social circus instructors and trainers who took part in the International Meeting.

In this sense, the booklet highlights the importance of paying attention to both participants' and instructors' emotional safety. In fact, as social circus instructors, it is vital that we construct and maintain an open and flexible attitude. The dynamics of power and privilege of this globalised and constantly changing world should be kept in mind too, and we suggest that labelling and fixing should be avoided.

Other steps have recently been taken in relation to social circus and the so called 'refugee crisis' (see "Websites and other projects" in section 9 below). This booklet provides a further contribution to this body of work which hopefully develop into future research, meetings and networking. This may help the building of broader and stronger connections among people involved in social circus and stories of migration and displacement, promoting social change and enhancing social justice.

8. Information on the involved organisations

ALTROCIRCO

AltroCirco gathers social circus associations and educators operating throughout Italy, to promote circus as a driver of social change. AltroCirco is run by a highly qualified team with long-standing experience. The Altro Circo team seeks to develop different domains related to social circus. AltroCirco's relentless work aims to raise funds and collect new resources, while striving to meet members' requests and needs.

Altrocirco articulates its activities around the following axes: training for trainers; development of a shared methodology; research and dissemination; strengthening of the social circus network and partnerships at the national and international level.

<http://www.altrocirco.it/>

SIRKUS MAGENTA

Sirkus Magenta is a non-profit social circus association from Helsinki, Finland established in 2011. We use circus to promote mental and physical well-being. Magenta works with special needs children, youth at risk, families in crisis, refugees, the elderly and anyone at risk of social exclusion. We work in kindergartens, schools, community centres, child welfare units and refugee centres.

In addition, we teach circus for children, adults and families in nearly 30 hobby groups every week. We also organize fun circus team building events, workshops and performances for private and corporate clients.

In 2013 we established a circus school in Zaatari refugee camp, Jordan, in collaboration with Finn Church Aid. The school provides joy and a safe hobby to nearly 200 boys and girls. We visit the school every year to give additional training and pedagogical support for the Syrian trainers.

We work closely with refugees also in Finland. We run workshops for children with refugee and immigrant backgrounds at schools widely in the Helsinki metropolitan area. We also organize various events for asylum seekers - there hundreds of kids and adults can enjoy circus and music.

Sirkus Magenta brings professional skills, energy and bucketloads of positivity wherever we go!

www.sirkusmagenta.fi - circuszaatri.blogspot.fi/

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL-CIRQUE DU MONDE

Ever since Cirque du Soleil has had the resources to follow its dreams, it has taken up the cause of at-risk youth, mainly through its social circus program, Cirque du Monde.

Cirque du Monde promotes the use of circus arts as an intervention tool with at-risk youth, an approach known as social circus.

With the aim to foster the personal and social development of these young people, Cirque du Monde focuses its actions on training for practitioners, support for social circus organizations and advocacy about the benefits of social circus.

www.cirquedusoleil.com/citizenship

ZIRKUS GIOVANNI BAMBERG

Zirkus Giovanni is a very special social circus project of the Don Bosco Organisation in Bamberg. There, disadvantaged young people live and receive curative education and therapeutic care. The circus project is open to everybody and it is much more than artistic achievements: circus promotes psychosocial skills and life skills. Since 2008, Zirkus Giovanni has been investigating the psychosocial effects of social circus work among young people with disabilities in a large university-assisted study.

www.zirkus-giovanni.de

CIRCUSPLANEET VZW

Circusplaneet is a nice and ever growing circus school in Ghent, Belgium, that has dedicated a lot of its energy towards developing a vision and a practice around Community Circus. The old church they inhabit, is a living laboratory where circus meets with social work, education, culture, music and urban arts. Circusplaneet has also proven to be a reliable and creative partner in its diverse neighbourhood, where the organisation brings people together, helps exploring relationships, develops critical citizenship and where people become amazed of their own social, physical and creative potential. The organisation never tires of sharing its good practices (and struggles) with other circus schools and the broader world.

CABUWAZI Berlin

The children and youth circus CABUWAZI Berlin/Germany was founded 1994 and became one of the biggest youth and social circus projects worldwide. Currently five CABUWAZI circus places are established in Berlin with a big top, extra training spaces, circus caravans and workshops. Those

five circus places are spread all over Berlin to provide free circus training to the Berlin youth. Additional to that, CABUWAZI collaborates with schools, kindergartens and refugee camps where outreach projects are realized.

Social Circus in Berlin has the following goals: open doors for all members of the community to the circus space; create a fun and safe space to provide social circus projects; use circus as an art for social change.

www.cabuwazi.de

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10. Further resources

Manuals and handbooks

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Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/excom/unhcrannual/5808d8b37/report-united-nations-high-commissioner-refugees-covering-period-1-july.html> [May 18, 2017]

Websites and other projects

Reliefweb, humanitarian information source on global crises and disasters:
<http://reliefweb.int/>

Network for the exchange of experiences and methodologies to improve the reception of young refugees in Europe:

<https://socialmodeexchange.wordpress.com/network-for-the-exchange-of-experiences-and-methodologies-to-improve-the-reception-of-young-refugees-in-europe/>

Developing and innovative platform to impact millions of refugees with social circus:

<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details-page/?nodeRef=workspace%3A%2F%2FSpacesStore%2F9c52022d-6cd1-4a6b-b7a7-3cd2e8c744c8>

The Circus Effect Europe 2016-2018:

<http://nomadways.eu/circus-heroes-europe-20162018/>

The Circus Effect project:

<http://thecircuseffect.com/>

UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response:

<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/settlement.php?id=254&country=103®ion=63>

AltroCirco (forthcoming). *Altra Risorsa 2017, conference proceedings*. Soon available from:

<http://www.altrocirco.it/altra-risorsa-2017/>

“Circus in Dis-Comfort Zones”

is the report of a three-day
International Meeting devoted to
social circus actions and projects
involving asylum seekers, displaced
people and refugees.

AltroCirco

AltroCirco is a project of association Giocolieri & Dintorni for the development and acknowledgement of Social Circus in Italy. It gathers together social circus associations and trainers from all over Italy, to promote the use of circus as a tool for social transformation.

www.altrocirco.it

