

TOOLKIT

ACTING OUT FOR CHANGE

*Theatre of the Oppressed for
Eco-Social Transformation*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction

About the Training

About the Coordinator: Brújula Intercultural

Why Theatre of the Oppressed for Eco-Social Change?

2. Theoretical Background

Paulo Freire and Critical Pedagogy

Augusto Boal and the Theatre of the Oppressed

Eco-Pedagogy and Eco-Social Education

3. Methodological Framework

Principles of Non-Formal Education

Embodiment and Experiential Learning

Theatre of the Oppressed as Methodology

From Exploration to Action: Process Flow

4. Energizers & Warm-Ups

Activity descriptions (timing, group size, materials, debriefing, variations)

5. Icebreakers & Team Building

Activities with reflection tips

Linking to Tuckman's Group Development Stages

6. Core Activities

6.1 Eco-Social Exploration & Group Readiness

6.2 Exploring Power Through the Body

6.3 Image Theatre

6.4 Forum Theatre

6.5 Newspaper Theatre

7. Open Space & Participant-Led Activities

Guidelines for Open Space

8. Facilitator Tips

9. Additional Resources

1. INTRODUCTION

The Acting Out for Change training course was developed as a response to the urgent eco-social challenges of our times. Today, we are living in a world shaped by interconnected crises: the climate emergency, loss of biodiversity, social inequalities, gender-based discrimination, and economic marginalization. These realities affect not only ecosystems but also the dignity, rights, and opportunities of millions of people.

For young people and youth workers, the question is not only how to understand these challenges but also how to engage actively in shaping alternatives. Traditional forms of education often provide knowledge but fail to offer the tools to transform that knowledge into collective action.

This is where **Theatre of the Oppressed (ToO)** becomes relevant: it is not theatre for entertainment, but theatre as a tool for reflection, dialogue, and social transformation. The Erasmus+ course took place in **Pradoluengo (Burgos, Spain) from 10–17 March 2025 and brought together participants from Spain, France, Latvia, Romania, Greece, and Hungary**. The diversity of the group enriched the discussions, exercises, and performances, creating an intercultural environment where participants could explore oppression and resistance from different perspectives.

About the Coordinator

The training was coordinated by Asociación Brújula Intercultural, a youth organization founded in 2017 and based in the rural village of Santa María del Campo (Burgos, Castilla y León, Spain). Brújula Intercultural promotes youth mobility, intercultural learning, and non-formal education, working both locally and internationally. The association believes in education as a tool for building more supportive, sustainable, and inclusive communities, and focuses much of its work on rural development, eco-social issues, and youth participation. As the main organizer, Brújula Intercultural not only provided logistical support but also contributed its expertise in facilitation, Erasmus+ project management, and intercultural dialogue, ensuring that the training was both professionally structured and deeply connected to the needs of young people.

This toolkit is both a documentation of that process and a resource for others: youth workers, educators, activists, and organizations who wish to use theatre as a tool for eco-social change. Inside, you will find:

- A theoretical grounding in Theatre of the Oppressed and non-formal education.
- A collection of energizers, icebreakers, and core activities tested in the training.
- Practical advice on facilitation, inclusion, and reflection.
- Additional resources to deepen your practice.

It is not a definitive manual—because Theatre of the Oppressed is always evolving—but rather a living resource, adaptable to different contexts and communities.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Roots of Theatre of the Oppressed

Theatre of the Oppressed (ToO) was created in the 1960s and 70s by Brazilian director Augusto Boal. Strongly influenced by Paulo Freire and his Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Boal rejected the idea of theatre as a space where a passive audience simply consumes a story. Instead, he envisioned theatre as a rehearsal for reality, where communities can explore oppression and experiment with alternatives.

Boal believed that theatre belongs to everyone, not only to professional actors. Every person can act, and every person can reflect critically on the world. This is why participants are not “spectators” but spect-actors: active subjects who intervene, propose, and transform.

2.2 Core Principles

- Spect-actor vs. spectator: ToO invites participation, not passivity.
- The Joker: a facilitator who guides the process, ensuring dialogue, horizontality, and critical distance.
- Collective creation: themes, stories, and images emerge from the participants’ real experiences of oppression.
- Rehearsal for reality: theatre becomes a safe space to test new behaviors and strategies before applying them in real life.
- From personal to political: ToO shows how individual experiences of exclusion are connected to wider structures of power.

2.3 Techniques

- Image Theatre: using bodies and still images to represent realities, oppressions, and alternatives.
- Forum Theatre: staging a scene of oppression, then inviting spect-actors to intervene and propose solutions.
- Newspaper Theatre: analyzing media narratives, questioning power behind information, and creating counter-narratives.

Other techniques exist—Rainbow of Desire, Legislative Theatre—but this toolkit focuses on the three above, which were central in the training.

2.4 Why Eco-Social Issues?

While ToO has often been used for issues of political oppression, gender equality, or human rights, it is equally powerful for addressing the climate crisis and environmental justice. Ecological destruction is not neutral—it is shaped by power, inequality, and exclusion. For example:

- Communities in rural or marginalized areas often bear the heaviest impacts of climate change.
- Decisions about land, food, and resources involve power struggles between corporations, governments, and citizens.
- The voices of young people, women, and minorities are often excluded from environmental decision-making.

By using ToO, groups can connect ecological issues with social justice, explore their emotions, and imagine collective strategies for change.

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

The Acting Out for Change training course was designed not only as a space for learning specific techniques from Theatre of the Oppressed (ToO), but also as a holistic educational journey. This required a careful combination of pedagogical principles, facilitation strategies, and group dynamics. Below, we outline the methodological frameworks that shaped the training and should guide anyone using this toolkit.

3.1 Non-Formal Education (NFE) Principles

Non-formal education is a powerful complement to formal and informal learning. It is especially suited for work with young people and communities because it is voluntary, flexible, and participatory. The following principles guided the training:

- Learner-centered approach: participants are co-creators of knowledge, not passive recipients.
- Learning by doing: experience comes first, followed by structured reflection.
- Safe and inclusive space: mutual trust, respect, and openness are built step by step.
- Interculturality: the group is diverse, and differences are seen as resources for learning.
- Connection to reality: activities are not isolated games but linked to participants' lived experiences and societal issues.
- Action-oriented learning: the ultimate goal is empowerment — enabling participants to translate learning into action in their communities.

3.2 Experiential Learning Cycle

The structure of the course followed David Kolb's experiential learning cycle, which has four interconnected phases:

1. Concrete Experience – doing, acting, playing. Participants engage directly in exercises, role plays, and performances.
2. Reflective Observation – sharing what happened: emotions, thoughts, body sensations. This step is often collective, through guided debriefing.
3. Abstract Conceptualization – connecting the experience to wider concepts: oppression, power, eco-social issues, or theories of change.
4. Active Experimentation – trying out new strategies, transferring insights to real life, or applying them in Forum Theatre interventions.

This cycle repeats continuously: each new activity builds on the previous one, deepening learning and encouraging transformation.

3.3 Group Development and Dynamics

Groups are living organisms. They change and evolve as trust grows, conflicts appear, and collaboration develops. We relied on Bruce Tuckman's model of group development:

- **Forming:** participants meet, feel uncertain, and need orientation. Icebreakers and team-building games are crucial here.
- **Storming:** conflicts, differences, and power struggles emerge. Facilitators must hold space for dialogue, ensuring safety while allowing honest expression.
- **Norming:** the group establishes shared rules, trust, and cohesion. At this stage, more complex and vulnerable ToO exercises can be introduced.
- **Performing:** the group works effectively together, creating Forum Theatre pieces or collective images of oppression.

Recognizing these stages helps facilitators adapt activities to the group's readiness, rather than forcing a rigid program.

3.4 The Role of the Facilitator and the Joker

In Theatre of the Oppressed, the facilitator is the Joker. The Joker role is unique: neutral yet provocative, guiding the process while avoiding authoritarianism.

The Joker's responsibilities include:

- **Clarifying exercises:** ensuring everyone understands instructions.
- **Stimulating reflection:** asking open questions that encourage dialogue rather than prescribing answers.
- **Encouraging participation:** making sure quieter voices and marginalized perspectives are heard.
- **Maintaining horizontality:** resisting the temptation to become the protagonist; the Joker mediates, not dominates.
- **Creating safety:** balancing the need to challenge participants with care for their well-being.

The Joker embodies the pedagogical principle that theatre is not about showing the "correct" way but about rehearsing many possible ways together.

3.5 Inclusion, Accessibility, and Care

Eco-social change cannot exist without inclusion. Every group includes different abilities, cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and emotional needs. Facilitators must:

- Adapt activities for participants with physical or sensory disabilities (e.g., using verbal descriptions, adjusting space).
- Be mindful of language barriers, using translation, visual aids, or body language.
- Recognize different levels of comfort with theatrical expression; allow gradual participation.
- Ensure gender balance and sensitivity to identities often marginalized (LGBTQ+, migrants, rural youth, etc.).
- Integrate principles of trauma-informed facilitation: avoid forcing participants to re-enact personal trauma, always offer opt-out possibilities, and provide support when strong emotions emerge.

Care is political. Taking care of the group is not just logistics — it is part of building an alternative, sustainable culture.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

When working with oppression, conflict, and eco-social struggles, facilitators face ethical questions:

- How to avoid reproducing oppression inside the group?
- How to ensure participants are not left vulnerable after intense emotional exercises?
- How to balance playfulness with seriousness?

Some guiding principles:

- Always debrief: no exercise should end without a chance to share and reflect.
- Make power visible: acknowledge your own role as facilitator and create space for critique.
- Link back to action: theatre is not therapy; it is a rehearsal for social transformation.

3.7 Reflection and Debriefing

Debriefing is the bridge between experience and learning. Without it, activities risk being “just games.” Effective debriefing moves through several levels:

1. Descriptive: What happened? What did we do?
2. Personal: How did you feel? What did you notice in your body or emotions?
3. Interpersonal: What group dynamics appeared? How did we relate to each other?
4. Analytical: What does this reveal about power, oppression, or eco-social issues?
5. Transformative: How can we apply these insights in real life?

The Joker can use open-ended questions, metaphors, or images to stimulate deeper reflection. Silence is also valuable — giving participants time to think before speaking.

3.8 Linking to Eco-Social Transformation

Finally, this methodological framework is not neutral. The training explicitly aimed to address eco-social issues: climate justice, sustainability, and social equality. This means that:

- Exercises were chosen with purpose: not just fun, but connected to real struggles.
- Reflections highlighted power: who makes decisions about land, resources, or nature? Who benefits, and who suffers?
- Actions were imagined collectively: participants considered how to bring ToO methods back to their communities, linking local realities to global challenges.

The methodological framework therefore connects art, education, and activism, creating a triangle of transformation.

4. ENERGIZERS & WARM-UPS

Energizers and warm-ups are essential in Theatre of the Oppressed training. They help participants reconnect with their bodies, focus their attention, and build group energy. Beyond being fun activities, they are pedagogical tools that prepare participants for deeper work: developing trust, enhancing concentration, and fostering group cohesion.

Olelé

Aim: To energize the group and build collective focus through rhythm, movement, and vocal expression.

Context & Rationale: Rhythm-based activities are a classic element in Augusto Boal's methodology. They allow participants to move beyond verbal communication, synchronize with the group, and gradually let go of inhibitions. Olelé is particularly effective to start the day or to regain energy after intense discussions.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Participants stand in a circle.
2. The facilitator begins chanting simple rhythmic sounds (e.g., Olelé, Olala) accompanied by a basic movement.
3. The group imitates the facilitator, repeating both the sound and movement.
4. The facilitator gradually increases intensity: faster pace, louder voice, more expressive gestures.
5. The group mirrors the changes until energy peaks. The exercise can end by slowing down into silence.

Timing: 5–10 minutes

Group Size: 10–30 participants

Materials: None

Facilitation Tips

- Start gently, especially if the group is shy.
- Use eye contact and smile to encourage participation.
- Avoid overcomplicating the rhythm; simplicity supports confidence.

Variations

- Invite participants to suggest new sounds or movements.
- Divide the group in two for call-and-response singing.
- Try a silent version: movements only, without sound.

Debriefing Suggestions

- How did you feel before and after the exercise?
- What helped you connect with the group's rhythm?
- How can rhythm and collective energy support cooperation in social change work?

Count & Shake

Aim: To energize the body, boost coordination, and activate attention.

Context & Rationale: This quick activity is often used as a transition. It brings humor, playfulness, and lightness into the group. The physicality also helps participants “wake up” after periods of sitting or concentration.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Participants stand in a circle.
2. Together they count from 1 to 5, shaking each limb in turn: left arm, right arm, left leg, right leg.
3. On the next round, they count only to 4, repeating the sequence faster.
4. Continue decreasing the count (3, 2, 1) until reaching zero, when everyone jumps together.

Timing: 3–5 minutes

Group Size: Any

Materials: None

Facilitation Tips

- Keep a fast pace to encourage laughter.
- Emphasize that mistakes are part of the fun.
- If participants are hesitant, exaggerate your own movements to model energy.

Variations

- Add voice: participants shout the numbers as they shake.
- Do the sequence in pairs, holding hands.
- Try reversing the order of limbs for an extra challenge.

Debriefing Suggestions

- How did your body feel after this short activation?
- Did the rhythm of the group help you, or did you focus on yourself?
- What does this say about collaboration and attention in collective work?

Aim: To improve focus, coordination, and reaction speed through a playful counting game.

Context & Rationale: This game stimulates alertness and concentration. It also mirrors social dynamics: the need to pay attention to others, respond quickly, and adapt to changing rules.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Participants stand in a circle.
2. One person starts counting "1" while touching the shoulder of the person next to them, indicating direction (left or right).
3. The next person says "2" and passes it on, continuing until "7."
4. At "7," the participant changes the gesture: instead of touching a shoulder, they place a hand on their head and restart the count from "1."
5. Mistakes (wrong number or gesture) result in a playful penalty, e.g., running a lap around the circle before rejoining.

Timing: 5–8 minutes

Group Size: 10–20 works best

Materials: None

Facilitation Tips

- Keep the energy light; mistakes should cause laughter, not stress.
- Encourage participants to maintain eye contact.
- Adapt penalties if needed: e.g., a funny dance instead of running.

Variations

- Add more rules at higher numbers (e.g., at "14," jump instead of clap).
- Play two simultaneous sequences in opposite directions.
- Combine with rhythm: participants clap while waiting for their turn.

Debriefing Suggestions

- What helped you stay focused?
- How did it feel when rules changed suddenly?
- Can you connect this experience to real-life situations where you must adapt quickly?

5. ICEBREAKERS & TEAM BUILDING

Icebreakers and team-building activities are not just “fun games.” In a Theatre of the Oppressed training, they serve a methodological purpose: building trust, improving communication, and preparing the group for deeper exploration of oppression and power. According to Tuckman’s group development model, these activities are particularly useful in the forming and storming stages, helping participants get to know each other and establish group cohesion.

Name/Action Game

Aim: To break the ice, learn names, and create a playful atmosphere.

Context & Rationale: Names are the first step toward recognition and inclusion. Adding actions makes learning names more dynamic and memorable while encouraging creativity and humor. It also lowers barriers and reduces fear of “looking silly,” preparing participants for theatrical work.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Participants stand in a circle.
2. One by one, each person introduces themselves by saying their name and performing an action starting with the same letter (e.g., “I’m Francesca, and I like fishing” while miming fishing).
3. The next participant must repeat all previous names and actions before adding their own.
4. Continue until the circle is complete.

Timing: 10–15 minutes (depending on group size)

Group Size: Up to 25 participants

Materials: None

Facilitation Tips

- Encourage big gestures and exaggeration to make names easier to remember.
- Support shy participants by repeating their name/action with the group.
- If the group is large, divide into smaller circles.

Variations

- Instead of actions starting with letters, use favorite hobbies, animals, or eco-social themes (e.g., “I’m Anna, and I care about animals”).
- Do the game in reverse order to reinforce memory.

Debriefing Suggestions

- How easy or difficult was it to remember names?
- What helped you connect to others?
- How does playfulness support learning and trust in a group?

Identity Exchange

Aim: To practice active listening, empathy, storytelling, and memory skills.

Context & Rationale: This activity creates immediate bonds among participants by allowing them to share personal stories and then retell them as if they were their own. It helps participants step into each other's shoes, which is a core principle of Theatre of the Oppressed.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Participants form pairs.
2. Each person shares a short personal story (2–3 minutes).
3. After both have shared, they swap stories.
4. Each participant then finds a new partner and retells the story they received as if it were their own.
5. The process continues until participants eventually hear their own story being told back to them.

Timing: 20–30 minutes

Group Size: Any

Materials: None

Facilitation Tips

- Encourage attentive listening: no notes, only memory.
- Remind participants to respect confidentiality if sensitive stories appear.
- Ensure time limits are respected so the exercise flows.

Variations

- Instead of personal stories, focus on eco-social experiences (e.g., “a time I felt connected to nature”).
- Use drawings or gestures instead of words to pass on the stories.

Debriefing Suggestions

- How did it feel to hear your story told by someone else?
- Did you feel empathy or connection when telling another's story?
- How does this relate to giving voice to marginalized experiences?

All Those Who...

Aim: To energize the group, highlight commonalities, and create connections.

Context & Rationale: This is a movement-based game that shows participants what they share while keeping energy high. It also allows facilitators to introduce thematic prompts related to eco-social issues.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Participants stand in a circle, with one person in the middle.
2. The person in the middle calls out: "All those who love hiking".
3. Everyone for whom this is true must run and swap places.
4. Whoever is left without a place stands in the middle and makes the next statement.

Timing: 10-15 minutes

Group Size: Any (works best with 12-25)

Materials: Chairs (one less than number of participants) or floor spots

Facilitation Tips

- Encourage prompts connected to the training theme (e.g., "All those who care about the environment").
- Remind participants to play safely and avoid pushing.

Variations

- Use eco-social or activist prompts to link to training topics.
- Add a rule: if you repeat a statement already used, you must do a funny penalty.

Debriefing Suggestions

- What did you notice about similarities in the group?
- Did you feel more connected to others through shared experiences?
- How can recognizing common ground support collective action?

✨ Two Truths and a Dream

Aim: To get to know each other and explore personal goals in a playful way.

Context & Rationale: This activity combines classic icebreaking with visioning. By including a “dream” instead of a “lie,” it encourages participants to share aspirations linked to the training theme (eco-social change, personal growth).

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In small groups, each participant writes down two true statements about themselves and one dream related to the course themes.
2. One by one, they share the three statements.
3. The group guesses which one is the dream.

Timing: 15 - 20 minutes

Group Size: Small groups of 4-6

Materials: Paper and pens (optional)

Facilitation Tips

- Model the exercise by sharing your own truths and dream first.
- Encourage dreams linked to eco-social transformation.
- Keep the tone light but meaningful.

Variations

- Instead of eco-social dreams, use “dream roles” (e.g., “a role I’d like to play in a Forum Theatre scene”).
- Make it collective: groups guess each other’s dreams, then vote on which to act out later.

Debriefing Suggestions

- How did sharing personal dreams feel?
- Did you discover unexpected common goals?
- How can dreams inspire concrete action?

❑ The Perfect Square

Aim: To build teamwork, communication, and trust without relying on sight.

Context & Rationale: This exercise demonstrates how communication and leadership emerge under constraints. It connects to ToO principles by highlighting power, cooperation, and trust in groups.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide participants into two groups.
2. Each group receives a rope.
3. Blindfold participants or ask them to close their eyes.
4. Their task: form a perfect square with the rope using only verbal communication.
5. Once finished, they place the rope on the floor and remove blindfolds to check.

Timing: 15 - 20 minutes

Group Size: Groups of 6–12

Materials: Ropes, blindfolds (optional)

Facilitation Tips

- Remind participants to move slowly and carefully.
- Observe group dynamics: who takes leadership? Who is excluded?
- Encourage everyone to contribute, not just the loudest voices.

Variations

- Form different shapes (triangle, star).
- Allow only non-verbal communication for a second round.

Debriefing Suggestions

- How did you communicate without sight?
- Who led the group, and how did that feel?
- What does this say about leadership, power, and cooperation in real life?

6. CORE ACTIVITIES

Core activities are the backbone of the training. They are not isolated games, but a progressive journey that mirrors the pedagogy of Theatre of the Oppressed: moving from awareness of reality, through embodied exploration, toward collective strategies for transformation.

The flow of this section is intentional:

- **Eco-social exploration & group readiness:** Activities that allow participants to map challenges in their contexts, build trust, and sharpen attention. These exercises ensure that when we talk about oppression or climate justice, we are not only using abstract concepts but connecting them to lived realities.
- **Embodied analysis of power:** Through objects, statues, and emotions, participants investigate what power looks like, how it shifts, and what roles (oppressor, oppressed, bystander, ally) exist in every conflict. This step is crucial for understanding oppression as a relational dynamic rather than a fixed identity.
- **Theatre of the Oppressed techniques:** With the ground prepared, participants then engage in Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, and Newspaper Theatre. These methods offer structured ways to rehearse alternatives, imagine change, and connect art with action.

In this way, core activities create a learning arc: from playful exploration, to critical analysis, to creative transformation. They form the bridge between theory and practice, allowing participants to embody eco-social issues and experiment with collective solutions.

6.1 Eco-Social Exploration & Group Readiness

Why this block first?

Before working with Theatre of the Oppressed techniques, participants benefit from playful, low-risk activities that: (a) connect the training themes to their realities, (b) attune attention and bodies, and (c) build trust and cooperation. These sessions lay the groundwork for deeper analysis later.

Mapping Our Eco-Social Landscape

Aim: To explore eco-social challenges in participants' contexts through non-verbal communication, and to collectively identify struggles, resources, and sustainable solutions.

Context & Rationale: Before jumping into theatre, participants need to connect the training themes to their own realities. Mapping with drawings allows everyone to express themselves regardless of language barriers. It also creates a collective "landscape" of challenges and dreams that can inspire later theatrical work.

INSTRUCTIONS

Place four flipcharts around the room, each with a guiding question:

1. What are the biggest eco-social challenges in your country?
2. How can you help address these challenges?
3. What do you need to make a difference?
4. What does a sustainable and just society look like to you?
5. Divide participants into four groups, assigning each to a flipchart.
6. Using markers, crayons, or symbols, they draw their answers silently.
7. After 5 minutes, groups rotate to the next flipchart, adding to what others have drawn.
8. Continue until all groups have visited all charts.
9. Reconvene and discuss observations: What themes repeat? What surprised you?

Timing: 45–60 minutes

Group Size: Any (works best with 16–24)

Materials: Flipcharts, markers, crayons, tape

Facilitation Tips

Emphasize silence during drawing to allow creativity without debate.

Encourage the use of symbols and metaphors, not just words.

During debriefing, connect drawings to lived experiences.

Variations

Instead of flipcharts, create a large "eco-social mural" on the floor with paper.

Add a final step: groups create a short performance based on one of the drawings.

Debriefing Suggestions

Which challenges were common across countries?

Did drawing help you see issues differently compared to words?

How do these challenges relate to oppression, power, or sustainability?

Which themes could be transformed into Forum Theatre scenes?

Pass the Beat

Aim: To develop synchronization, non-verbal communication, and group focus.

Context & Rationale: This exercise introduces rhythm and coordination as metaphors for cooperation. It helps participants pay attention to body language and eye contact—skills essential for Image Theatre and group improvisation.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Participants stand in a circle.
2. The facilitator explains that the exercise will be silent, relying on eye contact.
3. Two people look at each other and clap at the same time, creating one unified sound.
4. The clap is then “passed” around the circle, maintaining rhythm.
5. Introduce variations: faster rhythm, multiple beats circulating at once.

Timing: 10 - 15 minutes

Group Size: Any (works best with 12–25)

Materials: None

Facilitation Tips

- Highlight the importance of eye contact, not just speed.
- Allow time for mistakes—they’re part of the learning.
- Increase difficulty gradually so participants feel successful.

Variations

- Use different sounds (snap, stomp, vocal noise) instead of claps.
- Try passing beats in two directions simultaneously.

Debriefing Suggestions

- How did you know when to clap?
- Did you feel more focused on yourself or the group?
- How does this exercise relate to collective timing in social movements?

Back Dancing

Aim: To promote creativity, connection, and trust through playful movement.

Context & Rationale: Back Dancing introduces physical contact and improvisation in a safe way. It helps participants overcome inhibitions, explore creativity, and prepare for embodied theatre work.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Participants form a circle.
2. On the count of three, everyone makes eye contact with someone; if mutual, they become partners.
3. Partners stand back to back and begin to dance without music.
4. The facilitator calls out dance styles (e.g., salsa, waltz, hip-hop, freestyle), and pairs interpret creatively.
5. Switch partners regularly to keep energy dynamic.

Timing: 15 - 20 minutes

Group Size: Any (odd numbers can form trios)

Materials: None

Facilitation Tips

- Remind participants to respect each other's comfort levels.
- Encourage exaggerated, playful interpretations of styles.
- If group is shy, model silly dances yourself.

Variations

- Add music for extra energy.
- Try themed dances (e.g., "dance like a tree in the wind").

Debriefing Suggestions

- How did it feel to dance back-to-back without seeing your partner?
- Did you feel more or less connected through touch?
- What can this teach us about trust and cooperation?

👉 Blind Shake

Aim: To build trust, coordination, and spatial awareness.

Context & Rationale: Following Back Dancing, Blind Shake deepens trust. Closing eyes forces participants to rely on memory, orientation, and mutual support—skills linked to navigating uncertainty in real life.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Participants remain in pairs.
2. Each pair shakes hands, memorizing the contact.
3. They release hands, take three steps back, and close their eyes.
4. Their task is to reconnect with the same handshake position.
5. Repeat with new partners.

Timing: 10 - 15 minutes

Group Size: Any

Materials: None

Facilitation Tips

- Remind participants to move slowly and carefully.
- Create a calm atmosphere, encouraging deep focus.
- If needed, play soft background music.

Variations

- Increase distance before reconnecting.
- Try with different types of contact (elbows, shoulders).

Debriefing Suggestions

- How did you orient yourself without sight?
- Did you trust your partner to meet you halfway?
- How does this reflect real-life cooperation under uncertainty?

Mirrors

Aim: To enhance body expression, creativity, and synchronization.

Context & Rationale: Mirroring exercises are classic preparation for Image Theatre. They train participants to observe closely, reproduce accurately, and explore the expressive potential of their bodies.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Participants pair up.
2. One person becomes the “actor,” making slow, expressive movements.
3. The other mirrors them as precisely as possible.
4. After 5 minutes, switch roles.

Timing: 10 - 15 minutes

Group Size: Pairs (whole group can do simultaneously)

Materials: None

Facilitation Tips

- Encourage slowness to allow accurate mirroring.
- Remind actors to use full body, not just arms.
- If the group is advanced, try without eye contact (mirroring the whole body).

Variations

- Try mirroring facial expressions only.
- Introduce “delayed mirror”: the follower repeats the action with a 2-second delay.

Debriefing Suggestions

- How did it feel to lead vs. follow?
- Did you notice moments of true synchronization?
- What can mirroring teach us about empathy and social reflection?

6.2 Exploring Power Through the Body

Power is one of the central concepts in Theatre of the Oppressed and in any work on eco-social transformation. It shapes our relationships, our access to resources, and even our sense of self. When we speak about climate justice or social inequality, we are also speaking about who has the power to decide, to act, and to be heard—and who is excluded, silenced, or exploited.

Yet power is not a static thing that some people “own” and others lack. It is relational: it changes depending on context, on the roles we play, and on the presence or absence of others. Sometimes power is visible—politicians making laws, corporations extracting resources. Other times it is invisible—social norms, internalized oppression, or the subtle authority of body posture and space.

In Theatre of the Oppressed, we do not only talk about power in abstract terms. We explore it through the body. By arranging objects or shaping statues with our bodies, participants can express intuitions that are hard to put into words. A marker on top of a chair may suddenly feel “more powerful” than before. A statue of one person towering over another may immediately evoke dominance, even without explanation.

These embodied explorations serve several purposes:

- **They allow participants to externalize power, making it visible and discussable.**
- **They highlight that power is not fixed—it shifts when another object, body, or perspective enters the scene.**
- **They connect personal experience with broader eco-social structures, showing how power operates at multiple levels.**
- **They prepare participants for Image and Forum Theatre, where analyzing roles and interventions requires sensitivity to dynamics of power and resistance.**

In this block, we begin with objects as metaphors for power, move on to statues created with participants’ bodies, and deepen reflection through the Museum of Emotions, which explores the roles of aggressor, victim, bystander, and ally.

Power and More Power — Objects

Aim: To stimulate reflection on the concept of power, its different dimensions, and how context and perspective influence our understanding of what is powerful.

Context & Rationale: Power can be difficult to grasp when discussed abstractly. Using everyday objects allows participants to project meaning onto neutral items, sparking imagination and debate without personalizing too quickly. It demonstrates that power is constructed and relational—an object may appear powerful depending on how it is positioned or in relation to others. This prepares the group to think critically about visible and invisible power in eco-social contexts.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place three everyday objects (e.g., a chair, a marker, a cup) in the center of the space.
2. Ask participants: “Which of these objects has the most power?”
3. Invite one person to change the arrangement (e.g., putting the marker on top of the chair) and explain why this makes it “more powerful.”
4. After each intervention, ask the group: Does this new configuration feel more powerful? Why or why not?
5. Continue until several participants have modified the arrangement and shared their perspectives.

Timing: 20–30 minutes

Group Size: 10–25

Materials: 3–4 neutral objects (chair, marker, bottle, book, etc.)

Facilitation Tips

- Encourage creativity: there is no “right” answer.
- Choose objects without strong cultural or emotional connotations.
- If participants hesitate, model an example first to break the ice.
- Use open-ended questions: What makes this object powerful? Who decides?

Variations

- Use eco-socially symbolic objects: a leaf, a coin, a plastic bottle.
- Increase the number of objects to complicate power dynamics.
- Invite small groups to arrange their own sets of objects simultaneously, then compare.

Debriefing Suggestions

- What criteria did you use to decide which object was “powerful”?
- Did power depend on the object itself, or its position in relation to others?
- How does this mirror real-world power (political, economic, cultural, ecological)?
- Is power fixed or constantly shifting?

Power and More Power — Statues

Aim: To embody and analyze power relations through physical expression, and to reflect on how dominance, submission, and resistance are constructed in social interactions.

Context & Rationale: Statues bring the exploration of power from abstract objects into the participants' own bodies. By embodying power physically, participants gain new insights into how posture, space, and proximity communicate domination or vulnerability. This activity is a stepping stone into Image Theatre, where analyzing oppression through statues becomes central.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Invite one volunteer to come forward and create a still pose that represents “power.”
2. Ask the group to observe silently: What do you see? (Describe posture, distance, facial expression, not interpretations yet.)
3. Invite a second person to join the statue, making it “more power.”
4. Discuss: How did the dynamic shift? Who seems dominant? Who seems weaker?
5. Add a third, fourth, or more participants, each time reflecting on how the statue changes.
6. After several iterations, release the statues and debrief together.

Timing: 30–40 minutes

Group Size: 10–25

Materials: Open space

Facilitation Tips

- Encourage bold, clear body language (e.g., height, gestures, direction of gaze).
- Ask observers to describe what they see before interpreting meaning.
- Keep energy balanced—invite laughter, but also guide toward deeper reflection.
- Remind participants to respect each other's physical boundaries when shaping poses.

Variations

- Instead of “power,” sculpt “weakness,” “resistance,” or “solidarity.”
- Divide into small groups; each creates a different statue of power and presents to the others.
- Create two statues side by side: one showing “domination,” the other “liberation.”

Debriefing Suggestions

- Which body positions communicated power most strongly?
- How did power shift as more people joined the statue?
- What parallels do you see with eco-social issues (e.g., governments, corporations, citizens, nature)?
- What strategies for resistance or balance of power became visible?

Museum of Emotions

Aim: To investigate the dynamics of oppression through embodied statues, exploring the roles of aggressor, victim, bystander, and rescuer, and to reflect on the emotional and social dimensions of these roles.

Context & Rationale: By “freezing” a moment of aggression, participants can analyze power relations more clearly than in real life, where situations unfold quickly. The exercise transforms the group into a “museum,” where statues become exhibits to be observed and interpreted. This process helps participants link personal perceptions with broader eco-social realities (e.g., environmental destruction, gender violence, social exclusion).

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide participants into small groups of 4–5 people.
2. In each group, one person is the sculptor. Their role is to arrange the bodies of others into a frozen scene representing aggression.
 - Example: one participant as aggressor, one as victim, one as bystander.
3. The group observes the finished statue silently.
4. The sculptor briefly explains their intention.
5. Observers describe what they see (gestures, posture, gaze, proximity), before moving to interpretations.
6. Rotate roles so each participant has a chance to be sculptor.
7. Gather the whole group to share reflections on the experience.

Timing: 45–60 minutes

Group Size: 12–25 (in small groups)

Materials: Open space

Facilitation Tips

- Remind sculptors to move others gently and respectfully.
- Encourage sculptors to use different emotional registers: anger, fear, indifference.
- In the observation phase, insist on starting with description (what do you see?) before interpretation (what does it mean?).
- Allow space for silence—sometimes emotions need time before being spoken.

Variations

- Instead of aggression, sculpt themes like solidarity, climate injustice, or care.
- After showing oppression, ask groups to transform the same statue into one of resistance or liberation.
- Do a “gallery walk”: all statues remain frozen while the rest of the group walks around silently, like in a museum.

Debriefing Suggestions

- Which roles appeared most often across statues? Which were missing?
- How did it feel to embody the aggressor, victim, or bystander?
- Did any poses feel uncomfortably “real”?
- How do these dynamics appear in eco-social struggles (e.g., nature as victim, corporations as aggressors, citizens as bystanders)?
- What shifts are needed to move from passivity to resistance or solidarity?

6.3 Image Theatre

Image Theatre is one of Augusto Boal's most emblematic techniques within the Theatre of the Oppressed. It is based on the conviction that our bodies carry knowledge and history. Through gestures, postures, and spatial relations, we can express experiences of oppression and hope that may be difficult to verbalize.

Boal developed Image Theatre as a method to analyze reality without relying on words. In contexts where participants come from different cultures, speak different languages, or feel shy in discussions, the body becomes a universal language. Images open space for multiple perspectives: one person may see domination, another resistance, another solidarity. This plurality is not a problem—it is the point.

In practice, participants create frozen images with their bodies (alone, in pairs, or in groups) that represent emotions, concepts, or situations. Others observe and describe what they see. Later, the group discusses interpretations and experiments with transforming the images into new versions that express liberation, resistance, or alternative futures.

Basic Rules of Image Theatre

1. Bodies first, words later – Images are created silently. Verbal reflection comes afterward.
2. Description before interpretation – Observers begin by describing physical details (“arms raised, head tilted”), then move into meaning (“looks oppressed, looks powerful”).
3. No single truth – Images are polysemic; different readings are equally valid.
4. Transformation is essential – Oppressive images are always open to change, symbolizing that reality is not fixed.
5. Collective construction – Meaning emerges in dialogue between sculptor, actors, and observers.

Why Image Theatre for eco-social education?

- It reveals how injustice and ecological destruction are embodied in relationships.
- It allows complex issues (climate crisis, inequality, migration, extractivism) to be represented and analyzed visually.
- It strengthens creativity, empathy, and imagination—skills needed for systemic change.
- It prepares the ground for Forum Theatre, where participants will later embody roles and rehearse interventions.

In this training, we follow a progression:

- Begin with pair work to practice sculpting images.
- Move into collective images that represent eco-social issues.
- Transform oppressive images into liberating alternatives.

Sculptor and Clay

Aim: To introduce participants to creating and embodying frozen images, and to build comfort with non-verbal expression.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pair up participants.
2. One is the sculptor, the other the clay.
3. The sculptor silently shapes the clay into a statue expressing a theme (e.g., oppression, freedom, hope, pollution).
4. The clay remains flexible and responsive, adjusting as guided.
5. After presenting the image briefly, switch roles.

Timing: 15–20 minutes

Group Size: Any (pairs)

Materials: None

Facilitation Tips

- Remind sculptors to ask for consent before touching.
- Encourage exaggerated gestures so images are clear.
- Allow the group to look at each statue before moving on.

Variations

- Sculpt using only verbal instructions.
- Try abstract prompts: fear, justice, climate change.

Debriefing

- How did it feel to be sculptor vs. clay?
- What strategies did you use to communicate?
- Did the same theme look different across pairs?

Group Image Creation

Aim: To represent eco-social realities collectively and to explore meaning that emerges from the interaction of multiple bodies.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Form groups of 5–6 participants.
2. Facilitator announces a theme (e.g., climate crisis, migration, community solidarity).
3. Groups have 10 minutes to create a frozen image representing the theme.
4. Each group presents their image to the plenary.
5. Observers describe what they see first, then share interpretations.

Timing: 30–40 minutes

Group Size: 15–25 (in groups of 5–6)

Materials: Open space

Facilitation Tips

- Allow groups to work in silence if they choose.
- Ensure visibility of images when presented.
- Keep analysis structured: description → interpretation.

Variations

- Assign different themes to each group.
- Ask groups to present two images in sequence: problem and solution.

Debriefing

- Which common symbols or gestures appeared?
- What emotions did the images evoke?
- How are these statues connected to eco-social struggles in your communities?

Image Transformation

Aim: To explore possibilities for change by transforming oppressive images into liberating alternatives.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Select one group's oppressive image for the whole group to analyze.
2. Ask the audience: "What change could make this situation more just or liberating?"
3. Invite one participant to step in, replace someone, and reshape the image.
4. Repeat with several volunteers, experimenting with multiple alternatives.
5. Compare the oppressive and transformed images, discussing differences.

Timing: 30–45 minutes

Group Size: Whole group (15–25)

Materials: Open space

Facilitation Tips

- Keep focus on physical transformation, not long explanations.
- Encourage several interventions, not just one "solution."
- Remind participants that every change reveals possibilities, not final answers.

Variations

- Start with individual oppressive poses and "liberate" them.
- Use eco-social dilemmas: factory polluting river, community resisting eviction, youth striking for climate.

Debriefing

- How did the image shift with each intervention?
- Which transformations felt realistic? Which symbolic?
- What do these experiments teach about agency in eco-social struggles?

6.4 Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre is one of the most powerful methods of Theatre of the Oppressed. Developed by Augusto Boal in the 1970s in Brazil, it is a tool for collective problem-solving and rehearsal for social change.

In Forum Theatre, participants create and perform a short scene that shows a situation of oppression without resolution. The performance is then repeated, and the audience—the spect-actors—is invited to interrupt, replace characters, and try out different actions to transform the situation.

Forum Theatre is not about finding one perfect solution. It is about rehearsing multiple alternatives, learning from trial and error, and collectively reflecting on strategies for resistance, solidarity, and change.

Key Principles of Forum Theatre

1. Oppression at the center – The scene must clearly show a situation where one or more characters are oppressed by structures, people, or systems.
2. No resolution in the first scene – The initial play should end in oppression; otherwise, there is nothing for the spect-actors to intervene in.
3. Spect-actors, not spectators – The audience has the right to stop the scene, step into a role, and try a new action. They move from passive observation to active participation.
4. Multiplicity of interventions – Different spect-actors can try different strategies. The richness comes from diversity, not from “the best solution.”
5. Joker role – The Joker is a facilitator who mediates between the actors and the audience. They ensure clarity, fairness, and encourage participation.

The Joker

The Joker is neither neutral nor authoritarian. They are a bridge between stage and audience. Their responsibilities include:

- Explaining the rules of Forum Theatre.
- Keeping the space safe and inclusive.
- Encouraging participation without forcing it.
- Managing time and ensuring multiple interventions.
- Helping the group reflect after each intervention: What worked? What didn't? Why?

Forum Theatre in eco-social education

This technique is especially useful for eco-social issues, where oppression often involves structural power and collective dilemmas. For example:

- A community vs. a polluting company.
- Youth activists vs. local government inaction.
- A family facing the impacts of climate change.

Forum Theatre allows participants to rehearse strategies of resistance in a safe space and reflect on their effectiveness.

Creating the Forum Scene

Aim: To develop short scenes of oppression that serve as the basis for Forum Theatre.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide participants into small groups (5–7 people).
2. Each group brainstorms eco-social issues they care about (based on earlier mapping activities).
3. They choose one situation of oppression and develop a short scene (3–5 minutes).
 - It must have clear characters: oppressor, oppressed, bystanders.
 - It must end without resolution, in oppression.
4. Groups rehearse and present their scenes to the rest of the participants.

Timing: 60–90 minutes

Group Size: Whole group, divided into smaller groups

Materials: Open space, optional props

Facilitation Tips

- Remind groups to keep scenes short; clarity matters more than detail.
- Avoid stereotypes; encourage realistic, nuanced oppressors.
- Ensure everyone has an active role.

Debriefing

- Was the oppression clear?
- Did the scene feel realistic or exaggerated?
- How did it connect to eco-social realities in participants' contexts?

Running the Forum

Aim: To involve the audience as spect-actors, rehearsing interventions to transform oppression.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose one group's scene to run as Forum Theatre.
2. Perform the scene once without interruption.
3. The Joker explains:
 - The scene will be repeated.
 - Any audience member can shout "Stop!", step in, and replace a character (usually the oppressed or a bystander).
 - They then try a new action to change the situation.
4. The scene continues until oppression is again reached or a new outcome is tried.
5. The Joker facilitates discussion after each intervention: What happened? Did it reduce oppression? What new problems appeared?
6. Repeat with multiple spect-actors and interventions.

Timing: 90–120 minutes (depending on group size)

Group Size: Whole group (15–30 people)

Materials: Open space, optional props

Facilitation Tips

- Interventions should be shown physically, not just explained verbally.
- Encourage multiple people to try—even contradictory strategies.
- Remind spect-actors: changing the oppressed's behavior is not enough; the system must also be challenged.
- Keep the process dynamic: move quickly between interventions.

Variations

- Rotate multiple group scenes as Forums, if time allows.
- Try "Rapid Forum": run very short scenes (1–2 minutes) with many quick interventions.
- Focus specifically on eco-social conflicts: pollution, climate inaction, exploitation of workers.

Debriefing

- Which interventions felt effective? Which did not? Why?
- Did new forms of oppression appear after certain interventions?
- What can we learn for real-life activism and eco-social struggles?
- How did it feel to step into someone else's role?

6.5 Newspaper Theatre

Forum Theatre is often the centerpiece of a Theatre of the Oppressed process, but it is not the only technique that helps groups analyze and transform reality. While Forum focuses on lived situations of oppression, Newspaper Theatre offers tools to critically examine how reality is represented—in news articles, political speeches, advertisements, or even social media posts.

This makes it particularly relevant in eco-social education: much of what we know about climate change, migration, or social conflict comes through media narratives, which often distort reality or reproduce the voices of the powerful. Newspaper Theatre allows participants to deconstruct those narratives, reclaim them, and re-present them from the perspective of the oppressed.

Newspaper Theatre was the very first form of Theatre of the Oppressed that Augusto Boal developed in Brazil in the 1960s. At that time, newspapers were one of the most influential sources of public opinion. Boal and his theatre group began experimenting with ways to transform articles into theatrical performances, exposing contradictions, hidden ideologies, and silenced voices.

The method has since expanded: “newspapers” now include all forms of media—TV news, online blogs, TikTok clips, political propaganda, scientific reports. The aim is not only to represent the media but to critically reframe it, turning passive consumers of information into active interpreters and creators.

Why Newspaper Theatre?

- It reveals the bias and power dynamics in how news is constructed.
- It empowers participants to analyze and question media discourses.
- It gives tools to reclaim stories and give voice to those silenced.
- It connects to eco-social education by exposing how media shapes narratives about climate change, sustainability, or social justice.

Basic Modes of Newspaper Theatre (adapted from Boal’s original 12 techniques):

1. Simple Reading – Read the article as it is, highlighting language and tone.
2. Rhythmical Reading – Change speed, volume, or rhythm to reveal hidden patterns.
3. Complementary Reading – Add what the article leaves out (statistics, missing voices).
4. Crossed Reading – Combine two texts (e.g., government speech + protester’s testimony).
5. Improvised Scene – Act out the article as if it were a play.
6. Opposite Reading – Present the article from the opposite perspective.
7. Historical Reading – Contrast the article with past events or future consequences.

Activity 1: Reading the News Aloud

Aim: To introduce Newspaper Theatre by analyzing the tone, language, and omissions of a media text.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Select a short article or text (eco-social issue works best).
2. Read it aloud once, neutrally.
3. Read again, changing rhythm, emphasis, or exaggerating certain words.
4. Discuss: What is highlighted? What is hidden? How does tone shape meaning?

Timing: 20–30 minutes

Group Size: Whole group or small groups

Materials: Printed articles or excerpts

Debriefing

- What emotions did the text evoke in different readings?
- What assumptions or biases can we detect?
- Who speaks in this article, and who is silent?

Activity 2: Crossed Readings

Aim: To reveal contradictions and power dynamics by combining two different media texts.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose two texts on the same issue (e.g., government statement vs. activist blog).
2. Divide participants into two groups, each reading one text.
3. Perform the readings alternately or simultaneously.
4. Let the audience observe the clash of narratives.

Timing: 30–40 minutes

Group Size: 10–20

Materials: Two contrasting texts

Debriefing

- How did the texts contradict or complement each other?
- Which voices were amplified, which were silenced?
- How does this reflect eco-social power struggles?

Activity 3: Improvised News Performance

Aim: To transform written news into embodied theatre, revealing its underlying messages and impacts.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In groups of 4–6, select a short article.
2. Create a short scene (2–3 minutes) acting out the article.
3. Present to the group.
4. Replay the same scene, but this time from the perspective of those excluded from the article.

Timing: 45–60 minutes

Group Size: 12–25 (in small groups)

Materials: Articles, optional props

Facilitation Tips

- Encourage exaggeration and play with roles (reporter, politician, victim, nature).
- Remind groups that they are not mocking the news but exposing its perspective.

Debriefing

- How did the story change when presented from the silenced perspective?
- What impact does media framing have on public perception?
- How can we, as citizens, resist manipulative narratives?

7. Open Space & Participant-Led Activities

A Theatre of the Oppressed training is not only about applying structured techniques. It is also about **creating spaces where participants can take ownership of the process, propose their own explorations, and experiment with themes that matter most to them.**

Open Space Technology (OST) provides a framework for this: participants generate their own questions, set up parallel sessions, and choose freely where to participate. This method values self-organization, curiosity, and responsibility. It mirrors the eco-social principle that systems thrive when communities are empowered to self-manage.

In our training, Open Space was used to give participants a chance to propose activities, workshops, or discussions connected to their interests and identities. Some examples included:

- Identities & Judgment – exploring personal labels and prejudices.
- NARtural – connecting with nature through sensory exercises.
- I Am Being Aware – mindfulness-based self-reflection.

How to Set Up Open Space

1. Introduce the concept – explain that participants can propose any activity related to the training theme.
2. Agenda wall – provide a board or wall with available times and spaces. Participants write their session proposals on cards and place them on the wall.
3. Law of two feet – anyone can move freely between sessions if they feel they are neither learning nor contributing.
4. Butterflies and bees – some participants may prefer to observe quietly (butterflies) or carry ideas between groups (bees). Both roles are valid.
5. Harvesting – ensure that each session has some notes or creative output to bring back to the plenary.

Facilitation Tips

- Emphasize that no idea is too small—personal stories, physical games, or collective debates are all welcome.
- Create a balance between reflection-oriented and body-oriented sessions.
- As a facilitator, resist the urge to control: trust the participants' initiative.
- At the end, gather reflections: What new insights or energies emerged?

Debriefing Questions

- How did it feel to propose and lead a session?
- What surprised you in sessions you joined?
- How does participant-led space change group dynamics?
- How does this relate to eco-social principles of participation and self-organization?

8. Facilitator Tips

Facilitating Theatre of the Oppressed is as much about creating safe, inclusive, and dynamic environments as it is about leading specific activities. The facilitator's role is not that of a traditional teacher but of a companion, guide, and Joker—someone who helps the group discover insights collectively.

Here are **key considerations and strategies for facilitators**:

Creating Safe and Inclusive Environments

- Consent and care – Always emphasize that participants can opt out of activities or choose their level of participation.
- Check-ins – Begin sessions with short check-ins to gauge the group's energy and emotional state.
- Boundaries – Establish clear agreements (confidentiality, respect, listening without interruption).
- Accessibility – Adapt activities for diverse physical and cognitive abilities (e.g., offer seated options, simplify language).
- Intersectionality – Acknowledge that oppression is experienced differently depending on gender, race, class, ability, and other identities.

Adapting for Different Group Sizes

- Small groups (6–10) – More intimacy, deeper sharing, but may lack energy. Use energizers and rotate roles often.
- Medium groups (12–20) – Ideal size for ToO, allowing both intimacy and diversity. Can divide into subgroups for activities.
- Large groups (30+) – Risk of passive spectatorship. Use multiple facilitators, break into smaller workshops, or run parallel sessions.

Managing Emotions, Conflict, and Resistance

- Acknowledge emotions – ToO can surface strong feelings (anger, sadness, fear). Allow time to process before moving on.
- Normalize discomfort – Remind participants that tension is part of learning and reflection.
- Conflict as resource – Disagreements can spark critical dialogue if handled respectfully.
- Resistance – If participants mock or resist, invite them to analyze why (“What makes this uncomfortable? What is being challenged?”).
- Support – Pair participants or offer grounding exercises (breathing, stretching) when emotions overwhelm.

Connecting Activities to Eco-Social Issues

- Explicit framing – Before and after activities, link what emerged to eco-social challenges.
- Use metaphors – A statue of oppression can mirror community vs. corporation, or nature vs. extractivism.
- Local relevance – Always connect abstract exercises to participants' own contexts.
- Critical reflection – Ask: How does this dynamic play out in climate struggles, migration, or social justice?

The Role of the Joker

- Mediator, not judge – The Joker ensures the process is fair but does not decide outcomes.
- Clarity keeper – Explains rules simply and ensures everyone understands.
- Participation enabler – Encourages quieter voices and challenges domination by louder ones.
- Time guardian – Balances depth with keeping energy alive.
- Bridge builder – Connects what happens on stage with participants' real lives.

9. Additional Resources

Books & Foundational Texts

Augusto Boal – Theatre of the Oppressed

Boal's foundational work (originally published in Portuguese as Teatro do Oprimido). It outlines his theory of spect-actors, the Joker role, and the core methods (Image, Forum, Newspaper).

Why include it? It's the key theoretical reference for all ToO practice.

Augusto Boal – Games for Actors and Non-Actors

A rich compendium of warm-ups, games, and exercises that Boal used to lead into deeper work.

Why include it? Because it's often used by TO facilitators worldwide as a reference for methods.

Augusto Boal – Rainbow of Desire

This book delves into internalized oppression, subconscious dynamics, and more subtle psychological work using techniques beyond simple image/scene forms (e.g. "Psychodrama," "Anger Sculpting").

Why include it? If you, or participants, want to go deeper into the internal, emotional side of oppression.

Augusto Boal – Legislative Theatre

Boal used this method when he was a city councillor in Rio de Janeiro to transform community demands into draft laws via theatre.

Why include it? Because it shows how ToO methods can bridge theatrical reflection and real policy change.

Paulo Freire – Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Freire's work is deeply influential in critical pedagogy. Many of Boal's ideas on dialogue, agency, and liberation emerge from Freire's thinking.

Why include it? To help users of your toolkit appreciate the educational roots and philosophy underlying ToO.

Moacir Gadotti – Pedagogy of the Earth

An important work in eco-pedagogy, linking ecological awareness, justice, and education.

Why include it? To ground the "eco" side of your toolkit in pedagogical theory.

9. Additional Resources

Manuals, Toolkits & Guides

“Re-Create the ARTitude through Forum Theatre” (A.R.T. Fusion Guide)

A guide published under the A.R.T. Fusion project, offering detailed instructions for Forum Theatre in youth / non-formal contexts.

Why include it? Because it gives a concrete, field-tested guide relevant to your work.

Boal’s Arsenal of Games & Exercises

A public PDF collection of Boal’s games and techniques, useful as a practical supplement.

Why include it? As a supplement of warm-up, image, and improvisation games to add variety.

Open University / PASAR Online Toolkit – Forum Theatre for Community Activists

A free PDF toolkit that explains Forum Theatre structure, roles (Joker etc.), and how to facilitate in activist environments.

Why include it? Accessible and practitioner-oriented.

Ulex Project – Theatre of the Oppressed to Address Oppression

More theoretical and structural perspectives on ToO’s role in addressing oppression, with examples.

Why include it? To connect the methods with structural analysis and theory.

Networks, Organizations & Online Resources

International Theatre of the Oppressed Organisation (ITO)

A global network that connects TO practitioners and centers. They host exchanges, conferences, and resource sharing.

Why include it? For connecting your toolkit users to the broader TO community.

Centre of Theatre of the Oppressed, Rio de Janeiro (CTO-Rio)

The original center founded by Boal, active in research and publications of TO methods.

Why include it? As a core reference center with deep archives and practice.

Salto-Youth (Tools & Methods Database)

SALTO Youth provides repositories of non-formal education methods, toolkits, and training resources. The A.R.T. Fusion guide itself is hosted via SALTO’s toolbox system.

Why include it? Because many youth workers use SALTO as a starting point for methods.

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