

Toolkit for Civic Engagement through the Practice of Theatre of the Oppressed

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Important Note: *This toolkit is for trainees who have attended the Online Open University forum theatre workshops. The toolkit seeks to enhance understanding of migrant issues and to foster civic engagement. The exercises can be amended and adapted by the trainees to suit the needs of the groups they are working with. Trainees will receive the support of the Forum Theatre jokers (facilitators) to undertake these adaptations. A separate toolkit describes how the workshops could be run in face-to-face contexts.*

The context

This training offers trainees the tools to identify the social issues affecting migrant groups through participatory theatre methods. This will be achieved through the use of the following creative, participatory and socially engaged theatre practice: Forum Theatre (a central method of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*) and its group-based techniques. In the process, the workshops will enable participants to explore different perspectives, insights, and personal experiences, and to learn how to train the migrant groups with whom they are working to build tactics for social action. This is an important endeavour because the migration, education, health and employment practices and policies that affect migrants' lives need to be explained and communicated, personally and experientially by groups of users, and to service providers, to enable public debate, informed listening and direct action for all those involved. Ultimately, the theatre workshops will enhance trainees' ability to make arguments for change by actively proposing ways to improve services and attitudes that impact migrant integration.

Terms used

Forum Theatre: A participatory theatre form, developed by Augusto Boal in Brazil from the 1950s to the 1970s. Forum Theatre is the central technique used in Theatre of the Oppressed (ToO). It seeks to address social injustices through reflection, action and optimism. It creates a space for rehearsing change.

Image theatre: This is also a central form of ToO. It involves the creation of still body images and gestures, without verbalisation. The body-image creates the energy needed for the articulation of words, feelings and ideas. It is used as a technique for group members to reflect on and interpret the different meanings of the image.

Joker: The facilitator and person who shapes the overall structure of the workshops. The term Joker comes from Boal's use of the Brazilian Portuguese word "curinga", meaning "wildcard".

Spectactors: The name given to the participants in ToO. They become thoughtful and reflexive learners as they explore different ideas, skills and group sharing, by

taking part in Forum Theatre. In the process, they fulfil multiple roles as participants, creators, performers and eventually, Jokers.

Theatre of the Oppressed (ToO): A socially and politically engaged theatre practice created by Augusto Boal in Brazil and Europe from the 1950s onwards. It offers a means of bringing diverse groups of people together to engage in dialogue, critical thinking and action through performance.

Objectives of the Workshops

1. To introduce the structure of Theatre of the Oppressed workshops to the trainees as a practical teaching and learning tool for working with migrant groups.
2. To introduce Augusto Boal's structure and theory to the trainees as a basis for exploring approaches to dealing with their own experiences of social practices, understandings, power relations, etc.
3. To introduce the practice of the Joker, who guides the sessions.
4. To teach games and exercises which structure and encourage constructive communication and the creative sharing of thoughts and ideas, as a means of generating actions and solutions.
5. To explore safe communication, as well as the enjoyment and safe sharing of space in online contexts, if in person contact is not possible.

The course aims:

- To explain the frameworks and techniques, as well as how they can be applied with groups in community settings.
- To enable the trainees to explore the techniques through their own experiences, as a basis for working with the experiences of others.
- To teach Joking/facilitation skills, which will include group work techniques, such as establishing boundaries and ethical ground rules.
- To reflect on the role of the Joker, and to integrate its key features into their practice.
- To offer the trainees the opportunity to draw together a set of games and exercises they identify as the most relevant to their groups.

The workshops

- **Overview:** The trainees will learn and then practise the skills of the Joker, who plays multiple roles as a provocateur, creative stimulant, empower-er and educator. The Joker progressively hands these skills over to the group. In ToO, the participants/audiences/trainees are called Spectactors: they both watch and participate in the process.
- **Agree ground rules:** Ground rules frame a working group agreement on how to communicate with and relate to each other constructively. They help to create a mutual and horizontal learning space, and are collectively agreed and owned. Examples include listening to each other, being open about difficulties, ensuring confidentiality, adapting to working in remote contexts/online spaces etc.
- **Exercise Sequence:** An exercise sequence is a series of useful games and exercises, which transforms narratives into action, enabling reflection and the exploration of individual and collective change. The most relevant exercises should be chosen and adapted for use.
- **Feedback:** Feedback includes how people felt, what they discovered, and what was common/different in their experiences. This process should be undertaken after groups of exercises, preferably not after each one. The facilitator should avoid chatting and should encourage a focus on individual and group experiences through sharing and exchange. This section needs to be brief, noted by the Joker, and summed up in full at the end of the sessions by both the Joker and Spectactors.

The following sections will discuss the role of images in the workshops and also how the ground rules were established, before a discussion of the specific exercises that were undertaken.

Images

Images are important as they depict the visual, physical, spatial and interpersonal aspects of everyday encounters in space. They are important for all people, including those who don't have linguistic confidence and/or feel that they do not own the spaces they inhabit, as of yet. Images enable Spectactors to represent, 'show' and communicate their lived experiences, as well as to be recognised by those who look at and share the images.

We are currently working with Forum Theatre in an online context. However, until recently, forum theatre has not been employed as an online practice. Therefore, substantial elements needed to be transformed to ensure they were suitable. This process is still evolving. One method that was found to be beneficial was the use of Image Theatre to make images with the group. In spatially-based work, Spectactors are physically close to and can connect with each other. These images are important as they can be collectively and individually 'read' and experienced differently by members who are both inside and Spect-acting (outside) of them. They encircle the

images, offering different meanings and readings, and creating different ways of understanding them.

Accordingly, we creatively adapted our Image work for online contexts. We introduced gestures, sounds and movements as a development of Image Theatre practice, to create an online connection and a form of communication between Spectators, which broke down the barriers that the screen ordinarily presents. This innovative new practice enhanced the expression of feelings and ideas. As we indicated above, this is an adjustment and a way of working online in the absence of shared physical space, which is at the core of Forum Theatre practice. Beyond the pandemic context, we will eventually be able to return to a physical space, where bodies can interact fully.

Introduction to Ground Rules

1. We all – Jokers and Spectators – need to have an easily understood and agreed upon set of guidelines to ensure that our sessions continue to work well
2. If everyone involved shares the ground rules below, the work undertaken will be clear and communicative.
3. Ground Rules ensure that we can all intervene and debate difficult issues in a constructive way.
4. Before a session, we need to read and agree these ground rules together.
5. Ground Rules are guidelines for working online as we are facing an unprecedented situation due to COVID-19.
6. When we can engage in workshops together in face-to-face settings again, these guidelines will change.
7. Health and Safety rules will be followed in conjunction with Ethical practice, both in online and face-to-face workshop settings.
8. These ground rules are an ethical structure to ensure confidentiality and safety.

Ground Rules

1. Punctuality: please be on time!
2. The Joker will check through these ground rules with the Spectators. Are they understood? Is anything missing?
3. Stay for the whole workshop please. Arrange appointments for other times.
4. Let us know in advance if you can't come or are going to be late.
5. Observe confidentiality: do not release any ideas or personal information of group members outside the workshop setting.
Respect all visible personal space: your own and others'.
6. Have a go at the games and exercises or offer an explanation if you need to sit it out.
7. Show respect and listen when others are speaking.
8. Respond to others and learn how to exchange without interrupting. Signal to the Joker, use the chat function, wave or call politely if using zoom!
9. Feel free to argue and debate where it is needed.

10. Welcome different opinions: recognise and discuss them.
11. Mute your sound if there is noise in your personal space.
12. If on your mobile phone, only use the meeting software, please don't use other applications during the workshop.
13. If on a computer or tablet, switch off your mobile phone once the group has started.

GAMES AND EXERCISES

'We mechanise our lives - do the same thing at the same time every day... we try to do games to see things we're not conscious of' (Boal, 1995, p. 101).

The games and exercises introduced in this document draw attention to social space, bodies in motion and social interactions within a playful frame, both on and offline. They de-mechanise our bodies as we interact socially and creatively, by enabling us to move with other bodies in a different way than we would in our everyday encounters. The exercises, through creativity and group-sharing processes, therefore seek to raise awareness of the construction of power relations in everyday life: between us and friends, colleagues, strangers, employers, politicians and power-holders.

Forum Theatre shown to a group or to an external audience of potential Spectators

- The Hero and key Protagonist of the scene is the author of the story who wants to make a change to what is happening. The scene shows the difficulty and/or blockage the Protagonist is experiencing.
- The scene is performed to the group.
- The group watching the scene are asked to take turns at calling "Stop" and entering the scene to replace the Protagonist.
- The Protagonist replacer tries out a different way of resolving the problem depicted in the scene.
- Keep interventions brief and to the point. It is often best for the Joker to introduce a series of interventions without discussion. These can then be a focus for verbally sharing feelings, thoughts, etc. in the group.
- The Antagonist/problem person can also be replaced.

Session 1

Introductory exercise:

Say Who You Are! (2 minutes each)

- Members of the group introduce themselves: My name is...
- Say what you do, why you're here, your favourite activity in life.

Show two videos:

- A GP scene from a Carers' group in Hackney. A spectator was refused access to the GP by the receptionist because of her postcode. (The video 'Migrant Mothers: GP Waiting Room' can be found here: <http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/migrant-mothers/participatory-theatre/>)

A migrant women's scene about no access to public funds. Two real social workers watching a Forum scene about themselves. The scene depicts the experience of the performers as they show the scene to the social workers. (The video 'Clip: Forum Theatre: Social Workers Interacting and Performing in Workshops' can be found here: <https://fass.open.ac.uk/research/projects/pasar/videos/forum-theatre>)

30 minutes of discussion about the themes raised in the videos.

Use Soup as a closing exercise. The following is a description of Soup:

Soup

When we make soup, we use different ingredients: spices, vegetables, etc. This time, the ingredients will be what we have shared and created here together.

- Imagine a big cooking pot in the middle of the space.
- Take turns to throw an ingredient or two into the pot.
- Call out the name of your ingredients.
- Stand up and use your body to make circular movements to stir the soup: hold the spoon with both hands and call the names of the ingredients as you stir.
- A robust soup in a big pot needs to be stirred with an enormous wooden spoon!
- The Joker repeats the words, so everybody's voice is heard.
- Then we all lean over as far as possible to scoop the delicious soup into our mouths.
- Taste the soup!
- It will nourish us until we meet again!

Session 2

1: Yes let's! (10 minutes)

Introduction by the Jokers: stand up and move around the home spaces on screen:

- Walk away from the screen, turn your back, make contact with the group members across screens... Break the screen!
- When you do this exercise, call the name you can see at the bottom of each screen!
- Let's fly! is a good opening but participants can choose many activities.

A: Let's fly – she flies and calls B!

B: Yes let's and copies flying, then calls "let's go swimming C!"

C: Yes, let's and then calls "D: let's hide!" (everything except one finger!). Hides etc.

Go round the spaces calling names and showing and passing on gestures.

Examples of personal responses include: Laugh? Wave? Be Rude? Be Polite? Walk Away, Come Back...?

2. Mirror. Break Out rooms in pairs (10 minutes)

Joker's demo

- a. Work in pairs. Each person should focus across the screen on a partner.
- b. One is A and the other is B.
- c. A leads with a gesture and movement.
- d. It's good to start with hands leading near the screen.
- e. B copies, follows and then changes the movement.
- f. A copies, follows and then changes the movement.
- g. Have a go at simultaneous movement.
- h. Returning to the main group/gallery, find your partner and do the same as you did in the breakout rooms, finding your partners across the screens. A leads and B follows, then both move simultaneously. Be aware of others in the group.

Things to be aware of

- i. Move slowly and use all the space.
- j. Keep focus on the other, even if your hands are in front of your face.
- k. Use the whole body and screen.

3. Image of the Word (10 minutes)

The Joker call out words on the full screen. Then, the **Joker explains and demonstrates**.

Note: The group will need support and encouragement in doing this – it's a learning process.

- Think of words that describe how people feel every day, in good and difficult situations. Ask the group to make images of the words as they are called out.
- The group then makes images.
 - **Joker's calls:** Examples can include love, fun, sadness, hope, needs, arrival, new, surprise, boredom.
 - Last call. "Change!"
 - Ask the group to add new words associated with change.
 - Members call, supported by the Jokers, and everyone makes images.
 - Ask participants to look sideways and to identify similarities and differences.

Optional structure

Divide the participants into breakout groups of 4–6 and make images in response to the Joker's call.

Show images to the gallery

- Each group then shows the images they have created to the zoom Gallery. Look to see who has similar images.

An option now or in the next sessions

The Joker identifies themes which have come out of the images with the group. They agree main themes and assign breakout rooms or use the Chat function to discuss each theme. Here is a brief outline of the activity:

- Join the room with a theme you want to work on.
- Discuss: find stories and share ideas.
- Note results for the next sessions.

4. 10 minutes of feedback at the end of each session

Questions could include:

- How does it feel to do these exercises as compared to the usual ways of working and interacting in everyday relationships?
- What did you discover?
- Feedback on the games and exercises can also be explored.

Use Soup as a closing exercise (for details, see Session 1, p. 6). Yes Let's also works well using the themes of the workshop (for details, see p. 7).

Session 3

123 from Bradford!

- a. Divide the group into pairs.
- b. Maintain eye contact throughout!
- c. Count in turn "1 2 3" and repeat, practising to get a steady rhythm.
- d. On a signal from the Joker, replace 1 with a movement/sound.
- e. Accept the movement/sound from your partner (A) and practise the sequence: retain 2 and 3.
- f. On a signal from the Joker, B replaces 2 with a movement/sound. B accepts it, and both keep 3.
- g. On a signal from the Joker, one of each pair replaces 3 with a movement/sound.
- h. The movements/sounds are all different and become a form of exchange.
- i. Return to full screen to demonstrate and then do the exercise across the screen.

Complete the Image

The next exercise allows us to explore communication through images and pictures, without speech, enabling us to read and respond to each other's positions, expressions and gestures. This is a strong communication exercise as it shows us how much we understand through bodily expression alone.

Joker's demo: propose an opening gesture, then open your hands, reaching out. Following this, move into breakout groups with pairs of A and B.

- a. Decide who will be A and B.
- b. The Jokers demonstrate the opening gesture.
- c. Everybody tries it.
- d. A steps out and returns to complete the image, changing it so that it becomes a new picture. The Joker calls "Freeze".
- e. B steps out and returns to add to and complete the person who is A, (A's image) with a new gesture/image.
- f. A and B take turns to change the images, watching carefully.

Breakout rooms: Relationships with power

The Joker demonstrates:

- a picture without words of, for example, an angry or difficult relative, an employer, a police officer, a bus driver.
- Someone is trying to deal with the image, not knowing what to do.
- Two images related to power are shown, one powerful and the other not.
- A and B:
- A makes a power image, and B responds.
- B makes an image and A responds.
- A and B make three images each and offer three reactions.
- A and B take it in turns.

- Participants should switch on microphones.
- They should discuss which one to show the whole group.

10 minutes of feedback at the end of each session

Questions could include:

- How does it feel to do these exercises as compared to the usual ways of working and interacting in everyday relationships?
- What did you discover?
- Feedback on the games and exercises can also be explored.

Use Soup as a closing exercise (for details, see Session 1, p. 6). Yes Let's also works well using the themes of the workshop (see Session 2, p. 7).

Session 4

123

The Jokers demonstrate and then use breakout rooms to divide the group into pairs.

- a. Pairs should be labelled as A and B.
- b. Eye contact should be maintained throughout!
- c. Count “1 2 3” in turn and repeat, practising to get a steady rhythm. The numbers switch between partners.
- d. On a signal from the Joker, replace 1 with a movement/sound.
- e. Accept the movement/sound from your partner (A) and practise the sequence. Retain 2 and 3.
- f. On a signal from the Joker, B replaces 2 with a movement/sound. B accepts it, and both keep 3.
- g. On a signal from the Joker, one of each pair replaces 3 with a movement/sound.
- h. The movements/sounds are all different and become a form of exchange.
- i. Return to full screen to demonstrate and then do it across the group!

Make an image and a sound of your last week. Ensure this is undertaken in full screen.

- How do you feel about it?
- Freeze and on the Joker’s call, transform it into the opposite feeling.
- Look at the screens to acknowledge the different feelings.

Image of an Oppressor/Bully/Power-holder and its Opposite

In this theatre work, the powerful figure, the Oppressor, is there to be dealt with!

- Forum theatre is about how to handle oppression and find ways around it, ways to stop it, and ways to change it.
- The Oppressor may be a teacher, a partner, an employer and even at times, a friend.

Each participant makes an image of a power-holder, and when the Joker calls:

- Changes it into an image of the resister/hero: the resister doesn’t know what to do and may be scared, but wants to change things.
- Moves from one to another in slow motion – from the role of the oppressed to the oppressor and vice versa.
- At the end, makes an image of resisting.

Now, in breakout rooms of 4 or 6:

- Share stories about an oppressor and a person you perceive to be oppressed: an Antagonist and a Protagonist.
- Share a story in the group of something that you wanted to but you felt you didn't have the power to change.
- Then choose one story and decide who the characters are. You can choose people in the groups to play other unhelpful and oppressive characters.
- The characters talk to each other. They could describe, for instance, an argument with a friend, standing up to a boss, trying to talk to a doctor, etc.
- Make an image of the Oppressor. Oppressed and other characters (Not everybody in the group needs to be in the scene – just support each other to create it together).
- Also, not everybody needs to share a story as long as there is a story to create a scene.
- On full screen, show the basic dialogue and important moments of disagreement/oppression.

10 minutes of feedback at the end of each session

Questions could include:

- How does it feel to do these exercises as compared to the usual ways of working and interacting in everyday relationships?
- What did you discover?
- Feedback on the games and exercises can also be explored.

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Session 5

Image of the hour

The Joker calls out times: 12 noon! 6.00 in the evening! Midnight! Etc.

- The Joker demonstrates.
- Show images of the time called and talk to yourself as you make images of activities you undertake during different hours and days of the week.
- No talking to each other!

Making Forum Theatre

- Run an image session, and then build a forum from a story.
- If a similar issue arises in a new group, these techniques can be used to explore the stories that emerge from the shared images.
- If you have material from a previous session, work together to perform the dialogue you created.
- The Oppressor needs to be strong though not necessarily aggressive, using power and tricks to win.
- The Oppressor could be a nasty employer, a parent, etc. You will find out about them by asking questions.
- These are ways of exploring characters and scenes.

Joker's sharing techniques

Hotseating:

- The performers who play the Oppressor and the Oppressed/Resister sit in a chair with the group facing them and answer questions about their lives.
- Other participants ask about their age, job, relationships, and what they want in life.
- They ask why they are doing what they are doing, why they are hostile, scared, upset, etc.
- It is important to develop strong characters on both sides.
- Later, other characters can be interviewed as well.

Stop and think:

- Run the scene: the Joker calls the name of the character and "Stop and think!"
- The character offers a monologue about what s/he thinks.
- The character obeys. The Joker calls "Carry on!"

Thought bubble in character:

- The Joker calls "Freeze!" to the performers.
- Workshop members make thought-bubbles with their hands and speak the character's possible thoughts.

- Ask each character briefly: how do you feel about the situation and each other and what do you want to do about it? Answer: "I want to.....!"
- The character makes a gesture to show the feelings she is hiding.

10 minutes of feedback at the end of each session

Questions could include:

- How does it feel to do these exercises as compared to the usual ways of working and interacting in everyday relationships?
- What did you discover?
- Feedback on the games and exercises can also be explored.

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Session 6

Best feeling and its Opposite: Joker demo

- Make an image and a sound of the best feeling the character has during her/his day.
- Make the opposite image of the feeling.
- Move slowly between the images: feel the difference in your body.

Breakout groups

Review your stories and make images for developing a clear scene structure:

- Image 1 depicts the moods, thoughts and words that were present before the meeting with the Antagonist (A).
- Where is the Protagonist/Resister? (P): at home, having tea, at work?
- Do they anticipate problems?
- Image 2 depicts the moods, thoughts and words associated with opening a meet-up with A. Cheerful, hopeful, fearful, no expectations?
- Image 3 depicts asking/presenting/etc.
- Image 4 relates to refusal.
- Image 5 explores confrontation: big or small, shy or open? Etc.
- Image 6 relates to crisis/peak defeat!!
- Small groups play the scene through briefly.

10 minutes of feedback at the end of each session

Questions could include:

- How does it feel to do these exercises as compared to the usual ways of working and interacting in everyday relationships?
- What did you discover?
- Feedback on the games and exercises can also be explored.

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Session 7

Joker demos across screens

- Call your own name and then show a feeling with a gesture.
- Call the name of and show a feeling to a participant on another screen.
- The participant copies it and changes it into something else.
- Pass the feeling on to another participant by name, and so on around the group screens.
- Keep representing feelings and gestures until everybody has joined.
- The Joker calls “freeze” and everyone relaxes.

Joker demo: Walking

- Leave the chair and walk like you walk in sticky mud, where you can't lift your foot because it is heavy.
- Walk on hot sand, and on a slippery street after snow.
- Walk as a cat.
- Walk as a squirrel.
- Walk as a horse.
- Making a sound to match, the Joker calls.
- Walk as a policeman, as a boss, as rich and flamboyant; walk as if you are going to work, or you are going to pick up your children and are late.
- Walk as your character in your Forum scene.
- Freeze and relax.

Revisit the scenes you have chosen to work on: Breakout rooms

- Play the scene.
- Ask each character briefly: how do you feel and what do you want in relation to the situation?
- Each character offers two statements and gestures related to how they feel about each other and the situation.

Remember the structure needed:

- Before meet-up
- Opening meet-up
- Asking
- The refusal, confrontation
- Crisis/peak
- **The Question: What to do? The core of Forum Theatre.**
- UNRESOLVED: consider interventions!

- How many interventions? Spectactors explore in action how many possible interventions there are and develop the scene further.
- When you work with new Spectactors, they will discover more changes.

10 minutes of feedback at the end of each session

Questions could include:

- How does it feel to do these exercises as compared to the usual ways of working and interacting in everyday relationships?
- What did you discover?
- Feedback on the games and exercises can also be explored.

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Session 8

Joker Demo: asks for an Assistant from the group (A)

Machine of Rhythms: Hate and Love!

For clarity: Gesture, Movement, Sound = GMS

- The Joker makes a gesture, movement and wild sound of Hate/Anger/Fury to A across the screens. A responds with another GMS: Hate/Anger/Fury.
- A then turns and offers the GMS to another group member, calling their name. The other member responds with a new GMS and offers it to another by name.
- All members keep their sound and gesture going until all have and are using a GMS.
- The Joker calls “Stop!”.
- Start again with a GMS of love across screens.
- The process is repeated and the Joker calls “freeze”.
- You are called to change the Joker into your character in the scene.
- Call your names across screens, with the sound of your characters.
- The Joker calls “Freeze” and everyone relaxes.

Role of the Joker

- **The Joker** supports the performance of a short scene and then demonstrates Forum.
- The Joker explains that the “stop” call signals the exploration of alternative scenarios and possibilities for change.
- The scene is performed.
- The Joker asks for Interventions from the Spectators.
- No discussion is needed. The interventions are a form of discussion and debate in action.
- The Joker invites comments from the Spectators about the different kinds of interventions.
- The Joker asks: “what has changed?”.

10 minutes of feedback at the end of each session

Questions could include:

- How does it feel to do these exercises as compared to the usual ways of working and interacting in everyday relationships?
- What did you discover?
- Feedback on the games and exercises can also be explored.

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Session 9

Transform the Object

- Raise your index finger. Point it at the screen and at everyone on screen....
- Stand up and let your finger lead you away into your space. Follow your finger to different places, on different levels and with different rhythms and sounds.
- Let your finger lead you to an object: a pen, a mirror, a brush, a chair, etc.
- Take the object and transform it into different objects, by holding it differently, in different places and by adding a sound... a pen might become an axe or a bar of chocolate: let it happen!

Breakout Rooms

Reflect on the scene, interventions and Joking. Take notes for your collective use and for reporting back to the group.

How did you feel and think?

- When people intervened in the scene?
- About the tactics used to change the reality about barriers to intervening - personal, political, social, technical, etc.

10 minutes of feedback at the end of each session

Questions could include:

- How does it feel to do these exercises as compared to the usual ways of working and interacting in everyday relationships?
- What did you discover?
- Feedback on the games and exercises can also be explored.

Use Soup as a closing exercise (for details, see Session 1, p. 6). Yes Let's also works well using the themes of the workshop (for details, see Session 2, p. 7).

Observations and reflections on working on scenes:

There are many approaches to creating scenes and these will develop and change as work progresses. Many other issues may also emerge during the work.

- Encourage groups to explore social and linguistic issues that are shareable. If the facilitator develops a story further, check that the group member who shared the story is comfortable with it. Bear in mind that creative conflict is the basis of Forum Theatre. The best stories get their energy from conflict. Therefore, have faith in introducing Forum, as it works!
- If possible, avoid stories that are potentially traumatic or too personal. Ethical consideration is needed if the topic suggested seems problematic. As in all group facilitation situations, if problematic information or material emerges, the Joker needs to manage this with care for personal vulnerability etc. and to stop the use of the material with tact and consideration as necessary.
- Sometimes, stories shared are not fully Forum-able. Support all group members to share stories but develop those which work best in Forum. For instance, the story needs to display a clear rejection faced by a character and not an internal dilemma (The latter can be worked on with other ToO techniques).
- The process of group members sharing and recognising similarities in each other's stories is very powerful.
- If someone understands the oppressor role better than the actor playing the oppressor, or if someone wants to explore the pressures faced by the Antagonist, for example, questions such as "are they a horrible person?" or "are they being bullied too?" may be asked. Take turns and enact them.
- The stories become 'our stories', not one person's.
- Sometimes a story isn't clear at first, and if so, persevere. Give it time. It might take more than one session. Groups may have to re-work the story more than once before deciding to use it.
- A diverse set of techniques for exploring Forum Theatre are available in this toolkit and in further publications, if one desires further training.

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