

Embodied Intercultural Research Training



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This training was developed as part of an Erasmus Plus Strategic Partnership in the field of education, training and youth, called **Circus as Intercultural Encounter**. The project aims to promote intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and social inclusion by expanding the skills of social circus trainers working with youth from migrant, refugee and ethnic minority backgrounds. Through the engagement of practice-led and arts-based research, it will develop and disseminate a training programme of innovative skills and best practices of intercultural dialogue necessary for effective anti-racism and social inclusion interventions, for circus youth workers, trainers and organisations.

We approached the design of the researcher training based on the following overlapping premises:

Social circus is an inherently intercultural practice. At its best, interculturality involves critically reflexive, performative & transforming encounters, so circus work also requires strong skills in observation, reflexivity and social analysis.

Because researching intercultural circus practices involves an eye for capturing these dynamics as they pertain to 'difference', experienced circus workers actually already have advanced 'research' capacities and skills.

So we designed the training to flow from the researchers' embodied, practice-led knowledges - that is, their own experiences of circus work, of social researches and other related work. Essentially we combined elements of our respective practices - Raj's 'body workshop-as-aesthetic practice' and Alice's 'pedagogy-as-artform'. We used various forms of aesthetic pedagogies (body-based and sensory learning, from performance and visual arts, journaling and collectively mindful practices) that would create opportunities to individually and collectively critically explore, analyse and ultimately repurpose key intercultural principles, debates and practices for use in the research process itself.

(Feldman 2019; Singh 2019; Singh and Feldman 2019)