

Patras: Good Practice Case Study

The C4I Theatre of the Oppressed

Summary Description:

This uses theatre as means for tackling stereotypes and motivating action.

Background, Source of the Idea and Partners:

The idea originally stems from a partner NGO called *atroposhelp*.

Art is a powerful tool in Patras for synergy and co-creation. The *Theatre of the Oppressed* uses theatre as means to promote social and political change. In this case, artists and migrant associations have joined forces to outreach to young people against xenophobia through the use of theatre. Role playing and story-telling are the means deployed to achieve these goals.

In the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, the audience becomes active. Using terms such as "spect-actors" the idea is to explore, demonstrate, analyse and transform the reality in which the audience lives. The C4I team believes that this form of role playing allows people to better understand the negative influence of rumours and equips them to address them.



Specific Goal and Target:

The goal is to build the capacity of those participating to engage in specifically directed social actions in their own lives, though acting out their ideas in theatre. The specific outcome sought here is to engage in actions to counter rumours.

The target group so far is young people who participate in *atroshep* activities and students in the social work department of the University who are taking this as a practical exercise for their studies, but the wider public will also become involved.

Actions, Timescales and Resources:

The Theatre is based on stories that incorporate rumours told by theatre members, each including examples of injustice or oppression experienced that went unchallenged.

During this process the public is encouraged to halt the performance, often a short scene in which a character is oppressed in some way (for example, a rumour about women, or of a school teacher mistreating an immigrant student). The audience can then suggest a solution, in the context of the scene they are watching, but not from the comfort of their position – they must participate themselves. Thus the audience member becomes a participant, implementing their suggestions to meet the challenges in any way they wish. The audience is thereby enabled not only to imagine the change, but to exercise it in practice. This strengthens their capacity to engage in social action in their own lives.

The traditional audience/actor separation is overturned and members of the public are brought together into the play, to participate in the dramatic action.

Three two-hour shows have been presented by the theatre group so far: one in a Community centre attended by about 45 people, and two more in the University Campus each attended by 15 students.

Atroposhelp is planning another show at the end of March in the central square, on the occasion of the 'universal day of social'; and intend to repeat it again at other events and celebrations. They are also cooperating with a teaching school, aiming to work with their students.

Outcomes

The show has an immediate output:

- Rumours are identified and divided into themes.
- Role playing and story-telling is undertaken through face to face interaction, intended to inspire and motivate people around the issues
- The idea of supporting anti-rumours action is disseminated through the audience.

A discussion session was held after each show, with an exchange of feelings and opinions. This suggested that the Theatre of the Oppressed significantly sensitized participants to rumours and fostered interaction between them. Participants indicated that in future encounters with rumours, they would be equipped to interact positively, for instance through seeking evidence from those spreading them.

Learning along the way:

A lesson emerging through this action was that while objective data is important as a means to counter rumours, it is more effective if people can participate actively, and humour and feelings are used: There is a need to appeal to feelings and emotions, as well as to facts.