

**Jojo – Zentrum für Artistik und Theater – 2. Jahr / Vertiefung 4**  
Abschlussarbeit im Rahmen der Zirkus- und Theaterpädagogischen Ausbildung

# **Zirkuspädagogisches Arbeiten im arabischen Raum**



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von  
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## Abkürzungsverzeichnis

- CNAC Centre national des arts du cirque – Frankreich
- ggf. gegebenenfalls
- lw. Interview
- lws. Interviews
- NCS Nablus Circus School – „Assirk Assaghir“
- NGO Nichtregierungsorganisation
- PCS Palestinian Circus School
- S. Seite

## Zeichenerklärungen innerhalb der Interviews

- ... Gedankensprung des Interview-Partners
- [...] unverständlicher Abschnitt, der herausgenommen wurde
- M. der erste Gesprächspartner = Matthias Marquitz
- der zweite Gesprächspartner wird zu Beginn des Interviews genannt und dann im Gesprächsverlauf mit dem ersten Buchstaben seines Namens gekennzeichnet

## Kennzeichnung der Interviews als Quellennachweis

- [Name/Ort/Seite] Name des lw-partners/Arbeitsort/Seite im Anhang
- **XXXXXXXXXX** Markierung inhaltlich relevanter Kern-Teile im Interview

## Einleitung

Innerhalb meiner Mitarbeit beim Kinder- und Jugendzirkus Momolo erlebte ich auch unsere wachsende Präsenz in der Stadt. Dadurch erhielten wir 2012 die offizielle Anfrage des Oberbürgermeisters der Stadt Jena, als „kultureller Beitrag“ bei einer Delegationsreise nach Palästina mitzuwirken. Jedes Jahr im September wird dort, in unserer Partnerstadt Beit Jala im Westjordanland, ein „Festival for Peace“ veranstaltet, in dem die kulturellen Beiträge der Partnerstädte mit eingeflochten werden.

Bereits bei unser ersten Delegationsreise 2012 fanden wir zusätzlich zu den offiziellen Terminen etwas Zeit, um einen ersten Kontakt zur Palestinian Circus School (PCS) aufzunehmen.

Die PCS ist eine Nichtregierungsorganisation (NGO), die seit 2008 kontinuierlich in und um Ramallah im Bereich Zirkus aktiv ist. Neben der sozialen zirkuspädagogischen Arbeit mit Kindern und Jugendlichen stehen auch regelmäßige Produktionen des Trainerteams im Fokus. Über das Medium Zirkus konnten sie so ihre persönlichen und gesellschaftlichen Themen künstlerisch einem breiten und mittlerweile sogar internationalen Publikum darbieten.

In den darauf folgenden Jahren vertiefte sich dieser Kontakt durch nachfolgende Delegationsreisen, Gegenbesuche der PCS in Jena und einen regen Kommunikationsaustausch (e-Mail, Facebook etc.) immer weiter. Für mich persönlich war somit erstmals zirkuspädagogisches Arbeiten im Ausland, und dazu noch in einem anderen Kulturkreis, erfahrbar geworden. Im Rahmen der zumeist einwöchigen Delegationsreisen blieben die Möglichkeiten eines tieferen Gedankenaustausches leider sehr begrenzt.

Aus meinem Interesse für die soziale Arbeit mit Kindern und Jugendlichen sowie der wachsenden Neugier für den arabischen Kulturraum entstand der Wunsch, die Arbeit der PCS intensiver kennenzulernen. Wie Zirkus und damit zirkuspädagogisches Arbeiten im arabischen Raum wahrgenommen wird und ob es verbindende zirkensische Wurzeln zwischen abendländischer und arabischer Kultur gibt, waren zwei der Hauptfragen, die mich beschäftigten. Diesen Fragen wollte ich mittels mehrerer Interviews vor allem qualitativ nachgehen.

Vom 17. Januar bis 14. Februar 2016 konnte ich für vier Wochen als externer Trainer bei der PCS hospitieren und lernte dabei deren Arbeitsweise endlich intensiver kennen.

Zusätzlich ergab sich spontan die Möglichkeit, auch die Zirkusgruppe in Nablus kennenzulernen (Nablus Circus School – NCS), mit der Gelegenheit, weitere Interview-Partner aus einem anderen Umfeld zu gewinnen.

Vor der zirkuspädagogischen Arbeit stand für mich die Frage, welchen Stellenwert die Kunst- bzw. Kulturform Zirkus im arabischen Raum überhaupt hat. Hinzu kam die Frage nach gemeinsamen verbindenden Elementen.

Mir ist durchaus bewusst, dass dieses Thema, auch wegen des interkulturellen Bezuges sehr weitläufig ist. Eine weitergehende und intensivere Bearbeitung ist durchaus lohnend. Mit meinen Interviews will ich dazu gern einen kleinen Betrag leisten. In Anbetracht der kurzen Zeit und der eher qualitativen Umfrage soll dieser Überblick hier eher als ein Erfahrungsbericht gewertet werden.

Zusätzlich befindet sich Palästina, als arabische Region, in einer schwierigen politischen Situation. Diese spezielle Situation, und das Potential der Zirkuspädagogik im Bereich der Friedensarbeit scheint mir ein weiteres spannendes Thema. Innerhalb der Interviews kam dies auch hier und da zur Sprache, allerdings soll es hier inhaltlich größtenteils ausgeklammert bleiben.

## **Hauptteil**

### **Die „Palestinian Circus School“ (PCS)**

Die PCS wurde 2006 in Ramallah gegründet und arbeitet als NGO aktuell in Bir Zeit nördlich von Ramallah. Dort arbeitet sie lokal sowie überregional im zirkuspädagogischen Bereich mit Kindern und Jugendlichen sowohl direkt aus der Stadt als auch aus umliegenden Städten oder Flüchtlings-Camps im Norden der Westbank, z.B. Jenin. Im artistischen Bereich arbeitet die PCS mit dem Trainerteam auf hoch-professionellem Niveau. Soziale und vor allem politische Themen werden hier künstlerisch bearbeitet und in regelmäßigen Tourneen einem lokalen wie auch internationalen Publikum präsentiert. Aktuell gehören zur PCS 13 Angestellte. Pro Jahr werden ca. 300 Kinder und Jugendliche hier in Zirkusdisziplinen unterrichtet. Die Finanzierung der Personal- und Projektkosten erfolgt größten Teils durch auswärtige Sponsoren sowie einzelne lokale Geldgeber [2; Iw. Shadi/PCS/S.19].

### **Der „Assirk Assaghir“ - Nablus Circus School (NCS)**

Bereits im Jahr 1999 traf sich eine kleine Gruppe kreativer Jugendlicher in Nablus und begann in Eigenregie mit der Entwicklung und Präsentation clownesker Szenen, vor allem in den Vororten und Flüchtlings-Camps. Daraus entwickelte sich dann im Jahre 2004 der „Assirk Assaghir“ („kleiner Zirkus“) auch unter Mithilfe des deutschen Kinder- und Jugendzirkus Cabuwazi. Als kleine und vor allem zu Beginn ehrenamtliche Zirkusgruppe konzentrierte sich die NCS größtenteils auf das Gebiet in und um Nablus. Ab 2007 konnte über Projektgelder erstmals ein hauptamtlicher Betrieb erfolgen. Seit 2011 gilt sie offiziell als palästinensische NGO.

Aktuell gehören zur NCS 7 Angestellte. Pro Jahr werden ca. 300 Kinder und Jugendliche aus Nablus und Umgebung in Zirkusdisziplinen unterrichtet. Die Finanzierung der Personal- und Projektkosten erfolgt vor allem durch auswärtige Sponsoren [4; Iw. Mahmood/NCS/S.34].

## **Die Interviews**

Insgesamt konnte ich zum Zwecke meiner Nachforschungen zwölf Interviews durchführen. Dabei sprach ich mit zehn Zirkusleuten sowie mit zwei Personen, die außerhalb des Zirkus tätig sind und einen kleinen Laden neben der PCS führen.

Von den Gesprächen mit den Zirkusleuten entfielen sechs auf die PCS und vier auf die NCS. Sowohl in der PCS als auch der NCS konnte ich mit je zwei Hauptverantwortlichen sprechen. Von den Zirkustrainern konnte ich bei der PCS vier und bei der NCS zwei Gesprächspartner gewinnen.

Die Interviews selbst wurden in englischer Sprache geführt, sozusagen als Vermittlersprache zwischen arabisch und deutsch. Je nach Englischkenntnissen der Interviewpartner ist die Qualität schwankend. Auf eine Übersetzung ins Deutsche habe ich abgesehen, um den Inhaltsgehalt der Antworten nicht zu verzerren.

Letztendlich verwendete ich für die Auswertung und Zusammenstellung der Arbeit nur neun der geführten Interviews, unter anderem auch auf Grund von Sprach- und Verständigungsschwierigkeiten sowie Dopplungen.

## **Zirkus als Kunst- und Kulturform im arabischen Raum**

Durch den direkten Kontakt zu Personen, die seit mehreren Jahren im Bereich des Zirkus tätig sind, sah ich die Möglichkeit, an Informationen aus erster Hand zu gelangen. Hierbei ging es einerseits um die Untersuchung der Frage, ob der abendländische Zirkus in seiner Form auch Wurzeln im arabisch-palästinensischen Raum besitzt. Es existiert die Annahme, „daß es fernab von Europa, in Fernost, in China und Japan schon vor dieser Zeit [um 1768] ebenfalls Zirkusse gegeben hat“ [8; 9]. Andererseits sollten Gemeinsamkeiten herausgearbeitet werden, auf denen die zeitgenössische Kunst- und Kulturform Zirkus aufbaut.

## **Die Fragen**

...mit den Interview-Partnern zum kulturellen Hintergrund waren im Kern:

- ♣ „Wann und wie bist du erstmals mit Zirkus in Kontakt gekommen?“
- ♣ „Kennst du Zirkus im arabischen Raum?“
- ♣ „Sind dir Ähnlichkeiten zwischen Zirkus und arabischen Performance-Künsten

bekannt? Wenn ja, welche?“

### **Die Antworten:**

Hier zeigte sich, dass Zirkus als reine Kultur- und Kunstform zwar über Fernsehen und einzelne Live-Shows vor Ort, in Form der traditionellen Wanderzirkusse, teilweise bekannt ist [lws. Noor/PCS/S.26; Alaa/NCS/S.42; Ihab/Shop/S.45], aber in keinster Weise zum arabischen Kulturraum gezählt wird [lws. Shadi/PCS/S.17; Mahmood/NCS/S.35; Baha/NCS/S.39].

Schaut man allerdings auf das eigene kulturelle Spektrum, so zeigt sich hier ein buntes Bild an performativen Künsten, die tief in der arabischen Kultur verankert sind. Hierbei seien zunächst Musik- und Tanzdarbietungen, wie beispielsweise der arabische „Dubka“, zu nennen, die sich abseits vom arabischen Kulturraum auch in vielen anderen Kulturkreisen finden lassen [lws. Mahmood/NCS/S.35; 10].

Im darstellerischen Spiel lassen sich die typischen arabischen Geschichtenerzähler finden, die sich dann in die moderne Kunstform des Theaters mit hinein entwickelten [lws. Shadi/PCS/S.18]. Weiterhin wird auch in Palästina die performative Bandbreite mit unsichtbarem Theater, Sketchen, Straßenshows u.v.m., genutzt und stetig weiterentwickelt [lws. Shadi/PCS/S.18; Mahmood/NCS/S.33+35].

Aktuell sind die typischen Geschichtenerzähler zwar weiterhin noch gut bekannt, als Kulturform selbst aber kaum mehr zu finden [lws. Shadi/PCS/S.18]. Ebenso verhält es sich mit der weithin gut bekannten clownesken Figur des „Joha“ [lws. Shadi/PCS/S.18; Baha/NCS/S.39]. Dieser „Joha“ zeigt gewisse Analogien zur Figur des Narren aus dem europäischen Raum. Er galt als „dumm“, hatte aber dadurch die Freiheit den Leuten die Wahrheit, z.B. über gesellschaftliche Missstände, zu benennen, ohne Konsequenzen fürchten zu müssen [lws. Baha/NCS/S.39].

In dieser Art lässt sich ein ganz eigenes Bild unterschiedlichster performativer Künste im arabischen Raum skizzieren. Musik, Tanz, Theater und clowneske Figuren bereiten hierbei einen „künstlerischen Teppich“ auf dem sich auch neue Kulturformen, wie hier z.B. der Zirkus niederlassen konnten.

Somit mag Zirkus als Kunst- und Kulturform zwar nicht ursprünglich aus dem arabischen Raum stammen, jedoch kann er sich ohne Probleme in die hier vorhandenen kulturellen Strukturen integrieren. Dies schafft meiner Meinung nach auch eine Art der gegenseitigen kulturellen Bereicherung, die auf eine breite Akzeptanz in der Bevölkerung trifft.



## **Zirkuspädagogisches Arbeiten im arabischen Raum**

Vor dem Hintergrund dieser kulturellen Verankerung in der Gesellschaft fand ich es spannend herauszufinden, wie sich nun das zirkuspädagogische Arbeiten im arabischen Raum, am Beispiel Palästinas, konkret zeigt. Welche Schwierigkeiten ergeben sich hier, welche Ziele verfolgen die Trainer dort? Welche Gemeinsamkeiten oder auch Unterschiede lassen sich finden? Im weiteren Verlauf, wie dann auch in den Interviews, wird der Begriff des „social circus“ verwendet, der im weitesten Sinne dem Begriff der Zirkuspädagogik entspricht [7].

### **Die Fragen**

... drehten sich im allgemeinen um die persönlichen Erfahrungen der Organisatoren, Trainer und des Ladenbesitzers:

- ♣ „Was ist für dich der wichtigste Punkt in der zirkuspädagogischen Arbeit mit Kindern?“
- ♣ „Wie nehmen euch die Leute im allgemeinen wahr?“
- ♣ „Welche Art von Unterstützung erhaltet ihr? (finanziell, moralisch, materiell ...?)“
- ♣ „Wie sind die Reaktionen von Familie und Freunden auf eure Arbeit?“
- ♣ „Sehen Zuschauer und Eltern die Darbietungen eher als Sport oder als Kunst?“
- ♣ „Was für ein persönliches Ziel würdet ihr gern in zehn Jahren erreichen?“

### **Die Antworten:**

Bei der PCS und der NCS steht die Arbeit für und um die Kinder im Vordergrund. Seit dem ersten Trainingstag bis heute werden unterschiedliche Aspekte im Verhalten der Kinder, wie Konzentration, Energielevel oder Teamgeist, beobachtet und reflektiert [lws. Shadi/PCS/S.14+15; Mahmood/NCS/S35+37]. Nebenbei verfolgen die Trainer sowohl der PCS als auch der NCS mit regelmäßigen eigenen Produktionen und Shows ihren eigenen artistischen Anspruch, je nach Möglichkeiten, sehr intensiv [lws. Nayef/PCS/S.22; Noor/PCS/S.27+29; Alaa/NCS/S.43+44].

Die persönliche Entwicklung der Kinder und Jugendlichen steht hier bei beiden Zirkusschulen in einem starken Fokus. Über die letzten Jahre zeigte sich auf vielfältige Weise, wie sich mittels Zirkustechniken (z.B. gemeinsame Spiele, Übungen, Auftritte u.v.m.) das Verhalten der Kinder untereinander und auch mit den Trainern veränderte. Bereits drei Monate nach dem ersten Training der PCS in Hebron begannen Mädchen und Jungen gemeinsam zu trainieren, übten sich in Geduld, Höflichkeit und Achtsamkeit [lw. Shadi/PCS/S.15]. Dadurch wurde ein neuer Sinn für Gemeinschaftlichkeit erreicht, was für

die dortige Gesellschaft wohl teilweise eher untypisch sei [lws. Nayef/PCS/S.21+22; Baha/NCS/S.41].

Ein weiterer wichtiger Punkt im Zirkustraining zeigte sich im kreativen und künstlerischen Umgang mit den Zirkusdisziplinen. Es gäbe hier kein „richtig“ und kein „falsch“ wie bei anderen Sportdisziplinen, was die kreative Natur des Zirkus offenbart und zum Experimentieren einlädt [Noor/PCS/S.27].

Besonders nah fühlen sich die Trainer den Kindern, wenn diese plötzlich über sich „hinauswachsen“ und etwas vorher „Unerreichbares“ nun endlich können [lw. Alaa/NCS/S43].

Das zirkuspädagogische Element, Gelerntes dann in Form einer Aufführung vor Publikum zu präsentieren, wird auf zwei Ebenen als sehr wertvoll gesehen. Einerseits können die Kinder am Ende des Jahres zeigen was sie können und werden von ihren Eltern mal in einer anderen Rolle wahrgenommen. Andererseits ist der Prozess selbst auch für die Trainer wichtig, indem sie das Ergebnis ihrer Arbeit sehen und das weiterführende Trainings dann danach ausrichten können [lws. Nayef/PCS/S.22; Mahmood/NCS/S.35].

Für alle Trainer, die selbst als Jugendliche mit dem Zirkus anfangen, war es auch ein wichtiger Punkt, den Perspektiv- und Rollenwechsel – vom Schüler zum Lehrer – mitzuerleben [lw. Ahmad/PCS/S.32]. Damit verbunden die Erfahrung: „einen Trick selbst zu können, heißt noch nicht, dass man auch in der Lage ist anderen diesen Trick beizubringen“ [lw. Noor/PCS/S.28]. Des Weiteren gab es den klaren Wunsch, dass andere auch diese positiven Erfahrungen machen sollen, wie sie selbst [lw. Noor/PCS/S.28].

Ein schönes Beispiel von aktiver Partizipation erlebte ich während meiner Hospitation bei der PCS im Training am „Jenin Girls-Center“. Es ist eine reine Mädchenschule der oberen Jahrgänge, was im arabischen Raum bedeutet, dass alle Mädchen mit Kopftuch und entsprechend langer Kleidung zu erscheinen haben. Darüber hinaus ist direkter Körperkontakt zwischen Frauen und Männern streng untersagt. Also wurde eine Auswahl an Disziplinen zusammengestellt, die auch auf Distanz angeleitet werden können. Jonglage und Diabolo waren in der Art relativ einfach. Stelzen laufen und Akrobatik waren wegen der nötigen Hilfestellungen schon schwieriger. Im Rotationsverfahren konnten alle an allen Stationen proben und hatten sichtlich Freude. Am Ende gaben die Mädchen dann hier auch noch ganz selbstbewusst Kritik zum Akrobatik-Training. Sie hätten gern intensiver mitgemacht! Dazu hätte es jedoch eine Vorinformation gebraucht, dass es

sportiver wird, wozu dann gewisse Ganzkörpersportanzüge mitgebracht werden können.

Ein anderes spannendes Feld war für mich der Umgang mit „schwierigen“ Kinder, die unter anderem auch das Training verweigern. Diesbezüglich gab es weniger Erfahrungen, da die meisten Kinder eher hochmotiviert zum Training kommen [Iw. Mahmood/NCS/S.37]. Eines der wenigen Beispiele für eine „Verweigerung“ führte Nayef auf eines der Grundprobleme von Kindern zurück. Die Angst vor etwas, z.B. davor sich zu verletzen, weil eine Aufgabenstellung ggf. nicht verstanden wurde. Nayef beschreibt hierbei sehr schön sein kleinschrittiges vorgehen, um das Kind dann wieder mit einzubinden und bei seinem Können „abzuholen“ [Iw. Nayef/PCS/S.24+25].

Für Baha von der NCS gab es noch einen weiteren wichtigen Aspekt den er über das Medium Zirkus an die Kinder und Jugendlichen gerade in Palästina vermitteln will. Für ihn gehört Kultur selbst zu einem entscheidenden Merkmal des Menschseins, was uns von den Tieren grundlegend unterscheidet. Viele Palästinenser spüren seiner Meinung nach im Alltag kaum einen Unterschied zum Tiersein auf Grund des anhaltenden Konfliktes und unterschiedlichster Repressalien. Daraus erwuchs eine Art Kultur des gewaltvollen Patriotismus, in der man nur als Kämpfer respektiert wird. Baha sieht hier nun die Möglichkeit, mit Hilfe des Zirkus und anderer Kunstformen wie Theater und Musik einen kreativen und gewaltfreien Patriotismus zu nutzen, um für sein Land zu kämpfen. „Die Welt ist so groß und es gibt andere Sachen die man tun kann und wir können zeigen, dass wir Menschen sind, wie alle anderen Menschen auf der Welt.“ [Iws. Baha/NCS/S.40+41; Shadi/PCS/S.19].

Im Großen und Ganzen zeigt sich, dass Themen wie Gleichberechtigung, Offenheit, Kreativität und Gemeinschaftssinn auf sehr praktische Art und Weise einer jungen Generation vorgelebt werden können, die sichtlich an Charisma gewinnen [Iw. Mahmood/NCS/S.35]. Auf diesem Weg teilweise einen gesellschaftlichen Wandel in Palästina zu bewirken, ist ein Teil von Zukunftsvisionen [Iws. Shadi/PCS/S.17+18; Nayef/PCS/S.24]. Ähnliche Erfahrungen vor allem im Bereich der sozialen Integration sowie der Förderung sozialer und persönlicher Fähigkeiten lassen sich auch im zirkuspädagogischen Arbeiten in Deutschland finden und dokumentieren, auch wenn hierzu selbst bei uns noch Nachholbedarf im Bereich der Wissenschaftlichkeit besteht [7; 8].

Die Wahrnehmung des sozialen Umfelds war meist veränderlich in der Art, dass der zirkuspädagogischen Arbeit zu Beginn ein gewisses Maß an Skepsis entgegengebracht wird. Ab dem Zeitpunkt eines genaueren Kennenlernens der Arbeit, stieß sowohl die PCS als auch die NCS auf eine breite Akzeptanz in der Bevölkerung. Sie hat zunehmend bewiesen, dass es einerseits eine ernstzunehmende Art von Arbeit ist, von der man auch ökonomisch leben kann und andererseits dass sie wie eine große Familie zusammenhalten, egal was passiert. Sei es, dass einer der Trainer in Administrativ-Haft sitzt oder dass ein endlich gefundenes neues Zirkushaus in kompletter Eigenregie renoviert werden muss, weil es keine öffentliche finanzielle Unterstützung gibt [lws. Shadi/PCS/S.18+19 ; Mahmood/NCS/S.37].

Ein ähnlicher Wechsel ist in der Wahrnehmung zu sehen, in der die Leute den Unterschied zwischen einer „Sportveranstaltung“ und einem künstlerischen Produkt erkennen. Dazu ist allerdings größten Teils der Besuch einer Zirkusshow nötig, in der man den Unterschied sehen und erleben kann. Nur im Hörensagen gingen viele eher von einer „Sport- oder Gymnastik-Darbietung“ aus [lws. Nayef/PCS/S.22; Mahmood/NCS/S.36; Ihab/Shop/S.45]. Ähnlichen Vorurteilen müssen sich teilweise auch deutsche Zirkusgruppen stellen, wenn sie z.B. mit Sportunterricht in Verbindung gebracht werden [7].

Was die allgemeine Unterstützung der Zirkusarbeit in Palästina betrifft, so lassen sich grob zwei Kategorien benennen – die moralische und die finanzielle Unterstützung.

Die moralische Unterstützung ist bei beiden Zirkusschulen enorm. Von nahe stehenden Personen über Besucher bis hin zu offiziellen Behörden wird die Arbeit als sehr wichtig benannt und immer wieder gelobt [lws. Nayef/PCS/S.23; Mahmood/NCS/S.36].

Im Bereich der finanziellen Unterstützung zeigt sich jedoch weniger lokale Wertschätzung [lws. Nayef/PCS/S.23]. Sowohl die PCS als auch die NCS sind in großem Maße auf ausländische Spendengelder angewiesen [lws. Mahmood/NCS/S.34; 2]. Lokal hat sich bisher nur bei der PCS kurzzeitig auch eine palästinensische Bank als Geldgeber gefunden [2]. Allerdings berichtet zumindest die PCS auch über eine wachsende positive, respektvollere Stimmung bei lokalen Partnern [lws. Shadi/PCS/S.19+20; Nayef/PCS/S.23]. Dies könnte der wünschenswerte Anfang für eine langfristige finanzielle Unterstützung durch landeseigene Strukturen sein.

Das soziale Umfeld der Trainer reagierte ebenfalls sehr unterschiedlich auf die neue Möglichkeit, die Arbeit mit dem Zirkus als eigenständigen Beruf zu sehen.

In Einzelfällen gab es von Anfang an Unterstützung, vor allem aus der direkten Familie, mit dem Vertrauen in eine gute Sache [lws. Shadi/PCS/S.20; Alaa/PCS/S.31].

Beim Großteil der Zirkus-Trainer stand zu Anfang jedoch eher die Skepsis von Freunden und Familie. „Wir leben doch schon in einem Zirkus.“ [lw. Shadi/PCS/S.18+19], „...das habe keine Zukunft, finde lieber einen guten Job..“ [lws. Ahmad/PCS/S.32+33; Alaa/NCS/S.43], „sieh es als etwas nebenbei, aber mache es nicht zum Hauptteil deines Lebens“ [lw. Noor/PSC/S.29] waren einige der Kommentare, die oft geäußert wurden.

Durch internationale Auftritte und Festanstellungen konnte sich die Zirkusarbeit jedoch mit der Zeit als ernstzunehmendes Berufsbild etablieren. Dadurch wandelten sich die Sichtweisen teilweise von selbst [lws. Shadi/PCS/S.18+19; Alaa/NCS/S.43+44]. Andererseits zeigte sich auch die Hartnäckigkeit einzelner Trainer, die regelmäßige Diskussionen in der Familie, z.B. mit dem Vater, nicht scheuten und am Ende einen Kompromiss aushandeln konnten. Meist ging es darum, zusätzlich auch einen Universitätsabschluss anzustreben [lw. Noor/PCS/S.29].

Das Spektrum persönlicher 10-Jahres-Visionen, ist ebenso vielfältig wie das Spektrum an Disziplinen, die sich unter einem Zirkuszelt sammeln können. Es reicht von einem weiteren Bekanntmachen der Kunstform „Zirkus“ in der palästinensischen Gesellschaft, mit dem Bild, dass sich „in jedem Haus ein Jonglierball findet“ [lw. Shadi/PCS/S.15], über ein Etablieren von Zirkus als reguläre Schulform [lw. Ahmad/PCS/S.33] sowie einen gesellschaftlichen Wandel einzuleiten [lws. Shadi/PCS/S.17+18; Nayef/PCS/S.24; Baha/NCS/S.41]. Ebenso wie das Erreichen eines hochprofessionellen Niveaus für Trainer [lw. Alaa/NCS/S.44] oder Schüler [lw. Nayef/PCS/S.24], um auf weltweiten Tourneen auch Palästina präsentieren zu können, bis hin zu dem Wunsch mit anhaltenden Zirkusaktionen den Leuten und vor allem den Kindern in der dortigen Konfliktregion eine „Pause“ im Alltag zu bieten [lw. Mahmood/NCS/S.35], und noch vieles mehr.

## Schlussfolgerungen

Zirkus als Kunst- und Kulturform scheint in seiner komplexen performativen Gestalt im ursprünglichen arabischen Kulturraum nicht existiert zu haben. Allerdings gibt es im arabischen Raum im performativen Bereich eine Vielzahl von Einzelkunstformen wie Musik, Tanz, Geschichtenerzähler und auch clowneske Figuren wie die des „Joha“. Dadurch sind der arabischen Gesellschaft performative Darbietungen sehr wohl bekannt. Und auch wenn die verbindende Kunstform des Zirkus aus dem abendländischen Kulturkreis kommt, so findet er hier einen durchaus fruchtbaren künstlerischen Boden. Auf diesem konnte er sich in den letzten Jahren festsetzen und kontinuierlich ausbreiten. Die steigende Akzeptanz zeigt sich auch in einer zunehmend positiven Wertschätzung durch das soziale Umfeld wie auch bereits teilweise durch lokale Geldgeber bei der PCS.

Für die Kinder und Jugendlichen zeigen sich durch den „social circus“ vielfältige positive Entwicklungen. Gerade in den Bereichen der sozialen Kompetenzen beschreiben die Verantwortlichen einen außerordentlichen Zuwachs, auch auf artistische und kreative Weise werden die Trainer immer wieder positiv überrascht [lw. Shadi/PCS/S.20].

Für die Trainer wiederum bot sich mit dem Zirkus auch eine berufliche Alternative innerhalb einer von Gewalt geprägten Krisenregion. Mittels dieser Kunst- und Kulturform wollen sie den Kindern die Werte eines friedlichen Miteinanders vorleben mit der Vision, einen gesellschaftlichen Wandel einzuleiten. Andererseits können die Trainer in eigenen Shows und mit internationalen Tournées ihre eigenen Erfahrungen und Anliegen in die Welt hinaustragen.

Weiterhin wäre, wie schon in der Einleitung erwähnt, eine genauere Betrachtung des zirkuspädagogischen Potentials im Rahmen der interkulturellen Friedensarbeit ebenfalls hoch interessant.

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## Anhang, Interviews

1. Shadi / Direktor PCS
  2. Nayef / Chef-Trainer PCS
  3. Noor / Trainer PCS
  4. Alaa / Techniker PCS
  5. Ahmad / Trainer PCS
  6. Mahmood / Direktor NCS
  7. Baha / künstlerische Leitung NCS
  8. Alaa / Trainer NCS
  9. Ihab / vom Kleinwarenladen gegenüber
- 

### 1. Shadi – Director from the PCS

**M:** How old are you

**S:** Ähh, 36.

**M:** And what was your origin profession, before you where coming in touch with circus?

**S:** My origin profession was a theatre actor, director and Trainer. I start learning theatre when I was 12 years old. And than I did my studies in performing art. And I was introduced to circus and this is how I got involved.

**M:** How many years ago do you first heard about social circus?

**S:** Well, I didn't heard about it. What we did at the beginning, we started to work with kids from the old city of Hebron. **And with our first class, it was catastrophe.** Let me use the word catastrophe. It was jumping juggling balls flying all over the place, the diabolos jumping over the kids [...] jumping on each other ... it was a non organised trick, a big mess.

**The circus school was established august 2006, and in march 2007 we started to teach in Hebron** and after that day me and Ferdi, we were teaching there, we couldn't drive back, I couldn't drive, I was driving the bus of the circus school. We sit in the car and we were just talking. First we had 10 min of silence to try to adjust what happened, and than we start to talk about what happened, and okay how do we continue, how do we do this. **And than we start to talk about the energy, than we start to talk about the behaviour of the kids, than we started to talk about the violence, than we start to talk about males and females [...]** we



spend a long time in the bus sitting. And before start to drive back to Ramallah to talk about what we faced in that day, in the trainings in Hebron. And than, yes, we had only two choices – either we continue or we stop – honestly. And than I was like „ah, man we are doing social work, we are social workers, a no we use circus to make social workers, we are social workers” .. but nobody told us about this is social circus, nobody told us this is social circus. Our reality and understanding our reality made us realise what is social circus means.

I didn't read books about that from that time about social circus or experiences about social circus or meet somebody who is doing social circus. It was not in my dictionary. And than we continued working, and than visitors came and it was like „ah you do circus“ - „yea, we do circus“ - they came and they saw under which conditions and how we work, it was like „oh you are doing very good social circus.“ „oh, I mentioned that before, to my brother“. So yes, this is how it happened. And from that time we worked on how do we see the reaction from the kids after each training, after each game, after each exercise, how do they behave. So we arrived after three month, this kids started to say please, can I, thank you, sorry. Boys and girls started to do the trainings together and not separately. So it was like, wow, this is really playing a big role. So this is how it started realising what is social circus.

**M:** So, but in the beginning you didn't wanted to make social circus? Your first idea was to make an artistical circus school or just circus?

**S:** The dream was, to have a professional circus school. [...] No, not only this. It's to have a professional circus school that would help us to have one juggling ball in each palestinian house. That's the top dream. So, all the palestinian people, they have knowledge about circus, they are introduced to circus in a way. Or another, they can use a ball to juggle with or to release stress or to play fun – football – with it, whatever they throw it to each other, whatever they want to do with it. And the first Balls we did, it was made of rice inside or lentils. And if on time we have a curfew and we have no food they can open this ball and make the lentils and the rice there. So that was where ... we are still ... that was the first until now. We still working to that aim to have circus introduced to the palestinian society.

My image is the juggling Ball in every house, but now we are working to introduce circus to the palestinian society.

**M:** And do you have one point in the circus which is most important for you? Beside of all the other important stuff, but what you like most or which is for you the heart-point of the circus?

**S:** For me, ähh, its a lot of points honestly and I remember, I'm not forgetting every moment in the circus school between happiness and sadness. If I wane talk about happiness, is the happiness when we did the opening the circus school. It was 18th, 19th and the 20th of august. It was by chance, because we had the workshop for three weeks and the people who wanted to come where only available from the 2nd august until the 20th of august. But than they didn't come because of the Israeli war against Lebanon. That was the first sadness. But the first happiness was to have the circus school, to open the circus school, by chance it was the same day as my birthday is.

To have the opening of the circus school is the most important and it was shocking to have this huge amount of people, coming into the theatre and there is no place, the theatre is full. All the doors in the second showroom there are a lot of people, looking above each other to arrive to see inside the second hall. And I even remember the French general

councillor of Jerusalem, he couldn't enter the theatre, he was from the street looking from the window, try to see something from the door to arrive to the [...]. A lot of people, It was like – okay, this is something. So that presentation we called it „circus behind the wall“.

And also from me was another point that we talked about our life through circus art. That made people expecting and respecting our work as circus school. And, so this is like „bum bum“. Of course than we rented a location, it was another wow-point, oh we have a training place, and than going to the trainings in Hebron, welcoming our first group in Ramallah, going to Jenin refugee camp for our first training. It was like high big points, we had the director of the most important circus school, which is the national circus school of France, CNAC. I met him after two month of opening the circus school in France. Than he came in December, after four month of opening the school, he came here.

We had an invitation to go to [CNAC] – wow – than we were invited to make shows – wow – and than France, and than in Belgium...a lot of wows and a lot of sadnesses.

**M:** Always up and down

**S:** Always up and down, but what stays in mind, from our sadnesses is our student who was shot by the Israelis in 12 12 12 – 12th of December of 2012, on his birthday while he went to bring birthday-cake for himself for his birthday. And they shot him on the checkpoint, a young Israeli soldier shot him, six bullets, and he died. He was one of our promising future trainers. This is like .. push ... the big sadness that it will never leave my image or my memory.

We had another kid who died from families problems, not with his family but between two families by mistake, by chance he was passing through, and he also died. So yes this is some big up and down – coming here, having this location, big top up, than the circus tent is here, wow, another things yeah and so on. Than Abu Sakha in jail, boom, you go down, and than this student in jail, boom, you go down. Sent people to study at „CNAC“, like one of our students, we gave her a full scholarship to study at „CNAC“. Another student, Ferdi, also got full scholarship to study in Italy at „scuola del circo“, and than also the scholarship to Nayef to study in CNAC ...

So this you feel like „wow“, this is really my tops in circus and my downs. This is a lot of things, you know.

**M:** In the area of the social circus, in the work together with the kids, is there also some kind of heart-point which is important for you? Or do you think it is the most important item for the kids?

**S:** Well, I will say in general, and I will take some examples. From the social work we do I will take the ... like the most important I had at the beginning is with the kids from Hebron, which is the group of Motasem, yes. If I see that time and I look at Motasem now, its right. If I look at Hamad who used to come to take the classes with Abu Sakha, and he was able to do three steps, because of the support of the circus trainings that he is receiving, this is very important. With our social program in the Jenin Girls-Center, we had one Girl with ... she don't hear and she don't talk ... or she hear very very little and hardly she can say a couple of words. And I was working, really I was like this is our future trainer. She was unbelievable, incredible how she was able within two years to communicate with her, to pass to her the exercise, than she was very well able to teach you with her „disability“. So, we worked so much that she will be a trainer at the circus school. But after one year of fighting with the parents and the centre were supporting us a lot, than the parents refused. I felt like .. ahhh .. but anyway, it's a big lost not to have a Person like her, very intelligent, very sweetheart, very nice personality, to loose her.

**But at the same time, we know that in social circus we have no expectations and you**

should not have any expectations. If you go for your expectations you kill the work that you do. So you should keep open and you don't accept. You work for what you believe on, on the characters, on the situations, where they are, how they are improving, where they are going next – this you can do, but you have no expectations: "I want them to be a circus artist" or "I want to make with them a production" or "I want to have them as circus trainers" – no. So, we know this, and now we don't have this girl as a trainer at the circus school.

**M:** Do you have contact with her somehow?

**S:** Yes, on Facebook she is sometimes, sends hello, what's going on, she sends messages to the circus school, its still nice. Sometimes she comes to visit while the training is happening in Jenin at the girls centre, so its.

**M:** For the structure of the PCS, you have 13 full time employees with the office and the trainers. Do they completely live from this job?

**S:** Yes

**M:** Circus and the arabic culture, do you know, if there is some kind of origin in the arabic culture as well for circus arts? Or is it just coming from Europe or the western countries somehow? Or is there some similarities in the arabic culture as well?

**S:** Well, in the arab culture we don't have circus as a .. it is not in our culture, at all. We had gymnastics, in the universities you see photos from this room in front of us [Training room of the PCS] its used to be the sports hall for the Bir Zeit University. And some people come here in the 80ies and when they were at the university, they used to climb up on the iron pipe and they come and say „wow, its still here“, so there were gymnastics you see some photos from 30, 40 years ago , that people were doing gymnastics at schools, at universities and so on.

And we also discovered that there was also a family, from photos from 1936, from the occupied palestinian '48 – were doing circus, walking on the rope, and cycling on the rope but more than this I didn't really get any more information above that. So yes, it is not part of our culture in general, it is a new invention to the culture. And now, if we talk about Palestine, we have the little circus „Assirk Assaghir“ in Nablus, the PCS here, and than there is another two groups in Gaza, plus there was another one group in Jenin but they stopped. There was another group in Alhesha Camp, they stopped long time ago. So, and also in the arab countries, in Lebanon there is two initiatives, they started one in Syria but they stopped. So there is, you know, this kind of ... a new invasion, let me call it :o).

And than of course the ... so more you do, so more people get our effect. Now, every day we have phone calls they want to send their kids to the school, but we can not take now any more, they have to wait until September. you come to subscribe in may, and than they come to subscribe in may.

We used to have, I don't know, 12 students at the first day almost ten years ago, 9,5 years ago, now we have around 300 something students, so its like growing and growing, bigger and bigger and that means of respecting the religions that we have in Palestine, respecting the traditions that we have in Palestine.

Of course we wane change the mentality of: female has the right like the male, we are all equal, we should look at each other like partners, like colleagues, not like in my own willing on what do I want you for. Or you are only a woman, you are only go to the kitchen, you are a man, you go to work in the buildings and I don't know what.

So, of course we wane work to change all that behaviours or thought or whatever but we

don't go to slap the community ... we, slowly, slowly.

They see a young girl, they say, ah yeah, a young girl, but next year she is older, hm, but next year she is older. We had for example in Hebron the older girls started to leave, because they are getting older, they are getting their periods, all this is complex. So they started to leave. So, okay, what can we do? Our mission is not we have to fight to say NO. We only make males and females together, no, no. We should work with the male to teach him how he should behave to the female. And we should work with the female to teach her, that your body is much more important to you than to anybody else, once you respect what you have, than you obliged the other people to respect you. So it is respect to be respected, you know. That you have a mind, you can use it. You have a heart, you can use it. So, we have to work on two directions.

**M:** Okay, thanks, but short back to the arab culture. I know that 200 or 300 years ago, there have been some kind of story-tellers on markets or some kind of performing arts, as well in the arabic culture, also on the markets, on the streets, a little bit similar to the Europe culture with juggling on the markets there, but little bit different.

**S:** Yes, this is how theatre started, from the one of the storyteller, than it improved to a one man show, and than you know, slowly slowly. But the sad thing, that we don't have it any more, it died in the 70th maybe or the 60th, I don't remember exactly. In Palestine it completely died. You don't have anybody now going to the coffee-shop and telling a story and, you know? Or in the street or, no no, we don't have it. For example, when we had the opening of the circus tent, we asked the friend of mine to come. He plays a very famous character, it's called, Joha. Joha is known like he is a dumb Person, a dumb character, and he is on his donkey and .. so we heard the donkey and he dressed like this character, like Joha. And he came here and he was standing here on the donkey and he was telling the story to 3, 4 or 5 hundred people. So it doesn't happen, that he goes alone to the street if there is no activity, for example. So, this it died in Palestine, completely died. Street performances, one man show, it died.

Now you have in the theatre, for example, when I was doing theatre, I used to do invisible theatre. We worked on something with my team at the theatre, and than we go four or five of us on the street and we played it to the taxi, to the bus, and we played it. And now there is a group, who also started to do that, but they are reflecting to political situations, you know?

**M:** Somehow its known in the arabic culture this kind of performances?

**S:** Yes, its very known. This is very known. Street performances and storytellers is very known. But now as I see this different groups actually, working on that, probably in ten years you might see it back in Palestine. Maybe you see a dancer in the street dancing. Not only one time in ten years, because we have dancers, they go to the street. They do it one time in ten years. Or a theatre show it happens in the street, but one time in ten years. Maybe you will find it every month, one time. This is I think the healthy atmosphere for performing art or street art, to have. So yeah, I see it coming back in ten years, if we keep on working all of us as cultural institutions and performing arts institutions we will arrive to somewhere positive in the street.

**M:** What are your experiences of the people who know you, how do they see you?

**S:** Well, let me start by, when the people, especially the very close friends of mine which were with me from the beginning of establishing the circus school. When I mentioned the

idea of establishing the circus school, they were like „Ah, you are crazy, it will not work“, „We are living already in a circus“ and so on. So, after one year, they were the one who was supporting the circus school through their companies. Of course that means a lot, that means that we as a team, we proofed to the people of how circus can change behaviours, how circus can bring positive energy, how circus can promote Palestine and the palestinian identity and how circus can promote Palestine living under occupation. We worked a lot on concentration, on focusing, on teamwork. And this has been proofed from our students at their school.

So, now this people, who are the people who are very close to us and who are still supporting us until today. So the people now look up to the circus school as they see the work of the circus school every year, every new production, student productions, trainers production whatever. This is the progress of the school, how the school is progressing. Every open days, every year there is something new on stage. And that means a lot, it means how we are as a team is eating everything and digesting it and than we are eager by learning and than we are so proud to show it to the public. So now the people around the circus school they are very committed, very happy and they see the circus school as deeply [...] for kids as a safe place, to have there kids in here.

**M:** But is there also a difference between the people who are close to you and the “normal” local people?

**S:** No, I don't see a difference. Local people expecting and respecting it, the close people to me and even to my colleges expecting and respecting it, because we have proofed to the people that we, as a profession, that we can also life from it, because here in Palestine we say “ah, yes I do theatre, I do circus.” “Oh, but will you eat bread from that?” Yes, we proofed to the people that, yes, we can eat bread, on the economical level. We proofed to people that we are a family, we are a big family, a very close family. Whatever happens to one of us, we all stand next to him. If we look at the story of Abu Sakha, every single student who cares about Abu Sakha, sending messages on Facebook: “What happened to Abu Sakha?”, “How is he?” and so on. So you see this big family that has been grown since the past, almost nine and a half years now.

**M:** Is there a difference between the support of the “normal” local people and the municipality?

**S:** We had one time from a palestinian company, and we had one time from a bank, Palestinian Bank, financial support. [...] Beside that we didn't get any support from any local or official body.

**M:** Is there some kind of change between the last 7 or 8 years? Or is it just like the same nothing?

**S:** On which level?

**M:** Like financial support.

**S:** On the financial support of course, the more you grow, and the more you make noise, lets say it in a very simple way, the more people knows about you. And the more people know about you the more big companies would like to support you. Because of course, they gain a lot of publicity and so on, because the circus is known, and so on.

So now for example, when I go to do the meetings, for I do the fund-raising meetings for the local companies and the local banks, the palestinian banks and so on. I don't have to

explain about the circus, but two years ago when I was looking for fund-raising for the tent, I had to talk about the circus school and explain about the circus school and what we are and what we do.

But as we have been growing by having our tent of course and making a lot of shows, now when I go to the meetings I don't have to talk about the history of the circus school or what we do. They just know and I only have to talk about the festival. So this is a very big, huge step that we have made during the past two and a half years, actually. And this is what we are aiming for, we don't have to explain what is circus, we hope to arrive to the situation where even we say circus they know what is circus. So yes, now we see, we feel more people are interested, especially with the hole fund-raising, that I'm doing now, I feel more companies are interested to be partners in this festival.

**M:** How is the reaction of your family, your mother, father? How do they see, that you are working as a circus director?

**S:** Well, since I learned juggling in 1997, I went back home from my theatre school, where I used to learn at the university. And I tried to juggle with everything looks like a ball in the house. And my mum she sad, you can play with whatever you want but don't touch the eggs [...]. So my mum and my family were very supportive to the idea. First when I went to study theatre when I was 20 years old, and than when I choosed theatre as a profession. And than when I spend maybe 4 years at the circus school without any salary. And I had to support my family to life, so I was just not giving anything, my family they supported me even in that level. You don't have to pay or to do anything for the house, because I'm working on something. And, yeah, its like this mentality of: "This is what you feel? That you will succeed? We will support you." you know? So, this was very positive point as to start. This is the close family, the relatives I have, I don't have connections with them.

**M:** Do you have like one or two examples from the past about kids who did surprised you a lot about there development with the circus?

**S:** Well, examples there are a lot and I can not imagine one or two, to be honest. Every character at the circus school, and every student, surprise you in a different way. On a personality level, on a behaviours level, on educational level, on technical level, on artistical level, on humanitarian level. Each kid has his or showed one of these parts and surprised me since the past nine and a half years.

A lot on the personality level, a lot on the personality level, where I really concentrate there, and than on the creativity and technique and artistic level. And some of them I was like, at the beginning what do they do here? You know? Sometimes you have this questions, are you ask yourself, what do they do here? And than, at once they are what? This is incredible, you know? It's like they surprise, and I can not mention names, seriously. If I need to mention names? I need 100 names, they are all like this kind of surprising people. And this is what you offer them.

**M:** You are here in very special political situation. Would it be possible somehow for you to make a cooperation with a Israeli circus group?

**S:** Once we are equal on all levels, we will be the first organisation to work with Israelis.

Fin

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## 2. Nayef – Chef-trainer from the PCS

**M:** How old are you at the moment?

**N:** 31

**M:** You are like the chief-trainer and responsible for the artistic stuff in the Circus School?

**N:** Yes.

**M:** What was your first profession after school, after you left school?

**N:** I was farmer with my family, working with my father. Than I came to Ramallah, I worked in a bar, in a restaurant. And than I started working with the Circus School.

**M:** At which time you were coming in contact with circus skills and circus art? Before you met Shadi?

**N:** No, no, with Shadi, [...] when I met Shadi, he was telling me about the circus and where they teach, and it was interesting and I joint them, was practicing once a week, and slowly slowly I start to teach.

**M:** At which time you decided for yourself that you only want to make circus?

**N:** In the beginning of 2008, between 2007 and 2008. [...]

**M:** It's for you some kind of a difference between the circus stuff you are making and like social circus?

**N:** Of course there is a lot of differences.

**M:** What is for you the main difference?

**N:** The social circus, its where you don't really look at the technique and if they do it perfect or if they did a mistake or if they didn't even do it, the technique. The important with the social circus its how to transfer the energy of children and how to use it in a positive way. It's how to open their mind. Like with the circus technique its like the differences to the social but if I speak about myself, if I want to learn this movement, like I care, if I do it in a right way or not. I care, if I did it, or not.

**M:** Is there some kind of heart-point or what is like a very important point in the social circus which is most important for you?

**N:** Yes, in the social, the most important when I work with the children from the refugee-camps. Its kind of letting them be aware, it can be in there society, [...] open their mind and little as well, to decide of what they want in their life. Because I feel sad about it, if the parents decide what their children will be. And this is we are trying to change but when we change it, its not really through talking, its all through circus techniques, through circus games. And this is very important for me, that's one. The second thing, when we mixed all the students together, because we don't really want the students to have like: this is Muslim, this is Christian. So Mhmad come to talk to them because he is Muslim or

because he is Christian. Its really good to bring them together and to break this. And it happened to break it and to have it, and to treat everybody as a human being.

**M:** A lot of times in the circus you make a show. You always make a show with every kind of class you do? And how important do you think is this for the children?

**N:** We do ... its something [...] program, they have to pass. All the students have to perform, so its part of their learning in process. Some of the students I want them to perform, not because they are really good in performing but I want them not to be shy, to get this kind of experience. We have students, we make a presentation with them. All the students we have will make an open day, its a presentation in the end of the year, we work with them and kind of small presentation, sometimes a story, in order to show their parents what they have build there. The second, its as well to perform in front of people, for this and than not to be shy [...] and some of the students, yes we work with them, we call it show-group, we create a show with them in order to make a tour in Palestine. And sometime we go outside with this show like last year, two years ago, I went to Denmark with this group and perform. And last year I was in German[y] and this year they are going to Italy to perform. And we have the trainer-show, which we have created different levels, four different levels, different kind of shows. We have the trainers show which is this trainer show, the one they perform right now, its called "Mish Zabta", which is they did it, I think for 50 times. And the goal, we are really can not reach with the show for example with a high number people inside, like in villages, in Bedouin, people lives in the mountains, people lives next to settlements because they don't wanna leave this land, because its their land. And we have Ferdi and Ashtar show, which is another level. B-orders [2].

**M:** Well, this about the show-groups, but for the smaller children, what do you feel, is this performing day, this open day is like important for them? Or is it just like an examination?

**N:** I think they are very happy, and they always can't wait to perform. And I always know, for example I teach them, they asking me when we start to create the show, the numbers. Because they find it really pleased to perform, and they are very happy and we are very happy as well, to see this children have interest to show, what they have been learned. And its very important for them, and very important for their parents as well. Their parents its maybe they didn't really used to see their child in a stage, where there 200 [or] 300 people are watching. And that is a are very good thing for the parents and its very good for the school and its – which is for me the most important – its very good for the teachers, because they can see the result in the end of the year and maybe they can see, okay, from here I have to go: where I have to go deep, where I have to go less, where I have to improve them maybe.

**M:** And because of the audience or the parents, what is your experience? Do they see this performance more as a kind of sport, like gymnastic, or do they really see the quality as art, like an artistic performance?

**N:** There are different families, some families they see this sport, its a gymnastic, that they can have fun, some of them they think its good, because its good for their body, its very healthy and its good to grow up in a sport mind [...] and some families for example they see its a future for them, for the children, it can be a job in the future.

**M:** Is there a difference in watching the skills, sports versus art, between christian and muslimic parents?



**N:** No, no, its mixed, there is no difference. Our students and the teacher, all the team of the palestinian circus school we don't really know, who is the christian or who is the muslim, even the parents, when they come they didn't really see, okay, this is the christian performing and the muslim. We didn't see the religion inside. [...]

**M:** Do you know some kind of similar performing arts in the arabic culture, before circus was starting in the arabic culture?

**N:** No, but I saw some theatre there, but I didn't really see this kind of performing.

**M:** [...] and like the municipality, like the officials, how do they see this kind of circus art or circus work here in Palestine?

**N:** I think, all the people like what we are doing, the municipality, the government, the schools, in the community, in the camp, in the village they are really like what we are doing. And like one week ago I had a meeting in Alfaarah refugee-camp, with the communities taking care of the service of Alfaarah like electricity, water and stuff. They are really happy to have the circus school teaching this children. We are taking around 35 child from the street and we are playing with them, they are proud. And all the people they are really like what we are doing, but when it come for them to support the PCS they go away, like "we don't have" for example a money, we don't have [...] and the municipality for example of Ramallah, they do a festival every year and they invite us to be in this festival, and we do that, we show inside the festival but when it comes to go to them for example, "we guys we need a land to build our school, we need this"...we don't have. [...]

**M:** Have you seen through the last 8 years that there was a little bit changing in the mind of the municipality?

**N:** Of course there is a change, for example one .. the first, for example, show which belongs for the municipality, maybe they refused to give us a discount, because they didn't really know what we are doing and now for example they give us a discount. Sometimes the give us a discount in order to perform. There is change, there is respect more. When there is a festival or something happens in their city, they used not to talk to us, but now in every meeting they have to do, one of the PCS has to be there in order to share with them in the festivals. Not only in the municipality, some organizations, art-organizations and organizations they invite the PCS to be part of the festival, to be part in the preparation of the festival. This is a huge change, to be honest.

**M:** What would be your wish for the next days, what kind of support would you like to have?

**N:** We would like to have our own School, our own land [...] this is my dream, but its not only my dream, I think of the PCS, to have their land and to build a home [...], because in ten years we have to leave this school. Its not belongs to us. Yes, [as] we took this, it was really a big garbage, and we rented and we paid a lot of money in order to renew it and in ten years we have to leave. And where will we go?

**M:** You have to leave for sure?

**N:** For sure. When we signed the contract it was kind of 15 years, and after the 15 years we can talk to see if we can give you another 15 years. But like one year ago the owner

came and he says: guys, now after 15 years you have to leave, because I want to give it for my son and daughter [...]. For sure we don't have another option, and we [...] with them, it was a clear decision from him, okay, we need, when we finished we find something else.

Its a problem we are facing, and buying a land in Bir Zeit or Ramallah is expensive. Like me and Shadi, like one week ago, two weeks ago we went to Bir Zeit here with the friends to see lands and try to see how much, its like 2000 square-meter, it was around 40/45 [...] 450 000 dollars. Its a half million dollar, just for the land. We don't have this money, we don't even have half of this money.

[...]

**M:** If you now look back to the work of the circus school, do you have there like a dream or a **personal dream what you like to reach in like 10 or 20 years?**

**N:** Yeah, of course, everyone of us has his dream, we want to go with this students. **First its, I want to see a change of our society through the circus, through what we are doing.** We see change, but its a little bit, why? Because the change it will take times and what I think its the change I'm going to see in their children, the students who is teaching now. **Because they gone grow their children in a different way. The change I'm going to see not in this generation. In this generation they will loose what they have been learned and what we have been talking in order to grow up their children in a different way.** I think this gone take 20 years in order to see, yeah ...

Me, I always say it, **I would love to see one of my students, he is really having a very high level, a very high level** [...] everyone has his different level, has his own personality but what I would love to see, one of them ... **like all the companies in the world, they are asking him to join them, to be part of them.** That's I have a dream I don't know ...

**M:** Do you have in your mind some kind of stories of special students which surprised you by changing in personality or something like this?

**N:** I don't really have it in my mind. There is different stories, but actually this is a question ... I have to ...

**M:** Okay, than maybe later.

**N:** Yeah, later.

**M:** Do you also have to deal with **Children which refuse to train**, which are completely negative?

**N:** Every personality we have, we have a different way of dealing. We don't have only one way to deal with all the students, I think we have 100, wait, 300 ways of dealing, every one has their way of dealing with the students. Yes, we have a lot of students, its not "No, I don't want they are here", and they come here, its because they want to be here, not they are applied to be here. That's one thing which is very important for me. **And its a kind of they have a fear of doing this kind of movement. Yes, I don't wane do it, because I'm afraid, I am scared to do it.** And we work with him, he or her – I don't know - in order to break this fear, in order to let them trust us, because in every technique, in every movement, we do we have a spotting, and before you arrive to this complicated movement, or the one you are afraid of it, we have a basics, we have exercise, we build it together. And this is ... I talk to them as well. **If I have one who is really scared, I talk to him, I give him a lot of exercise, a lot of games but I talk to him its like this: Before you arrive here, we build it up,**

don't worry, we have different moves, we are here to protect you, this is one of our important things at the school. You come here, for example, for Friday at ten you have no accident and our goal is to go home without any accident, this is a part. And this is we have like a fear [...] I always face this kind of [fear]: "I don't know how to do it."

For example I teach [...], how to make a front role. Like I have at the stations for example ten. Like five or six of them, they always telling "okay" and on every station, "I don't know how to do it", so, here as well I give them ... to give him a very simple exercise, I don't go really direct to the front role, I do an exercise in order to make the role without him realize – I did this role. And I also talk to them. At last Saturday, one of them he told "I don't know how to do". I told him: "Can you tell me why you are here?" He said: "Because I want to learn". I told him: "Can you tell me, why I am here?" "Because you want to teach." So it is, you are here to learn, and I am here to teach. Okay, so lets go on in order to do it. I didn't do it before [...] as well, I was like you, I didn't really know how to make a front role, but my teacher he was helping me, I had no accident, I do it now. He says okay, lets go. And he did it. Its something just made in her mind.

**M:** Now a more political question. At the moment you are doing like a completely boycott to Israel. Could you imagine for the future some kind of cooperation with an israeli circus?

**N:** What I believe and what I know, there is no possibility of having an exchange with an israeli circus school. Because the team, we don't want, the students as well, they don't want like even their parents [...] maybe [...] like if you tell them there is a group from Israel coming here to have an exchange. Our children they see and they hear about the Israel, they see only guns, and this is the picture. They see only the guns. The picture in their mind. And we have students, their parents, or his father or mother or brother or cousin or his neighbor, they got shot, they die. Maybe his brother or father, he is in prison. You can imagine that if this people come here and to do this kind of ... maybe its gonna be shocking for the children and for me as well, maybe ... I have a friend, he got shot from the Israeli. If I wane work with the circus school [...] I always think of my friend and I can not really know if he is the one who shot him or this one or this one ... because they all do the military service. And for me its hard, if it happen, I don't know if its going to happen. I don't really know if its going to happen. If it happen, I'm not going, to be part of this exchange. Its hard, I can see my daily life with all this checkpoints. I can see the news now, I can see, people get shot every day. How you want me to do work with them? You see like ... go in youtube, you can see they are teaching their children now, how to use the gun. Children they are ten, seven, twelve years old ... they are teaching them how to use it. Why? They are killing their childish, I don't know, they are doing a brain-wash. How I can work with them? How I can make an exchange with them? Yes, maybe we say, okay, there is a lot of palestinian who has a burnish into war inside, and building or in something ... this is something else, this is different than this, because they have no other opportunity, they work because they want to survive. They work because of our government [...] offer them something similar ... I have a choice not to talk to them.

**M:** You spoke about the brain-washing of the israeli children. Could it be maybe be to counter this brain-wash with this kind of circus-exchange, to see that there is something else like art and creativity? A different point of view?

**N:** If you do this kind of circus-workshop you do it once every year? You do it one week intensive, one week every year? Its not going to have a really change because they are having their life there. They have it every day, this kind of things. Its stronger than the circus-technique. [...] They already have a brain-wash. Even if you do a workshop or an exchange with them, maybe they look at you as a terrorist. You know, you don't really feel

comfortable, even if you work with them. I don't think its gonna make something from change. I prefer to go to a village or refugee-camps to do this one week to teach them, to play with them, to perform to them [than to] go and come back without any result. Go and come back and people start maybe to talk about us, which I don't care about, but I don't feel really good for the rest of my life.

Fin

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### 3. Noor - Trainer from the PCS

**M:** How old are you?

**N:** 24

**M:** What was the first time you were coming in contact with circus?

**N:** I knew circus since I was a child and I saw it once in my life like a life circus show. It was either in 1999 or 2000, I don't remember the date exactly. But at that time there was a Russian circus, came here to Westbank, and they had a big tent, and they build it here and they started to make shows and moved between the cities. And Jenin, they came three days in Jenin and they were making shows every day. And my father bought tickets for us and my cousins and he took us, and I was really young, I was eight or nine years old, and I don't remember what actually, I remember only the Clown and the snakes, yes there was like girls with bikini and lot of snakes and this is the only thing I remember. I don't remember any techniques from that thing and than I only knew Circus through TV. I like gymnastics, I look always on TV there is a lot of championships, they show gymnastics. Acrobatics, flip flaps and these things. And the first time I get in contact with the circus here in Palestine was in 2007, in the end of 2007. I was volunteering in a center, a youth center, we doing like volunteering work, lots of social work, cleaning, planting and like doing sports, like lot of activities, like social volunteering. And once they told us there are visitors are coming to visit you from Ramallah from the Palestinian Circus School. They want to come to [...] with you, a group from 20 guys at that time. Then I met Shadi and Ferdi, they came to Jenin and they told us "yeah, we established a circus school in Ramallah and we started also to teach in Hebron. And from next year, like in two or three month later, we will start to teach in Jenin, do you want to join the circus school?" We sad like: "Okay, we join", but it was just out of curiosity, because we were sure that its not like how we know, because we know that we don't have animals here in Palestine and we know that we don't have a big tent and things [...] like tent, animals, clowns but when we knew that it won't be the same, because they will teach us in Jenin and we know in Jenin there is nothing, there is either no Elephants, no Lions we didn't know actually what will be, but we said okay, just yes yes. And at that time we were not really committed like we say yes, and say we go and if we don't like it, we don't come back again. And than, like in March 2008, we started and it was a course for two month, twice a week. And than we started like with drama-exercises and than we start to think its different than our expectation. actually we didn't expect anything, we didn't know what we will take, but was a lot of teamwork and group-work, concentration, trust-games and basics of juggling and acrobatics, that was the only thing we did. And in the end of the two-month-workshop we made a small presentation. We invited our friends and our families and we made it for them – it was maybe ten minutes, or less. It was really simple but we put a lot of energy and I felt: "Okay we have something and people are await coming to see us, so we have to

work really hard and seriously, so we work a lot on this presentation, and we did.” Since that time we get involved more in the circus and start to know more and we kept going on.

**M:** What was the reason for you to keep on doing that?

**N:** Because I felt its something different than other things, like other sports or other arts. Me I used to play Takewandoe, I did it for eight years and when I start doing circus I was doing at the same time Takewandoe. I started like in 2004 to play Takewandoe and than when I start with the circus I started to do both, than I quit, I stop doing Takewandoe. I felt circus is different, because its not like sports, like all the sports has rules, you know, this is the right this is the wrong, you should do it this way and this way and this. And in the Circus I felt its different, there is no real rules like its should be like this, the Circus is like this or like this - for the techniques, yes, of course. to play with three balls, of course you need technique. But in general as a Circus, as a sport, as a culture, it depends how you look at it – its something real open – you can choose whatever you want, you can choose your own way of doing the things and there is no right and wrong, and there is no this way or this way, its about exploring and experimenting and either they have this way and at the end you could have a lot of different ideas than you can build your own way. And I felt its something more open its more than sport its not like..., I was looking as it for a sport, than I said no, its something bigger. Its like ... its an art and contains a lot of things, bigger than like sports, that's why I stay more in the circus and to put more energy.

**M:** Is there one point in all the circus-stuff which is most important to you?

**N:** Yes, actually there was ... there is two things, it was really like big steps for me in the Circus. First thing is like me and Ahmad, Mhmad and Abu Sakha, like the four of us from Jenin. And before we started to teach at the circus-school we were students, the circus school came and they told us - like we will work on a new production and we want you to make this production like it would be you guys, who making this production and than we will make a tour here and we will make 50 shows. And it was the first time for us, like we will working on a show. Usually do presentations little bit on the open days for the families but we didn't worked in a show before.

And there is a director, he is from Belgium, from the Netherlands, he will come to work with you, for four month, three days a week. We said okay, wow its nice and at that time our level also was really simple, like it was in the end of 2010 and in the beginning of 2011. So it has been only three years at that time, that we are doing circus and we used to do it once a week, so our level was really simple with everything – acrobatic, juggling. So we said “Yes, we are happy”. The director came we sit with him, we talked together what we are doing and things and than he worked with us like four month and was a really great experience like to work in a show, we worked intensive and he worked also a lot on our techniques. So after this four month we had a show and also we improved a lot during these month like technically and artistically.

And than we started to tour around with this show. This was for me the biggest [...] it was the first show and we made like big tour, we arrive really a lot of places we didn't know about it before, I never heard of it. So it was a big experience for me, that show. [...] The show was close to “Mish Zapta”. The idea was to perform everywhere – go to villages, camps, to the places where they are not able to come here, as usually people from villages who come to a city to see a circus-show. We did with Bedouins in the fields, in the mountains – everywhere we did that show.

The second thing, also was very important, was when I started to work in the circus school, because we took a program like “training of trainers”. How to get trainer and how

to make schedules, how to teach this things. And than in 2011 I became like full-time-trainer at the school. There was people who is in this workshop and they say in the end “we want four people to be out of this workshop to work in the school”. It was me, Abu Sakha and the twins. And also at this time I start also to see things differently, when I started to teach. Also this is the second important thing. And than there is a lot of important things.

**M:** Just to the short difference you spoke about, what is the difference you saw as a trainer?

**N:** Yes of course, like when I was a student, the only thing was, how I learn this trick. But when I start to teach also children, okay its different. It doesn't mean if I know how to do the trick, that I'm able to teach it. Then I start also to see, like I see myself, when I started to teach people. I know the behavior the way how they ask questions, what they want to do, they want to do first, like back-flip from the first class. And I was like them exactly, but now I'm older. Now I understand how things work and they don't understand. So I know now I need to work on them, that they start to understand the things, to be more aware and work with them. And it was a nice experience also to share, to give the opportunity to other people to learn what I was learning. And I was lucky to get involved in the Circus by chance, it just was by chance, and its good and I believe its something really good to pass it to other people.

**M:** Is there one most important thing in teaching children for you?

**N:** For me I concentrate, for me personally, I like two things. First the technical thing, like me I like that the child and someone who is learning something, he can do something special. So he is proud of it like he is encouraging. For example the one who is learning balls, like i'm really happy when I see someone, he start to play with three balls and he is really excited, “look look” like it works, playing with three now. Or someone who did like back-flip for the first time. Or someone who did salto on the trampoline. They are really excited about it. And me I believe, if they feel that they are doing something special, is something good for them and en-strength their personality. Second thing, its also effect on the social side, like if they feel I do something special other people cant do it, I trust myself more, because they believe I can do something. The other thing is to work with an older group, like me in exercises, I work a lot on concentrations and trust and team-work. This three elements is always to be like in a game or in the exercise or to do the exercise together, it should be like this three subjects [are] very important to concentrate, as a group and as a person. How to concentrate through juggling balls or through an exercise and how to work together. How to do the move together, how we can help each other like as a group and the other thing is to trust. Trust other people and to trust yourself. Its a lot of ... and also its basics, like the juggling really helps with the concentration, to do akroliftings and pyramids helps with the trust, because if I don't trust my friend to carry me, I won't do it. So then you have to be like trust to each other, so you can't do people don't know each other like we don't go with them two-man-high, carry each other, so of course you need to do ice-breaking to make them trust each other and to concentrate and work together, and then also technically it helps you technically, you can go faster.

**M:** What do your friends and family say to your job?

**N:** Me my friends they like Circus, they say its funny, its nice, its not like our work [...] you like it and you go to different places and things. And because they look at the Circus as

something interesting like playing like, you know, something you are enjoying doing it [...] wow its nice to work in this. Something really easy, something really nice, traveling all the time, but they don't know all the hard things in it. Its really tiring, when you are teaching its not easy to teach. So they see the nice things from the circus .. the shows and they like the thing.

My family also they like the Circus. In the beginning I had, like it wasn't easy to start in the beginning with my father. He like sports and he encouraged me to do circus and anything physically he like that I do it. But then [as] he realized that it start to take a lot of time from me. Me, I started once a week, than I started train twice a week, and we work on the show that I told you about, we start to train five days a week – he told me stop – like come on its too much, like keep it as a hobby, one twice a week, but don't go to much in it, like don't put that time on it. But concentrate on your study on the university, not on this. And this you go sometimes, but don't make it the main life, the main thing in your life. This is something beside the study.

Then we always had discussions, he didn't like and [I] say I would like to continue [...]. Until I got the opportunity to work at the circus-school, he told me okay [...] and I started to work, in the beginning my father didn't like, he said now you will stop the university, you wont study a lot. Because I'm still studying at the university and then I said no, I wont. It was a lot of problems and discussions [...] and in the end I said I will go and I will not quit the university, I will keep going with the university and then he agreed, but he didn't like, he didn't really like it. But then I started to work on the both, its hard actually. In the first two years of the circus school my marks in the university was really bad, I couldn't study anymore. Then, since last year I start to revive the study, because I want to finish, I just want to finish, so I can have more time [...]. So now he is okay with the thing, he is okay in order I'm still studying and working on the same time.

**M:** And your mother?

**N:** My mother, she likes everything I like.

**M:** And your sisters, brothers?

**N:** They like. My sister she sometimes come to our shows, when its in Jenin and my brother, the one who is younger than me, he is on the circus school, he started with me, we started together. And my little brother he is at the circus school, he stopped now, he is in the last year of the school, he has a lot of studies, but he is coming back.

**M:** Could you imagine any other job beside of the circus?

**N:** Yeah, I imagine. Like me, I study accounting and then I imagine maybe one day I work as an accountant, but me, its not my plan. Even when I finish university, I want keep on going with the circus school. But I don't know maybe one day I'm doing something else.

**M:** And if it could keep going on like you want, what would you like to reach in maybe ten years?

**N:** Ähhh, like ... the thing is like, I want to do more than one thing, like me, I really like to work in the artistic field, like to create the shows or to work on a shows with people, like more the artistical and technical thing. And this is I really like.

Also, beside that, I like also the social work to work with people who don't want to be an artist or like to work with normal people, and with disabilities and things, also its something

real different than the students who wants to be. The artistic field is something totally different than the social field, its totally two things different, but I want to improve myself in the both fields, like to keep going in the both fields. But our time now, we are teaching more than training and make shows, because we have more students and we concentrate on the shows in summer. **But now like I'm trying to improve myself on the both sides.**

Fin

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#### 4. Alaa – Technician from the PCS

**M:** How old are you?

**A:** 34.

**M:** When did you, for the first time, came in contact with circus?

**A:** Actually, in the circus like the guys here, like Shadi and Ferdi and Nayef, I know them since they start the circus, but I never thought I will be part of the circus because I was like studying different thing and working totally different things ...

**M:** But did you heard something about circus before?

**A:** **The first circus-show I saw it, when I start to study circus-technician in France** but before I never saw any [...] like I grew up in a refugee-camp, so we don't have big thing or anything like this, so **we never had experience about circus.**

**M:** Okay, so with Shadi and Ferdi and the PCS was your first experience?

**A:** Yeah.

**M:** And for you, what is for you the **most important point in circus?**

**A:** To keep, **to make the children smile.** This is what bring me to the circus, like at least you can help, not big thing but at least you will make ... like some kid here have a horrible life, to smile. That's no one can do it, like not politicians, not governments. I didn't talk about just Palestine, anywhere, like you can't make like the happiness from inside you going out, not your smile a stupid thing, so smile – no, you start smile, because there is happy inside you and that's what bring me to the circus.

**M:** So its more like the social aspect of circus or also the artistical aspect you like most?

**A:** Social! Because the artistical, it will come with the experience, because if you don't know anything about the art you can't have artistic point in the shows or anythings, so you ... in social it will start for sure, I think its the normal way to start.

**M:** You are now like full-time-employe at the PCS, and did you had a different job before the PCS?

**A:** Yes, I studied political strategies, and I was work in the political strategies research center and actually this is the first point I start to think about the circus because when we



was making research political research and strategies and you... we send it to politicians and they say wrong thing. They say ... they are not honest with the people, so I start to see myself like a Clown working. So, the first thing, the first idea in my life – if I'm a Clown, why am I not be a really Clown, and make the people actually smile or laugh when they saw me, because they will be happy. Not because I'm stupid and I'm lying to them. So this is the first, and after when I had the experience I saw the kids how much they are ... so touching and open eyes and just looking, focusing how much ... its so good for them. So I start to think, the circus help the people more than the politicians in any way, not just here.

**M:** You are now a full-time-employee at the circus, how do your friends, family think about that?

**A:** My family, they didn't shocked, because like my father, he is singer and writer, and my family they work in medias. We have experience with shows, my father he was doing theater [...] so they don't have shocked. But the think of them – if they are really sure about my future, because its tricky here. We don't have a lot of circus here, so if you going outside the circus, what you will do? Because its just one organization or school, so where you will go? You cant build circus because the circus here its not like a company, its like an organization and its hard to make another organization and start to work from zero. No, that's ... but they have faith of me, like if I want to do something, I'm really sure 100%.

For my friends they are just shocked, shocked from the way ... or they know I'm a crazy and I can just switch anything in my life and that's a healthy thing. And there was really hard [for] some of them to understand, like. "Really? you work in the circus? Like you are from the good people in Palestine who do like strategies-research and you will just ... and you study for five years and you will let it go?" For sure I will let it go, its my life. How I make the five years, I will make another five years so what is the problem? We live just one life, so and if there is other life I don't [...] care about them, I care about this life I [...]. But after that they start to ... like support me about [...] and they start to thinking of themselves also, why will not change? So I have until now three friends they change what they study or what they work all the life, they just changed it, because its not about circus for them, its about changing, changing something. Because in Palestine we don't have a lot of choices, so if you ... we tried to have half-choice, you know, so and you let it go? For just dark[\*] way and you walking .. but the dark way maybe is more healthy for you to walk it, you don't know. No one know what will happen. Also [...] just fixed the life when they work in the air, schools or organization or whatever its also ... I like to change, like you know, and I will not say I will work all my life in the circus, maybe I will work, but maybe not. [...] That's the free of the human being, they can choice what they want, and they can change what they want.

**M:** If you had a wish for yourself, what would you like to do or where would you like to be in like ten years?

**A:** In ten years, I don't know, but maybe ... my thought its like to just, [...] enter it to 48 and Gaza, so I can make the children there happy also, not just in Westbank, because if you are going to 48 there is like refugee-camps like here but without names, so I want to help those people also, I want to ... I want to do a lot of things without anyone asks me "Whats your name?" or "What is your ID". That's, I don't know, whether I will be ... I don't know like I'm thinking go to Latin-America to help the people in the forest to life and surviving and a lot of capitalism kills them every day. I thinking to go to Africa, but you know, we don't have a lot of choices and ... so I hope I can do it, but I will work to make it.

[\*] dark way – in diesem Kontext ist wohl “hard way” gemeint im Sinne von der schwierigeren, unsicheren Weg.

Fin

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## 5. Ahmad – Trainer from the PCS

**M:** How old are you?

**A:** I'm 22 – sorry 24 years

**M:** Can you remember the first time you came in touch with circus?

**A:** Yeah, it was in 2008, in march. It was in march. They came to Jenin, with like a new sport. I was doing before the circus, was playing „Takewandoe“. [...]. The place that we make some volunteering things, cleaning and helping and they we was like the support-team, no, the sport-team [...] we was volunteering, and we was just helping and do some [...].

**M:** And before 2008 you never heard about circus, or something?

**A:** I was know the circus by, like some programs in television and I was know the circus just elephant, like animal, tiger and lion and someone he jumped very high with trapeze and do some crazy things, yeah, but I wasn't like imagine that I'll join the circus before. Was something new. When I entered I just want to try it, like the same things to do.

**M:** And if you look about circus and your job, is there something which is most important for you, or do you like most?

**A:** Yeah, the most thing I like, I teach the people that there was like me before and they don't know about the circus and I see my past before that the students I teach them, that how they will grow by circus, like they will improve by personality and how to deal with the people and how they will life. We [ ... ] a lot of people, not. Now, if you came to me before I don't know the circus like, for example I'm not in the circus and you ask me some question like this, I didn't answer anything, because I don't know before...something its important for also the body and the ... its something ... its changing and when I go to teach somewhere its ... I be very happy, because I teach them, because they don't know. They are happy, because they learn circus, and they enjoy here. And when they enjoy, I enjoy with the circus.

**M:** What about your friends and family, how do they see your job at the circus?

**A:** In the beginning that was hard with them. “No, this is not the future.” “This is ... “. The mostly question that there was asking me: “Its the future? Did you see the future of the circus?” “Work something else, not the circus, don't join the circus. Work something .. and put it in the side of your life and work an other thing and join the circus, not to be the thing only in your life at the circus.“ Yeah, but I want to make a challenge to join and I was really happy to continue but there was [...] my life, I like to be here and I want to continue.

My family it was ... because we are two, me and my brother we are twins and we leave together. We left the home. For my mother, she was like – always say no, enough, come back. **But now she is not worry.**

**M:** Was there a difference between your friends and family?

**A:** For my friends, they didn't like. They are [...] its something new.

**M:** Is there something else you would like to do, as a job or something?

**A:** No, I didn't think like something else. No, now I concentrate on circus, teaching and doing shows.

**M:** And if you have a wish for yourself, what would you like to reach in maybe about ten years?

**A:** I would like to see a lot of students we have **and the circus school is something very important here in Palestine like something like the schools, something by education of the country.** And I would like to be like something ... like I do thing and its standing like ... **its like a normal school in Palestine,** not just a circus school or something like sport, no, I wish it will be a real school. Everybody know about the circus, everybody know the shows, everybody he wants to join. **And I wish we have 1000 students.**

Fin

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## **6. Mahmood – Director from the NCS**

**M:** How old are you?

**Mahmood:** I am 33 years old.

**M:** When did you finished school and what have you done first after school?

**Mahmood:** Well, I finished my school in 2003, so I was volunteering before that, since 2001, was volunteering with a medical organisation called „union of palestinian medical [...]committees“ I used to be a first aid volunteer. And than when I finished school I kept my work at that organization until 2003/2004. After that I worked with an organisation called „project hope“. And this organization was based on [...] Nablus. The idea was bringing international volunteers to come to the city and do some education or whatever skills that they can share with us. So languages, art, drama, photography - skills like that. And that's where we met with the circus, with the guys here. **There were a bunch of young people who were doing clowning, made their own costumes and they made heir own red-nose using a glue and the shape of the egg. And they used to go on the street or to kindergardens and do some comedy-sketches, which used to be a local jokes and they made it as sketches.** That's how I end up doing this kind of work.

**M:** So this was your first kind of performing-work? Or did you had some kind of performing work before?

**Mahmood:** **No, I never performed before. I never studied art. I never studied Circus. I**

never learned skills of the circus before. Circus never been in our culture, at all. But we met a German circus called Cabuwazi, they are from Berlin, they are a kids-circus. They came here in 2003, I think. They invited a couple of those guys, who is doing street performance, to Germany and then they came back in 2004. They give us two weeks of workshop, circus workshop. I joined that group at that time as translator and I liked it. My especially was diabolo. I was translating for Diabolo-session, and then I got hooked over there. So they left after two weeks of these two-weeks-workshops, they left the city and they left us some equipment and that's when we start the group, we name it "Assirk Assaghir", which stand for "small circus".

**M:** At which moment you decided for yourself to make this as your job?

**Mahmood:** It wasn't at that point. At that time it was like kind of hobby, it looks nice, some people like what we told them and what we showed them. I joined the performing-group after that, I learned a lot of them also. We had to learn things on our own because we didn't had any teachers. We were around our twenties. We had to figure things ourselves. With some of the equipment that they left us, we had to teach ourselves or help ourselves [...] Because we were older, kind of, we found some young kids from a refugee camp nearby here called Aska-Refugee-Camp. And we invited them to teach them, maybe they will learn faster than us, and it did work, actually. And they liked it, and they kept doing it till today. Some of them they have been with us for the past eleven years. I think you met Kahled and Alaa inside. Kahled is the acrobatic teacher and Alaa they are with us for the past eleven years. Those from the first group. And that's when I decided, that yeah, it did work, and people liked it and maybe we should keep going on with it. Performing and teaching.

**M:** Okay, and at which moment you decided to make it as your job?

**Mahmood:** In 2007. From 2003 till 2007 it was a volunteering thing. We do have time, we could do it, we didn't had any funds, we have no money at all, we have to pay, so we have to work some other place to find some money to help us keep going with it. Yeah, 2007 it was maybe our first project that we got founded. Of course we opened the circus school in 2006, and 2007 I got a paid job at the circus. So I left my other job, I quit my other job and I focused on the circus at that time.

**M:** And from this point until now, how many people get paid with the circus?

**Mahmood:** Well, we have a bunch of volunteers, but we also have employees. We have four trainers at the moment, two of them full-time, two of them half/part-time. We have the accountant, we have me, we have the performing-team director. We are eight, eight employees. We could be ten or twelve in summer, in the vacation, because more students comes in the summer-vacations, so we need to hire part-timers as well.

**M:** Okay, and actually you get the money about a cooperation's from outside, or do you have cooperation's also in Palestine with municipalities or something?

**Mahmood:** No, unfortunately locally we don't have any donors, if you call them donors. We have partners that we perform with, we are going to perform at their places, we receive the students, we make shows or workshops. In this kind of partnership but founding-partners, we don't have any local founding partners. We always relies on outside-donors who also work with culture or performing art.

**M:** And do you have like a personal goal with this social circus project? Is it for you just a social circus project or is it more?

**Mahmood:** This project is like kind of our baby, you know, it doesn't wane grow up actually. Yeah, its so personal because I could see that, how people get benefit out of this place, how they could skill their skills, they equip themselves with the charisma, they get their mind opened over here. They get introduced themselves to different kind of work, different kind of ideas. That's why I think its very important and that's why I'm keep going on doing this job.

On the other hand, yeah, its very hard to keep this place open, with the crisis that NGO's faces at the moment in this part of the world. Its impossible to keep a place with all of the running costs and the rent and employees. Its not easy to keep such a place open. So we are trying our best to find different ways to keep this place open. Its not easy at all.

**M:** Do you have like a personal goal, what you like to reach, maybe in ten years?

**Mahmood:** Well, if we life for the next ten years, I hope to see this place full of performers or at least enough to entertain kids in refugee-camps and villages, because people here they need [a] break. They need to go out of their daily life. No, its not easy to life in such a place, so at least to find some people who could make you enjoy 30 minutes or one hour, take you outside of this kind of conflict.

**M:** And are you just focusing on kids or do you also tried some experiences with adults like clowning, juggling stuff for the parents?

**Mahmood:** Well, we, our students start coming to the circus from nine years old and we have no limits for the age. If you are nine years old you could come and stay until 40. We have students who is 44 years old, he is a lawyer nearby. We have no limits, anybody can come. The parents they come here every Thursday in summer, they used to come every Thursday to watch their kids and sometimes to try, maybe their kids can teach them also how to do stuff. This is like a kind of changing the role, they will be the boss.

**M:** You just spoke about before that circus is not mentioned in any arabic culture part. But do you know is there some kind of similar performance art in the arabic culture before like in the last 200 years?

**Mahmood:** We do have different kind of performing. We have the "Molat", this event in Egypt they used to have once a year, which is lots of performing, kind of clowning, its not clowning, it has a fire-show, strings stuff, but not circus, not the circus that we know at the moment. Yes, circus its not in our culture, at least in Palestine. We have different kind of performing, like dancing. We have this dance called "dubka". Its a traditional dance, that people loves over here, and its everywhere around the city in the weddings or any celebrations you find people dancing this kind of dance.

Music and theatre has been a big time in the arabic culture but as I sad, or maybe I didn't say that, in the intifada-time, when the upraise in Palestine happened, all sort of art had been stopped, because of the conflict that we have at the moment. So since that time we shut down, or people shut down the cinemas, the theatres. Performing art was not a really big thing in this city and in Palestine in general. It kept going in different countries like Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon but not in Palestine. They thought its not appropriate to have while people are suffering. It was also for us hard to convince people that we are doing some sort of art right now and it took them time to accept you and to understand what you are doing.

**M:** How do you think was the acceptance of the people around you?

**Mahmood:** It depends, you know. If they know what you are doing or they saw what you are doing, than they will understand. But if they hear, they don't understand. They will even maybe go against it because they see circus on TV but they don't really understand that. The similarity maybe they will hooked about the dressing how people dress, how people perform, they wouldn't accept that. And they also misunderstand that we don't use animals in our shows, because if you say circus over here they say "Ah, do you have Lions?". So that's what first thing they get in their mind, but its not like that, its totally – we are totally against using animals in the shows. We are more theatre [or] human skill circus.

**M:** What would you say about the appreciation of the people around? If they see what you are doing do they more think about this is kind of sport or do they think its kind of art?

**Mahmood:** Its also depends. The problem, people who doesn't see us, they don't know, they can not decide if its like a sport [or not]. For us, its an art! Like ... whatever you can name it. But this kind of things that we do is a big time art and people they feel fascinated. I mean if they see us for the first time in a performance they totally go crazy, they don't understand that locals could do such things, and that makes our job even easier over here. If it's not in our culture so its easier to be more convincing and people would like it more, its easier for you to get the audience, you don't have to be really good at what you do. You maybe juggle with three balls and people like "wow", you know, that's an advantage-point.

**M:** So if I could summarise it, the people who have seen you, they see it mostly as art?

**Mahmood:** Yeah.

**M:** You don't really have local support. But do you have seen like a change in the past ten years? Or is it just like no support at all?

**Mahmood:** As I sad, Money-support is not there. From local organisation, no. But what the people, the support that people: "yeah, you doing great job, a good work its this kind of support [M: mental support ..], yeah, go ahead and keep doing it, because it works and is really nice. So that's pretty good. I don't need to gain more money if the acceptance is not there, the people they don't like you and you are against them, that's not the idea. We try to not go against the culture or the general feeling of the community. But yeah, its unfortunately we are in the north of the Westbank, the north of the west-bank faces ... is being treated differently than the south of the Westbank. Well, like for example Ramallah, Jerusalem, Hebron - Organisations there, they get founded because its closer to the headquarters of all of the Founding-Organisations and governmental worker. Here in the north, if you go a little bit more further to the north you get less attention and maybe Nablus is better than Jenin, Tulkarem etc., so, you know what I mean? We are not I the focus, we are not maybe in the big interests for local donors to be founded, because they wane see it, they want people around that they see it, that they founded such a thing.

**M:** This place that you found here, was this kind of some support of the municipality to use this or did you had also to do it by your own?

**Mahmood:** We actually had no help at all from the government or from the owner, even from the house or the municipality, no. We had to do everything here on our own. This

building used to be a palace, a two floor palace. We took the second floor, we rented out from a family, right after ... I mean from this family, this family rented as a school for the ministry of education. Ten years ago the school left and we came here last year, so the past ten year this place used to be open, empty and open. So everything is destroyed, young people used to come and play here in this place football and they go inside and break stuff ... So when we came here it was a disaster and we tried to get a found to ... we applied for a local organisation found, a national organisation to renovate this place. Unfortunately nobody helped us because its outside of the old city and they wouldn't help buildings outside the old city. So we ... we had to do it on our own, that's why we didn't hired professional workers to do the work and had to do the work on our own. We had to learn stuff, we had to figure out stuff, to minimise the coasts. And also the coasts that had been ... that we used to renovate this place, had been saved by the years into the circus account and also individual help.

**M:** I'm also looking for some special experiences with kids you got through the last years. At first, did you had sometimes to deal with kids which refuse to train, but the parents want to give them a good opportunity.

**Mahmood:** Well yeah, sometimes we face this kind of young people, but its not common. I mean people who comes here they want to ... they actually they push their families to let them come in. No, the other way around maybe for the past month, I faced it, tried, but if they don't want, you can not push them, whatever they wane do, I mean either family or us, we try to introduce them to stuff, like they come and in the beginning the new students they come here, they look around, they try things around, and than they decide on their own if they wane be here or there or if they wane do this and that together. Its very hard to come in the circus and you don't like everything. You would find something that you would like more than others, like you might like juggling more than acrobatics, maybe you like stilts but not unicycle, maybe you like unicycle and you don't like to do aerials, it depends which kind, maybe you don't like any of those but you like clowning and theatre. Its very hard for a person to come and see people how they [become] really good in what they are doing, and you go outside [...] I don't wane practise in this place, I don't wane be in this place. Its impossible, like I tell you as a young person I wish, if I had such an opportunity, to come to this kind of places. I mean, when I was a kid, I want to learn music, but it was not possible, at my time when I was a kid, there was no music-centres in this place, there is no sports, there is nothing at all. I mean, you either can play football in the streets or at school at the sport-classes, which is 40 minutes. And they give you the ball, no instructions, just like do it, that's ... nobody would give you or try to have you and show you how to do things or encourage to learn such things. Its not in our culture, actually.

**M:** And do you have one or two examples of kids which like surprised you, like a very shy kid and got after two years a star or something like this? What you never thought about?

**Mahmood:** That goes with all of them. Yeah, now they feel that they are professional, they reach really good ... as I sad, the focus for us is not "how to become a professional artists" or to make professional artists. As I sad, we are a social school, everybody is welcome to come and join and enjoy. It's not the goal to make circus and to become really good in what you are doing but if you want to we try to help you as much as we can. This is the goal of this place. Its just a place where you can come and hang out, the dream is not for you to become an artist, the dream is for you to come and ... you know ... become maybe a better human, maybe good with a team work, maybe good at making friends and if you don't have friends you can have the circus guys as your friends. I'll try to advice them from time to time about school, about behaviour maybe ... we are here for them to share with

them our experience as an older generation. Yeah, they come shy, they surprise you all the time.

**M:** Do you had some kind of contacts to israeli artist-group or is it not possible? Or you don't want?

**Mahmood:** Well, we met some israeli circus-group, especially in the beginning of our ... we met them actually not in this part of the world, we met them in different countries, especially Germany. The thing, that ... there is like some really god nice people over there and yeah, if the political situation would let us to share and cooperate circus-wise ... it would be nice, if its fair enough to do so. But yeah, we don't wane actually. We don't wane participating in any of meetings, would be considered as normalisation, we are totally against it. I met some nice people over there, nice people with the circus, but its ... the other moment its impossible to do such ... an exchange, visits or work.

**M:** Just to summarise: what kind of classes do you have at the moment every week?

**Mahmood:** We have a juggling class, no two classes of juggling, four classes of acrobatics. We do have ... the aerial is not a fixed class, its a free training, a few people does it, its not totally fixed. The unicycle is also a free training. Only when we do the beginning-tour we show them, we make them try, when they want to we can make a class for it. Most of the time its a free training time, after the juggling and after the acrobatics everything can be done by the older group as a free training. So we make the space open for the boys and girls to practise on their own. And we supervise, we help from outside, its not [a] totally fixed training.

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## 7. Baha – künstlerischer Leiter NCS

**M:** How old are you?

**B:** 34.

**M:** After school, what was the first profession, job or education you are doing?

**B:** I have done a clowns-school in Sweden. That was a six month school. It was an intensive courses with clowns without borders. And after that I did a year, a master-degree, with a year of physical comedy it was called, at the Stockholm academy for dramatic art. I have an other degree which doesn't has anything with circus to do, but maybe it can help with cinography. I have studied in Jordan interial design.

**M:** But, what was the first education you made?

**B:** The first education was the interial design, and than the clowning and than the master degree.

**M:** How did you found the way to the clowning education?

**B:** **It was through clowns without borders.** I was working with them and than they arranged



this education, so I applied for it.

**M:** How old have you been at this point?

**B:** 27 - (2008).

**M:** And from which time you knew about circus and circus arts?

**B:** Well, we used to see circus on TV but the first time I have seen circus and been training circus, that was ..

**M:** First seen and recognizing and later doing.

**B:** That was a group from clowns without borders Spain, who came to Nablus and perform and that was 2003 [21 years old Baha] and that was the big inspiration also, for the way. Because we were doing clowning two or three years before that and it was, yeah, I don't know if I would call it clowning, because its nothing from our culture, clowning, so we just like [...] it was a lot of face-painting, balloons and stuff like this. We have been doing some sketches as well and turning jokes into sketches and do it [...].

**M:** Do you know something similar in the arabic culture?

**B:** I made some, like researches about clowning in our culture and the closest thing I found, it was a character, that was called Joha in arabic. And its in turkish also they have it – “Hushi Atro” they call it – its the same character, which is the character that was, like he was so silly and he wants like people to considering that he is mentally strange but he could, he could tell the truth down that he is showing his ass or without being putting [...] to judge him and to put him into a trial also, and people would laugh about what he is saying but he was actually to much political and he was like seeing the things that is in the society that needs to point on, he was pointing on it, which became after a lot of stories about him and a lot of [...] We have, in our culture we have storytellers, that was something from before and this we are using a lot this character to tell story's. So that's the closest thing we could figure out.

**M:** And in which age or century has been this like fool and the storytellers?

**B:** Oh, I don't know exactly, its long time ago, maybe two hundred years ago? Hundred, two hundred years ago?

[...]

**M:** Back to the Circus from today. At which time you decided that you wanna work mainly in a social circus? Was there some kind of happening?

**B:** Yeah, maybe I don't like to talk a lot about ... I'm trying to avoid talking about occupation and, because I don't like to hang over [...] look, but actually it started in the invasion, the second invasion for the city, for Nablus [2000/2002] and during this time we had like, we ... for 108 days, we were at home, we were not allowed to leave, it was curfew and I have a little sister, it was six years old, which I noticed that the situation was affecting on her because in that age she didn't really understand whats going on, whats happening around her, why its bombing and shooting all the time. She was really afraid because also at home we couldn't move really inside our home we were sitting in a room that [...] far

from the street and like one window in it, because shooting was everywhere. And then I start to joke with her about the situation and stuff like – if it happen a bomb, I say like, its just a fart, because soldiers have a really big ass and stuff like this. And I found out that its working and she start to laugh, and every time we hear a bomb she didn't think that its a bomb, she think its a fart from a soldier ass and stuff like this. And then, when I ... when this period was finished, I met some friends and then I talked to them about it, and then we liked the idea and we thought its not only Heba, which is my sister, that have been in this situation, most kids in the city have been in this situation and in much harder situations as well. And then we can maybe do something for these kids? And the first idea was just to make an open day. Just to invite families and to play with the kids and to have something change.

**M:** And this was before the circus starts already?

**B:** Yeah, step by step we started – like clowning was the most accepted thing, so we targeted only kids. Because it was a hard situation, people were dieing daily and it was a big sorrow in the hole city. So it was really hard to do something, so we were always targeting the kids and that's what we are working with and that's why people accept us somehow to do these things. Even [...] it was still hard and we have a lot of pressure from families, from friends, from like [...] . But our force that pushed us, is the families who talked to us about their kids and that they kept talking about the clown for two weeks and just like jumping from the table. Also we use the situation, the things that is happening, we use it these sketches, like shooting and things – but of course in a clowning way, so kids when they start to hear someone was shoot [...] the closest for them is the clown and to think about, how the clown was shoot and how he fell and they laugh [...] ha, it wasn't [...] like this horrible pictures about blood and things pushed away [...].

So that was the force that pushed us to continue, is the families and friends and the kids who come after, you know, its something also like in this situation, the families don't have really a lot of time for their kids. Its mostly like thinking about: How we can provide food, how can we provide water and how, like I will keep this family living and how I protect them but ... its ... I have a friend, who gave a really nice example about it. Its like, if you have a flower in your yard and then you want to protect these flower, so you build a lot of walls around it and then you kept watering it but it didn't see the sun and it dies. And that's how it is, because okay we keep the bodies living but the soul is dieing because there is no contact with others, there is just like all news at home, and all horrible stories and sad stories. So the kids were really ... when they see that, okay we could joke with them, we were adults and they liked it a lot, and they come and they really touch us and they really want to have this physical, also contact. Its something you could notice easily and notice [...]

**M:** In this social circus project is there one point, like a heart point, which is most important for you, in this kind of social work?

**B:** I would say like this, I was a guy with like 24 years old in a situation where either you became a fighter or you became nothing. So that was the two choices – because no university, no works, its like curfews like you do nothing. And then suddenly you find yourself something important at least for these kids and you are doing something and you could change something and there is an other way than fighting by violence. For me this also as fighting and its also a patriot work that we could do for our country without harming other ones, without being violent and because this is something I don't believe in. So that's for me was a very important point for me and myself and than when we start to work with the kids. Because as you see in our society its like there is no places really where kids can

go and play, if either the street where you learn a lot of horrible things and you become involved in things that is not for kids to be involved.

Or you have to find a place where you should go and we are part of a society that can provide some places because officially the government is not providing anything. We have some parks, but its really like ... its kind of dangerous to go to these parks for kids and its a lot of garbage and a lot of broken glasses in it, so it is ... yeah ... and than this is one thing.

The other thing is, this culture that has been created in our society that if you want to be a patriot than you have to be a fighter, either you go to prison or you throw stones or you do things and this is something we need to take away and we need to show that there is ... there is really ... the world is to big and there is other things in the world that you can do and you can show that we are people like all other people in the world. Its also like culture for me, its something ... its really important for me, culture, because if you think about the way we are treated its kind of animals. Okay we decide for you if you can go out from your home and you can go in. If you want to go out from the city, you stand in lines and go ... its exactly like you feel you are just a bunch of sheep's who wanne go through some gates and all this feelings it really ... it cant make it easily in your mind just see yourself as an animal and what I see different between animals and humans, is that we have cultures. We have all these activities dance, and theater and we love, we become happy, we enjoy. As well as circus, is for me as important as theater and music, but that's more clear picture I can say. And that what makes separate us from animals, that what makes me feel like I 'm not an animal, I'm a human, I gonna show all the world that I am a human. This is the point and the hope also for these kids who comes here and see us and see how we treat them and the way also we work with them is like I teach them, that you stand in line and you wait for your time, because that is something not really existing in this society – respect other people, you help each other, you work with each other, you meet other people. We also support a lot school. We ask them all the time for their grades, we try to help them, we try to work together with the families ... if they have problem with the school and to see where is this problem, try to solve it because kind of they listen to us, they look for us, they need this place because they like it a lot and that can be a winning part for the parents also to push [...] just to respect time and to organize there live, and to become people who are ... working hard to achieve something, to have a goal and to work for it because that's all circus you can't learn it in one day, you know. You need to work hard to achieve a certain point and that's you also can measure it in the rest of your live [...]. So, that's why I believe in social circus.

**M:** Do you have like a personal goal with social circus what maybe could happen in ten years?

**B:** I could say that I have a lot of dreams and all of them became true, I can say. One day I dreamt that we will start to teach kids this and than we will be watching these kids performing and that happened already, as you see the main-trainers of the circus, they start with us since they were really small. The other dream was about that one day we will have a place where we can..., because we were training in the streets, training just like borrowing someones place or in one of the groups guestroom that we trained. We tried to find any place and that was one dream to have a place where we can bring the kids there and they can continue and that also became true. I had a dream to go around also, to help the people around the world to do shows and that also became true. I worked with clowns without borders within traveled to many countries and worked with a lot of kids and met a lot of people.

Yeah, the dream is of course the circus will become something stable and big in Palestine and we will have a lot of performers and we will compete and to have something big for

people also to understand because now if you say circus, they say “ah you have an elephants and a lion and a tent?”. We tried to explain like a lot. I think we are on the right way.

Fin

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## 8. Alaa – Trainer from the NCS

**M:** How old are you?

**A:** I'm 23 almost, next month I'll be 23.

**M:** How old have you been, as you were coming in contact with circus for the first time?

**A:** Twelve years, I was eleven years in that time and they were in my camp. I entered the circus in 2004 and I am with them until now.

**M:** With the Nablus Circus?

**A:** Yeah, with the Nablus Circus.

**M:** And did you heard something about circus before?

**A:** No, not that much, only seeing in TV but not like this circus. Animals and flyer things on the TV.

**M:** And how old have you been, as you have seen circus for the first time?

**A:** I don't remember, I was a kid, yeah, but I was not focusing like I see it, yes okay, nice but then I go on, I never thought to be in a circus one day. [...] because its not from our culture, circus, there is not much circus here.

**M:** And than you joined the Nablus Circus School.

**A:** Yeah, they were in my camp – Nablus Circus School, Assirk Assaghir – and I joined them there [and] kept going on with them.

**M:** And after you finished school did you made something else first like studying something or an education?

**A:** Yeah, I'm studying in the university right now. But I don't go always, sometimes I make it for later, if we are so busy and when I have good time I get a new semester at the university. And the good thing with my university, its open learning, that you don't have to go to university every day. You just can join and study far away you don't have to get class every day. That's whats nice thing with my university, I only go for the exams.

**M:** And if you think about circus what is for you the most important part or what do you like most in the circus?

**A:** In the Circus? Ahh, I like circus, it takes me to [an] other world, like when I get here I feel happy, I feel comfortable, feel with the other family - doing things we like so much, learn things, teach kids, making a new generation of circus people ... many things actually.

**M:** And is there one thing which is most important for you?

**A:** For me I like juggling more in the Circus, so my specialist is diabolo and since three years or four years ago I start practicing on clubs, juggling-clubs. I get more like to it. [...]

**M:** You are also working as a trainer, and you have like the work with the children together and is there some kind of most important part in the work with the children?

**A:** For me its a good part for them, because when they learn new things and see happiness in their face and start showing to his other friend that "look, what I have done. I can do like this [...]" you could see that learning things feel more happiness with him, and feel proud about it and I feel happy about it, that I made him so happy, and made him learn new thing that he never thought he will learn. I like this part, when I see his smile on his face.

**M:** Is it for you like a job or is it like a hobby?

**A:** In the beginning it was a hobby but recently start a job, but still also as a hobby, like I take it not work just I have to go for it. I take its like a hobby, something I like and love so much. And also work. In 2011 I start to work at the Circus officially as a trainer.

**M:** As an employe also with getting money?

**A:** Yeah, I'm getting money from the Circus.

**M:** If you could make a wish for the future, would you rather like to work on in the Circus or something else?

**A:** I want to keep going [on] in the circus, actually. But also I want to have other things like some, you know, make different things in life, but circus will stay in my life forever, like I will not stop it one day.

**M:** What are your friends and family saying about your job at the circus?

**A:** In the beginning, like when we started with the circus, they didn't like it, because they said ...

**M:** Can you divide between friends and family?

**A:** Actually, friends and family was the same thing, almost the same thing what they were saying. They say that "its nothing, that will not make thing from you, there is no future for it here, go and find good job, or new career [...] study hard" or like this talks, you know? But I just want to keep going. I like it, its nice.

Yeah, but after years when they see me that [I] became very good and doing shows, traveling around in Palestine, going [to] Europe, Germany, Sweden ... many countries. They start feel that okay, there is a good thing in the circus and they start to support me and like what I do. And even when they come to see [a] show for me, they were sitting in

the audience and looking at me and telling the people around: "That's my son, that's my son". Yeah, they feel proud of me then and give me a huge smile after finishing the show. So everything change from the beginning till now.

**M:** And was there some kind of switching-point in the perspective of your parents?

**A:** It was not that fast switching-point, it was getting slowly slowly slowly. Takes time and time.

**M:** What would you like to reach during the next ten years?

**A:** I want to reach a good thing, which is something I want so much. I want to have my own show with the Circus and travel all around the world with it and let the people see what I have done. Because lots of people have bad ideas about Palestine and Palestinians. They think that [we are all] terrorist or whatever. Bad things, they never think about good things, most of them, not all of them, because of the media. And I want to change that thing. I want to show them, that there is Palestinians [who] can do many things. We can do Circus, can have good life, can be special. I want to travel around and around with my own show with the Circus.

**M:** Did you thought about joining a professional Circus-School in Europe?

**A:** Yeah, of course I've thought before ... but its not that easy to go there. You need lots of papers, invitations, they have to accept you. If they accept you on the university or the school, you need a place to stay in, you need money to spend there on yourself. Yeah, its very expensive actually for us to join there. Its not that easy. Yeah, but one day I would like to be in a professional Circus-School. I can develop myself more and more and more.

Fin

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## 9. Ihab – from the Shop

**M:** How old are you?

**I:** I'm 42.

**M:** Are you married?

**I:** Yes , I'm married. I have three kids. Two boys, one girl.

**M:** Can you remember, when was for you the first time in life you got in contact with circus?

**I:** The start was, when they start to take the building here. I think it was three four years ago I met Shadi for the first time. He introduced himself. He started to talk about the circus and we got to talk to him, got to know him. And after that, you know, we got to know everybody there. Its good to know them. It's good to have them here.

**M:** And as you have been a child, you didn't know about circus, or?

**I:** I heard about circus, but you know, I heard about it in general, but I never got to know anything about circus.

**M:** Have you ever seen a show from the circus school?

**I:** Yes, I've been for a couple of the shown here, from the palestinian circus.

**M:** How do you like it?

**I:** I love it, it's good. It's good for everybody, it's good for the kids, for the families. Because its like, the circus its like being with the family, for everybody. Your kids, your wife, your friends will be there. So, it's good to have them here.

**M:** And do you think is it more like a sport or more like artist stuff?

**I:** I think its something from everything. Like sports and the family and everything. It's all together. It's good. It's kind of sport, of course. But its good for the kids, they sometimes they watch the show and they will have fun with it. Some funny things. It's good. And it's better than being in the streets, they are doing nothing, you know? At least they will learn something good.

**M:** Do you know something similar in the arabic culture, which is like circus-performance, artistical stuff?

**I:** No.

**M:** Something which is close to this?

**I:** No, I don't know anything about that.

**M:** Are you making for yourself something like music, hobby artistical, painting?

**I:** No, I prefer sport more than .. I used to play soccer when I was a kid, I played basketball. There was nothing as we were kids, there was nothing here.

**M:** Now for yourself, do you have like a hobby?

**I:** With music I have nothing at all. I play football all the time. This is my hobby.

Fin

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