



BEYOND PERFORMANCE

Experiences in Legislative Theatre

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OVERTURE

Dear reader,
what you see is a compendium including diverse articles covering the topics of Legislative Theatre and political participation of youth written by youth workers. This online booklet represents one of the two intellectual outputs of the 15-month international project LegiLab 4 Progress co-created by 4 partner organisations: Giolli from Italy, Active inquiry from Scotland, Pracownia Inspiracji Społecznych from Poland and Pekar-na Magdalenske mreže Maribor from Slovenia.

All of the participating organisations have years of experience in working with diverse target groups, using the techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed, a.k.a. theatre for social change. After years of networking and exchanging knowledge and ex-

perience among youth workers, active in the above mentioned organisations, we felt the need to upgrade our questioning, analysis and praxis in the area of political participation of youth. Based on the methodology of Theatre of the Oppressed we set ourselves the challenge of trying out the technique of Legislative Theatre in local communities and adapting it to the here and now.

In the following articles you can get acquainted in detail with the technique of Legislative Theatre as it has been developed by its initiator and pioneer Augusto Boal. You will also find examples of good and a few not so good practices carried out by the organisations involved in the project, as well as an overview of some other examples of Legislative Theatre in practice.

In order to make this booklet available to everyone and not get stuck on dusty bookshelves or turn into exclusive privilege of those that can afford such literature, we set ourselves the goal to make it accessible online and allowing anyone to print it out.

The added value of this book lies also in its multilingual form as it is available in English, Italian, Polish and Slovene.

At this point we would like to express our thanks to the Erasmus+ programme and the Movit National Agency for enabling us to realize this project, as well as to all volunteers and performers who have been and still are involved in the process of developing Legislative Theatre.

Pleasant reading!

SCENE ONE

WHAT IS LEGISLATIVE THEATRE?

Legislative Theatre was developed by Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal (Augusto_Boal). It is one of the 'branches' of the Theatre of the Oppressed, an umbrella term for all of the techniques of this type of theatre developed over 40 years (Theatre_of_the_Oppressed).

Influenced by radical educationalist Paulo Freire, Boal developed the Theatre of the Oppressed to use theatre as collaborative, educational and political process (Paulo_Freire).

Unlike traditional theatre, the Theatre of the Oppressed enables the audience to engage with the theatrical action and use theatre as a rehearsal for reality.

Legislative Theatre builds on the technique of Forum Theatre in which an audience can stop the play, enter the stage space and change the direction of the play in order to try to learn more about and overcome a certain oppression (Forum_theatre).



Still from the animation in "LegiLAB - Experiments in Legislative Theatre"; authors: Lucija Smodiš and Brina Fekonja



Still from the animation in "LegiLAB - Experiments in Legislative Theatre"; authors: Lucija Smodiš and Brina Fekonja

The stage becomes a space in which knowledge can be shared and built, where solidarity can develop and where people can rehearse ideas for how to **change reality** outside of the theatre space. It is the most commonly used technique of the Theatre of the Oppressed, used in over 70 countries in the world.

Boal developed the technique of Legislative Theatre whilst he was Vereador (city councillor) for Rio de Janeiro from 1993 to 1997.

The project involved working with many of the diverse and often under-represented communities in the city to use theatre to propose and vote on new laws which Boal would then bring

to the City Chamber. Overall 13 new laws were passed using this technique (Boal, 1998). This included a law that all municipal hospitals must have doctors specialising in geriatric diseases and problems.

A more recent example is, on the 13th December 2017 in Austria, a law was passed about the participation of disabled people in society which used a Legislative Theatre technique (Legislative Theatre-Take part! It's about us!).

HOW DID BOAL ORGANIZE A LEGISLATIVE THEATRE SESSION?



A piece of Forum Theatre is presented to an audience. However, beforehand the Joker - the name given to the facilitator in the Theatre of the Oppressed - asks the audience "if you had the power to make a law, then what would it be?" (Forum_theatre).

During the Forum Theatre session and audience interventions in the play, the audience are asked to write down any ideas for new laws that they think would help to overcome the oppression shown on stage. These are collected up and passed to the Metabolic Cell (Boal, 1998).

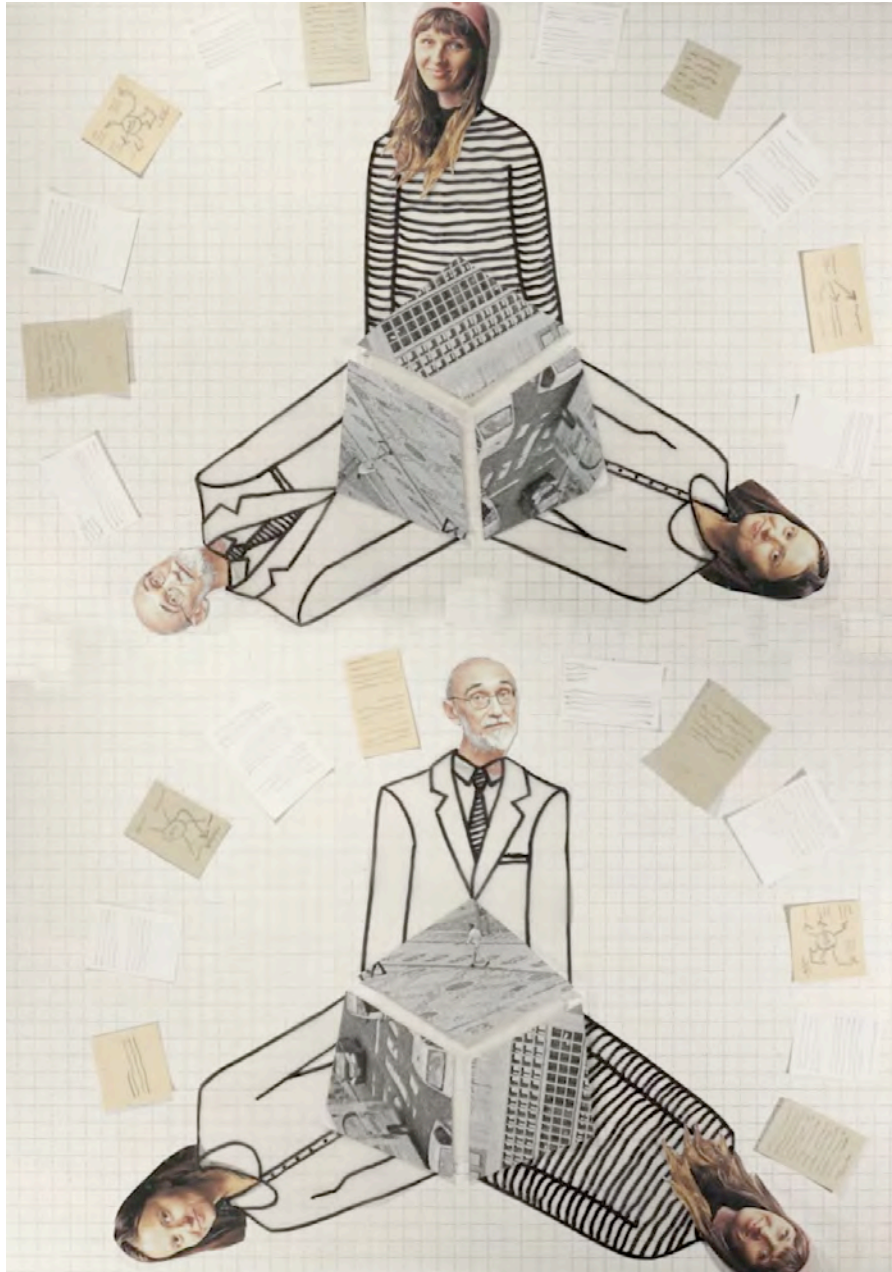


The Metabolic Cell sit at a table near the stage.

It should consist of at least three people:

1. An activist who is involved with the issue being presented in the play;
2. A lawmaker who understands how to write legislation;
3. A lawyer with experience in the issue being presented.

During the play and afterwards it is the duty of the Metabolic Cell to look at the proposals from the audience and to write down any laws that have been suggested that are existing laws and 3 or 4 changes to existing laws or new laws that have come from audience proposals.



Still from the animation in "LegiLAB - Experiments in Legislative Theatre"; authors: Lucija Smodiš and Brina Fekonja

After the play the Metabolic Cell come onto the stage, introduce themselves and firstly present any laws that have been suggested that are existing laws. This is an important part of the process because many **existing laws** are not used properly or at all. The purpose of Legislative Theatre is not just to make new laws but also to understand existing laws, how they currently work and how they could be employed better to challenge oppression. Secondly they propose 3 or 4 changes to laws or new laws. Each proposal is debated by the audience and then voted on using coloured card. Green to agree, red to disagree and yellow for undecided. A majority of green cards means that the law has been voted through by the audience.

It is important to note that this is a **pre-law making process**. It is now important to find a way to bring these laws to a Legislative Body in order to make them a reality. In Rio this process was easier because Boal was a member of the Chamber but this is the big question for those undertaking a Legislative Theatre project without a politician as part of the theatre company!

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QUESTIONS WE NEED TO ASK ABOUT LEGISLATIVE THEATRE

Active Inquiry is a theatre company based in Edinburgh, Scotland. We have been using Theatre of the Oppressed to make theatre with communities for 10 years. We have always ensured that we thought hard about where we position ourselves politically, always ensuring that our work was with various 'oppressed' groups. We have always sought to have a structural and societal understanding of oppression and not a moral one. To be oppressed means to belong to a group of oppressed who lack power and are discriminated against by the structure of society rather than by 'bad' individuals (Cheney, et al., 2006). Forum Theatre performances are a place to build solidarity and understanding amongst these groups and to find connections and ways to take positive action to change things from the ground up.

We would often invite politicians and policy makers to performances and they would often come, join in and enjoy themselves. But they were always coming to our space and joining in on our terms. This was, of course, the point. We didn't want our performances to feel that they were political consultations in which those in power ask for responses but nothing changes. We wanted politicians to be a part of our dialogue but mostly to listen to what was being said in the hope that this would change things. Many would

join in with interventions and take time to speak to the actors and audiences. They often commented that it was nice to be "doing something different" and that what we were doing was "really important." Many of us felt that we had made an impression on them that could lead to change. In the energy of a Forum Theatre performance it sometimes feels that anything is possible and that change will happen but this is very difficult to measure and, at best, we are left with the hope that something will happen.

Legislative Theatre moves beyond just hoping and sets out to directly influence and change policy and laws. The attraction of this is that there is a concrete outcome - a proof that Forum Theatre achieves change. But of course there are many dangers. No longer can we play the game by our rules - we need to step into an arena with its own set of rules that have been developed over hundreds of years. We need to start to play the game of Politics with a capital 'P'. No law is going to change with a series of Legislative Theatre performances, no matter how good they are. So what else needs to happen to transform the energy of theatre performances into new legislation? Probably negotiations, deals, manipulation of language, building alliances and all the other shady practices that politicians need to be involved with on a daily basis.

Of course we can play these games if we think that the end result is worth it. But this raises many questions that we have to interrogate:

- ♦ Who do we choose to collaborate with and what does this collaboration look like?
- ♦ What political agendas are we consciously and unconsciously a part of?
- ♦ How do we keep our radical identity and avoid being absorbed into the 'system'?
- ♦ In what way do we extend the dialogue to those who we have traditionally viewed as oppressors? Should we do this?
- ♦ How do we ensure that the democratic principles and practices involved in the Legislative Theatre performances are continued into the law making process-

es? Who makes the decisions when the audience aren't there? What criteria do they base these decisions on?

- ♦ Is democracy/majority to decide or should we search for a non-violent consensus process?
- ♦ How to deal with polarities within oppressed people? How should we facilitate an agreement?
- ♦ And finally, is all this effort and time worth it for what may be a weak end result? Should we be using our energy better elsewhere if we want to achieve change?

As we move into exploring Legislative Theatre in Scotland, these questions are at the front of our minds. The prize of a new law is something that is very attractive but what do we lose in the process of attaining it?

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LEGISLATIVE THEATRE CAN BE A SUPPORTIVE AND INSPIRING TOOL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Interview with Michael Wrentschur

InterACT, Factory for Theatre and Social-Culture in Graz, the second largest city in Austria, is a non-profit professional theatre and culture initiative using theatre and drama for culture of dialogue and living together in diversity, for empowerment, participation and social change. The initiative, cofounded by Dr. Michael Wrentschur, sociologist, theatre facilitator and cultural creator, who has already experienced using the Legislative Theatre technique as a tool for social and political change. Michael works as a joker, project leader, workshop host and professor at the University of Graz.



Rappel/InterACT

Asking: Tjasa Kosar

How do you understand Legislative Theatre?

For me Legislative Theatre is the most political technique in Theatre of the Oppressed, because it tries to link or connect people that are affected by a certain problem or who want to change something, within society, with the public, and then with political decision makers. And theatre is the main medium as a participatory method, so it is the artistic medium in the center of it. For me this would be the core of the description. In this sense, it can make a great contribution to developing our understanding of democracy and for our trying to find solutions. We aim to connect people, who are the experts in their life, and who are the experts of their realities, but also to give new impulse into the public discourse.

For example, at the moment we are doing a big project about basic social service, because there is a big discussion in Austria, as a consequence of the refugee movement. The conservative right, they say, "oh, there are people coming now, we don't have a

place for them in our social system, they can't get the same as citizens". Therefore, a lot of social division, a lot of separating people as communities is happening. So just out of our experience, we just had some performances last week, it's interesting when people get involved by Legislative Forum Theatre, you can really experience how their perspective can change.

So for me it's not only the community aspect, in the sense of people who experience some problem, trying to make theatre out of it, and wanting to change it. It also creates space to discuss this, it creates a space of dialogue, which is really based on self- and group experience and for this, Legislative Theatre can be a very strong tool.

It can be a hot discussion, whether this dialogue, and building the bridge with decision-makers, is really breaking the core of social oppression or is just maintaining status-quo. What is coming from up and what is coming from down? Can I also quickly challenge you

with this, how you see this dilemma?

True, this can be an interesting discussion sometimes, but I'm not so sure if it is the most important discussion about this. In the last year, in the last decade we tried to make our kind of Legislative Theatre, mostly trying from the bottom up, in the sense that we organized projects, we organized community workshops and out of this made Forum Theatre productions. Our part also involved trying to get money for these projects, without getting instrumentalized. But if you don't find the bridge to the decision makers, however that bridge is, it is not Legislative Theatre. Although, Legislative Theatre is not always about laws, it's sometimes about other rules, other ideas, and for me this is the crucial point. You can have the principle of being convinced about something that you don't want to cooperate with, and some knowledge that you don't have any impact on this kind of system, but I think we shouldn't forget how Legislative Theatre was invented. Boal was

part of the political system, Boal was a part of the workers party and without him being part of the elected responsibility as a counselor of Rio De Janeiro, we wouldn't ever get an idea about Legislative Theatre. So I think it is a tricky dilemma that you need to be very careful about, but this bridge between communities and decision makers, I consider that as important. And the interesting thing is, we would have wished in Styria (a region of Austrian), where we are mostly working, that sometimes we would get the question: " Would you support us, because we really need your opinion, we really need other proposals", I mean directly from decision makers like in Tirol, where my colleague Armin Staffler facilitated a wonderful Legislative Theatre project. It was interesting because the government of Tirol was interviewing us before, asking if we can send them reports of our work, which was not Legislative Theatre top down but more bottom up. And I was a little bit sceptical about the Legislative Theatre project in Tirol. I asked, can this work, or if there is a danger of instrumentalization and things like that. But my impression was, that there was no big

difference for the Theatre of the Oppressed process itself, in this case, if it was a bottom up or "top down" project. I think what was interesting was that even some people from the administration got really inspired by what had happened. And we never, or not often, have the administration on our side, even though we have a lot of proposals and political demands. So for me after the process the question is, how can we now reach our goals, how can we do this work, how can we have an impact on political discourse, and how can we impact political decisions?

In 2002 I started the project about homeless people, and we were asking ourselves, is this possible in Graz, in Styria to do this, and what is necessary? It was a hard learning process and it is still going on, but the principle question is not so much, is it now pure Theatre of the Oppressed or not? You can say Legislative Theatre is from the very beginning a kind of a compromise thing, a kind of ambiguous thing, because it's not criticizing this representative democracy or radically criticizing the political systems. No, it's not at all! It is a kind of specific contri-

bution, but with seeing this, I think a lot of other things become possible. Even though I think the question, 'is this maintaining the status quo?' is an important question and I had a lot of principle talks in my life already, in some cases I had to consider, where do we really get the power to change something, to work together with communities? So we have to debate on that, but it could be, that our view is more pragmatic and depends a little bit also on our experiences of working, especially in the communities which are more at the edge of societies. We had some projects, that were life-changing, so if you think about change and what is change for us, I think we have to be very clear about it. There are so many different images, so many different points of view of 'what is change?'

And then there are also a great number of categories of radical, personal, pragmatic and political perspectives, as well as the perspectives of different groups and communities. So I think we have to be careful about this as well, when we talk about change.



Rappel/InterACT

And not support black and white ways of thinking, right?

I know these discussions from the lefties of the 1930's onwards, 'who is real left, who is not?' For me it would be more fruitful to ask what we have learnt, what do we need when we make this approach, what can help us to make change possible, what does it mean to connect with other organizations and how can we build on what works? How can we use it but not in-

strumentalize it for the system, but at the same time be ready for the real dialogue? In our case you could see, when we make Legislative Theatre projects on specific issues, we very often get the information, that sometimes people already have ideas about what has to be changed. But for years these concepts, these ideas were not put into reality. We had some moments in the last few years through Legislative Theatre intervention, that told us really

good ideas, good concepts can somehow also get into reality. So sometimes it helps to make the window, or the doors open more, for already existing ideas of change. And I think Legislative Theatre sometimes is not about changing the system itself but challenging the system. This is for me, a very interesting question, what is change and what is our image of the system? This would be interesting to explore together.

Yes, we are not the only individuals, that see one collective change, but we also see how different individual perceptions of change can work together.

Yes, for me it is important to share the conceptions and come to a point, where a lot of people would say, 'yes, this is not exactly what I personally want, but I can understand why we get more power, so I can agree on this change.' In our last production we worked a lot with a trainer, who uses chorus theatre techniques, where a group of people, a collective, an ensemble, works and acts together theatrically and socially. Not so much the scenes, but more about how there are

a lot of possibilities. Even big groups can perform something and there is an individual side in it, so each of them is different, but they form and create something collectively. This was interesting, because in this process it is not about only one individual story but we all tried to connect the hot topics of the different individual stories. The base for the next step is to collect and create pieces out of it, and then to connect with other organizations, grassroots initiatives, and social movements.

So what kind of projects have you made with Legislative Theatre?

I will make this very short, we did one project about the issue of homelessness in the city of Graz, and we did a project about urban spaces. There is a lot of building construction going on in the city, therefore the public space becomes smaller. Then we were working a lot on the issue of poverty. One generally about poverty, and also a project on the poverty of elders, because this is a big issue, I think in all EU countries. We held a project about migrants, who are not coming from the EU but from third states, 'third state

migrants' we call them, and their right to be included in labour market. We've started a project about a kind of basic income, basic existence support for people in precarious situations. And we had a project about disadvantaged young adults. A lot of them had to do with the issue of poverty and social inequality. We also did another project on the issue about urban space, it was located in the public park area, where a lot of conflicts between the youth in the park were going on. We made the project with the young people and their perspective, and then found out and really touched the structural problem behind it. There was kind of a solution, as the result of this project, which from that time, we made it in 2008, became the solution for the whole city.

How would you evaluate them? I don't like the language of results, results, but ...

Yes, but I think we should be honest about this, I'm also working as a researcher, I'm not so much interested in things that can't be measured. From when I started my theatre work, and this is decades before, I could feel a

great impact on myself. For example, I could see how this work affects my thinking, my body, my feelings, my senses, and from then I was always interested, how to describe that to people, when they are doing this, what is the change about, in changing their perspectives, their actions and their attitude. So, I would say the results can be somehow described also on different layers. For example we found out, that because we are often working with communities on the edge of society, in mid-term or long-term projects, they got new impulses for their life. They began to create new social networks, they became more active in political life. Because very often people are not politically active, they are not socially engaged. In this current project we have three people, who told us about their isolation and for one of them their only contact with a person, in society, is their social worker. It's the first time for years, that they are being part of a group.

Many in this time are socially excluded...

Yes, and I think this is the interesting thing, that theatre and particularly this

kind of theatre can somehow offer people a chance to get a way to plug in and become a part of some community, part of a group. Then they are sharing stories and some people told us they never had the chance to tell these stories. They are sometimes very hard and challenging, and you can see how the conditions that people are living in are not in good, but then, step by step, you can see that there is some kind of change. Legislative Theatre means, in a sense, coming together, playing together, sharing ideas, sharing stories and then really creating a play together through all this process, using theatrical tools that also have an effect on the people. Then going to the public, and see that there is some kind of acknowledgment. Not in a sense 'oh, they are so poor', but as people that want something, they share something. And taking it a step further, talking with politicians, decision makers, they can see, they can stand and express for themselves, to those decision makers, what change is needed. In this way, a lot of things can happen. These are also results, the results of the whole process.

We don't talk so much of this, we rather speak in numbers usually as a proof...

Yes, until now we were always bottom up in our projects, and it was always a kind of 'good will' if representatives of the system let us in or not. And when they let us in, we've really tried to make a performance. So we did the same Forum Theatre piece that was going around and had 20-30 performances, and we had a lot of collective ideas and proposals that were then brought to the parliament or city council. And then we could see the theatre can have an affect even on the decision makers. Afterwards, some of them get new ideas about what's going on in real life. That's why it was sometimes possible that in the political process, a decision was made, which was not all the ideas we had. But at least in some cases we could really document the sense of success, a result, a change in implementation or a new project or concept.

How did you approach your projects? Did you, like Boal did, adapt it to your environment, and to the specific problem?

I was inspired by what I'd heard, read and talked about with Boal, but as I said, every project has a special design, approach, regarding the issue, regarding the community we are working with, and regarding the resources. But we always take three main steps: first step, I think, has a lot to do with networking, research and community, and creating the play. The second then is organizing performances, having them and documenting them. Asking 'what are the interventions about, and what are the proposals about?' Then the third step in our case is to transfer the results to different layers of administration, political organizations and decision makers.

And they react to this?

Sometimes yes, but sometimes it takes a lot of energy to really enter the space. We were never invited to make a Forum Theatre piece on a certain issue. We ask them, we invite them to come to our performances. Sometimes it leads to little results, sometimes not. But because of what happens in the process, despite of a lot of work, I think it is worth it.

According to your experiences, what would be your advice to the groups that are just starting with the technique of Legislative Theatre?

On one side, everyone has to adapt it to their own situation, because it always depends a little bit on how you are organized as a group or a team. How big or how small such a project is, what is the inspiration and the energy? So it's difficult to say, 'this should be avoided' etc. What we found was supportive, was the networking and the dialogue from the beginning on, with different organisation's initiatives. This is very important from the grass-root and NGO side, but what we are also sometimes doing, is even coming to dialogues with politicians at the beginning of the project, coming to them and saying, 'look, we will work on this issue for the next number of months and we would really like to invite you to get to know what it is about, so come to our performances, we will discuss this and this issue.' Then I think it helps that there is a very clear framework for all the participants, because when we are working, especially with communities, what the project is

about, and what can we offer has to be very clear and transparent. Sometimes we can offer a little bit of money for the people who are joining the project or at least any other platform, but it needs to be clear, so we invest a lot into thinking about this. Also it is important that the Forum Theatre play, no matter if it is a little bit dangerous to say this, that it is a good play. And that there is enough time and space for rehearsals, to create that space in aesthetic and political sense. This is important especially since we are dealing with political and law issues. We really need to communicate what is the state of the art, what is the problem and this needs time. The documentation from the interventions, from the discussions and proposals are very important, sometimes we even make a project board, where we discuss with people who have an expertise in the topic from social organizations. We have also had good experiences when, right after a performance, there is also a round table or fish bowl, to really get an idea if there can be some quick solutions out of the performance. We also invest a lot into public relations and media work, because the project needs

to be seen and perceived somehow. There are a lot of challenges, dealing with people in the communities, because some of them might not have been in groups for years, in many cases they have been really excluded. Therefore there are a lot of challenges to reaching these people, to invite them, make the space open for them, and to build the trust again. That's a good thing with theatre, that on the one side it makes fun and gives a kind of life energy, but at the same time we don't make a comedy. But some of the participants are asking exactly for this: "When can we also make a comedy?"

It is challenging, that sometimes we have no influence on the power relations and dynamics in the political system. So you have to know a lot of tactics and strategies of patience, networking, how not to lose the power and contact with the decision makers, who have their own agenda normally. For one project, I did some telephone interviews with politicians who were part of the performance. I was talking to them one month to sense how it was for them, what will they do now,

and what will be their next step. It is interesting that the president of the Styrian parliament had time for an interview and he was really impressed by the performance but then he said to me, 'but one time is not enough, it has to be played 3,4,5 times, because every day of the politician's life, means to be getting a lot of impressions the whole day, and then they forget about the touching and impressing performance.' You need strategies if you really want a political impact of Legislative Theatre projects

Therefore a forum play is not enough, you need to press further on?

Yes, it is tricky, you need to think what can be the contribution that makes political pressure stronger, at the same time as not to become instrumentalized. We are also thinking, how Legislative Theatre can be connected with social media, that is something we just started to think about. So, even the political process can go on in this way.

So what would you say in the end is the potential of Legislative Thea-

tre as a technique, at least here in EU maybe?

I think very similar to what I said at the beginning. I'm seeing the situation in Europe, for example, where there is a lot of social exclusion but also social division, while at the same time only a few people are interested in democracy any more. There are lots of reasons for this, and the situation is rising and becoming even stronger. I think Legislative Theatre can be one important tool to give other important ideas. We ask how political decisions can be made, with people who are really experts about the problem, looking for a solution, and Legislative Theatre can really be a part of that. It is filling the gap between people and decision makers, a gap between different communities but also a gap between communities and other parts of society. Legislative Theatre can help to get more awareness of those gaps. It's more about finding solidarity in ways for closing the gaps. Because there are big processes that are separating people, so Legislative Theatre offers some other way.

This booklet is exploring youth political participation and how to

support it with the tools of Legislative Theatre. Since you also had a project with young adults, what would be your thoughts on that?

There is no general answer to this, and I can only extrapolate from the projects we did. We had a project in schools, looking at how theatre can become a tool for democracy in schools. And there we could see that for some people, who then became really part of this project, it is a good way, especially for people who want to change something. Another project we had was with young adults in disadvantaged and sometimes really challenging, life situations. They were really far away from politics, they were only hating politicians, feeling in a sense, that politicians are only assholes and things like this. This was interesting because there was nothing in between. But we made a Forum Theatre play and we went deeper into the issues, and they got an idea how politics and laws affect their everyday life, their decisions, and with this they started to become more interested in politics. We then had a performance in the parliament, where they got direct contact

and dialogue with political stakeholders, and there they got a feeling that people are listening to what they are saying. At least in this temporary dialogue they got really strong experiences, which for some of them, not for all, was an inspiration for further political engagement. It's not as easy as it sounds, of course, it's not that people magically get more engaged, but I can

still say, yes, Legislative Theatre can be a supportive and inspiring tool for young people and their political engagement. In Austria we have different representative platforms and networks for young people, so there is always something going on in political participation for young people and then it's a decision, whether to participate in regional settings, urban or national, in

school or district settings. I think on all these different levels Legislative Theatre is possible and makes sense. Sometimes it could be that on the lower levels, regional or district levels, the effect can be seen quicker. In the Styrian parliament nothing happens for two years and then something finally moves. Young people like to see the effect of their work more quickly.

SCENE TWO

GIOLLI EXPERIMENTS IN LEGISLATIVE THEATRE

WITH THE COMPANY OF DOUBTS

Giolli knew Legislative Theatre by Boal's book with no practice at all at the beginning. Many years ago we tried for the first time to apply this process in Italy. Here are our main attempts.

Vicenza: In 2003 a political leftist party asked us to support them in creating a youth policy as **electoral programme** with a **bottom up approach**, focused on the problem of spaces for youth. The idea was to work out a list of objectives for youth before the city election, in a participatory way, instead of the classical way, where the party itself elaborates the program based on its knowledge of what people want. In this case we would have started through a path where youth would be involved. So we interviewed some youth associations and groups in different districts of Vicenza, about the spaces for youth they perceived as problematic or desirable. After that we staged a performance containing the main issues and organised, together with the party, 4 sessions of Forum-Theatre where

solutions coming from the audience were recorded. At the end of each performance there wasn't a real Metabolic Cell, but we debated, in the presence of the politicians, the proposed solutions. At the end the Party assumed most of the solutions emerged by the process, but then lost the election, so we don't know if they would have ever implemented the agreed policy.

Rovigo: in 2003-4, here the initiative started from "Archi e non solo", an association defending the migrants' rights. They proposed for us to work around the topic of **foreign caregivers**, mostly Ukrainian women, that live in an Italian old person's home, with little payment and a lot of stress. These women are obliged to stay at home and to care the person 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, even if the national contract demands 1.5 days off each week and 2 hours break each day. Their situation is often out of contract and is a real exploitation, so we accepted. A set of interviews was done with these women and the collected da-

ta became a Forum-Theatre play where their bad conditions were shown. Then we organised a public session where we invited the caregivers themselves, related Public Institutions, trade-unions, associations. Local Public Institutions did not come to the performance. The results of this Forum-Theatre and following debate became a document that was sent to the Municipality to stimulate a policy regarding these caregivers. As far as we know nothing happened after the project on the side of Municipality.

Livorno: in this town we had a project in 2003-4, funded by European Social Fund, called "Facce bianche facce nere facciamo informazione" (White faces, black faces, let's do information) focused on racism, stereotypes, misinformation. We organised theatre workshops where Italians and migrants came together and researched around their relationship. Moreover in a workshop we investigated specifically the discrimination against migrants in the labour market. We did put together the results of this process creating some performances that toured in the town, meeting different audiences. Here again we collected solutions from the audiences and set up a document in the Metabolic Cell that was sent to the relevant public Institutions.

Casaltone, Parma: in 2012 we organised a workshop with José Soeiro, Theatre of the Oppressed practitioner and also member of the Portuguese Parliament for 4 years and activator of a Legislative Theatre process that came to a new law for youth. This workshop was a milestone in our learning because it widened our idea of Legislative Theatre that was limited to the creation of a new law, while in Italy we have more than 100,000 laws, sometimes very good, and **the problem is their application!** His perspective opened up our vision to other possibilities, for instance on how to apply an existing law or how to create a legislative power in a movement.

One key reflection was also the parallels between Theatre of the Oppressed and **sociology**; in his words (from a conversation during the workshop in Italy):

"Theatre of the Oppressed can learn important lessons from sociology. The craft of sociology and of theatre are both, in a sense, a work of symbolic production of reality and of manufacturing categories of representation and understanding. In both cases, they do it at odds with other actors - other disciplines, politicians, media - that offer competing ways of representing the social world. A Forum-Theatre play is a narrative about reality, a point of view about it. Forum-Theatre usually shows the different scenes

of the story as frameworks of interaction. One of its dramaturgical challenges is how to make evident the structural elements that are present in the "interaction order" (Goffman, 1983). Sociology has developed a significant conceptual apparatus to represent, through concepts, elements that are not readily identifiable in each concrete situation, because they are beyond it. These are for sure useful in the work of making visible, in a scene, the systemic properties that are there, the structures that so often are invisible. At another level, sociology has deeply studied how social relations are somatized through practices and dispositions and how roles are one of the means through which the social world is embodied. Sociology might challenge theatre to always take into account how roles, identities, forms of action, body hexis are structured by social relations of power. Last but not least, sociology is used to look at individual stories and narratives not in its irreducible singularity but in what they are expressing of these relations. What in Theatre of the Oppressed is called "ascesis" - the process through which we pluralize individual narratives and go "from the phenomenon to the law" - is a basic operation of sociological reasoning and there is much accumulated thinking about it. Theatre of the Oppressed might also be a powerful device for public sociology. Being a more complete human language, theatre can bring to

each debate the complexity of the context, of the mechanisms of interaction, the social through body and space. At one time, it ties the discussion to the experience, to the "practical sense" (Bourdieu, 1980), avoiding an abstract code that is often felt (and used) as a means of dispossession, particularly for those that don't belong to the field of sociology. Because Forum Theatre is located in the interstitial space between what exists and what doesn't exist yet, it invites us to think about social reality critically, as just one possibility among others. In Theatre of the Oppressed, each oppressed has within him a submissive and a rebel, each body is at the same time the locus of domination and of liberation, each repetition is at the same time an act of reproduction and the possibility of a deviation. At last, Theatre of the Oppressed is interactive, it can be both "instructive and entertaining", to use Brecht's expression, and allows public sociology to reach much broader audiences.

Fidenza, Parma: in 2015 we started "Dal Desiderio alla Legge" (from desire to law), an experience with hundreds of high school students; the project, supported by Municipality, was about the relationship between man and woman and the question of violence. We created an interactive action played in several classrooms, aimed at knowing the point of view of youngsters about the topic. All the

proposals were collected and listed, then consigned to a Public Authority in a ritual ceremony.

Trentino: we are planning to start a 2 years long Legislative Theatre project in a valley of Trentino, around the Sarca, a river 88 Km long. The idea is to gather together some main stakeholders who use the river for different reasons: fishermen, Alps guides, tourist guides and canoeing trainer, Municipalities, ski plants. These groups have different needs and desires but use the same resources that are also limited, therefore the process will try to make it likely that the groups negotiate, instead of fighting against an oppression... or maybe we could discover that there is an oppression... who knows?

This is for us a new scheme because we are used to starting with marginalised social groups in order to empower them while here it seems there is a **balance of powers**. This project would have been started in September 2017 and so be fully accomplished for the timing of LegiLab, but unexpectedly we faced bureaucratic difficulties and even if it is approved by the Regional Government is not started yet.

Conclusion

Our considerations about our practice is that each project was too short to impact reality in a strong way. One reason

is that we didn't have any support by institutions and the world of politics, not enough to carry on the proposals beyond the Forum-Theatre session. It is likely that we did not have the legislative power, citing José Soeiro, so we allowed people to create proposals, but without a strategy to make pressure on the concerned institutions. Another limit was the fragmentation in the oppressed groups, which reinforced the first point.

Some questions arise:

- 1) Is it possible to start a bottom up Legislative Theatre **without any support from Institutions?**
- 2) And if so, how is the process limited by the **strong presence of politicians?** How do we build up the legislative power?
- 3) How do we overcome the **fragmentation** of oppressed people, division, different opinions and solutions, competition among popular organisations?
- 4) How do we avoid a **manipulation in the process**, where populist leaders can bring oppressed people to a situation where the 'solutions' are discriminatory, if not openly racist? I have in mind that Lega Nord affiliates could propose to solve unemployment by rejecting migrants or solve issues of housing by saying 'for the pub-

lic house, first Italian!' as they really did in some Municipalities.

- 5) How do we avoid manipulation from the "system" that today talks often about participation but just as a way to create consensus beside its own decisions? So, some less important decision is processed in a participatory way, but are we sure that key economic decisions will be managed in this way? For example, there was a ref-

erendum on Water Privatisation that was won by citizens who wanted to re-publicize the water plants and what happened? Most Municipalities did not care about this "will of the people"!!! So it seems to me the **system just let us play in a limited playfield.**

Therefore Legislative Theatre should be investigated more and have a deep reflection about its ambiguity, risks, weaknesses.

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DEAF POLAND - PERFORMANCE: THE (ALMOST) SILENT WORLD (FOUNDATION PRACOWNIA INSPIRACJI SPOŁECZNYCH)

Doing Legislative Theatre is a challenging task, but doing Legislative Theatre in a certain political rupture, just after national protests against constitutional court crisis, overwhelming accusations of destroying legislative systems and proceeding laws overnight by the parliamentary majority, seems **quixotism**. It is precisely the context in which we started Legislative Theatre project for LegiLab 4.0.

Deciding upon the issue we wanted to tackle was thus a result of a strategic decision. The decision was embedded in calculating political possibilities. The last few decades in Poland, beginning with the Solidarity Movement and 1989 political transformation are characterized by a growing number of social movements. Many of the new social movements are gathered around identity politics such as LGBT+ movements or women's rights movements, that gained certain visibility in the past quarter of a century (e.g. the Women's Strike, Manifas, Equality Marches, Prides). Although relatively strong they did not manage to implement desired laws e.g. marriage equality or protection from discrimination (Pawłęga, Makuchowska 2012,



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Struzik 2012, Mizielińska, Stasińska 2017). Countered with the political agenda and de facto almost unlimited power of the governing party it is a huge success when taking to the streets results in government withdrawal from a planned legislative change (e.g. the Women's Strike) (Król, Pustułka 2018). On the horizon of social movements, the disability rights movement remains relatively unseen (with strong NGOs but less visible movement), yet the governing party builds their political agenda strongly including the rights of persons with disabilities. Having realized that, led us to search for the topic of Legislative Theatre among **disability rights** struggles. Starting with the limitations in the labour market, for mother-carers of disabled children (one cannot work if taking disability care benefit which restricts women's access to the labour market) soon we came up with the topic we have explored in the project: **deaf education**.

It is a well-researched area with clear possibilities for change. It seems to be non-controversial and in line with the governing party values. It was even difficult for us to understand why the educational system does not work properly if the proposed legislative changes clearly would address the problem (see RPO 2014, Dunaj 2016). But we missed one factor: ableism, or discrimination faced by people with a disability (Kumari Campbell 2009).

But to start from the beginning let us draw first your attention to the very core of the problem. Deaf and hard of hearing children often change schools during education due to the diagnosis or parent's decision. It is often due to late diagnosis, hope that the kid will manage in the public school with well-hearing kids. Unfortunately with little help and limited knowledge of teachers about how to work with hard of hearing children, their education in integrated schooling



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fails. When they change school and start attending Deaf Schools it is common that they do not know sign language and miss years of education and are not able to participate fully. Even if they use sign language they use PJM (Polish Sign Language) the grassroots Deaf language, while teachers speak SJM (manually coded language) codified, non-intuitional translation from the Polish language. Children are often afraid to say that they do not understand the language their teachers speak. Still, this is not the biggest problem. The elephant in the room is the lack of bilingual education. Experts claim that the adequate education for Deaf children is treating Polish Sign Language as their mother tongue, and Polish (reading, writing, often also speaking) as their second language (RPO 2014, Dunaj 2016, Czajkowska-Kisil 2010). In reality, children in many Deaf schools are not educated in sign language but rather through the reading of lips, and reading books. Deaf schools are usually organized as residential schools which means that children spend most of their lives at a distance from their homes (from the age of 6). This is what we knew when we started the project. But we also knew how much we didn't know yet.

In order to address it (one of us started learning PJM, the second had experience in working and doing research with the Deaf community) we organized the storytelling evening

where we gathered sign language speakers and people who were curious about how their world works, to share stories. The group that would prepare the performance were also there, sharing their stories, as they are pupils learning in Warsaw's Deaf School. Soon we started rehearsals, shared many stories and enthusiasm towards Forum Theatre, and created a scenario about education. We learned that next to **systematic problems** already described, that there is a huge issue of understating the level of teaching (it was the students who fought to get to better schools) as well as some issues related to identity, belonging and dealing with emotions. We prepared the performance and plan to use it as an educational tool for changing the legal situation.

Although a substantial part of the Deaf Community does not define itself in terms of disability, but in terms of Deaf cultural approach, something that might be called **able-ism**, still tackles deaf and hard of hearing children. In what other words can we call a situation when there is a clear need for change, the diagnosis is made, the propositions for change are in place, but there is no will/interest in changing the life of Deaf youth? Discrimination was among the first words in sign language that we learned from workshops participants, others were a good day, ladybug,

development, language, and change. It seems that even though we prioritized strategic planning for Legislative Theatre, still we had overestimated what the government devotes to disability and Deaf rights. As we prepare the premiere of the performance a strike in the parliament of disabled persons and their mother-carers is conducted and

neglected by the ruling party (Prończuk, Kocejko 2018). It is still not the best context to try out Legislative Theatre, but will there be a better one? To change the law we need to tackle ableism, as any other oppression that is persisting and embedded in everyday lives, attitudes and social structures.

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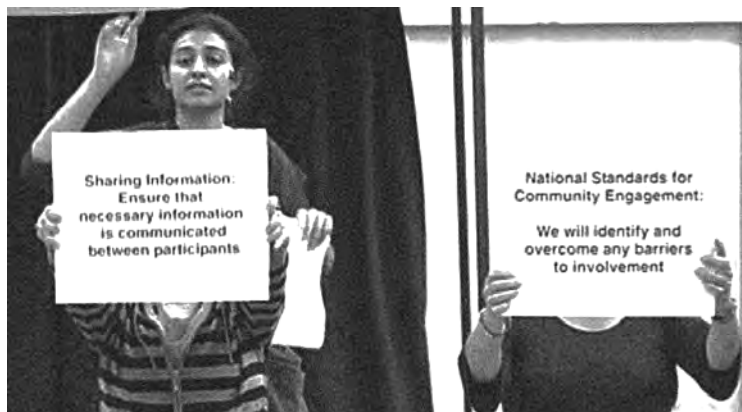
RESILIENCE - A LEGISLATIVE THEATRE EXPERIMENT IN SCOTLAND

Resilience was a Legislative Theatre project in Edinburgh, Scotland which took place in 2014. It was carried out by Active Inquiry Theatre Company. It is impossible to talk about Resilience without talking about the project that preceded it – Divided We Fall? Active Inquiry works mostly in an area of Edinburgh called Leith. This is a very **mixed community** in terms of ethnicity and class. Because of its proximity to the docks it has been an area for centuries where immigrants to Scotland have settled. Traditionally a working class community, it has become more mixed in terms of class, especially since regeneration policies in the 1980s.

We had worked in Leith for over 5 years and had good relationships with many people in the community as well as community organisations. We spent some time as a Company finding out which issues mattered to the community and what they wanted us to make a theatre project about. The issue that came out clearly was a pride in the diversity of Leith (which is unlike most other areas of Edinburgh) but also a fear that this diversity



www.activeinquiry.co.uk/past.php



was under threat because of cuts to public services and divisive rhetoric from politicians and the media.

We carried out more research on this topic and then created a Forum Theatre Play which we performed in various community venues. We invited the audience to come and join us to make their own Forum Theatre. From the 250 people who saw the play, 20 took up our invitation and we created two new Forum Theatre performances. These were performed, along with the original play, at a two-day community event involving food and music. Part of this event was an action planning workshop with audiences and one of the action points that came from this was for Edinburgh Council to develop

policy to support local community organisations to become more resilient and be able to support people in times of government cuts to public services. We held a follow-up workshop to see how we could do this and the Legislative Theatre project Resilience was born.

Resilience involved the following components:

1. Research

We spent time researching how laws are made at European, UK Government, Scottish Government and Local Council levels. We also commissioned a researcher to in-

interview Edinburgh Council and representatives from community organisations in Edinburgh that had both won and lost campaigns against the threat of closure and the lessons learned.

We spent time looking at the history of participation in politics in Scotland and the ways in which people could participate today.

2. Developing deeper links with community organisations

We spent time working with three community organisations to create Forum Theatre plays and explore how participants and service users from these organisations interacted with the organisation.

3. Developing the Legislative Theatre Play

We used all of the research gathered in the above two stages to develop a play. Our approach to this development was different from usual Forum Theatre development, because we started with **how laws and policy affect community organisations**. This starting point ensured that this was built into the fabric of the play.

4. Legislative Theatre Event

We held a Legislative Theatre event in Leith which was attended by over 100 people. This included local politicians

and members of the community. The event was dynamic and exciting – until we came to the law making part. The Metabolic Cell found it hard to distil all of the audience suggestions into specific laws. This was not helped by the fact that we did not have an expert in policy/law writing as part of the Metabolic Cell. We came up with two proposals; the first was that Councillors could be unelected at any time by constituents if they felt they were not doing their job – this was not voted through by the audience. The second was that Edinburgh Council should put less emphasis on purely economic points when dealing with community organisations. This was voted through but there was a sense in the audience that this was very vague and also that if they did not vote this one through then the event would have been a failure.

5. Follow-up meeting with Edinburgh Council

These did not go well. The language Councillors used was often to congratulate us but to say what they were already trying to do in order to support community organisations. They also felt that the relatively small number of people at the event meant that we didn't have a mandate to change policy – and they probably had a point.

In conclusion, Resilience felt like an exciting project and a logical conclusion to the community development work that was started with *Divided We Fall?*. We learnt a lot about

how the Political system works and developed new partnerships with organisations in our community. However the final event, despite being dynamic and exciting in parts, felt like a disappointment at the end. In moving forward with our next Legislative Theatre project we need to think about how to involve politicians from the start in order to

make them feel like allies in the process. We also need to involve more people so that there is a mandate behind whatever laws or policies come out of the process. To learn more about Active Inquiry and to watch a film of the Resilience project please visit www.activeinquiry.co.uk.

LEGISLATIVE FORUM PERFORMANCE: STATUS QUO ON THE LABOUR MARKET

The Vse ali nič group has been active since 2013 and brings together individuals who wish to tackle current social issues through the method of theatre of the oppressed. This is a method encompassing diverse techniques for actors and non-actors based on group dynamics and team building exercises, attention and expression techniques, basic theatre exercises, sensory awakening, physical awareness, body expression and use of theatre as language, discourse etc. (Boal, 1985).

The group is principally aimed at **young people**, as it is among youth that we perceive a **decline in political and social engagement**.

Ricketts notes that a centralised system of authority enacted on the modern national state level encourages individuals to passivity at the personal and socio-political levels. Even the democratic institutions tend to lead individuals into **delegating** their destiny and responsibility into the hands of 'responsible people' instead of taking personal responsibility and direct actions at everyday level by each individual (Ricketts 2012).

During the past five years we have covered different techniques of theatre of the oppressed, while this year we are focusing on the technique of Legislative Theatre. The content of our performance is tied to a burning social issue of exploitation of precarious workers that the group of participants began to explore in January 2017. Through sharing personal stories, stories of friends and relatives, and reading relevant publications this topic proved to be relevant and problematic for all members of the group.

But after months of work, delving into the topic, reflection and polemics, we realised that while all the stories shared by the participants for the formation of the performance, were related to **precarious forms of work**, and were indeed personal stories, they were mostly bound to the period of study or at least a long time ago. We were all aware of the problem at the systemic level, but most participants struggled to recognize their current position as precarious.

Internalised oppression prevented them from viewing their current employment status as being equally problematic

and precarious as those from years ago. It proved to be easier to talk about the past. After a prolonged period of venting, these defence mechanisms finally caved in. We all raised our fists in order to change the systemic exploitation of precarious workers and thus, new, fresh, present-day stories surfaced.

As citizens we can never become absolute subjects, since **we are bound as objects** by economic, cultural and social forces influencing our thinking and actions (Boal 1985). To make matters more concrete we added the situation of the exploitation of postal workers, who are forced to sell door to door in order to fulfill their quotas, as has been lately reported in the press. The script was solid, we prepared the scenography and started to rehearse. Developing characters, movement patterns, exercises in improvisation and getting prepared for interventions.

We also invited two external experts to join us: a lawyer working in human resources and a sociologist and activist employed in the Precarious Workers' Union. This organisation is also our partner in the further articulation of proposed bills and transferring them to decision makers. In 2017 we performed five times in Ljubljana, while this year we are planning approximately ten performances in different locations in Slovenia and abroad. Each performance in

the past year brought not only diverse interventions and legal proposals by spect-actors, but also important feedback which helped us to adapt and improve our script.

One of the participants was also recording the process of rehearsals, the performances, and comments by spect-actors, thus gathering material for the making of a short film produced by the LegiLAB 4 Progress project.

Of course we also faced several challenges during the process of creation and performing. Some of the proposals from last year penned down by spect-actors got lost. Fortunately, most had been recorded both in analogue and digital form, thus preserved and ready to be passed on to other participating organisations. Another challenge we had to face was the ensemble. Starting in 2018, half of the actors left the group, so we had to find substitutes in a hurry. This was done swiftly and relatively easily, since our network of activists interested either in the method or the topic or both proved wide enough to fill in the holes. On the other hand in 2018 the project also got additional funding by the Slovene Government Communications Office which allows the actors to receive symbolic payment. It is unclear if the substitutes would have been so easy to find if the work were entirely voluntary. Another challenge is also the fact that at the moment the project and the performance do not receive media support that would additionally ex-

pose and promote the issue of precarious work. It is true however that precarious forms of work are becoming ever more prominent in media reports in general.

What is the reach and the goal of a legislative forum play 'Status Quo in the labour market?' Siegfried Melchinger argues that **any human activity is political**, which also includes theatre. The aim of political theatre is to intervene, to express the concealed, to point out the issues regarding society as a whole, not merely individual members,

to display situations, findings, modes of behaviour, power abuse and to offer a minority forum where individuals can make a stand against the majority and the authority. When political theatre addresses its audience, it displays the hidden sides and truths that are not being exposed. It also offers the possibility of public criticism (Melchinger 2000). Recognising the problems at the personal and political level is the first step to defeat systemic exploitation and one way to reach this is through changing legislation.



www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/Vse-ali-ni-Status-quo-na-trgu-dela-1374328259472881/

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EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN USING LEGISLATIVE THEATRE

Since the beginnings of the Legislative Theatre there were numerous initiatives throughout the world that took this form of participatory democracy as a method to achieve change in legislation. Some of them resulted in accepting proposals, raised in the process of Legislative Theatre, in relevant legislative acts while others offered foundations for several civil initiatives and/or performed as awareness raising campaigns. In this article only a few examples are presented. Irrespective of the outcomes, such actions have a great role and importance in the processes of transformation of society.

TAKE PART! IT'S ABOUT US! (AUSTRIA, 2017)

Christine Baur, minister for social affairs in Tirol, invited practitioners of Theatre of the Oppressed in the process of shaping the law to support the participation of people with disabilities in society. The law that included proposals, given in the process of Legislative Theatre was passed in Tyrolean parliament in December 2017. We met Armin Staffler, the joker of the process, in the transnational meeting of the LegiLAB 4 Progress project in January 2018. He introduced the whole process to our project group and it's pretty fascinating. Please don't hesitate to read more about it here (Jana Sanskriti International Research & Resource Institute): <https://voiceofjsirri.wordpress.com/april-2018/legislative-theatre-take-part-its-about-us/>

NO MEANS NO (GERMANY, SINCE 2016)

In September 2016 the group first presented Legislative Theatre play "No means No" (Metropolis Theater, Berlin) based on the content and validation of the Istanbul Convention (Action against violence against women and domestic violence). In Germany the convention has only been recognized as legislation since November 2016. The play has been presented many times in Germany and worldwide. During the two year process, Ma(g)dalena Berlin and international Ma(g)dalena Network came up with concrete internal conventions on announcing gender based violence (sexism, sexual harassment, physical violence, etc.) against women. The aim is to empower each other through the Ma(g)dalena community, an "I believe you" culture, to assure social and legal support for women to speak up. The highlight was the 2nd International Ma(g)dalena Theater of the Oppressed festival where many concrete actions have been agreed.

More about Ma(g)dalena Berlin and the festival <http://kuringa.org/de/madalena/ii-festival-berlin-2017.html>

LEGISLATIVE THEATER BERLIN

(GERMANY, SINCE 2005)

This initiative was founded in 2005 by Harald Hahn and Jens Clausen with the purpose of offering space for people to speak up for their rights. Since establishment they conducted several projects on different topics: precarious living and working situations, aging and care for the elderly, the position of the people with disabilities etc.. The group also promotes Legislative Theatre in the dialogue between politicians and citizens by using art as an expression.

PRACTICING DEMOCRACY (CANADA, 2004)

In this case a Legislative Theatre play was created by Headlines Theatre to defy the cuts in social welfare, imposed by the local government in Vancouver. The Vancouver City council endorsed the project that resulted in recommendations for action. The process did not reach its goal (i. e. change of legislation) because some could not be implemented by the City of Vancouver alone, yet it is believed that it supported local groups and initiatives dealing with the issue.

LEGISLATIVE THEATRE ON NEW YORK CITY POLICY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 2013-2017)

Theatre of the Oppressed NYC (TONYC) organized Legislative Theatre events and festivals between 2013 and 2017 where several topics have been discussed: tackling homelessness due to sexual orientation, racial profiling by police and the bystander effect, zero tolerance to offence of high-school students and others. They defined the process in three segments: WATCH, ACT and VOTE. With the goal to shape sustainable activities within NYC community TONYC added activism workshops to the process of Legislative Theatre that includes training on community organizing, participatory budgeting and information-based sessions.

THE ART OF LEGISLATION (UNITED KINGDOM, 1998)

In 1998 London hosted a series of workshops on Legislative Theatre, conducted by Augusto Boal. Working in different groups, highlighting issues of housing (homelessness), education and transport. The proposals were symbolically discussed in the former Debating Chamber at County Hall that was closed down during Margaret Thatcher's term as Prime Minister in 1993. It was an event attempting to show, how law can be made through theatre.

SILENT NO MORE: YOUTH LEGISLATIVE THEATRE IN KENYA (KENYA, 2010)

In 2010 a book was written by Jack Shaka and Mary Goretty Ajwang about a Legislative Theatre process implemented by the Moving Framez of Africa. The project was meant to give voice to the young people and to encourage them to take action towards the change they want to see. In the Legislative Theatre performances they discussed changes in the constitution through practical examples such as affordable medical services, corruption, job creation, girls' heritage and other topics, relevant to youth.

WORKSHOP IN BARCELONA: THE STORY OF ASSANE (SPAIN, 2010)

Boals' experience with Legislative Theatre was examined through the activities of the Sixth International Meeting of Theatre and Education in 2010. A Forum Theatre session was dealing with problems with immigration officials. The case showed that the issue can't be solved by changing the attitude of the protagonist and must yet be dealt with by changing the laws. In the article written by Eduardo Salvador important questions in Legislative Theatre are pointed out. Is raising hands the way to vote on the proposals (questioning the anonymity), what are the alliances with the lawmakers, who benefits from the proposed changes etc. (Salvador, 2014).

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EPILOGUE

YOUTH ARE READY TO PARTICIPATE

For youth, political participation does not mean just voting

The populist rhetoric that the previous generation raised a passive, self-centered, rather-go-on-holiday-than-vote young generation is in many ways correct. There are few political questions where young people decide to participate in helping to shape answers. But dry facts without a context remain just facts. The questions about how and why these facts exist offer possible paths for new and different futures. This is the purpose of this text; to offer all of us possible paths with the experience from four EU countries exploring one possible technique and approach that could enable the younger generation to become more politically active. In fact, this might already be happening.

The histories of Slovenia, Italy, Poland and Scotland are different. One can however notice similar themes concerning political participation, or civic participation, between older

and younger people that we can draw from. Young people are affected (like the above-mentioned generation, but even more so) by the same social, economic, environmental and political systems that all four countries share in the context of the bigger picture. Thus we might connect similar facts with similar reasons behind them across Europe.

In all of the above-mentioned countries the false division between the left and the right is either increasing or becoming blurred and political parties sustain this system. Many people believe that there is no possibility for real change and so they do not vote at all. The ones who do vote are becoming a minority. The younger generation is facing an uncertain, precarious way of life. They are being asked to be flexible in all areas and this is now spreading to other groups of people as well. All of these countries also lack specific research on political participation of youth, which is another way of showing how little their voice matters in our society.

PARTICIPATION IS NOT VOTING

Young people feel excluded and don't trust the voting system

"Italian youth and adults have similar views about politics and institutions... They both have but little faith into representative democracy, politicians, and institutions like the parliament. Moreover, most of young people and older generations as well believe either that democracy can be achieved without political parties or that parties are an obstacle to democracy. They prefer a kind of direct democracy," wrote the important Italian sociologist Ilvo Diamanti in 2013. Diamanti says that youngsters, however, are socially committed and participate in society through their engagement in local problems. They are more present in demonstrations, they often start up debates on the web, and over 40% of Italian youth claim to have participated in political, social, environmental initiatives in the past year, while in the overall population this percentage is only 25%.

But how did it come so far that rights like the right to hold elections and the right to vote which are the result of tough struggles in our global history, is nowadays so globally mistrusted? The Italian case might sound familiar. Ventura Valsecchi calls the generations of the 60' and the 70' the political generation that felt a very strong need for political participation. This was thus a time when activism was linked to a spontaneous and widely spread critical attitude towards society. Youth were stimulating transformation, raising con-

flicts, accepting values opposing those of the "system". What exactly happened? The 80's generation took a step "back into private space", the vision of life became more individualistic and political participation decreased, while at the same time there was more civic than political engagement. New impulse for associations and volunteerism emerged, while the focus shifted from social transformation towards self-realisation.

The generation of the 90's is already designated as the "Invisible generation" by Valsecchi . Why? At the social level there was an institutional crisis due to the discovery of large-scale corruption affecting many parties and companies all over the world. In Italy they called it the times of "Tangentopoli" (tangente means corruption, so the city of corruption). Political parties experimented more and more with weakening their ideological sides, the Berlin wall fell and neoliberalism as a global economic and political model seemed to have won all over the world. Precarious work, disillusion, lack of trust in one's own capacity, refusing all engagement and many other things happened as a consequence of this and are still very well known, or today maybe even more than in those times.

After 2000 the new millennium brought further increases in risk and precariousness, flexibility in the labour market, while further de-legitimizing institutions. Life projects became more individualistic. The youth reacted to these changes with

passivity, since they already refused the system of parties, looking for a different democracy, trusting the web as a way to create a new one at that time. With this, youth political participation starts separating from political as latent, to unconventional and instrumental.

What is interesting that happened is that at the same time more youth started entering associations, bringing their own energy there. Associations can be social, political, trade-unionist, civic but also cultural, sporting or religious. For instance, from 2001 to 2006 in Italy the share of youth from 15 to 35 years old that belonged to given associations, went from 12% to 45%.

Nevertheless, the number of youngsters enrolled into political parties in Italy went down from 15% in 1976 to about 1% in 2006, as the National Institute of Statistical Research says. This probably hasn't changed much by 2018, since only in 2016, 25.1% of citizens expressed to have rust in Italian parliament and 12.8% to political parties.

This has also been confirmed by the youth's preferred channel, the MTV. In 2013 a research showed that 72% of the interviewed would go to vote, even though 85% of them did not believe in change. At the same time "abstinence" was seen as a way to protest against the political class by 72% of youngsters. Politicians are seen as incompetent (74%) and corrupt (67%).

In Poland almost a quarter of youth population is not interested in politics. But...

Poland as part of the Central and Eastern European region has historically been known as a site of intensive and effective youth protests during the communist years. After the transition it seemed that the younger generation has been much less involved in protesting. Recently though a lot of civic engagement can be observed also in Poland, for example, protests against ACTA in January 2012 or the black protests of October 2016.

The youth population (counted as those aged 15-29) in Poland is relatively large – young people constitute around 22% of population (Krzaklewska 2013). In general the Poles lack agency with regard to influencing the local and national communities as demonstrated by the national survey on Gender Equality and Quality of Life in Poland (Krzaklewska et al 2016). A majority, close to 80% of the respondents, state that they have neither any influence on the community they live in, nor any impact on the future of the country. Moreover, more women feel this lack of influence when it comes to deciding on national level (80% of women as compared to 74% of men). Also at the community level women more often (72% as compared to 66% among men) feel that they have no influence.

But in comparison with the general population, youth is even less moderately interested in politics. Gender differences re-

garding interest in politics are also visible: less girls claim to be interested in that matter. A dangerous trend can be observed among youth in the past two decades. A vast majority of respondents claim that the politics in the country is going in the wrong direction (53% in 2016) (Badora, Herrmann 2016). This trend can also be observed when asking about their preferred political party. The majority of youth (49% in 2016) claim there is no political party that is close to them (Badora, Herrmann 2016).

Voting remains the most frequent type of political engagement in Polish society, as less than 10% of participants are taking part in various types of civic action like for example voluntary work, drafting and signing petitions, partaking in citizens' consultations, or taking action in one's neighbourhood community. Also the position of labour unions is weak. The only exception is the participation of parents in kindergartens and schools.

But even though Poland has relatively low levels of participation in the voluntary activities by young people when compared to other European countries, in recent years (between 2013 and 2015) there was an increase in the interest in politics of youth.

In Scotland some trends in political participation go the opposite way

The interest and participation of people in Scotland has grown since the inception of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. That year 24% of Scots were interested in politics as compared to 40% today. 30% of young people now say they have an interest in politics, although 41% say they have little or no interest

Although the Scottish Parliament has had some contribution to make to this increase, two major events since 1999 have had a larger effect on the politicisation of young people - the Iraq war and the Scottish independence referendum.

The Iraq war in 2003 sparked huge protests across the UK that included many young people. Some of them walked out of classes in school to join the mass protests and were prominent figures in the growing anti-war movement. Many of the young people who became politicised during this period went on to join political parties, including the Scottish Nationalist Party and the Greens, while many moved away from the Labour Party. The Iraq war was one of the major factors in why Scottish voters turned away from the Labour Party towards the SNP.

This triggered that 85% of the electorate voted in the Scottish Independence Referendum, including 75% of 16/17 year

old's who were allowed to vote in that election (normal voting age is 18). 73% of young people said that the referendum had increased their interest in politics a lot. And there were 10 times the amount of young people involved in campaign groups for the referendum than for usual elections. After the referendum there were 4 times the amount of young people who joined political parties as many moved from campaign groups they had been part of during the election. Since then the referendum support for the SNP has dropped among young people. Since the Iraq war, many of them shifted to vote for a resurgent Labour party under Jeremy Corbyn in the 2017 General Election.

Brexit is another important area that had an effect on young people. Around 75% of young people voted to remain part of the EU. It will be interesting to see whether Brexit becomes another campaigning ground for young people or if it will make many of them turn away from participation in politics. It is now almost impossible for young people to own their own houses in UK, and there is increasing tension between the generations, which is shown in the division between young and old, especially in voting.

AS PART OF THE EU

Slovenia, the EU country where it is most difficult for young people to become independent

In Slovenia the position of young people is extremely unsatisfactory. They are facing the problems of crumbling democracy and solidarity, fighting for scarce and most often precarious jobs (Slovenia is first in the European Union regarding atypical first employment of young people) with low wages and not granting us all of the workers' rights (no more than 15% of youth is able to get permanent employment), neoliberal reforms are sweeping our education system, social security, labour rights... We find ourselves on a pivotal point when we have to make a decision whether the youth will keep bowing their heads or finally start resisting. Namely, the situation of youth and society in general is not getting any better, but rather worse.

Since government funded social security for the youth who have trouble finding employment after finishing their studies has dwindled, many of them cannot make sense of their future. Social housing is also becoming harder to get, thus more and more youths are becoming dependent on their parents. In the EU Slovenia is the state where young people tend to stay with their parents the longest, while at the same time having 150.000 empty appartements according to official data from 2015. The youth also encounter problems in other areas of life, eg. They find it more difficult to get credit, which makes it even harder to become independent and form a family.

After the disintegration of Yugoslavia, capitalism has radically transformed the labour market conditions. Today most workers no longer have financial or social security comparable to the ones in socialist times. Thus the numbers of the working poor who are unable to make a decent living wage are increasing. Due to such conditions many young people have to look for work in Austria, Germany, UK or in other continents and in the capital Ljubljana, since they do not see a meaningful future in the smaller towns in Slovenia. The social vulnerability of people is also increased through a number of bad measures implemented by the state that no longer advocates for workers but rather takes side with corporations and capital.

The Youth 2013 (CEPYUS, FES) survey report states that half of Slovene youth 'does not feel represented' by young people active in politics, and a mere 15% of youth believes that their 'pro' or 'con' has any influence over state institutions, while only 25% think it has influence over local government institutions. The research also showed only 32.2% of Slovenian youth would participate in parliamentary elections, which led to an interest twist in the recent election, where some records were broken among young people after years of abstinence. For example, the newest research of recent election showed that participation in parliamentary elections was lowest among youngest voters, but these voters aged between

18-24 years nevertheless significantly influenced the result, since 46% of them participated. Thus 18- and 19-year olds broke the record in voting attendance numbers, the ones that were able to vote for the first time even came up to 64.3%.

The lowest participation rate was among 30- to 34-years olds, who only participated in 34.1%, while the percentage then increases with age. Among 75- to 79-year old voters as much as 90.9% participated.

However, the younger Slovenian generation started a new political movement in 2011, which represented the first grass-root movement after the fall of Yugoslavia.

Political participation of young people was undoubtedly triggered by the global Occupy movement which resulted in the occupation of the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana, when students strongly demanded more democracy on the university. The

occupation of the faculty was responsible for the creation of the progressive student movement Iskra which focuses on eliminating the systemic problems that young people are facing in capitalism.

Another important event was the insurgence that started in Maribor, the second largest Slovenian city, at the end of 2012, when thousands of people protested against the city's corrupted mayor Franz Kangler. In order not to repeat the arbitrariness of the authorities that used the people's mandate for unscrupulous plundering, self-organized quarterly and local communities were set up, which was moderated by young activists. Young people seem to prefer learning from active community participation (direct democracy, decision-making by consensus, direct action) rather than changing the existing system of political action and decision-making at state level.

YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN FROM ACTIVE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

We need to create autonomous, safe spaces for youth offering them unconventional participatory tools and methods most of all hear their voice. The young are ready to participate.

Youth as a group represents a minority facing economic oppression in all four countries, but we should not overlook the fact that this can be aggravated by systemic oppression on the basis of dis/ability, sexual orientation, refugee status, ethnicity, religiousness/atheism etc. These groups of young people mostly do not have equal opportunities and therefore cannot participate on equal grounds. In all four countries it is clear that trust in politics and governments, including the EU parliament, is very low in all age groups and people do not believe anything can be changed through the voting system. While this results in low participation in elections, it makes people search for new ways and outlets for political participation where they feel their voice and work make a difference and their opinion matters.

Simona Gozzo reveals that one of the major causes of youth disaffection with politics lies in the delay in entering the labour market and becoming independent. She thinks political participation only starts when you fully become a citizen, earning your subsistence, leading your life autonomously. Therefore she perceives participation as a way to influence society, she believes in creating appropriate conditions and in the importance of rights. In this sense strong policies for youth employment are welcome.

Many authors talk about a generation who returns to the private sphere (Ricolfi 2002) or becomes “invisible”. On the other hand there are researchers underlining new forms of participation, such as critical consumption, fair trade, attending referendums and signing petitions, online discussions, volunteering and attending public meetings.

According to Gozzo, political participation today can be seen in the increase of membership in various associations. Cambi also mentions a different model of politics, a more social and egalitarian than the institutional one. Gozzo claims an increase in unconventional and direct participation can be observed instead of the traditional one, while Bertozzi points out that volunteering or belonging to an association brings youth to political engagement in the form of interest in collective issues due to two reasons: creating the feeling of community and developing skills useful in the political arena.

Ventura and Valsecchi confirm that politics and political parties should open up to youngsters as well as adults, and must change their view on youth, leaving behind the ideas that they are apathetic and uninvolved. They must recognise their privilege to be able to politically participate. The youth are participating in different ways, more consistent with the world as it is today, more fragmented. Insecure, precarious condi-

tions prevent them from participating in long term projects or movements.

Besides listening to youth and creating safe spaces for them to discuss their own future, Oxfam also shifts the axis to education and proposes to spread Global Citizenship Education in schools as an important factor, which is supported by the report from the EU Youth Forum. But education should start with an understanding of the importance of knowledge about how power structures and class struggles work. Young people want to participate, but they want to take different, new approaches. There are also more and more tools and methods for unconventional participation, including the one explored by this booklet. Seemingly, the EU itself is aware of these facts, hence their willingness to redouble the amount of funding of the Erasmus student social fund. So, we need to get ready for hard work, as youngsters are ready to participate in new, creative ways.

AS YOUNGSTERS
ARE READY TO
CREATIVELY
PARTICIPATE

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BEYOND PERFORMANCE: EXPERIENCES IN LEGISLATIVE THEATRE

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