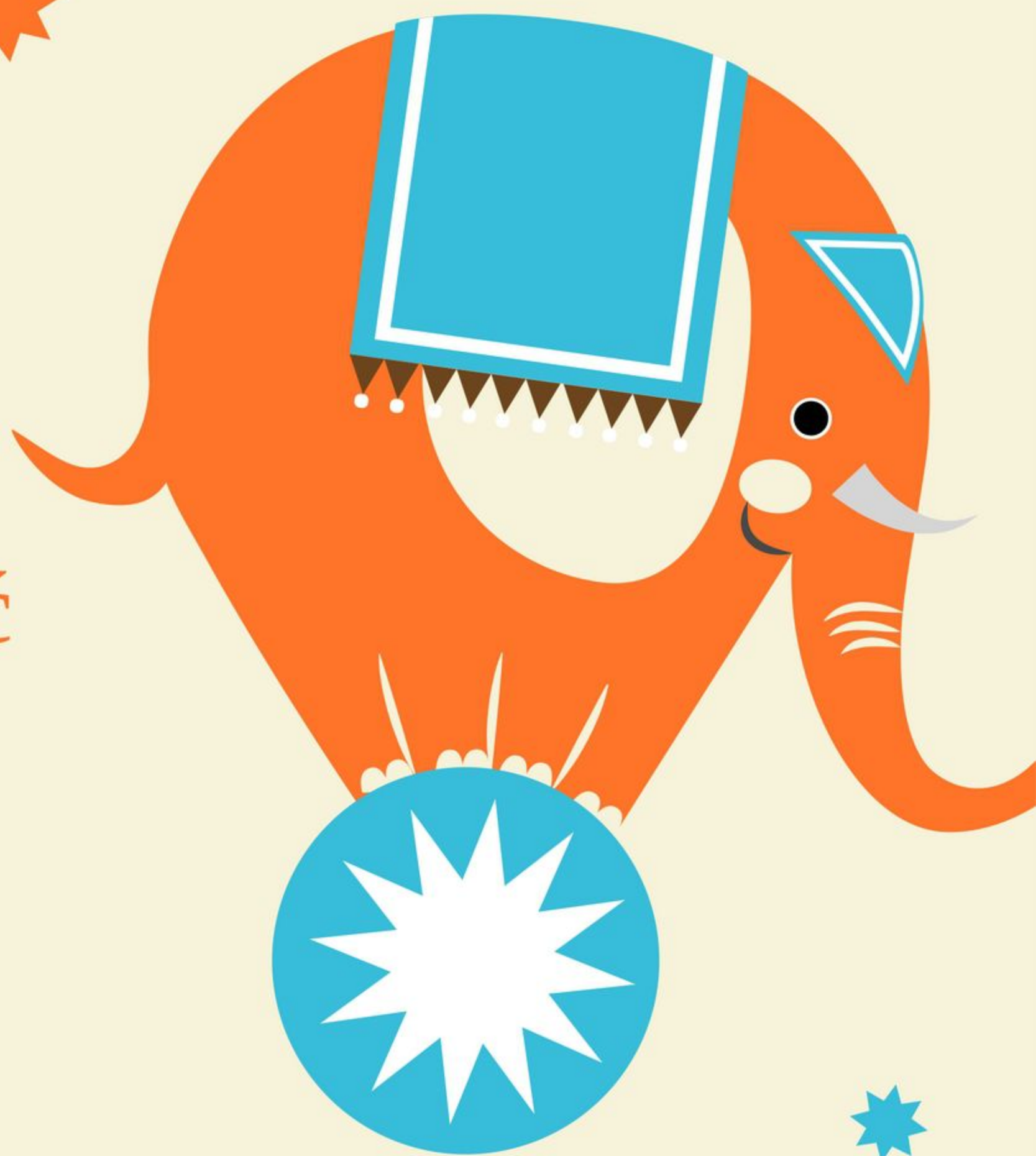




In the »shadows« of education – a job shadowing diary

WRITTEN BY

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Day 1

I start my day by joining the third year; they are the first group that arrived to the organization since their training is 2 days longer than the second and first year. Participants all know each other from previous years and are of different background, some work as teachers, some with children with special needs and some social workers. We start the day by warming up the body and this is where observation comes in to practice again. My mentor translated most of the program to me and I was able to follow exercises by observing and following the actions of others. In the third year the participants are also leading some of the warm ups and exercises, they are now in the phase where they will be passing on their new skills to others and the importance of attaining trainer skills comes into play. To understand how to lead training and be a good trainer the participants go through both rolls of trainers and participants.

In the third year the main goal is to produce also a theatre play at the end of the course. By doing this they get a better understanding of what it is like to be a participant in the process of educational theatre and also what it is like to be the trainer behind the process.

The day goes by quickly with different theatrical exercises that each participant conducts to the others and after we have a reflection on the process.

In the second part of the day we start doing improvisation sketches on a theme given out by the lead trainer, the task is to portray the sentence »Fine della scuola« which in literal translation means »The end of the school«. At this point my first association was the last day of school of course, the best part, school is out! So we all go on making sketches of the »end of school«. But what do those words really mean? After performing our short sketches to each other on how we see the end of school, we go into reflection of the meaning behind the words. That is the time the trainer presents us the story of Malala, for whom school really ended.

My perspective on school is all of a sudden shaken in one statement. “What is someone said you no longer have a right to go to school, like it was for Malala.” What is then the end of school?

We ended the day on that note, which leaves me think.

FUN FACTS: In Italy you can buy square spaghetti!

Day 2 and 3

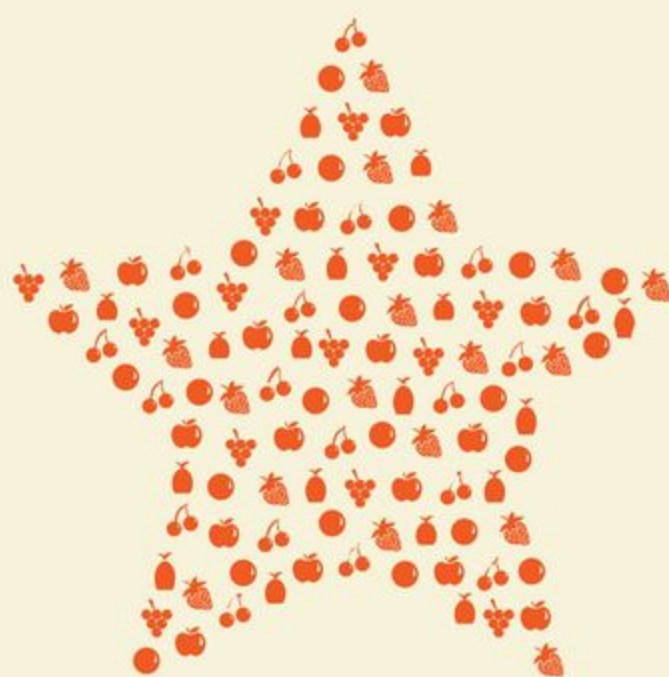
The second day I stay in the 3rd group and we start the morning of with a reflection of the previous day. The first part of the day we explore practices on how to set up an Educational theatre performance for young people and with young people. The morning is spent exploring the performance typologies, languages and the audience. We go through the regular warming up of the body and then into improvisational sketches. This time we step back from our leading force, the story of Malala and go into something familiar to all- fairy tales. We divide into 3 groups and each group is to perform a short sketch from the fairy tale “Little red riding hood”, but each group is performing for a different audience, group one for children 4–8, group two from 10–14 and group three from 15–19. With this exercise we practice the idea of always having the audience in mind. Knowing our target group is important.

At this point I find myself acting as a participant already, even though there is a language barrier with theatre it seems to disappear. So for the second part of the day I step back and try to observe the dynamics of the afternoon session. We go back to our main “protagonist” Malala. The group goes into a discussion about her life path, and what the end of school really meant for her. At this point I drift into my own thoughts. What is education for me? Where does education take place and does education equal school? I have always favored alternative educational processes and school was not my favorite place.



But what if I was forbidden to go to school? My perspective shifts on this matter and I try to define what education means to me, would I be standing in the place I am today if my formal education was taken away from me.

On the third day I stay for the first part of the day with the third group as in the afternoon the first and the second year arrive. For most part we keep on discussing about the direction on how to create a performance using Malala story as an inspiration. Some interesting subtopics arise from our discussion, such as, the ritual of the class picture, quality of education in schools and out of schools, the meaning of an empty chair in a classroom (the student that gets kicked out). This whole thinking processes started from one single character. In the second part of the day we are all introduced to the participants of the first and second year. Together we go to see a play produced by ATGTP. The group that is playing is a group of young people with special needs and down-syndrome that is being mentored by staff in ATGTP. Even though I do not understand the words in their play I understand the energy, the motivation and originality. Their mentor later explains to me that they made the texts and concept by them self, with the help of the mentors as guides. How is it to work with a group who has special needs? I get the answer “ There is nothing different about them, you just have to adapt a little here and there and take things slowly, that is it”. This was something I really wanted to take home and try implementing in the collaboration with the regional center for disable. So the day slowly ends and I am already at a half point of my stay. I end the day with “gelato”, which is not same as ice cream!



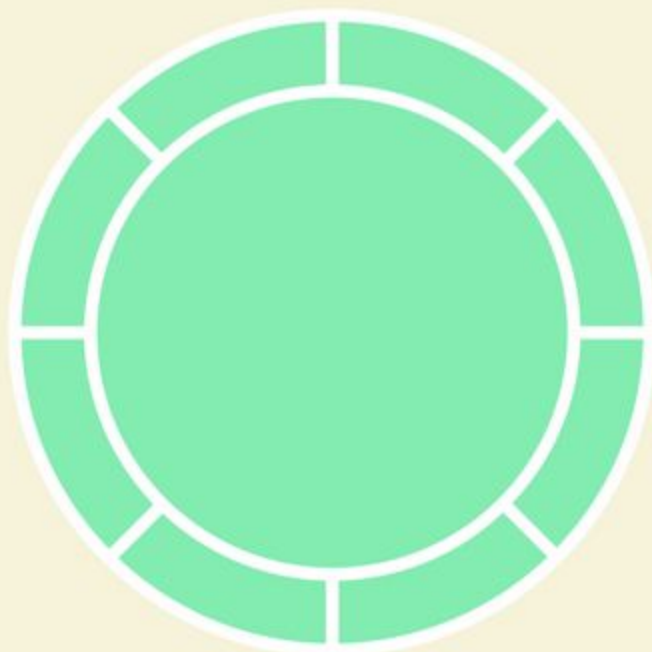
Day 4 and 5

The fourth day of my visit I join the second year. Their main focus is the roll of the trainer in the field of social and educational theatre. The group starts discussing about what the roll of the trainer really is, what is he or she responsible for. The group goes through various exercises that help them realize what one has to pay attention to as a trained, space, people, connections, safe feeling, know the limits, there are just some of the topics that are brought up.

I found this part very useful since in November we will be hosting training on the topic of inclusion through theatre which is a follow up to the “jobshadoiwng”. The best advice I took from my stay with the second year is: As a trainer always create for yourself little rules to follow, for example how you greet participants in the beginning, how you enter the space, make a safe place for participants, the little details are important for your consistency as a trainer.

In the second part of the day the second year is also introduced to the story of Malala. As in the previous year they start short improvisations and sketches. But before they start on the sketches we do several exercises to connect the group that everyone feels comfortable with each other.

At this point I put on my observation goggles and observe the different group dynamics between the second and third year. How they go about the story of Malala and how they derive from her story totally different topics than the third year, yet related. They go into the direction of school bullying, what it like is to be an immigrant in a new school (concentrating on the part of Malalas life after she left Pakistan) and the wish for education.



Here I realize the openness of such a process, the idea of using a single character to spark conversations about different social topics. I was very glad that I had the chance to observe the different dynamics between the two years. On the fifth day for a half of the day I join the third year who is already in the process of creating the theatre play based on previous improvisations and discussions, the group is now divided into the actors, costume makers, scene group, and direction group and so on, to undergo the whole process of a theatre production. I jump around from group to group also trying to help and give my input if needed. In the second half of the day we all go to see a theatre play that is produced by ATGTP. It is a children educational theatre play. Again I do not understand the words but I understand what it is about, the concept is translated to me and I am able to follow a beautiful story. At one moment I feel like I am a child again laughing and expecting what the characters will do next. At the end of the play we discuss about the scene and actors and the idea. What stayed with me during this discussion is the importance that the organization also puts on the final result. Their philosophy is that the result is as important as the process, both are equal; the result has to always be evaluated and after all the process is visible through the result.

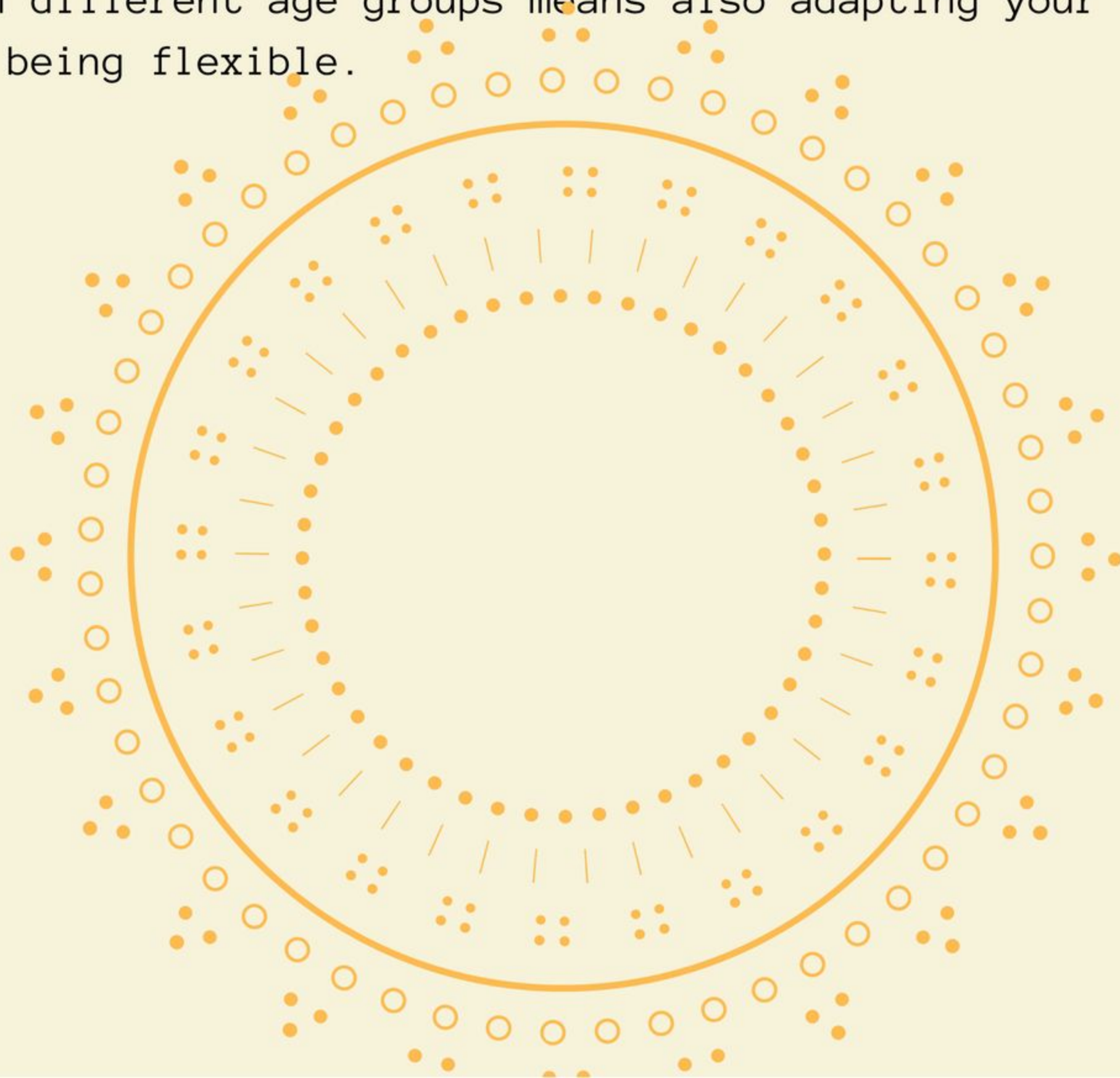
Day 6 and 7

So now I am almost at the end of my stay and the tension in the third year who is putting a performance is already visible. With the training slowly coming to an end I go visit the first year.



The first year is still getting to know each other; after all they are here for the first time working together. The aim of the first year is to be introduced to the methodology of social and educational theatre, so the group is always on the move. As I spent the last two days observing I decided to join the group in their theatre exercises. I observe the groups' movements and the trainer translates sections to me that I am able to follow. We explore the importance of rhythm and synchronization. As a big group we try to move like the waves of the sea, in constant motion. The exercises start accumulating and becoming physically intense. We then go outside for the first time and explore also the space outside, how it is different from the enclosed environment. After an intense workshop we sit down for a reflection. We discuss about the exercises and for which age group they are appropriate. A question arises on how to motivate young children to explore the space around them and their body. With children it is different, they need a motive to move and to explore, and by saying just "explore the space" you do not get anywhere. Children need magic, telling them to explore the space is nothing to them, but telling them to find a hiding place for a special ring in the space that surrounds them is already a motive for them. In the beginning they need lots of metaphors that you can then later slowly take out of the exercises.

Working with different age groups means also adapting your methods and being flexible.



So I come to my last day which becomes a blur for me. The training is slowly ending and the second and third year is putting together their play. In the third year I stay with the props group and help put together the scenery for the play. As the day slowly ends I start packing for my early morning train.

The seven days seemed to fly by me. I realized my initial idea of keeping a written journal was a good choice, now that I am looking at all the scribbles, words and drawings that I tried to sum up in this diary/article.

I would suggest to every youth worker to use the opportunity of “job shadowing” it is a great way to observe and learn different ways of working with young people. The most I got from my experience is a whole lot of inspiration for future projects and great friendships.

THE END.....

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