

A photograph of three women in a meeting. The woman in the center has blonde hair, wears purple-rimmed glasses and large blue earrings, and is looking at a newspaper. The woman on the right has brown hair, wears black-rimmed glasses, and is looking at the newspaper. The woman on the left has blonde hair and is looking towards the center. They are all holding and looking at a newspaper with some text visible, including 'ANUL EUROPEAN AL TINERETULUI' and 'CORPUL EUROPEAN DE SOLIDARITATE'.

# Newspaper Theatre



This text was made with the support of the European Commission.  
The author is solely responsible for the content of this text. The National Agency and the European Commission are not responsible for how the information herein will be used.  
Reproduction of the material in this publication is authorised only for non-commercial purposes and provided that the source is appropriately acknowledged.

# Newspaper Theatre

author/documenting the method: Andreea-Loredana Tudorache  
proof reading: ANPCDEFP  
layout and graphics: Alisia Damian-Coantă  
  
photo credit: ANPCDEFP

2022 Bucharest, Romania

---

# Newspaper Theatre

The 7th edition of the Connector provided a space and context where people involved in learning became familiar with and practiced different non-formal learning methods for use in inclusion and diversity contexts. A special focus was placed on how these learning methods can be used for the integration of migrants and refugees, given the outcome of the Ukrainian displacement crisis that began on 24 February 2022.

## CONNECTOR 2022 workshop

Newspaper Theatre method stimulates critical thinking and consumption of media content, in order to push engagement and interest towards the issues raised through the performance (always linked with a type of oppression).

The topics raised by the media materials (newspapers, reports, magazines, statistics or other sources) are examined from alternative perspectives through Newspaper Theatre, in order to bring them to the relevant audiences in a different light and angle and to trigger critical reflections.

The core sources of information which are used in the preparatory process are newspapers or media materials (articles, advertisements, etc.). These can be used as inspiration or provide the main material for the artistic outcome. Even if, originally, print media was the main source, now practitioners make use of all type of media content (printed, TV, online, mainstream, alternative, etc.) in order to develop the final performance.



**Andreea-Loredana  
Tudorache**

Actively involved in Global Citizenship Education since 2007, as facilitator of short and long-term global learning training programs and also as coordinator of national, European and Intercontinental initiatives in this area since 2012. During this period I trained more than 500 professionals worldwide.

I conceptualized and wrote manuals for practitioners in the field, for beginners and for advanced facilitators in global citizenship education, theatre of the oppressed and sensitivity learning.

# Summary of Contents

What is Newspaper Theatre? Background. Context. Objectives.	4
Why use this Method? Inclusion & Diversity Context	7
Working with Newspaper Theatre Method: Preparation Phase	11
Working with Newspaper Theatre Method: The Performance and Interaction with the Audience	25
Evaluation and Impact Assessment	31
How can Newspaper Theatre Method be used in Erasmus+/ESC contexts?	36
Communities of practice and resources	39



# What is

# Newspaper Theatre

Background.

Context.

Objectives.



## Background, Context, Origin of the Method

Newspaper Theatre Method is part of a larger set of methods called Theatre of the Oppressed.

Under the umbrella of Theatre of the Oppressed, we find the following methods: Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, Invisible Theatre, Legislative Theatre, Newspaper Theatre and Rainbow of Desire.

This is a type of theatre methodology developed by Augusto Boal (1931-2009) in the 1960s, inspired by the critical pedagogy and pedagogy of the oppressed concepts of Paulo Freire (1921-1997). Both of them were based in Brazil at the time, and the socio-political context of those days (post-colonialist era and authoritarian military junta regime) significantly influenced the development of these concepts, approaches and methodology. In the 1960s Augusto Boal experimented with theatre to give voice to the oppressed, to empower them to fight the oppression in their lives. At first, he was active in Brazil, and then he was forced to leave the country and continued to work with these methods in other South American countries, and later predominantly in Europe.

From the 1960s till the present time, due to various factors, these methods were transformed, upgraded, adjusted, adapted, etc. and at the moment there is no set of concrete and specific criteria that could attempt to define or standardize this methodology. Very often, the practitioners in the field use the same terminology (which is often taken for granted) but refer to different things, and there is no concrete point of reference to be used.

Although the methodology was initially developed as a community-based approach, for community intervention and empowerment, these days you will find various types of Theatre of the Oppressed being used in workshops or training courses (as a tool for introducing or debating specific topics), or as a method of teambuilding or conflict management in the corporate sector. In the next pages, you can find more details on how specifically the Newspaper Theatre method can be used in various Erasmus+ and ESC projects and contexts.



## Newspaper Theatre Method

Although maybe Less known and used by practitioners around the world, Newspaper Theatre was the very first method developed under the Theatre of the Oppressed umbrella. Augusto Boal, in his first attempts to develop participatory theatre, used articles from newspapers, more exactly: news. At first, he simply improvised the events described in the newspapers and facilitated critical discussions around the issues raised there.

## Objectives

**The original objectives of this method were:**

- To bring theatre closer to the people.
- To demystify the objectivity of most journalism.
- To show how theatre can be played by anyone.

*Some of these objectives are reflected, as well, in other Theatre of the Oppressed methods such as Forum, Image or Legislative Theatre.*

**As a distinct method, Newspaper Theatre** is focused on the stimulation of critical thinking and consumption of media content, to push engagement and interest towards the issues raised through the performance (always linked with a type of oppression).







# Why use this method ? Inclusion & Diversity Context



## Type of oppressions which can be tackled in a Newspaper Theatre Process

To understand  
oppression,  
we need to  
understand power.

They are linked concepts; oppression needs the concept of “power” to have a meaning. Power exists in physical body/actions, mind, language (volume, tone, words, etc.), symbols and meanings (money, status, roles, media, etc.), spirituality, politics, decisions, relations, attitudes, objects (guns, possessions, etc.), nature, groups, privilege, etc.

**Power in itself does not have a positive or a negative value, but rather the way it is used (or not used) may have negative or positive consequences.**

**A simple definition of oppression, in general, could be “abuse of power”.**

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

**The main source and starting point for any Newspaper Theatre scenario** are represented by media content in any form, broadcasted, published physically or on the internet.

What kind of oppression  
is unpacking across  
media productions?

Media content  
can reveal  
oppression which happens  
at different levels.

...well, all kinds of oppressions:

- **By the individuals**, towards other individuals (or animals) in private homes, schools, working spaces, streets, shops, public transportation, parks, bars, restaurants, hotels, etc.
  - **By the state**, in forms of state representatives' abuses, corruption, discriminatory laws, lack of reaction or intervention, insufficient protection of oppressed groups, etc.
  - **By the private sector** in terms of workers' mistreatment, abuses, discrimination, harmful practices on the whole chain of production, denial of responsibilities, illegal actions, blackmailing and corruption concerning state authorities, etc.
  - **By the advertising industry**, in terms of promoting/perpetuating narratives or social representations which are harmful, discriminatory or dangerous to different groups.
  - **By art and popular culture creators**, in terms of productions which stigmatise, discriminate; promote hate speech and other problematic values.
  - **By different** (*organized or informal*) **citizens' groups/movements** in the matter of actions affecting the liberties and rights of other groups or individuals in the society.
- local, national or global
  - micro, macro or meta
  - individual, institutional, systemic or socio-cultural mentalities
  - visible or invisible
  - concrete or abstract
  - emotional, rational or behavioural

**In Newspaper Theatre we can address oppression from different points of view.**

We can connect local situations with national/international circumstances or frameworks, as well as with value systems across different generations or institutions. At the same time, we can go only one level deep and analyse all the particularities of a very specific context.

**Concretely, concerning Inclusion and Diversity media content can touch on the following** (see below) to develop a performance on any of these topics (or subtopics):

- 
- **Vulnerable groups**
    - Different religions and spiritual beliefs
  - **Migration**
  - **Racisms**
  - **Intersectionality**
  - **Sexism**
  - **LGBTQ+**
  - **Ethnic groups**
  - **Xenophobia**
  - **Ableism**
  - **Poverty**
  - **Ageism**
  - **Systemic discrimination**
  - **Human Rights**
  - **Gender-based violence**
  - **Social-cultural norms enabling social exclusion processes**
  - **Social equity**
    - Hate speech/ attacks
    - Intolerant acts

# Working

with

Newspaper

Theatre

method:

Preparation

Phase





**The theatre preparatory** process includes different steps to be undertaken and categories of exercises to be conducted (*group building, drama and theatre games, specific exercises for Newspaper Theatre, improvisation, getting into characters and activities to support the rehearsals, etc.*) Each team or group, depending on their profile and experience, needs a differently tailored preparatory program and time frame to be ready for a performance. This is also heavily influenced by the scope and context in which the method is being used, which will have a strong say on the length and the steps required in different processes.

We have included in the next pages, examples of different complexity and length of processes, relevant for Erasmus+ and ESC, as well as a list of more detailed resources that can be used for different steps. Below we have mentioned some of the most important aspects in the preparation phase, specific only to Newspaper Theatre Method.

**The core sources of information which are used in the preparatory process, specifically for the scenario creation, are newspapers or media materials** (*articles, advertisements, etc.*). These can be used as inspiration or provide the main

material for the artistic outcome. In the framework of Newspaper Theatre, we consider media content as practically everything, that is/was created and aimed for public outreach and wide dissemination. If in the past, we could reduce the avenues for such content to print (*newspapers, magazines, flyers, etc.*), radio, TV, cinema and recordings. Nowadays, we have a much broader spectrum of options, facilitated especially by the use of the Internet.

The Internet has facilitated the emergence of new types of media, and the creation and spreading of the “news” around, more easily and faster. At this moment in time, anyone can be a media creator; we don’t rely anymore on traditional media institutions for our need/wish to be up-to-date with what happens in the world; we also don’t settle to be just a consumer, we produce and/or disseminate media content to other people – we actively participate in the complex media network.

In Newspaper Theatre we may use materials from mainstream, alternative or independent media actors, which can be either formally, or informally organized groups, as well as self-employed individuals.

**The topics raised by the media materials are examined from alternative perspectives through Newspaper Theatre, to bring them to the relevant audiences in a different light and angle and to trigger critical reflections. In the process of development of a Newspaper Theatre play, the groups can use different techniques to work with the media content they have selected or they are interested in.** Depending on the chosen technique(s), they may need to find additional articles or media material to be able to use a certain technique(s).

The techniques' main aim is to help the practitioners by providing ideas or different starting points on how to approach the articles. **They represent a tool to “translate/convert” the media content into a performance language.** They are a collection of options that CAN be used. None of these techniques MUST be used.

**A Newspaper Theatre group can:**

- Use one or more techniques (*even if not mentioned below*) in their preparations
- Use none and decide to work with the material in any other way
- Create their own technique(s) to process the media material.

## Newspaper Theatre Techniques



### *Important mention!*

The terminology used to refer to these techniques is not the same as the one used by Augusto Boal, which can be found in his publications in any online search. We have consciously decided to use different terms, which are clearer and make sense for us, and were easier to be used in our work. We have also mixed some of the techniques, added a new one and left space for new techniques to be created by other practitioners.

**Below, we list and explain the techniques we use in our work, and give brief examples of how each can be used.**

*\* By “Story” we refer to the story or events depicted in ONE single article.*



## Basic Story

The article is improvised exactly as it is described in the used material. There is no modification or addition made to the text or the depicted events. The performance may include/combine the reading of the article text and/or acting of the described events (*especially when video news is used*).

The intention is to improvise the material in a neutral way, without adding behaviours, interpretations, emotions and thoughts which were not explicitly stated or expressed in the material.



## Story out of the context or in a different context

The events depicted in the article are acted out in a different context than the one mentioned in the article to see them in a new light and perspective. The text of the article/media content can be used in the scene or it can be adjusted to fit the new context. The different contexts can be anything from a real and possible one to something absurd or unrealistic.

*Examples:*

An article about a workers' strike acted out as a strike of children in the family or a strike of students in a school.

News about a case of discrimination or racism acted out in an animal world set-up.

A material about climate refugees acted out on a different planet/universe.

News about sexual harassment is acted out in an imaginary world where there are no gender roles or even different sexes.

A material about online hate speech was dramatized in a supermarket.

An article about a beauty pageant acted out on a construction site or a factory.

A media material about bullying in school is staged in a bus/flight/group visit to the museum/etc.

## Story exactly in the context

The events are depicted exactly in the specific context mentioned in the article. This technique is often suitable for stories which are narrated or presented with a cold/neutral distance and readers often don't really get to understand what it means concretely, to fully take in the story.

The "exact" context can be any of the following:

- On the ground where the depicted events actually take place
- In the personal lives of the involved people (which influence the events to take place)
- "Behind the doors", where different decisions are taken
- Inside the mind of people involved in the events
- Global/local contexts depending on how the article covers the portrayed topic
- Other interpretations of what the "real context" can mean
- The text of the article/media content can be used in the scene or it can be adjusted to fit the acting flow.

*Examples:*

- An article about war/refugees/migration acted out exactly on the battlefield/border/roads/ etc.
- News about protests against antiabortion laws acted out in the house(s) of different women and families themselves, getting a peak in their lives linked to the reasons for the protest.
- An article about a new controversial law proposed by the parties in power acted out at the meeting between different politicians, advocacy groups and different private interests' groups (from where the law proposal emerged).
- A media material about illegal deforestation acted out to reflect the global implications of these events to portray the global context of these actions.
- News about a global treaty endorsed by UN countries was dramatized from the perspective of the local context, to portray the relevance or lack of relevance at the local level.

## Story with the missing information

Media highlights and presents a single detail or a small part of what is usually a much more complex and bigger situation. The news is not false, but it is incomplete, the reality presented is truncated. With this technique, the story is presented alongside some of the missing information, which, very importantly, shouldn't be invented or guessed by the team.

The missing information should be gathered from different reliable sources (official reports, statistics, case studies, research, interviews, platforms, etc.).

While working with this technique, the main questions a team needs to ask for each article are:

*What/who is missing here? What/who is not presented? What/who is left out? What do we know is a part of this story, but was left out? Who controlled/influenced what exactly appears in the article?*

These answers can guide the team towards specific sources of information from where to extract the missing bits they want to use in the performance. These questions can also be used as a questioning tool during the performance – to trigger the finding of missing information with the audience or to raise critical questions about the “completeness” of a media article. The text of the article/media content, as well as, the missing information, can be used in the scene or it can be adjusted to fit the acting flow.

*Examples:*

- An article about consuming patterns among young people acted out completed with statistics or info/reports about the harsh realities of the workers in factories where the objects sold the most are produced.
- A news story about a successful female CEO and her professional success, to be dramatized together with information about the number of female CEOs in that country/continent/field of work, as well as experiences of other women and how they were discouraged to follow similar paths, and faced strong stereotypes in male-dominant fields.
- A media material describing a project of a multinational company and their Social Responsibility projects acted out completed with information about the concept of Green Washing, and the previous history of the same company's lack of responsibility in different human or environmental rights areas, in other parts of the world.

## Story with parallel action

This technique implies having two sets of actions happening in parallel on the stage in any of the following ways:

- One person is reading different parts of the article and in another part of the stage different team members are acting out certain actions/events (from the article).
- Two theatre actions (*portraying events happening in different locations*) in parallel on the stage (independent from each other) but linked with your news material. These two 'actions' can be chosen to complete or contradict each other, bring a different light to the other actions, etc.
- While using this technique, it is important to coordinate the speaking parts in a way that is not confusing. The parallel actions should both be clear at any given time on the stage. The text of the article/media content can be used in the scene or it can be adjusted to fit the acting flow.

*Examples:*

- An article describes the massive workload employees have in a certain industry and how this is affecting their health and social life, etc. The performance using this technique can show, on one side of the stage, the worker(s) loaded with never-ending tasks, and on the other side of the stage, activities which happen at the same time outside of the work (social life, family gatherings, etc.).
- A news story about a progressive new law regarding LGBTQ+ rights to be dramatized with a parallel action of stereotypes, bullying and negative behaviour people belonging to the LGBTQ+ community experience in day-to-day life.
- An article about refugees and their struggles to arrive in a country is acted out in parallel with the regular citizens from that community hearing about refugees, showing indifference, exchanging prejudices, negative statements as well as some supportive attitudes about them (reflecting the opinions of the community at large).

## Contradictory Stories /Cross-Stories

For this technique, a team uses more than one article. Most often, articles which contradict each other are combined in performance. Articles which are connected, complemented or complete each other's meaning, can also be used through the cross-stories approach.

The text of the article/media content can be used in the scene or it can be adjusted to fit the acting flow. The act can be shaped in any way from a natural, realistic manner to something absurd or paradoxical. The articles can be used in alternating scenes or mixed in the same scenes.

*Examples:*

- A performance can use an article about food waste, and another article about poverty/starvation, and combine them in a way that highlights the contradiction.
- A scene combines an article about education curriculum reform and what topics should be covered and another article which points out a high level of domestic violence in society.
- A scene with news about the Xth general lockdown in a certain community/country because of Covid19, another one about the way Sweden managed the Covid19 outbreak in 2020, and one with news about different negative consequences of lockdowns on vulnerable people, etc. All these news stories are linked with each other in a cross or contradictory manner and can be transposed into a performance.

## Story with exaggerated elements

The events are depicted with different parts/aspects exaggerated in size, appearance, volume, etc. This technique can make use of grotesque or clowning elements such as oversized objects, costumes, props, etc. which should be linked in a relevant way with the people, issues or actions captured in the article.

The text of the article/media content can be used in the scene or it can be adjusted to fit the acting flow. The act can be shaped in any way from a natural, realistic manner to something absurd or paradoxical.

*Examples:*

- An article about the abuse of police officers, to be acted out using exaggerated equipment of the police officers; even if they are not weapons, to actually show the power position and how easily the abuse can take place.



## Story with advertising elements

- To dramatize an article about street harassment or bullying by depicting the events with the victims of such behaviours carrying very big written labels (*dirty, ugly, fat, whore, smelly, fagot, thief, devil, etc.*) attached to their bodies; these being the labels that oppressors see when they look/think about these people (to some extent, the labels being the only thing they see).
- An article depicting stories of different women experiencing violence from their partners can be acted out with the feelings (fear, power, sadness, anger, confidence, etc.) of these women portrayed by different actors, dressed in a specific manner. During the performance, these “feelings characters” are either getting in the way of the women, hugging, surrounding, blocking them, or can become smaller and smaller, or getting as far as possible from the women.

The purpose of advertising is to sell a product, service or idea, and it usually makes use of rather irrational methods such as:

- hiding the truth
- simple music, easily reproducible jingles
- photos of ‘pretty’ people – especially girls or women
- short phrases – slogans (to have an impact even if they are meaningless)

When working with this technique, the actors use similar methods to depict the events/issues from the chosen article(s). These methods can be used to “sell” certain aspects of the article or to emphasise certain issues or topics.

The text of the article/media content can be used in the scene or it can be adjusted to fit the acting flow.

*Examples:*

- Certain sentence(s) stated by a person in the article can become slogan(s)/jingle(s) and used repeatedly throughout the performance.
- An article about different statistics on how open-minded people are in society can be transposed to a performance staging a market/bazaar, where people are selling old thoughts/ideas and buying new thoughts/ideas.
- A material about general elections can be acted out as an auction of different candidates.

## Story with a historical approach

The events depicted in the chosen article(s) are connected to relevant historical facts/ events from the past or from present times, from the same or different parts of the world. The comparison with the situations of other countries can be done to explore solutions or to critically reflect on the circumstances in one's country/region.

The act can be shaped in any way from a natural, realistic manner to something absurd or paradoxical. The articles and the historical information/addition can be used in alternating scenes or mixed in the same scenes. The text of the article/media content can be used in the scene or it can be adjusted to fit the acting flow.

*Examples:*

- An article about the low wages paid to workers (*from a specific industry or, in general, in the country*) in present times is combined in the performance with moments/ events from slavery times.
- News about the gender pay gap is acted out together with information about the situation of women before they had the right to vote.
- A material about overcrowded prisons is combined with information from another country, which has low crime rates and low numbers of inmates in prisons; or it can be combined with the information from a previous period in the same country.
- An article about the current restrictive abortion law in Poland combined with information about the consequences of the total ban of abortion during communist times in Romania.

## Story with a field interview

The individuals included in the news are interviewed on stage, during the action itself (the one depicted in the article) similarly to how football players give interviews during the breaks of the game. This allows for a deeper exploration of the inner realities and thoughts of the involved characters, and can also provide space for the audience to ask questions. It is up to each team how to use this technique – if all characters are to be asked questions or only some, and how long the interviewing part is compared to the other actions depicted.

The text of the article/media content can be used in the scene or it can be adjusted to fit the acting flow. The act can be shaped in any way, from a natural, realistic manner to something absurd or paradoxical.

This technique can also highlight the often-intrusive approach of journalists or



reporters, as well as their lack of sensitivity on the ground and how they portray different events.

*Examples:*

- An article about refugees and migrants, acted out with interviews of refugees and migrants during their journeys from their own countries; on the roads, at the borders, and in their interaction with different people on the way, including border control or police members.
- News about racist incidents, sexual harassment, hate speech, cyberbullying, illegal deforestation, etc. could be dramatized with field interviews with the attackers/aggressors themselves.
- A material about precarious living/working conditions can be performed with field interviews with the people finding themselves in such situations.

Story  
with the  
corresponding  
emotions

Many articles depict different aspects of society in a very cold, heartless manner; especially the ones which refer to numbers, statistics, surveys, behavioural observations, etc. Media consumers are often desensitised from the realities they read about in the news. This technique aims to awaken the spectators' sensibilities and capacity to absorb news as something real and concrete; to reveal, on stage, what the story often hides beneath numbers, clichés or overused terms (which, due to overuse have lost their capacity to touch the corresponding emotions within the reader/media consumer).

This technique makes the corresponding emotions visible/real, through the use of analogy, symbols, or any other equivalent particular words or actions. The text of the article/media content can be used in the scene or it can be adjusted to fit the acting flow.

*Examples:*

- An article about the situation of LGBTQ+ rights around the world (focused on numbers and statistics) can be portrayed with small demonstrations of the realities of the people behind those numbers (how people are killed because of their

sexual orientation, how tragic the life of some couples is in certain places around the world, etc.) to trigger emotions beyond the knowledge given by the article.

- A material about cyberbullying and its psychological impact on teenagers can be dramatized by focusing on one student, to show their emotional life and struggles at home, their trust and broken trust concerning their friends and different romantic partners, questioning themselves and life in general, and how all this leads to an increased vulnerability towards cyberbullying and how that became the drop filling the glass leading to a suicide attempt.
- News about plastic pollution, global warming and climate change can be acted out by using symbols and/or images of real victims of such phenomena: animals choking with plastic, species becoming extinct, fertile land becoming desert, animals dying of thirst, etc. combined with small scenes depicting negative consequences, such as people getting sick because of pollution or of new diseases, climate refugees, people getting flooded or being affected by storms or tornadoes, wildfires, etc.



## Working with Media Materials and Creating a Performance



There is no frame or structure of a Newspaper Theatre play, therefore the end result depends on how a group picks the most suitable ideas which emerged in the brainstorming phase.

Once a team has a “generative stash” of media content, they start “playing” with the materials, connecting them with the different Newspaper Theatre techniques and the proposed aim for their performance. In this brainstorm-creative-free phase, it is good to explore as many ideas as possible. More ideas may lead to more content, to be searched and added (*depending on the chosen technique*) and a richer pool of options from which you can select and construct the final version of the performance.

The logic of the performance can unfold in any way, and the artistic flow can capture ideas from classic to very unusual types of performing acts.

These are some examples of what can be done or used (or not):

- One storyline (of one person)
- Multiple storylines (of different people)
- Chronologically or in random order
- Mixing concrete real world with abstract realities
- Using any genre or a mixture of genres
- With or without words
- Using human statues and/or moving acts
- Monologues and/or dialogues
- Using technology aspects such as projection, music, light shows, etc.
- (Un)conventional spaces
- Each scene in the same or a different location/space
- Static or travelling performance (between different sites)
- The audience to be physically involved in the performance
- With a clear delimitation between actors and audience or not
- Acting fully exposed to the audience or partially hidden

There are no requirements regarding the number of actors necessary in a Newspaper Theatre play, either minimum or maximum. A team can organize themselves as they think it is the most suitable. Actors can play double roles as well, with the condition to make the difference between roles clear and not confusing for the audience.

Although there is a lot of space for creating and using ideas as wild as a team wishes, there are some key aspects that, nevertheless, still need to be carefully assessed case by case, for the performance to be conveyed to the audience better :

**Clarity** – Can the message of your play be easily understood? Can you make it clearer without compromising its artistic outline? This aspect is extra important for performances that have consistent abstract, symbolic or metaphorical segments, which are the most likely to be misunderstood.

**Short** – Keep the performance (*the acting part*) under 15-20 minutes (*the shorter the better*); focus on the main aspects and elements. Too many events, actions, and characters will lead to an exhausting (*and contra-productive*) process with the audience.

**Safety** – Make sure the experience you design for your audience is safe physically and emotionally. The audience shouldn't feel forced or pushed to be involved directly in the act, at any moment. Any proposed interaction always has to provide the option for the audience members to refuse, stay out or just observe. Be sure you don't incite violent behaviours from the audience on you, as actors, or on the other audience members. For sensitive and emotional topics ask an external person for feedback on your performance.

**Shocking and/or provoking factor** – It is connected to the previous point, but should still be addressed separately. It may be that your purpose is to develop a shocking performance, to provoke and trigger strong feelings, even negative ones, among the audience, which, then, need to be processed by the Joker (*more about Joker in the next pages*) and transformed into positive changes. This is a conscious decision a team takes, but it needs to be taken based on the knowledge you have about the audience and the potential risks you are willing to take. Not every person is comfortable, open and willing to be provoked – thinking otherwise reflects a condescending attitude. Try to know your audience as much as possible before deciding to develop a provocative piece. Very important: do not do it if your Joker doesn't have advanced competencies in facilitation!

**Respect** – there is a blurred line between making fun and using humour (strategically) to address serious, delicate and sensitive topics. If you are not sure how your production is approaching the topic and how you chose to represent it responsibly, better to not use humour. The risks and negative consequences could be substantial and totally overshadow any possible positive outcome your idea could have. For sure, there are some topics, which can rarely work with humour, such as rape, murders, child abuse, and so on.



# **Working** **with Newspaper** **Theatre Method:** The Performance & Interaction with the Audience

We have witnessed performances or parts of different performances taking place in various types of locations:

Newspaper Theatre, unlike other types of Theatre of the Oppressed, which need a more organized space and process, offers larger freedom in terms of choices of locations and structuring of the performance. The main factors that weigh in are the design of the acting part and how the interaction with the audience is planned.

- Theatres
- Hallways
- Conferences/seminar rooms
- Youth or cultural centres
- Prisons
- Toilets
- Balconies
- Storage areas
- Classrooms
- Schools
- Campuses
- Bars/Pubs
- Gardens/Parks
- Parking places
- In front of buildings
- On stairs
- Tents
- Exhibition areas
- Podiums
- Sport halls
- Online
- .....

**The interaction with the audience, which is a compulsory part of the process (as a key feature of Theatre of the Oppressed methodology) can be done at different times during the performance, either by the joker or by the actors, during their scenes.**

A few remarks about the Joker role, a key part of any Theatre of the Oppressed process:

- Is the person who intermediates the interaction between the audience and the play (performed by actors);
- Doesn't have any acting role in the play;
- Is the host and overseer of the entire process;
- Has a crucial role in achieving the objectives of the performance.



## How can the interaction with the audience be facilitated by the Joker?

The purpose of the Joker is to guide and support the audience to understand, connect, analyse, exchange opinions, views, and critical points and extract significant (empowering) learnings relevant to their lives. The Joker can ask questions and discuss with the audience before, during and after the performance.

The most prevalent and at the same time essential is the conversation done after the performance. It is the easiest to be put in practice and planned,

BUT Newspaper Theatre offers so much more potential in terms of interaction with the audience which Jokers can valorise by:

- Asking questions and having an initial discussion before the performance, preparing the audience for the topic, for the acting part (*especially if there are aspects which need warnings*); raising some critical points which can later be observed in the performance, etc.
- Discussing with the audience in between scenes, to decode what happened in the previous scenes, taking the pulse on how the audience feels, thinking about the events unfolding on the stage, asking about their wishes, expectations for what will happen next and reasons why etc. The audience can be invited to join in the next scene and play either one of the roles already existing or a potential role, to make sure what they wish to happen in the next scene happens. Of course, any physical intervention on the stage should then be discussed with the audience, regarding the changes or impact in the overall situation and connections with real life.

*\*if the physical involvement of the audience is wanted, it should be carefully planned with the whole team and not be organized spontaneously; the actors must be prepared to improvise based on the changes made by the audience members.*

- Discussing with the audience during a scene. Actors could freeze during the scene (either at the signal of the Joker or of the audience) and the Joker unpacks the situation with the audience on the spot. It can be combined with the invitation for the audience to join the scene, either by replacing one of the actors or by adding another character to the situation.
- Discussing with the audience members after the performance ended. This should be the main and the most important discussion. The Joker, together with the audience, analyses and wraps up all the issues raised during the performance, connects them to their own lives and also addresses the issues of changes and transfer in their own lives and realities.



## How can the interaction with the audience be facilitated by the Actors?

### Actors can engage the audience during the performance by:

- **Verbally or physically asking them to join the action.** Especially for the scenes which depict events happening in public places, the audience can be treated as if they are there themselves, in that specific public place. Nevertheless, such engagement can be designed for other types of scenes, as well.

#### Examples:

For a protest or gathering, the actors can invite the audience to join as well; when there is a dance play or an action in a club/disco, they are encouraged to dance; if there is a song/slogan/jingle/ etc. they can repeat and join the chorus; if there is a border crossing physically in the room, they are treated as if they are also on the way to cross the border; if two sides are fighting or opposing,

How can the interaction with the audience be facilitated by the Actors?

The actors' purpose in engaging and interacting with the audience during the performance is to make the spectators feel like a part of the depicted actions and events, to raise their interest, attention and motivation. Actors don't do the work of the Joker, which is focused on analysing from a detached and external perspective. Actors, in fact, help the audience blend in the performance and be or feel as a part of it.

the spectators are invited to take sides and give support to their favourites; they can give votes for different actions or people; if there is a play about cyber-bullying, they can be invited to write down offensive words a bully can use in the scene, to make it more realistic; they can engage with different online tools which can be projected in real-time during the performance, etc.

- **Acting in the audience's place.**

Actors can sit in the audience area, even before the performance starts; have conversations from their role, with the spectators (before or during the performance), with other actors who are also placed in the audience area or on the stage;

- **Offering different objects to the audience members.** These objects can be papers with the thoughts of the actors at that moment, flyers from the planned protest, tools of the workers, weapons of the police, etc. The objects can be given without any explanation, mentioned in the dialogue of the actors or the conversations between actors and audience members.

At the end of the play, if the team plans to mingle and interact with the audience, they shouldn't be in their roles anymore. The end of the play signifies, as well, the end of their characters, regardless of how they have interacted with the audience members during the performance.



## Newspaper Theatre - Online Adaptations

Before the year 2020, we haven't even considered working with Theatre of the Oppressed (*any of its methods*) in an online format. We valued and we still do, human connection in the same space, feeling each other, being present and connected in real-time. We still believe that theatre, and especially theatre of the oppressed, has its biggest potential, impact and quality level when we are together in the same physical space, actors, audience and Joker.

The year 2020 challenged and forced us to transform some of our activities into online set-ups; it was either that or nothing. Even if we had (sometimes) satisfactory processes and results we still recommend organizing physical events whenever there is a possibility. In the case of Newspaper Theatre, as it has such a flexible and loose structure, it came easier to adjust it to online context or to situations where the audience and actors cannot be in the same physical space.



### The options that can be used:

#### **Everyone (actors, audience, Joker) in a different physical place meeting in the same virtual place.**

In such cases, the play was performed in real-time, adjusted and using only artistic and dialogue options possible in a virtual set-up. When the performance was delivered, the spectators had their video cameras off so the only video action was that delivered by the actors. The interaction with the audience was reduced mostly to the work of the Joker, to make it easier for the audience to follow the process and engage in conversations. The conversations with the audience took place either verbally or in writing in the chat spaces. Also, direct intervention in the scenes was possible, but it was harder to motivate the audience to “get on the stage” – due to the virtual and rather awkward context. It was also helpful to have 2 Jokers, to share responsibilities; one to manage the spoken conversations and the overall process, and the other one to follow the chat, the issues raised there and to make sure they don’t get lost, but addressed properly.

#### **Actors in the same physical place and everyone else (Joker, audience) in different physical places – meeting in the same virtual place.**

The main difference between this option and the previous one is that actors can deliver a more nuanced and complex performance, as they can all act in the same space. The interventions or suggestions from the audience for change in a scene (if this was part of the process and discussions with the audience) were enacted directly by the actors and not by the audience members.

#### **Audience members and the Joker are in different physical places meeting in the same virtual place.**

In this case, the play was filmed and the scenes were shown and discussed with the audience at different moments. The actors were not present at the event.

#### **The audience members and the Joker are in the same physical place.**

Similarly to the previous option, the actors were not present at the event; the performance was filmed in advance and shown to the audience, in the same manner as the performance would have been played (e.g. *Show the first scene, stop for discussions, continue with the second scene, and so on; discussion, full performance, discussion; etc.*)



# Evaluation and Impact Assessment

The two dimensions we need to look into, when we want to evaluate the work with Newspaper Theatre Method are:

- The achieved results,
- The process to get to those results.

Like anything we do in our work, no matter the methods we apply, it is very important to know if and how we have achieved our objectives. To draft and develop an evaluation plan, a team needs to analyse different dimensions, which then need to be analysed and compared to the desired Aim of the Newspaper Theatre Process. The aim should be framed at the beginning of the process and be the main reference in the evaluation assessment.

#### Results (indicators)

- **Quantitative:** number of actors, plays, performances, audience members, age group, gender distribution (for each performance), number of partners (state and non-state), number of audience members engaging in conversations, etc.
- **Qualitative (short and long-term):** relevance of the audience members, partners, interventions/reactions of the audience, influence on the actors' team, audience, society, future cooperation, etc.

#### Process (indicators)

- **Team process:** positive, negative points, conflicts, management, challenges, strategies to overcome obstacles, feedback, etc.
- **Partnership process:** positive and negative points, conflicts, management, power dynamics, challenges, strategies to overcome obstacles, feedback, etc.

For each of the indicators and aspects mentioned previously different tools and methods can be used to gather data and qualitative information to measure the produced change. Some of the possible methods depend on the specific context in which practitioners are operating, so each team should explore and choose/design the most suitable and adequate methods.

#### Quantitative Results (tools)

The first tool is an example of a monitoring sheet which can help you to track the quantitative data during performance time. The example can be modified and adjusted based on each team's specific desires and needs. For the rest of the indicators, each team can easily develop their own system to collect that respective information.



## Newspaper Theatre Play Observation Sheet

**Location** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of the play**

**Main topic addressed in the play**

**Aim of the play**

- How long (in minutes/hours) was the performance together with the discussions and interventions (*if you had any*)? \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of people in the audience \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of people in the audience belonging to the oppressed group \_\_\_\_\_
- How many people left during the performance? \_\_\_\_\_ Number of women: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of men \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of other gender/non-binary: \_\_\_\_\_
- Age group(s)-*approximate estimation*: \_\_\_\_\_
- Assess the overall level of interest and active participation of the audience during the play (high, medium, low) \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of people that went on stage to make interventions (*if you had any*) \_\_\_\_\_
- The approximate number of people actively involved in the discussions \_\_\_\_\_
- Relevant feedback, and impressions from the audience regarding the topic and your aim: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other comments/observations: \_\_\_\_\_



## Team Process and Impact on the Team

- examples of tools  
for measurement

Throughout the working process, the team should have regular meetings with the aim to assess their own process, and the impact on themselves, exchange feedback, identify challenges, and brainstorm strategies and changes they should do for more constructive and productive teamwork. These meetings can be facilitated by an external person or they can switch roles to empower group members to take more responsibility.

A very important discussion takes place immediately after the performance. The purposes of this meeting are:

- to process the feelings of the actors from their performance;
- to list each actor's perspective on the process with the audience;
- to give feedback to each other;
- to explore the challenges and how they were dealt with;
- to identify the strong and weak points in the scenario and the overall process with the audience;
- to take decisions regarding the changes which should be made if implemented again;





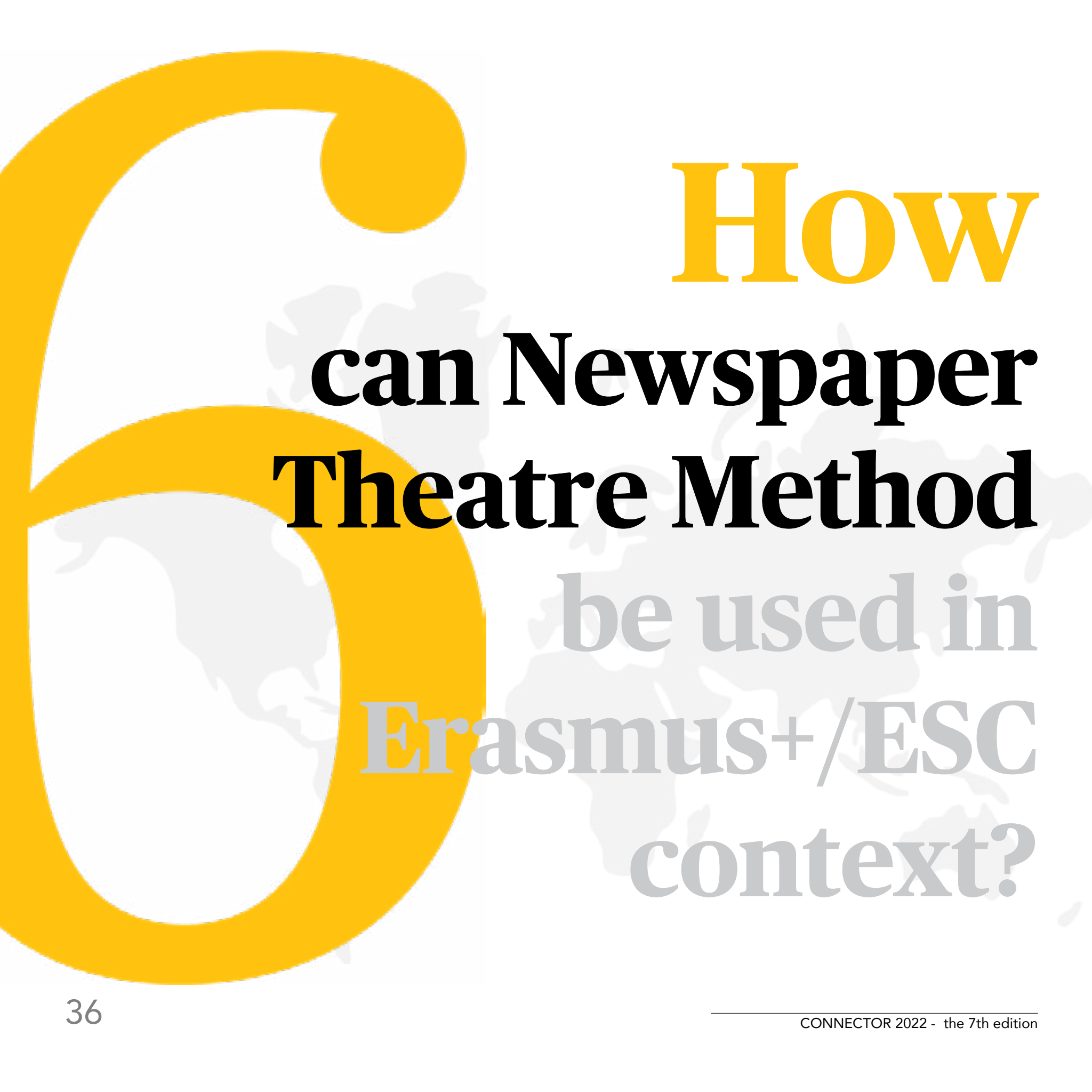
## Assessment of the Impact on the Audience

### – examples of tools for measurement

- If the audience members are using mobile devices connected to the internet, you can use an online tool for collecting their fresh impressions and thoughts from the Newspaper Theatre Event. You can write in a visible place the specific link they can use and kindly ask them to do it before leaving the premises. The survey should be short, to combine quantitative marks, as well as qualitative ones.
- After the performances, team members and other volunteers can go into the public and interact with the audience members, ask them directly how they feel about it, how relevant was this process for them, what they want to do next, etc...
- Big pieces of paper could be placed outside the location and audience members can write on them when they leave the performance. Questions should be specifically related to the topic of the play and shouldn't be more than 3-4!
- The same questions as before, together with some others connected with the issue, could be made into a short evaluation form. The Joker could mention, at the end of the event that some volunteers will come and ask them a few questions, and they are kindly invited to support the initiative.
- The same evaluation form, mentioned before, can be already placed on the seat of each person, and they can individually fill it out and give it to the team at the end of the performance. The Joker should mention it and encourage the people to do so.

## Ideas for longer-term evaluation with audience members

- You can collect their contact details (during the performance) and after some time contact some of the spectators (via e-mail or phone) and invite them to some follow-up meetings to discuss the problems, the changes in their life and the society – or ask them directly via e-mail or phone (post-performance impact evaluation).
- You can set up a specific online medium for the follow-up process after the performance, where, whoever wants to be involved or informed, can join/sign up. Post the exact location of this medium in a visible place and invite people to join. The activity from this medium can offer information on the long-term impact – how many people have joined/are following the specific topic/issues tackled/promoted, how many of them got actively involved, what kind of reactions they have, etc.



# **How** **can Newspaper** **Theatre Method** be used in Erasmus+/ESF context?



### As a method for community intervention

- This is the most “authentic” way of using the method, in line with the principles and the context in which it was developed. It is the most complex, serious and in-depth way of applying it.
- It is prepared and implemented by a group in the community of which they are part.
- The members of the group can be people directly affected by a certain problem (they are oppressed) or they are allies of oppressed people and they are interested to do a change concerning that specific issue.
- The people in the group are very often, not professional actors.
- The group meets regularly or for intensive periods to prepare and develop a performance, relevant and adequate for a specific local community;
- It will require, depending on the group profile, at least 15 to 20 hours of work, only for the scenario development and rehearsals. If the group has previous experience in Theatre of the Oppressed methods this time may be shorter.
- The audience consists of people from the community and it is recommended to be around maximum 50 people in the public;
- **It can be part of a long-term Erasmus+ project**, in the shape of local activities organized by the consortium members, as a follow-up/transfer phase after learning mobility. The local experiences can be later included in exchanges of practices, public events (e.g. festivals) or the creation of toolkits.
- **It can also be included in a European Solidarity Corps project**, as a solidarity project or as part of the volunteering projects (either by the local volunteers or international ones).



*As a learning method  
used during a one-time  
learning context*

- This is a simplification of the method and it is used in its most basic form.
- It can be used as an exercise to explore a specific thematic of a learning context (e.g. human rights, gender, etc.) with the help of media materials.
- Groups of different sizes, between 5 to 10 people, improvise, in a short time, different articles on the given thematic. They are not guided through all the theories, principles or techniques of Newspaper Theatre.
- The scenes prepared by these teams are performed for the other groups, and the facilitator of the bigger learning process, facilitates the discussion of their outcomes with the present “audience”.
- The entire process can be organized in 3 hours (1.5 to introduce the task and prepare and the rest for the performances and discussions) or, for a more nuanced version, in a full day (6 hours).
- The groups can be given already a selection of media materials to speed up the process.
- **It can be part of a short-term Erasmus+ project**, as a learning session included in the program. The Newspaper Theatre method, in this context, is not a purpose in itself but the means to achieve other learning objectives set for that specific educational process.
- **Similar to an Erasmus+ project, it can also be included in a European Solidarity Corps project**, as part of a learning process for the youth groups or volunteers.



# Communities of practice and resources



We have published  
a very detailed manual on  
Newspaper Theatre Method

(<http://toolbox.salto-youth.net/3045> ).

In this manual, we have included a consistent amount of theory and guidelines for any person/group interested to use the Newspaper Theatre method in their work. It includes detailed explanations of Newspaper Theatre and its techniques, concrete examples of scenarios from our work, Practical Guidelines on how to work with this method, Joker instructions adapted to the Newspaper Theatre process and a large section of exercises that practitioners can use in their efforts to work with this method. This manual can be found in English, Greek, Hungarian, Norwegian, Portuguese and Romanian at this address: <https://en.artfusion.ro/resources/>

Based on our fieldwork, we have published a series of free and accessible manuals on different Theatre of the Oppressed methods which can be used in the process of working with the Newspaper Theatre Method, as well.

In the Forum Theatre  
Manual

(<http://toolbox.salto-youth.net/1503>)

we have listed a general curriculum which can be used for working with a new team (with no experience in the area). There are diverse warm-ups, theatre games, and power and oppression exercises, which can serve as a resource for any team. This manual and some other educational materials (related to Forum Theatre) in Romanian language can be found here: <https://artfusion.ro/resurse/>

In the Invisible Theatre  
Manual

(<http://toolbox.salto-youth.net/2636>), there is a variety of exercises meant to prepare and support a team working with this specific method. There are exercises on group work, power, emotions, and improvisations that can also be used for working with a team in Newspaper Theatre.

In the Legislative Theatre  
Manual

(<http://toolbox.salto-youth.net/3044>) there is a variety of exercises meant to prepare and support a team working with this specific method. There are exercises on society and power distribution at the macro level, problems and solutions (from different society actors' perspectives), personal reflections and improvisations. Depending on the topic addressed through the Newspaper Theatre play, some of these exercises can also be used. This manual can be found in English, Greek, Hungarian, Portuguese and Romanian at this address: <https://en.artfusion.ro/resources/>







## **CONNECTOR**

is an international event focused on non-formal learning  
and organised every year by

## **ANPCDEFP**

National Agency for the Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training  
(Romanian NA for European Solidarity Corps and Erasmus+)

[www.anpcdefp.ro](http://www.anpcdefp.ro)