

OUR PLANET ACTS

6 THEATRE WORKSHOPS TO
ADDRESS THE CLIMATE
CRISIS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE



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6 THEATRE WORKSHOPS TO ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CRISIS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Global climate change is one of the greatest challenges and most important problems of our time, manifesting itself as extreme phenomena impacting both nature and human societies.

In Europe, the figures are particularly significant: between 1980 and 2020, the economic impact of extreme weather and climate events was between €450 billion and €520 billion, according to data presented by the European Environment Agency (2022). All these figures illustrate the horrendous impact of such natural disasters as floods, heatwaves, wildfires, and pollution events striking our water and soil.

Flooding, for instance, accounted for approximately 43% of total economic losses from extreme climate events in the European Union in the 21st century to date. Recent events keep bringing out this pattern: in Spain, following a severe drought, the medieval church of Sant Romà de Sau appeared as a consequence of the draining of a reservoir near Barcelona; in 2024, an upper-level cut-off low brought intense rainfall, leading to disastrous flooding in the Valencian Community, resulting in dozens of deaths, displacement, and irreparable losses.

Heatwaves have also had deadly effects, particularly in the southern European cities. A study published in *Nature Medicine* has warned that, as temperatures rise, there could be 2.3 million more heat-related deaths in European cities by 2099, and southern cities such as Madrid, Rome, Athens, and Nicosia would be the most affected (Peel & Mooney, 2025).

Apart from the human toll, the economic cost of such events is gigantic. Extreme weather conditions have caused economic damages in excess of €145 billion in the EU over the past decade alone, as per Eurostat (Eurostat, 2022). All these clearly indicate the necessity of earnest implementation of actions to adjust to this reality, which will continue to impact our lives in the future.

Education and awareness, in this scenario, are essential tools to equip upcoming generations with the information and capabilities to confront the climate crisis.



This guidebook has one purpose: to share effective tools to carry out workshops that will make young people more aware of environmental matters and activate them to take action and be a part of the solution. Through the use of non-formal theatre and creativity based methods, we wish to transform concern into action, creating safe spaces for the participants to experiment, create, and reflect on the situation Europe is facing further empowering their engagement with nature protection.

Our Planet Acts is a co-funded project of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission, promoting transnational collaboration between three organisations from different European countries. Each area has its specific environmental problems today: in Spain, wildfires and droughts are reaching a historical peak; in Italy, heatwaves, air pollution, and soil contamination severely affect public health in certain regions; and in the Netherlands, rising sea levels threaten to overwhelm densely populated coastal areas. These regional problems are part of a shared global reality that affects all European citizens, and hence international coordination is necessary. By working together, we understand the issue better and devise long-term, effective, and sustainable solutions.

In this guide, you will find detailed descriptions of workshops for investigating various aspects of climate change with young people. Each workshop includes practical objectives, theoretical backgrounds, step-by-step facilitation instructions, materials required, evaluation and reflection ideas, as well as field observations and feedback from the facilitators who piloted these activities. In addition, complementary readings and resources are provided for deeper investigation of the topic area.

The non-formal approach welcomes young people to be active and creative and embraces diversity and inclusion in learning. Rather than inciting fear or hopelessness, these workshops aim to inspire and empower young people with practical tools to be change-makers, both inside and outside the classroom. By using art as a force for change, they promote cooperation and personal development in our communities.



1. RISE OF SEA LEVEL

In the past few years, Europe has witnessed a rise in devastating flood events, many of which are increasingly attributed to the effects of climate change. Notably, the catastrophic floods in Germany and Belgium in July 2021, which resulted in over 200 fatalities, were linked to unusually intense and persistent rainfall driven by a warmer atmosphere. Climate models indicate that global warming enhances the water-holding capacity of the air, leading to more extreme precipitation events. This intensification of hydrological extremes highlights the role of climate change in altering rainfall patterns and exacerbating flood risks across the continent (Axios, 2021)

The Netherlands has always faced the challenge of flooding due to its low-lying geography. Around 26% of the country is actually below sea level, and over 50% of the population lives in areas that are at risk of flooding. This makes flood protection a big concern, especially with rising sea levels caused by climate change. Experts predict the sea level could rise by 1–2 meters by the end of this century, which would increase the flood risk even more (ABN AMRO, n.d.).

Historically, the Netherlands has had some devastating floods. One of the worst was the North Sea Flood in 1953, which was caused by a combination of a high tide and a strong storm. The result was tragic, with nearly 2,000 people losing their lives and thousands of buildings being damaged or destroyed. In 1995, the country experienced another significant flood, this time from rivers like the Rhine and Meuse. Although no major disaster occurred, about a quarter of a million people had to be evacuated as a precaution (PMC, 2012).

In response to these dangers, the Dutch have developed some of the world's most advanced flood protection systems. After the 1953 flood, they created the Delta Works, an impressive series of dams, barriers, and levees designed to prevent another disaster of that scale. The country also has an extensive network of dikes—over 3,700 kilometres in total—that protect it from the sea, rivers, and lakes. In recent years, a program called "Room for the River" was introduced, which gives rivers more space to flood safely without endangering people or property (SpringerOpen, 2024).



The threat of flooding is expected to grow as climate change leads to more extreme weather, like heavy rains and rising sea levels. To prepare for this, the Netherlands is making big investments in infrastructure and natural solutions to manage water more effectively (ScienceDirect, 2023).

Despite these challenges, the Dutch have become world leaders in flood management, constantly finding new ways to protect their country from the water. What this means for young people living in The Hague is that if a 100–200 cm sea level rise happens, half of The Hague as we know it today would be under water, along with small cities and villages around it. Some parts of The Hague are at a -1 meter sea level. It is needless to say how devastating this perspective is for the Dutch and how threatening it feels to know these statistics. Young people are sensitive, and the outlook of having their homes under water in a century is paralysing. Young people are also receptive to different truths, persistent and creative if they are empowered to find solutions.

The sea level rise threatens a lot of big cities worldwide, since big cities are traditionally built close to water. This problem is definitely a global one, and so it should be addressed as well. There are no countries uninvolved in the global problem of sea level rise. (Axios, 2021).

Empowering young people to take action on big problems like climate change and flooding, rather than feeling overwhelmed or paralysed, requires a few key approaches. There is a way we can help them feel capable and motivated with the help of drama and theatre exercises!

Through education, showing positive examples, focusing on the local impact they can have with their innovative approach, and making them realise that this is a community problem which we all have to face together! Let's emphasise progress, not perfection: One major source of paralysis is the fear of not doing enough or making a mistake. Emphasising that any action is better than no action, and that progress comes in steps, can help young people feel more at ease taking the first step. It's important to remind them that they don't need to solve the entire problem on their own, and that even small efforts contribute to a larger movement.



WORKSHOP - FLOODING

OBJECTIVES

- To understand different kinds of flooding
- To learn how flooding affects everyone
- To use physical theatre to communicate

LEVEL OF THEATRE EXPERIENCE



MATERIALS AND SPACE

- Chia/linseeds
- Bin bag and tape
- Large open space to move
- Speaker for music
- Tables and chairs

ACTIVITIES

Think about the different kinds of floods

In 1 minute, think about all the different kinds of floods that could occur and, as a group, act them out so the rest of the room can guess. For example, a tsunami or tidal wave, a river flood, heavy rain, a hurricane, dams, melting ice, and an earthquake (causing a tsunami). Each team that goes will remember the previous team, so it gets more competitive.

The more each team guesses, the more points they earn – they have to shout their team name to get the guess. Each team has one minute to act and guess.

The facilitator keeps a tally of the scores for each team.

The stress of flooding

Flooding is impossible to respond to quickly. That's why advance warnings are important. Use two ways to demonstrate how stressful and out-of-control flooding can be.

Drop a tablespoon of linseed and chia seeds on a bin bag taped to the floor and ask an individual to pick up as many seeds as possible in 30 seconds. Optionally, another person can push them, representing the added pressure and futility of the task of responding to a crisis. Reflect on how it feels.



Flash Floods

Flash floods can advance 2.74 meters per second – so that's fast.

In small groups, each team is given a table, four chairs, belongings (rucksacks, phones), and two members who play “floppy bodies.”

Teams have one minute to try to get everything out of the classroom door — or an imaginary exit.

Movement

Explore as a class moving around using the four movement components developed by Rudolf von Laban, a pioneer of modern dance and movement analysis.

1. **Direction** (direct or indirect)
2. **Weight** (heavy or light)
3. **Speed** (quick or sustained)
4. **Flow** (bound or free)

These combine to form 8 basic movement qualities (called "effort actions"):

1. Wring	5. Glide
2. Press	6. Float
3. Flick	7. Punch
4. Dab	8. Slash

Split the class in half and assign one movement type. Have them move from the front to the back of the room to music, first in slow motion, “as if they were running from a flood.”

Then, experiment with combinations, such as:

- Everyone *Slash*
- *Glide* and then *Float*



For more advanced groups (and if time allows), further explore and refine slow motion movement.



Power/futility and empathy

As a group, create a scene of a house/place being flooded using the Laban movement methods. (You can be people or the objects.)

You are trying to show the power and the futility, but also to get the audience to feel empathy for people affected by floods.

The scene can last 30 seconds, or 1 minute if it's an advanced class.

We will provide music to perform to, but as a next step, participants could choose their own music.

You can take it further by developing short verses of creative writing or spoken words to accompany the action.



For advanced groups, add in freeze moments and explore performance qualities, such as facial expressions.

REFLECTION PROPOSAL

The facilitator may use the following questions to lead the reflection:

- What's one totally unexpected idea from today that actually made you think differently?
- If you could send one message about climate action into the future in a bottle, what would it say?

ADDITIONAL READING

- Learn right (2024, October 9). *Floods for kids | Learn about the three types of floods* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4yuzWuMLGQ&t=8s>
- Newlove, J., & Dalby, J. (2019). *Laban for all*. Routledge



3. WATER POLLUTION

The situation of fresh water sources in Europe is in dire need of undergoing resilience and recovery actions, since just 37% of surface waters are in good or better (compared to the previous year) ecological status and only 29% are in good chemical status (European Environment Agency, 2024a, p.6).

Groundwater, on the other hand, is in a better situation, 77% of it being in good chemical status. However, it faces the threat of pesticides that pollute 10% of groundwater and 14% failing due to nutrients (European Environment Agency, 2024a, p.10). Nutrient pollution refers to “where septic systems are placed near drinking water wells or nutrient-sensitive surface waters” (Mallin, 2009, p. 78).

Going forward, ensuring water sources are not polluted further, the following pressures need to be addressed (European Environment Agency, 2024a, p.11):

- Diffuse sources, such as atmospheric deposition. Diffuse sources of pollution are those that reach bodies of water indirectly through runoff, subsurface flow, or leaching into groundwater. Classic examples include leachate of nutrients from fertilisers, nitrogen oxides from air pollution, and oil and heavy metal runoff in urban areas, with the most severe impacts occurring during storms (OCDE, 2017, p.17).
- Changes to the physical features and natural flow of rivers, lakes, transitional and coastal waters (51% of surface waters). Rehabilitation measures like riverbank restoration, river remeandering, management of sediments, and reconnection of rivers with floodplains enhance ecological status and facilitate the recovery of habitats and species addressed in EU nature policies (European Environment Agency, 2024a, p.30).
- Agriculture: Agriculture is currently the main source of pollution in both surface and groundwater. The intensive use of fertilisers and pesticides leads to the infiltration of toxic chemicals into aquifers, or they are washed by rainfall into rivers and lakes, causing their eutrophication. Extensive farming, lack of regulation, the widespread use of chemical products and fertilisers, and intensive livestock farming have resulted in high levels of nitrogen across large regions of Europe, particularly in central and western areas, significantly worsening the chemical status of our waters.



- Point sources, such as those from wastewater discharges. Industrial plant and wastewater treatment plant effluents pollute water with oxygen-demanding substances, nutrients, and poisonous chemicals whose impact depends on the intensity of the treatment before release. In the past several decades, point-source pollution has lessened drastically due to improved wastewater treatment in Europe (European Environment Agency, 2023).
- Abstraction: Most abstracted water from fresh water sources (up to 74%) comes from surface waters. In terms of where this water is used, cooling in electricity generation (34%), agriculture (29%) and public supply (21%) are the main sectors, followed by manufacturing (15%) (European Environment Agency, 2024b). Considering that the energy consumption is increasing, it is a problem bound to grow.

Water pollution, as we can see, is a highly complex topic, and can be hard to explore in youth and educational settings. Art in its various forms has always been a channel through which we can reflect on societal changes. One of the biggest plays in European theatre history, *An Enemy of the People* by Henrik Ibsen, is precisely about a small community that is faced with the dichotomy of whether to address the pollution of their waters or protect their economy.

During this workshop, built around the core idea behind this play brought to present times, young people will take over the roles of various characters and debate. We will use theatre to voice all the different opinions on this issue and reflect on the impact we can have on policy making, and how different groups defend their interests and rather than what is best for the environment and the common good.



WORKSHOP - AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

OBJECTIVES

- To build confidence in public speaking
- To develop critical thinking skills
- To reflect on how climate challenges are dealt with socially

LEVEL OF THEATRE EXPERIENCE



MATERIALS AND SPACE

- A room in which participants can move freely
- One chair per participant
- Character sheets
- Explanatory sheet for the mayor

ACTIVITIES

[The ninja](#)

Participants stand in a circle. They will follow this sequence:

- One participant raises his arms, saying "HI".
- Both participants beside him mimic cutting him in half, saying "HA".
- The first participant lowers his arms, pointing at some other person in the circle, saying "HU".
- The participant who has received the "HU" starts the sequence again.

[Characters](#)

In this activity, participants will have to create their own approach to the given characters. They will be presented with the following situation:

In a coastal town, a heated debate has erupted over the future of its main attraction: the public spa. Dr. Thomas Stockmann, a local physician, has discovered that the spa's water supply is contaminated and poses a severe health risk to visitors. However, closing the spa for repairs would mean financial disaster for the town, which relies heavily on the tourists the spa brings in. Today, the participants will take on the roles of the townspeople, local leaders, and business owners, each with their perspectives on whether to shut down the spa for repairs or keep it open despite the dangers.



They will receive a sheet of paper with some questions about their character that they need to complete. The characters are as follows:

1. Doctor
2. Mayor
3. Owner of the spa
4. Director of the newspaper
5. Journalist in the newspaper
6. Worker in the spa
7. Firefighter
8. Waiter in a pizzeria
9. Teacher in the local school
10. Owner of a restaurant
11. Police officer
12. Owner of a butchery

If the group is larger, new characters can be added, or some participants can share the same character and work in small groups.

The doctor and the teacher must be in favour of doing the renovation for the spa, while the mayor, the owner of the spa and the director of the newspaper must be against. The rest of the participants can choose where their character stands, but all of them must keep it secret until the next activity.

Once participants have completed their sheets, they are asked to stand up and start walking around the room. They will be asked to walk at the same speed they imagine their character would walk. They must move their whole body at the same speed. They will be asked to, for example, raise their hand at the speed of their character. Then they will be asked to imagine whether their character has any nervous tic (twitch their hand, twirl a pen in their hands, cough...)

TIPS

Usually, if the group has not finished writing their sheet by the time you ask them to finish, it means they are quite engaged in the activity. On the other hand, if they finish early and without putting that much of an effort, it can mean they are disengaged from the activity, and you may ask them out loud the questions from their sheet for them to reflect on while they are walking around the room in the next step.



The Assembly

Once the participants have developed the characters, they will exit the room. One by one, they will enter and sit in a circle of chairs. The mayor will be the first to enter the room and will receive a paper with the following instructions:

You are hosting an assembly for the whole town to make the decision whether to renovate the spa, which will be a long process and cost several jobs, but will ensure the visitors' health, or to keep it open as usual.

While you are in favour of keeping it open and will not change your decision, you need to seem neutral to the rest of the neighbours, not to alienate them before the upcoming election. You will moderate the assembly. The assembly will end when all neighbours have shared their opinion at least once and two-thirds of the attendants vote for the same option.

When the rest of the participants enter, he will welcome them and start the assembly. Participants need to stay in character for the whole debate. The facilitator will need to remind them to keep the same speed of their character and not forget about their nervous tic.

Once the assembly finishes, the participants will be asked to break out of character.

REFLECTION PROPOSAL

The facilitator may use the following questions to lead the reflection:

- Did you share the same point of view as your character? If not, was it easy or difficult to defend an idea you do not agree with?
- Can you relate what happened with something that has happened in the real world?
- Do you imagine an assembly debating this issue with the same people would go as it did during the activity?

ADDITIONAL READING

This workshop is based on the play *An Enemy of the People* by Henrik Ibsen. Having read this play is recommended.



4. AIR POLLUTION

One of the world's largest health and environmental problems is represented by air pollution, a “contamination of the indoor or outdoor environment by any chemical, physical or biological agent that modifies the natural characteristics of the atmosphere” (WHO, n.d.). Although natural factors also play a role, the primary contributors to this phenomenon are human activities like livestock and agriculture, means of transport, household combustion devices and industrial facilities.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 99% of the global population breathes air that exceeds the WHO guideline limits and contains high levels of pollutants, such as particulate matter, carbon monoxide, ozone, nitrogen dioxide, and sulfur dioxide. These pollutants represent an important threat to human health, as they are linked to asthma, heart disease and stroke, and they are associated with 7 million premature deaths annually. According to the World Air Quality Report 2024 (IQAir, 2025), in 2024, only 17% of the global cities complied with the WHO air pollution guidelines, and the five most polluted countries in 2024 were Chad, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and India.

Even if they're not in that list, European countries also have critical levels of air pollution: in fact, in 2021, 97% of the urban population in Europe was exposed to concentrations of fine particulate matter above the health-based guideline level set by the World Health Organisation. In particular, Central-eastern Europe reports the highest concentrations of particulate matter: according to a recent report from the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the countries which suffer the most deaths from pollution are Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, Bulgaria and Montenegro.

Although air quality is generally better in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe, Italy represents an exception: in fact, more than a third of those living in the Po valley, in the northern part of the country, breath air that is four times the WHO figure for the most dangerous airborne particulates (Taylor and Duncan, 2023). The critical environmental conditions of this area are linked both to its geography and to the presence of big cities, with high levels of industrialisation.



The Italian NGO Legambiente observed that, in 2024, 25 important cities exceeded the daily limits of PM10's concentrations (35 days with a daily average of 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mc}$), and even more cities didn't respect the limits suggested by the WHO (annual average of 15 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mc}$) (Legambiente, 2025).

As per the latest European guideline, in the next five years, many Italian cities will need to reduce their annual concentration of particulate matter by 28-39%. Significant progress is still needed to reach this goal, but, as the latest Legambiente report highlights, it can be achieved by implementing specific actions and policies: upgrading local public transport, adopting zero-emission heating systems, extending cycle and pedestrian routes, and reducing intensive farming.

For these actions to be implemented collectively, it is essential that all citizens, especially the youngest ones, have the tools to know the problem and what solutions can be put in place. The OPA workshop "The weight of air" is intended to be a first step in raising awareness and empowerment of young people, to remind them that they can be part of the solution.

Through the workshop young people understand that each of us in our daily lives can take small actions to improve the air quality of the place where we live, e.g. by preferring to use a bicycle or public transport instead of a car, lowering the home heating by a few degrees during the winter, preferring to buy in shops rather than on line, and not shopping superlative goods.

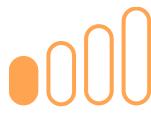


WORKSHOP - THE WEIGHT OF AIR

OBJECTIVES

- To give students more information about air pollution in the area where they live
- To provide participants with tools to communicate better, also through their bodies
- To enhance collaboration within the class
- To make students aware that they can contribute through daily actions

LEVEL OF THEATRE EXPERIENCE



MATERIALS AND SPACE

- Paper and markers
- Music speaker
- Articles about air pollution

ACTIVITIES

Presentation and warm-up

After a simple game to present the trainers, the participants, and the activity, the class does some warm-up exercises.

How does it breathe?

In a circle, the group, led by the trainers, does some breathing exercises. Then, with shoulders toward the centre, the trainer asks: *How does **** (a tree / a car / the snow, etc.) breathe?*

At the count of three, everyone turns to the centre and performs a brief action to represent it. The object can be a natural element or something you can find in a city. Then the trainer chooses another participant to become the leader of the next round.



Walk and make a statue

The group starts walking in the space, following the trainer's instructions.

First, the air is very pure and light, and participants are invited to move lightly as the air. Then, the atmosphere becomes foggy and the fog gets thicker and thicker, and also the quality of the walk changes. Participants have to move the air with their bodies until they stop.

They start again at speed 1 as the music starts. The speed increases, and trainers help participants by giving them different scenarios (a relaxed walk in the park, a busy day in the city, a rush to catch the bus...).

When the music stops, the group also stops and observes how their breathing has changed according to their walking speed.

The group begins walking again at a normal pace. When the music stops, participants must make a statue of:

- The thinnest...
- The strongest...
- The softest...
- The highest...
- The shortest...
- The largest...

... character they can imagine.

Later, they are invited to make statues in small groups (of three or four people), representing natural or urban elements suggested by the trainer. Then, the groups create "postcards" with their bodies to represent a title given by the trainer (e.g., traffic jam, hiking in the mountains, workers in a factory...).

At the end, the postcards are animated by the group, as if the statues could breathe.



Improvisation

The group, in a circle, reflects on a question: *What can I do to improve air quality?*

After brainstorming, students are divided into smaller groups (maximum 5 people). Each group has to perform a scene in response to another question: *What can the school do, with our help, to improve air quality?*

The trainer randomly assigns each group a role and a task. They can represent:

- A group of activists asking the headmaster/headmistress to take more sustainable actions to improve air quality
- A group of scientists trying to convince the headmaster/headmistress to adopt a specific solution to improve air quality
- A group of students who want to be elected as school representatives (student council), and who create an electoral program to propose solutions which could improve air quality.

The trainers can also give participants some articles or sources of information about the topic, from which the students have to take inspiration.

REFLECTION PROPOSAL

At the end, the trainer asks the group some questions: *Have you discovered something new? What do you think about this experience?*

Each participant can write their feedback anonymously on a paper sheet, make a paper airplane with it and throw it in the air. Then the students walk around the class, take one airplane and read it out loud.

ADDITIONAL READING

- Bernardi, C. (2004). *Il teatro sociale. L'arte tra disagio e cura*. FrancoAngeli.



5. SOIL POLLUTION

One of the most essential resources for all terrestrial life is the one under our feet: soil. The land we step on, in fact, “is involved in the regulation and provision of many key ecosystem services that are essential to the environment and human health and well-being” (Global assessment of soil pollution, 2021): it is the basis of the agri-food system, the largest active carbon store, after the ocean, and a custodian of biodiversity, which contributes to the cycling of nutrients and carbon, regulates the emergence of pests and diseases, and serves as a source of pharmaceuticals that contribute to boost our health.

However, global soils are under threat, because of phenomena like erosion, loss of soil organic carbon and biodiversity, pollution, acidification and sodification, salinisation, nutrient imbalance, compaction, sealing and waterlogging. In particular, soil pollution - a chemical degradation process that consumes fertile soils - may be invisible to human eyes, but it compromises the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe.

The main sources of contaminants contributing to soil pollution (in order of importance) are human activities like industries, mining, waste treatment, agriculture, fossil fuels extraction and processing, and transport emissions. “Pollution knows no borders; contaminants move through soil, air and water and enter into agri-food systems, affecting the environment and human health” (Global assessment of soil pollution, 2021).

According to the report, although the main sources of pollution varies by region, the biggest problem in Western Europe and North America is the heavy industrialisation, mostly farming in Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, mining in sub-Saharan Africa, and in North Africa, urban pollution is predicted to be the biggest source of contamination.



In Europe, soil pollution is widespread, even if its intensity and impact vary across the continent. The EU soil strategy imposes that by 2050, soil pollution should be reduced to levels no longer considered harmful to human health and the environment, and it prioritises pollution prevention at source.

The problem is equally serious in Italy: according to the Re Soil Foundation (2023), every 100 m² of soil, 47 m² has some form of degradation, and 80% of agricultural land is undergoing erosion phenomena. Data about soil sealing is particularly alarming: as described by ISPRA, artificial soil cover concerns 7,14%, while the European average is 4,2%. In Lombardia, Veneto and Campania, soil sealing exceeds even 10% of the soil.

To tackle such a serious, yet invisible problem, it is essential to talk and raise consciousness about it. For this reason, the workshop aims to help young participants understand and experience what soil pollution is by enabling them to discover what positive role they can play in a complex chain of causes and effects.



WORKSHOP - ALL DOWN TO EARTH

OBJECTIVES

- Enhance collaboration within the class through theatre exercises and make participants more aware of their bodies
- Give students more information about soil pollution in the area where they live
- Make students aware that every action, even small, has consequences

LEVEL OF THEATRE EXPERIENCE



MATERIALS AND SPACE

- Newspapers with specific information about soil pollution
- Trash (plastic bottles, batteries, aluminium, cards describing chemical pollutants, etc.) and a rug
- Sheets and markers
- Music speaker
- Mushroom card for the game Human-Animals-Trees

ACTIVITIES

Human/Animal/Tree

After a simple game of presentation, the group does some warm-up exercises.

The class is then divided into 2 to 4 groups (depending on the number of participants and the size of the space). The game consists of a challenge of 4-5 rounds. The two groups stand in front of each other, and in secret, each group decides what to perform with their bodies: a human, an animal, or a tree. The trainer counts to three, and the group shows their choice. Humans win against animals, animals win against trees, and trees win against humans.

Each group has a joker card representing a mushroom, which wins against everything, but can only be used once.



Small Actions and Big Consequences

In a circle, the trainer makes a very small movement. The person next to them must reproduce the movement but make it slightly bigger. The next person makes it even bigger, and so on, until the last person, whose movement will be enormous. Then, another person from the group becomes the leader and suggests a new little movement.

Theatrical boxers

The class is divided into pairs, standing face to face (like in a mirror). In couples, each partner touches the other with any part of their body they choose (head, shoulder, arm, finger, etc.) using different amounts of strength. The touch must never hurt the other.

Both partners can explore different levels of intensity: the touch can be very soft and small, or very big and delicate too. The receiver absorbs the impulse, feels what it generates in their body, and then reacts with a movement of the same intensity of the touch they received.

Then roles alternate, and this continues for 4–5 minutes. Soft music is needed to create a comfortable atmosphere.

TIPS

The two above written activities help young people to keep in mind that every action, whether good or bad, made by an individual, even a small one, could have very big consequences. These activities help to think about actions and reactions. We underline the usefulness of raising this kind of awareness in young people, not through discussion or other rational means, but by offering them a physical experience.

Sensitive Rug

After a short break, the trainers place a large rug on the floor with some rubbish underneath: plastic bottles, batteries, wastepaper, plastic bags, and cards describing pollutants (antibiotics, pesticides, copper, etc.).

Students walk on the rug, paying attention to what they feel with their feet. They can also sit down and touch the objects under the rug. They try to guess what's underneath and say it out loud.



In a second phase, the rug is removed and students see what they were walking on. In small groups (maximum 5 people), they can choose one polluting element and begin researching it. Trainers will provide newspapers and articles about soil pollution in the local area, especially linked to the elements found under the rug.

Improvisation

Using the same small groups, students create and perform a short scene inspired by the information they collected. The trainer randomly assigns a narrative genre to each group (musical, crime, Spanish telenovela, romance, comedy, horror, etc.).

Groups have 20 minutes to create the scene, which is then performed in front of the rest of the class.

TIPS

According to an ancient Confucian saying, "If I listen, I forget, if I see, I remember, if I do, I understand". Students improve their knowledge and gain information more easily by playing a game and collaborating with their companions to develop creatively what they have learned. When developing activities, we suggest avoiding face-to-face explanations and putting the scientific content into an amusing experience.

REFLECTION PROPOSAL

At the end, the group takes a moment to share feedback about the workshop. Each participant draws their own footprint on a paper and writes their feelings inside.

Footprints are mixed on the floor, and everyone can walk around the class to read what their classmates wrote.

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6. EXTREME WEATHER

In recent years, whole Europe has experienced an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, a trend closely linked to climate change. Severe heat waves, such as those in 2019 and 2022, have shattered temperature records across the continent, while intense storms and heavy precipitation events have led to widespread flooding, particularly in countries like Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Scientific assessments attribute these changes to a warming atmosphere, which increases moisture content and alters weather patterns (EEA, n.d.).

The Netherlands is increasingly experiencing the effects of climate change, especially through more extreme weather. Scientific observations and projections by the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI, 2023) show clear trends driven by global warming.

Temperatures are rising, with the Dutch average temperature having increased by about 1.7°C since 1901. This has led to more frequent and intense heat waves, especially in urban areas where heat is trapped more easily.

Worldwide, rainfall patterns are also changing. The atmosphere can hold more moisture as it warms, resulting in heavier and more sudden rainfalls. This raises the risk of flash floods in cities and overflows in rivers like the Rhine and Meuse, particularly in winter (ResearchGate, n.d.).

Storms are shifting in both path and intensity. While the total number of storms hasn't risen significantly, storm surges along the North Sea coast are becoming more dangerous, especially when combined with sea level rise, which has accelerated in recent decades. Projections estimate a possible rise of up to 1.2 meters by 2100 in high-emission scenarios.



The KNMI's climate scenarios (KNMI, 2023) predict more extreme rainfall, hotter and drier summers, and wetter winters. These developments pose serious challenges for water management, infrastructure, agriculture, and health.

Adaptation strategies are already being implemented, such as strengthening dikes, redesigning cities to handle excess water, and improving heatwave response plans. But continued mitigation efforts are crucial to limit future risks.

Many young people feel worried about climate change, but there are things you can do that help. Learning more, making small lifestyle changes, and speaking up can all make a difference—and help you feel more in control.

Start by learning the facts and talking about climate change with friends and family. Even simple changes like reducing waste, biking more, or eating less meat can lower your impact.

You can also take action at school: join or start a green group, organise awareness days, or suggest eco-friendly improvements. And don't forget—taking care of your mental health matters too. Spending time in nature and focusing on what you can do, not just what you can't, helps keep climate anxiety in check.

Remember: your voice matters, and your actions, big or small, can inspire others to act too.



WORKSHOP - THE POWER OF YOUR VOICE

OBJECTIVES

- To empower students by helping them realise that their voice can have an impact
- To teach some practical skills on how to use their voice
- To encourage creative use of voice

LEVEL OF THEATRE EXPERIENCE



MATERIALS AND SPACE

- At least one chair per student (with space to move and stack chairs)
- Small Bluetooth speaker (optional)
- Laptop or smart screen to show video (optional)

TIPS

The number of activities you can fit into the workshop depends on the size of the group and how much time is allocated.

ACTIVITIES

Icebreaker and video introduction

Optional Icebreaker

If working with a new group or if time allows, begin with the icebreaker *Red Socks* to get the students using their voice:

One person sits in the middle of the circle and says:
“*Change places if you are wearing red socks.*”
Repeat the format with variations:
“*Change places if you are...*” (tired, hungry, have a sibling, etc.)



Watch a video clip from the film **Don't Look Up** (2021, Leonardo DiCaprio)

Has anyone seen the film?

For context, Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence play scientists (astronomers) who have discovered a meteor the size of Mount Everest is heading toward Earth, but no one (not even the government) takes seriously their warnings about the world ending.

<https://youtu.be/L99-t5OvSbk?si=VVmuVnASdRnfK9yL>

Stop the clip at around 1:38

Reflect in small or big groups:

- What's happening in the clip?
- How does DiCaprio's character feel?

Speed Dating Discussion

Split the group evenly and have pairs sit in two lines of chairs facing each other. Line 1 on the left does not move, in between each question, line 2 changes people and they rotate. They can discuss based on the following questions:

- We are surrounded and overwhelmed by fear and disaster. Everywhere we look, there is drama and doom 24/7. How often do you check the news?
- Where do you find news information?
- Some of the news is relevant to us! When has the news been relevant to you?

Bring the group back together. Reflect on how we all sought news during COVID. It was an interesting time when we often drew information from digital sources rather than traditional media like newspapers or TV. Where should we look for reliable information?



Gaining vocal and physical skills in order to use our voice

1. Tongue and face warm-up (optional)
2. Breathing warm-up (diaphragmatic breathing)

Diaphragmatic breathing:

- Sit on chair, feet hip-width apart, hands on thighs, shoulders relaxed, spine long.
- Breathe in through the nose, out through the mouth, at a natural pace.
- Progressively build up breathing exercises:
 - In 4 / Out 4
 - In 4 / Hold 4 / Out 4
 - In 4 / Hold 8 / Out 8
 - In 4 / Hold 16 / Out 16

To take the exercise further, you can slow the breathing, breathing into your back , sides of rib cage, chest cavity, frontal chest...

3. High octave/pitch one-breath alphabet, as many times as you can
4. Say “I love you” with enough air in your lungs and “I hate you” with running out of breath

- Inhale 4 counts and say “I love you” to person on the left (going one at a time)
- Then, inhale 4 / exhale for 16 and say “I hate you” with empty lungs and no breath

5. A car at the fuel station

- Sitting on a chair means you are at the fuel station
- You can only refuel while seated on a chair
- You “drive” your car around the room making car sounds and using your breath
- You have to return to your chair to refuel (breathe)
- You cannot refuel while holding a chair, you have to be sitting on the chair



Levels of Tension (Based on Jacques Lecoq)

Our body already communicates information before we speak. How we stand, our posture, and physical tension all affect the way we are perceived, and can change the information communicated just through our mouth.

Levels of tension:

- Level 1 - Amoeba/jello, with no energy (lying or slumped against the wall)
- Level 2 - Coming out of a coma: enough energy to just about sit up, but slump back down
- Level 3 - Can nearly stand up, but falls down
- Level 4 - Can stand up but cannot control limbs
- Level 5 - Can stumble a few steps but then have to steady yourself
- Level 6 - Can walk but cannot remember where they are going
- Level 7 - The perfect human being: you walk to a location in the room, touch that point, walk to another location, perfect level of energy
- Level 8 - Teacher walking in a rush down the hallway, shouting orders at students.
- Level 9 - Late: gentle jog
- Level 10 - Sprint and miss the bus
- Level 11 - Tension through the whole body: major or robot
- Level 12 - You have just been run over by a bus

Reflect on the different levels. *What's the difference between Level 11 and 12?*
Which level do we naturally live in?

Ways of walking

Start walking and lead with a body part. Suggest and ask students, *what kind of people lead with...?*

Toes	Hips	Nose
Knees	Chest	Forehead

Get half the students or a group to go to the back of the room and choose their favourite body part. Then they have to walk in slow motion, leading with their chosen body part. Call it "The Attack of the Killer Toys".



Devising

Now that we:

- Have thoughts and opinions about natural disasters in our countries or areas, and how they could be communicated
- Have the skills to know how to breathe to support our voice
- Have posture and body awareness
- Have ideas of different kinds of characters

Imagine you are making a video, and you need to communicate a natural disaster happening that affects your country or your area. You need to include:

- What are the facts of the disaster? For example, if it's an earthquake, of what magnitude?
- How should people respond right now?
- How and when will people receive more information about this disaster?

It doesn't have to be sensible; it just has to grab attention, but it must include the information above.

Allow 15 minutes to work on each piece. Facilitators should visit each group to support the process.

1. Silence while watching
2. Name two elements you enjoyed or thought were effective
3. Name one element you would add or build upon to make it even better

REFLECTION PROPOSAL

Redo the original speed dating questions but this time participants should play as themselves and not fictional characters.

ADDITIONAL READING

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7. FOREST FIRES

Annually, the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) reports on forest fires in Europe (and has done so for 24 years now). According to it, 2023 was another record year for the European Union in area burned by wildfires. Overall destruction was in the order of 500,000 hectares, or double Luxembourg's area (Durrant et al., 2024, p.188).

These fires are affecting to a very large degree to protected areas and are thereby destroying the natural heritage of the continent. Nearly 41% of the area burned was located in areas of special biodiversity protection in the Natura 2000 network, the EU's main biodiversity reserve.

The year 2023 was also notable for a large wildfire in the Greek area of East Macedonia and Thrace, which was the largest single fire ever recorded in the EU since 2000, when the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) started tracking.

While natural causes remain significant, man-made activity is still the leading cause of fires in Europe. Whether by accident, or even by arson that is intentional, human activities mostly start fires. With more and more people setting up home either in or close to woodlands as the urban areas expand, the danger of accidental fires increases.

It will be frustrating to ask young people to find solutions to this issue, and there are not so many actual steps that they might take, since aside from global warming other factors that could pose threats include forest inadequacy management, development proposals and lack of response or lack of capacity (Bassi & Kettunen, 2008).

Instead of saddling them with such a tremendous responsibility, this workshop will help them learn how they can use art to express themselves and be heard. It analyses some of the features of Brecht's Epic Theatre that prompt the audience towards action after dissecting and discussing what is shown on the stage.



WORKSHOP - THEATRE FOR SHARING OUR POINT OF VIEW ABOUT FOREST FIRES

LEVEL OF THEATRE
EXPERIENCE

OBJECTIVES

- To learn how to use theatre elements to share our opinions
- To devise small scenes around the issue of forest fires
- To share opinions about those scenes



MATERIALS AND SPACE

- A room in which participants can move freely
- Markers
- Pens
- Carboard boxes / Cardboard scraps
- Speaker
- Newspaper articles/ pieces of information on forest fires

ACTIVITIES

1, 2, 3, 4

Participants are split into groups of three. Each group has to count from 1 to 4 by saying one number each. Once they get to 4, they start on number 1 again in a loop. They have to attempt to do it as fast as they can.

They will swap number 3 with a word and will continue counting until they can do it without much effort or confusion.

Afterwards, they will swap number 2 with a sound.

Next, they will swap number 4 with a gesture.

Finally, they will swap number 1 with another word.

Then you will ask the participants to use these 4 elements in that order, they need to present a small scene.



Including our point of view

Now we will explain that they can add their point of view in these small pieces using the following elements:

- Breaking the fourth wall and sharing their own opinion (not the character's opinion) with the audience. It must be clear that it is the participant who is sharing their point of view, so they must show how they break character. If you participants have opposing points of view, they are encouraged to share both, as this can create a debate in the audience.
- By creating posters and showing them. These posters can be very diverse, from showing information on the setting (like including a poster that says sofa next to a chair), to posters showing their opinion or that of one of the characters.

Then, they will be asked to add one of these elements to the small piece they had previously created.

TIPS

These activities take longer the first time participants do them, so you may need to be prepared to adapt the workshop to fit the time you have.

For devising, a good starting point could be to share with participants some news about some forest fires that have happened close to where they live.

Devising

Participants will then be split into groups of 5/7 participants and asked to devise a 5-minute theatre piece based on a piece of news on forest fires. We recommend using local examples so that they relate better to the story. To better guide the process, asking questions at the beginning of the work on who is responsible, whether there are enough resources to combat fires, can be helpful. They can be encouraged to do some research on the articles brought to the group.

Participants will be asked to include the elements from the previous activity in the play (posters and breaking the fourth wall).



REFLECTION PROPOSAL

The facilitator may use the following questions to lead the reflection:

- How was the creative process? What aspects did you find more challenging? And more enjoyable?
- Were you able to share your personal and individual opinions during the play? What challenges did you find to do so?

ADDITIONAL READING

This workshop is based on Brecht's Epic Theatre and the *verfremdungseffekt* (distancing effect). Further reading on this issue is recommended.

8. ABOUT US





FOCO

FOCO promotes different activities and projects using non-formal methodologies with a broad range of target groups, including participants with fewer opportunities. FOCO provides training opportunities tailored to the needs of the target group, and these activities are implemented both for trainers, facilitators, educators and youth workers (training the trainers) as well as directly with the beneficiaries.

Additionally, FOCO supports other organisations that wish to upscale their projects by providing consulting and training services. In that sense, FOCO is already working at an international level by accompanying other grassroots organisations to carry out their projects, bringing the experience of the members of FOCO with regards to project coordination, non-formal training and facilitation.

www.focoeuropa.com



GONZALO MARTÍNEZ RAMIRO - Project coordinator

Gonzalo holds a BA in History from Rey Juan Carlos University. He worked in the private sector, and in 2019, he moved to Ireland for an EU-funded volunteer project. Upon returning to Spain, he co-founded and coordinates projects at the FOCO association.



JUAN ESCALONA CORRAL - Facilitator

Juan is a theatrical facilitator, director and writer with over a decade of experience, leading 30+ international projects, creating educational resources, and training diverse groups. He specialises in theatre, non-formal education, and project coordination.



STET

The English Theatre

STET Education is the education department of STET The English Theatre, a theatre company based in The Hague. STET Education focuses on bringing high-quality, English-language theatre to schools and young audiences in the Netherlands. Through workshops and performances, STET Education inspires creativity, enhances language skills, and fosters a love for the performing arts among students. Their offerings include interactive drama workshops, theatre-in-education performances, and special projects designed to engage students in learning through theatre, while also promoting cultural awareness and artistic expression.

<https://www.theenglishtheatre.nl/education/>



DORA VOROS - Head of STET Education since 2013

Dora leads programs that connect young audiences with theatre, focusing on creativity, language development, and cultural awareness through interactive performances and workshops. With her passion for the arts and education, Dora plays a key role in inspiring students to explore theatre and embrace its educational benefits.



REBECCA POOLE - Freelance actress, workshop leader

Rebecca is British and lives in Capelle aan den IJssel, The Netherlands, with her family. A caring and earthy person, she is trained in physical movement and acting. She is incredibly resourceful with young people and has a warm sense of community and togetherness. Rebecca helped design the workshops for this project.



KAYLEE GOOD - Freelance actress, workshop leader

Kaylee Good is from the USA and lives in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She is fun with children, creates imaginary stories to playfully explore serious themes, and lets them use all their senses. Kaylee is well-travelled and enjoys the cultures of this world. She is an experienced teacher and actor.



Calypso is an NGO founded in 2006, with the main aim of supporting people in active citizenship and participation. Calypso works in the field of community development and it cooperates with schools, community hubs, NGOs, libraries, using theatre techniques and processes in order to empower people and groups. Rather than on the final result, the main focus of Calypso projects is on the process of personal and collective growth and reciprocity through shared experiences, like a theatre performance, an exhibition, or a festive event.

Coming from a social and community theatre background, Calypso involves people of different ages and with different skills in organising events and promoting activities, in order to engage a wider audience that doesn't consider theatre or art as means of participation.



ALESSANDRA VIOLA - Community maker and social theatre trainer

Alessandra is one of Calypso's founders, and she started working with social and community theatre in 2005. She loves to tell stories and she uses them to involve people, from toddlers to elders, supporting them to express themselves and to be active in their community. She has been leading mixed groups since 2007.



ELISABETTA CORTINOVIS - Facilitator

Elisabetta Cortinovis holds a BA in Modern Literature and is currently completing a Master's degree in Performing and Visual Arts. After attending the Social Theatre School in Pavia (2023–2024), she began collaborating with Calypso and leading creative workshops for children in libraries and schools using picture books, storytelling, and theatre to create spaces for connection and free expression.



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