

FORUM ZINE

FROM STORIES OF RESILIENCE
ABOUT THEATER OF THE
OPPRESSED

may 2026

The nature and aims of our practices

- Are there any “standard” rules/structure/criterias to call a process/play TO or is everyone game ?
- Not therapy ! But : meaningful insights and healing effects. How to ensure this ?
- Why we do it ? For whom ? Audience or actors ? Who has priority ?
- Re-traumatization versus empowering of audience ?
- Training versus therapy in preparation of the play ?
- Where is the limit in between facilitation and therapy ?

The posture of the facilitator

- How to aware everyone (including me) that our speeches are situated from our privileges and/or social state ?
- How to facilitate in a horizontal way between knowledged person versus novice person ?
- How do we facilitate a TO performance without seem in superior ?
- Joker objectivity : How to ? How much ? Until when ? 1 or 2 ? How long debate/forum ?
- How to fight against the privilege of experience ? Knowing person versus a novice person ?
- Empowering or saviorism ?
- Do I am legitimate to accompany on x topic or with x audience ?
- How do I work on my “instinct” judgmental reactions, side ?
- Can you truly be neutral as a Joker ?

The relation to the audience

- How to allow everyone to develop their own strengths ?
- How do I take care of the emotional discharge
- Tips & tricks on facilitating the performance with tacklers ?
- How to neutralize oppressors in the audience
- Motivation of the audience when going in schools ?
- If working with a specified group, to which extent do I adapt the tools to fit better the needs of this group ?
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-
- How to deal with the power dynamics within a group and make sure everyone can participate ?
- How to both create a safe space where no one get hurt and a space of debate where tensions can appear ?

The ethic of the creation process

- How do we keep ethics in your play construction ?
- From where you get the money ?
- What do you think is an ethical usage of someone's personal story ?
- Asking the “oppressed” to change : victim blaming ?
- Choosing the topic from reality ?
- Is it ok to play other people's problems ?
- What conditions do we need to do an empowering TF sessions ? (Time, number of people ?...)

to do
today

2 only if
you worked
together already,
don't take it for
granted

read the audience

Joker objectivity: How to? How much? Until when? 1 or 2 jokers? How long is the debate/forum?

- Perhaps by being clear on your subjectivity. Nobody can be objective but can just try to be objective and pay attention, lucid about the influence of her subjectivity
- The duration I think should depending on the TO method, but not less than 1 hour in order to have real debated with the audience. Also it is depending on the context (school, self organized events, etc).

For our S1 practice I think the length was 1 hour and for Diol's play I was missing more time to rally have some empowerment and deep talks with the audience.

Joker objectivity/neutrality

1 or 2 jokers - i personally support more 1 joker process as a way for the joker to be fully empowered and having complete overview of what happens and what needs to happened next. In this way Jokers develop and grow the most. Co-jokering is more tricky, especially if they didn't work together much or they don't know each other well. It can make wonders but only if they really complement each other because at the same time it can be more confusing and create more problems in the process and is harder to solve them when more people are involved.

Length of the forum - as much as is needed i will say but very rarely we have that privilege ;) so as much as you are constraint by the structure or context in which you are operating. Generally i will say at least 1 hour for any meaningful process.



to do
today

Can you truly be neutral as a Joker?

- No. We're here to be in solidarity with an oppressed person.
- Depends what we mean by neutrality. Like Andreea was a neutral facilitator in the play of S1, but she had a open, empowered audience already. In communities, when we perform the TO sometimes it is needed to be aware that there are possible oppressors in the audience and then it needs to give more voice to the oppressed ones and this is not-neutrality.
- There are degrees of neutrality and also issues to be neutral on which affect. 100% neutrality is not possible because is human but this doesn't mean we should be 0% neutral. We should strive and try our best to be neutral in how we facilitate the process.
- The method and the structure is not neutral. We invite the audience to find solutions for the oppressed - therefore, embedded in the method is that we are on the side of the oppressed BUT how the solutions are collected, debated, agreed on etc. that part should be done with neutrality - not to favour certain solutions more then others or certain people more then others. If audience members do not abide by the rules and the proposed structure you do have to intervene. We are there to reduce oppressions - if audience members want to question that or do something else you shouldn't give space to that - there is a proposed frame and how doesnt want to follow the frame is free to go away. The frame is not neutral but for those who follow the frame the process should be facilitated in a neutral manner.

Neutral in
the approach
but not
in the int
(we are there
for the opp
outs)

The Relation to the audience

- How to allow everyone to develop their own strengths?

I think if we can show some options in the play, maybe they will find small steps of courage, like you can tell a friend your story or here are some places you can go if you are a victim of domestic violence.

by observing
how efficient
is a
strategy

seeing many
strategies
from others
can inspire!

To highlight
the positive
change in
every group
even when
it's not
obvious

within the
process of
play
creation

- How do I take care of the emotion?

Maybe we can provide some
want to go outside or be near someone

feel safe (if she
out this.

with actors:
- theatre games to
decompress
after care (go for
a drink, stay to chat...)

with audience:
give enough time to
share and process
the emotions (in
smaller groups or
pairs)

- Tips & tricks on facilitating the performance with toddlers.

What if we can provide some examples relevant for that person like a metaphor for the problem in the play. Also if we can have a little talk to a psychologist about this kind of situations, i think we will find some good options. But to be calm and open and not judge over them.

at some point
name that would
be nice to hear
other voices



Hold
the frame!

Give attention
to every voice
& keep an eye
on the group
energy

DO A BIG
FART!

K - Is the audience participation effective or symbolic?

How to analyze the concrete forms of participation, identify whether interventions genuinely transform the scene or remain superficial or even participations "to please the artists"

how active is
the audience
during the
discussion

- How to neutralize oppressors in the audience?

We should stay on our problem, many arguments of them are more about whataboutism or scenarios that never happen. What if we can ask the audience to raise the hand if they or anybody else feel oppressed and show them how many of people are in this situations. Also the idea i wrote before with some exemples relevant for them (what if you car is stolen and the police say its your fault :))) - depends on the subject).

GIVE
VOICE TO
OTHER
PEOPLE IN
THE
AUDIENCE

How?

Be prepared
good enough to
give factual information
or statistics on
the issue.

How

- How to both create a safe space where no one gets hurt and a space of debate where tensions can appear?

To decide some rules before the audience can join the discussion, no bad words, no judgment, no shouting. And let people know that this is a debate to create a better world for all of us, we are all in the same boat.

EXERCISES
BEFORE THE
PLAY TO
PREPARE THE
AUDIENCE.

BY ALLOWING PEOPLE TO
DISPLAY OPINIONS, NOT
HATE SPEECH.

- ✦ - To what extent does the process allow for conflict, disagreement, and contradiction?
How to avoid forced consensus and consider conflict as a political resource?

The process allows for contradiction, but re-victimising speech should be avoided and excluded. Multiple interventions show multiple ways of solving the issue.

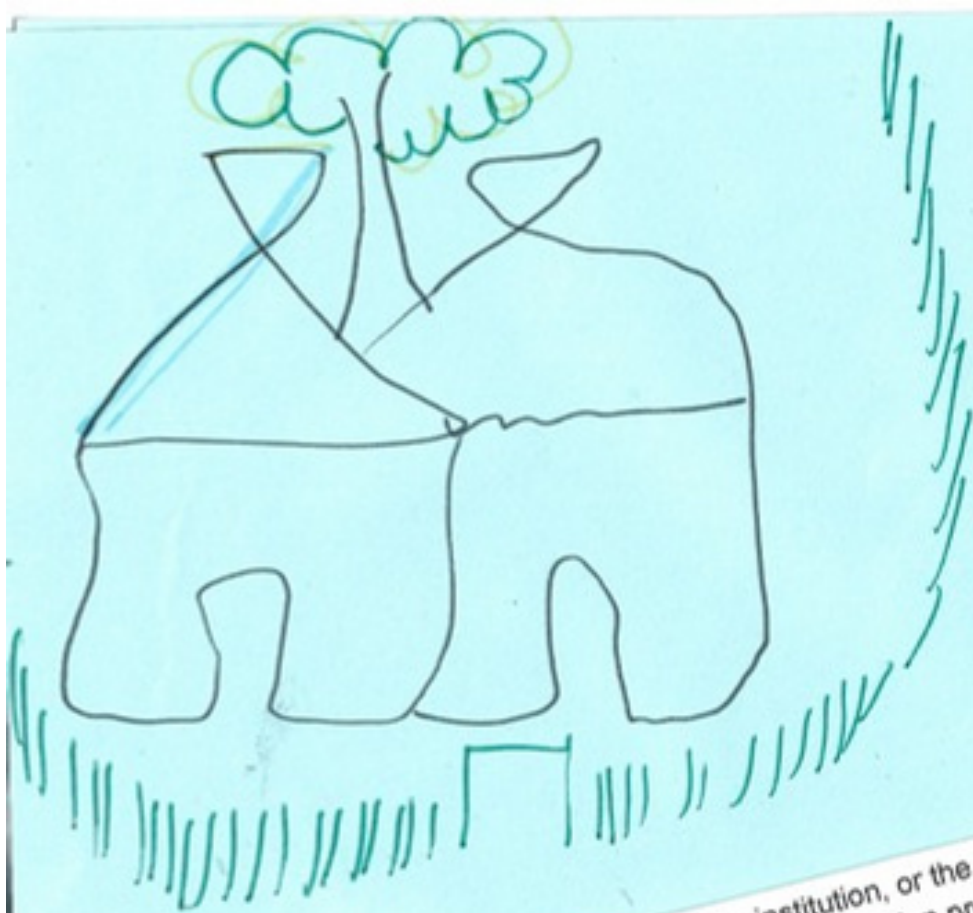
- ✦ - How can the gap between facilitators' experiences and those of the audience be addressed
Maybe work on listening practices, prioritize the voices of those concerned

- Motivation of the audience when going in schools ?

Talking about their family members or how is the world they want to build for their future.

- How to deal with the power dynamics within a group and make sure everyone can participate ?

Maybe we can have rounds of interventions like one round includes one answer per person so we can give the chance for everybody to talk. And maybe a time for every answer? And this rounds of answers to be organized, like first round is about the play, the second one is about their personal experience.



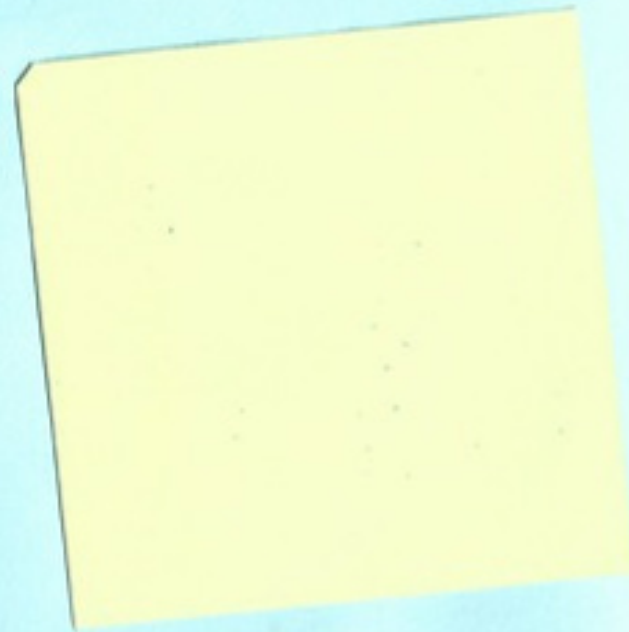
How can facilitators avoid projecting their own concerns onto the audience?

By researching the topic and being confident on one's knowledge

- Who defines the issue: the facilitators, the institution, or the audience itself?
- Question institutional constraints, explore co-construction processes...
- How can we be sure that an issue is relevant if it does not emerge directly from participants' lived experiences?
- Maybe at the beginning of the performance we should consider some preliminary listening phases.

The issue should be researched beforehand.

22/10



- Forum theatre become a tool of social management rather than transformation X
- Is there a risk of oversimplifying or depoliticizing the situations presented? How to maintain the complexity of narratives? X

- Does the audience know how their contributions will be used? How do we address ethical concerns, clarify the use of collected material, ensure transparency...
- What space is given to anonymity, confidentiality, and emotional safety?
- Who speaks the most during sessions and who remains silent. How to implement facilitation strategies...
- Which voices are valued and which are marginalized ?

implicit norms in what we do? Is a kind of participation and answers privileged?
theatre enable genuine co-construction, or does it sometimes frame expected

by
receiving the
support of the
audience!
arrangement

- Is the framework sufficiently explained at the beginning of the session? Have to clarify rules, goals, and limits, make the process understandable, prevent misunderstandings. Are the objectives of the session clear to the audience? Tools to check it? ~~misunderstandings~~

Feedbacks welcome!!!



Let's party!

KNOWLEDGE

PATIENCE

How to facilitate in a horizontal way between a knowledgeable person and a novice person?

Are we sure it's possible to do it in a real horizontal way? Isn't it better to say and admit it's not horizontal cause one have a knowledge the other one doesn't have. We can reduce the power but not make it disappear. But we can create the space for each one to express and listen. And the knowledgeable person could explain is approach and choice and admit that the beginner is gone a be soon a knowledgeable person....

I think the way the french team did their facilitation in S1 was a bit trying to show how to be horizontal, because they offered space to all their team members to facilitate one activity. For romania it was only Andreea facilitating and not all the team.

So, it depends on the context, process, community, goal of doing this I would see different answers: like balance the activities between the novice and the one that has more experience, let the novice try some new activities if it is not a risk to unbalance the process of the group and so on.

- I do not believe in a horizontal way of facilitating between trainer and participants - it is "vertical" by definition and by its purpose. Participants know less of something the facilitator knows more. Yes mutual learning and exchange happens because is non-formal learning but it an outcome of the process is not because is a horizontal way of facilitating. If we look at a team that has different levels of experiences and they have to facilitate together it is a matter of supporting each other, using each other's strengths for the benefit of the team and learning process of the participants.

Horizontal? ? ?

Awareness
clarity
on the blind
spots
as possible!

SKILLS

REPETITION

ACTIVITIES

EXPERIENCE

Know that
you don't know
everything

How do we facilitate a TO performance without seeming superior?

CENSORSHIP?!?

By having inclusive narratives, giving more space to the audience to talk, asking open questions.
Like in our practice in S1, the way Diol showed us to facilitate seemed a bit powerless because the joker
was also the oppressed person, so it was hard for the audience to empower themselves.
But in the way Andreea facilitate was more general and I could take for myself some empowerment, and
the facilitation was linear, not superior and not to feel pity for the joker.

By being neutral as much as possible, consciously and intentionally. Asking questions and not stating
opinions. Inviting opposing perspectives to be shared without giving value to any of them. Creating a
space in which all voices are welcomed (with certain limits, when things get aggressive, offensive,
discriminatory, hateful, etc.)

That's why I don't think jokers or actors should share their own opinions on the topic or solutions or what
solutions they have (not mentioned by audience) as this will give the impression they are "superior". They
do have a more superior role in the process as they are the ones who prepared the play and the process
so it comes embedded in the set-up that their own opinion is stronger - therefore they shouldn't even
share it in the process so the audience feels that this is their process and what they think and propose - they
are the judges of that (and not the team)

I felt
empowered!

Maybe with no expect something from the audience
and how should end the play?

HOLD
MY ANGER

BREAK
FREE



How do I work on my "instinct" judgmental reactions, side?

- ✓ I try to become more aware of my emotions, thoughts, and behaviors so as not to be carried away impulsively.
- ✓ By being open to discussion, being aware it is a learning process, asking questions, make it clear is a instinctive reaction, but there is a need for better explanation. Accepting that there are differences on practice, approach, goals and communities we work with.
- ✓ With constant and intentional self-reflection and mindfulness. Yes, we may notice inside of us judgment towards a certain opinion/behaviour/action but at the same time we are in control of how we behave or act out based on this. As a joker we have to hold space for everyone, even if we may have positive or negative judgment towards what they said or did, so we need to act out in a neutral way. We should consciously do this and, later, self-reflect on the judgments we did and why and how we felt while having them, etc.

RELAX

CLEAR PURPOSE

NOT EASY!!



How to make everyone (including me) aware that our speeches are situated in our privileges and/or social state?

- Not easy. By introducing the trainings or shows by positioning themselves within the spectrum of domination.

I saw that this question was having different approaches by the team members of France and Romania. The french team was reflecting about the colonialist past that they come with, and Romania team was more reflecting about social/economic status. I think there is no answer to this question and the time we spent together did not really cover a lot of discussion about privileges and/or social status. For me there is a question of acknowledging the self privileges and working on them via training, workshops, self narratives, critical thinking and so on. It is a process because also privileges can change during our lifetime. Also being open with the communities that we work with to create TO should be a learning point for me.

Personally, each person, especially if they Joker should undergo a self reflection process which can take all life as we are made up of multilayers of privileges on different levels, which vary depending on reference point (a specific group you work with, a specific place in the community you are active, national, global level etc.). The combination of power and privileges we all have, of course influence our perspectives and way of understanding or positioning in certain moments. Self-reflection and being open to feedback from people around is very important. As a Joker it is particularly important how these privileges could affect the way of talking or responding to the audience input which may come from a different positioning. It is important to try to talk and reflect in a sensible manner and to be self-critical and acknowledge your blind points or limitations.

I do not think we need to make "everyone" in the TO process to be aware of these things, unless this comes across or to surface in some statements of some audience or team member may make in the process. To have this as the main purpose is not matching the purpose of TO for me as the main objective is different and process is built for the TO process not for becoming aware of privileges which is a process in itself (takes time and efforts). But if it come in the discussions (e.g. somebody says: why this person doesn't leave the abusive relationship, it is easy!) then the Joker could invite them and the rest of the audience to reflect deeper on the reasons for not leaving and also on why is easier to say for other whats to do - especially for people with whom you do not have shared lived experience.

OUI OUI
DA DA

PRIVILEGES
CAN BE
GOOD

WORK



The Nature and Aims of our practices ?



Are there any "standard" rules/structure/criterias to call a process/play TO or is everyone game?

- To make the play, we use real stories of oppression.
- We make the play interactive (or at least there is a discussion with the audience).
- Different methods have different aims.

Forum Theatre : - to create dialogue

To give the chance to people to try a lot of solutions to solve themselves to react - focusing on oppression between individuals. - and discuss alternatives

Legislative Theatre :

- focusing on state / institutional oppression.
- to consult the audience regarding legislation proposals.

Newspaper Theatre :

- it uses media materials
- you can set different aims (critical reflection on the role of media ; to raise awareness or open a discussion on a certain topic).

Why do we do it ? For whom ? Audience or actors ? Who has priority ?

I dedicate a lot of work with the actors and the whole team, I prefer to develop a play in a longer process, giving proper time and attention to each step of the process. But the aim of the performance is regarding the audience (ex. To empower the audience), so during the play the audience has a priority and us (actors+joker) are there for their process. Doesn't mean that the actors don't go through their own process and learning (often they are also facing the issues represented in the play) but for me it is important for the actors also to know that they are doing this for the audience in order to avoid certain situations (for example actors not to be satisfied with the solutions that the audience is coming up with and thinking that the solutions are not good enough and judging them- this is something that I talk ahead with the actors in order to avoid such feelings and attitudes)

For me, the process of forum and the play is of the audience before and after the performance is for the actors

We both work the process (with the actors) and the performance (with the audience) but we mostly take decision in relation to the audience

Often actors are just people coming in a training. Depends of the project. But in this case we should pay special attention to both Audience and Actors - Who are audience is a way -

I think it can be for actors, if the actor is part of a oppressed group so it could be a win-win !!

AUDIENCE
+ 1

OPPRESSED
PEOPLE
OR CHANGE LEGISLATION

Actors are on the service of the audience and the collectivity + 1

Is everyone's game?

I am not for gatekeeping this methods, but I also don't think they should be simplified and they should be given a proper thought. There was a lot of thought put into them by Boal and other practitioners and I think that should be honored at least in a way that if you do TO, you should spend enough time educating yourself on the methodology, reflect critically, learn from others, exchange, and be clear in your head why you do certain things in a certain way.

Not therapy! But, how we can ensure meaningful insights and healing effects?



We can't control if healing and empowerment happens, but if we make sure that we go to the right audience, if we dedicate enough time to the whole process, we try to create a safe enough space for people to open up (step by step both with the audience and actors, there are different activities/exercises that could be done at the beginning and during the whole process), we can increase the chances of having a meaningful process.

Yes, you can experiment and try different things, but also that should not put your team of actors and the audience in an unsafe/uncomfortable situation. All the process should be given enough time (both the creation of the play and the performance)

it is important to take the creation of the play seriously, to not make it superficial or comical but as well not to portray violence (we usually talk that the violence happened and not put it into the scenes, if this was part of the real story).

And we should try to construct a play, and joker the process, in which we will reach an end with a more hopeful ending. That's why I like to work with Forum Theatre with keeping the changes, so we gradually can show what can be done and have some kind of ending with empowerment.

The actors are going through their own process, but for sure this is not a therapeutic process! And we are very clear with that, we are not professionals in this sense, we are educators, and giving an impression that this is a therapeutic process can be risky and have negative consequences. The best we can do is to create a safe-enough space in order for our actors to feel comfortable with all the feelings that might arise.

Is it everyone's game?

FOR BB ALSO

Facilitation of TO is not for baby facilitators (it needs skills)

I think that we need to reflect critically on our methods to not cause more oppression

TO PRACTICE TO $\neq$ YES
to facilitate, need to have awareness on power dynamics & privileges!!!
OTHERWISE CAN BE DANGEROUS

NO +1

IT IS FOR EMPOWERING PEOPLE THAT ARE OPPRESSED AND NOT FOR THERAPY!!

We must learn by experiencing, embodying rather than learning concepts.

NOT FOR OPPRESSORS!!

How can we ensure meaningful insights and healing effects?

GOOD JOKEING :)

give EMPOWERMENT a central room!

by changing situation based on life's experiences & usefull in daily life!

STIMULATING DEBATE AND MAKING TRANSFER AT THE END.

Make sure you reach the right audience! And that you give enough time for personal sharing

WHAT MEANS MEANINGFUL INSIGHT?

For who?

AUDIENCE

HEALING IS NOT THE PURPOSE

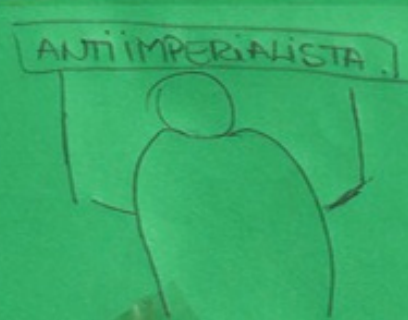
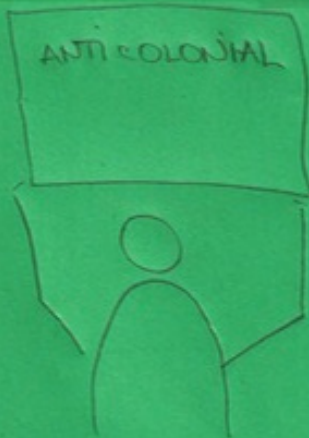
Listening deeply and give true feeling of healing & consideate

Handwritten notes on a separate sheet of paper, including a large arrow pointing right and the word "HEIL" written vertically.



Funding & ethics.

one of us explained that they maintain clear limits on the funding they accept. For example, they refuse money from companies they consider ethically problematic, such as fast-fashion brands, fossil fuel companies, or large corporations like Coca-Cola.



The question of free labor also emerged. One of us asked whether it makes sense to talk about power and oppression while working for free, emphasizing the importance of valuing the labor involved in facilitation.

VOLUNTEERING
IS A CHOICE!

Choosing of the story.

Consent is non-negotiable for all of us. Stories should only be used with clear, informed, and reversible consent — given after a genuine understanding of what the Forum Theatre process involves, including the fact that the story may be significantly transformed.



Story selection is another ethical decision.

The contributors often prioritize situations that:

- reflect common social realities,
- involve structural power relations,
- offer possibilities for action and empowerment,
- and correspond to the experience of the audience.



same? IS it possible?

once the story becomes part of a process, it should not be taken personally. if not to use their story.



Oppression is a collective issue that affects society as a whole, even if not equally, and theatre has a role to play in making it visible.

Keeping Ethics in Play Construction

For the three of us, ethics in play construction begins with the way we act as facilitators. Rather than imposing interpretations, facilitators should remain in a position of questioning. The goal is to bring the tools of Forum Theatre without interpreting participants' experiences or judging outcomes as "good" or "bad."

One of us explained that they try to remain as much as possible outside the process of play construction, ensuring that their own story or perspective does not become more legitimate than those of participants. Another added that the approach may need to adapt depending on the group, for example, working with young people requires particular attention and care.

Don't make play
about a topic ^{problem} without
involving the community
that faces that problem...

No
RE-VICTIMISATION!

we agreed on a central principle: care must come first.



Asking
the oppressed
to change?
Empower the oppressed

How can we
make sure the
T.O. does not
promote
"good behavior"?

We also converge on the role of the joker: not to judge, validate, or impose a moral framework, but to support the group's process and hold open the complexity of the situation. The joker does not expect a "happy ending," but rather keeps the space open for contradictions and multiple positions — including those of allies or even characters identifying with the oppressor.

LI DON'T AGREE

JOKER



REDUCE
OPPRESSION

↓

EMPOWER
AS
AN
ENDING

Where our perspectives nuance each other is in how we frame agency. Some of us emphasise the importance of recognising one's own capacity to act and transform a situation, without waiting for others to change — while being careful not to place the burden of change solely on the oppressed. Others place greater emphasis on Forum Theatre as a space for collective discussion and the building of society together, through conflict and difference, rather than primarily as a tool for individual empowerment.

What we all resist is simplification. Ethics here lies in staying with the complexity and contradictions of real situations, and in not reducing the process to finding the "right" answer.

DEBATE
DEBATE
CRITICAL THINKING



iii
the trainers propose the people to facilitate and they co-facilitate with them, and people choose.

We discuss possible approaches if in a dominant position

- *Choose not to facilitate.
- *Be transparent about one's social position.
- *Take on a technical support role rather than leading the content.
- *Do not focus on your own experiences.
- *Use open-ended questions and encourage the group to express themselves.

favour a co-facilitation, to limit blind spots

Can someone act as a facilitator when they embody the figure of oppression being discussed?

YES

There are Risks to consider:
*Blind spots linked to one's social position (privileges, lack of lived experience).
*Influence of the authority figure, who is never neutral within the group.
*Reinforcement of power dynamics or discomfort for the participants concerned.
*Silencing or marginalisation of those directly affected.

RISKY

RISKY

RISKY

DANGER

DANGER

THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE TO GIVE VOICE TO OPPRESSED!!!

How much is the responsibility of the Joker to make sure that there are no oppressors in the audience?

the responsibility of the Joker is to create and ensure a space as safe as possible

no oppressors

NOT IN TO

how would the oppressed feel being in the same room?

to understand each other better.

- this voice exists in our society and it's great to hear it

UNPOLARIZE

unpolarize

create change

The oppressed should be the main focus!

NOT IN FT

oppressors can be challenged in their perception in order to

TF can be performed everywhere, in the street, and can gather a very mixed audience. This is an objective to have diversity.

URBAN IN STREET NO

But how can you ensure safe(r) space in this situation?

!FU**! = -[]-

Furthermore, we distinguish between violent and oppressive behaviour and violent and oppressive individuals. We believe it is more worthwhile to work on changing behaviour, without reducing a person to a single behaviour

OPPRESSOR

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN

- The protagonist does not play their own role, to avoid reliving the oppression directly.
- Consent is checked continuously, especially when distributing roles.
- Actors are encouraged to choose roles that are relatively close to their lived experience, to avoid reproducing harmful representations (for example, avoiding situations where men play gender minorities or white actors play POC characters).
- The oppressed character should be shown as aware of the oppression and seeking empowerment, rather than portrayed only as a passive victim.
- Scenes should reflect situations recognizable to the audience and offer room for action and transformation, rather than presenting hopeless situations.
- Explicit physical or sexual violence is generally avoided on stage.

IT IS THEIR CHOICE!

ALWAYS

It's for a debate - For some Joker it's a way to shake protagonist is ready to do to with is story.

Unpresent person story

systemic

IS THIS SYSTEMIC?

violence or generating unrealistic representations can cause real harm, even when intentions are good.

We also agree that it is not always possible or safe for people directly concerned to publicly embody their own oppression. In some contexts, asking someone to represent their lived experience on stage may expose them to risk

IT IS THEIR CHOICE!



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