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A.R.T. Fusion Association



METHODS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE  
Image and Forum Theatre

2013  
Bucharest  
Romania

„Act For What You  
Believe“

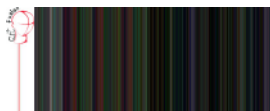
METHODS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE  
- IMAGE AND FORUM THEATRE -



-2013-

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*The opinions expressed in this material belong to its authors and do not reflect the position of the European Commission.*



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# „A C T F O R W H A T Y O U B E L I E V E ”

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# INTRODUCTION

The toolkit that awaits the reader after the introduction part is in fact an ambitious initiative. It is based on years of experience of the A.R.T. Fusion Association (Romania) in working with Theatre of the Oppressed methods but inspired by the first Africa-Europe youth cooperation project focused on Forum Theatre: “Act for What You Believe” (details about the project will follow as well).

The reality is that in the world there are a huge number of practitioners in the Theatre of the Oppressed field (as it will be highlighted in the specific chapter) and maybe even a higher number of various institutions, organization representatives or individual activists that will desire to work with the methods. What are missing from this huge invisible network are standardization and a common methodological approach that could be easily shared and introduced to the newcomers in the field. As by “wireless phone”, these methods have been transferred, replicated, adjusted and adapted in multiple ways everywhere in the world in the last 30 years.

In every capacity building project (focused on Forum or Image Theatre) implemented by A.R.T. Fusion we were confronted with requests (based on genuine needs) for more specific guidelines and tools that could give more support for becoming Independent Multipliers.

Based on these aspects in this manual the reader will get to know in details the following:

- **Description of Forum Theatre and Image Theatre Methodology** as it was developed and applied in the last years by A.R.T. Fusion groups (small warning in this regard: it may certainly differ from how other practitioners use it)
- **Concrete examples** of FT and IT (for a deeper understanding of what the methodology looks like in practice)
- **Detailed Curricula** for working with Forum and Image Theatre (with specific instructions for beginners in the field)
- **Detailed guidelines for the role of Joker**
- **Contact details of experienced multipliers** from Europe and Africa that can provide free consultation in working with these methods for beginners.

This represents an ambitious initiative not only because it is first of this kind that will be freely shared with anybody interested but also because it includes considerations related to different cultures where the methods could be used. The inspiration for this product came from an intercontinental project that provided a reasonable amount of reflections related to what can work or not in very different cultural settings.

## Who are the persons that this toolkit is addressed to?

- **Practitioners in Theatre of the Oppressed field** ( to enrich their toolbox, to diversify their understanding of these methods, to deepen their methodological competencies, to get inspired);
- **Beginners in the field** (to have a concrete hands-on manual that could guide them in their work, to fill the gaps in their understanding and approach, to sharpen their facilitation skills, to contribute to their independence as users);
- **People interested to work with these methods** (it will provide an almost complete

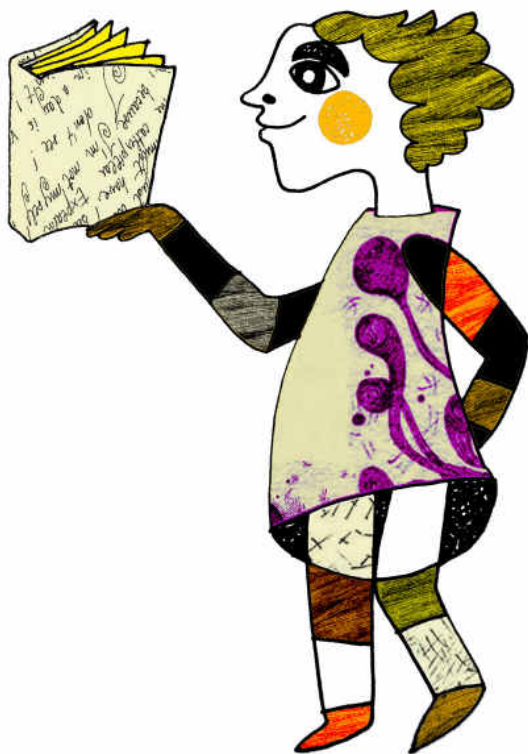
understanding of how the authors work with the methods, a detailed curricula designed to help newcomers to the field as well and free consultation opportunity)

- **Curious people** (it might inspire them to start working with these methods BUT a mention needs to be made: this is not a novel, it is quite a technical material- not quite a before naptime reading option)

The readers are invited and encouraged to share their views, opinions, feedback, comments, criticism, etc. after exploring everything that this toolkit includes and we thank you in advance for taking the time to do that.

Enjoy the reading,

**Andreea-Loredana Tudorache**  
**A.R.T. Fusion Romania**



A.R.T. Fusion Association created the “Act for what you believe” project as an answer to the needs of civil society representatives across Europe and Africa. They are dealing with diverse social problems and need competencies in new alternative methods for improving the situation of young people facing these various problems.

*(The project took place between December 2012 and December 2013)*

AWB was developed as a capacity building project and youth workers coming from the NGOs (partners in the project) from Romania, Bulgaria, Ghana, Slovenia, Tanzania and Uganda developed practical competencies in working with Image and Forum Theatre for dealing more efficiently with social problems, conflicts and oppression from their community.

The main goal of the project was to increase the capacity of various youth organizations to raise the participation and involvement of young people in social processes and change.

The project achieved the following objectives:

- ❑ To develop and improve skills in non-formal education in general, and in particular in Theatre of the Oppressed methods for youth workers from Europe and Africa;
- ❑ To develop a network of Forum Theatre multipliers in various regions of Europe and Africa;
- ❑ To develop pro-active attitudes among the partner NGO members and also among the beneficiaries of the partners;
- ❑ To gain awareness of similarities and differences in social problems and kinds of oppression in different European and African countries;
- ❑ To develop a sense of common responsibility for the future of their local communities as well as the whole global community.

The project beneficiaries took part in a long term training course focused on developing practical working competencies in working with forum and image theatre methods. The training approach was designed as follows:

- 1) An initial training for developing basic competencies in forum theatre method (took place in South Africa- May 2013),
- 2) A practice phase in each of the partner countries (Romania, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Ghana (joined the project later), Tanzania, Uganda) where the multipliers prepared and implemented forum theatre initiatives for more than 700 young people in each community. The topics tackled were: school bullying; discrimination of HIV infected persons, gender discrimination, child labour, peer pressure, family psychological violence, sexual harassment, and gentrification. Some of these performances (and the public reactions and interventions) are described in the Forum Theatre examples chapter for a better understanding of the methodology.
- 3) The practice phase was followed by a second training (in Romania- September 2013), for evaluating the practice phase and for developing advanced skills as multipliers in Image and Forum Theatre. The main aim of the training was to complete the set of competencies of the beneficiaries to become independent users of these methods. The training focused on



sharing practices, feedback, upgrading skills in facilitation and joking (as a crucial role in this methodology)

- 4) A final evaluation meeting was organized in Tanzania in order to evaluate and assess the impact of the whole project and to plan how the network can continue to work in a coordinated manner from now on.
- 5) Each partner also disseminated in their communities (among other organizations and interested people) the project results (including the movie and the toolkit) to increase the interest in their civil society toward this methodology.

## THE MAIN PROJECT RESULTS INCLUDED:

A network of Forum Theatre multipliers active in Africa and Europe;

More than 700 direct beneficiaries of the local projects, which we empowered and motivated to make a change in their lives (in connection with the social issues relevant for them);  
A resource movie based on the project development and experience (available online on <http://www.youtube.com/user/artfusiontv>);

This manual (which you are reading at the moment) represents a tool that could be used by any person interested to work with Forum or Image Theatre provides specific guidelines in this sense.

# THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED METHODOLOGY

## – BRIEF OVERVIEW

**THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED** is a type of theatre methodology developed by Augusto Boal (1931 – 2009) in the 1960s inspired by the critical pedagogy and pedagogy of the oppressed concepts of Paulo Freire (1921 – 1997). Both of them were based in Brazil at the time and the social-political context of those days (post-colonialist era and authoritarian military junta regime) significantly influenced the development of these concepts, approaches and methodology. In the resource chapter of this material you can find references for the titles of the most relevant works of these authors which you can purchase (also online) or freely download (some of them) in order to read in detail the ideas and the original thoughts regarding the concept of oppression, pedagogy of oppression, critical pedagogy and theatre of the oppressed.

As it was mentioned, in the 1960s Augusto Boal experimented with theatre in order to give voice to the oppressed, to empower them to fight the oppression in their life. He was active at first in Brazil then he was forced to leave the country and he continued to work with the methods predominantly in Europe. During his lifetime he got in contact with many theatre practitioners as well as other people interested in working with theatre for social change and he trained and worked together with them in various countries in the world. During this time the initial methods developed, were transformed and new methods emerged as well. The people that he got in touch with continued to work with the methods in their communities, adapting and adjusting them to their own contexts.

It is estimated that from the '60s to today the methods included under the umbrella of theatre of the oppressed have probably reached more than 100 countries although in fact it is difficult to monitor this aspect because there is no coordinated monitoring system that can track down all the practitioners around the world. Due to various factors that pushed the methods to be transformed, upgraded, adjusted, adapted, changed, etc. at the moment there is no set of concrete and specific criteria that could attempt to define or standardize this methodology. The richer arsenal of approaches and the complete freedom in terms of working with these methods allowed the beginners and experienced practitioners to work in various settings, types of communities and beneficiaries which lead to different levels of impact. The down side of this “freedom” also lead to practices which could be categorized as potentially dangerous, for the team or public, for their emotional and sometimes physical wellbeing, regarding the message that they sent across (sometimes reinforcing oppression or promoting violence) and doing more harm than good.

Very often the practitioners in the field use the same terminology (which is often taken for granted) but refer to different things and there is no concrete reference point to be used.

Although the methodology was developed initially as a community based approach (for community intervention and empowerment) in these days you will find types of theatre of the oppressed being used in workshops or training courses (as a tool for debating on specific topics or to introduce them), or as a method of teambuilding in the corporation sector.

We make these mentions in order to be aware of them while referring or exploring Theatre of the Oppressed, in this education material and also in other contexts.

## MAIN FEATURES OF THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED METHODOLOGY

(\*note-should not be confused with criteria for defining TO-which doesn't exist)

- ❑ **Is an interactive type of theatre** – the public will be engaged actively and can participate in the process and become “spect-actors”;
- ❑ **Tackles real life oppression** in its various forms (the discussion here could be vast as very often oppression can be interpreted in endless ways and can be applied to almost all areas of life) ;
- ❑ **Aims to bring along a change** in relation with the specific oppression approached – mostly by empowering the oppressed and people around.

**Main types of methods included under Theatre of the Oppressed umbrella** (the description provided here is simplified and for sure will not provide enough understanding regarding the methods but rather give a basic idea):

### FORUM THEATRE



- ❑ It is one of the most popular types of TO. Often in a Forum theatre performance we see a real life case depicted (which reflects a situation of oppression) and in which the public is invited to participate actively by coming on the stage to propose solutions to the exposed examples of oppression. Based on the proposals, ideas, interventions of the public, a discussion (forum) will take place with the public;
- ❑ In the long term it aims that the public will apply the proposed solutions in their real life (if the topic depicted is relevant for them);
- ❑ The process is facilitated, moderated by a Joker who makes the connection between the stage (actors) and the public;
- ❑ Being so popular, it is also one method that is being applied in an extremely large number of approaches. In the Forum Theatre section of this toolkit you will find one approach of working with the method described in detail.

## LEGISLATIVE THEATRE

- ❑ It often follows the same structure as Forum Theatre but aims to extract ideas from the public in order to draft proposals for a law or changes in a law (at local, regional or national level);
- ❑ These events can be organized in partnership with the institutions which are responsible with taking the proposed drafts further (municipalities, local councils, schools, parliaments, etc.) or not. In the latter option the organizers follow the steps for the proposal to reach the responsible institutions.
- ❑ There is no guarantee that the ideas of the citizens will actually make it into the final version of the law.



## IMAGE THEATRE

- ❑ The main characteristic of this method is that it works with body statues/postures (images) to depict aspects related to oppression in certain forms. This technique can be used as a supporting exercise in the process of development of the other methods (Forum, Legislative, Newspaper, Rainbow of Desire) or as a separate method in interaction with the public.
- ❑ Working with images also leads to a variety of approaches as it is very easy and leaves a lot of space for creativity and imagination.
- ❑ In the Image Theatre section in this toolkit you will find one approach of working with the method described in detail.

## NEWSPAPER THEATRE

- ❑ The same as image theatre, it can be used as a technique –exercise for the development process of the other methods or as an independent method.
- ❑ The main characteristics are that a core source of information (which later will be used in its process) are newspapers. These can be used as inspiration or providing the main material for the outcome.
- ❑ It can aim to open a debate about the media as an oppressor (or source of manipulation) or to tackle the examples of oppression included in newspapers.
- ❑ Newspaper theatre can take diverse forms: it can be a performance, it can be exhibitions, dynamic installations etc. (it's quite open in this sense based on how the newspapers inspire the working team).

## INVISIBLE THEATRE

- ❑ It is implemented in public places (usually streets, but not only) and it's based on a planned initial scenario which then is changed by the people from the public space (the initial scenario can have included in the planned part how to naturally engage the public);
- ❑ The action looks natural and passers-by shouldn't realize this in fact was directed before. According to them they truly believe this is a real life situation;
- ❑ It can tackle examples of oppression that are happening in public places (but usually nobody intervenes- and in this way they are stimulated to do so) or oppression on a bigger scale from the society (in order to open a debate in this regard);
- ❑ This method has the highest level of risks for the team as the unpredictable factor is huge and therefore the preparation process is crucial;
- ❑ Some groups decide to inform the public in the end that it was a directed performance, others do not.

## RAINBOW OF DESIRE

- ❑ This method mainly tackles the inner oppression which exists within us from various past events and relationships;
- ❑ It has a therapeutic approach and it does not aim to be exposed to the public. It is designed mainly for a personal inner process within a trustworthy group which through different exercises (mainly based on image theatre techniques) will lead the group members to empower themselves (by reducing or eliminating the inner oppression);
- ❑ Among all the methods developed by Augusto Boal, this is the most developed methodologically – as there is a manual which specific guidelines;
- ❑ Bearing in mind the extremely personal approach of this technique it should be used with extreme care and by professionals that can handle strong emotional processes within a group.

Around the world there are various formal and non-formal educational programs (of various lengths (delivered by various institutions, organizations, theatre groups, etc.) aiming to train different professionals in TO methods (to introduce these methods or to build the capacity to apply them in their communities). This methodology is not standardized or safe guard through

any coordinated system and this means that none of these available options (of education in the field) have more authority than the others. There is also the option (which many professionals pursue) to try out working with some of these techniques without participating in an educational program, and even this specific educational material will provide guidance to such individuals.

## FORUM THEATRE METHOD

### –PRESENTATION

Forum Theatre is the most popular form of Theatre of the Oppressed worldwide and also the oldest, as it was the first one to be experimented by Augusto Boal. Due to this popularity, very often Forum Theatre practitioners use the terminology of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) as having the same meaning as Forum Theatre when in fact TO is just an umbrella of methods and Forum Theatre is one of them.



At the same time it is also probably the method that has the highest diversity in terms of how it is structured or what rules are used in its implementation phase due to its large history and ramifications around the world and also due to the lack of an initial specific methodology.

Therefore the practitioners who picked it up filled the gaps while working with the method. While we acknowledge the importance of being flexible, adjusting to a specific context and upgrading based on the concrete experience it is important to be aware that what we call Forum Theatre around the world might refer to very different things (even if at its core, hopefully, it tackles oppression of some sort).

In A.R.T. Fusion Association we have been working with Forum Theatre from 2004 and in all these years we have transformed the method that was originally transferred to us, based on our experience in Romania and abroad (on 3 continents). The transformation aimed always to maximize the impact among the public and to make it easier for the volunteers to learn and become independent Forum Theatre practitioners.

In this chapter we want to introduce Forum Theatre as we use it, as we train our multipliers and how it has been used in all our projects with more than 5000 beneficiaries along the years. From the beginning we want to warn the readers who are familiar with Forum Theatre that in the following pages they might discover details and aspects of Forum Theatre that they might not agree with, or are (very) different from what they know. They might call it the A.R.T. Fusion approach or just another Forum Theatre approach. We certainly desire more and more practitioners to use it, that's why we created this very specific methodological toolkit.

## DEFINING OPPRESSION AND FORUM THEATRE (IN THIS APPROACH)

First of all we define oppression as power abuse and *in Forum Theatre we focus on very concrete examples of oppression which happen between people that have a sort of relation in a certain situation* (colleagues, neighbours, relatives, in-laws, friends, etc.). We do not work with abstract forms of oppression or hidden oppression (that is not explicit) as we choose to depict aspects of reality that happen in front of our eyes (or of our target group's) and change is needed.

*A real life case is used for the Forum Theatre play*- so the main source of information is reality, either of the team members (if they are faced with that specific problem) or from discussions with people who experience that specific oppression. We do not invent, use rumours or our own assumptions. The play is focused on only one specific example of oppression (not more), it has only one oppressed character, only one oppressor, (there is a relation between them), each of them has 1-2 allies/supporters on their side and there are also 1-2 neutral people in the story. It has a length of between 12 to 15 minutes, 3-4 scenes and shows the process of oppression and how it increases in intensity.

The play has a negative ending (the oppressed makes a wrong decision).

The play is showed to a public who is connected to the problem (they are victims of it, or are connected in some way to the problem – as allies of the victims or oppressors, or they are neutrals).

The performance is showed the first time so the public gets to understand what is happening and what the end of the story is. The performance *will be shown a second time* (after a discussion with the public takes place) and this second time *the public is invited to make changes* so the ending of the story will be different. The public will have to come with ideas to reduce or to solve the oppression depicted on stage (by balancing the power relations among the people involved in that specific situation). In the next chapter you can read more concrete examples of Forum Theatre from 5 countries and how the public intervened to change the story end.

The process with the public is managed by a Joker who facilitates the discussions with the public and stimulates them to reflect on and critically analyse the proposals for change, how realistic they are and also how they can transfer them to reality. Forum Theatre is a very powerful tool for empowerment on different levels in a community as it brings attitudinal changes among the public members and also among the team members.

## METHODOLOGICAL, TECHNICAL ASPECTS AND RULES USED IN FORUM THEATRE

It is preferable to work with non-actors (as actors in our experience end up focusing on the artistic part of the work and not on the social change part) but nobody is excluded from the process;

Team members should be volunteers that are genuinely interested in making a change in society with their involvement in the Forum Theatre project;

The scenes are shown in chronological order;  
If there is a different time or different location/setting then it is a different scene. We do not show 2 scenes in parallel;

We do not show psychical violence on stage – we can suggest it (that it is happening in that specific context) but we do not show it explicitly – because it can actually be reinforced as acceptable behaviour, it can scare or shock public members (as it can be too strong for them, it can inhibit them from coming on stage, being afraid to face physical violence)

One actor has one role – we do not use anyone two times (same person having multiple roles) ;

We do not use the travesty approach – one person playing a different gender role (unless we do have a performance about this aspect);  
If possible we do not use microphones – to keep the play as simple as possible and also because in reality people do not talk into microphones among themselves (but if we have a large crowd in the public of course it will be needed)

We do not use music or special lights (this doesn't happen in reality either);  
The public has free access to the performance - we do not ask for money from the public as this will restrict their access and therefore reduce the impact;

Usually the process takes 1.5 hours – even 2 hours, depending on how many solutions the public proposes. We do not speed the process by approaching it superficially – it takes so long as it goes more deeply into the issue and it contributes to a longer-term impact on the public.

It is better to not have more then 50-60 people in the public as then the discussions with such large crowds will be less deep than with a smaller public.

The public needs to be informed if photographs are taken or video is shot and if they ok with that or not.





## THE RULES FOR INTERVENTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

- The Oppressor cannot be changed;
- Everybody else can be changed (oppressed, all the allies, neutral people);
- If you want to change: clap your hands one time– the people on stage will freeze;
- If you want to get off the stage (once you finished your intervention): clap – the people on stage will freeze;
- No violence is allowed on the stage – the public is encouraged to come with alternative solutions;
- No magic solutions – the public is encouraged to come with realistic solutions.

## PROCESS WITH THE PUBLIC

- The second time, the play starts from the beginning and the public needs to intervene at any moment they feel the people on stage should act differently (in order to reduce/solve the oppression). If we get to the second scene we do not go back in time for the first scene. Whenever they feel a change needs to be made they need to clap at that moment.
- After each person from the public makes an intervention the Joker discusses it with the public, its realism and what change it made. The public takes the decision (by voting) if the change is to be kept (and the actor who was changed will continue to act as the spect-actor suggested) or is not to be kept and then another person from the public shows a different alternative that maybe will be assessed as more realistic by the public.
- Every change needs to be decided with the public (by voting).
- The Joker is neutral – he/she just asks the questions and never says his/her own opinion about anything (more details about the Joker in the specific chapter from this manual).
- The actors on the stage will improvise based on the changes made by the public members in harmony with their roles, realistically reflecting the reaction towards the new proposed change.

We do not close the process without having an acceptable ending – it will send across a negative message with the public who tried to make changes and they cannot see the outcomes of their efforts.

The actors do not interact with the public – it is only the Joker that talks with the public; the only space and context where the actors and the public members interact is during the play if they make interventions.

## STEPS IN FORUM THEATRE DEVELOPMENT

For a deeper understanding we concentrated the process of developing a Forum Theatre project in 6 process phases explained briefly in the following lines. Each phase depends on the previous one and none of them should be taken out from the process

### *First phase - the basis*

This phase is focused on finding answers to the following questions – the order can be different based on the type of project:

- Who is the team?(it can be part of the oppressed target group or a team of volunteers who believes in change using this method)
- What are the budget and the structure of the project? (if there is an existing project)- it will influence time allocation;
- What are the social problem approached and the **aim of the Forum Theatre project?** (aim is in relation with the social problem - to bring a change in relation to the problem)- Sometimes the topic is proposed by the organization (based on the program and projects they are dealing with) but it can also be decided together with the team.

### *Second phase – group/ team development*

This phase is focused on the team of volunteers, to work on their group dynamics, getting to know each other, teambuilding, etc. It's an important phase to set out the foundation of the team that is going to create a Forum Theatre play together.

- Getting to know each-other
- Teambuilding exercises
- Trust exercises
- Communication exercises
- Energizers/Ice breakers/ etc. Introducing the Forum Theatre method (information, videos, some exercises)

### *Third phase – Forum Theatre Preparation*

- If the topic is already given (from a third party) it is important to do research on the oppression problem (understanding more deeply, research, direct contact with people affected or working with the theme, interviews, talking to specialists, etc.)
- Preparatory games, exercises, activities on:  
Attention, coordination, focus, space, body, speeds, movements, emotions (expressing emotions), rhythm, voice, imagination, creativity, decision making, etc.
- Specific forum theatre (and other theatre of the oppressed) exercises: power exercises, exploring and understanding oppression, imitations, improvisations, image exercises, image theatre.

### *Fourth phase - Development of the Forum Theatre Play*

(\*very important note: decisions are taken by consensus)

- Sharing/working with concrete stories reflecting the concerned social problem;
- Choosing the story that is the most relevant to the problem and that more people (from the target group/public could identify themselves with);
- Structuring the performance (3-4 scenes connected between them that have a dramatic ending (the oppressed character makes a bad decision), 10-15 minutes maximum;
- Role distribution (based on personal preferences, not allocated – they could change in the process);
- Female roles are distributed to women, male roles are distributed to men, no travesty (only if the play is about it);
- Exercises for developing the characters;
- Exercises for developing the script;

### *Fifth phase- implementation of the Forum Theatre performance*

- Introduction (from the Joker) (energizers with the public- to warm them up).
- The play is performed the first time.
- Discussion with the public (about the problem, characters, connection with reality, discussion about the idea of change).
- Explaining the change process and the rules (clapping for making interventions, change of any characters except the oppressor, only one person at a time, no violence, no magic solutions).
- Interventions from the public and management of the interventions until the oppression is reduced, the oppressed character doesn't make the bad decision anymore.

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- Interventions from the public and management of the interventions until the oppression is reduced, the oppressed character doesn't make the bad decision anymore. For each intervention there is a discussion (about the change produced and its realism) and a decision made with the public if the change is kept or not!
- Summary of discussions and solutions proposed.
- Transfer – the public is asked what they can transfer to their lives.
- Conclusion.
- Closure.

### *Sixth phase – evaluation and follow-up*

- Team evaluation, evaluation of the public (short and long term);
- Decision with the team on how to proceed next – another FT play or another type of intervention.

In the next pages the readers can understand even more deeply the Forum Theatre method and process of developing such plays because:

- In the next chapter they can see concrete examples of Forum Theatre plays that were implemented in 2013 in 5 countries ;
- In the following chapter they can access a detailed curriculum that provides supplementary information regarding the method explained step by step;

There is also a chapter about the Joker which will detail with adequate information the role in Forum Theatre context.



## FORUM THEATRE EXAMPLES

### TAYCO - TANZANIA – “BADILIKA”

The play was performed in August 2013 for 113 people in Dar es Salaam (98% of them below 30 years)

**The Topic of the play: Gender Discrimination**

Roles: Oppressor: FATHER – Mr .Rashid/ Oppressed: DAUGHTER – Mwajuma/ Ally oppressed: NEIGHBOR SISTER – Sophia/ Ally oppressor: SON- Abubakar/ Neutral: MOTHER - Mrs Rashid

#### SCENE 1

At home: The father is reading the newspaper showing the aggregate statistics in recent years of girls who become school dropouts due to pregnancy. Suddenly the daughter enters with excitement telling her dad that she has been selected to go to secondary school, but father takes it as nonsense in a manner that she cannot go to school any more as she should stay home and wait for marriage.

Father calls the rest of the house mates, which are mother and son, telling them that he will never allow any topic with regard to taking the girl to school in his house. The wife remains quiet out of fear to converse with her husband and the son supports his dad for such a stand, the daughter cries.

#### SCENE 2

At the Well: The neighbour sister meets the daughter Mwajuma while in the process of fetching water and informs the youngster that she is going for her university studies in the capital city. She encourages the girl to study hard so that someday she can be like her but the daughter sadly tells the neighbour sister that although she has been selected for secondary school the father refuses to take her and moreover wants her home as a female nowhere to go, according to the culture of the clan.

The neighbour sister feels sad about that but gives her support and promises she will come by her home before she goes to university and advise the father. She tells the daughter not to lose hope as she has the right to study like any other people in the world.

#### SCENE 3

At home: The house mates relax having some evening talks all together when a knock is heard as the neighbour sister comes in and greets the parents. She has come to say goodbye because she will be leaving the village to the capital city where she has been selected to take a degree in law. The father is annoyed, the reason behind that being that he does not believe in education for girls.

On top of that she insists that the father allows the daughter to go for secondary studies so that someday she can become just like her. The father wants to throw her out of the house but the conversation becomes serious, the son keeps boosting his father not to support girls, the wife trying to please the daughter and the husband at the same time. The neighbor turns to the mother and tells her that she should be wise enough to know that women need revolution and education is the way. The daughter agrees with this standing therein.

## INTERVENTIONS :

### SCENE 1

The oppressed daughter was changed with the reason of showing reality to the sense that the exact message can be delivered and bringing the sensitivity of how the oppressed daughter should appear in a real sense.

The neutral mother was changed as well, turning to the side that the mother is a confident woman and able to assist the daughter in most instances, rather than remain silent and follow everything that the oppressor says. The intention was to raise the power so the oppression



can be eliminated by increasing the number of the people with strong arguments against gender discrimination.

### SCENE 2

The ally of the oppressed, the neighbour sister, was changed to the point that she can be in a position to reflect the actual sense of the sister in the village with concern for what exactly is happening once the elder sister spoke to the young sister. She also gives spirit to the oppressed one upon the rights of girls, just like the rights of any other people in the world.

### SCENE 3

Once again the ally of the oppressed was changed with the moral target of not threatening the oppressor but being in a position to converse and change the wrong perspective that the father had with facts, not with provocations. This meant mutually giving the benefit of doubt accordingly. The ally of the oppressor, the son, was also changed in a manner that he could be neutral to such a degree so as to reduce the energy of the oppressor for the sake of eliminating the oppression and being the matter of point where the very best there is can be achieved as much as the society desire to the better solutions.

## CONCLUSIONS

The oppressor finally agreed that a girl has equal rights to a boy and moreover the daughter deserves to study and attain all other preferences, like all other children receive regardless of gender.

Morally, the solution was obtained without use of violence, as well as not changing the oppressor with the due concern of following and obeying the rule of the game which was clearly described by the Joker to the audience.

## IDEAS FACTORY – BULGARIA – “TO BE OR NOT TO BE”

**The play was performed in August for 50 people (in Sofia)**

**Topic of the performance: Gentrification** - The place is the oldest market in Sofia, and the last one of its kind. It is also a big issue – there are several groups of people that have interest in it – to save it as it is now, or to go for reconstruction (complete change).

### Roles:

**-Oppressor** – the municipality man, Mr Stefan Gospodinov, second director of Vazrazhdane markets.

**-Oppressed** – active merchant and shop-owner, who is not from Sofia, Hristo Hristov, selling shoes for more than 20 years. He has a family to support with this job.

**-Ally of the oppressor** – local resident (person who lives at the market), Tatiana Markova, interior designer, has kids who are in school, she is concerned about crime on the streets of the city where three generations of her family have lived.

**-Ally of the oppressed** – the young girl, Mariana. She has graduated from university and has a job, but she still prefers to shop at this market for its low prices and the unusual atmosphere there.

**-Neutral** – passive merchant, the other shop owner, Ivanka, selling fruits and vegetables. She doesn't rely on this job to support her family and it's just something she does to earn some extra money, though she spends a lot of time there.

**-Neutral** – the old lady, Mariika, who has a pension of 85 euro, lives with her daughter and her family, because she can't survive without their support.

### The usual atmosphere at the market

#### SCENE 1

There are the two merchants – Ivanka (the passive one, neutral), and Hristo, (the active one, the oppressed). Mariika the old lady is buying fruits from Ivanka; they have a small chat that shows how important the market is for the old lady. The old lady likes the market because she enjoys the company of the merchants, because her family is busy a lot so they don't spend so much time together. She likes the low prices and the overall positive atmosphere here, and she also feels like she is helping her family by buying cheap goods for them with her own money. She has no idea however of any plans to change the market. At the same time the young girl appears – Mariana (ally of the oppressed), she helps the old lady collect the coins she just dropped on the ground, in a very informal manner,



which is typical for this market (speaking like you are at home to strangers, closeness). The old lady leaves, Mariana tries to start a conversation with Ivanka about the future of the market, but Ivanka is not interested and she has no idea, like the old lady, on what's going on in the media or the municipality. In the next focus Mariana moves to the next place where Hristo is, they know each other as a seller and a buyer, they talk about the market's future, he is worried, he can sense by the way that his boss at the municipality talks to them when they pay rent that something is going on, but he can't find any information about the future of his workplace. Almost at the same time the local resident, Ms Markova (ally of the oppressor), passes by and gets into the conversation – nagging the merchant about crime and the horrible infrastructure of the market, blaming the merchant for all these things without listening to his answers. She remembers a time when the market wasn't in such a bad shape, and she associates the worsening with the arrival of the new (from 20 years ago) merchants. She leaves, mumbling something. Mariana, confused, wishes the best of luck to the merchant and goes about her way.



## SCENE 2

Hristo is at Mr Gospodinov's office to bring the rent of the stalls he has. After he gives the money, Mr Gospodinov informs him, verbally and among other things, that the renovation of the market may start any day now, so the merchants must pay the rent weekly and need to be prepared to leave the market at any given time, and he refuses to go into any details. The news comes to Hristo like a cold shower, and he doesn't know how to react. He just says ok and leaves the office.



## SCENE 3

Both merchants are at their stalls, in the morning, preparing for a hard day of work (because working at a market selling vegetables and shoes is not an easy job). Hristo informs Ivanka about the new conditions of paying the rent. They talk to each other about the coming change. It is still not clear to them what exactly and when is going to happen, even though Hristo tried to find out, but, like all of Sofia, he couldn't find any new information. At that moment Mr Gospodinov appears and announces the start of the reconstruction, and that the merchants need to move out in two days. Nobody makes a sound in the first moment, and the two merchants stare into Gospodinov's face, until he asks "Is everything clear? Be gone with all your merchandise by Friday. Have a productive day!", and Hristo, devastated, mumbles a short "Okay, boss...". They both exit the stage with their heads down and holding some merchandise.

The discussion with the public was focused on exploring what is realistic to do in such situations. Most of them agreed that they need to unite and to make some sort of union in order to claim and protect their rights



# KUKU- SLOVENIA – “SLOVENIAN MOTHER AND DAUGHTER”

**The play was performed in September 2013 for 20 people in Maribor.**

The performance talks about psychological violence in the family that can be seen as invisible or ‘not important’ violence in society.

**The characters:** Mother Valerija, business woman- oppressor / Daughter Hana (27), student, volunteer in NGO- oppressed / Family friend of Hana – Živa (26), just finished her studies, she has moved in with her boyfriend in the flat that her mother bought her – ally of the oppressed / Živa’s mother, member of charity organisation – ally of the oppressor / Seller in the shopping mall- neutral

## SCENE 1

Scene: Hana and Živa are having a coffee and friendly conversation (what is going on, what are the news etc.). We can see how different the girls are. Živa finished her studies and works, she has just moved in the flat (bought by her mother) with her boyfriend. Hana is still studying, writing her dissertation and is occupied with the work in the NGO as a volunteer. Hana’s mother calls and orders her to come home.

## SCENE 2

Scene: Family shopping in the shopping mall Europark. We see Valerija and her friend shopping for clothes for the charity dinner. The friend and her daughter Živa are very happy to shop together. Valerija calls Hana and starts to insult her about how badly she’s dressed, how ugly she looks, that no one would even look at her etc.

## SCENE 3

At Valerija’s home. Valerija and her friend are drinking a coffee and having a small talk. Hana enters and wants to go to the NGO where she works. Mother starts to shout at her that she is incompetent, doing nothing all the time, not working yet or doing her studies, not having a boyfriend, being a loser etc. She is humiliating Hana from all aspects and they have a big argument. Mother asks Hana to leave the house.

## SCENE 4

Hana is in the park; she calls her friend Živa and tells her about the big fight. She feels completely undermined and doesn’t know what to do.

## INTERVENTIONS

- In the first scene: Hana becomes more powerful. When mother calls her and orders her to come home soon she doesn't take it so seriously. She says she will come but she is more relaxed and takes some things in her hands. She is showing her rebellion in the way that she is not coming home when her mother wants it but a bit later.
- In the third scene: the mother's friend starts to support Hana. She says it's good she has lots of activities as a volunteer and supports her. (The public didn't approve of this intervention as being realistic.)
- In the third scene: Hana becomes more independent. She says she did all the work at home, explains to her mother that she has a job and that she can go live on her own. She tells the mother that she doesn't agree with her rules.
- The last scene: Hana calls her friend and tells her she is going for EVS for one year to get more space for herself and her mother.  
The last scene: Hana is going to move in with her friend. The point is not to finish her studies right now but to get more experience for the job later.



# HOPE SPRING GHANA –

## “FREEDOM COMES WITH A COST”

The performance was implemented in September 2013 at a correctional institute for young boys, for 44 boys serving time.

### The characters

Young boy – Oppressed

Ally Oppressed – Counselor, Teacher

His friend – Oppressor

Ally Oppressor – Ju-Ju Man, Mother

Neutral –Colleagues from school

#### SCENE 1

The boy comes home from serving his sentence in a correctional institute. The mother is alone at home, cleaning and complaining about the hard life they have. She is surprised to see the boy and she treats him indifferently. She clearly states she doesn't trust him and she sees him more as a problem now that he came back home. The boy promises that he has changed and he will be a good boy from now on. The mother sends him off and continues to clean the house complaining about the poor life she has and the problems with the boy.

#### SCENE 2

After one week he goes to school together with his counselor. He is now going to a different school after finishing his sentence. The counselor introduces him to the teacher and she explains his situation and the trust she puts in him, and asks the teacher to pay closer attention to him and respond to his needs. The teacher looks friendly and willing to help the boy. She introduces the boys to the 2 colleagues but she shows extra effort or attention to the boy and his new arrival in the class.

#### SCENE 3

After some more weeks the boy meets by coincidence on the street one of his previous close friends. His friend mocks him for going to school and clearly states that it is stupid, nonsense and only for losers. At the same time the friend shows off with his richness and success and the boy is attracted to it (especially as he comes from a poor background and he would like to get to have money faster). The friend tells him that with school he will never have money and in fact he can suggest exactly what he needs to do if he wants money. He lures the boy to go and see a 'Ju-Ju' man or a spiritualist in order to gain wealth through illicit means. They go together to the ju-ju man right away. The boy is afraid but his friend reminds him that if he wants money this is the way he made the money. The Ju-Ju man requires some items from the boy together with an initial amount of money (which the friend provides).

#### SCENE 4

After a couple of weeks the boy desperately goes to see his friend. He tells him that he is very afraid of the Ju-Ju man, that he went a couple of times there and every time the man asked for new things and threatened him that if he doesn't provide those things it will be very bad for him. The friend explains to him that he needs to do everything the Ju-Ju man asked, he did the same thing (he even killed

people) because he wanted what he asked for. The boy says he needs more money to pay the Ju-Ju man but the friend becomes angry as he already needs to pay back the initial amount – he tells him to make sure he will give everything to the Ju-Ju man and to pay him back his money.

#### Scene 5

The boy goes again to the Ju-Ju man (very scared and desperate) and he tells him he doesn't have the money. The Ju-Ju man tells him that in these conditions the spirits are angry (because he didn't do what was requested) and he will have to do something to make them calm down- he needs to make a ritual sacrifice of his mother. The boy is shocked – Ju-Ju man warns him that if he doesn't do that he will go crazy.

The boy is in a dilemma because he is very afraid for what might happen but in the end decides to pursue with the ritual involving his mother.

## INTERVENTIONS

#### Scene 1

- The mother was changed to pay more attention to her boy, to give him another chance and to trust him; to encourage him in his plans for life.

#### Scene 2

- The teacher was changed to be more interested in the boy's story and to make a warmer introduction of the boy to the class, also to encourage them to talk more and become friends.

#### Scene 3

- The boy was changed 2-3 times to show different approaches in talking with the friend and to reject the offer to go to the Ju-Ju man.

The forum with the boys was focused a lot on the support needed in the family and also the strength they need when they go back to their neighborhoods and to stay focused and say no to these friends with bad influences.



The play was performed in September for 2 classes (13-14 years old) from a primary school (with mix ethnic groups- Romanian and Roma children) from Bucharest.

This play is about bullying in schools and it was inspired from different stories from schools, from our experience and from the school where we performed. The aim was to reduce bullying situations among students and to make students understand that their words have a big influence on others' lives, and can even lead to dropping out of school.

**Characters:** Oppressed – Maria: a 13-year-old girl, Roma, she doesn't have very good grades at school because she doesn't have enough support from her family, but she is good at Chemistry. Oppressor – Petra: a 14-year-old girl, she is the bully type and one of the reasons why she oppresses Maria is because she is Roma. She is in the same class with Maria.

Ally of oppressed – Mihaela, a 13-year-old girl / Ally of oppressor – Roxana, a 13-year-old girl / Ally of oppressor – Teacher of Geography: he is the type of teacher that makes differences between Roma and Romanian students. Neutral – Maria's mother: divorced, she works in a supermarket; she is concerned only about earning money for a living.

### Scenario:

#### SCENE 1 At Maria's home

Maria and her mother are in the kitchen and having a usual chat. The mother is preparing the food; the daughter asks if there is anything else to eat besides potatoes and they argue a bit about money. The mother says: "Other girls at your age are already bringing money home". Suddenly the mother's phone rings. It's her boss, who is calling her to work earlier. He does this all the time and she thinks it is because she is Roma. Before leaving, Maria gives her a paper with her grade to sign. Her mother signs fast, without reading the paper.

#### At school, on the same day

#### SCENE 2

Maria and Mihaela meet in the school yard and have a small chat about school. Maria asks Mihaela if her uncle is still looking for people to distribute promotional flyers because her mother is pushing her all the time to bring some money home.

They talk a bit about the next class, Geography, and Maria says that she is sure that the teacher will evaluate her because he always does this.

Petra and Roxana come in the school yard, too. Petra starts to oppress Maria: "Hey! What have I told you? I don't want to see you here! You make me sick! etc." She takes Maria's backpack and throws it on the ground.

Mihaela, Roxana and Petra go to the class because the bell is ringing. Maria stays to collect her things from the ground.

#### In Geography class

#### SCENE 3

The scene starts with the teacher, Petra and Roxana in the class. Mihaela enters the class a bit late and the teacher tells her to take a seat. Maria comes and the teacher tells her: "Ms Maria, do you think that it is polite to enter the class after me? Come



in front of the class and show me on the map two important rivers from North America.” This is how the oppression starts in this scene. Petra, together with Roxana, is mocking Maria and the teacher doesn’t say anything about it. He pretends that he doesn’t see. He also has an exchange of bad jokes (very subtle) about Maria with Petra. At the end of the scene, Maria goes to her place, next to Mihaela and she says: “I told you that he would evaluate me. I cannot stand Petra anymore...she is so mean to me”. Petra hears that and she says: “What did you say? I will show during the break what it is to be mean!”

### In school during the break

**SCENE 4** This scene has a very high level of oppression from Petra against Maria. She uses lines like: “Do you hear me? I don’t want to see you anymore in here! Do you think that a gipsy like you can finish school? Maybe you hope to go to high school... Listen to me! You will never go to high school. You are a stupid gipsy. Do you think that you can finish school? Tell me!! Listen to me! I don’t want to see you again around here! Tell me! Do you plan to come to school much longer? Tell me!!!” This is the moment when Maria says that she will not come to school anymore because she a stupid gipsy who doesn’t have any chance to finish school.





## INTERVENTIONS FROM PUBLIC:

### 1. The mother in the first scene

The public chose to change the mother and to make her more interested in her daughter's school situation. When she had to sign the grades she looked before signing and she decided to go to school to talk with the teachers about her grades and about how she can improve them.

### 2. Maria in the second scene

The public decided that the mother will come to school in the second scene, when Petra is oppressing Maria. This is when they change Maria and make her tell her mother about the situation with Petra and to ask for her help.

### 3. Roxana in the third scene

After the change from the second scene, the mother goes to the Geography teacher and tells him about the situation with Petra. Petra denies everything, so the public decides to change Roxana, and to make her realize that what they are doing to Maria is not right and that they have to stop so she will tell the truth. Even though Petra is threatening her that they will not be friends anymore, Roxana tells the teacher and Maria's mother that it is true that they bullied Maria.

After these interventions, the public decided that now, with her mother's support, with her attitude changed and with Roxana not supporting Petra anymore, Maria will not drop out of school anymore and she will not accept to be bullied again by Petra.

## A.R.T. FUSION ASSOCIATION-ROMANIA "ONLY STUPID PEOPLE WORK"

**The play was performed in September in one placement center for 30 abandoned/neglected children/teenagers (mostly boys) from Bucharest**

### Characters:

Oppressor – A teenage boy (17 and a half years old) – MARIUS

Oppressed – A teenage boy (15 and a half years old) – IONUT

Allie of oppressor – A teenage girl, a friend (17 years old) – NICO

Allie of oppressed – A teenage girl who becomes a friend (16 years old) – Andreea; Neutral

character – A teacher/educator from the placement center – FLORENTINA

### SCENE 1

At the placement center – In the common room

The oppressor and his ally talk about the oppressor's last deed (running away from the placement center) and the punishment he received for that. He will be in charge of cleaning the common room and the kitchen for a month. They talk about running away together after they turn 18, soon. The teacher comes and presents the new boy who is going to stay there. She presents him to the other children and reminds the oppressor about the punishment he received. After the teacher leaves, the oppressor fakes the intention of being friends with the new boy and lets him know the "rules" of the house and that "it is HIS turn to clean the common room". The ally of the oppressed character, tries to say something but she is taken away by the ally of the oppressor, making her not influence the oppressed in any way.

### After 2 days

#### SCENE 2

At the placement center, in the evening, after dinner – In the dining room  
The oppressor is congratulating the oppressed on the good job he did cleaning. He is being nice to the oppressed making him think they are on the same side as long as they work together. As a “bonus” for the work he is doing, the oppressor tells the oppressed that if he ever has problems in school he can count on him to “fix them”. It is known that everybody in the placement center is being picked on in school because they don’t have parents, they are naïve, they don’t have a future. The ally of the oppressor supports him. At the same time, the ally of the oppressed is trying to make the oppressed understand that he should not listen to Marius and that he is not obliged in any way to help him with the punishment he has been given. She is shut up by Marius. The teacher comes, interrupts their conversation and tells them a new waiter-cook course is starting soon and that it would be good for them to attend since it is nationally recognized. She presents the advantages that the course has. The oppressed is really excited to take part. The ally of the oppressed is sure her mother will call her from Italy and will take her to go to work with her there so she refuses to take part. The oppressor and his ally make fun of the idea and don’t give an answer. After the teacher leaves they begin to make fun of the oppressed because he wants to take part in the course and tell him that it is a shameful job and that he will be no good for it. A real job means being a “boss”.

### After 2 weeks

#### SCENE 3

At the placement center – in the common room, after they finished dinner  
The oppressor complains that the oppressed did not do his job cleaning as well as he used to. The oppressed tells him that he’s been busy with the waiter-cook course that he is attending, with school and homework and that he didn’t have so much free time. The oppressor gets mad, his ally makes fun of the oppressed and supports the oppressor in his attitude. Each time the ally of the oppressed wants to defend him, she is shut off by the oppressor. She is weak and lacks self-confidence and she is easily manipulated by the “strong ones”. The oppressed tries to explain why he wants this so badly (He wants to have a job when he goes out of the placement center, he wants his parents to be proud of him when and if they see him sometime etc.) but the oppressor makes fun and interrupts him. The “disadvantages” of the waiter-cook course come again into discussion, now even more detailed (He is stupid for wanting to work. It is hard to have a job – you have a tight schedule, you don’t get to see your friends, you have a boss etc.). The oppressor attacks him with personal stories about his parents and the fact that he doesn’t know where they are and that they will never know that he wants to be a responsible kid. After that, he threatens him to give up the stupid dream, otherwise “they will not be friends and that is not good”.

### 2 weeks after

#### SCENE 4

At the placement center, in the room of the oppressor and oppressed.  
The oppressed comes into the room looking for his robe and his note-book, on his way to the course. He is in a hurry and he cannot miss any more meetings because he will be thrown out. The oppressor gets mad and the oppression reaches the last level of tension. He uses all his “arguments” and mostly the ones emphasizing the shame this job brings, emphasizing the fact that he is not made for it and convincing him that he really is not suitable for this kind of job. Last but not least the oppressor reminds him of the

fact that his parents didn't want him. He tells him that he is stupid to think that he will ever meet his parents and that they will ever be proud of him. The oppressed eventually quits, discouraged and hopeless.



## INTERVENTIONS

### Scene 1

1. The ally of the oppressed – making her more courageous and making her stand by the oppressed more in order for him to feel he has someone on his side. Now, with the change, the ally of the oppressed tries to tell the teacher that she should pay more attention to the behavior of the children, mostly Marius.
2. The oppressed – in the discussion with everybody, and the teacher is present. The change is made after the teacher leaves the stage. The oppressed is more courageous than he used to be at first.
3. The Ally of the oppressed – After the teacher leaves, she is more on the side of the oppressed and calls back the teacher. She says that as far as she knows, she is the one responsible to show the oppressed around; she tries to make the teacher understand that there is a problem in the centre. The ally of the oppressed is even more courageous and does not leave the oppressed and the oppressor alone. Although she is a girl, she can have a little more power.

## **Scene 2**

4. The teacher – She is changed in order to pay more attention to what is happening and not letting the ally of the oppressor and the oppressor make fun of the enthusiasm the oppressed has when listening to the announcement about the course. She explains in a more detailed way why they all should attend and supports the oppressed more in his decision to take part.

5. The ally of the oppressed – After the teacher comes, she once again tries to talk to the teacher and make her take more action against the situation of oppression. The teacher becomes more interested in the situation and asks question in order to find out more information before acting.

6. The oppressed – He is more courageous and directly confronts the oppressor regarding the fact that he does not want to be the only one cleaning, since it is not his punishment. He offers to work together with the oppressor but not alone. Being cornered by a more courageous ally of the oppressed and oppressed, the oppressor lived into his room, having still a superior attitude.

## **Scene 3**

7. The ally of the oppressed – States that the oppressed should follow his dream to become a cook or a waiter if he wants to and if that is his dream.

8. The oppressed – she tries to make the oppressor understand that he should not behave the way he is behaving with his friend (the ally of the oppressed) and that he really wants to continue taking the course of waiter-cook. He is supported by his ally in the discussion with the oppressor. The oppressor starts listening more actively and lacks arguments against the situation.

9. The oppressed – Believes in his dream even more and is not so intimidated by the oppressor, being supported by his ally at the same time.



## FORUM THEATRE CURRICULUM

There are many factors that influence the exact steps that a group needs to go through in order to develop a Forum Theatre Play:

- Whether the group members know each other or not from before;
- Whether they have experience with Forum Theatre or not ;
- Whether the topic of the performance is already known/or proposed to the group or the group needs to make their own analysis/research on the target community and its needs;
- Whether the group members are facing/experiencing the problem they will work with or not;
- How much time is allocated for the preparation process;
- The age of the participants.

Of course there are many possibilities based on these factors for a forum theatre facilitator to develop a schedule and process step by step.

This specific curriculum is addressed to new Forum Theatre facilitators or not yet fully independent in developing FT performances with different kinds of groups. It will propose a structure that has the following assumptions:

- ✓ that in the group there are new people who don't know each-other;
- ✓ that they are new to the forum theatre field;

- ✓ that they will choose the topic by themselves (based on their realities-maybe their own problems or not);
- ✓ that there is no time pressure for the group to work out the performance;
- ✓ that the age group is minimum of 16-17 years old – no upper limit

Of course the following activities could be used as well with other groups (on different levels in their process in working with this method) and an experienced facilitator will be able to extract the right activities for the groups he/she is working with.

**The units are divided in 2-3 hours** and they are split in bigger categories in order to understand more deeply the „philosophy behind” and why such an order is proposed. These units could be implemented in a 5 days intensive training course (following the order proposed) or 1 or 2 units per week. Based on experience (if possible), it is suggested to use the second approach in order for the group members to digest the process more easily, to better assimilate the learning outcomes and to have more flexibility in terms of time allocated to various FT needs of the group.

**The units do not include breaks** – but of course 3 hour long sessions could be rather tiring so the facilitator is invited to provide a break after 1 hour/1 hour and a half – depending on the structure of the unit.

Depending on the group dynamic it might happen that in a certain stage you need to work more than the number of units suggests in this curriculum. The facilitator should pay attention to the dynamic and group needs in order to assess the speed of the process.

As you will see in the structure below it might be that the group needs more time for team-building before getting into Forum Theatre work, or more time for exploring social issues in





their community and deciding on one problem as well as maybe more time for improvisational skills. The number of units (and time division) is based on the previous experience of the partners and authors but nevertheless there are groups that need more or less time (for various aspects) and this is not a criterion for judging their competence in the Forum Theatre field. It is very important for the facilitator of this process to be flexible, plus ready to change and adjust their own curriculum if it is necessary.

For the person who will facilitate these sessions it is strongly advisable to have been part of a forum theatre group before, to have had the chance to experience the process and the method personally (as an actor). It could be helpful for the facilitator to have been previously in the position of the Joker with a public but nevertheless it is not a compulsory condition – every Joker starts from somewhere!

If the facilitator doesn't have experience with the Forum Theatre method (as mentioned before) then it is very important for him/her to be in touch with an experienced FT facilitator for advice and assessing if the process is going in the right direction.

*Please note that at the end of this manual you can find the contacts of some of the Forum Theatre facilitators (engaged in this project) who are willing to provide online guidance and consultancy to new facilitators (with or without experience in Forum Theatre).*

*If you never worked with this method and you don't have anybody around you that has this experience (willing to help you out) – please contact the resource persons mentioned at the end of the toolkit!*

The activities suggested for this curriculum are mostly based on non-formal education principles and experiential learning. They aim to be highly participatory, active and to provide a space for participants to reflect and extract the learning outcomes from their own experience. They also make use of previous life events and learning outcomes that people are bringing into the process. They will often challenge the participants outside of their comfort zone in order to expand it and prepare the participants for later stages in the process, as well as for performing for an unknown public (that will be interacting with them). The process is intense, personal (especially when the time will come for working with various social problems-often personal or from their own realities) and often changes the attitudes of the people engaged- they will come out different people. In each session there will be space allocated for processing/debriefing of what happened so that the participants could

maximize their own learning and to assimilate the changes produced in themselves (in the curriculum there will be also guiding questions that could be used in this part).

Very often the debriefing will include questions related to the feelings that the group members experienced in some specific activities. From our experience it has been observed that participants tend to reply to such questions with answers which don't reflect their feelings (thoughts, their interpretations, etc.). The facilitator needs to be very careful at this stage and to remind the participants that the question was about feelings and therefore to insist so that the participants who want to verbalize them to have a secure space to express themselves (which is important before advancing to the rational analysis of the process).

**The activities presented** here were used in practice over the last years by the authors and other partners' members with various groups

in different countries (in Europe, Asia and Africa). They were often inspired by or taken out from various methodological books (some of them can be found at the end in the resources part), adapted and changed over time or from other projects from different practitioners that shared some of their tool box activities. The selection here includes the activities which had good feedback and strong impact regardless of the type of group and country where they were used. Nevertheless, any facilitator who wishes to use them needs to assess in advance

if a specific activity is appropriate or not for the group they are working with.

The authors of this manual are not aware if there is any copy right for any of the activities (from their initial developers) but are of the opinion that the sharing of such tools will increase the capacity of Theatre of the Oppressed or Forum Theatre workers to be independent facilitators and to contribute to a more sustainable change in their societies and communities.

## STRUCTURE OF THE UNITS

**Please find below the structure of the units** and after it a detailed description of each unit, one by one.

- ☐ Team development - Introduction, Getting to Know Each-Other and Team-Building
- ☐ Intro to the Forum Theatre Method and Preparatory Exercises
- ☐ Preparatory Exercises – part 2
- ☐ Power and Oppression Concepts
- ☐ Oppression Exercises and Oppressions in Our Community;
- ☐ Transferring the Social Problem in Forum Theatre Play Format;
- ☐ Improvisation Exercises and Other Preparatory Exercises.
- ☐ Exercises for Getting Into Character and Developing the Play
- ☐ Rehearsals – with different exercises
- ☐ Preparing the Team for The Performance

### **1-Team development - Introduction, Getting to Know Each-Other and Team-Building**

- ☐ Intro – 5 minutes
- ☐ Shaking hands – 5 minutes
- ☐ Cross the line – 30 minutes
- ☐ 3 truths and 1 lie - 25 minutes
- ☐ Project Introduction – expectations/contributions – 25 minutes
- ☐ Blind square – 50 minutes
- ☐ Blind counting – 30 minutes
- ☐ Final comments, announcements – 5 minutes

### **2-Intro to the Forum Theatre Method and Preparatory Exercises**

- ☐ Introduction (explaining the context and what will happen in this session) – 3 minutes
- ☐ Energizer (look at the resources area for examples of materials where you can find lots of examples of energizers)– 5 minutes
- ☐ Carousel-getting to know each other – 20 minutes
- ☐ Introduction of Forum Theatre - Movie /simulation FT -1h/1.5h





- Forum Theatre process- remarks -10 min
- Preparatory exercises 1h/1.5 h
  - Pass the beat- 10 minutes
  - Electric current – 10 minutes
  - Space exercises – 20 minutes
  - Back dancing – 10 minutes
  - Blind shake – 10 minutes
  - Mirrors – 15 minutes
  - Processing/ Discussion on all the exercises -15 minute

### **3-Preparatory Exercises – part 2**

- Introduction (explaining the context and what will happen in this session- following up from the last session)- 3 minutes
- Exercises – 2-2.5 hours
  - Samurai – 5 minutes
  - Magnet – 10 minutes
  - Trust Dancing – 25 minutes
  - Bears and Princes (or adapted versions)- 10 minutes
  - Hey You! Who me?- 10 minutes
  - 1,2,3-4,5,6- 15 minutes
  - Exaggeration circle- 15 minutes
  - Statues and emotions – 15 minutes
  - Museum of emotions – 20 minutes
- Processing the games and exercises/Debriefing
- Final circle – announcements

### **4-Power and Oppression Concepts**

- Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes
- The apple in the tree- 10 minutes
- Stop and Action- 10 minutes
- Circle of statues- 30 minutes (followed by a small energizer and/or break)
- Power and more power (statues)- 40 minutes
- What is oppression – discussion -20 minutes (followed by a small energizer)
- Power and oppression (statues) – 30 minutes
- Introduction of homework – 10 minutes
- Final circle (evaluation, final announcements) -15 minutes

### **5-Oppression Exercises and Oppressions in Our Community**

- Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes
- Talk and Listen– 15 minute
- Group shower – 15 minutes
- Balance Statues – 20 minutes
- Homework analysis - 50 minutes
- Images of oppression – 60minutes

- Final circle (evaluation, announcements) -15 minutes

## **6-Transferring the Social Problem in Forum Theatre Play Format;**

- Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes
- Emotions Bus– 20 minute
- Steps in Forum Theatre- 10 minutes
- Oppression and sharing real examples-decision – 60 minutes
- Run and Project– 10 minutes
- Initial draft –real story in Forum Theatre structure - 60 minutes
- Final circle (evaluation, announcements) -15 minutes

## **7-Improvisation Exercises and Other Preparatory Exercises**

- Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes
- Forum Theatre- Story Line Review – 10 minutes
- Hey (voice and emotions)– 10 minute
- AEIOU- voice- 10 minutes
- Market time – voice and expressing different roles - 15 minutes
- Imaginary balls- 10 minutes
- Different space-same actions-15 minutes
- Imaginary objects – 10 minutes
- Complete up to 3 – 20 minutes
- Forum Theatre play – first improvisations- 60 minutes
- Final circle (evaluation, announcements) -15 minutes

## **8-Exercises for Getting Into Character and Developing the Play**

- Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes
- Music and action- 10 minutes
- Finalizing the first round of improvisation of the play- 45 minutes
- Getting into character (angels and demons, hot seat)- 45 minutes
- Final rehearsals on the day- 1 hour
- Final circle (evaluation, announcements) -15 minutes

## **9-Rehearsals – with different exercises**

- Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes
- Rehearsals – Stop and Think – 40 minutes
- Different kind of Rehearsals - 1.5 hour
- Final rehearsal of the day -30 minutes
- Final circle (evaluation, announcements) -15 minutes

## **10- Preparing the Team for the Performance**

- Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes

- ☐ Push Not to Win – 20 minutes
- ☐ Come with me! No- 30 minutes
- ☐ Brainstorming –Interventions- 20 minutes
- ☐ Briefing on the Process of Forum Theatre with Public – 20 minutes
- ☐ Open space session – based on the last session needs- 70 minutes
- ☐ Final circle (evaluation, announcements) -15 minutes

## 1- TEAM DEVELOPMENT - INTRODUCTION, GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER AND TEAM-BUILDING

A Forum Theatre play requires (according to the model of the method introduced in this manual) a minimum of 5 characters (1 oppressor, 1 oppressed, 1 ally oppressed, 1 ally oppressor, 1neutral) going to a maximum of 8 (if we add another ally to each character and also another neutral). It is therefore important to have these aspects in mind when you select or form your initial FT group.



You could work with more people – and have later doubles (for some roles) in case you perform more than one time or even to have 2 completely different FT groups (working together with them step by step but they develop different performances). Have in mind that if you will have more than 8 people involved in the development of the same play it will be harder in the decision making process and more time consuming in different phases of the process.

Also some other aspects that you need to consider from the beginning:

- ☐ In Forum Theatre we do not work with the travesty approach – meaning that women do not play the role of men and men do not play the role of women!
- ☐ In Forum Theatre we do not have double or multiple roles for the same person (for example: in one stage a person will be the Mother and in another stage she will play the role of the teacher).

The main reason behind these mentions is that in Forum Theatre we want to develop a performance as close as possible to reality and as concrete and explicit as we can. In reality one person has only one position in the story we want to reflect (for example: she is the mother and she is a woman).

This unit and phase of the process represents in fact the basis for future steps in FT development. At the same time it is important to acknowledge that this is, in fact, a required phase in any kind of group process or educational program (on any theme).

Therefore the area of activities that can be used in working with groups of different sizes and backgrounds is very large and easily accessible (via internet). Please refer to the resource section for many suggestions for various toolkits and manuals focused only on getting to know each other and team-building).

One thing that we need to mention and also to emphasize is that although there are many examples of team-building activities that you could use they also have various aims and focus on different dynamics of a group – (competition, collaboration, communication, decision making, coordination, leadership, group feeling and awareness, frustration management, etc.). We need to have a perspective of how this method works and to choose activities which help the group to work on their

- ☐ Collaboration
- ☐ Group awareness and feeling of the group
- ☐ Inclusive and consensus decision making

In Forum Theatre we don't have directors or script writers - in the process each member is equally important and valuable and everybody's ideas will be included in the final shape of the play (regardless of each member's background or experience - each Forum Theatre process belongs to each member of the group). There shouldn't be any assigned leader who gives directions in terms of task execution and very often in team-building activities groups have the impression that the key for a successful result is to have a leader - at this stage the facilitator needs to be careful and set the right tone in the group and to encourage the members to reflect on the dynamics of their team in which everybody will feel included, everybody will have ownership of the process.

Even the role of the facilitator should never be perceived as one of a leader (either for the facilitator himself/herself or for the group) - his/her role is to set up a structure for the process in which the content is proposed and decided on by the group members. He or she might have some extra input in terms of how the method works and its framework but in terms of content – this all comes from the group members.

This in fact will also increase the motivation, feeling of ownership and dedication of the participants in later stages of the process.

## **Rules discussion**

In the next unit there is no special time allocated to setting-up rules for the group process. This is in fact a debatable aspect which we leave to your own judgment whether you want to take further. There are educational practitioners that in any session, workshop (especially when the same group has to go through a longer process) set-up the rules for the working process with the participants (usually aiming at aspects related to: punctually, mobile phones on silent mode, talking in turn, etc.) and sometimes they also agree on a kind of “funny” punishment system for the ones that break the rules: to give candies to everybody, to sing something etc.

The authors and their partners do not take this approach although in the early working years it was used. Conclusions were extracted based on experience and this approach is not implemented anymore. The main reasons are related mostly to the fact that the rules are often not decided by real consensus (so there will be people who might not agree with some of them but who are “forced” to follow), there are people who hate rules by default and might act in

a rebellious way just to make a point or statement, that any idea of punishment (in a learning context) could create inhibition, frustration and would go against flexibility and understanding- and can affect the learning process.

At the same time the authors want to focus on creating an open atmosphere based on the motivation and the personal responsibility of each member to advance in good spirit and smooth working conditions. If at any time various problems occur in the process they can be openly discussed in the group and it can be decided together where to go further – but not to put them in frame (as rules) which could actually harm more than be beneficial.

It is important for the facilitator to have good observation and presence and to address in real time any disturbing issues that might affect the group. (For example: people talking on their phones during the sessions, people smoking if you do outdoor activities and some others being disturbed by it, people expressing offensive (or perceived as offensive) things to each other, etc.

### **The activities explained here are some examples extracted from our experience.**

- Intro – 5 minutes
- Shaking hands – 5 minutes
- Cross the line – 30 minutes
- 3 truths and 1 lie - 25 minutes
- Project Introduction – expectations/contributions – 25 minutes
- Blind square – 50 minutes
- Blind counting – 30 minutes
- Final comments, announcements – 5 minutes

### **Detailed explanations**

#### **1- Intro – 5 minutes**

Welcome your group; explain shortly why you are here and what will happen in this specific session. Introduce yourself and who you are in this context. Mention that for the beginning you want to provide a space for each of you to know each other better and then you will go into details related to the project that gathered all of you together a bit later in the session.

#### **2- Shaking hands – 5 minutes**

**Aim-** to stimulate the participants to get in direct contact with one another

**Description-** Each participant has the task to shake hands with everybody in the group. When they do that they have to say their name (and one more thing – you can choose from the following: where they come from, if it is an international or national group/ their profession/ what they are studying/why they are here/ etc.). The trick is that once they have met a person and shake his/ her hand they cannot remove their hand until they do not connect with the other hand in another shake with another person- only then they can release the first person from the shake. They continue until they have met every person in the group.

### 3- Cross the line – 30 minutes

**Aims-** to support the participants in knowing each other better and to have a better perspective of the group

**Description-** The group is asked to write on 2 different papers 2 things about themselves – one aspect that they think they have in common with everybody in the group and one aspect they think makes them unique. It has to be more abstract and something that is not easily perceived at first glance (for ex: I speak 5 languages, I have travelled on 3 continents, I want to change the world, I am bisexual etc.). It is important to mention that they should write aspects that they feel comfortable sharing with the others. They don't have to write their name on the papers and once they are ready they hand them to the facilitator. The group is asked to stay in one line and to imagine that an imaginary line is in front of their legs. The facilitator then says: "Cross the line if you..." – and mentions one of the things participants have written on the papers. The participants that feel that it fits them (regardless of whether they wrote it or not) take a step forward. They look at who crosses the line with them – who didn't and they go back in line. The facilitator continues with all the papers from the participants and tries to keep the similar aspects out.

#### Recommendations

- The facilitator can have prepared some additional sentences that could be used in the purpose related to the project (for ex. I have experience in Forum Theatre, I have never been a volunteer before, etc.) or deeper aspects for the group to explore (for ex. I am religious, I don't believe in monogamy, etc.)
- After the facilitator finishes, participants can be invited to ask the group to cross the line for something they are interested to ask the other members.

#### Debriefing/ Processing the activity

After this activity – especially if very deep and maybe provoking aspects were mentioned, ask the group: What impressions do you have from this activity? How do you feel now after the activity? Any other comments?

#### ● 4- 3 truths and 1 lie- 25 minutes

**Aim-** to facilitate a deeper and more personal getting to know process in the group; to encourage the participants to interact personally with everybody in the group;

**Description-** The group is instructed that now they will have the chance to get to know each other in a more personal manner. Each person is invited to think about 4 aspects that they want to share about themselves (it could be something related to what they like to do, what they did, what dreams they have, something amazing they did in their life, something special and surprising, etc.) – they have to choose what they are ready to share with the others. The facilitator can provide an example – which could also set up the tone of the kind of things that people are encouraged to share (something more personal, deeper).

They can be drawn/written on a paper (which is divided in 4 squares/areas). Out of these 4 aspects one thing must be in fact a lie (and it shouldn't be something obvious – as any of the other aspects as well). After everybody will have prepared their own papers (they should also put their own name on it) they will interact with each other and they will try to guess which







ones are right and which one is a lie. The aspects the people mentioned often lead to deeper communication and contributes to a general good atmosphere in the group as everybody has the chance to talk with the others.

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**Optional** – you can provide each participant with a set of candies/small chocolates/dry fruits (whatever you can) and give an extra flavour of competition to the game. Each participant can have the same number of items and once they interact if they manage to guess from the first (which one is the lie) they can take a candy from the other person. Same applies in return if the other person also guesses from the first try.

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## 5- Project Introduction – expectations/contributions – 25 minutes

Depending on the context and framework of the project or initiative in which this FT group is involved, you need to provide information to the group about it.

For them it will be important to know:

- why and for what this project/initiative is (the reasons, the objectives);
- the timeline of activities,
- what their role in the project is and what is expected from them

(here it is important to add that the process is designed as a pack and it is important for everybody to be present in all the meetings and sessions and if they cannot commit fully to reconsider now- of course at later stages once the foundation is set up depending on circumstances some people could miss a meeting-but the group needs to understand exactly what kind of commitment is expected from them)

Clarify any potential questions or misunderstandings. It would also be good to ask the group about their perspective of the project (to ask what their main expectations from their involvement are and how they can contribute to make this project impactful).

You can use small papers, or post-its where they can write these aspects (anonymously or not) and then to have them all collected so the whole group can read and have a picture of the group expectations and contributions.

## 6- Blind square – 50 minutes

**Aims** – to stimulate the group to reflect and acknowledge what their instinctual/natural ways of communication in the group are and what are the aspects needed to improve them.

**Description** – The group stands in the circle.

The facilitator hands the group a rope which will be held by each member of the group (the rope has the shape of circle inside of the circle of people - so the facilitator will tie the ends of the rope).

The facilitator doesn't participate in the exercise. It is explained to the group that they have to fulfil a task with their eyes closed but they are able to talk with each other. During the task everybody has to be in contact with the rope. They are requested to close their eyes. Then the task is given: "place the rope in the shape of a perfect square".

The facilitator needs to be sure they have their eyes closed all the time (if you can use blindfolds for everybody it would be even better). There is no time limit but if they take an

extensively long time you can introduce a time limit at some point. Remind the group that they first need to be sure they have a perfect square before they can open their eyes- so you can at one time ask them if they are sure they have it or not. No other involvement or input is needed from the facilitator's side.

Once they are ready, they can open their eyes and see the result. At this stage it is important to **debrief/process** this part of the activity. Suggestions for questions:

- ☐ How did you feel in the activity?
- ☐ What happened? How did you come up with this result?
- ☐ What were the key aspects that helped you in the process?
- ☐ What were the main difficulties that you encountered in this task?
- ☐ How did you decide on a specific strategy?
- ☐ How did you make sure everybody was included in the decision?
- ☐ What could have been done differently?

## NOTE

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Very often groups that have been in trainings or workshops previously tend to use the cliché words without actually reflecting on the activity itself and what happened: “it was team work”, “we all cooperated”, “leadership”...etc. This is why, as a facilitator, it is important to push the group tendency (if this is happening) beyond this superficial layer and ask very specific questions (Did everybody know what was happening all the time? Is there anybody that has a different perspective on the exercise?) and you can also provide your observations from the activity (if they don't come from the group): “You say you all agree with that idea but you never asked the group if they agree or not... You say you cooperated and communicated well but very often there were many people talking at the same time” - and then go back to the questions and make the group assume their behaviour and reflect on the ways to improve it.

If you have time you can ask them: “If you have to do it again what is the most important thing that will help the group for a better process and result?” They will mention different aspects and then you tell them that the second part will take place – they close their eyes and you give them the second task “to make a perfect triangle” or a “star in 5 corners” or any other shape that is challenging enough.

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**Afterwards – process the activity** (using some of the questions mentioned before) and also focus on what were the main differences in their processes, also ask them if they put into practice the things they said they would do differently or that are important for the group- and reflect on it – why some of the things couldn't be put into practice etc.

At the end ask them to reflect on what the main learning outcomes are (from this exercise and discussion) that could be used in further stages in working in this group. Optional- you can write them down (together with the things mentioned before in terms of what is important for the group etc.) and have them on a flipchart that can be a reminder for the group during other sessions (if it becomes necessary).

## **7- Blind counting – 30 minutes**

**Aims-** to stimulate the group to connect to the deeper layers of a group dynamic; to develop a strong group feeling; to encourage the group to be more aware of each member of the group.

**Description-** The group is seated and it is explained to them that they will have a group task – tot count to 20 (or 15 if there are less people in the group) in consecutive order, without repeating one number and without 2 people saying the same number at the same time- if this happens then the counting starts again from 1- the trick is that they have to do that with their eyes closed and no time is allocated for discussion or strategizing – once the instructions are clear they will be asked to close their eyes and whenever they are ready to start.

If the group asks questions related to potential strategies or if they are allowed this or that- just explain that everything they need to know has already been told and they could start at any time. Depending on the group there will be different times in which they manage to get to the number. You can also optionally tell them that the number given is just the minimum and they can continue until they make a mistake.

## **Debriefing/Processing the activity**

Suggestion of questions to be used for the discussion after they finish the task (these are more for the starting of the discussion – later depending on their answers you can focus on specific aspects more)

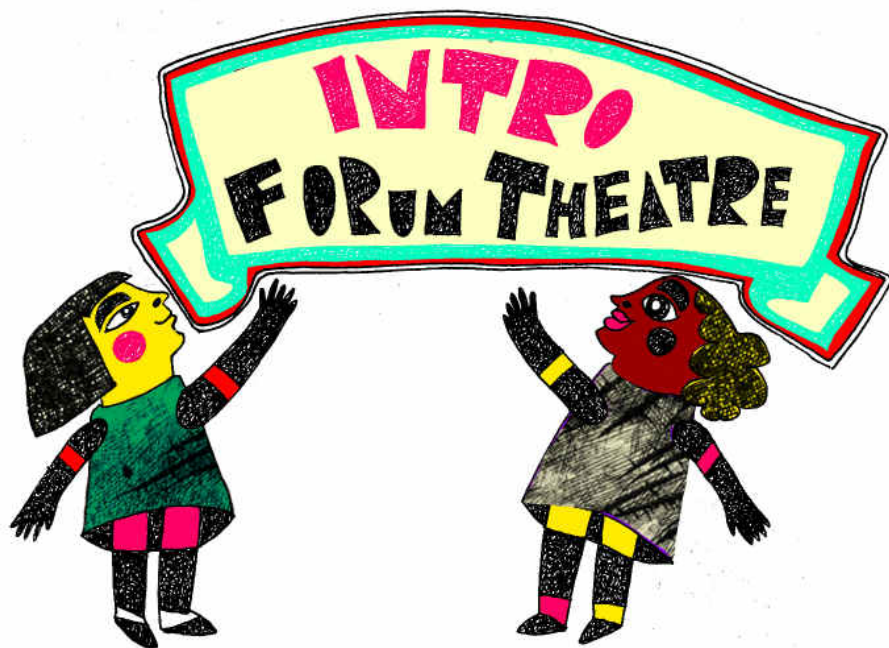
- ✓ What kind of feelings did you experience during the counting?
- ✓ How did you manage to get to this result?
- ✓ What were the key elements for achieving your aim in this exercise?
- ✓ Did everybody say a number?
- ✓ What is needed when you don't have time to strategize in order to move forwards in whatever you need to achieve? How do you cope with potential negative feelings that might come along?

After the debriefing you can mention that, in Forum Theatre – especially because there is a lot of unknown (mostly due to the fact that the public changes the story) the FT team needs to be synchronized and to feel each other in order to react to the changes coming from outside- and that's why we have chosen this specific activity.

## **8- Final comments, announcements – 5 minutes**

Time to mention: details about the next meeting, where, when it will take place; what will happen next – if they have any questions/ remarks.

## 2- INTRO TO THE FORUM THEATRE METHOD AND PREPARATORY EXERCISES



The assumption made when the curriculum was developed was that the group is new to Forum Theatre and this aspect needs to be carefully addressed. Being a complex method, people usually understand it fully only when they see it in practice. Even if you provide lots of details and explanations in advance (before they see it in real life), it often makes people just more confused than when they know just a little bit. In this session we propose 3 alternative approaches of how to introduce the method to the group so they can have an idea of what they are embarking on.

Sometimes it is also possible that some of the group members have been in the public in some FT performance, or they have worked with some other organizations with the method. In those cases this session should provide the same basis for the whole group- for the purely new people to have an idea of what the method is about and for the others to actually have the idea of how the method will be approached in this group (it might happen that they have a different experience with the method- as you know from the FT presentation chapter there are many approaches).

## Suggested activities

1. Introduction (explaining the context and what will happen in this session) – 3 minutes
2. Energizer (look at the resources area for examples of materials where you can find lots of examples of energizers)– 5 minutes
3. Carousel-getting to know each other – 20 minutes
4. Introduction of Forum Theatre - Movie /simulation FT -1h/1.5h
5. Forum Theatre process- remarks -10 min
6. Preparatory exercises 1h/1.5 h

## 3- CAROUSEL-GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

**Aims-** to provide space for participants to know each other better; to create a warm and friendly atmosphere for the day.

**Description-** participants stand in 2 circles – one inner, one outer. Each person faces another person from the other circle. The facilitator gives various topics/subjects for discussion- the discussions happen one on one (between the person in the inner circle and the one from the outer)-so everybody will talk at the same time. After the time allocated for one discussion (usually 3-4 minutes) is up, the facilitator asks the outer circle to move to the right or to the left 1 or 2 steps. The facilitator can play with this movement of the circles – the result has to be that for a new topic of discussion there will be new pairs all the time. The topics of discussion should help the group discuss deeper things about themselves with each other and they should be adapted to the context and background of your group.

## Suggestions for discussions/topics

- ✓ What is the most exciting thing that happened to you from our last meeting?
- ✓ How long was your longest romantic relationship?
- ✓ What are you most proud about in your life?
- ✓ Share one funny /strange story from your life
- ✓ Say something you don't like about yourself
- ✓ What is your opinion about religions in general? Are you religious?
- ✓ What behaviours of other people really annoy you?

## 4- INTRODUCTION FORUM THEATRE - MOVIE /SIMULATION FT -1H/1.5H

**Aim-** to familiarize the participants with Forum Theatre method – its main outline, aim and structure

### Description

OPTION  
1

### With the highest impact

- ✓ If you were in a Forum Theatre performance (with some other volunteers) in the past or if somebody from your organization was then you or the other persons will show the performance to your group – your group being the public of the performance. The play has to follow all the steps (with the interventions and discussions).

You can also improvise a performance with the more experienced volunteers from your organization – just with the purpose of showing it to your group.

- ✓ You can explain to your group that the best way to introduce the method to them is a real life experience so they will be the public of one such performance. Then you may proceed.
- ✓ If at that time your organization is performing a forum theatre play in the community – you can invite the group there and in this session you can have a discussion based on their experience as members of the public.

**OPTION  
2**

**With the possibility of some confusion in the group** (but it is fine – it will get clear in time- do not panic as a facilitator if your group is not fully clear about the method- you were also not clear at first)

- ✓ You make a brief introduction about the background of the method in simple terms (where it was developed, why and that it has been transforming itself all these years)
- ✓ You show them a movie – or movies – depending what you have on hand (that could fit your group)

This movie tells little bit about history of Forum Theatre  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGGnHyH5iVM> .

On A.R.T. Fusion YouTube Chanel you can find some movies about Forum Theatre in English or with English subtitles – including the movie developed in “Act for What You Believe” project- <http://www.youtube.com/user/artfusiontv>

If you have movies from your own performances you can show those.

Bear in mind that showing 1.5 hours of video material from a performance (the whole process) is not going to have the same effect as when they are in the public – because it is not participatory for the group –and they will not experience the process. You could maybe show parts of the movie and provide explanations for the missing ones.

**OPTION  
3**

**With the highest possibility of confusion** (but it could still be manageable in time).

If you don't have the possibilities of showing video material, and you don't have a group that could show them a performance you can use this approach

- ✓ Use flipchart or power point presentation (if you prefer so) for your introduction. Here you need to improvise in order to send a simple, attractive and clear message to your group. Bear in mind that excessive details in this format are not going to help you.
- ✓ Focus on the main elements that you want them to take out of your presentation – the main aim and features of this methodology, the structure and the process of forum theatre
- ✓ It will be very good if you can give them a concrete example (preferably from your work) or make it interactive with them- ask them one social problem from their community,

extract the main characters from it and put it in the FT format and then explains what is happening once you go to the public.

- ✓ It is good to let them know that the whole process will surely become fully clear only after they either being a public or they will have done it themselves but this presentation had the aim to give them a picture of what they will have to have in the end.

For any of the options used you need to allocate enough space for their questions and to have a clear vibe in terms of their understanding of the method after your introduction. You need to check they didn't misunderstand some aspects so you could ask them some questions to verify this.

## 5- FORUM THEATRE PROCESS- REMARKS -10 MIN

**Aim-** to introduce to the group the main aspects of the process on which they will embark and that will lead them to the final performance

**Description** – the facilitator explains to the group that in order to have the performance and the kind of impact that was mentioned in the previous part there are several steps that need to be pursued and some features that will be constant in the process. It is important to talk now:

1. About the preparatory phase (full of games that aim to prepare them for acting in general but in particular in such settings (of forum theatre). This phase will be very active and very experiential and it is not planned to provide theory in advance but rather to discuss after they have experience and to draw the theoretical conclusions –you can remind them (at the beginning of the next part of the session about this aspect)
2. About the fact that each meeting will include such games which will target various dynamics necessary for them to work together and with the method- and will facilitate the group work as well
3. That there will also be a phase allocated to the reality exploration- the research and study for the performance (in terms of social issue/s that are going to be the subject of the performance)
4. That the process is 100% inclusive and each member is equally valuable and that the decisions will be made by consensus from the whole group
5. Feel free to add any other information that you think is relevant and should be included in this part.

## 6- PREPARATORY EXERCISES

**Aims-** To warm-up the group, to develop their coordination, focus, attention, rhythm and synchronization, to explore and work with the space and the group in different setting, to practice working with their body; gestures and expressions; To develop group trust in each other and in the FT process.

**Description** – the time allocated for this part depends largely on the option you choose to introduce the method- for example option 1 will definitely take long and you will not have time at all for this part of the session – and in the case of option 3 – you will have more time. In any case depending on your time you can do these exercises in this session or in the next one- and it should be just fine. You just need to readjust the number or the structure of your meetings.

It would be good if you have at least one hour of games and exercises – preferably 1.5 (the







suggestions included here refer to 1.5 hours of preparatory activities – with some discussions included as well).

Briefly introduce this part and remind them about the fact that it is planned to be an experiential approach and they should let themselves go with the process – and after the games we will discuss their experience

### Description of exercises

- PASS THE BEAT- 10 MINUTES
- ELECTRIC CURRENT – 10 MINUTES
- SPACE EXERCISES – 20 MINUTES
- BACK DANCING – 10 MINUTES
- BLIND SHAKE – 10 MINUTES
- MIRRORS – 15 MINUTES
- PROCESSING/ DISCUSSION ON ALL THE EXERCISES -15 MINUTES

The group stands in a circle; the facilitator explains that this exercise will be done in silence and has eye contact as a key element. The facilitator can start by “passing the beat” which in fact represents a clap – 2 people look into each other’s eyes and they have to clap (their own hands) at the same time- so we can hear only 1 clap and not 2. The beat will be passed on in the circle from person to person – trying to keep the same rhythm and play with it – to become faster or slower. The first round (a complete circle) will be more of a trial round until the participants get in the mood- then more beats could be introduced – all the time trying to synchronize with the rhythm developed.



The beat can be passed anywhere in the circle – here the participants need to pay attention to all the other members of the group in order to be ready to receive the beat and to pass it along.

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**ELECTRIC CURRENT** – Develops group coordination, attention and focus, warms-up the group

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The group stands in a circle – it is explained to them that an electric current will be travelling among them - 2 signs will be used to express “receiving the current” and “sending the

current” (you can create your own signs- usually by using the hands) – the idea will be to make a loud sound and also to show with your body that you are electrocuted – before you send it to somebody else in the group. Eye contact is required between the giver and receiver. More electric currents can be introduced (by the facilitator) and the group can be encouraged to focus on the group- so they can be ready to receive at any time (usually the tendency of the group is to follow the currents, not to look at the others).

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**SPACE EXERCISES-** Stimulates the participants to reflect on how they feel in the group and in the space provided, to work with different types of space in different ways, different speeds; Increases their flexibility and group awareness level.

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● Participants are invited to explore the space – at the beginning by themselves- without talking and interacting with each other.

● During the time they walk the facilitator can encourage them to go to places in the space that they didn't pay attention to before, to try to go to every corner/square of the space, to use a different route all the time (not to go in circles); to explore how they feel in this space- which part of the area they like the most and why – they can be invited to go to the place they prefer the most in the space and also the place they dislike the most;

● The facilitator can continue to provide guidelines or questions for reflection for the group: they should now pay more attention to the people around because they are sharing the same space ; to make eye contact with the people they meet and smile at each other; to reflect on how they feel in their presence in this specific space;

● The group can be asked to walk backwards for a while (and in this time to reflect how easy it is, how they feel, how they take care of each other – if they do..) – it can be alternates between backwards and forwards in terms of walking to feel the difference and also to become easier to shift between directions.

● The facilitator can introduce different settings for exploring the space –for each of the following suggestions (feel free to use a setting as diverse as possible for the participants to experience) leave the group to walk a little bit in that specific setting - to get in the mood and the atmosphere (to imagine the sounds, the smells, etc.)

Examples: to imagine they are on a hot floor; in a forest; in a market, on a train; underwater; on top of the mountain; on another planet; that they are in the middle of the storm; they are in a soup (or some other food dish); trapped in a box; in a room full of mosquitoes;

If the group is not tired you can also work with them on different speeds – 1,2,3,4 – 1- slow motion; 2 - regular walk; 3 - hurry; 4 - super hurry and agitated (but not running) – they are just different speeds of walking) (you can also use colours instead of numbers – use your imagination as you want).

And while they are asked to walk with a specific number different guidelines can be addressed (How do you feel? How easy is it for you? In which situation do you find yourself walking like that? How much are you still able to focus on the group or are you more focused on yourself? Etc.

You can say at some point: 0 – they stop and you can ask them to make a circle in order to explain the next activity.

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**BACK DANCING** – Develops group cohesion, synchronization and rhythm; facilitates close physical contact between the participants; Challenges participants’ personal limits

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● The group stands in a circle. They are asked to look in the middle of the circle and the facilitator counts to 3- after that they have to look at somebody in the group (only one person). If the person returns the look then both participants become a pair in the next exercise (and they go out of the circle). The game continues until everybody has a pair. “Back dancing” can also be done in 3 (so if you have an uneven number of people one group can be of 3).

● They will have to stay back to back and they will be dancing. There will be different styles announced by the facilitator. There will be no music- each pair will have to find their own way in dancing. From time to time you can ask them to find some other pair to dance with. Based on how much fun they are having and how relaxed the group is you can adjust the time for each dance. Suggested styles for dancing: Salsa, Waltz, Hip-Hop, Free Style, Contemporary, Some ethnic dance (if relevant for your group), Bollywood dance, Hard Rock, etc.

Note- this exercise proved to be quite challenging for some pairs/people (that’s why it is recommended to keep an eye on the group –if they don’t look relaxed enough you can make shorter rounds and change the pairs more often)

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**BLIND SHAKE** - Develops coordination in unknown places and trust in different spaces and people; Supports the group in growing closer to each other;

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● The facilitator asks the last pairs of the dancing exercise to stay in pairs for the beginning of the next activity as well (they will change pairs during the exercise).

● The facilitator demonstrates how the exercise goes and then all the participants replicate in their pairs and then they change pairs and do it with other partners as well.

● The activity goes like this - the 2 people in the pair shake hands and then stay still; they close their eyes at this moment- then they have to “unshake” and keep the hand in the position (as it was in the hand shake) and take 3 steps backwards.

● Then they can check with each other if they are ready, because they will have to come back to the initial position.

● The first few times participants usually find themselves in different positions from the initial ones but then they learn how to assess the space and their own coordination with eyes closed.

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**MIRRORS** - Encourages the groups to expressively use their body in different ways; to release their creativity, to work on coordination and synchronization among group members.

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● The group is divided into pairs (you can use the last pair of the “blind shake” activity if you want to). In these pairs they have to mirror each other- one person has to do the actions (but rather slowly, and to focus more on expressions, various gestures and mimics) and the other person will have to copy in real time as accurately as possible.

● They switch roles after 5 minutes – the facilitator will announce the time. Mention to the group not to make sudden movements- as it will be impossible for the mirror to follow in real time. If you still have time you can try the next level which implies that the whole group stands in a circle and one volunteer goes in the middle – now each of the persons from the circle is the mirror of the person inside- according to the angle they are positioned towards the person in the middle.

● For the person in the middle it will be a strong sensation to have so many mirrors reflecting him. It will be little bit more challenging for the persons standing behind the volunteer - that’s why it is advisable to ask the volunteer in the middle not to face just one direction but to be more dynamic.

● You can ask some volunteers who would like to be in the middle to do it and then you can close the activity and also the session.

### **Processing/ Discussion of all the exercises**

Usually this first session of games and exercises is perceived as fun, active and very engaging. It is important now to help the group to reflect on their experience and to understand in which way it actually prepared them. You could use this set of questions as suggestions for facilitating this small discussion.

- How do you feel now at the end of the exercises?
- How do you feel in the group? What are your comments on how you are as a group?
- What activity was most challenging and why?
- What did you gain from this session?

## **3- PREPARATORY EXERCISES – PART 2**

The preparatory process includes various types of exercises which need to help the group members work on various dynamics for themselves individually, but also for the group process and also for learning the forum theatre method. Many of these activities are also found in other types of theatre or drama groups.

In the Forum Theatre process the focus is not on developing high theatrical skills and therefore the time allocated for such kind of preparation might look shorter comparing with the professional groups.

In Forum Theatre groups the aim is to establish a strong basis/foundation in this sense and to follow-up with Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum Theatre (in particular) specific activities.

This curriculum is addressed to beginners – of course for more experienced FT groups more time could be allocated to sharpen those “acting” or “theatre” areas that were not so



fully taken care of in the early stages in their training process- but it will not be a condition for evaluation of their Forum Theatre competencies.

The important categories of preparatory general exercises that any facilitator should have in mind while working with a beginner group are the following: coordination, focus, concentration, space, speeds, body, relaxing, rhythm, trust, synchronization, emotions, expression, gestures, statues, imagination, creativity, expanding personal limits, improvisation, getting into the role, voice.

Some of these exercises (like improvisation and getting into character) will be implemented more when the Forum Theatre development starts. After these general preparatory activities, specific Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum Theatre exercises are implemented in the following sessions.

**The suggested structure for this session (which will focus predominantly on preparatory exercises) is:**

- ☐ Introduction (explaining the context and what will happen in this session- following up from the last session)- 3 minutes
- ☐ Exercises – 2-2.5 hours
  - Samurai – 5 minutes
  - Magnet – 10 minutes
  - Trust Dancing – 25 minutes
  - Bears and Princes (or adapted versions)- 10 minutes
  - Hey You! Who Me?- 10 minutes

- 1,2,3-4,5,6- 15 minutes
- Exaggeration circle- 15 minutes
- Statues and emotions – 15 minutes
- Museum of emotions – 20 minutes

- Processing the games and exercises/Debriefing
- Final circle – announcements

## Preparatory Exercises

**Aims** – to work on group coordination and focus, its members' capacity to express various emotions with their voice, body and facial expressions; to stimulate the group to deal with various emotions expressed around them or to them, to prepare the group more deeply for acting and for analysing social issues.

## DESCRIPTION OF EXERCISES

**SAMURAI** – Warms up the voice, Trains the actor to talk from the diaphragm (which is better when acting – because it projects a larger voice. The letter H always engages the diaphragm while talking - a good exercise before going on stage as well; energizing.

● The group stands in a circle. They are informed that they are all samurai that will attempt to kill each other in the exercise. Every samurai has a sword (which is represented by both hands being close to each other (symbolizing the sword). When somebody wants to kill somebody else first he prepares by raising firmly the sword on top of his head (and also saying very loudly HA). Then the person chooses his „victim” and very firmly directs his sword towards that person (at the same time has to say very loudly HE).

● Then the person targeted also raises the sword (to prepare for attack and says loudly HA)- at this moment the person standing on the right and on the left (of the person that is about to attack) will both attempt to cut him by going with the sword to his belly, both of them at the same time and saying very loudly HE- the middle samurai will bend as to avoid the attack and then immediately will attack somebody in the group – as explained before. It has to go very fast, very loudly and very firmly. Of course it goes without saying that in this exercise nobody gets hurt physically. In this version HA and HE are used – you can also use just one, like HA.

● For more advanced groups you can use the order HA. HE. HI, HO, HU – for example: person attacking raising the sword HA- the neighbours attacking HE, the samurai attacking somebody HI, the victim preparing for attack HO, the neighbours HU, the attacking one HA ...and so on...- the people have to in fact just remember the order and to continue to do the exercise – in this version the work with the voice is much broadened.

**MAGNET** - Develops focus in the group, coordination in space (while they are many obstacles), facilitates easier contact among the participants.

● The group is divided into pairs; one group can be of 3 (if it will be necessary). It is explained to them that they are magnets and as they know sometimes magnets attract each other or they reject (depending on the polarization value). So they have to remember who their magnet pair is and the facilitator will give the polarization mode.

● They walk around the space individually and the facilitator says loudly: **ATTRACTION** and they immediately (as magnets do) have to run and be in contact with the pair magnet and continue to walk around the space. Then the facilitator says **REJECTION** so very fast they have to run from each other (exactly as magnets do) and continue to walk around the space – keeping far from their pair. The facilitator can play with these 2 values (Attraction and Rejection) a couple of times.

● Then you can go to the next level- having pairs representing one magnet and coupling them with another pair – so now you have 5 or 6 people that are in some sort of connection. The group continues to walk around the space (individually) but have to remember how they are magnet partners. The same now again, the facilitator uses the polarization values: Attraction, Rejection, Double Attraction (for the big magnets), Double Rejection. So participants either go in small magnets or big ones. You can optionally have one version with the whole group coming together as a Total Attraction /Total Rejection (for the end of the activity)

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**TRUST DANCING** – Develops trust among group members, helps the participants to extend their personal limits, to relax in the group. (It will be good if you can have music for this exercise but you could also work it out in silence).

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● Explain to the group that in this exercise they will have their limits maybe tested but in a safe environment and encourage everybody to take care of each other during this activity. They have roles- with eyes closed or open and when they have their eyes open they need to act responsibly towards the group.

● Divide the group into pairs- (different from the ones in the previous activity). In each pair one person opens the palm of their hand and keeps open only the index finger. This person then closes their eyes.- this is person A. If you have blind folds it would be even better. The other person (person B) puts his own index finger on the other person (this is the only contact among the pair). They are not allowed to talk during the exercise. If you have music turn it on (it should be a calmer kind of music). Person B has to lead the other person around the space – he can dance with the person or just walk around. At some point the facilitator stops the music and ask persons A to continue to keep closed their eyes and asks the B-s to go to another A. They need to be silent so that the A-s don't know who their new partners are.

● The activity continues and the new pairs are allocated time for their dance/walk. Another change is made so in the end the A person will have had 3 B persons as partners. (if you want you can make it 4 times) After the last round you can allow the A-s to open their eyes and see who their partner was. Then the roles switch and now the B becomes an A and the A becomes a B- and the activity continues the same way. You can change the song for the second round.

● After this specific activity it is important to have some **debriefing/processing** (because it is very personal and some people might have challenged their limits).



Suggested questions:

- ☐ How did you feel during the exercise as person A?
  - ☐ What was the most challenging aspect?
  - ☐ What made you feel safe?
  - ☐ How did the change of partners influence how you felt in the exercise? If it did?
  - ☐ How did you feel as person B?
  - ☐ With what from real life can you associate the experience you had in this activity?
  - ☐ How can this exercise help your group work/dynamic?
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**BEAR AND PRINCESSES** – Prepares the group for getting into different roles (with different emotions); warms-up up the body and the voice; relaxes the group members in terms of acting and being silly; It also develops focus and concentration.

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Depending on the country you do this exercise in you can change the roles more appropriately maybe for the fairy tales background from your culture or from the culture of the people you will be working with.

This exercise needs to be explained very carefully at the beginning – so it can have a proper start-up (it is difficult to clarify after you start).

The group is divided into pairs that hold each other by the arm. If there is anybody in the group who knows the exercise they can volunteer to help you explain, if not you can ask a volunteer from the group. If the group is even and you want to play as well a pair can be a trio and the middle person is held by each arm.

#### Explanation:

The pairs are in a magic forest (that is the setting) and they are standing randomly in that space. One pair (that volunteers to start) will not be standing.

The next part needs to be demonstrated by the facilitator and one volunteer so that the group can get an adequate understanding. It would be good to demonstrate in slow motion and to stop at times to explain why it is like that.

One person is the bear (that needs to make sounds and gestures as a fearsome bear). The other person is an innocent princess (that as well needs to make sounds and gestures according to her role). The bear runs after the princess in the forest and the princess tries to escape from the bear.

There are 2 options of what can happen next.

■ **The bear catches the princess (he touches her)** – if this happens then because we are in a magic forest the princess suddenly becomes a bear and the bear becomes a princess (and tries to escape from the bear)- they switch roles and the game continues this way

■ **The princess escapes by attaching herself to one of the pairs that are standing in the circle** (she needs to hold the arm of one person) –she is safe now BUT the other person from the pair becomes an angry bear and the previous bear suddenly becomes a princess who needs to escape from this new bear. (and the run continues).

There will always be a bear running after a princess (following the “rules” explained previously). Usually people get confused (so you need to emphasise on these aspects) – on the switching roles when the bear touches the princess, and also on the roles division when the princess attaches herself to a pair.

It is important for the pairs to be standing in the forest not in a circle but as randomly as possible and not to have any other objects or obstacles in the way – as you can see it is quite a running activity. If the group is very much enjoying the activity you can allow more time for it. For an advanced group (or at later stages in the process) – you can give different emotions/moods for the bear or princess (and change them during the exercise)- drunk, crying, desperate, crazy, diplomatic -polite, nice, robot, alien bear/princess.

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**HEY YOU-WHO ME?** – Develops emotion expressions, dealing with various emotional accusations, works on various attitudes development.

Note: This exercise can also be used to discuss responsibility and how often people do not take any responsibility for what is happening in their communities and how they always blame the others.

● The group stands in a circle, close to each other. The facilitator starts by pointing at somebody in the group and saying to somebody: It's YOU!

● Then the whole group has to speak as one: Hey YOU! (Very loudly and point at that person). That person has to reply; WHO ME?

● The whole group still pointing at that person will say: YES YOU! – Then the person will reply: NO, NOT ME!, then the whole group still pointing : THEN WHO? It's HER or HIM and pointing at somebody – then the whole group pointing at that person: HEY YOU! And so on.

● Make sure you allow time at least for everybody to be pointed at. Once it continues the people could play out in different ways to reply to the accusation (by being very innocent, angry, upset, etc.). You can mention this at the beginning or during the exercise or you can leave it naturally for the group to develop it – pay attention to the group.

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1, 2, 3 - 4, 5, 6 - Helps the group to express a variety of emotions and feelings in interaction with another person, makes it easier for the group in later stages to get into different roles and have different emotions.

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● The group is divided into 2 groups which will be standing in a line facing each other. Each person has to have a corresponding person in the other group. The lines stay a few steps from each other.

● The facilitator explains that in this exercise they will have small conversations with the person in front of them. One line of people is instructed to use just the following words: 1, 2, 3 (nothing else, nothing more) – just these 3 words. The second line is instructed to use just these words: 4, 5, 6 (nothing else, nothing more).

● The procedure goes like this: the facilitator will give an emotion, a feeling, a mood and the 2 lines have to come in the middle (to come close to each other) and have a small conversation using the words they can use but expressing the emotion provided and then they go back in line (and not having that emotion anymore). If possible the facilitator should make a demonstration also to show the duration of the discussion (which should be rather small).

**Suggestions for emotions, feelings, moods that could be used in the activity:** long lost friends, snobs, shy, rude, arrogant, annoyed, sad, angry, bored, extremely polite, scared, shocked, desperate, old enemy, suspicious, flirting, funeral, as if the other person is your idol, jealousy, giggling, proud, in a big hurry, after a break-up, excited, very tired, in love, using a very strong accent, etc.

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**EXAGGERATION CIRCLE** – Helps the group to work on their mimics and emotional expressions.

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● The group can be sitting or standing (depending as well on how tired they are). Anybody in the group can start by showing an emotion (using face mimics, looks, etc.) to the neighbour on the right. You can make a round of just trying to copy exactly the emotion that was expressed (this round is just to warm up and also to show that it will be very hard to copy exactly anyway).

● Then the group is instructed that the task is now that after a person shows an emotion to the next person – that person has to copy for the next person BUT this time has to make it little bit bigger in intensity. So one by one the emotion should grow until it reaches the highest level back to the original person.

● The group needs to be reminded all the time to amplify it just a little bit and if the group is small you can then do 2 rounds to see how much it can grow. A volunteer could be asked to start by showing an emotion. For the beginning the facilitator could also start as example – also to set up the right tone for the types of emotions that are being expressed.

Make sure people are actually starting by showing emotions and not gestures (like touching their face, putting their tongue out, etc.) so you can stop one round if in fact it is not an emotion that

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**STATUES AND EMOTIONS** - Works with body postures and helps the group express different emotions by using their body. Prepares the group for later phases in working with body postures and expression of different emotions.

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● The group is divided in 2- participants can count 1 -2 – so each member is either 1 or either 2. Then it is explained that they have to walk around the space in silence and at some point the facilitator will say out loud one number (either 1 or 2) and an emotion/feeling/mood. All the people that have that number have to freeze in a statue that expresses that specific emotion (wherever they are at the moment in the space).

● The other half of the group in that moment is present in a spontaneous museum and are invited to observe the “pieces” of that thematic museum. They stay for a couple of seconds- they are encouraged to make sure they have a look and observe all the statues. They are also requested not to touch or interact with the statues.

● The group needs to be reminded if they are having too much fun and they are touching the statues or are trying to make them laugh. The facilitator closes the museum and then all the people continue to walk around the space and the exercise continues by saying again a number and an emotion. (It is advisable to do at least 3 rounds for each number group). Suggestions for emotions that could be used: sad, happy, proud, afraid, frustrated, dreamer, troubled, powerful, powerless, etc.

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**MUSEUM OF EMOTIONS** - Develops group member capacity of standing longer in statues, their observation and analysing capacity, prepares the group for deeper discussion of social issues.

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● The group is again divided in 2. One group is invited outside to wait until the group inside is prepared. They are informed that they will visit a museum, they will have to observe the statues and to figure out what is the theme of this museum.

● They are not allowed to touch the statues, to interact or to disturb them – their only task is to observe. The group inside is instructed that they all have to be statues in a museum with the following theme: **Aggressor** (so the person committing the aggression).

● They all have to think individually and once they decided what kind of **aggressor** they want to show they can practice the posture. Announce them that they might have to stay for a longer time in that position so they should choose a position that could allow them that. Tell them that the others will be invited inside to observe their statues.

● Once the other group is in the museum invite them with guiding sentences and questions to analyse and observe the statues: Make sure you observe each statue; Try to feel the atmosphere in this museum; How do you feel in this museum? What are the similarities in the museum? ... Additionally you can also go from statue to statue (especially if you have a small group) to check

with the group what they see: What is this person doing? Where is he/she? Why do you think he/she is doing this? Check all the statues fast and then ask them at the end to tell you what the theme of this museum is (based on their experience in it).

☉ Then the statues can come back to life. Clarification could be provided if there were puzzling statues and also if they assume it is another theme than the one provided. Then the statues are invited to go out and the process is repeated. For the persons inside, the theme is: **Victim of aggression** (they could express it based on their experience as visitors of the museum or not).

☉ At the end you can ask some questions: How easy was it to choose what statue you wanted to have? Based on what did you choose? How easy was it to understand what the others statues expressed? What were the main aspects that made it easier for you? What was hard or challenging in this process? Any other comments/impressions from this exercise?

### Processing the games and exercises/Debriefing

Ask the group to sit and make a clear shift from the previous exercise to this final debriefing. Explain that you want to know their views on this session based on their own experience. You can do a small review together with them on the activities you have done in the session.

Suggested questions that you can use:

- ✓ How do you feel now after at the end of today's session?
- ✓ What are the main aspects that we worked on today?
- ✓ What activity was most challenging and why?
- ✓ What was easy for you?
- ✓ How easy is it for you to express emotions that you do not feel? What can make it easier for you?
- ✓ How is it for you to use your body in order to express certain feelings or situation
- ✓ What did you gain from this session?
- ✓ In what way do you feel the session prepared you?

## 4- POWER AND OPPRESSION CONCEPTS

With this unit the work starts to focus more on Theatre of the Oppressed (Forum and Image Theatre) exercises- which will address the concepts of power, oppression and provide a solid understanding on these concepts to the participants as they are the key concepts in Forum Theatre. Nevertheless there will be still included some exercises from the general preparation- as the sessions will combine various elements. It is very important for the facilitator to be very clear on what oppression is and the relation with power in order to help the participants to understand them as well. As they are abstract concepts is very easy to deviate and to make them so relative in order to apply to everything- that's why the way the session is constructed will allow time for participants to express their view on the concepts but also a clear definition format on it from the facilitator side.

Often the assumptions that people generally have on various terms can be very strong and could make the discussions little bit more difficult. The main problematic issues that arises from practice with different groups are:

- ☐ That people tend to think that having power is something bad/negative
- ☐ That oppression is anything depending from which angle you look at.





From the perspective of the authors of this manual and their partners is important to stress the followings:

- Power in itself it doesn't have a positive or negative value but rather the way of using that specific power could be seen as positive or negative (that's why in this unit participants will have the chance to explore various type of power and to reflect on what that means to them)
- Oppression is defined in the context of this manual as “abuse of power”.

Oppression defined in this way can be applied to various dimensions of life and society and could be more concrete or more abstract: people could be oppressors, the system, political parties or the government, authorities, religion or religious figures, etc.

In Forum Theatre we want to focus on very specific and concrete forms of oppression, where the oppressor is portrayed by a concrete person that has a connection/relation with the oppressed person. There are many kinds of oppression around us but the reasons for focusing on the closest to our realities and our life oppression is because the change will start from here. Yes, the system could be oppressing but who represents the system? Who practices oppression? It is always a real person if you narrow it down, and this method wants to focus on this part of oppression. Same thing applies to the oppressed – it has to be a real person and not an animal or element of nature.

Somebody who has power is abusing it and exercises pressures of different kinds against another person. That person will not only feel powerless but also mentally or physically abused. Balancing the power distribution in this context will help reduce the oppression. Even if the oppressor is an “evil” person and with bad intentions, if people around him (the oppressed, his/her allies or other neutral characters) get stronger and more powerful, the oppressor's power will be reduced, the power distribution will be more balanced and his bad intention cannot come true or not have much impact on a more powerful structure of people.

When looking around (in societies close to us or far away) in order to identify oppression one main question arises that is important to reflect on: what is the reference point we use when we decide that somebody is oppressed or not?

Often, while conducting FT workshops in Europe, there were people that gave as an example of oppression: “Muslim women in Arabic countries who are oppressed to wear veils”. Who decides if somebody is oppressed? How do we know for sure those women feel powerless and abused? Based on what information do we decide some people are victims or not? It is very important to reflect on this and to be careful when we point fingers and decide to intervene in somebody else's community and life.

In our work we focus on the oppression around us, from our life or communities, on which who except us is to say we are oppressed or not.

## Structure of the unit

1. Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes
2. The apple in the tree- 10 minutes
3. Stop and Action- 10 minutes
4. Circle of statues- 30 minutes (followed by a small energizer and/or break)
5. Power and more power (statues)- 40 minutes
6. What is oppression – discussion -20 minutes (followed by a small energizer)
7. Power and oppression (statues) – 30 minutes
8. Introduction of homework – 10 minutes
9. Final circle (evaluation, final announcements) -15 minutes

## 2- THE APPLE IN THE TREE- 10 MINUTES

**Aims** – to physically stretch the participants, to work on their imagination and capacity of projecting themselves into another reality, to encourage them to zoom in on things and not to rush; to warm up the group for the day; (note: depending on the country in which you do this exercise you might choose another fruit more adequate for that specific place/country)

**Description-** Participants are asked to walk around the space in silence.

The facilitator introduces the group to another setting and asks them to follow the guidance (and at some point they will hear a clap- when they hear the clap they have to stop-freeze): Imagine you are now walking in a green field, there is fresh air and a blue sky, and you see a forest and you go closer to it, it looks so big with huge trees, as you come closer you realize it is in fact an orchard with all kinds of fruit trees; all your favorite fruits are here and they smell so good, you are enjoying their smell, their colour and you walk around more to see what other wonders are in this orchard; at some point you observe a huge 100 year old apple tree and it is full of fruits; the branches are almost breaking from the amount of fruits on them; they are all so big, and very ripe; immediately you feel attracted to the tree and you get closer but first you take your time and observe it, how many fruits you see in it, what colours, what flavours they send around; at one point you look up (at this stage the facilitator claps and the participants freeze).

While they are statues the facilitator explains that in order to get to that apple they will go step by step and each step will be directed by a clap; they are instructed to take a moment and look at that apple (the time frozen as well), they have appetite for it but now they are stuck in observation, they can't wait to just grab it ...at the next step they can stretch their arm and do their best to hold the apple, to stretch really hard and to almost grab the apple and freeze in that position.

Now once again they receive instructions, they are so close, very soon they will have the chance to take their first bite from the apple, they feel its texture – it is just the way they like it; next, they will hear another clap and they can grab the apple and take it down (not yet eating from it) and freeze; now the apple is in their hands, in front of them, is it the way they have imagined? Look at the whole fruit, smell it, analyse its texture, get ready to take the first bite- at the next clap they can finally bite from their chosen fruit, enjoy it and hopefully it is as they want it and now

they are ready to come back to the working room.

**Optional-** you can do a repetition of the exercise – explain to the group that we will go again in the forest and now they can do their own imaginary movie but when they hear the first clap they have to look up and freeze, and then the next claps for the next moves: stretch the arm, grab the fruit, eat the fruit; and you can do it faster and faster.

### 3- STOP AND ACTION – 10 MINUTES

**Aims-** to help the group focus, connect and be aware of each other and of the whole group, to stimulate the creativity and imagination, to warm-up and energize the group;

**Description** – The group is instructed to walk around, just to relax and observe a little bit the space then when the facilitator stops everybody has to stop and they receive at this stage the next instructions: everybody has stopped and now anybody from the group can start doing some sort of action (that requires that they move from the stop position- it can be anything that involves legs, hands, sounds as well- for example some sort of dancing, or jumping, clapping etc.)- when one person starts an action everybody else has to copy and do the same – at any time any person can decide to stop- when one person stops- all the others stop one by one until everybody is in the stopping position- at this stage once again anybody can start with an action.

There is no talking in terms of people announcing the group they stopped or they are doing an action- the group just needs to observe each other. Everybody stops then somebody can start an action, at which stage everybody copies (at this stage nobody else can start doing a new action)- if only one person stops – whenever somebody observes the person stopped they also have to stop. Only when everybody stopped – one person can start - not before. Stop and Action!

**Option for advanced level-** the group just walks and stops – no action required BUT they have to do it when the whole group is ready either to stop – either to walk – not one person to impose the speed and flow of the exercise. It is quite difficult, as they cannot talk and it is not easy to accommodate each person's needs (especially if you have a big group) but you can give the challenge to a group that has already worked together and take it from there.

### 4- CIRCLE OF STATUES – 30 MINUTES

**Aims-** to stimulate the group members to use their bodies to express various concepts; to expand the view and understanding of the participants towards different concepts; to define stereotypes and prejudices;

**Description** – The group is instructed that in this activity they will have to use their bodies to express certain concepts. They have a very short time to think about them so they should go ahead with the first idea that they associate with the word mentioned. Some of these concepts are more concrete, others more abstract.

They stay with their backs to the circle- the word is mentioned and the facilitator counts to 5 – at 5 everybody has to turn to the circle having the body posture (as statue) representing the

word given by the facilitator. This activity can be a simple warm-up in terms of exercises using body (therefore the words used should be rather simple and impersonal like: worker, mother, volunteer, change, power, student, etc.). It can also be a stronger activity which will trigger a deeper discussion about stereotypes and prejudices (using words which can include different religious groups, nationalities, genders, sexual orientation, etc.).

Therefore it is in the hands of the facilitator to decide which approach to use based on the group profile and process so far as well as their learning needs.

The process should go like this- after each round the participants stay as statues and at the same time they have a look around and try to have a glimpse of how the others expressed the same concept. Additional questions could be addressed when they are not clear enough, or they are very abstract, also the people in the group can ask the ones that are the most triggering what they meant with their image.

All the comments and impressions related to their observations will be taken further in the debriefing part (so only after all the rounds of words have taken place). It's advisable to use around 10 words, more or less. It's good to have in a round of words concrete and abstract and among the abstract ones to include: change, power, powerless, abuse, etc.

## **Debriefing/Processing the activity (Suggestions of questions)**

### **The simple version of the exercise**

- How easy was it for you to find the image you want to show?
- What word was most challenging for you?
- Which trigger words had the biggest amount of similarities (in the group's images) and which didn't? Why is that so?
- If you had more time would you have a different image? Give examples.
- What impressions do you have from the activity?
- How can this exercise help us in our FT work?

### **The stronger and more complex version**

- How did you feel during the exercise?

- What made you feel that way?

(If you decide to choose words representing people in the group (their religion, ethnic group, etc.) be ready for a more emotional reaction from the exercise and you can allocate more time for it in terms of people expressing how they feel and talking about it)

- Which trigger words had the biggest amount of similarities (in the group's images) and which didn't? Why is that so?
- How did you decide what image to show? Based on what? If you had more time would you show something different? Give examples.

- How much do you think this exercise reflects reality around you and people's perceptions or views? Give examples.

(Up to this stage people will be using words as stereotypes and prejudices in different ways- each person with their own understanding – even if not, you can continue as following)

- What do you think is the difference between stereotypes and prejudices? Give examples. Can you make a connection with the activity we did?

(After a few people share their views it is important to intervene and clarify the concepts- either by agreeing with the people that talked accurately about it or by telling them the definition we use so we can have the same understanding in talking about these concepts.

In short: stereotypes are based on a brain function to manage reality by making categories of the information received from many channels – they are not good or bad in themselves -they are natural processes and they make it easier for the brain to process reality. (They can be modified if a person diversifies the types of experience and information they get on a specific issue).

Prejudices include a value (positive or negative) and it's the next level from stereotypes. While stereotypes are a picture, an image, prejudices are the value allocated to it and the belief in it- which is often associated with the people belonging to that category even before an actual experience happened. (A person can voluntarily work on their prejudices by mental efforts if they wish to by constantly questioning their beliefs and opinions about other people or experiences)

- Could you give some examples from this perspective?
- Why is it important to talk about these concepts and how do they influence (if they do ) our work in Forum Theatre? How can it influence us as actors/team and the public perspective on what we present to them?
- What do we need to remind ourselves constantly about these things in order to have better control?
- Any other impression you have from the activity that you want to share with the group?

**Energizer** (something short- to change the rhythm and atmosphere a little bit before going into another serious discussion)

## 5 - POWER AND MORE POWER - 40 MINUTES

**Aims-** to stimulate the group to explore the complexity of the concept of power and what it means to have power; to expand participants' understanding of power and its dimensions; to raise analysis, observation and critical thinking skills; to increase psychical endurance for staying in statues.

**Description-** The participants are introduced to the framework of this activity. It is explained to them that we will explore the concept of Power – a key concept in Forum Theatre.





Power being an abstract concept, people tend to have various understandings of it and this is what this specific session will focus on. At the same time the sessions will follow-up on previous sessions and continue to work with body expression.

For the beginning there are 3 objects in front of the group (on the floor) - for example a table, a marker, and mug. The group is invited to look at the 3 objects and to arrange them in such a way that according to them the marker has the biggest power. They can come one by one and make modifications in the configuration of the objects. After a person makes a configuration the group is invited to reflect and to express their opinion – if the marker has the biggest power in the image or not and why.

There is no aim in having a mutual agreement but only for the group to express their views and to stimulate the general group critical thinking. (This feature will be for the whole process in this activity). This part of the session is just for the warm-up of the process- after a couple of people make some changes and the group shares their opinions on it you can go to the next level. At this stage you can invite one volunteer to come on the stage and show power. The volunteer has to remain in statue while the group is going to share their view – if it has power and how they decided that /or if it doesn't have and why as well. Another volunteer is invited to join the person already sitting in statue- the second person has to attach themselves to the statue (also as a statue) in such a way that it will express more power. The group is invited to tell their opinion – who has more power or not and why. A third volunteer also is invited...and so on.

● There are several approaches you can have now (depending on your time as well).

- ✓ You can always work with 3 people on the stage – so after the third one comes you can send the first back to the group – or the first 2 and ask again the group – you can make a couple of rounds like that in order to stimulate the group to come up with different types of power.
- ✓ After a few rounds of “people” power you can keep all the statues on the stage and all the time invite the group to volunteer to show MORE POWER – and the remaining to comment on it – and to do so until the last person attaches himself/herself to the group. – this approach is indeed the best in terms of exploring as many options as possible of types of power and what it means to have more power.

### **Debriefing/Processing the activity- Suggestions of questions**

- What types of power did you observe in the activity?
- What are your impressions of what it means to have more power based on what you observed in the activity?
- What does it mean for you personally to have more power? How is this reflected in reality? Give examples.
- Having power is something bad or good? Based on what?



## 6-WHAT IS OPPRESSION – DISCUSSION -20 MINUTES

(This discussion can emerge naturally from the debriefing of the previous activity but it is mentioned as a separate activity in order for the facilitator to be aware of it and to make a clear switch in the discussion)

**Aim** – to clarify the concept of oppression for the participants, to explore the types of oppression that exist, to clarify the type of oppressions that we focus on in Forum Theatre;

**Description-** It has the format of a facilitated discussion in which at first the participants are invited to share their perspective and understanding, then the concept is clarified in the context of Forum Theatre.

The following questions are suggestions for how the discussion could be structured.

● What is your understanding of the concept of oppression? How do you use it if you use it?

● What is the connection between power and oppression?

(Whether it is mentioned by the group at this stage or not, the facilitator has to clarify for the whole group the understanding of the concept in the context of Forum Theatre as abuse of power- see again the explanations from the beginning of this chapter)

● Based on this way of defining – which will be the reference point in our work with Forum Theatre - could you give examples of oppression?

(people mention here aspects that are not so much of an oppression – you can intervene and ask those people to break down that example and to mention exactly who or what abuses power against whom?- the idea of this kind of intervention is more to actually stimulate the group to think things through and not to rush to put the label of “oppression” on anything.

(At this stage there will probably be mentioned abstract and concrete types of oppression)

There are many ways of abusing power /oppressions and we can identify them in many life dimensions in our society – (...and you can mention again some of their examples) – Forum Theatre is a method which focuses on very concrete and real types of oppression, where we have a relation of some sort between the oppressed and oppressor.

Of course, more abstract examples related to media, system, etc- mention their examples) oppress in certain extended the people and the society BUT with this method we will focus on the types of oppression that are very close to our realities (at home, at work, at school, in our neighbourhoods, at the hospital, etc.) to start the motor of change from here and of course in time this change process will influence how the system works or the media (or any other examples they mentioned as more abstract)

● Please give more examples of these types of oppression and mention clearly the relation between the oppressed and oppressor and how power is abused.

For the end you can repeat the main aspects of this discussion – defining the oppression, what types of oppression are explored in Forum Theatre and the group is informed that all these aspects will be followed up in the next steps in the process.

**Energizer** – something short to change the energy in the group and to make a transition to the next part of the session

## 7- POWER AND OPPRESSION (STATUES) – 30 MINUTES

**Aims-** to understand the difference between having power and oppressing; to interiorize a deeper understanding of the power and oppression concepts; to understand the importance of these concepts in the context of Forum Theatre work; to develop critical thinking;

**Description** – The group is instructed that in this activity they will follow up on the previous discussions on power and oppression to understand more deeply the link between them. Also in this session they will work with statues. Two volunteers are invited from the group in order to exemplify how the activity works. The volunteers are invited to take a position towards each other (they will have to remain as a statue) in which they have more power than the other person. So both of them remain frozen in a position in which they consider they have more power than the other person.

At this stage the group will be invited to look at the 2 statues

- What do you think is the relation between the 2?
- Where are they?
- Who has more power? (you can ask people to vote to have some statistics)-Why?
- Is the person (that the group mentioned has more power) oppressing the other person? If yes – why; if not - why? Connect their answers with the definition of oppression clarified before.

Ask the group to replace the person that has more power and to show oppression (and stop there as statue)- continue the discussion with the group

- Who has more power? Is there also oppression or not?
- How is the power distributed in this specific situation?
- Why does this happen in that specific situation?  
Does this also happen in your communities?

■ You can also ask the group to replace the person with less power and to show that he/she is oppressed and then discuss with the group.

Depending on your time you can also start all over from the beginning – with some new volunteers that will show more people than the others (that they are not oppressing – their aim is to show more power).

### Debriefing/Processing the activity

● How clear is the difference between having power and oppressing for you? Can you give some more examples?



## 8 - INTRODUCTION OF HOMEWORK – 10 MINUTES

**Aims-** to develop the interest of the participants in exploring and analysing social issues and problems in their communities; to develop their critical eyes in terms of spotting cases of oppression around them;

**Description-** It is explained to the participants that they are invited to take the further all the discussion and new learning from this session back to their lives and home. They will have homework until the next session. The task given is to observe the reality around them (at home, at work, at school, in the neighbourhood, etc.) and to take notes of their observations (it is recommended written or mentally) as they will be used in the next session on:

● How is power distributed around them? in various relations around them (including their own relations)- family, working, colleagues, neighbours, etc. and based on what they make those observations;

● What kinds of oppression exist around you? In which context and type of relations and how do you know that it is oppression? (it can as well be oppression in which they themselves are involved as oppressors or oppressed)

● Select the strongest and most important examples of oppression that you observed in your community and analyse how the power is distributed between the oppressor, oppressed and other people around that specific situation.

(Ideally around one week should be allocated for the group to work on their homework; if they have access to internet and they check it regularly you can also send them reminders and motivation during this time.)

## 5- POWER + OPPRESSION EXERCISES AND OPPRESSION IN OUR COMMUNITY

This unit aims to further the observations that the people have made from their community, and to zoom in on examples of oppression and also into the structure of oppression in forum theatre. The exercises presented here aim to develop the capacity of the group to work easily with various examples of oppression, to have a deepening understanding of how oppression is approached in Forum Theatre Methodology.








This unit also aims to have as an outcome the topic for the performance but these activities could be used without this purpose as well- for practice and deepening the understanding and to have at a later stage time allocated for choosing the story. Depending on the flow of the sessions and the amount of input coming from the group it can happen that the decision for what topic to follow is taken in the next session.

There will be very often situations in your work as FT facilitator when you are requested or invited by third parties to work on a certain topic/subject – which in that sense will be imposed to the group. In that case you can adjust some of the activities from this session in order to be focused on that specific theme you have to work with. Definitely when the topic is given (maybe also the target group) less time will be needed for discussion and decision – but the side effect will be that the group could feel less connected /motivated to work with a theme that is given.



Depending on how personal the stories of the group will be you can allow more time for sharing and for creating a safer space in this sense for the participants to share among themselves.

### Structure of the unit

-  Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes
-  Talk and Listen– 15 minute
-  Group shower – 15 minutes
-  Balance Statues – 20 minutes
-  Homework analysis - 50 minutes
-  Images of oppression – 60minutes
-  Final circle (evaluation, announcements) -15 minutes

## 2-TALK AND LISTEN– 15 MINUTES







**Aims-** to increase the active listening competencies of the group; to make the group aware of the conditions needed for an effective communication; to make the participants take responsibility in terms of constructive communication in the group.

**Description-** The group is instructed to take a moment for themselves and to think about something they would like to talk about, something that they would like to share with the others (it can be some story of what happened to them on the way here, a book they have read, etc.) – anything they want.

After they think about it the group is divided into pairs (or according to the case one trio as well). Their task is to share their story or what they wanted to talk about to the other person- they will have to do that at the same time.

They also have to remember as much as possible from what the other person is saying. They do that for about 2-3 minutes. Make sure everybody respects the rule of talking at the same time. Then the exercise can be stopped and we proceed to the debriefing.

### Debriefing/Processing the activity – Suggested questions

-  How was it for you to talk and to listen at the same time?
-  What was the most frustrating aspect of it?
-  How much did you manage to remember from the story of the other person?
-  Can you make associations between what happened in this exercise and reality? Can you give some examples?
-  How can the communication in our group be improved?
-  What other impressions do you have from the activity that you would like to share with the group?

### 3 - GROUP SHOWER – 20 MINUTES

**Aim-** to increase the level of trust between group members, to strengthen the connection between the participants, to contribute to a safer environment for sharing between participants

**Description –** The group receives explanations related to the context of this activity and why it is being implemented. Then they are asked to stay in 2 lines facing each other, close to each other to leave enough space for one person to pass in between the 2 lines.

It would be good to have some calm music in the background; one by one the participants will walk between these lines of people (that look kind of like a tunnel) with their eyes closed. They have to walk slowly, slowly between the lines. The people on both sides will have to give the person walking a kind of “warm” shower – by touching gently, massaging their arms, back, legs, removing the bad energy, etc.

The aim of the group is to clean the person of stress, bad energy and tension and however they interpret this they can put it in practice BUT they have to be responsible acting towards each other and be kind. The person will walk through this shower (like a car at the car wash) and at the end they will join one of the lines and contribute to the shower of the others.

The facilitator can send people in the tunnel after the previous person has already made some steps forward. It is important for the walking person not to open her/his eyes and to take in the experience as it comes.

As an optional activity - If somebody doesn't want/like to be touched by other persons they are free not to take the “shower” but to contribute to the cleaning process of the others.

Optionally, at the end, you can ask the participants how they feel now.

### 4 - BALANCE STATUES - 20 MINUTES

**Aims-** to make the participants reflect on what balance means in general and its connection with the power distribution; to develop analytical skills for the participants to identify ways of balancing certain aspects/situation; to prepare the group for intensive and deep discussions by activating their group awareness and attention to the group needs;

**Description –**Participants are instructed that they will explore and work with balance and what balance means for them. For the beginning they are in pairs and then the number grows to trios, groups of 6 and so on – and then with the whole group.

The exercise focuses on body postures and personal reflection = no talking among the team is allowed during the exercises. The pairs have to place themselves in various positions (for a couple of minutes) in which they find the balancing point (it could be leaning on their back and holding hands, it could be back to back, etc.)- the pairs are encouraged to work on different positions and postures and all the time to identify the point where they are in balance (as much as possible perfect balance). After a couple of minutes the pairs become trios (could be randomly divided again in the group so they are encouraged to work with as many people as possible).



When they are 3 – one person starts by taking a specific posture and then the second one will analyse it and try to identify in which way to be attached in order to balance the posture the initial person made. The same things are done afterwards by the third person.

Then another member starts this time and they continue the exercise. They are encouraged to try as many options as possible. They can also work out some of the positions in 2 persons (that they experimented in the previous leg of the activity) and then the third person has to analyse and see exactly where and how they can balance the image. They are allocated a couple of minutes before the group will grow again.

The same procedure will apply - starting with 1 and then the next person observes and tries to balance and so on. All the time a new person starts up by making a posture. It is important to mention to the group that they don't need to rush into the exercise, but rather to observe as completely as possible the posture in front of their eyes and to be sure why they chose a specific posture to balance it.

Also another important mention to be made is that in fact every time a new person decides to attach themselves to the picture, they should look at the picture overall and focus not just on the first person in the picture but on all the persons, how balanced they are or not and if they need any support. It would be useful to do the exercise with the whole group.

The algorithm for increasing the number of people per group will depend on the total number of people in your group (for example: if you have 6-7 people you can have 3 groups, 2 and then 1 group – for a bigger group it will be of course a little bit different – maybe you start with 10 groups, then 8 then 5, then 2, then 1) – just make sure you have a smooth growth and that the groups will mix often – all the time new people in the group.

### **Debriefing/Processing of the activity**

Being a silent activity most probably all the participants gather many impressions and personal experience in it which has to be discussed with the whole group. The aim of this discussion is to help the participants understand what balance means, the connection with power and the relevance in Forum Theatre and also for their group process. Suggested questions that could be used:

- ☐ How did you feel during the activity?
- ☐ What was easy in this exercise for you?
- ☐ What was a more challenging aspect for you?
- ☐ How difficult was it to find the balancing aspects when the group was bigger?
- ☐ How can you connect this exercise with the power relations/distribution?
- ☐ How can we find balance in our work as a team?
- ☐ What are your main learning points that could be used further in our work as a team?

## 5-HOMEWORK ANALYSIS - 50 MINUTES

**Aims-** to explore the materials that the participants collected from observing the reality around them, to deepen the understanding on oppression and its link with power, to put the foundation for the next step in choosing a subject for the Forum Theatre performance.

**Description –** The group is asked about their homework with warming-up questions

- How many of you actually did your homework?
- How much time did you spend on it in a day?
- Which dimension of life were you able to explore and observe more? How much did your observations include you as part of the relations you observed?
- If you collected all the observations you made in a book- what title would you give it?

The group is instructed that now they will have the chance to share more details about their homework and they will work in the initial phase in small groups and then they will follow up with the others.

The groups is gently warned to share as much as they feel comfortable to share and if there are personal stories they can choose to tell them or not.

The facilitator should try to focus the group more on being responsible for the kind of trusting atmosphere that is in the group and to balance/support each other.

The group is divided in groups of 2-3 people, in these groups they will have to share the following

- Main examples of power-imbalanced relations that they observed around them;
- The most important (for them personally) examples of oppression they identified (also to mention if according to them they are also more common types of oppression or more isolated cases- to give a mark from 1 to 10 – 1 is very isolated case – 10 is very common type of oppression)
- They can share among themselves as many details as they want- they are encouraged to ask each other question and also to challenge each other in terms of defining certain situations as oppression or power imbalance.

Each group will have to take notes on the examples (without the details) in order to be used further. Approximately 20 minutes could be allocated to this part of the activity. After this the small groups will gather together and they will share the examples.

In real time the facilitator will write on a big piece of paper (flipchart) in 3 columns their answers (examples of power imbalance, examples of oppression, and another for the number from 1 to 10 for the situation of oppression). –

There can be a 4<sup>th</sup> column which will be used later in the discussion. The other groups are invited to comment on the examples provided or to ask more questions if needed in order to fully understand what was meant.

After all the groups point out all their examples a few questions could be addressed to the group

● What are your main impressions while looking at these examples? How do you feel when you look at them?

● Are there other examples of concrete oppression that maybe you didn't observe in your community but exist in our society? (if the group mentions new types of oppression add them on the list from the second column)

● In which context do you observe more examples of oppression (family, school, work, etc.)?

● Who are the oppressed most often? What about the oppressors?

● Which examples of power imbalance also lead to oppression from what you observed and from the examples you mentioned?

● Which types of oppression affect the biggest number of people in our society?

The group is informed that starting from this reality “diagnosis” that they delivered it is now time to narrow down and to focus on the areas of oppression which they consider as being the most important to tackle.

It is explained to the group that Forum Theatre methods should be used in order to address important situation of oppression in order to make a social change by empowering people affected directly or indirectly by oppression.

There are many problems in a society but we need to focus on those that affect the bigger number of people, that are urgent and with damaging consequences in the society (in the short and long term). The participants are invited to reflect individually and to analyse the examples of oppression mentioned and to mark the 3 most important examples of oppression (based on the criteria already mentioned) that should be addressed by Forum Theatre in this group.

They will come to the flipchart and put a dot/or an X/a mark in the 4<sup>th</sup> column on the line that corresponds with the oppression that they choose.

## 6- IMAGES OF OPPRESSION – 60MINUTES

**Aims-** to narrow down the potential situations that could be included in the Forum Theatre performance, to help the group to identify the key actors in a situation of oppression, to understand more deeply the most important type of oppression.

**Description-** Based on the “voting” the group is informed what the 3 top examples of oppression are, and they are invited to comment on this.

If there are people who consider that none of them should be in this top 3 and that other topics are rather more relevant they should express these ideas. This voting was done to see the perspective of the group but they didn't have the chance to express the reasons behind their voting and they can do that at this stage.

So the group is encouraged to share their views – especially if they don't agree that the initial 3 (resulted from the vote) are the most important. In this part of the discussion the facilitator needs to be very careful in his approach, as everybody in the group should feel free to talk at any time, nobody should impose his/hers opinion and based on the arguments they present the decision will be taken as a group (by consensus).

It is good to remind the group about the fact that in this stage we want to have the top 3 oppressions in our society and from these ones to choose later the one to work on but – only after we understand these 3 better.

Once a top 3 will be agreed on by everybody divide the group in 3 for each theme (if you can)- if you have a small group then you have to work on the themes one by one (with the same group), or 2 groups and then the last one with the whole group. They can choose the topic they want to work with in this exercise.

The facilitator explains to the group the structure of roles that we use in Forum Theatre (oppressor, oppressed, ally on each side, neutral persons) which of course are based on how the problem is reflected in reality. They go to their group and discuss the kind of oppression chosen. Now they can share more examples from the same category.

Their task is to make an image of one concrete example of the oppression where they have to portray all the characters/actors relevant for the situation – oppressed, oppressor, allies, neutral. They show this image to the others.

It is very important to stress the fact that all the sharing that is happening in the group has to come from reality and that the example they show in the image has to be a real example and not created/invented by them. For this part around 20 minutes are allocated.

One by one they are shown to the others (in the case of smaller groups where there is no public – they show and then discuss it). The public is invited to identify the roles, the context, and to make the connection with reality (if indeed cases like that are happening or not).

The facilitator has to guide this discussion with the public.

(These images were used in this session to better understand different types of oppression through very concrete examples and how different relevant actors are engaged in it- at later stage in the process of developing Forum Theatre the image of the chosen theme could be again used for the group work).



After all the images were shown a few questions could be addressed to the group:

- ☐ Which type of oppression was the clearest from your perspective?
- ☐ In which one was the imbalance of power the biggest?
- ☐ What other comments do you have after you have seen the images?

At the end of this part of the session the facilitator mentions that what happened today is very important in the forum theatre process as it places the fundamentals for whichever social direction the team will continue to work in.

Observations and sharing of the reality the way they experience it, from the angle of kinds of oppression that exist, are in fact the routes for making a decision on what topic to work with. Now they probably have many reflections in terms of how the oppression could be approached through this method and we had 3 concrete examples and they have to decide on only one oppression to focus on.

The main criteria they should have in mind are related to the needs of the community:

- The urgency and importance in the society- based as well on how common it is;
- What kind of beneficiaries should be the target group? (who needs to be changed/ influenced in relation with that theme) – Ideally it should be people that are in fact oppressed (suffering from the problem) but it could also be people who are in a neutral position or in that of an ally.

NOTE- there will be many groups that believe the ones who should change are the oppressors (because they are the ones that are abusing the power and so on) but in Forum Theatre we focus on empowerment (the oppressors are very powerful already- so we need to target the people involved in various situations that don't have enough power to deal with these situations they are involved in).

The group is invited to reflect on these criteria and to think which one of the 3 types of oppression should be the priority for this FT group.

Depending on the time left from the session, this “reflection exercise” could be their homework (even to research a little bit more on these topics, find more relevant examples back home) and to come next week with their suggestions in this sense or it can be discussed now (until the end of the session).

Every group member should express their point of view and there should be consensus based on the arguments presented.

## 6- TRANSFERRING THE SOCIAL PROBLEM TO THE FORUM THEATRE PLAY FORMAT

This session focuses on finalizing the process of selecting the type of oppression that the group wants to work with, sharing more examples from reality and how a complex story of oppression could be transferred to a structure of Forum Theatre.

Because of aspects related to Forum Theatre Methodology some important points need to be mentioned at this stage for the facilitator to understand more deeply why certain parts need to be done in a certain way. Find below some of the most important guidelines for the construction of a Forum Theatre performance.

The story transferred to Forum Theatre has to be real; this is the fundamental reason why sharing concrete examples is compulsory. The team members have to share stories that they know personally, that happened to persons close to them, or maybe based on their experience working closely with such topics. If no such situation is possible then the team members have to get in touch with people that are being affected by the problem you are working with- find them, talk to them, find their stories, find similarities, research it etc. Of course some elements might get lost during transfer, some might get adjusted and adapted to the FT format BUT the true story that it is based on is reflected fully in its sense and meaning.

**It is not allowed** under any circumstances to invent or to make assumptions that certain situations are probably be like that or like that. We stress these aspects very much because very often the group member can fall into this trap – mostly fed by rumours, media and gossip on certain topics.

We cannot imagine an oppression happens – we need to know how it happens for real. The role of the facilitator is crucial- to constantly remind the group about the reality check and that we will not advance in the process if we don't work with reality. If the group is stuck don't take the easy way out by accepting faking reality – allow more time for research and for getting in touch with the reality of the problem you want to work with.

■ One Forum Theatre performance shouldn't take more than 15 minutes – 10-12 minutes is preferable and it is usually made out of 3-4 scenes which could be placed in different time moments of the story. For example the first scene can show a situation at home - the second scene could show what happened after 1 week at school and so on and so forth.

One performance can show the complexity and the process of oppression happening over one year or even faster – depending on the concrete example chosen. The Joker can announce to the public how much time has passed from one scene to the other. In Forum Theatre (by the approach introduced in this manual) a scene is defined as a moment, a situation from the story that takes place in a specific time and place – if the place or time change it is considered another scene.

For example: a scene takes place in the house – the daughter comes from school- meets the mother that comes from another room and they have a discussion – later on they all go to their rooms (scene ends); after a couple of hours the whole family gather for dinner (this is another scene- the time changes even if the space is same).



■ Concentrating a complex process to be shown in a short period of time requires the team to be focused on the most important elements of the story and the necessary ones to be revealed (in order for the public to understand it fully).

It is important to choose exactly those elements that are part of the core of the story and not to allow unnecessary elements and dilemmas (which take time, are just fun or sometimes boring and don't give any opportunity for the public to make any change (for example: long time allocated to characters doing nothing or talking by themselves on the stage (without significant meaning, long small talks between the characters that are not providing any relevant information to the public, discussions providing unnecessary or even confusing details, etc). Several details can be mentioned through different discussions in order to fill the gaps of the story (for example talking about somebody's father already introduces his presence in the story, talking with somebody on the phone and communicating important details introduces that person as well, sharing between characters about aspects that happened in between the scenes (but that were not shown on the stage, etc.)

■ Oppression in the society could reach the level where the oppressed person can be at the end of their power, not having the capacity to fight for her/himself and showing total submission in front of the oppressor.- reaching this stage could be a sign of being too late for the oppressed to change something for her/his life (this person probably gave-up long time ago). Or, in some extreme (but common as well) cases the oppressor kills the oppressed or the oppressed commits suicide (these are examples of the consequences of the decision made by the oppressed at the time when they still had some power to make a decision for themselves)

■ This is why when we construct a Forum Theatre play it is good to choose stories in which it is not yet too late- the performance ends immediately after the oppressed made a wrong decision (by being so powerless and abused by the oppressor) and the potential very bad ending is anticipated- based on the decision made (as the consequences could be understood). We do not show the negative impact of the wrong decision made by the oppressed (running away from home, stopping looking for a job, giving up school, stealing something, etc.) we make the public understand what those are but to remain with an urge to do something and prevent from happening. If they happen and we show them it can make the public feel sorry but at the same time feel it is too late!

**In the graphic below** – which is a reference tool to be used by any facilitator, to be introduced to the participants and used as guidelines for construction- we have 2 dimensions – one is the time (which refers to the duration of the performance and not the duration of the oppression) and the other one shows the tension on stage, given by the intensity of the oppression.

The structure of the scene is explained using the graphic like this:

**Scene 1**- at the beginning of the play- has a lower tension and is also named an **INTRODUCTORY** scene (the public should understand a little of what the story is about out of this scene - some of the characters, their relations, context and the beginning of a potential problem that might exist between some of the characters). This scene should contain enough

space for the public to come and make changes and not to be empty in this sense.

**Scene 2-3** known as “**RIISING ACTION**” – the tension is growing, the public gets to know the situation better, the characters, the relation between them, we see how the oppression is growing in intensity (especially in the direct interaction between oppressed and oppressor).

**Scene 4 – CRISIS** – this is the last scene in which we (the public) participate in the highest peak of the oppression and tension, we see the biggest power imbalances, we see an oppressed who has used the last drop of their power and we see how this makes the oppressed take a wrong decision for her/his future.

Immediately after the decision is made, (and this decision needs to be clearly stated so the public fully understands it) the performance stops. We stop it when it is still high in terms of tension because we want to keep the public with the urge to do something and stopping the play at this moment increases the chances that the public will have a stronger wish to do something for the oppressed and to prevent him/her from reaching that crisis point again.

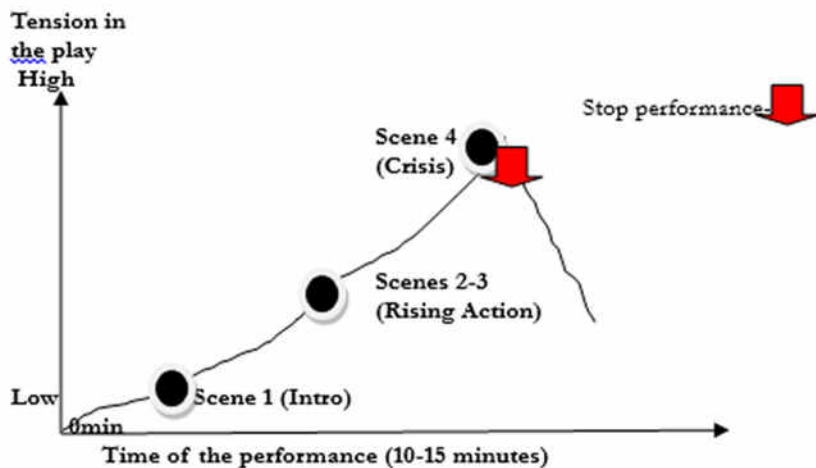
Why does the decision need to be clearly stated by the oppressed?

If the oppressor is very dominating (maybe shouting, threatening, cursing, forcing, aggressing, etc.) and the oppressed doesn't reply verbally it can lead to a variety of interpretations from the public.

- ☐ The oppressed maybe replies or could make a good decision (we don't know what they think)
- ☐ The oppressed will make the bad/wrong decision
- ☐ The oppressed could be very strong in relation with the oppressor
- ☐ It is too late – the oppressed gives-in (see the previous points raised),
- ☐ Etc.

This interpretation process could happen in the public's mind as the position of the oppressed (after the highest point of the oppression) is not clear to them and it could make it more difficult to motivate them later to come on the stage and make changes (some of the public members might think it is not needed).

## Forum Theatre Play – time line and tension on the stage



### Other useful aspects or details that might help in the construction of a Forum theatre Performance

● All the props used on the stage need to be real objects and not imaginary ones (they will contribute to the sense of reality that the public will get out of our performance) - plates, mugs, glasses, mobile phones, papers, books, pens – anything that is needed for certain actions has to be a real object.

● Forum Theatre is played in very unconventional spaces within communities and it is useful (for the training of the team as well) to develop performances that require the very minimum of furniture- most of the time a table and 2 chairs can be enough- as the emphasis in FT performances is on the discussion between characters and not on décor or the props settings- they need to be as simple as possible.

● The simplicity of the props and décor is also required in order for the stage not to need many modifications from scene to scene. Ideally, no makeover should be needed in between scenes or a minimal one that could be done by the actors in the previous scene – connecting it with their own actions (for example: mother talks with the family and at the same time is cleaning and rearranging the chairs; at the end of the class, the teacher asks the students to put away the chairs and more examples could be identified).

Of course sometimes we have scenes that require (for higher realism) modifications that could be done in between the scenes – preferably not by the actors (but the Joker and other volunteers). Actors should remain in the perception of the public only as the people involved in the story they are showing, as close to reality as possible and having them assume non-role duties could affect the perception of the public by reminding them of the fact that they are (just) playing a role.

● The stage needs to be empty between the scenes- to make a stronger transition and pass to the next moment and location (if it's the case) in the story. Because of that it is important for the actors to come on the stage with a reason and to get off the stage with a reason.

What this means in fact is that they don't come on the stage as an aim (to be on the stage) but rather that they come from the break to the classroom, from outside to inside the house, to a meeting place with a friend, etc. and while they enter the stage through their acting and talking we should be able to understand where they are and why they are there. So you need to avoid actions like coming on stage, sitting on a chair and only then starting the scene. The same for finishing the scene.

The scene doesn't end on the stage and then the actors – oops- they just get off the stage suddenly- they need to have a reason to go so the action runs smoothly and as realistically as possible. For example: mother tells the family that dinner is ready and they all go to another room to eat, class ends and the students go out on their break, etc.- the actors need to provide the information-reason before they get off the stage.

● Some of the approaches in Forum Theatre make use of technology, such as different lighting for different actors or scenes, music, microphones – but we encourage the FT practitioners to keep it as simple as possible and as close to reality as possible – in reality there is no special light coming on you when you make a serious decision for your life, there is no music in the background when you go out with your boyfriend, you don't talk with people with microphones around, etc. so we should strive to show reality as it is and this contributes to a stronger feeling of realism for the public that can think at times: “this is exactly like what is happening to me”.

The use of a microphone is of course something that, if you perform in a noisy public space for a big crowd, is often needed but if your conditions allow, do not use it – work more with the voice of the actors and they will be able to project higher and higher.

The actors need to develop their constant awareness in relation to the public- what is the public getting out of our story? The public doesn't know all the details that we have discussed as a team about the topic presented, we show extracts from it but these extracts need to make sense and to give a coherent meaning all together.

Therefore the actors constantly need to pay attention to how loudly they talk, how they place themselves on the stage (not to turn their backs at any time when they talk), what information they make sure they provide on the stage, to improvise if needed: for example if they realise their colleagues are talking too low to help them talk more loudly so then the public will also hear better: “What did you say, I didn't hear you, could you please talk more loudly” (the public will think it is part of the script).

The actors need to be aware of their multiple roles on the stage – the role of the Character in the story, the Forum Theatre Team member, Public Helper (to help the public to understand as accurate as possible the action from the stage) and of course the actor's own self and ego (that at times needs to be controlled during the performance – we will talk in later chapters about this aspect)



## Structure of the unit

- Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes
- Emotions Bus– 20 minute
- Steps in Forum Theatre- 10 minutes
- Oppression and sharing real examples-decision – 60 minutes
- Run and Project– 10 minutes
- Initial draft –real story in Forum Theatre structure - 60 minutes
- Final circle (evaluation, announcements) -15 minutes

This unit is mainly discussion-based and needs careful guidance and facilitation to have a healthy consensus among the team members. If needed during the process the list (that was developed in the first unit) could be used by being reminded to the group. Is the list from the team building activities related to what will help the group to work more efficiently.

The aim of the facilitator is to make the group have the ownership of the process so he/she shouldn't impose anything – it has to be a group process. Indeed the facilitator will introduce several concepts (mentioned as well in the introduction of this unit) which are part of the methodological principles the method is based on but other than that it is in the hands of

the group to decide which topic, which story, how to build the timeline and the script etc. There is no stage director or script writer and in fact all the team members are going to provide input related to how it is more realistic to have a discussion or a specific set-up- they are all equal in this process of Forum Theatre development.

If somebody with more experience in FT or theatre is trying to dominate the discussion it could inhibit the other members from expressing their views so it is important from the facilitator's side to include everybody and to make sure at all times that everybody's opinions are taken into account.

The facilitator is the guardian for the process to happen in healthy conditions. It is very important to have an eye on the process at this stage (especially in the discussions part) as the level of frustration in the group will be the highest in this unit from this entire curriculum. This is due mainly to the fact that full participation from all the group members and the decision making process as consensus will challenge people's limits and borders and will be quite tiresome mentally.

## 2- EMOTION BUS- 20 MINUTES

**Aims-** to warm-up the group, to develop participants' capacity to express various emotions (to change emotions with ease, to express emotions as realistically as possible), to contribute to an easier capacity of getting into and coming out of a role; to stimulate imagination and creativity

**Description-** The space is set-up like a bus- there is a chair in the room for the driver, behind this chair are couples of chairs (giving the impression of a bus). It is explained to the group that they are going for a ride on a special bus.

This bus will travel around and will go anywhere the passengers want. The bus will stop for any person that wants to get on it and every interested person has to come on the road and make a sign to the bus driver to stop and ask him if he/she goes to a specific place (desired by the traveller). The special feature of this bus is that people get contaminated with emotions brought by the new travellers.

Every traveller has an emotion, mood which has to be visible in the way they act, talk, gesticulate, etc. and once he/she steps on the bus all the people that are already there will suddenly get contaminated with the emotion of the new traveller and everybody will experience that specific emotion (of course until the next traveller comes). The travellers / including the driver can get off the bus at any time and there is no minimum or maximum number of people that have to be on the bus at the same time.

They are reminded that only on the bus they have to express a specific emotion –once they get off they need to be themselves again as fast as they can. They can also go multiple times on the bus. Any potential questions are clarified and then a volunteer is invited to be the driver. The driver of course gets on the bus with a different emotion (than his/her own) and then pretends to drive around. At any time somebody wishes to get on the bus the future traveller has to go on the road and make a sign. The driver and travellers can also talk with each other, not only express various emotions non-verbally.

The exercise can go on as long as the group is enjoying it, become more creative and original and also the majority of participants try to take the role of traveller. The facilitator can encourage participants to get on the bus if he/she observes that just some people are very present.

At the end the group can be asked to share a few impressions from the exercise and how it can help them in their work in Forum Theatre.

**Alternative-** it can also be a walking bus – so there are no chairs and everybody is standing and the driver is miming the use of a steering wheel and they travel around in the space for people. This alternative can get a little bit more chaotic and it can be difficult to see the change of emotions as clearly and fast as in the other option.

### 3- STEPS IN FORUM THEATRE- 10 MINUTES

**Aim-** to provide information about the context of this session in the broader perspective in working with the Forum Theatre method, to introduce/remind the participants of the steps of developing a Forum Theatre Play, to help the group understand where they are in the process at the moment.

**Description –** The group is instructed that they will review together now the process of developing a Forum Theatre performance, what the steps are (and why) and where we are at the moment in the process (depending on what was previously discussed with the group when the Forum Theatre methods was introduced this can come as a reminder or as a first time introduction). Please refer to the steps presented in the description of the method earlier in the manual. The presentation should be interactive, should connect the participants with the place in the context of development, to understand why they did what they did so far and what is ahead of them. Clarify any potential questions.

### 4- OPPRESSION AND SHARING REAL EXAMPLES- DECISION – 60 MINUTES

**Aims-** to have a decision in the group on the type of oppression they will work with, to share real life examples of this kind of oppression, to choose one example to be transferred into the play.

**Description-** If the participants had the reflection homework (given at the end of the last session) this will be discussed now in order to decide which area of oppression we want to focus on. The group members will bring different arguments and positions and the facilitator needs to take notes and focus the discussion at all times and to remind them what they have discussed or achieved so far.

This first part of the discussion aims to focus on type of oppression to work with (and to also think what target group they want to have for activating a change).

Once the group (with an assumed consensus) decide on what oppression to focus on the next step is to share concrete real life stories that reflect that oppression. At this stage participants are encouraged to share stories they know personally and to give details about who was oppressed, oppressor, allies, neutral and what happened in the story if the story has any end so far.



The facilitator has to take notes and at the beginning everybody is invited to share a story – no comments or evaluation of the story are allowed – just questions to understand better. The group needs to share real stories, not invented, and they can be reminded of this. This can also be checked with questions for the people sharing a specific story.

NOTE- it is important to remind the group to share only what they are comfortable sharing with the others and not to push themselves more than what they can handle in terms of emotional reactions (especially if these stories are very close to their reality and life).

Once all the stories are collected they are reviewed and analysed by the group. The facilitator will make the summary – the others can be involved as well in making the summary and then the group is invited to think and reflect on the stories shared.

- From which story do we have more details and accurate information?
- Which story is more common?
- Which story could more people from our target group identify with?
- Which story reflects more accurately and easily the type of oppression that we want to show?

Based on the answers to these questions the stories proposed will be narrowed down to just a few. And starting from here once again the discussion continues in order to choose the one they consider should be reflected in the F'T play. The questions mentioned before should be repeated from time to time if the group starts to deviate and lose focus.

If the discussion gets stuck, if people have strong positions and they seem to be more focused on winning the argument than on the wellbeing of the group (and/or advancing in the process) you can ask the group at that moment to close their eyes and provide some reflection guidelines.

- Take a couple of deep breaths
- What is your role in the process?
- What role would you like to have?
- How are you contributing to the group work at the moment?
- How can you make the process go more smoothly and help everybody feel included?
- What will you do differently from now on?

All these questions are addressed but no answer is expected – they are just for the group members to take a break and reflect on what is happening.

The outcome needs to be one real story that will be the basis for the Forum Theatre play.

## 5- RUN AND PROJECT- 10 MINUTES

**Aims** - to energize the group, to change the energy dynamic, to help the group focus and coordinate;

**Description:** The group is told to wait until the instructions are given before they start the activity. They will have to walk around the space in fast speed- if the space allows it is in fact advisable to run from one side to the other.

At some moments the facilitator will shout: Corner projection, ceiling projection, floor projection, mirror projection etc. (depending how your space is constructed – it has to be various walls of the space or areas). Anytime they hear this indication they have to stop and to project as a statue in the direction mentioned by the facilitator.

It can be whatever they understand – pointing at that space, looking at it, staring at it, having a reaction from it, etc.- they don't have to overthink it, just do it. They stay like that for a couple of seconds and then the facilitator signals to run again and another kind of projection will be mentioned.

After a few rounds the facilitator can start indicating other types of projections: Forest Projection; Happiness Projection, Power projection, Sky projection which can be interpreted as they wish.

This exercise is not about reproducing the words but any kind of reaction to it or letting the imagination free - it happens very fast, only for a couple of seconds, and people will run in between projections. The facilitator will continue until the group is energized enough and not overtired.

## 6- INITIAL DRAFT –REAL STORY IN FORUM THEATRE STRUCTURE - 60 MINUTES

**Aims-** to transfer the chosen story in the format of Forum Theatre; to develop the draft script

**Description** – The facilitator will introduce the main characteristics of what a Forum Theatre Play should look like (please refer to the beginning of this unit for guidelines in this sense) in order for the participants to understand better and already make connections.

All the potential questions are clarified and then as a group process (discussion and decision) the story line of the FT play is created step by step.

First of all, establish the characters: the Oppressed, his/her 1 or 2 allies, Oppressor, his/her 1 or 2 allies and 1-2 neutral characters. These numbers will depend on the number of people



in our group and the plan in terms of people involvement (as doubles for example). It is very important at this stage not to assume that some roles have to fit somebody in the group- it often happens that participants get overexcited and already think ahead and they see some people fitting some roles: Oh you will be a perfect oppressor/oppressed etc.

The facilitator needs to warn the group from the beginning that at this stage we just construct the play and we do not talk about role distribution – that will be done after we finish the script – without somebody being influenced in the process by the role he or she might have in the play. The facilitator needs to remind them in case they seem to be forgetting about it.

Then the story line in terms of 3-4 scenes and how the tension will grow on the stage will be developed step by step. In this process it is now important to think about the public and what the public needs to get from us (as content of the story) in order to understand the process of oppression and also to leave enough space for the public to make changes.

So the key moment of the story needs to be chosen in order for the public to make changes at the intervention phase.

The facilitator could have already prepared some big papers (flipchart paper) where to have already written/drawn the FT graphic (in big version) with the story time line and to take notes that could be then added to the flipchart- the characters, in which scene they will appear, the main aspects happening in this scene, etc.

At this stage the group doesn't go into details but rather builds the general picture of the performance and its key elements. Some assumptions will be made in the construction, as in some cases the true conversations or the reactions of some people in real life are unknown but the facilitator needs to ask the group regularly if they consider this is real or not and not to allow anything that is considered not real.

It is also very important to make the group aware that they all need to guard reality (and the story they chose to work with) and not to blur it to a large extent. From time to time it is important to remind the group of this so that the story that it is based on does not slip from their minds.

The facilitator needs to be very careful at this stage and to observe the dynamic of the group, to include everybody's opinions and ideas and also to observe how much harmony is in the group- if it is hard to make decisions, if they are rushed, with many compromises, a break could be useful, as well as a reminder to the group that it is not compulsory to have the full story line now (there is no pressure in that sense) and that it is better to take it at the pace of the group and it could be finalized whenever they need to finalize (in this session or not).

If the group does manage to finalize to a certain extent the draft they can be instructed that they need to incubate the process (by defocusing, taking care of other tasks, and letting the ideas that flowed in this meeting settle and rest) and at the next meeting they will go over the draft and see if they want to change something or not. They could also think (if they want) about the role they feel drawn to from the list of characters from the play.

## 7 - IMPROVISATION EXERCISES AND OTHER PREPARATORY EXERCISES

This unit (mostly for its improvisation and preparation components) could be done in the preparatory part as well – very often in shorter versions of Forum Theatre curriculum is being done like that and less time allocated to it.

The reason why in this structure it is here, is because the outcome of this session can be applied immediately in trying out the performance and it will make a change in the dynamic of the session as the last ones were mostly based on discussions.

The exact structure of this unit should be adapted based on the observations from the other exercises (preparatory or not)- to focus more on getting into the roles, emotions expression, voice, etc.) as well as on the cultural background of the group.

### Structure of the unit

- Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes
- Forum Theatre- Story Line Review – 10 minutes
- Hey (voice and emotions)– 10 minute
- AEIOU- voice- 10 minutes
- Market time – voice and expressing different roles - 15 minutes
- Imaginary balls- 10 minutes
- Different space-same actions-15 minutes
- Imaginary objects – 10 minutes
- Complete up to 3 – 20 minutes
- Forum Theatre play – first improvisations- 60 minutes
- Final circle (evaluation, announcements) -15 minutes

### 2 - FORUM THEATRE STORY LINE REVIEW – 10 MINUTES (OR MORE - DEPENDS ON THE GROUP)

**Aim-** to explore the impressions and views (in relation with the forum theatre draft) of the group members after they had some time for incubation; to have the final agreement on the structure of the play

**Description-**The group is reminded about the outcomes of the last session and in terms of the draft for the performance. They were requested over the break in between the sessions to think about it and to reflect more on the structure. They are asked if they have any new ideas or comments regarding it – to upgrade it, to change it or even if it has to stay the way they agreed last time. Based on their comments the final structure of the script will be drafted and will be used as a reference point for the next steps in the process.

### 3-HEY (VOICE AND EMOTIONS)- 10 MINUTE

**Aims-** to warm the voice and diaphragm of the participants, to support the participants to develop a variety of expressing various emotions;

**Description-** The participants stand in a circle. They are instructed that one by one they will all have to say out loud the same sound but every time with a different intonation, emotion and gesture. It will be a different sound for a full circle – then it will be given a new one. The sounds could be: Hai, Hei, Hepa, Hi, Huho, etc. (feel free to be creative in this sense). The letter H is usually vocalized by using diaphragm and if the participants will use it more while talking their voices will be louder.

### 4-AEIOU- VOICE- 10 MINUTES

**Aims** - to continue the work with the voice by warming it up and activating it for acting; to help the participants to control their breathing;

**Description** – The participants will stay in a line and they will work one by one with the vowels – A E I O U. The whole group will have to pronounce continuously one letter and the facilitator will act as a volume marker. He faces them and he will walk from one side to another and he will make stops as well. As the facilitator get closer to one side of the line those people will have to say the letter more and more loudly (never shouting – just more loudly) and as the facilitator will go away from one specific part of the line those people have to say it lower and lower. It will be repeated for each of the letters.

### 5- MARKET TIME – VOICE AND EXPRESSING DIFFERENT ROLES - 15 MINUTES

**Aims-** to prepare the group for acting, to stimulate imagination and creativity, to stimulate the participants to talk more loudly.

**Description-** The group is instructed that they will become sellers in a street market; they need to imagine a specific market in which they want to sell , to decide what kind of product they want to commercialize and where they want to place their stall. They are invited to go to their location (they will not use any real props) getting into their roles and stay as a statue thinking about their task as market sellers. The facilitator will touch a couple of sellers- once touched they are able to move and talk and they have to promote their stall and their products as best as they can. If they will be touched a second time they will have to freeze again. It is their choice if they want to

move from their stand and promote their products or they stay in one fixed location all the time – they just have to make sure they will promote them as best as possible. It doesn't have to be an interactive exercise – each participant is free to take it as far as he/she wants. The facilitator will have to make sure all the participants are activated at least 2-3 times during the exercise.

At the end of the activity you can address 1-2 questions to the group

- How did you feel during the exercise?
- What was easy/difficult for you?



## 6-IMAGINARY BALLS- 10 MINUTE

**Aims-** to develop the imagination and creativity of the group; to increase the focus and concentration in the group

**Description** – Participants are informed that they will be playing with balls in this activity – imaginary balls! They will have to decide for themselves with what ball they want to play with – bigger or smaller – it's their call. They need to actually play with it and to decide on a sound associated to the ball – for example somebody decided to play with an imaginary ping - pong ball, and while this person is playing with it he is also making a sound like that (splash splash) –which is made continuously. The participants are all requested to decide on their ball, to play with it and



to make the sound. After everybody practiced for a while and got used with their ball they will travel around in the room (and continue to play with their ball) and find another person. They will have to exchange balls and also the sounds associated with that ball. They will continue to do that a couple of times – changing as many times as possible. At one signal they will be requested not to make the sounds anymore (although they do continue to play with the ball they have at the moment) and to make a few more exchanges. The final task given is to take their ball back so they have to find the person that has it and exchange in order to take it back.

## 7 - DIFFERENT SPACE - SAME ACTIONS - 15 MINUTES

**Aims** – to develop improvisation skills among the participants, to stimulate their creativity and imagination, to increase the flexibility,

**Description** – Participants are asked to walk around the space and several instructions will be given to them. They will be told that they are in a supermarket and they need to find themselves a role – what are they doing there? Why are they there? Are they alone? With somebody? Where in the supermarket are they the moment?

In the meantime the participants will start doing different actions related to the context of the supermarket and when they are more into their roles from the supermarket the facilitator claps and ask them to freeze in the position they have in this specific moment. After they became statues, they remain as statues and they are informed that now they are actually in a forest.

The facilitator can go around and ask people (as a sort of interview): What are you doing here in the forest? Why are you doing this? Why are you carrying that? etc. After a couple of interviews the participants don't have to be statues anymore and they continue with the same actions (knowing now that they are in a forest and that they have a reason for what they were doing).

After some seconds the facilitator will give another context – after the participants accommodate to it they will freeze and the context will change but their actions will be the same. The facilitator could make a couple of rounds in this way and increase the complexity of contexts. Suggestions in this sense: bottom of the ocean, in the bathroom, in prison, on the beach, in the elevator, on the bus, in the graveyard, in an animal farm, etc. Impressions from the activity could be requested at the end.

## 8 - IMAGINARY OBJECTS – 10 MINUTES

**Aims-** to develop the creativity, imagination, to contribute to development of improvisation skills, to encourage the participants to express themselves publicly, to connect the group

**Description-** The group will be standing in circle. The facilitator starts by introducing a certain object just by miming it with the hands in order for the group to understand what the object is; then the facilitator will pass the object to the person next to her/him and that person will take

the object and will have to transform it and demonstrate that with the hands, when he/she is done once again the object will be passed to the next person. The object will continue to be transformed and changed in the group from one person to the other. Depending on the time there could be 2 full complete rounds (2 circles) done.

Impressions from the activity could be requested at the end.

## 9-COMplete UP TO 3 – 20 MINUTES

**Aims-** to develop the creativity, imagination, improvisation skills, to encourage the participants to express themselves publicly, to connect the group, to energize and warm-up the group;

**Description –** The group will be standing in a circle. The facilitator will demonstrate with the help of 3 volunteers how the exercise goes. One person comes in the middle of the circle and makes a statue representing for example a tree – and says out loud: I am a tree (and then freezes), the second volunteer will come and attach himself/herself to the tree statue –saying for example: “I am an apple in the tree” – trying to show that in some way with the body and freezes. The third person does the same and could say something like : “I am the worm in the apple” and freezes in a relevant posture (the third person has the choice to attach himself/herself to either the first or second person – it doesn’t matter). In this moment the first person (in our case the tree) says: “I am a tree and I take with me the apple” and they go back to the circle (from the other 2 one is chosen - it is the decision of the first person). After that the person remaining says again what she/he represents (I am an apple)...and then anybody in the circle can continue. They are free to make any kind of links possible with the images from the circle (abstract or concrete). The facilitator should encourage every participant to get involved and participate and should give reminders more often if just a few people are mainly participating.

Impressions from the activity can be requested at the end.

## 10-FORUM THEATRE PLAY – FIRST IMPROVISATIONS- 60 MINUTES

**Aims-** to make the initial role division in the team, to make the initial steps in character development, to improvise the first scenes

**Description-** The group is referred now to the Forum Theatre play storyline (which should be written on a big paper where the all the group members can see it easily) – with characters and each scene shortly described.

The group is asked to think about the roles and to mention what role they would like to play. Here they are reminded that each person has to think for him/herself strictly on what role they want- and not for the others and what roles could fit them and here the facilitator should be very firm in making sure the group understands this.

The group is informed that this is just an initial role division and that once they start

acting that role based on how they feel it changes could happen at a later stage (and very often they do). The participants are asked to say what roles they would like to try out for a first try.

If there are 2 people who want the same role (sometimes this happens - but not very often)– then some reasoning discussion is advisable in which they can say why they want that specific role etc. If neither one is willing to make a compromise after hearing the other person's arguments – you could give priority for the first try to the person who hasn't done FT before or any kind of theatre- if this is not the case in the group then you remind them that it's in their hands – you are not going to decide for them (or impose) and if we need to talk more about it until we have some decision from their part then that will happen.

There are some important remarks (and reminders if they were mentioned before in other discussions about the method)

● There is no written script in Forum Theatre – the group will improvise and focus on character development (as deeply as possible- through supporting exercises) and each person will have to know the main aspects for their role that have to be present on the stage in each scene – around those key features they will improvise in line with their character. The key features can be written (on a paper – it could also be the paper with the storyline). Of course while rehearsing and practicing a couple of times the actors will tend to repeat the same lines more or less but they are not requested to remember by heart a specific script line by line.

● Forum Theatre characters (specially the allies and the neutral persons) are considered incomplete characters in order to provide space for the public to come and change them and to make them complete. Sometimes this aspect is rather difficult to understand at first instance by the new FT participants which often want to show all the solutions (we expect from the public) already in the play. We need to bring extra clarifications in terms of how the power relations are happening, the imbalance that we will present and also to remind the group that we need to provide a context for the public to come with as many possible ideas on various approaches that could bring solutions to the oppression situation.

● If there is enough time for the development of the play it will be useful (even recommended) to have all the team members to try out all the roles from the story. This will offer to each one of them a complete picture of the story and when they will implement it for the public they will be much faster able to adjust, help each other and help the public.

After the initial role division has taken place the next exercise can be implemented to help the group get into their roles. They are invited to walk around the space and the facilitator will guide them to reflect, think and get into their character.

● Think about your role.....Who are you? What is your name?

● How old are you? Where do you live? With whom do you live? What kind of person are you? What is your motto in life? How would you describe yourself in one word? What do you like to do? Who are your friends? Who are you enemies? What are your dreams? Do you still have dreams? What is your main source of happiness at the moment? What are your main problems at the moment? ....you could continue by adding some questions related to the topic of the performance.....What is your opinion about....? What do you think in regard to ...?....(add any other questions that you think will be helpful for the group)

Allow enough time for people to reflect on each question. After you finish all your questions inform the group that when they hear a clap they have to find another person and talk with that person about themselves (as roles). Allow a couple of minutes and then clap again. Make enough rounds so that everybody talks with everybody.

After the last clap ask the characters who appear in scene 1 to remain together and the others will observe them. These characters will improvise now the first scene- no planning- just improvisation. After the first trial the whole group is invited to comment on how it went – how realistic it looked, if there was enough information presented in the scene, how it can be made more clear, more realistic. At this stage every person is encouraged to provide their input and opinion – the detailed development of the script is based on the group's feedback, ideas and suggestions.

Then you can try the first scene again based on the comments provided and talk again.

Depending on the time left in the session, you can also try out the other scenes (with the same process of feedback from all members which will be constant) if not it will be continued in the next session.

At the end of the session it is important to talk a little bit about what happened in this session so do not take out the final circle (which is included in the unit structure).



## 8 - EXERCISES FOR GETTING INTO CHARACTER AND DEVELOPING THE PLAY

In this unit the group will follow-up on the aspects tackled in the last session, continue with improvisation, getting into character exercises and building up the play. The aim of the session should be to have the Forum Theatre play in a finalized form. In this session it might happen that some of the roles will change based on the feelings, acting and improvisation of the actors.

There are 2 possibilities in this sense

■ The actors themselves communicate to the group that they don't want to pursue that specific role (in which case it is necessary to ask the group to volunteer to take the new opening);

■ The team considers that one actor (and this can happen mostly in relation to the main roles: oppressed and oppressor) based on his/her improvisation is not contributing to a strong enough oppression in the play– we can meet oppressed characters that are in fact quite powerful, if not very powerful or oppressors that are not strong enough and the imbalance level is not as high as needed. This is a more delicate situation which is in fact very dependent on the time left for finalization of the play. In time and with proper training (with more specific activities and exercises in this sense) to support the team members everybody can play any role as realistically as possible. If time is not in favour of the team this means a change needs to be made in the division of roles. Very often the team continue with rather weak performances because they don't want to hurt the feelings of the team members – but it can actually lead to a low impact on the public- the Forum Theatre group needs to understand that they do their work not for themselves but for the public among whom we want to start a change- if somebody is too strong to be an oppressed character (because he/she is still too attached to their own personality) they should not take it personally and understand that such a role will not benefit the public. This mind-set needs to be encouraged and reminded often by the facilitator.

### Structure of the unit

- Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes
- Music and action- 10 minutes
- Finalizing the first round of improvisation of the play- 45 minutes
- Getting into character (angels and demons, hot seat)- 45 minutes
- Final rehearsals of the day- 1 hour
- Final circle (evaluation, announcements) -15 minutes



## 2-MUSIC AND ACTION- 10 MINUTES

**Aims-** to warm-up and energize the group, to prepare them for the day, to create an atmosphere of wellbeing and general positivity;

**Description-**The group is instructed that there will be music and they are invited to dance and feel free to do whatever they want. The music should be more active and dynamic. When the music stops they have to freeze and listen to the instructions from the facilitator (which usually involves some sort of task to be delivered by the participants). After each task the music will play again until the next one. There will be a couple of rounds like that.

Suggestions for the tasks: go to at least 3 people and tell them something nice about themselves; gather in groups according to the colour of your socks, look at somebody and recognize a long lost friend, shout very loudly – “Today is a fantastic day”, go to everybody in the group and say : “Thank you”; go to one person and tell her/him something that you have never told somebody in the group so far; hug individually at least 4 people; go to everybody and tell them how much you are looking forward to today.

### 3-FINALIZING THE FIRST ROUND OF IMPROVISATION OF THE PLAY- 45 MINUTES

**Aim** – to have one round from beginning to end of the initial improvisation of the play; to warm up and make the participants ready for more acting

**Description-** The group is reminded of what progress was made in the last session, and at what stage they are now and that they will follow up on what happened the last time and continue in order to have the first improvisation draft of the play.

The process will go as described in the last session and hopefully one draft version of the play has been performed. It can happen that the last scene in this first round of impressions is not as strong as needed but it will be worked out with rehearsal and some specific exercises in this sense.

These first rounds of improvisation are in fact designed to gather content (in terms of what information needs to be included or not in some specific scene) and less to have high competencies of acting from the volunteers as that will improve through practice, rehearsals and specific exercises which will be tailored to their needs.

At this stage it might happen that some of the actors want to change their roles – you can advise them to wait until they do some more supporting exercises – if they don't want to wait you have make some decisions at this moment (before you move on).

### 4-GETTING INTO CHARACTERS (ANGELS AND DEMONS, HOT SEAT) - 45 MINUTES

**Aims-** to support the actors to get into their roles better, to develop their characters more deeply, to increase their competence in Forum Theatre

#### **Description**

**Angels and Demons-** aims to provide the actors with more ideas and thoughts for their roles. (Makes use of the group's potential to provide ideas to the actors)

The participants stand in 2 lines facing each other– the angels are in one line – in the other one are the demons. One by one the actors walk in between these lines. They walk in character and just listen. The people will talk in their ears telling them why they should do a specific action or not, or that they should do something or not...it very much depends on their role and the story, and their ideas, suggestions are connected to the story; The Angel will try to give good advice, positive while the Demons do the opposite (they can also use each other's arguments to provide more arguments on any of the sides). For example: Angel: „*Go and talk with your husband, tell him you want to take a job, etc.*”... The Demon will say: „*Don't you dare confront your husband, don't you know what he is capable of? Do you really want to take that risk? You'd better focus on your*



*children*". The actors do not reply, they just listen to it until they finish walking in the line. One by one the actors (if they wish so, and if they feel that it will help them) will walk in between the lines. It would be useful to ask the group at the end of the exercise how much they consider the exercise helped them to get in their roles.

**Hot seat** – aims to help the actors understand their characters more deeply and to develop them more strongly as well as to prepare the actors for the rehearsal of their Forum Theatre play;

Each participant, in character, will have to sit on an empty chair in the middle of the room. All the other team members face the chair, as an audience and ask the person (the character) from the chair questions, as many and as deep as possible. The person from the chair must answer to all of them honestly. All these answers can come like from his inner self – the character is not going to lie to him/herself. This exercise is recommended primarily for the oppressed and the oppressor, and any other character that feels the need to get deeper in the role. After each round of questions the group can give feedback related to how they assess the realism expressed by each role and also how much power is expressed by oppressor and oppressed.

This exercise usually helps the group see if the initial oppressor/oppressed is not strong enough /too strong. If they are the facilitator can ask if anybody would like to go on the hot seat just to show another option. When the group has 2 versions of the 2 characters they can discuss what to do next depending on the time left for rehearsals.

If the need for redistributing the roles emerges it is important to remind the group that they are creating this play with an aim in their mind which is related to our target group. If the roles are partially redistributed it would be helpful to do a "hot seat" before the start of the next rehearsals.

## 5 - FINAL REHEARSALS OF THE DAY - 1 HOUR

The group is briefed on what they achieved in the last rehearsals and how they proceed now. The process of rehearsals (with feedback and comments from everybody from the team) continues as it was implemented in the last session.



## 9- REHEARSALS – WITH DIFFERENT EXERCISES

Depending on the progress achieved so far the facilitator can assess if the group needs more work on improvisation, on character building, on developing the script if it is not yet a final version on which everybody agrees with or to focus on rehearsals. This unit provides a set of activities that can be used for the rehearsal sessions.

### Structure of the unit

- Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes
- Rehearsals – Stop and Think – 40 minutes
- Different kind of Rehearsals - 1.5 hour
- Final rehearsal of the day -30 minutes
- Final circle (evaluation, announcements) -15 minutes

### 2- REHERSALS –STOP AND THINK – 40 MINUTES

**Aims-** to help the participants to understand the role they have more deeply; to get more relaxed and comfortable in playing another role, to understand the connections between the characters in the story more deeply, to prepare more to stay in statues a long time;

**Description-** The group is instructed that they will start rehearsing the play from the beginning. At any time they hear a clap they have to freeze in whatever position they have at that time. They have to stay in statues until they hear another clap (at which moment they continue from where they left on). During the time they stay in statues the facilitator might come and touch any of the actors on the shoulder - at that time the actor has to say what he/she is thinking in that specific moment (of course from the perspective of their role). Once the facilitator touches the same person a second time he/she doesn't talk anymore. It would be good to stop 2-3 times in one scene (in different action moments) and at each stop to touch every actor on the stage. Impressions from the activity can be requested at the end.

# REHEARSAL



## 3-DIFFERENT KIND OF REHEARSALS - 1.5 HOUR

**Aims-** to develop acting and improvising skills, to increase the ease of rehearsing in different circumstances; to develop flexibility and spontaneity; to relax and warm up the group.

**Description-** The group is instructed that they will have to rehearse the play again (and again) but with different variations. The play (as structure, lines) doesn't change during any of these variations but the speed, the style, the order, etc. Below you will find listed a couple of options that can be used in this activity. Use as many options as you can for the time left but do not rush the process.

- Rehearse different movie genres: drama, horror, comedy, action, etc.
- Rehearse as if some actors are invisible (are not on the stage) - but the action has to happen exactly as originally planned (so the actors have a discussion with the missing person, reply to his/her words and so on);
- Rehearse from end to beginning; from high tension to low tension;
- Rehearse at a very high speed (and nothing can be left out from the play), or a very low speed;
- Rehearse without words (doing all the actions but no words);
- Rehearse with mixed roles – asking some actors to play other roles (this exercise also contributes to reducing the feeling of possession that some actors develop for their role)

## 10- PREPARING THE TEAM FOR THE PERFORMANCE

This unit has a very important role especially for a beginner Forum Theatre group because it provides a space to work on some elements necessary for participants going in front of a public for the first time.

It will focus on

- Exploring power – but now more from the perspective of the relation with the public;
- The feeling of possession the participants have for their roles;
- Preparation for the interventions and all the process with the public; please check again the chapter about Forum Theatre to review the steps with the public and other important mentions related to the Forum Theatre Process;

- It is important to emphasise for the participants that in their role as Forum Theatre actors they need to help the public members and not to be in an antagonistic position to them. This helping has to be in their mind constantly and accommodate it together with their role as keeping everything very realistic. For example: a helping actor makes time/ space for the public person to talk (if on the stage) not just to say his/her lines in order to prove a point without caring if the person from the public had any chance to say something at all.

Very often beginner FT actors fall in two traps when they go on stage:

- They want to help the public too much. When somebody makes an intervention they immediately change their reaction in a unrealistic way to make the person from the public feel that they won; (which in fact is not helpful because the public discusses and assesses as not realistic the reaction of the other people involved –in this case our actors)

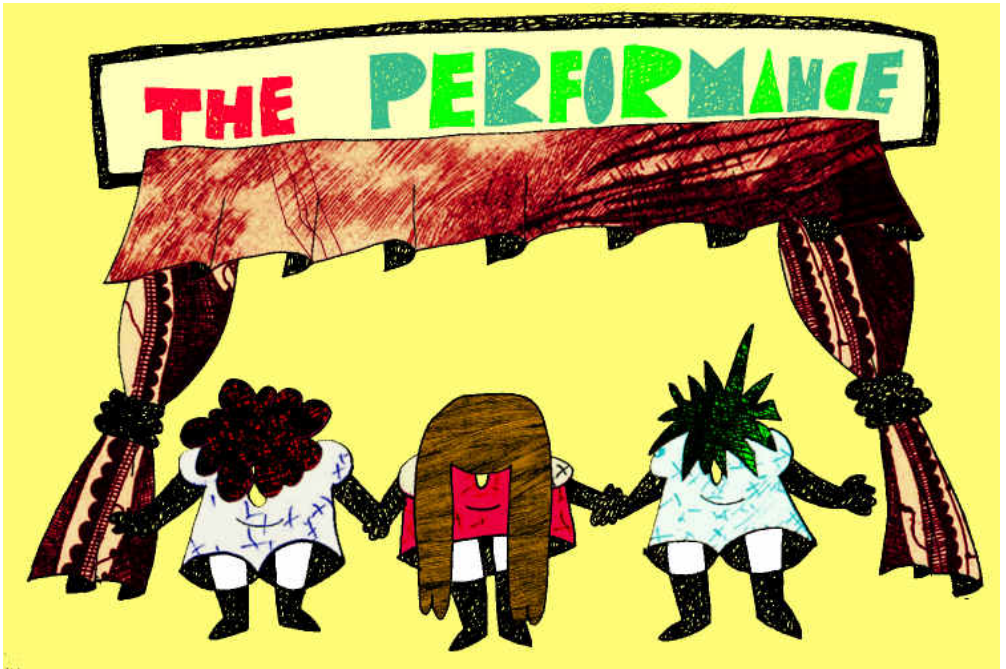
- They hold on too strongly to their roles although the power relation has obviously changed, while their reactions are not realistic. This is often the case with the oppressor – we call it “Oppressor syndrome”. The Oppressor first of all is not changed by the public and this aspect contributes to the development of this syndrome. Also in the overall situation the oppressor has the biggest power (and he/she is abusing it)- once the people around start having more power, the fear of losing power rises in the actor who wants to hold on to it even more. The “oppressor syndrome” is quite dangerous if is not properly addressed because it can lead to the public leaving our performance feeling hopeless – because nothing they tried balanced the power relations and nothing changed. This is part of the Joker’s task (it will be explored as well in the Joker section) but also part of the preparation process.

Another delicate aspect is related to the discussion of potential interventions. It is helpful to do it, to have an idea of what solutions the public can propose BUT some groups tend to prepare mentally in advance for how to react to certain interventions too well – again not realistically; the spontaneous improvisation on the spot very often is much more natural and realistic as actors do not over think what to do. An FT group can never anticipate everything the public can come up with as solutions so during this preparation for interventions they should keep this in mind.



## Structure of the unit

- Introduction of the day (explaining the context and what will happen in this session)- 5 minutes
- Push Not to Win – 20 minutes
- Come with me! No- 30 minutes
- Brainstorming –Interventions- 20 minutes
- Briefing on the Process of Forum Theatre with Public – 20 minutes
- Open Space Session – based on the last session's needs- 70 minutes
- Final circle (evaluation, announcements) -15 minutes



### 2 - PUSH NOT TO WIN- 20 MINUTES

**Aims-** to make the participants reflect on how they use their power in a way in which they are not dominating but not submissive either, to encourage them to reflect on how they feel in such situations, to understand where the balance point is for them personally, to discuss about the power of the public versus power of the actors;

**Description** –Participants are divided into pairs (they all have to be in pairs – if it is necessary the facilitator will join the exercise as well). A line, or demarcation limit will be made visible on the floor and each member of the pair has to stand on one side of the line.

The participants will have to face and touch each other's palms (in vertical position).

Their task is to push but not to win. This is the same task for everybody. The pairs are not allowed to talk with each other during the exercises- any question will be clarified before the exercise will start. It has to be reminded during the exercises that they have to Push (but not to win) – especially if pairs not really moving are observed.

At some point during the exercise you can also ask the participants to close their eyes and to continue to do the exercise. It will probably not take more than a couple of minutes (around 5 at least)– make sure you allow enough time for every person to get in the exercise more deeply - the first minutes can be taken as funny exercise but as time passes they understand and have deeper reflections.

### **Debriefing/ Processing the Activity**

This exercise is useless without discussing at the end, so do not rush this discussion if you have chosen to do this activity. Suggestions for questions in this sense:

- How did you feel during the activity?
- Did anybody win during the exercise? How did you manage that?
- How did you approach the task? You had to push but not to win...did this mean you had to lose? What did winning mean for you? Did you feel the other person is winning? How was it for you?
- Did you identify a point where you both pushed, but nobody was winning or losing?
- How did you understand you are at this point?
- Please think now in connection with the process involving the public – the public will come on our stage and change our story – they will push us and we will push them back (because of our roles) – what correlations can you make form this exercise and the process of interaction with the public?
- How can you be constantly aware of the point where both of you are pushing, you are not winning over the public but you are not losing either?

### **3- COME WITH ME! No. - 30 MINUTES**

**Aims-** to stimulate the participants to reflect on their own approach to winning over somebody (convincing the person) – and also on their feelings if they fail to do so, to encourage the participants to be honest with themselves and identify the inner answers/reactions to certain situations, to reflect individually on what makes them give in/what never makes them give in. (It is a very good exercise to work with the “Oppressor Syndrome” or other possessive tendencies.



**Description-** Each participant has to have a pair. During the exercise one person will have to constantly invite the other one: “Come with me!” until he/she accepts. The other person has to say NO as long as possible. There will be 5 minutes for each round so in this round the pairs can try continuously. After 5 minutes the roles switch for another 5 minutes.

### **Debriefing/Processing the activity**

This exercise is useless without discussing at the end, so do not rush this discussion if you have chosen to do this activity. Suggestions for questions in this sense:

- How did you feel asking the question? How did you feel replying to it?
- How fast did you give in? What made you say YES?
- What made you say NO until the end?
- If you did say NO to the end of the exercise, was there any moment when internally you felt like saying YES but you didn’t want to so you continued to say NO? In which moment did this happen? Why did you continue to say NO although you felt like saying YES inside of you?
- When the public comes and makes changes, very often they come against our initial plan, our initial wishes and ideas for what should happen in that specific situation. How can you remain connected to what we feel inside as a radar of what is a natural signal of how the power relations change and not to impose yourself to it?
- How can we control our actor Ego in relation with the public?

## **4 - BRAINSTORMING –INTERVENTIONS- 20 MINUTES**

**Aim-** to reflect in advance on the potential changes proposed by the public, to list all the ideas the team has, to become aware of the fact that the public will surprise the team and come with ideas that were never considered;

**Description-** The group is informed that they will need to have an initial brainstorming on potential solutions that the public can come up with. They look at the play scene by scene and think of what solutions can be made in each one of them (which role will be changed, what idea can be proposed).

If there is any scene where no change is possible to be made that is a sign that there was a mistake in the construction, because only the key moments of the process need to be transformed in scenes in which the public has the chance to make changes. If the team assess at this stage that one scene might be “empty” of changes you might consider to change the play structure.

In this brainstorming process it is also important to remind the group that this exercise is just to give them an idea of some potential solutions that can be proposed but definitely they will not be able to anticipate all of them and they should accept that.

After the first scene there is no certainty related to what the next scene will look like, the whole story might be changed by the public based on the discussions. For example: even if the original second scene shows a situation at school between students, if in the first scene the public decides that it is realistic for the mother to come and talk with the teacher personally about the situation of her daughter then this scene will be created—it was not planned initially by the team but that doesn't mean that it can't happen in reality. So a new scene will be shown with new possibilities of changes and directions in which the story could go.

**Optional activity-** for working on the key actors' (oppressor and oppressed) capacity for adjusting to changes

● The participants stand in 2 lines facing each other. The oppressor and the oppressed are one step in front of the line facing each other. The group chooses a moment from the story in which they interact. They talk (as in the original play). The lines behind the actors have one aim – to help the person in front have more power (regardless of whether in front of them is the oppressor or the oppressed). The process is similar to the one on the stage with the public but goes continuously. The oppressed and the oppressor interact (as in the moment chosen to work with). If somebody behind them (from the line) considers they do not express enough power they clap and replace the person and this continues. The original actors can replace the persons now playing their roles again. It should continue until the oppressed is not oppressed and has enough power before the oppressor.

● After one round you can discuss with the group what arguments were stronger, which ones were more realistic and also it would be useful to discuss how the oppressor felt when the oppressed had more and more power. How much power did he/she still feel that he/she had? The exercise can continue, working on other key moments from the performance as well. It is a useful exercise for preparing the group for interventions and also for preparing the oppressor to work with his oppressor syndrome tendency.

## 5 - BRIEFING ON THE PROCESS OF FORUM THEATRE WITH PUBLIC - 20 MINUTES

**Aims-** to clarify/introduce the process of implementation of Forum Theatre to the group, to have a clear perspective of their role and the main guidelines that need to be followed

**Description –** The facilitator explains step by step the process of implementation and how the process will be managed; the role of the Joker, their role as actors.

Besides the technical aspects of the process (which need to be clearly introduced and explained) it is important to emphasise on the following:

● During the introduction of the characters, the actors are instructed not to smile, not to talk with the public, not to make signs to them- to be as much as possible in character.

● The team needs to be silent and not to talk backstage while the Joker is talking with the public (it will disrupt the discussion, can show disrespect and lack of interest for the points raised

from the target group- the public; they will miss the conclusion drawn with the public – what is happening next, what change is kept, etc.)

- The public will have many points to talk about and the discussion will go in many directions- for the team it is important to follow and listen to the Joker, who draws conclusions through which he/she also aims to calibrate the team (to know what change was kept, what happens next – if there is a new scene, or the same, or the next, etc.)

- The oppressor and the Joker need to agree on a sign that will be made by the Joker to the oppressor person in case he/she becomes possessed by the role and deliberately does not reduce power at all. This sign can be a signal for the oppressor that he/she maybe has gone too far;

- The actors need to pay lots of attention to how a public member shows an intervention/ change as later on they might have to continue to act like that and it is important to keep the change proposed by the public, not exaggerated by the actor.

- Actors need to help the public: allowing space for them to talk, asking them 2 times to repeat if they understand they are talking too low, moving on the stage so the public member doesn't stay with their back to the public.

## 6-OPEN SPACE SESSION – BASED ON THE LAST SESSION'S NEEDS- 70 MINUTES

**Aim-** to work on the needs expressed by the team before they perform for the first time

**Description –** It is decided together with the group what to focus on in this part of the session in order for them to feel more prepared to go to the public (more rehearsals, more preparation for interventions, more voice or stage exercises, more emotions or getting into character, etc.).

What to include in this session depends strictly on the group's needs and you can also repeat some of the previous activities if you are not ready with new ones right away. In the resource area you will find some toolkits that can provide some extra activities that you can take further in this sense (for future meetings in new Forum Theatre projects as well).

### Recommendation

Before going to the target group it would be useful, especially for a beginner group to have a rehearsal with public. This public can be made up of friends, colleagues, relatives, etc. The aim of this rehearsal with public is to practice interventions and to have a clear understanding of how the process goes with the public.

## EVALUATION IN FORUM THEATRE

The 6<sup>th</sup> phase in the Forum Theatre process is related to evaluation and follow-up (check out once again the Forum Theatre Presentation Chapter). In this phase we in fact measure what impact our performance had among the target group. Our aim is not to have a play but to start a change process among our beneficiaries. But how do we know we have done that?



## Documenting the Forum Theatre play and the interventions

- use a monitoring sheet for each performance (see on the following page one example)
- write down the interventions from the public (mention scene by scene who the public changed and what solution was proposed and if the public validated it or not)- please include briefly all the interventions that the public made (for each of the performances you have)

## EVALUATION (SUGGESTIONS IN THIS SENSE)

Evaluation of your team and their process: (have discussions with them in this sense during the preparation phase and also after each performance – what went well, what not so much, what could be improved to increase the impact, what changes need to be made (if needed) in the construction of the play.

### Evaluation of the public:

#### Suggestions

● The transfer phase in the Joker's work is very important!!! At the end, before the closure, the Joker asks the public how they can use all these ideas in their own community, or what they have learnt from this performance – let more members of the public share their ideas (they can be briefly written in the observation sheet mentioned in the documentation) ;

● All the team members and the other volunteers go in the public after the performances and talk with them and ask directly how they feel about it, how they are affected by the problem and what they want to do about it? (after that share in the team what impressions you collected from the public)

● Post large sheets of paper outside the location and people can write on them after they leave the performance (Questions should be related to the topic of your play and should be no more than 3-4)! Examples: What will you do the next time you are involved in a similar situation in your community? With what feelings or thoughts do you leave this event? What is the

first thing you want to do in relation with this problem? What do you think is the most important solution that should be implemented? What should the community do about it? What do you think the authorities should do?

● The same questions as before (together with some others connected with the problem) can be made into a short evaluation form and the Joker can mention at the end that some volunteers will come and ask public members a few questions (and to support the initiative) – send volunteers to up to 10 audience members and have a small 1 on 1 interview

● You can create an evaluation form (as mentioned before) that is already on the seat the person will sit on and they can fill it individually and give it to the team at the end of the performance

### Ideas for longer term evaluation

Depending on the location you can check with the community leaders or facilitators (if you are in a school, or in a rural area, or you went to a concrete group) what changes they observe in the community in relation with that specific problem from the attendance list at the performance – you have the contact details and you can contact some of the spectators (via mail or phone) and invite them to some meeting to discuss the problems and changes afterwards – or to ask them directly via mail or phone (post performance impact evaluation )

# OBSERVATION SHEET FOR DOCUMENTING A FORUM THEATRE PLAY PROCESS

**Location** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of the play** \_\_\_\_\_

**Main topic addressed in the play** \_\_\_\_\_

■ how long (minutes/hours) was the performance together with the discussions and interventions \_\_\_\_\_

■ number of people in the audience \_\_\_\_\_  
(how many people left during the performance? \_\_\_\_)

■ number of women \_\_\_\_\_

■ number of men \_\_\_\_\_

■ approximate the age distribution in the public \_\_\_\_\_

■ assess the overall level of interest and active participation from the audience during the play  
(high, medium, low) \_\_\_\_\_

■ number of people that went on stage to make interventions \_\_\_\_\_

■ approximate number of people that were involved in the discussions during the forum \_\_\_\_\_

■ what ideas does the public mention in the Transfer Phase of the Joker's discussion (when the Joker asks the public how they will use what they learned here, or what they learned from the event)

■ other comments \_\_\_\_\_



# THE JOKER ROLE IN FORUM THEATRE

## - GUIDELINES

The **Joker** is considered to be one of the crucial roles in Theatre of the Oppressed especially in Forum Theatre (as well as Image, Legislative and Rainbow of Desire). The Joker (or Facilitator, Moderator, Difficultator, etc.) is usually responsible for the direct management of the process of the public (including the interaction between public and actors).

The reason for naming this role the Joker is probably inspired from 2 possible sources:

- From deck cards, where the Joker is the neutral card, it doesn't have any value in itself;
- From Tarot, where the Joker is represented by the Fool card. This card is seen to represent new beginnings, the start of a journey or new phase in life, enthusiasm, awe, wonder, bravery, optimism, self-confidence and occasionally as throwing caution to the wind.

These interpretations do in fact illustrate how the Joker role is reflected in this methodology. The Joker strives to be neutral and opens new beginnings, new roads for exploring new solutions for various problem.

The **Joker has a neutral role** in the process (at least as much as possible). This neutrality is reflected mainly through the fact that he/she is asking questions not stating opinions. Questions about what the public sees, what they think, if it is real or not, whether to change something or not, if the change should be kept or not, how they will use the learning and so on. The Joker certainly has an opinion about all the things discussed with the public (and also about what the public is proposing) but this opinion is not shared in order to not influence the public (or even to manipulate it). The process of finding solutions and assessing them in connection with a certain reality belongs to the public – the Joker is just a manager.

**What is the Joker's role in the process of designing a Forum Theatre Play?** Usually the Joker is the facilitator of the process and provides comments and opinions in the process in equal manner to all the other team members. The Joker doesn't have any role in the performance as the Joker is responsible for guiding both the public and the actors in the process and cannot simultaneously be one of the actors.

## JOKER-ING STRUCTURE AND GUIDELINES

The following structure which we have been using in A.R.T. Fusion in the last years can be applied to Forum Theatre and Image Theatre. It focuses on main milestones, or steps that need to be made or achieved in the process. This structure has proved impactful for the public, clear and coherent and also an easy to use tool for a joker to manage the process.

**Important note:** This structure doesn't refer to how well or not a play is designed. The work of a Joker is heavily influenced by the "product" that they introduce to the public and if the play is not relevant for the public or it has big enough technical mistakes in construction this structure can help but for sure will not make miracles. This structure and guidelines in questioning fits the Forum and Image theatre approaches explained in this toolkit- it doesn't represent by default something that can work on other approaches so it is important to look at it from this perspective. For indications related to how to construct Forum or Image Theatre please refer to the respective chapters.



# THE STRUCTURE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE JOKER

## **Introduction from the Joker**

(very short, just to prepare the public, doesn't provide many details)

*The forum theatre play is performed/ the image-from image theatre is shown (first time)*

● **The Problem** (discussion with the public about the problem they observed in the play, the connection with their reality - they can provide more examples, decision with the public on only one problem (the main one) – if the public is divided);

● **The Characters** (zooming in on the story depicted to better understand who the characters from the play are, what their role is, what is happening with them in the story, whether they can do something differently, the connection with the reality of the public- the public can provide more examples);

● **Change making Process** (motivating the public to make changes, explaining the process and the rules, warming-up the public);

*The play is performed the second time*

● **Management of Interventions** (each intervention is discussed with the public before moving to a new one, for each one of them the change made is analysed as well as its realism in the context, the public makes a decision whether to keep a change or not - the process continues until the oppression is reduced to a satisfying level for the public and the oppressed makes a different decision);

● **Summary** (alone or with the public the Joker makes the summary of the discussions- what problem they tackled, that is coming from their reality, how they approached the problem, what solutions they proposed for it);

● **Transfer** (the public reflects on how and what they can take further to their realities from these discussion which were focused on a problem relevant to them and possible solutions)

● **Conclusion** (based on their transfer comments and the overall theme)

● **Closure** (the event is closed and the public invited for next activities – if there are)

**The order of these steps is very important** – each of these steps can be perceived as a foundation for the next one and so forth. If a Joker jumps any of them, or doesn't cover them adequately, the rest of the process will be affected. Why is that? Let's take them one by one.

1. If the **introduction** is too long and the Joker explains all the rules and what will happen in detail it is possible that the public will be confused because they are given unnecessary information at a time when it doesn't make much sense without seeing the play. This is a difficult start that can (and did in our experience) influence the mood and overall atmosphere for the rest of the process.

2. Based on how the play is constructed the public can observe multiple (main) problems and if a Joker doesn't clarify/make a decision with the public about the main **problem** and she/he pushes for the next step the public will have a high level of confusion for the rest of the process. For some of them the problem they are trying to find solutions for is one, for others it's another one and this will be reflected on how they vote, what arguments they give and what ideas they propose. It will make the task of having a common goal with the public difficult for the Joker. At the same time if the Joker doesn't make the **reality connection** with the public they will be less engaged personally in the process.

3. If the Joker jumps over the **characters discussion** and move directly to the changes it is very likely to see that the public interprets some of the characters differently and the same thing can happen when the problem is not clarified. Also if the public doesn't have the chance to reflect specifically on the story and its main actors it will be harder for them to identify solutions and to come on the stage. This step also helps the Joker to induce the idea of change in the public's mind by asking them if they think any of them could act differently.

4. **Explaining the process and the rules** is very important and in case it is rushed or not explained with enough details it will confuse the public – either they will not know how to come on the stage, who to change, how long they can stay there, etc. and it will make it harder for the Joker later on to motivate them to come on the stage. At this stage it is important to do a warm-up for the public; this contributes to better preparing them to come on the stage and it shouldn't be omitted.

5. **If in the change making process** the Joker doesn't discuss one by one, but rather allows all the public members to come and make changes, doesn't make decisions immediately after they see examples of change, it creates chaos and confusion with the public, who will not know in which direction they are heading and how they are heading there.

6. **The summary** after a long and deep discussion (as discussions often are in this field) will help the public to have synthesized the experience and make it easier

mentally to think about the transfer – removing this step will consequently make it harder to think about transfer.

■ **6. Transfer is** crucial for the public to mentally connect all these discussion outcomes with their reality even if also during the discussion this happened often – this is the moment when before they go back to their reality they actually think and reflect on what they can use and where they want to do that. The question needs to be addressed to think about it even if we acknowledge that some public members will probably make the connection anyway but we want to maximize the impact and increase the numbers. Providing a space to reflect on the transfer will always have better impact than when we assume and hope each public member will do this process on their own after the play.

## THE JOKER'S MAIN TOOL – QUESTIONS

Each of the steps in the structure introduced previously is implemented with the help of questions. Asking questions, the right questions, is a skill and it is developed in time and with practice. It is important for a Joker who wants to develop this skill to know what characteristics these questions (in this context) should have:

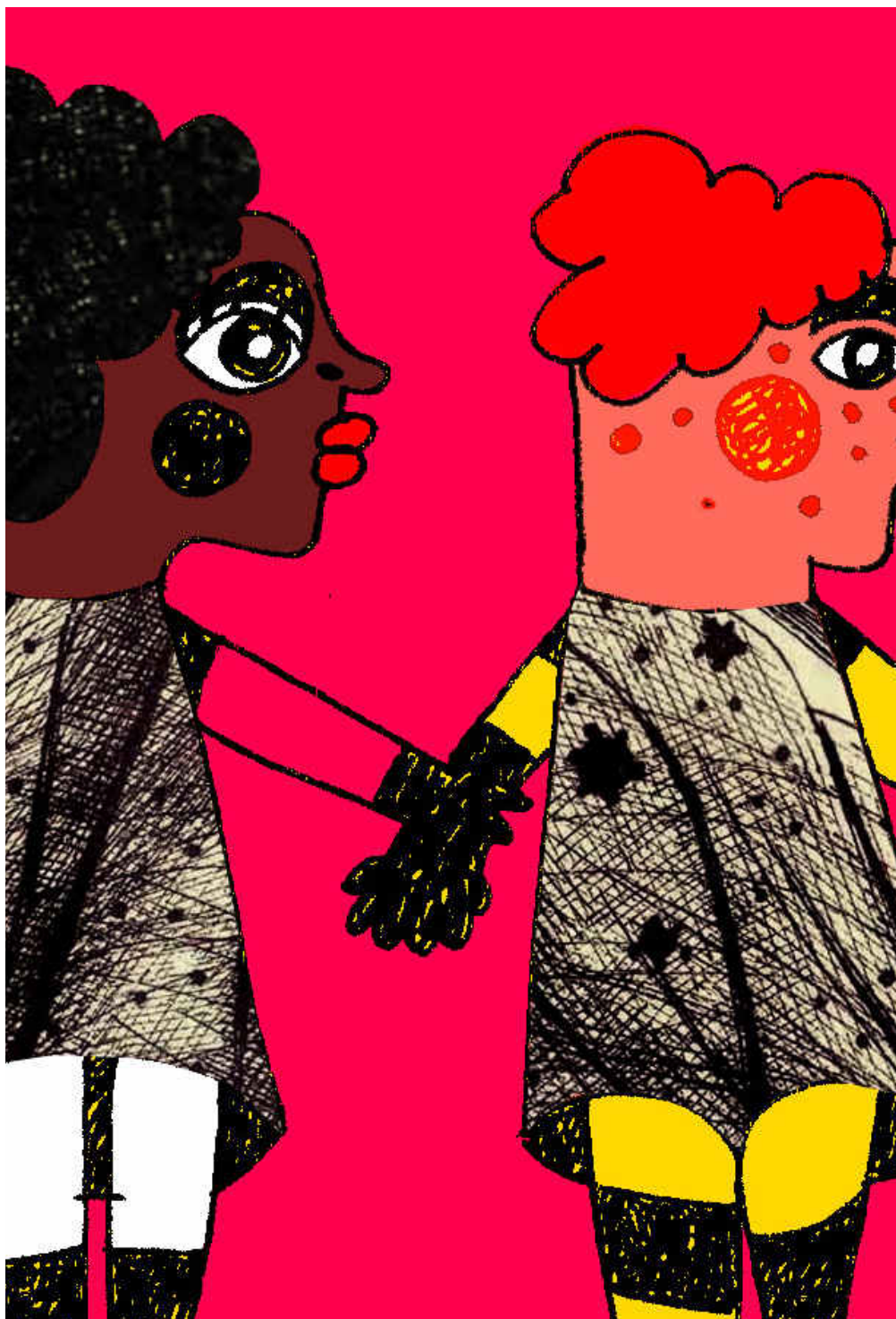
● **They are open** (most of them) which means a respondent cannot reply by YES or NO but with an open answer;

● **The questions are neutral** (they are not suggestive nor do they include the opinion of the Joker);

● **The questions are not judging or evaluating** (examples of wrong questions: Isn't it a wonderful intervention? Do you think it is a good idea? etc.)

● **Inclusive** (they aim to include and motivate as many people from the public as possible)

Please find below a set of suggested texts and questions that can be used by any Joker in their work. It is advisable for a Joker to develop their own style of approaching the task and the questioning. Below you will see an example that can be used exactly in this form or as inspiration, which for beginners in the field can be helpful. The number of questions will depend largely on the diversity of the public opinions and to some extent on the time available for the whole process. The Joker needs to have the time perspective of the event and to structure it in such a way so as to make sure all the steps are covered before the closure of the event. Many of the questions here are exemplified in more general format but when used in a Forum Theatre event could be more specific (for example: not to mention the word “problem” anymore, but to mention specifically the problem the public identified in the play; or when you refer to the “wrong decision” you will mention it not name it “decision”)



## INTRODUCTION FROM THE JOKER

”Hello, thank you very much for being here with us! We are a team of volunteers (who are not professional actors) that prepared a performance (*give a name if you have a title for it*) tackling a social issue/situation (**NOTE: don’t mention the issue- because this will influence the public**), inspired from reality (maybe it is also in your reality) which we want to introduce and to discuss with you. After the short play I will come back and we will discuss your observations about the performance. As I have said – the volunteers are not professional actors so I want to invite you to encourage them with a strong round of applause.”

**Optionally**, you can ask the public some questions regarding the themes from the performance which will start a little bit the connection with their reality. If you choose this option you need to ask questions inspired fully by aspects related to the story BUT do not ask questions that will actually reveal the problem as this means influencing the public.

### Examples:

“How many of you have volunteered?” “How many of you are in love, or were in love at some point in your life?” “How many of you had a dream that came true?” etc. (and then at the end you can mention to the public – “This is the story of one volunteer – let’s see what happened to him/her – please give a round of applause as they are not professional actors and need some encouragement.”

*The play is performed/image is shown the first time*

## THE PROBLEM

“Now that you have seen our performance, let’s discuss it more.

**Optional:** “For one minute talk with the neighbour on your right or left about the story and what happened in it.” – After 2-3 minutes (which will also warm-up the public) continue with the public:

- What happened in this story?
- Did you observe any problem?



- What is the main problem according to you and why?
- Are there other opinions in this regard?
- I see that some of you think the main problem reflected here is..... and others that it is ..... Are there other opinions as well? In order to advance in our discussion I want to see how you feel about it so I will ask you to raise your hands- who considers that this performance is about .....and who thinks it's about.....As more of you think it is..... If it's ok for the others to look at this story from this angle we will continue in this direction.
- Is this story/problem real? Where do you think it is happening?
- Does it happen in your community/around you as well? Could you give some examples? How does this problem end in our example? Do you think that this type of situations have to always end this way?
- Can this be changed?  
(*at this stage we want just to hear the public say YES – do not go into details*)

## THE CHARACTERS

“Let’s have a closer look into this story and to analyse what is happening with the main people involved in this story. You said that we have here an example of ..... Who is the person mainly affected by this problem?”

The public will hopefully mention the oppressed person – if they mention more people repeat the question: “Who do you think is most affected by the problem? Who suffers the most?”

Invite the oppressed person on stage and ask the public to applaud again. You do not need to mention to the public she/he is oppressed – in the eyes of the public they can be named the victim or the person suffering in this situation.

Questions about the character:

- What can you say about this person?
- What is he/she doing in the story?
- What is the last thing he/she does? (this is for the oppressed only – to point out with the help of the public that the wrong decision that was made)
- Do you know people like him/her in your reality?

● Do you think she/he can do something different in her situation not to make that decision? (*at this stage we want just to hear the public say YES – do not go into details— they will show their ideas in the intervention phase*)

One by one, by making the connection between the characters, invite the actors on stage. “Who is the person making the victim suffer or make that decision?- to identify the oppressor from the public’s perspective; “Who supports or is on the side of .....?”; “Who else is in the story and what is their position towards this topic?”

When inviting them on stage, position them the way the public perceives them – victim and oppressors- the Joker stands between them. Whenever they mention an ally, they have to go next to the person they support and the neutral a little bit out of the line. In the end the public will see all of the actors, their positions in the story and the relations between them. Having this perspective will help the public identify potential solutions to the problem by making connections.

**For each of the characters, the Joker asks the public:**

- What can you say about this person?
- What is he/she doing in the story?
- Do you know people like him/her in your reality?
- Do you think she/he can do something different so this story doesn’t end the way it does? (*At this stage we want just to hear the public say YES – do not go into details*) – This question is not asked for the oppressor. (After you finish with all the actors – give them another round of applause and send them backstage).

## CHANGE MAKING PROCESS

“Up to now we have been discussing a specific story that reflects a problem present as well in your community. Our team decided to present this situation to you in order to explore together how it can be changed (if it can) especially since, as you also mentioned, many people are faced with it. We have asked you to think if this can change and also if the persons involved in the story can do something different in order to change it. You have answered positively to these aspects. Now you have the chance to actually show how these situations can be changed. We do not want just to talk about making changes – we want to show them. The power is in your hands. We will show the performance again from the beginning (you already know how it ends). Whenever you consider that somebody involved in the situation can do something different, make a different

decision, have a different attitude, you can come on stage and show it. The story will change and have a different ending only if you show all the ideas that you have when you tell us that this can be changed.

There are some rules that we will follow so your ideas can be better processed:

● If you want to change – CLAP one time – at any moment when the persons on the stage do not act as you think they should. The scene will freeze and you can come and replace the person and show how she/he should act; You come and make a change for that specific moment – once you have finished your intervention CLAP again, the stage will freeze and you go back to the public area;

● You can change .....(and mention their name/position in the story) – The only person you cannot change is ..... (mention the name of the Oppressor). Of course we wish that this kind of person acted differently and didn't cause such situations but they do exist in reality. It is not realistic to change and make them into good people – we want to encourage you to find alternatives that can be used by persons being confronted with such people/situations.

● No physical violence on stage- we do not support physical violence as a solution (to any kind of violence) although you might disagree and here you are invited to think about alternative solutions!

● No magic on stage – we welcome realistic solutions (not that, for example, the victim wins the lottery and moves to another part of the world)

● Only one person from the public is on stage at a time– if you have another idea you can show it after the person on stage finishes.

● Whenever you feel something can be done – clap –we do not go back in time so take advantage of the moment where the change is needed!

“If you don't like what's happening in this story – change it! If you don't change it, it will continue the same way.”

Let's warm our hands – as you will use them for stopping the action. I want you to clap and the speed of clapping will change based on the indicator I show to you from faster to slower and so on.”

The Joker can play with the applause a little bit so the public warms-up- You can also do an extra energizer with the public – the public needs to feel relaxed and ready to act.

*The play is performed the second time*

## MANAGEMENT OF INTERVENTIONS

Usually the first intervention is rather crucial because it is the one that has to break the ice – after it the process is clearer for most of the public members, and they gather courage and more ideas to come on stage.

The Joker needs to observe the public and to see if they are about to make an intervention and also to see who claps first. If nobody is clapping the Joker can clap – so the scene freezes and they ask the public:

“Do you think something can be done in this part of the story? Who can do something different? You were mentioning before that these people can do something different? Here as well or not? Do you want to show it?” – usually people you will say yes and in this way they will feel more encouraged to come on stage.

The team can also have a volunteer (undercover) in the public that can help, coming with a small intervention just to break the ice – and then leave the process in the hands of the public. Before the person from the public goes on stage the Joker asks their name and which actor they wish to change and if it is from this specific moment of the discussion or a little bit earlier?

After each intervention the Joker needs to follow a “protocol” in order to process each idea proposed by the public. If other people want to make changes at this stage they are reminded they can show their ideas after we talk about this one now.

### “PROTOCOL” OF DISCUSSION FOR EACH INTERVENTION:

The Joker asks first the person who made the intervention:

“What was your intention and what do you think you managed to achieve?”

After their answer the Joker asks for another round of applause and sends her/him back to the public. Then the Joker asks the public:

- What do you think? What did it change?
- Any other opinions?
- How realistic is it? Can it happen in reality?

- ☐ Is it possible for that person ....(say the role/name) to act in this way?
- ☐ How many of you agree with this? (raise hands)
- ☐ If you don't agree why do you not agree?
- ☐ We need to decide whether we keep this change to see what will happen next or we try a new alternative? Let's vote!

Depending on the public's responses there are various options:

- ☐ They vote to keep the change so the actor will continue to act as proposed by the public;
- ☐ They vote that the change was not realistic- the play continues the same way until the next intervention;
- ☐ They have another idea for showing a change for the same person and they show it – the 2 alternatives will be compared and one of them will be voted to be kept or not.

The Joker can also ask: "In this specific situation who else can do something different?"

If public members take too much time on stage, repeating the arguments, the Joker can clap so the scene freezes and to ask the public member if he/she still wants to continue or he/she has finished what was in their mind.

The process continues to the next scenes, or maybe new scenes are created: "Now that this person is like this (...) what do you think will happen next? Where is the next moment in the story?"

The Joker can encourage the public to think about the power and the role of other people connected to the situation: "Who else can do something in this kind of situation? Is there anybody who didn't appear on stage but we know is connected in some way with this story and can influence it? How can that person do something?" (These new people, if proposed, need to be acted out by the people that proposed them.)

The story can change, new scene can appear, new persons can be involved if the public considers so and every time they need to be reminded about their goal to prevent the oppressed from taking the bad decision and to reduce the oppression level.

## SUMMARY

“We talked today about ....., we presented an example inspired from real life, you said it also happens in your communities and we tried to explore possibilities of approaching such problems. You mentioned that in such situations person X can do this..., person Y can do this..... etc.”

The list of changes can be extracted from the public.

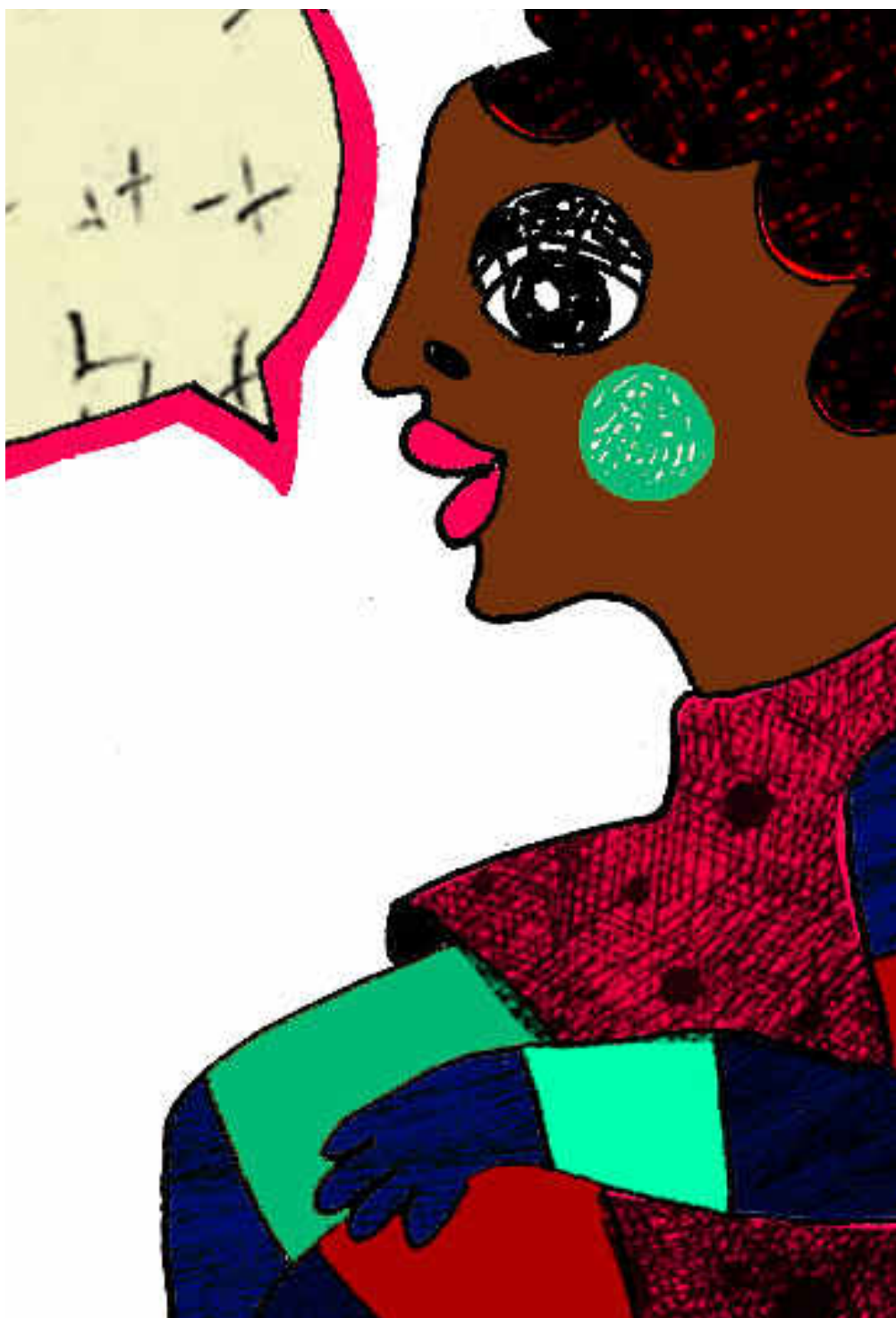
“How did we change the story today? Who did you change and how? Let’s list today’s outcomes ...”

## TRANSFER

“These situations are happening in your community as you mentioned before, people around you are being confronted with such problems. From our discussions and your proposals what are you going to use back in your community? What is applicable there? What do you take with you from this meeting?”

## CONCLUSION

## CLOSURE





## IMPORTANT ADVICE FOR A JOKER

■ **Terminology, words, sentences** used need to be adapted to the public profile in terms of level of understanding, language, dialect etc. It should always be as simple and as clear as possible to avoid misunderstandings and it is recommended for a Joker to put themselves in the shoes of the public and to make it as easy to follow the process as possible. It is preferable not to use terms such as oppression, oppressed, oppressor, etc., these are abstract terms and probably new concepts for most of the public members anyway and it would put an extra mental task for them to work with a new concept and to follow the process at the same time. It is better to focus on the concrete expression of that oppression: discrimination, or domestic violence, etc. than to introduce a new concept and risk confusion.

■ **It is good to repeat what public members** say so as to make sure everybody hears them and also to keep the focus. If discussions go on for long and in many directions it is also good to make summaries of what has been discussed so far from time to time.

■ If a member of public starts explaining what they will do on stage they need to be stopped and **encouraged to show their idea rather than talk about it**. It is important to reinforce these aspects and to set the right tone in this regard – once you allow some people to talk extensively about their ideas, it encourages more and more public members to do that and not to come on the stage.

■ **Do not praise solutions:** “Wonderful! Perfect Idea! etc.” Even if you think this is rather an encouragement, in fact it gives the impression that there are right or wrong solutions. The same applies for the public – you need to encourage the public to assess the impact produced by a certain intervention and **not to let the public start judging each other’s performance** but rather to argue, based on reality, why a certain approach changes or not something in that specific situation.

■ **Try as much as possible to be natural** and not to force yourself to be somebody different – the public has a high capacity of feeling and sensing the energy you send around and they will be more cooperative and open if you are relaxed and natural and not tense to prove yourself to be somebody.

■ **Trust the method and the process**– do not rush with conclusions about what is happening with a certain public – each public has its own pace and if, for example, you panic that they will not find a solution it won’t make them find a solution.

**Forget about being a perfect Joker from the beginning**- every Joker in the field learned from experience how to deal with certain challenging aspects and is in constant training because of that.

**The main challenging aspects for a Joker (especially a beginner)** which will be mostly worked through experience and practice but also with self-awareness and constant auto-evaluation:

**Problematic Forum Theatre Play** – if the play has pitfalls and mistakes in the construction it will heavily affect the work of the Joker. If there are more problems reflected, it looks like there are more oppressors than one (because there are too many strong people, if the oppressed doesn't look powerless, if it is not clear what is happening from one scene to another, if the actors talk very low etc.). The Joker needs to compensate them in working with the public, the questions addressed and the direction of the discussion – but some of them will for sure affect the whole process.

**Ego factor (of the team or of the Joker)** - which can be reflected in a team that doesn't follow the instructions of the Joker (they don't change their roles based on what the public says, don't reduce their oppression because they think it is not realistic, etc.) and generally that is not working well together. If there is no trust among the team members the public will also feel it and it will affect their involvement. The Ego of the Joker can be a problem if it becomes more important than the aim for which they are doing their performance (they shouldn't make any mistakes, they have all the right answers, they should be funny, popular, charismatic, etc.)

**Asking the right questions** (hopefully the guidelines introduced before will help in this regard)

**Maintaining their neutrality**, especially when they are personally concerned and interested in the topic tackled in the performance and when their ego is strong.

**High expectations** – especially for a beginner Joker, expectations are high and sometimes too specific and concrete in terms of how it should happen. Depending on how the Joker copes with unfulfilled expectations, they can be reflected or not in losing neutrality, being aggressive, rushing the process; The expectations of the team can also create difficulties for the Joker;

**Keeping their calm and cool**- very often the Joker panics when people don't talk right away, don't reply immediately to their questions, don't clap, don't raise their hands and start talking more, adding more and more questions, going on a problematic road. On the other hand (based on the same reason) they can get overexcited when people have opinions and ideas and let everybody talk and come on the stage. They lose control of the process, as they don't want to risk stopping the public from doing so.

**Following the structure** –once you have skipped a step it creates problems for the following stages and until a Joker gets more experience it often happens that they either cover some steps too superficially or totally pass some over.

**To create a safe environment-** especially if you go to a public that is affected by the problem exposed and it is very personal to them the Joker needs to be very careful to make the public feel secure to be open, to talk about their lives and their views. The Joker needs to pay attention as well to the reaction of other public members and how they handle what is happening in the room. It is recommended for a beginner not to work with very sensitive topics for the target group as it can lead to reactions that they might not know how to cope with as a first time Joker.

**Managing time-** very often in Forum Theatre Performances many people want to share their opinions and the discussions are long and going on many levels. This takes time and it's really not easy to estimate how long it will take. Beginner Jokers often don't want to stop or rush the discussions (even if they went on for enough time) as they don't want to disrupt the public or they don't know how to do that in a gentle way.

## IMAGE THEATRE – PRESENTATION

Image Theatre is one of the methods included in the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology that uses body postures, statues to depict oppression or aspects related to oppression. It is mostly used as a supporting exercise –technique in the development process of the other methods included in Theatre of the Oppressed (Forum Theatre, Legislative, Rainbow of Desire, etc.) but it is also used as a separate method for community interventions.

There is a large variety of approaches in using Image Theatre due to the image factor as core element which gives more freedom and doors to the practitioners' creativity.

In A.R.T. Fusion we use Image Theatre as a step in Forum Theatre development and also as a separate method with a similar process of implementation in the community to that of Forum Theatre.

The advantages of using Image Theatre include shorter preparation and implementation phases than for Forum Theatre and to a certain extent it can lead to the same impact among the target group. The actors in Image Theatre stand for a long time (as statues), and it is advisable that the size of the public is not larger than 30-40 as the discussion needs to be faster (for the general wellbeing of the actors).

If in Forum Theatre we depict a concrete oppression and we show its process, how it grows, how the power relations are changing and how it leads to an extreme imbalance, in Image Theatre we show a “picture” from this process. This “picture” represents a statue of 5-8 people that includes the main characters exactly as they are reflected in Forum Theatre (oppressed, oppressor, 1-2 allies on each side, 1-2 neutrals). The actors are frozen in a specific body posture that depicts the feelings, thoughts and the relations between the people involved in the situation. The actors do not talk to each other, they do not move and because of these aspects (which might be considered limitative) the actions reflected with their bodies and their positions have to be very simple and clear. You can see examples of pictures from Image Theatre performances in the example section after this presentation.

Usually there is only one image shown to the public which will become the main source for work with the public. The picture taken out of reality to be exposed in an Image Theatre format reflects higher level of oppression, where the power imbalance is much more visible. The Image Theatre team has also the option to create 3-4 images as the equivalent of the scenes in a Forum Theatre play and to lead the change making process only with the body postures from scene to scene. In A.R.T. Fusion we prefer to work only with one image and to explore the possibilities and the reasons behind them more deeply.





## WHAT DOES IMAGE THEATRE LOOK LIKE IN THE COMMUNITY?

*-the task delivered by the Joker is similar in structure to that of Forum Theatre explained previously*

■ The Joker interacts with the public and makes a small introduction – then they ask the public to close their eyes for the volunteers to prepare the image for them.

■ The public opens their eyes and if they wish so they can go closer to understand what the image is about.

■ The Joker talks with the public about the problem, the characters involved and the connection with their reality and about the idea of change to reduce the oppression. The mission of the public is to come with proposals that will change the situation to an image that will satisfy them.

■ The Joker introduces the change making process which in Image Theatre is as follows :

● They can change anybody except the oppressor;

● They can add extra characters that depict roles relevant for the situation at hand;

● They come on stage and they place themselves in the position of the specific actor and show a different body posture that expresses the suggested change- after that the actor will copy the posture showed;

● It is not allowed to show physical violence as a solution;

● Only one person intervenes at a time.

■ The management of interventions is mainly done similarly to what was explained about the Joker role. The public is constantly invited to imagine what would happen if the image stopped being frozen, how the people around would react, to think towards the proposed change.

■ Decisions are made by the public.

After the public is satisfied with the changes and the outcomes the actors are released and the Joker talks alone with the public.

■ Summary

■ Transfer

■ Conclusion + Closure





In Image Theatre the risk that the public sees and interprets something different than what we aimed to show is much higher than in Forum Theatre.

The Joker (as well as the team) needs to be aware of that. The Joker can ask more questions to be sure that the public has seen all the elements from the picture but it is their decision in what manner the topic depicted.

Under no circumstance will the Joker give hints or try to suggest what it in fact is about. There is no “true” answer except the reality as the public sees it and as it makes sense to them. We cannot tell them – “this is what you see!” – “yeah we know you saw differently but in fact it is this”. We will lose the public exactly at that moment. The Joker needs to continue the process, to follow the steps with what the public understood.

From experience we see this technique as helping groups analyse certain problems they are facing more deeply, make connections and identify clearly what solutions are at hand and also be touched emotionally, as human images are very strong. For a beginner Joker and Theatre of the Oppressed group, Image Theatre can be a good start-up that will sharpen some of the competencies that can be taken further in this field and is less emotionally risky for actors or public.

Forum Theatre indeed offers a stronger and more personal experience, due to the verbal and dynamic interaction between the actors and also between the actors and the public but depending on your context and time Image Theatre can as well be a useful method for a great impact in your community and we recommend applying it.

In the next pages you will find examples of Image Theatre in Practice and a small curriculum for developing Image Theatre.

## IMAGE THEATRE      EXAMPLES

“Say No to Drugs”- Image Theatre played in “Act for What You Believe” Project

In the photo of the Image you can identify:

Oppressed- the girl that is about to take drugs

Oppressor – the colleague/friend that is providing drugs

The Ally of the Oppressed – the friend behind her

The Ally of the Oppressor – the boy that consumes drugs

The neutral person- the girl that sits on the chair and does nothing

The public agreed on the topic of drugs and that it is probably a case of peer pressure in which the girl is involved. The play was shown to a public made out of participants from 6 countries and they all mentioned similar cases in their countries.

The solutions proposed were:

- the Ally of the Oppressed to take a more firm stand against the drugs and to provide support to the oppressed
- The neutral person became more interested and more engaged
- These interventions lead to changing the Oppressed as well in order to say no to drugs and leave the table.

The discussion proved to be fruitful and many ideas were shared related to the role and influence of peer groups on young people.



## IMAGE THEATRE WORKSHOPS EXAMPLES

Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners are often requested to deliver workshops on TO in various settings and most of the time it is expected from them to make the beneficiaries of those workshops some sort of experts in only 3 hours. The sad part is that some practitioners accept the challenge and squeeze in those 3 hours everything (including Forum Theatre) – as a result, there is a superficial understanding of the methods (but claimed to be known now at deeper levels), there are emotional risks for the beneficiaries as they were rushed in the process and also (maybe worst) huge misunderstandings of how these methods are supposed to work and what they were designed for. There are people who tend to believe that Forum Theatre is a training method and have no clue about oppression and the community change that can come through FT and for which it was developed to begin with.

We believe that each TO facilitator(of any method) has a responsibility in how they treat the method, how they introduce it to the others and what kind of message they are sending across in this regard and this responsibility shouldn't be underestimated or overlooked.

Because in Image Theatre shorter time is needed for the preparation and also for the implementation phase, it is a handy method for quick initiatives and also for workshops settings. If you do want to deliver a TO workshop an Image Theatre one is adequate and can be easily introduced to the participants and it can also be easily adapted to other contexts.

The structure of a 3-hour or 1-day workshop focuses on warming up the group, expressing emotions, working with their bodies and postures, image theatre preparation and then Image Theatre. The assumptions are that the group doesn't know each other from before.

The activities are inspired from the Forum Theatre curriculum and they will not be detailed here as they can be found described in the previous pages.

## STRUCTURE OF 3HOURS IMAGE THEATRE WORKSHOP

- ☐ Introduction (explaining the context and what will happen in this session) – 10 minutes
- ☐ Carousel-getting to know each other – 15 minutes
- ☐ Preparatory exercises- 60 minutes
  - Pass the beat- 10 minutes
  - Space exercises – 15 minutes
  - Blind shake – 10 minutes
  - 1,2,3-4,5,6- 15 minutes
  - Statues and emotions – 10 minutes
- ☐ Image Theatre main concepts – introduction – 10 minutes
- ☐ Images of oppression – 70minutes (groups prepare an image of an issue from their reality – the facilitator will be the joker for the others, who form the public)
- ☐ Final debriefing – transfer to their reality.- 15 minutes

## STRUCTURE OF A ONE DAY IMAGE THEATRE WORKSHOP (6 HOURS)

- Introduction (explaining the context and what will happen in this session) – 10 minutes
- Shaking hands – 5 minutes
- Carousel-getting to know each other – 15 minutes
- Preparatory exercises- 90 minutes
  - Pass the beat- 10 minutes
  - Space exercises – 10 minutes
  - Blind shake – 10 minutes
  - 1,2,3-4,5,6- 15 minutes
  - Statues and emotions – 15 minutes
  - Museum of emotions – 20 minutes
  - Stop and Action- 10 minutes
- Bears and Princes (or adapted versions)- 20 minutes
- Circle of statues- 30 minutes
- Power and more power (statues)- 40 minutes
- What is oppression – discussion -20 minutes
- Image Theatre main concepts – introduction – 10 minutes
- Images of oppression – 1.5 hours (groups prepare an image of an issue from their reality – the facilitator will be the joker for the others, who form the public)
- Final debriefing – transfer to their reality- 30 minutes.

## CONSULTANTS (EUROPE AND AFRICA)

This toolkit was designed and structured in such a way that a person who has never worked with Theatre of the Oppressed Methods (any of them) but has interests and motivation for the field, can have a basic introduction and a detailed proposed practical curriculum to be used in their work with various beneficiaries. The material has included so far concrete examples, methodological details and advice, plus detailed step-by-step descriptions of how to apply these techniques for social change.

We also consider that beginners and first time facilitators in the field need some support and advice from other experienced people and we always recommend looking in their communities for such people that could provide this support. People that have worked with these methods can guide the new start-up Forum Theatre workers and give answers to some of their specific questions. Especially if somebody has never participated practically, as an actor, or has not even seen such methods in reality it is important to be in touch with experienced people for consultation purposes.

If it happens that nobody knows or has experience in these methods around you and you really want to start working with them, the authors and their partners want to assure you of their support. We list here some of the experienced people (as actors, facilitators, Jokers, multipliers) that could provide guidance and consultation if needed so please feel free to contact them. They are from Europe (Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia) and Africa (Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda) and they have all worked with Forum and Image Theatre as described in this manual so it is most likely that their guidance or consultation will come from the same approach you got to know in this manual.

Below you will find their names, details about their experience and contact details (e-mail address) as of November 2013. The authors don't guarantee the validity of these addresses (after 2013) so in case you cannot reach somebody from the list you can write to A.R.T. Fusion Association for updates.

### ANDREEA-LOREDANA TUDORACHE – ROMANIA

Has been working since 2004 with Theatre of the Oppressed, mostly Forum and Image Theatre, but also Invisible Theatre and occasionally Rainbow of Desire and Newspaper Theatre. Worked and works with the methods in Europe, Asia and Africa.

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### OANA MUCEA – ROMANIA

Has been working since 2011 with Theatre of the Oppressed, mostly Forum and Image Theatre. Worked and works with the methods in Europe and Africa.

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### A.R.T. FUSION ASSOCIATION RESOURCE CENTRE – ROMANIA

The association has been active since 2004 and along the years many of their practitioners have worked together in Europe, Asia and Africa. You can contact A.R.T. Fusion to be directed towards more consultants from A.R.T. Fusion or to connect to other collaborators from around the world.

[www.artfusion.ro](http://www.artfusion.ro)

Contact details- [art\\_fusion\\_romania@yahoo.com](mailto:art_fusion_romania@yahoo.com)

### AJA ROGINA – SLOVENIA

Has been working since 2008 with Theatre of the Oppressed, mostly Forum and Image Theatre. Worked and works with the methods in Europe and Africa.

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### SASKA VITANOVA – BULGARIA

Has been working since 2012 with Theatre of the Oppressed, mostly Forum Theatre in Bulgaria.

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### RHODA OKOBEA AMPENE – GHANA

Has been working since 2012 with Theatre of the Oppressed, mostly Forum Theatre in Ghana.

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### IRENE HANCE DONALD – TANZANIA

Has been working since 2012 with Theatre of the Oppressed, mostly Forum Theatre in Tanzania

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### MIRIAM TALWISA – UGANDA

Has been working since 2012 with Theatre of the Oppressed, mostly Forum Theatre in Uganda

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## RESOURCES

### THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED AND PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED

**Boal, Augusto** - Games for Actors and Non-Actors (*London: Routledge (1992)*)

**Boal, Augusto** - Legislative Theatre (*London: Routledge (1998)*)

**Boal, Augusto** - Theatre of the Oppressed (*London: Pluto (1979)*)

**Freire, Paulo** - Pedagogy of the Oppressed (*New York: Continuum (1970)*)

### TOOLKITS (WEBSITES WERE CHECKED IN NOVEMBER 2013)

A.R.T. Fusion – TO Collection of Practices

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/129839118/Theatre-of-the-Oppressed-collection-of-Practices-2013>

UNESCO-CCIVS Project- Act, Learn and Teach (Toolkit for Youth in aRica)

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001492/149283e.pdf>

Youth ARTS Handbook: Arts Programs for Youth at Risk

<http://www.americansforthearts.org/youtharts/pdf/youtharts.pdf>

Participatory Theatre for Conflict Transformation

<http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/drcongo/pdf/Participatory-Theatre-Manual-EN.pdf>

A guide to interactive drama for sexual and reproductive health with young people

[http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/\\_temp\\_/Alliance\\_drama\\_557\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/_temp_/Alliance_drama_557_EN.pdf)

Theatre-Based Techniques for Youth Peer Education: A Training Manual

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/ypeer-theatre.pdf>

### MANUALS, ACTIVITIES, TOOLKITS

<https://www.salto-youth.net>



NOTES

## NOTES

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