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Stories in Action Training.

The session started with a brief presentation of the previous research project (AHRC funded (2014-2015), Migrant Mothers Citizens Caring for the Future and introducing the current project (NCRM funded (2015-2017), Walking Maps and Participatory Theatre for coproducing knowledge). (Dr Umut Erel, Prof. Maggie O'Neill and Prof. Tracey Reynolds).

Part of this four day training will raise questions about how to

- 'systematise' the combination of Playback and Forum as a method,
- Create a toolkit for researchers, teachers, community workers and policy makers.
- use it as a dissemination and impact activity
- create a format for academics to collaborate with art practitioners and vice versa.

A short presentation of the practitioner/researcher's work has followed. The practitioner developed her practice of participatory arts for research and social justice through her collaborations with academics since 2005. She has found these collaborations demanding and intense on one hand and very enriching and interesting on the other hand. She found particularly interesting the reflections of academics that go beyond practice and at the same time how can the participatory arts practice inform social research. When she works as a practitioner her social/anthropological research background informs her practice therefore she searches and creates practices that can raise questions and coproduce knowledge with participants in research. Subsequently this informs research.

She initiated as co-investigator with Professor Nira Yuval Davis the use of Playback and Forum for Social research with migrant and refugees, funded by ESRC (2005-2009) and produced findings on social issues and methodology please see www.uel.ac.uk/ipasa and relevant publications. One of the main research findings was that participatory theatre can be a suitable methodology in combining social research and public engagement as it produced dialogical, performative and embodied data. She then worked with Umut and Tracey on families and citizenship (Please see references below and forthcoming publications of how the use of participatory theatre generated a process of coproducing knowledge with the participants). She then worked with Tracey Reynolds using physical theatre, mapping and forum Theatre with young students of English and BAME backgrounds and it was interesting to see how these methods 'revealed' the 'social performances' of Black people as products of their social circumstances and migration histories. Through the workshops in these research projects she came up with the exercise 'Talk to the Panel', 'mapping through visualisation', physical theatre leading to Forum Theatre, and using maps and images with objects as reflective tools in research interviews.

She is using different narrative and movement methods inspired by improvisation, Dramatherapy, physical theatre, Playback and Forum Theatre. Some of them can be used in group work, interviews and focus groups as well as in a longer practice and fieldwork.

Expectations:- This training is not about enabling participants to run a theatre workshop at this stage (unless you have already run groups yourself, have some applied theatre experience, and practice and can transfer some of the exercises and apply them in your context of work). It is about experiencing the methods, being part of creative exchanges, collaborating with artists and practitioners, creating/devising participatory theatre so you start understanding the methods and see the relevance to your work.

Content

The theatre exercises emphasize

- **Bodies and Relationships within Images**
- **Emotions that creating Actions**
- **The public, social and private spaces where all these take place.**

The training was divided in 4 parts.

- Each day we used introductory games/exercises to prepare the work on Playback and Forum Theatre.
- Playback theatre forms
- Image theatre
- Forum theatre scenes and interventions

Description of some of the exercises and their purpose.

- 1- Name game-It starts by each person in the circle taking turn to remember the names of the people placed before her. The respondent says name or asks 'name' then repeats. The spoken name is a signal to move. While moving to the spot, the next person fixes gaze on another, waits for name to be called, then moves while that person fixes gaze on another. And so on. Next stage as above with 'yes'. Next stage as above with nod. This is a warm up game where one can learn the names outside a register or written form. It allows to make 'mistakes' and communicate with the names in a playful way. There many variations on the game and you can find these in theatre games books.
- 2- Image of the word. (Boal, 1992)Individual Images of (Love, work, summer seaside holidays, separation). First on their own facing outward the circle then bring them together due to similar body positions then to different body positions. (This help us to start looking at images and bodies and their relationships in the images) (20 min). This is an image work exercise from Boal Games for Actors and non Actors.

- 3- A circle of movement and sound. One person in the circle makes a movement and sound and pass it to the person next to her. Make sure that the person who receives it copies the movement and sound as accurately as she can then by repeating the movement and sound slowly transforms it into something else and passes it on to the person next in the circle. This exercise is about receiving and seeing and listening what we receive and trust it that we can without stopping or intervening can transform it into something else during the process. (10 min).
- 4- Colombian Hypnosis,. In pairs one leads with the palm facing the other person in a 'journey' of different levels, pace and rhythms, then swap. Then with both having their palms facing each other starting moving where after while there is not a follower or a leader. (Boal, 1992).
- 5- Elements-fire/air/earth. Character work, group to walk around and embody in their movements and rhythms the elements of fire, air and earth in turn. Making these movements very bold and big, and making the movements more 'everyday'. In pairs you can choose one quality and respond to each other. This is a physical theatre exercise that is helpful to create different qualities in character work and draw attention into the body. Another exercise with similar purpose is that of 'The forest of sticks' exercise. (Lecoq, 2009).
- 6- Vocal and physical warm-up in circle, using three body resonators – belly, chest, head: sounding from there. Use imagery of types: giant, tragic monarch, young warrior, child. Walking in space. On clap, and name of emotion, take up physical shape and move and sound in the space with that. Freeze on clap. Repeat with variety of emotions. Progression: take up physical position. Sound from there. Check in with the emotion or feeling state that brings and move in the space with it. Then go through several changes, allowing new states to emerge. This exercise helps develop embodiment and therefore expression. It is useful for many Playback forms. It helps develop confidence in vocalising and shows the power of physical position to convey meaning. Sometimes those who are new to Playback are shy of using their voices fully and this whole group exercise avoids spotlighting individuals.

Playback Forms

Fluid sculpture: One person comes at a time making a sound/ word and movement and all together physically connected create different aspects of the same person's experience.

Transitional fluid sculpture: as above but two of them to show changes over time.

Pairs: are chosen for conflicts or dilemmas. Working in two pairs that either are back to back and rotate verbalising the two conflictual aspects of the person or there are interacting as two parts of the conflict where one person steps first and the other follows.

Chorus: is chosen for an internal/emotional journey. All together as a flock of birds moving and one makes a movement and sound and all copy till somebody else initiates another movement and all copy.

Diamond chorus: is chosen for an action based journey in a person's life. The group creates a diamond shape that rotates clockwise and in each turn the person who is in that direction of the turn does an action and sound/word passing to the person next. The group can complete two or 3 rounds.

Image Theatre

- 1) See introductory exercise two above.
- 2) Two groups were set up one was asked to sculpt an Image of Exclusion within the Family, using all group members' bodies to act as one image. The other group was asked to sculpt an image of Exclusion in the Public, in a similar way. (services, transport, work,)
- 3) Exercises of how to change a scene in the tube and break the image involving interventions with the whole group. How to stop marching soldiers (Boal, 1992). These are exercises to make participants think about using 'tactics' to change what is taking place.

Forum Theatre

In groups of 3 to start thinking of stories of exclusion.-we will choose which ones to turn into a forum theatre scene.

Analytic image example- see (Boal 1995, p.125)- Play the scene, choose four or five images/actors symbolising emotions, attitudes and thoughts for the protagonist and for the antagonist respectively and place them in confrontational pairs where they can interact with each other. After each pair had a chance to interact the protagonist follows and copies word by word and movement by movement each of her images while they interact with the antagonist's images in each pair. After that, the protagonist decides which of her images can support her and which cannot when she interacts with all the images of the antagonists at simultaneously. She then goes back to the initial scene and plays it again now with the experience gained from the previous process.

Forum Theatre scene and interventions.

After the scene is played you place four or five image/actors (with a particular gesture and rhythm) of how the protagonist 'hears' the antagonist next to the antagonist and how the antagonist 'hears' the protagonist next to the protagonist. They can all images talk together or when the antagonist speaks then the images next to her speaks and when the protagonist speaks then the images next to her speaks so to see how they hear each other. To make the exercise easier one can use thought bubbles first where we explore and name the thoughts of the protagonist and the antagonist about each other and then creating them as images/actors with a particular gesture and rhythm so to see what the protagonist and the antagonist beliefs are in their head. It is a complex exercise as you remember so take it step by step.

We invited interventions in the health visitor and mother scene on food advice session. In the interventions the facilitator asks the members the group to replace the 'Protagonist', the one who has been treated unfairly, and try to change the course of action. The scene is first

presented and when is played for the second time person who wants to intervene shouts 'stop' and comes onto the stage to replace the Protagonist with her new intervention. Forum Theatre interventions by members of the group. (Boal, 1992).

Questions for exchange and evaluation in milling groups.

1. How is to be part of the workshops instead of knowing or read about it?
2. What is included and what is excluded as potential data?
What is different to other 'methods'. What kind of processes are generated?
3. What data can be produced?
4. How can they be analysed.
5. What are the relational, embodied, co-productive benefits?
6. What are the limitations
7. Applications to your field? Benefits and challenges.
8. What would you like to see further as a format and as knowledge.

References for Practice:

Boal, A. (1992) Games for Actors and non Actors. London and New York. Routledge

Boal, A. (1995) The Rainbow of Desire. London and New York. Routledge.

Fox, J. (1994) Acts of Service. New York. Tusitala

Lecoq, j. (2009) The Moving Body. Bloomsbury, London. Methuen Drama

Salas, Jo. (1993) Improvising Real life: Personal Story in Playback Theatre. New York. Tusitala

<http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/migrant-mothers/publications/seminar3.php>

www.ptoweb.org

www.socresonline.org.uk/13/5/2.html **Participatory Theatre as a Research Methodology: Identity, Performance and Social Action Among Refugees.** by **Erene Kaptani** and **Nira Yuval- Davis.**