



Dipartimento di Sociologia e Ricerca Sociale

Corso di Laurea magistrale in Sociology and Social Research

*Representing People from a Migrant Background
through the Theatre of the Oppressed. An Analysis of a European Project
Looking at Creative and Participatory Approaches to Inequalities*

*Relatrice:
Prof.ssa Chiara Bassetti*

*Correlatrici:
Prof.ssa Ester Gallo
Prof.ssa Alessia Donà*

*Laureanda:
Laura Pauletto*

anno accademico 2021/2022

Ringraziamenti

Grazie alle quattro organizzazioni partner del progetto al centro di questa ricerca, in particolare alla Cooperativa italiana, per avermi permesso di condurre questo studio.

Grazie alle dieci persone che hanno acconsentito ad essere intervistate per la disponibilità e il tempo dedicatomi, nonché per avermi fatto conoscere l'importante contributo che l'arte e la creatività possono dare al raggiungimento dell'inclusione e della giustizia sociale.

Grazie alle persone che hanno partecipato alle attività del progetto per aver contribuito anch'esse, con la loro presenza, alla realizzazione di questo studio.

Grazie a tutte le persone che si occupano di Teatro dell'Oppresso e più in generale di teatro (facilitatori e facilitatrici, artisti e artiste) che negli ultimi due anni mi hanno raccontato un po' del loro lavoro e della loro vita. È anche grazie a loro che questa ricerca ha preso forma.

Grazie a Chiara e Aida per essere state due preziose bussole durante questi mesi.

Grazie alla Prof.ssa Chiara Bassetti e alla Prof.ssa Ester Gallo per avermi accompagnata durante il processo di ricerca. Grazie alla Prof.ssa Alessia Donà per la disponibilità.

Grazie ai colleghi e alle colleghe, agli amici e alle amiche, in particolare Nicla, Agnese e Sofia, per avermi incoraggiata e avermi fornito degli interessanti spunti di riflessione.

Grazie ai miei genitori per avermi sempre supportata.

Grazie a me stessa, per aver guardato "oltre" ed essere arrivata fino a qui con determinazione.

“Per andare al di là dei suoi confini,
ho dovuto lasciare quello spazio che chiamavo casa,
e più tardi, però, ho anche sentito il bisogno di tornarci.”

bell hooks

(Elogio del margine / Scrivere al buio, 2020, p. 125)

Abstract

Creative and participatory approaches are increasingly being used to tackle inequalities. This concerns particularly the Theatre of the Oppressed, which in the past ten years has started being applied to the field of migrations. This thesis examines the ways in which creative and participatory approaches to inequalities are developed, organised and enacted, particularly focusing on how Theatre of the Oppressed constructs and communicates people from a migrant background. Since the focus is on inequalities, an intersectional approach is adopted. The case study is MiGreat!, an Erasmus+ project which involved four educational organisations based in Italy, France, Hungary, and the UK. The study focuses particularly on the Italian context. The research is based on a combination of qualitative methods including ethnography, interviews, and documentary and visual analysis.

The thesis examines firstly the emergence of a new professional field based on the application of creative and participatory approaches to inequalities, as shown by the recent increase in the application of Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations in Italy. Then, the thesis analyses three main themes concerning MiGreat!. First, it investigates the social background of participants in activities, analysing in particular the challenges in the access of people from a migrant background to creative and participatory activities, as well as the impact of participation of people from various social backgrounds. Second, it discusses the complex issues involved in the development, organisation and enactment of creative and participatory approaches in the context of migrations. Finally, it analyses the ways of representing people from a migrant background as well as people who are not from a migrant background through the Theatre of the Oppressed, discussing which dimensions of inequality affecting their experiences are included, and which are overlooked.

In sum, a stronger consideration of an intersectional approach is encouraged in order to facilitate solidarity and social transformation. This should be considered also in policies related to migrations and inequalities, and it is argued that creative and participatory approaches may provide a significant contribution to this field.

Keywords: creative and participatory approaches; inequalities; Theatre of the Oppressed; migrations; intersectionality; professional field; representation.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	11
1.1 Creative and Participatory Approaches to Social Inequalities.....	11
1.2 Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations from a Sociological and Intersectional Perspective.....	13
1.3 The Focus of the Research and the Research Questions Driving the Work.....	16
1.4 Migrations in the European and Italian Contexts.....	19
1.5 Notes on the Terminology.....	25
1.6 Structure of the Thesis.....	27
2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review.....	31
2.1 The Theory of Intersectionality.....	31
2.2 An Intersectional Approach to Migrations in 21 st -Century Europe.....	38
2.3 Theatre as Representation of Society.....	45
2.4 Migrations and Performative Arts.....	48
2.5 The Pedagogy of the Oppressed.....	51
2.6 The Theatre of the Oppressed.....	55
2.7 A Feminist Approach to Theatre of the Oppressed.....	64
2.8 Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations from an Intersectional Perspective.....	68
2.9 Conclusions.....	76
3. Methodology.....	80
3.1 The Research Questions and the Abductive Logic of Research.....	80
3.2 The Case Study.....	82

3.3 Methods of Data Collection.....	85
3.4 Methods of Data Analysis.....	96
3.5 The Ethnographer's Body while Doing Research (on Theatre).....	98
3.6 The Challenges of Doing Research with Human Subjects.....	101
3.7 Notes on Ethics and Privacy.....	104
3.8 Conclusions.....	105
4. Empirical Context: Theatre of the Oppressed in Italy.....	108
4.1 The Main Principles of Theatre of the Oppressed.....	108
4.2 Theatre of the Oppressed in Italy and Around the World: An Overview.....	126
4.3 The MiGreat! Project.....	131
4.3.1 The Four Partner Organisations.....	133
4.3.2 The Phases and Activities Included.....	139
4.3.3 The Methods Utilised.....	141
4.4 The Types of Projects of Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations and Their Goals.....	143
4.5 The People Involved in the Projects of Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations.....	149
4.6 The Themes and Stories at the Centre of Representation in the Projects of Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations	154
4.7 Conclusions.....	161
5. The Social Actors Involved in Representation and their Engagement.....	165
5.1 The Participants Involved.....	165
5.1.1 The Social Background of Participants in Activities in Italy.....	165
5.1.2 The Social Background of Participants in the Other Three Countries.....	172

5.2 The Structural and Procedural Barriers Limiting Participation of People from a Migrant Background.....	176
5.3 The Impact of (Limited) Participation of People from a Migrant Background.....	181
5.4 Participants' Gender (and Other Categories of Difference).....	191
5.5 The Role of Social Workers.....	199
5.6 Conclusions.....	212
6. The Organisation and Enactment of Creative and Participatory Approaches.....	216
6.1 The Complexities of Working on the Goals of MiGreat!.....	216
6.1.1 Communicating the Goals of MiGreat!.....	216
6.1.2 The Building of a New Professional Field.....	233
6.2 Coordinating Activities among a Diverse and Distributed Group of People	237
6.2.1 Coordinating People's Active Participation in the Construction of a Forum-Theatre Scene.....	238
6.2.2 Coordinating Participation of People from a Migrant Background during Public Events.....	242
6.2.3 Coordinating Participation from Other Groups of People during Multiplier Events.....	251
6.3 The Role of Practitioners' Gender.....	256
6.4 Any Room for an Intersectional Perspective?.....	266
6.5 Conclusions.....	271
7. The Content of Representation.....	274
7.1 The Portrayal of People from a Migrant Background.....	274

7.1.1 The Portrayal of People from a Migrant Background in the Forum-Theatre Scene in Italy.....	275
7.1.2 Other Examples of Stories on People from a Migrant Background.....	285
7.1.3 The Portrayal of People from a Migrant Background in the Other Three Countries.....	289
7.2 The Portrayal of People Not From a Migrant Background in the Forum-Theatre Scene in Italy.....	291
7.3 The Marginalisation of Other Axes of Oppression: The Case of Gender.....	301
7.4 How a Story Emerges and Is Staged.....	309
7.5 Conclusions.....	317
8. Discussion and Conclusion.....	321
8.1 The Challenges Involved in the Application of Creative and Participatory Approaches to the Context of Migrations.....	321
8.2 Some Limitations of the Study.....	333
8.3 Suggestions for Future Research.....	335
References.....	347
Appendix.....	364
A. Observation Guide.....	364
B. Questions and topics to be discussed during the ethnographic interview with two spect-actors from a migrant background.....	369
C. Interview Guide 1.....	371
D. Interview Guide 2.....	380
Table A. Participants in Projects on Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations	

(from interview with Roberto Mazzini).....	385
Table B. Participants in Projects on Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations	
(from interview with Massimiliano Bozza).....	387
Table C. Participants in Projects on Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations	
(from interview with Uri Noy Meir).....	388
Table D. Codes.....	389
Table E. Code Groups.....	408

List of Figures

Figure 1: The tree of Theatre of the Oppressed.....	59
Figure 2: Intervention from a spect-actor.....	187
Figure 3: Dominant narratives: Who? Where? Through which means?.....	203
Figure 4: The law of the jungle.....	277

1. Introduction

1.1 Creative and Participatory Approaches to Social Inequalities

This thesis aims to study the ways in which creative and participatory approaches help to represent and tackle social inequalities, specifically migrations and related forms of inequalities, through an intersectional lens. In recent years, various creative and participatory methods have emerged, usually combining art with social and political goals, in order to utilise aesthetic and artistic tools to understand and change society. Creative and participatory approaches are based on the direct participation of the people involved. Indeed, the separation between performers and audience is suspended, and everyone participates in activities and performances (Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 59; Pisciotta 2016). Among these approaches, theatrical methods have spread which are often defined as “social” or “political” (Pisciotta 2016, 69): indeed, theatre is increasingly being utilised in fields other than the artistic one, in order to reflect upon contemporary social changes, but also act to transform society and overcome social injustice, exclusion and inequalities (Pisciotta 2016, 66 and 69; Rossi Ghiglione 2011; see also Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009). Social Theatre, Theatre in Education and others include a variety of activities and workshops that usually take place in contexts such as schools, prisons, various types of associations, and often result in performances taking place in public spaces in order to involve common citizens (Rossi Ghiglione 2011; Pisciotta 2016, 66). The overall aim is to reflect upon contemporary issues, trying to find and enact common strategies to tackle social problems and inequalities, as well as focusing on the needs of the communities involved and their empowerment (Rossi Ghiglione 2011; Pisciotta 2016).

Theatre has often been studied in sociology and the social sciences more generally: for instance, Goffman (1956) famously utilised theatre as a metaphor to explain social interaction in daily life. Further, it is often claimed that theatre represents social reality and reflects human values and social relations (Vösu 2010, 131; Nichols 1956, 180-183). Moreover, theatrical performances and more generally the performative arts have been analysed by social scientists to investigate the complex processes of production of these cultural works (e.g., Becker 1982; Atkinson 2006; Bassetti 2019; Bassetti 2021).

The recent development of creative and participatory methods renders the study of such approaches timely and open to further investigation. On one hand, it is a field of study that allows to investigate how these approaches are developed, organised and enacted, including the relations that engender between participants and the complexities in organising activities and performances. On the other hand, by looking at the ways in which social groups and their privileges or subordination are represented and explained, scholars may understand how these approaches may help tackle social inequalities and promote social transformation (e.g., Pisciotta 2016; Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009). Among the creative and participatory approaches that have recently spread, Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed is one of the most diffused and well-known (Pisciotta 2016, 66). It has been applied to various contexts, including the central, contemporary issue of migrations, which this thesis focuses on. This choice is explained in the next section.

1.2 Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations from a Sociological and Intersectional Perspective

Theatre of the Oppressed is a theatrical method (Boal 2011b, 108; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 112) that was created by theatre director, writer and politician Augusto Boal in Brazil in the 1960s, and it is based primarily on Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire 2018). Nowadays, this theatrical method is spread world widely (Pisciotta 2016, 66; Mazzini 2011, 7; Bozza 2020, 1). Similarly to other creative and participatory methods, it is often used in the field of education, pedagogy, conflict resolution, art, and in processes of social integration (Pisciotta 2016, 69; Powers and Duffy 2016, 61; Tolomelli 2012, 34-35; Bozza 2020, 1). Theatre of the Oppressed exemplifies the core of creative and participatory approaches: it combines an artistic dimension ("Theatre") with social and political goals ("of the Oppressed") (Santos 2018, 89, 95 and 121). Indeed, Boal argued that theatre is always political, and it represents the values of a society in a given historical period (Boal 2011, 16; Boal cited in Schroeter 2013, 397; Smith 2012, 49). Furthermore, Theatre of the Oppressed is directly aimed at changing society. As Freirian pedagogy aims at helping the oppressed liberate from oppression through participatory education (Freire 2018; Tolomelli 2012), so does Theatre of the Oppressed focus on situations of conflict and power imbalance to train people for their real life, providing them with the artistic tools necessary to problematise reality, and subsequently transform society by promoting dialogue and end oppression (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Boal 2011a, 21 and 26; Boal 2011b, 108; Pisciotta 2016; Boal 2021; Tolomelli 2012).

All Theatre of the Oppressed techniques include people's direct participation and a shift from being a "spectator" to becoming a "spect-actor" (e.g., Boal 2021, 39; Boal 2011a; Boal 2002; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012; Schroeter 2013, 397;

Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Tolomelli 2012, 33-34; Boal cited in Pisciotta 2016, 69; Erel et al. 2017). By directly involving participants, this theatrical method aims at empowering them, allowing them to express their agency and taking active part in the process of liberation from oppression (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Boal 2021, 42-43; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 169; Tolomelli 2012, 22; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 11; Bozza 2020, 1).

Hence, Theatre of the Oppressed is highly relevant from a sociological perspective: firstly, it tackles issues related to conflict, oppression, inequalities, and power (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 122-123). Secondly, it is usually applied to the exploration of various social and political issues with the aim of finding solutions (e.g., Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Boal 2021; Pisciotta 2016; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012). Thirdly, by combining artistic with social and political goals, it provides a fertile area of study to critically investigate the ways in which theatre and art represent inequalities, potentially acting as a further tool to overcome injustice (e.g., Pisciotta 2016; Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009).

In recent years, several projects utilising Theatre of the Oppressed to work on migrations have emerged in various European countries (e.g., McGregor and Ragab 2016, 12; Schroeter 2013; Day 2002; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010; O'Neill et al. 2019; Opfermann 2020; Ranjan 2020; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Smith 2012). The literature has examined how the Theatre of the Oppressed provides opportunities for participants (both from and not from a migrant background) to share their experiences, develop mutual solidarity, and increase their empowerment (e.g., Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009; Horghagen and Josephsson

2010; Ranjan 2020; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Schroeter 2013; Day 2002). Moreover, researchers have studied how theatre may facilitate encounters between different cultures and raise awareness on issues related to migrations, discriminations, and racism (e.g., McGregor and Ragab 2016; Day 2002; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Erel et al. 2017).

The application of Theatre of the Oppressed to the field of migrations is relevant also from an intersectional perspective. In the US, at the end of the 1980s, intersectional scholars argued that in order to understand the subordination to which black women were subjected, the intersections between multiple systems of power had to be taken into account (e.g., Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991; Collins 1998; Collins 2000; hooks 2020a; hooks 2021; Davis 2018[1981]). Intersectionality and Theatre of the Oppressed share various common points, including the centrality of concepts such as power, conflict, oppression, and inequality (e.g., Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 122-123; Bello 2011); the idea that oppressed groups need to be aware of their subordination in order to then take action to overcome oppression (e.g., Freire 2018; Boal 2021; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; hooks 2021, 111; hooks 2020a, 193; Collins 1986; Collins 1989; Collins 2000); the fact that oppression entails the opportunity to liberate oneself (Boal 2021, 78; Freire 2018; Freire cited in Opfermann 2020, 151; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 125-126; hooks 2020a; hooks 1989).

Moreover, both approaches underline the complexity of oppression. In fact, intersectionality allows to conceive oppression as involving multiple systems of power which are interrelated and lead to a variety of forms of privilege and subordination which shape people's experiences (Collins 2000, 288-289; hooks 2020a; Erel et al. 2017; Bello 2011, 351; McCall 2005).

In addition, intersectionality has been increasingly utilised to analyse the experiences of people from a migrant background (e.g., Bürkner 2012; Herrera 2013; Bastia 2014; Anthias 2012; Amelina and Lutz 2019). Indeed, it helps account for the different ways of experiencing migrations and the ways in which categories of difference and their intersections influence migration processes (Anthias 2012; Herrera 2013; Bastia 2014; Bürkner 2012; Thimm and Chaudhuri 2021, 274; Amelina and Lutz 2019; Salvatori and Terrón Caro 2019; Castro and Carnassale 2019). In short, intersectionality helps avoid the production of simplistic portrayals of people from a migrant background (Castro and Carnassale 2019; Bürkner 2012; Herrera 2013; Bastia 2014; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008, 2; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 57). Yet, only a minority of projects utilising Theatre of the Oppressed in the field of migrations have been examined through an intersectional approach. These have shown how theatrical activities allow participants to express the multidimensionality of their identities and the diversity of their experiences (e.g., Erel and Reynolds 2014; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009; Bello 2011). Drawing on these debates, this research adopts an intersectional approach to study the use of Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations trying to answer specific research questions, presented below.

1.3 The Focus of the Research and the Research Questions Driving the Work

The thesis analyses the application of Theatre of the Oppressed to the field of migrations through an intersectional framework. This approach is important for various reasons. First, analysing Theatre of the Oppressed in the field of migrations through intersectionality helps examine who participates in activities and how the social background of the people involved impact on activities and representations. Second, it helps analyse the challenges involved in

the organisation and facilitation of activities considering the diversity that participants and facilitators embody, also underlining the critical aspects of this theatrical method (and of other creative and participatory approaches). Third, it allows to investigate the ways in which the experiences of people from a migrant background and the multiple axes of inequality that shape their oppression are represented during activities. In this way, it helps understand the complexity of oppression, inequalities, and power relations. At the same time, analysing Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations through intersectionality emphasises the relevance of intersectionality to explore the possibilities that people from a migrant background have to express their agency, acting from their different social positions (Bürkner 2012, 192; Dill cited in Collins and Chepp 2013, 58; Crenshaw 1991, 1297; Collins 2000, 288-290; Bello 2011, 350). Moreover, as this thesis will highlight, theatrical activities on migrations help represent also people who are not from a migrant background, reflecting not only on the complex systems of power which contribute to the oppression of people from a migrant background, but also on the ways in which natives may act in solidarity with oppressed groups or on the contrary contribute to their oppression. Finally, studying Theatre of the Oppressed allows to underline that an intersectional approach could be relevant in all projects applying creative and participatory approaches to inequalities, as well as in policies dealing with migrations and discrimination.

In brief, the main questions that this study seeks to answer are:

How are creative and participatory approaches to inequalities, such as Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations, developed, organised and enacted? What actors are involved in the process? And how does Theatre of the Oppressed construct and communicate the topic of people from a migrant background? What factors account for specific representations?

All the above-stated research questions are considered from an intersectional perspective, and an intersectional approach is adopted in trying to answer all of them.

The focus is on the Erasmus+ project MiGreat! which involved four partner organisations from Italy, the UK, France, and Hungary. The project developed between 2019 and 2022 and aimed at contrasting negative narratives about migrations and identifying new, positive ones. It was based on the application of several creative and participatory methods, particularly Freirian pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed.

The study focuses on the people participating in activities, including the drivers of their participation and the ways in which they got involved (i.e., who the actors involved are). Then, it centres on the complex issues that facilitating creative and participatory activities to talk about migrations entails, therefore analysing practitioners' roles (i.e., how creative approaches are organised and enacted). Finally, the research critically examines through an intersectional lens the ways in which people from a migrant background are represented through participatory methods, particularly Theatre of the Oppressed (i.e., which representations are constructed and how).

The study adopts a qualitative approach, which includes ethnography, interviews, and documentary and visual analysis. It focuses especially on the Italian Cooperative that took part in the project, where I did my internship as part of my master's degree in Sociology and Social Research at the University of Trento and where I conducted most of the research. Nevertheless, references to the other three partner countries are included.

The thesis analyses the ways in which a community of practitioners who utilise Theatre of the Oppressed to work on migrations is being built, creating a new professional field composed of experts with specific knowledge and who work to achieve legitimacy.

After having outlined the application of Theatre of the Oppressed to the field of migrations in Italy, the study centres on the MiGreat! project. This aimed on one side at creating counter and alternative narratives on migrations that could contrast dominant, negative ones. On the other side, it attempted at spreading knowledge of creative and participatory approaches in order to build a community of practitioners able to apply them to deal with social inequalities.

In the context of MiGreat!, the thesis investigates several structural and procedural obstacles that curb the participation of people from a migrant background in participatory activities. Furthermore, the inclusion in activities of social workers and other people operating in the field of migrations is examined, including the role that they played in activities.

Additionally, the ways in which practitioners communicated the goals of the project and of Theatre of the Oppressed and facilitated activities is analysed.

Further, the ways of representing people from a migrant background and Italian people not from a migrant background is examined, considering the layers of social stratification which are included and those which remain hidden. In sum, it is argued that an increased consideration of intersectionality when talking about and representing the experiences of people from a migrant background in projects utilising creative and participatory approaches to tackle social inequalities is needed. Given the focus on migrations in this thesis and in the MiGreat! project, the relevance of this topic is discussed in the next section.

1.4 Migrations in the European and Italian Contexts

Migrations have increasingly become a prominent topic of discussion in Europe, particularly in the past twenty years. In 2020, the foreign population residing in the EU constituted 8.4% of the entire EU population (37.4 million of people) (Idos 2022, 2). The continent is also

characterised by internal migrations within the EU (Sharifi 2016, 324). Moreover, refugees and asylum seekers constitute only 0.8% of the EU population (3.5 million) (Idos 2022, 3). Germany, Spain, France and Italy are the countries where 70% of the foreign population residing in Europe live (Idos 2022, 2). In France, in 2021 foreign people (without French nationality) constituted 7.7% of the whole population, whereas 10.3% (7 million) was composed of people from a migrant background (including those with French nationality) (Insee 2022). In the UK, in 2021 14.5% (9.6 million) of the total population was composed of foreign-born people (including also those who have acquired British citizenship) (The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford 2022). London is the area with the highest percentage of people from a migrant background in the whole country: in 2021, 35% of the UK's foreign-born population lived there (The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford 2022). In Hungary, in 2020 6.2% (0.6 million) of the whole population was foreign-born (OECD iLibrary 2021).

Migrations structurally characterise Europe (Sharifi 2016, 322). They are linked to various global phenomena, including colonialism (Sharifi 2016, 348 and 352), globalisation, the rise of inequalities, conflicts and more recently environmental issues and Covid-19 pandemic (Wade cited in Sharifi 2016, 329-330; Sharifi 2016, 329; Idos 2022, 2). In recent years, a security-based approach to managing migrations has spread following 9/11 and the so-called “War on Terror”, which led to deem people from a migrant background, and often from Muslim and non-white backgrounds, simultaneously as a threat to nation-states or as inferior and victims (Giuliani 2016; Sharifi 2016, 330). Moreover, debates on migrations increased following the Arab Spring (2011) and subsequently the “refugee crisis” (2014-2016) (Giuliani 2016; Chetail 2016).

Since the 1990s, the EU has made various attempts to systematise the management of migrations (cf. also Camera dei deputati Ufficio Rapporti con l'Unione Europea 2022). EU citizens can travel freely between countries which are part of the Schengen area (which the UK was not part of also before Brexit), whereas people from other countries must possess a visa (which allows them to remain only for short periods of time).

In the case of people seeking international protection, the Common European Asylum System (hereafter CEAS) was instituted in order to harmonise the procedures to grant asylum or other forms of international protection among EU Member States (Camera dei deputati Ufficio Rapporti con l'Unione Europea 2022, 1-2; Chetail 2016). The main principle at the basis of the CEAS is included in the Dublin Regulation, which was introduced in 1990 (Dublin Convention) and modified for the third time in 2013 (Dublin Regulation III). This claims that the Member State that has to take charge of an asylum request must be the one that “played the greatest role in relation to the seeker’s entry and stay in the territory of the Member States”, and an asylum request can be made in only one Member State (COM 2008/820 cited in Marchetti 2014, 66 note 35; Camera dei deputati Ufficio Rapporti con l'Unione Europea 2022, 2).

However, inequalities between Member States have emerged, for example in the efficiency of their asylum systems (Chetail 2016, 586; EASO cited in Chetail 2016, 586). Moreover, countries located at EU borders, such as Italy, have encountered difficulties in managing all the asylum applications that they received (Chetail 2016). Furthermore, various policies have been adopted which hinder the access of people from a migrant background to the EU (Idos 2022, 2; Sharifi 2016, 358; Camera dei deputati Ufficio Rapporti con l'Unione Europea 2022, 3; Chetail 2016). This has exacerbated arrivals especially through the Mediterranean Sea as well as through the Balkan route (Idos 2022, 2; Chetail 2016, 588-589). Yet, obtaining

international protection has become considerably difficult, given also that asylum applications are often rejected (Fassin and Kobelinsky 2012; Chetail 2016; Idos 2022).

Because of all these issues, some authors argue that Europe and specifically the EU has become a “fortress”, and that its way of dealing with migrations is mainly based on keeping non-EU citizens (especially those seeking asylum) out of its borders (Römhild cited in Sharifi 2016, 321; Sharifi 2016, 358). In general, nationalisms, xenophobia, and populism have recently spread all over Europe, contributing to portraying migrations (by both the media and politicians) as a problem that needs to be tackled by protecting European borders at the expense of human rights protection (cf. also Chetail 2016, 602). For example, in France there has been a spread in negative discourses around migrations, also by far-right parties (Sharifi 2016, 348). Indeed, particularly since the “refugee crisis” and the acts of terrorism that took place in those years, people from a migrant background and above all from a Muslim background have been seen as a threat (Sharifi 2016, 348; Giuliani 2016). Thus, immigration policies have recently become more restrictive (Sharifi 2016, 348-349; Fassin and Kobelinsky 2012), and in general a climate of suspicion, distrust, and other negative feelings have spread throughout Europe in the past twenty years (Fassin and Kobelinsky 2012; Giuliani 2016).

Several issues outlined above apply also to Italy. Currently, foreign people residing in the country constitute 8.8% (5,193,669 people) of the resident population (Istat no date). 144,862 refugees and 51,779 asylum seekers lived in Italy in 2021 (Centro Astalli 2021). In the province of Trento, foreign residents correspond to 8.9% (48,726 people) of the residing population (Istat no date). Italy was considered for a long time a “country of emigration” (Gabaccia cited in Castro and Carnassale 2019, 200; Sharifi 2016, 358). The situation

changed in the 1980s and 1990s, when immigration increased (Colucci cited in Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 5; Sharifi 2016, 358). Although attempts at categorising people from a migrant background are often vain, given that migration status usually changes and the difference between categories is not always straightforward (Zanfrini cited in Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 5), people from a migrant background are in some cases residing in the country, in others they have Italian citizenship, in other cases they are second or third generation immigrants or internal migrants (Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 4). Further, people seeking international protection arrive in the country (Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 4-5). Italy is in fact one of the first countries of arrivals in Europe, due to its geographical position on the Mediterranean Sea (Marchetti 2014, 60-61; Andreone and Amore 2019, 106; Sharifi 2016, 358) and near the Balkan route.

Legislation in the field of migrations started to be implemented only in the 1990s (Castro and Carnassale 2019, 201; Marchetti 2014, 53; Sharifi 2016, 358). In particular, in the field of asylum, in 2000 the National Asylum Plan was instituted (Marchetti 2014, 54-55). When in 2002 the so-called Bossi-Fini Act was passed, aiming at limiting illegal migrations (Sharifi 2016, 358), the National Asylum Plan was changed into the SPRAR (“Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees – *Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati*”), which consisted in a national system to manage the reception and integration of asylum seekers (Marchetti 2014, 55). After the Arab Spring (2011), which led to an increase in arrivals in Italy (Marchetti 2014, 58), and particularly after the “refugee crisis”, the CAS (“Centres of Extraordinary Reception – *Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria*”) were introduced (Marchetti 2014, 61). In 2018 the Italian Parliament approved a law that significantly influenced the management of migrations (Decreto-Legge 4 ottobre 2018, n. 113 - Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana 2018). This abolished the humanitarian

protection, introduced a form of protection for “special cases”, and reformed the SPRAR system into the “SIPROIMI” (“Protection System for People with International Protection and Unaccompanied Minors – *Sistema di protezione per titolari di protezione internazionale e per minori stranieri non accompagnati*”), which was accessible only to people who already held the international protection (not asylum seekers). In 2020 these laws were modified (Decreto-Legge 21 ottobre 2020, n. 130 - Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana 2020): the humanitarian protection, now called “special protection”, was restored, and SIPROIMI was replaced by “SAI” (“Protection and Reception System – *Sistema di accoglienza e integrazione*”), which is accessible also to asylum seekers.

Notwithstanding the attempts at unifying the reception system of asylum seekers, fragmentation is present and important disparities exist between various parts of Italy (Marchetti 2014, 57; Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 8; Ferrari and Rosso cited in Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 8). In addition, scholars have questioned the extent to which this reception system veritably facilitates the integration of people from a migrant background and assures appropriate standards of living (Marchetti 2014, 65). Moreover, the examination of asylum applications is extremely slow (Idos 2022), further contributing to the precarity of people’s lives (Sorgoni 2013). Overall, migrations in Italy have been dealt with predominantly following an emergency approach: rather than being considered structural, it is deemed a sudden and extraordinary phenomenon that creates problems for the country (Schuster cited in Castro and Carnassale 2019, 201; Zincone cited in Castro and Carnassale 2019, 201; Marchetti 2014, 54; Ambrosini cited in Marchetti 2014, 54). This leads to a polarisation in the ways of tackling migrations. On one hand, migrations are often portrayed in negative terms as an “invasion” and a threat to the security of the Italian state and its citizens, particularly by the media and right-wing parties (Castro and Carnassale

2019, 201; cf. also Patriarca and Deplano 2018, 352), for example through its association with criminality (Musrò and Parmiggiani cited in Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 5).¹ On the other hand, migrations are often debated through a humanitarian language: people from a migrant background are considered victims needing help and assistance by European citizens (Marchetti 2014, 67-68; Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 5). In Italy, support to people from a migrant background is often provided by various associations and other entities that are part either of civil society or of religious organisations (Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 8; Villa cited in Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 8). Both processes lead to the social marginalisation of people from a migrant background (Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 5 and 8). Indeed, their social inclusion is still limited, and discrimination and inferiorisation persist (Idos 2022, 7-8).

With the recent elections in September 2022 and the formation of a right-wing government led by the far-right party *Fratelli d'Italia*, heated debates within the country as well as among EU Member States have re-emerged, and it is likely that they will continue to occupy a central role in the political arena.

1.5 Notes on the Terminology

Given the issues previously explained, it is important to provide some clarifications regarding the terms utilised in this thesis. In line with an intersectional approach, the word “migrations” is utilised instead of “migration”, in order to underline the variety of the phenomenon in terms of causes, consequences, types of migrations, and other dimensions of diversity. Similarly, people with experiences of migration are defined as “people from a

¹ With respect to this, it is important to note that racism in Italy did not appear with the start of immigration in the 1980s nor with the increase in recent migrations towards the country. Indeed, researchers have shown that racism in Italy was widespread also in post-Second World War Italy and it played a key role in the process of nation-building (Patriarca and Deplano 2018, 351).

migrant background” or “people with a migratory background” rather than “migrants” or “migrant people”. This choice is in line with the one made in the MiGreat! project, and it is based on the definition provided by the European Commission (European Commission Migration and Home Affairs no date). These expressions allow to encompass the diversity of experiences of migration without describing people reductively considering only their migratory background (Malkassian et al. 2021, 83 note 1). Other terms are utilised only when included in excerpts.

Moreover, in this dissertation the terms “race” and “ethnicity” are utilised in two different ways. When the sources consulted use the term “race”, this is used, which also underlines its political relevance, given that it led to the establishment of a system of power (that of racism) (see in this respect the note on translation by Moïse and Prunetti in Davis 2018[1981]; Crenshaw 1991, 1296-1297; Patriarca and Deplano 2018; Amelina and Lutz 2019, 9). However, the term “ethnicity” is more generally utilised, firstly to highlight the socially constructed nature of racial and ethnic differences, given that biological differences among human beings based on race do not exist (Amelina and Lutz 2019, 9-10; Sharifi 2016, 326; Salvatori and Terrón Caro 2019, 40). Secondly, because the term “race” appears very rarely in the data. Similarly, the adjective “black” is utilised either to refer to black people (i.e., of African descent) or because it is used in the sources consulted or in the data. If the reference is broader, i.e., to people who are not white, the expression “of colour” is used (Sharifi 2016, 328).

Further, the term “gender” is utilised rather than “sex”, unless the sources consulted or the data do otherwise. This choice is made to underline that gender is historically, socially and culturally shaped. Masculinities, femininities (voluntarily referred to by plural nouns) and

other gender identities are “constructed in interaction” (Connell 2005[1995], 35) and are not based on biological differences which can instead be referred to through “sex”. In addition, the term “gender” refers to the social relationships that are precisely based on gender and the reproductive sphere (see for example Connell 2011, 47; Connell 2005[1995], 35 and 71).

Finally, although the English language usually allows to refer to both genders in a single word, I try to include terms in both the masculine and feminine version (e.g., actors/actresses) when the nouns refer to people of both genders.

I am aware that these issues have been highly debated in the social sciences and particularly in the field of feminist and post-colonial studies, which are central in this dissertation. Moreover, issues related to gender, sexuality, and race/ethnicity are object of vibrant discussion in Italy (e.g., Castro and Carnassale 2019; Patriarca and Deplano 2018). I did my best to consider what could be the most correct and appropriate terms to use in order to be as inclusive as possible and reflect the attention to the multiplicity of people’s experiences as foreseen by intersectionality.²

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The dissertation is structured as follows. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework and the literature review. It discusses: the theory of intersectionality, the main debates concerning migrations, the most central issues concerning migrations and performative arts, the main ways in which theatre has been studied in sociology, the key points of Freirian pedagogy, the main principles and techniques which are part of Boal’s Theatre of the

² To deepen the issues concerning inclusivity and partiality in ethnography, see for example Clifford 1997[1986], 41-43.

Oppressed, a feminist approach to this theatrical method, and the key issues concerning the use of Theatre of the Oppressed to work with people from a migrant background. All the research questions that the thesis tries to answer are presented in this chapter.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology utilised, including its relevance in relation to the research questions, and it outlines the abductive logic of research. Then, it overviews the case study, the methods used to collect the data and to analyse them. Subsequently, two sections are based on reflexivity in qualitative research: they focus on the role played by the researcher's body, and on several challenges that any research involving human subjects entails. Finally, some information on ethics and privacy and a synthesis on the methodology used are included.

Chapter 4 investigates the empirical context of the research. It analyses the key principles shared by practitioners of Theatre of the Oppressed and the formation of a community of practitioners worldwide and above all in Italy. Then, it briefly presents the MiGreat! project. Finally, the chapter examines several projects applying Theatre of the Oppressed to migrations realised in Italy.

Chapter 5, 6 and 7 are the analytical chapters focused on the MiGreat! project. Chapter 5 (first analytical chapter) centres on the participants involved in the representation of people from a migrant background. It analyses who the people participating in activities were, how they were involved, what the triggers of their participation were in the four countries, as well as the difficulties to include people from a migrant background particularly in Italy. Moreover, it examines the role of participants' gender and of other axes of inequality and the central role of social workers in Italy.

Chapter 6, the second analytical chapter, analyses the development, organisation and enactment of creative and participatory approaches in the context of migrations focusing on the role of facilitators. It examines the ways of communicating the goals of MiGreat!, the critical issues that emerged in facilitating activities mainly in Italy, the role of practitioners' gender, and the consideration by practitioners of an intersectional approach to migrations.

Chapter 7 is the third analytical chapter, and it analyses the stories and themes about people from a migrant background that emerged from activities and theatre scripts and scenes. It critically investigates the ways of portraying people from a migrant background, as well as Italian people not from a migrant background, and the ways in which gender and sexuality issues were (marginally) discussed, focusing above all on Italy. Finally, it analyses the methodological, aesthetic, and practical issues that influenced the emergence of certain stories and ways of representing them.

Finally, Chapter 8 discusses the main findings focusing particularly on the challenges in including people from a migrant background in theatrical activities and performances, the professionalisation of a community of practitioners of creative and participatory approaches, the complexities involved in organising and enacting activities, and the relevance of an intersectional approach to the representation of people from a migrant background. Additionally, the section highlights the contributions that an intersectional perspective can give to the understanding of the use of Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations. Then, the main limitations of this study are outlined, especially from a methodological point of view. Finally, some suggestions for future research are provided, underlining especially the urgency to analyse other issues related to migrations and the performative arts, reflect on

the entitlement to speak about migrations and people from a migrant background, deepen the role of gender in theatrical activities, and assess how an intersectional approach should be implemented in EU and national policies regarding migrations.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 The Theory of Intersectionality

Intersectionality emerged from black feminist thought (Herrera 2013, 476; Cooper 2015; Harris and Bartlow 2015; Collins and Chepp 2013; Bello et al. 2022, II and XXVI) and was theorised at the end of the 1980s. In particular, the term “intersectionality” was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a black feminist legal scholar and critical race theorist, firstly appearing in two essays published in 1989 and 1991 (Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991; Cooper 2015, 385; Harris and Bartlow 2015, 261), although numerous other theorists contributed to the understanding of this “conceptual and analytic tool” (Cooper 2015, 405; Erel and Reynolds 2014, 106; Bello et al. 2022, II). Even if consensus over the meaning of the term has not been reached yet (Collins and Chepp 2013, 58; Cooper 2015, 385), intersectionality can be defined as follows:

an assemblage of ideas and practices that maintain that gender, race, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity, ability, and similar phenomena cannot be analytically understood in isolation from one another; instead, these constructs signal an intersecting constellation of power relationships that produce unequal material realities and distinctive social experiences for individuals and groups positioned within them. (Collins and Chepp 2013, 58-59)

As this definition shows, intersectionality is based on the idea that various axes of differences, such as gender, race, and social class, among others, should not be analysed separately; rather, they intersect, influencing social relations and experiences, and leading to power dynamics from which inequalities emerge. In this way, people who find themselves at the intersections of these power structures may experience oppression or privilege (Collins and Chepp 2013, 58-59; Harris and Bartlow 2015, 261; Collins 2000, 299). Precisely because of the intersections of the various axes of difference, social groups are not homogenous.

People within them have different social experiences, since there are various categories of difference that affect them (Bello 2020, 9; Samuels and Ross-Sheriff 2008, 6).

Importantly, the aim of intersectionality is not that of theorising personal identity, such as tastes and personal preferences. It is centred instead on the structural dimensions of identity and on the ways in which power structures intersect, influencing people's lives and causing inequalities (Crenshaw 1991, 1244-1245; Cooper 2015, 389-391; Smith cited in Cooper 2015, 401; see also Bello 2020, 14).

Intersectionality was initially utilised to investigate the oppression to which black women from lower social classes living in the US were subjected. Thus, the three initial categories on which intersectional scholars focused were gender, race, and social class (Amelina and Lutz 2019, 7; Hearn 2017).

In reality, attention to the discriminations experienced by black women in the US emerged already in the nineteenth century (Cooper 2015, 387; Harris and Bartlow 2015, 262; Crenshaw 1989, 153-154; hooks cited in Bello 2020, 10; Davis cited in Bello 2020, 10). Indeed, black women were both exploited as slaves (due to their race) and sexually abused (due to their gender) (Davis 2018[1981]). In that period, black female activists started to fight against this double oppression (Davis 2018[1981]; Harris and Bartlow 2015, 262).

Throughout the 20th century and culminating in the 1970s and 1980s, attention was raised to the invisibility to which black women from lower social classes were subjected to within both feminist and anti-racist movements (Collins and Chepp 2013, 66-68; see also Bello 2020, 10; hooks 2021, 112; Davis 2018[1981]). Indeed, feminist movements were dominated by white women from the upper-middle class who saw black women as a threat and overlooked the discrimination of which they were victims (hooks 2021; hooks 2020b, 156-157; Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1989, 154; Lorde 1984, 116-117; Davis 2018[1981]). At the

same time, anti-racist movements fought for the priorities of men of colour, without considering the experiences of women of colour (hooks 2020b, 156-157; Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991). Consequently, each movement considered only a single axis of oppression, either gender or race, in a mutually exclusive way (Crenshaw 1989, 139; Crenshaw cited in Cooper 2015, 385; Crenshaw 1991; hooks 2021). As Crenshaw (1991, 1242; Crenshaw 1989, 139-140) pointed out, black women were condemned to invisibility, since the intersection of sexism, racism and classism which characterised their experiences was not taken into account. This invisibility was denounced also in the 1970s by the Combahee River Collective, underlining that black women were oppressed because sexism, racism, classism, as well as heteronormativity were intertwined (Crenshaw cited in Hearn 2017; Combahee River Collective cited in Collins and Chepp 2013, 68; Amelina and Lutz 2019, 47-48; Harris and Bartlow 2015, 261-263).

In sum, it was in this context that black women, subsequently joined by Latin, Asian, and native American women (Moraga and Anzaldua, Smith, Dill, Davis cited in Collins 2000, 5; Collins and Chepp 2013, 68), developed what hooks (2021, 111) called a “consciousness of difference”, leading to the emergence of intersectional thinking. Hence, intersectionality emerged from the direct experiences of oppression of women of colour (hooks 2020a, 193; hooks 2021). Having direct experience of the topic studied became a central tenet in academic analyses of oppression in black feminist thought (hooks 2020a, 193; Collins 1986; Collins 1989).

At the same time, consciousness around the intersections of power structures developed also in academia. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) theorised the concept of “matrix of domination”, which is antecedent to “intersectionality” (Amelina and Lutz 2019, 7-8), to refer to an organisation of power constituted by “interlocking systems of oppression” that influence one

another and reproduce (Collins 2000, 18, 227-228; Collins cited in Harris and Bartlow 2015, 263; Collins 1986, 19-21; Amelina and Lutz 2019, 7). Within a matrix of domination, power is organised in the “structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains” (Collins 2000, 18, 288-289 and 299; Collins cited in Harris and Bartlow 2015, 263). Individuals and social groups are located within a matrix of domination, and they are both shaped by them and influencing them (Collins 2000, 228). This concept helps understand how oppression is much more complex than a simple dichotomy between oppressors and oppressed (Collins 2000, 288-289; cf. also Lutz and Wenning cited in Bello 2011, 351). Indeed, experiences of discrimination are multidimensional and depend on different systems of oppression that are interconnected and interdependent (Amelina and Lutz 2019, 7; Collins cited in Harris and Bartlow 2015, 263). For this reason, struggles for empowerment are complex and need to account for the complexity of the systems of power leading to oppression (Collins 2000, 288-289; Collins and Chepp 2013, 62; McCall 2005).

Subsequently, Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality to examine black women’s invisibility in the juridical system. In fact, studying the strikes initiated by female workers in the 1970s after them losing their jobs at General Motors, Crenshaw (1989) noticed how the law protected only white, “class-privileged” women under the category of “women”, and only male, “class-privileged” workers of colour under the category of “black people” (Crenshaw 1989, 140 and 151; Crenshaw cited in Amelina and Lutz 2019, 8). In this way, black women were “erased” from the law and could not be protected (Crenshaw 1989, 139-140; cf. also Bello et al. 2022, XIII). Nonetheless, it was not possible to simply sum sexism and racism to investigate oppression against black women (Crenshaw 1989, 140 and 149; Anthias and Yuval-Davis cited in Bürkner 2012, 182). Rather, sexism, racism, *and* the interaction of these two had to be included in the analysis (Collins 1986, 20), given that black

women were discriminated against as women, as black, *and* as black women (Crenshaw 1989, 149).

Later, Crenshaw (1991) investigated violence against women of colour (including not only black but also Latin American women), pointing out how this phenomenon was influenced by the interconnection between gender and race (Crenshaw 1991, 1244). Crenshaw (1991) theorised three types of intersectionality. Structural intersectionality refers to the ways in which the intersections between various axes of oppression influence people's lives and how they are included in social interventions, for example those related to domestic violence (Crenshaw 1991, 1245-1246; Crenshaw cited in Cooper 2015, 386). In particular, Crenshaw (1991, 1245-1246) showed how these interplays resulted in different experiences of violence between women of colour and white women (Crenshaw 1991, 1245), referring also to the experiences of women from a migrant background (Crenshaw 1991, 1247-1249). Political intersectionality refers to the ways in which the intersections between various axes of oppression are considered in politics. For example, women of colour are located at the intersection of feminism and anti-racism, but the two often pursue different goals and priorities (Crenshaw cited in Cooper 2015, 386; Crenshaw 1991, 1251-1252). Finally, representational intersectionality questions how cultural representations reproduce narratives about certain axes of oppression, and how they perpetuate the marginalisation of the social groups at their intersection (Crenshaw 1991, 1245 and 1282-1283). For instance, representational intersectionality allows to show how women of colour are represented in popular culture, where they are often portrayed in a devaluing way (Crenshaw 1991, 1245 and 1282). Moreover, it helps investigate whether these types of representation contribute (or not) to perpetuate stereotypical images (Crenshaw 1991, 1271 and 1287). These three types of intersectionality uncover different levels at which oppression may occur.

Another central intersectional scholar and activist was bell hooks. She underlined that concepts such as “space and location” are crucial for oppressed people, and they include a political dimension which is connected to questions of belonging, inclusion, marginalisation, resistance and more generally power (hooks 2020a 120-134; hooks 1989). hooks pointed out how oppressed people who are relegated to the “margin”, such as black women, live in a “space of resistance” that can provide the opportunities to enact change and social transformation (hooks 2020a, 127-128; hooks 1989, 22).³

hooks also underlined the variety of women’s experiences not only because of the intersections of several dimensions of inequality, but also because in different contexts privilege and oppression are experienced in distinct ways. In other words, the ways in which people experience their conditions and in which categories of difference influence experiences change across different national and cultural contexts (hooks 2020a, 190).

Moreover, similarly to the complex conceptualisation of oppression by Collins (2000, 288-289; Collins 1986, 19-21), hooks (2020a, 52 and 193) warned against binary thinking, which creates hierarchical positions and allows “systems of domination” to emerge, overlooking the different life experiences that individuals within a social group may have.

In sum, intersectional scholars highlighted that systems of power are interrelated and influence one another. Thus, their interconnections need to be analysed in order to make oppressed social groups and power relations visible (Collins 2000, 299; Harris and Bartlow 2015, 261; hooks 2021, 114; Bello 2020, 14; Cooper 2015, 405; Bastia 2014, 240).

³ bell hooks had direct experience of what it meant to live at the “margin”, as a black woman that lived directly racial segregation, but nevertheless overcame oppression and worked as both an academic scholar and a feminist and anti-racist activist (cf. also hooks 2020a; hooks 2020b; hooks 2021).

Intersectionality has been utilised to analyse how multiple categories of oppression affect the experiences of a given social group following an intracategorical approach, namely focusing on social groups located at the intersection of various systems of power (McCall 2005, 1773-1774; McCall cited in Cooper 2015, 401; Crenshaw 1991, 1242). In particular, other axes of oppression beyond gender, race and social class have been considered (see also studies cited in Bello 2020, 14-15, Bastia 2014, 245, and Bello et al. 2022). These include religion and spirituality (Anthias and Yuval-Davis cited in Collins 1998, 64; Harris and Bartlow 2015, 267), health, disability and more generally the body (Harris and Bartlow 2015, 268-269; Winker and Degele cited in Bürkner 2012, 184; Amelina and Lutz 2019, 47; see also studies cited in Bello et al. 2022), sexuality (Collins 1998, 64; Amelina and Lutz 2019, 47; Crenshaw 1991; Crenshaw 1991, 1244-1245 note 9; Harris and Bartlow 2015, 265-267), age (Collins 1998, 64; Bürkner 2012, 187; Amelina and Lutz 2019, 47; Crenshaw 1991, 1244-1245 note 9). This has led to the application of intersectionality to the study of various social groups (Collins 2000, 227; Cooper 2015, 399; Harris and Bartlow 2015, 263; Mahajan cited in Bello 2011, 350).

Moreover, several scholars argue that intersectionality could be helpful in investigating the conditions not only of groups that experience oppression or marginalisation, but also advantaged ones (Carbado cited in Cooper 2015, 393; Anthias, Brah and Phoenix, Maynard, Yuval-Davis cited in Bastia 2014, 244) – including men, white, heterosexual people from upper classes – in order to uncover the power dynamics that lead to their privileges (Collins and Chepp 2013, 78). In fact, as Crenshaw (1989, 151) argued, the effects of race and gender are visible only when they cause disadvantage, while the privilege that white people or men enjoy remains hidden.

This is relevant also considering that the ways in which various categories affect people's experiences are not static, and privileges and oppressions are “dynamic” (Samuels and Ross-

Sheriff 2008, 8; Bürkner 2012, 185-186). Individuals may be privileged in one system, for example if a person is white, but at the same time oppressed in another, for example if they are a woman in a patriarchal society, or a homosexual person in a heteronormative society (Taha 2019, 4; Bürkner 2012, 186; Samuels and Ross-Sheriff 2008; Crenshaw cited in Collins and Chepp 2013, 60; Crenshaw 1991).

Overall, scholars have emphasised how intersectionality may help achieve both individual and community empowerment, as well as promote resistance to power and oppression (Dill cited in Collins and Chepp 2013, 58; Bürkner 2012, 192; Crenshaw 1991, 1297; Collins 2000, 288-290; Bello 2011, 350). As Crenshaw (1991, 1242) argued, this may occur only if the differences within groups are recognised, since this helps promote solidarity among groups (cf. also hooks 2021, 114). Otherwise, tension will arise (Crenshaw 1991, 1242 and 1296; hooks 2021). In sum, power relations, oppression and empowerment are central concepts in intersectionality. This is the case also in the field of migrations, as discussed below.

2.2 An Intersectional Approach to Migrations in 21st-Century Europe

Intersectionality has been applied to the study of migrations by various scholars who have pointed out how it helps reveal the ways in which multiple factors influence experiences of migration, as well as the fact that people do not experience migrations in the same way (e.g., Bürkner 2012; Herrera 2013; Bastia 2014; Anthias 2012).

To begin with, intersectionality highlights the importance of considering the intersections between multiple power relations when analysing migrations (Anthias 2012). For example, rather than considering categories such as gender in an isolated way, such as examining the ways in which women experience migrations differently from men (Bürkner 2012, 181;

Bastia 2014, 240-241; Salvatori and Terrón Caro 2019, 38), intersectional scholars have pointed out the necessity to investigate through an intracategorical approach how different categories intersect, for instance considering how distinct groups of women experience migrations (McCall 2005; Anthias 2012, 106; Lutz et al., Anthias cited in Herrera 2013, 472; Herrera 2013, 476; Bastia cited in Bastia 2014, 242; Bürkner 2012; Bürkner cited in Bastia 2014, 238; Thimm and Chaudhuri 2021, 274).

Furthermore, the use of intersectionality in the field of migrations has led to the inclusion of other axes of difference to analyse experiences of migration, such as legal status, nationality, skin colour, condition of migration, and other space-related categories, such as the fact of having (or not) transnational ties (Yuval-Davis, Chow cited in Bastia 2014, 245; Thimm and Chaudhuri 2021, 274; Amelina and Lutz 2019, 51 and 57; Salvatori and Terrón Caro 2019, 40-41). For instance, nationality impacts on experiences of migration: for example, people from EU countries have easier access to travel within the EU than citizens from third countries (Carmel and Paul cited in Amelina and Lutz 2019, 51). People with certain nationalities, skin colours or religious backgrounds risk being treated more negatively than people with other types of backgrounds, for example those who are white (Cisneros cited in Castro and Carnassale 2019, 205).

At the same time, categories should not be considered equivalent: for example, having refugee status is often connected with having a certain racialised identity, but the two do not always overlap (Held 2022, 17; Salvatori and Terrón Caro 2019, 40-41).

Moreover, intersectionality helps consider not only experiences of oppression, but also privileges, pointing out that people from a migrant background should not be considered in a simplistic or essentialising way (Anthias 2012; Herrera 2013; Bürkner 2012, 182-183;

Bastia 2014; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008, 2; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 57), and underlining how both privilege and oppression are always flexible (Samuels and Ross-Sheriff 2008, 8; Bürkner 2012, 185-186). Additionally, intersectionality reveals the possibilities of empowerment for people from a migrant background: by considering the axes of oppression and the power relations that impact on their lives, it is possible to recognise them as subjects with agency, and not simply as people needing help (Bürkner 2012, 192). In sum, intersectionality warns against generalisations about experiences of migration (Castro and Carnassale 2019, 205). It helps capture the complexity of this phenomenon and the fluidity and socially constructed nature of categories of difference which are also shaped by experiences of migration (Smith, Parreñas and Siu, Siu cited in Herrera 2013, 476; Bürkner 2012, 182-183; Taha 2019, 6; Carastathis et al. 2018, 10; Sinatti 2014; Thimm and Chaudhuri 2021, 279; cf. also Collins and Chepp 2013, 62; McCall 2005). Moreover, by revealing the importance to consider multiple axes of inequality to examine the experiences of people from a migrant background, intersectionality points out the necessity to look at these people in their entirety, rather than as “fragmented subject[s]” (Bello et al. 2022, XVI; Samuels and Ross-Sheriff 2008, 6).

Despite the contributions of intersectional studies to the field of migrations, scholars have shown that people from a migrant background are usually treated in similar ways in Western societies, without taking into account the differences in their experiences (cf. also Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 57). In fact, discourses and practices about migrations are usually based on a process of “othering” (Grove and Zwi 2006, 1933). This term refers to a way of considering some people as “other” from someone else, in this case in relation to natives and people not from a migrant background (Grove and Zwi 2006; O’Neill et al. 2019, 134; Ahmed 2014, 1). This mechanism contributes to creating a dichotomy “us vs them”, where

people from a migrant background are placed in opposition to nationals (Grove and Zwi 2006, 1933; Ahmed 2014, 1-2). This dyad leads to the construction of identities which are both racialised and essentialised, as if the two groups – people from a migrant background and nationals – were homogeneous (Giuliani 2016; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008, 2; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 57 and 64-65; cf. also Bello 2020, 9; Bello 2011). This dynamic is in line with a binary thinking criticised by hooks (2020a, 52 and 193; see also Lorde 1984, 114; Collins 1986, 19-21) that leads to a hierarchical system where people from a migrant background are subordinated. At the same time, othering contributes to re-affirm national identities, which are established in opposition to an “other” (Giuliani 2016, 98; Grove and Zwi 2006, 1933), creating a dichotomy between insiders and outsiders, normality and deviance (Grove and Zwi 2006). In this way, an attempt to stabilise national identities is made, although these are always unstable and constructed (Giuliani 2016, 98 and 101; Anderson 2006[1983]).⁴

Othering has led to a negative representation of people from a migrant background, perpetuated by government policies and the media, among others (Giuliani 2016, 98; O’Neill et al. 2019, 134; Musarò and Parmiggiani cited in Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 5; Rovisco 2019, 656). People from a migrant background are often portrayed as a “threat” to the security of the nation-state, to national values, and to national identities (Grove and Zwi 2006, 1934; Giuliani 2016, 98; Rozakou 2012; Degli Uberti 2007, 386; Rovisco cited in Rovisco 2019, 652). As a consequence, they are often kept under control, as in the case of increased reliance on border control and surveillance measures as part of the European asylum system (De Genova cited in Carastathis et al. 2018, 5; Ahmed cited in Carastathis et

⁴ This concerns also racialised identities: indeed, national communities are often not homogeneously “white” or “black” (Samuels and Ross-Sheriff 2008, 7; Giuliani, Lombardi-Diop cited in Castro and Carnassale 2019, 216; cf. also Patriarca and Deplano 2018, 350-351; Schroeter 2013, 409-410).

al. 2018, 5; Carastathis et al. 2018, 5). These dynamics may take place also in asylum centres and in the various associations or charities where people from a migrant background receive support, due to the numerous rules that they have to respect and the control to which they are subjected (Rozakou 2012, 568-569). This has increasingly led to marginalisation and discrimination of people from a migrant background, in some cases including the use of violence (Grove and Zwi 2006; Degli Uberti 2007, 386; O'Neill et al. 2019, 143; Fassin and Kobelinsky 2012, 450; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 174; Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 5; Palmer cited in Andreone and Amore 2019, 102).

At the same time, people from a migrant background, particularly in the case of asylum seekers, are often relegated to live in highly precarious conditions (Grove and Zwi 2006, 1936; Ferrari and Rosso cited in Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 8; Fassin and Kobelinsky 2012, 450), and they are generally infantilised, disempowered, dehumanised and deprived of their agency (Rozakou 2012; Grove and Zwi 2006, 1935; O'Neill et al. 2019, 134). Despite this, the literature has documented the capacity to resist these dynamics by people from a migrant background and show resilience (O'Neill et al. 2019, 131).

These power dynamics are part of a colonial legacy that leads to considering people from non-Western countries a threat to stability, as well as inferior (Giuliani 2016; Degli Uberti 2007, 391; Abu-Lughod 2002, 788-789). Scholars have pointed out how people from a migrant background may be compared to the idea of a “monster” in the sense theorised by Kristeva (1982), namely a subject who is considered threatening and abject (see also Giuliani 2016; Tyler cited in Rovisco 2019, 652). Central to these dynamics is the role played by emotions (Ahmed 2014): people from a migrant background are seen as causing fear or disgust, particularly in the case of people from Islamic countries (Ahmed 2014; Giuliani 2016; Furedi cited in Giuliani 2016, 97; Butler cited in Giuliani 2016, 97). This leads to the

creation of boundaries and to relegate to the margins people who are considered fearsome or disgusting, also limiting their mobility (Ahmed 2014). In particular, these emotions are related to an idea of danger, as what is considered disgusting or dirty is usually something that is strange for us and that we consider intimidating (Douglas 2003[1966]; Ahmed 2014, 82-83; see also Giuliani 2016, 99). In the case of migrations, this connection between the “other” and danger or dirt leads to consider people from a migrant background sources of disease (Grove and Zwi 2006; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 169). Moreover, racism may be based on supposed embodied characteristics, such as the idea that African people have a “typical odour” according to Western people (Bassetti 2021, 186-187). Importantly, these emotions arise not only from people’s migrant background, but also from their ethnicity or skin colour, or from their religious background, thereby showing how axes of difference are intertwined.

In addition, the othering process takes place also through the intersection of ethnicity and migrant background with gender and sexuality: for example, men of colour have long been considered sexist, violent, homophobic, and a danger also for white women (Giuliani 2016, 97, 102 and 105; Crenshaw 1991, 1287), whereas women of colour have been seen as victims (Giuliani 2016; Abu-Lughod 2002). Additionally, bodies that are not white have often been sexualised according to racist, neo-colonial stereotypes: already in the 1980s, Angela Davis (2018[1981]) critically deconstructed the “myth of the Black rapist” and of the black woman as hyper-sexualised, that contributed to the racist portrayal of black people as “more sexual” than white people (cf. also Crenshaw 1991, 1271 and 1287). Nowadays, some ethnic backgrounds, skin colours or nationalities are sexualised either positively or negatively, for example being considered “exotic” (Cervulle and Rees-Roberts, Klesse and Lelleri cited in

Castro and Carnassale 2019, 217) or dangerous (Giuliani 2016). Again, the intersections between various axes of oppression contribute to the marginalisation of certain social groups.

These mechanisms can be understood from a feminist perspective that considers relations between the North and the South of the world (Ahmed 2014; Young 2003; see also hooks 2021, 92). Indeed, people from a migrant background are often considered people who need to be “saved” by Westerners, and this relates to the patriarchal idea according to which women and children need to be protected by men⁵ (Young 2003; Spivak cited in Abu-Lughod 2002, 784; see also Collins 1998, 67). Citing Foucault, Young (2003, 6) names this power relation “pastoral power” (Foucault cited in Young 2003, 6) and points out that while it might seem benevolent at first, in reality it is a form of paternalism that hinders the empowerment of those that are deemed in need of protection (Young 2003). In this way, people from a migrant background are seen as weak, passive subjects that need to be helped by European and Western citizens. Moreover, this dynamic is intertwined with gender, leading to see “white men saving brown women from brown men” (Spivak cited in Abu-Lughod 2002, 784; see also Abu-Lughod 2002; Giuliani 2016, 97; Mohanty 1984). As stressed by Mohanty (1984), this view has led to depict both women from the “Third World” and women from the “West” (to which we could add men from the “Third World” and men from the “West”) as homogenous groups, ignoring differences within them (Mohanty 1984). Again, these dynamics originate from colonialism (Young 2003, 19; Abu-Lughod 2002; Giuliani 2016, 97; Mohanty 1984), and reproduce the dichotomy “us/them” or “we/others” (Giuliani 2016, 99; Abu-Lughod 2002, 784; Grove and Zwi 2006, 1933). Further, they are

⁵ This perspective may be applied also to the nation-state: the state represents masculine, pastoral power and is portrayed as the protector of its citizens who represent women and children (Young 2003, 2 and 9; Berlant cited in Young 2003, 9).

based on the intersections of various categories, including gender, ethnicity, religion, social class, and migrant background (Giuliani 2016, 99).

Following these power relations and the othering process to which people from a migrant background are subjected, a traditional and hegemonic concept of citizenship based on the intersection of various categories is perpetuated: citizenship is enjoyed by white, Christian people who are not from a migrant background; those who do not respect such standards are othered (Giuliani 2016) and excluded from society. In other words, people from a migrant background are forced to live “in the margins of the margins” (Erel et al., O’Neill cited in O’Neill et al. 2019, 134). In sum, intersectional thinking helps understand the complexity of experiences of migration and the power relations that shape them, but also the ways in which people from a migrant background may be empowered or, on the contrary, disempowered. Some of these themes have been explored also through the performative arts. Yet, it is necessary first to briefly discuss the relevance of theatre and theatrical performances for sociology, which is the object of the next section.

2.3 Theatre as Representation of Society

Sociological literature on theatre may be broadly distinguished between that which employs theatre as a metaphor to comprehend and analyse social reality, and that which treats theatre as the centre of the study, focusing for example on the process of realisation of theatrical performances (Pisciotta 2016, 68). Regarding the first case, theatre has often been utilised as an analogy or a metaphor to study society and social action (Vösu 2010; Pisciotta 2016, 66). In fact, it is often claimed that, on one hand, human behaviour resembles theatre, whereas on the other hand theatre is similar to society, because its aim is to represent it,

showing also the values held by people and their relations (Võsu 2010, 131; Nichols 1956, 180-183).

Goffman's key book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956) is central in understanding how theatre may be utilised to study precisely social interaction considering the "dramaturgical principles of performances" (Võsu 2010, 139; Goffman 1956). Studying micro-level communication in everyday life in Western societies (Võsu 2010, 140), Goffman argued that people's interaction is organised by the dramaturgical principles of a theatre performance guiding social actors in interaction (Võsu 2010, 150-151). In particular, "impression management" is central in carrying out everyday interaction, and thus applies to mundane situations in "natural settings" (Goffman 1956, 152; Võsu 2010, 151; Jacobsen 2017, 216-217; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 59). As such, individuals adapt their behaviours to the impression that they create on others (Jacobsen 2017; Võsu 2010, 155; Goffman 1956, 8). In order to do so, other people's reactions and responses are necessary (Võsu 2010, 152 and 155-156). This functioning of social interaction leads to the constitution of what Goffman called the "interaction order" (Jacobsen 2017, 204).

Yet, it is important to note that, for Goffman, society is not theatre (Jacobsen 2017, 215-216; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 59). Rather, he utilises theatre as an analogy (Võsu 2010; Jacobsen 2017, 216). Thus, there are several similarities between social interaction and theatrical performances, but social actors do not voluntarily act with the same level of intentionality as actors do in theatrical performances (Võsu 2010, 153, note 16, 155 and 156). Moreover, social interaction is a performance in which roles and behaviours are not scripted in advance, but rather emerge and are sustained by individuals while interaction unfolds (Võsu 2010, 160).

As it has been shown, theatre is helpful to investigate society and social action (Pisciotta 2016, 66-67). This occurs not only if it is considered a metaphor of social reality, but also if theatrical performances are examined. Although theatre represents reality in a “fictional” way (Rozik cited in Vösu 2010, 156-157), it allows society to “observe itself” (Pisciotta 2016, 67), providing it with the opportunity to understand and interpret reality (Nichols 1956, 179; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 111).⁶ Moreover, theatre allows to promote social transformation (Pisciotta 2016, 68) while conveying meaning to an audience (Shvetsova 2018, 113). In this sense, society and theatre influence one another (Nichols 1956, 179-180). This is amplified by the capacity of theatre “to unite people in a shared experience”, which constitutes its main social function (Nichols 1956, 179; cf. also Durkheim, Goffman, cited in Bassetti 2019, 136).

Several authors have studied the “social ritual of theatrical representation” (Bassetti 2019, 116), examining various aspects of the realisation of theatrical performances. Firstly, sociologists have underlined the necessity for cooperation and negotiation between professionals in order to realise a performance (Becker 1982; Bassetti 2019, 58 and 77; Atkinson 2006; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 169). Becker (1982, 1-4), for instance, has pointed out how art – and also theatre – constitute a “collective activity” (cf. also Shevtsova 2018, 113). Moreover, individuals involved often come from different professional

⁶ Etymologically, *theatre* comes from Greek *theatron* which indicates “theater, the people in the theater, a show, a spectacle” and literally means “place for viewing”. It comes from the Greek verb *theasthai*, meaning “to behold” (Online Etymology Dictionary 2001-2022a). Drama, instead, comes from Greek *drama*, meaning “action, deed; play, spectacle”, and comes from *drāo*, “to do, make, act, perform” (Online Etymology Dictionary 2001-2022b; Vösu 2010, 134).

backgrounds and complete distinct tasks, which renders their collaboration even more complicated (Bassetti 2019, 128; Becker 1982, 9-13; cf. also Shevtsova 2018, 113).

Additionally, sociologists have shown the practicalities involved in the realisation of a performance: indeed, as Bassetti (2019) shows in her research on dance, the choices as well as the changes made during the process of construction of a show are not simply related to aesthetic reasons, but also to practical constraints, including space (Bassetti 2019, 117) and time (Becker 1982, 3; cf. also Becker cited in Bassetti 2019, 68; Becker 1982, 26-28; Atkinson 2006). Theatre and more generally the performative arts have been studied in the literature in relation to migrations and the opportunities that they entail to represent this topic. This is analysed in the next section.

2.4 Migrations and Performative Arts

The literature exploring the relationship between migrations and performative arts, including theatre, is recent (Musca 2019, 4), yet it has focused on several aspects. Among these, scholars have explored the limited presence of people from a migrant background or from ethnic minorities in the theatrical sector in several West European countries, analysing not only the theatres where they operate, but also the performances that they realise (Sharifi 2016; Cox 2014, 22). In this respect, scholars have pointed out how artists are often excluded from theatre in various European countries not only on the basis of their migrant background, but also of their ethnicity, gender or disability, thereby leading to intersectional forms of discrimination (Sharifi 2016, 325). Nevertheless, groups of artists from a migrant background and of artists of colour are emerging in various countries, including France, Great Britain, and Italy (Sharifi 2016; Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019). However, groups of artists from migrant backgrounds are often considered part of the pedagogical or

sociocultural sector, rather than the artistic one, and they may benefit from less resources (Sharifi 2016, 325 and 332). In sum, racism does exist in European theatre (Sharifi 2016), and the presence of artists from various ethnic and migrant backgrounds is still diversified, although they are generally starting to influence European theatre (Sharifi 2016, 322).

Furthermore, researchers have examined the ways of representing migrations. This involves ethical choices and responsibility, given that representations influence the ways of perceiving migrations and people from a migrant background, as well as social inequalities (Musca 2019, 4-5; Corrêa cited in Musca 2019, 6; Rovisco 2019). In fact, theatre representing migrations encourages critical thinking about issues such as identity, otherness, and people's social positions (Cox, Zaroulia cited in Musca 2019, 5-6; Musca 2019, 5-6; Rovisco 2019). For instance, scholars have argued that comedy and humour help portraying migrations not through images of victimhood, but rather emphasising the potential for empowerment (Meerzon cited in Musca 2019, 6).

Nonetheless, the marginalisation of people from migrant backgrounds in theatres is detrimental to the representation of migrations, which is often left to artists who do not have direct migratory experiences (Sharifi 2016, 324). In fact, debates about who is entitled to perform and to speak for people from a migrant background, as well as how migrations should be represented (including through which aesthetics) are emerging (Rovisco 2019; Sharifi 2016; Cox 2014). Similarly, questions regarding who composes the audience, and whether the stories performed are about "them" or about "us", are being discussed (Cox 2014, 27). This "politics of position" that concerns both artists and audiences stresses the relevance of power relations when investigating theatre (and performative arts) and migrations (Cox 2014, 27).

Moreover, the literature has explored numerous positive consequences of representing migrations and including people from migrant backgrounds in performative arts and particularly theatre. Indeed, theatre allows people from different backgrounds and cultures to meet, dialogue and develop solidarity (Degli Uberti 2007, 386; Netto cited in Andreone and Amore 2019, 102; Rovisco 2019, 656; O'Neill et al. 2019, 143; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7-8). Further, people from a migrant background may have the opportunity to give meaning to their own life, express themselves and their identities, gain visibility (Degli Uberti 2007, 386; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7-8; Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019; Netto cited in Andreone and Amore 2019, 102; Powers and Duffy 2016, 63; Sharifi 2016, 366; Rovisco 2019, 651-652), and overcome discrimination and marginalisation (McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7-8; Rovisco 2019, 652), while also discussing issues related to identity, cultural differences and belonging (Zoniou et al. 2012, 6). Thus, performative arts may promote empowerment (Rovisco 2019, 657; Zoniou et al. 2012, 5), social inclusion and critical thinking (Carpani cited in Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 15; Rovisco 2019). Additionally, performative arts, including theatre, constitute places where citizenship can be contested in an embodied way (Rovisco 2019, 648). In this way, rather than simply constituting a status, citizenship becomes an embodied act or practice, including the involvement in cultural activities (Rovisco 2019, 649; Hartley cited in Rovisco 2019, 649). Through performative arts, one may reflect on, as well as challenge, the elements contributing to inclusion or exclusion from society of people from a migrant background (Rovisco 2019, 656).

For all these reasons, scholars argue that more traditional types of theatre (also with artistic and not primarily social goals) should represent migrations, in order to overcome prejudices and uncover people's identities and rights (Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 19).

The literature examining the relationship between performative arts and forced migrations is particularly recent, but increased in the last fifteen years (Cox and Wake 2018, 141). Scholars have explored how art may facilitate the integration in European societies of refugees and other people from a migrant background (McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7), particularly in the case of theatre as well as Theatre of the Oppressed (McGregor and Ragab 2016, 12). In Italy, numerous theatre projects have been realised with groups of refugees and asylum seekers (Sharifi 2016, 359) included in reception centres, such as ex SPRAR and CAS (Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 13). For instance, it has been shown how humour allows people to meet, fostering social inclusion and cultural integration (Andreone and Amore 2019). Several studies have also explored how creative and participatory approaches, including Theatre of the Oppressed, allow to deconstruct and change the ways in which refugees are looked at within society, reducing their disempowerment (Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 59). Several of these issues apply also to the Theatre of the Oppressed. Yet, in order to understand what Theatre of the Oppressed is, it is necessary to briefly explore the theoretical approach from which it emerged, to which this chapter now turns.

2.5 The Pedagogy of the Oppressed

The Pedagogy of the Oppressed was theorised by Paulo Freire (1921-1997), one of the most influential pedagogist of the twentieth century. Born in Brazil and starting working as a teacher, he applied his Christian and Marxist perspective on society to the field of education, aiming to encourage the liberation of the oppressed (Tolomelli 2012, 22).

Freirian pedagogy starts from a critique of what Freire considered the dominant approach to education, which he named “banking” or “depository” approach (Freire 2018, 77-87;

Tolomelli 2012, 36 note 1, and 37; Macedo 2018, 20 and 32). In this type of education, students passively receive the notions that are taught to them by teachers, without developing critical thinking and accepting reality merely as it is (Freire 2018, 77-87; Macedo 2018, 20 and 35; Tolomelli 2012, 37). According to Freire, this approach is dehumanising, and is utilised by the dominant classes to spread their vision of the world and exert their power onto subordinate groups in order to prevent their resistance or rebellion (Freire 2018, 77-87). As such, oppressed groups are taught a reality which is falsified, but they passively accept it, whilst their creativity and freedom are hindered (Tolomelli 2012, 37; Macedo 2018, 20 and 35). In this way, the oppressed do not develop the tools necessary to counter power.

In Freire's view, in order to liberate people from oppression, it is necessary for them to develop critical thinking and self-awareness about their conditions, similarly to what hooks (2020a; hooks 2021, 111) and other black feminist thinkers and activists argued regarding the liberation of women of colour. Freire (2018) pointed out that the oppressed are not people who deem reality as something from which they cannot escape. On the contrary, they consider the reality of oppression something that they can transform after becoming aware of their oppressive condition (Freire cited in Opfermann 2020, 151; see also Freire 2018, 94-95; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 126). For these reasons, "oppressed" is different from "victim": in contrast with the latter, the former includes power (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 125-126; Miramonti 2017, 12) and individual agency. According to Freire, it is necessary that social transformation starts from the oppressed, who have to liberate both "themselves and their oppressors" (Freire 2018, 49 and 62).

For Freire, it was central to transform the approach to education to achieve these goals.⁷ Consequently, he established a new approach to education which he discussed in the highly influential book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published in 1968 (Freire 2018). Here, a dialogical, problematising, critical, and humanising approach to education is outlined. Teachers and pupils are not placed in a hierarchical position; rather, they are both active agents and they learn together through dialogue and through their “becoming in and with the world” (Tolomelli 2012, 38). Moreover, teachers and students learn to problematise reality (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 129), critically thinking about it and adopting a maieutic approach⁸ (Tolomelli 2012, 37). In addition, Freirian pedagogy allows people to develop “conscientização” (Macedo 2018, 21-22) or conscientisation (Freire 2018),⁹ which may be defined as “the critical development of awareness” (Freire 2018, 206). It is based on the idea that people need to become critically aware of the world and of the power relations that characterise it (Freire 2018, 53; Macedo 2018, 8, 23-24; Tolomelli 2012). Moreover, by liberating themselves from oppression, previously marginalised people may “humanise reality” (Tolomelli 2012, 24): in other words, individual freedom is inseparable from their dignity, thus the hierarchy oppressors/oppressed should be replaced with dialogue among human beings, including between oppressors and oppressed, in order to overcome conflict, liberate humanity, and claim “equal dignity and power” (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 115; Tolomelli 2012, 25; Freire 2018, 50).

In brief, Freirian pedagogy works “*with*” the oppressed and not “*for*” the oppressed (Freire 2018, 50 – original emphasis), it is not taught from above – indeed, it is “humanising” but

⁷ This is related also to the fact that, in Brazil, illiteracy was one of the major factors causing social exclusion of people from lower classes at the time (Tolomelli 2012, 40).

⁸ Briefly, this can be defined as an approach to education where knowledge is not imposed from above, but rather teachers and students discover and co-construct it together (Tolomelli 2012, 41-42).

⁹ This concept was not invented by Freire (Freire 2018, 206), but it is central to Freirian pedagogy and it is thanks to him that the term nowadays is infused with pedagogical and political meaning (Freire 2018, 207).

not “humanitarian” (Freire 2018, 60; cf. also Freire cited in hooks 2020b, 87). In sum, Freirian pedagogy links educational goals with political ones, aiming at empowering people starting from their conscientisation (Freire 2018; Tolomelli 2012, 23-25; cf. also Schroeter 2013, 397).

Freirian pedagogy has been criticised at various levels. Some argue that it has a naive and utopian character that renders it difficult to realise (Tolomelli 2012, 26). Nonetheless, Freire was aware that the work of educators was not sufficient “to change the world”, but he stressed that education was a field that could significantly contribute to this goal (Freire cited in Powers and Duffy 2016, 71). Others have pointed out that Freire focused primarily on oppression caused by classism, while overlooking the role played by other variables, such as race (Macedo 2018, 15). Yet, his approach to pedagogy was significantly influenced by the historical, social and cultural context in which he was immersed, where class inequalities were highly relevant (Macedo 2018, 15-16). In contrast, nowadays the impact that social class has on inequalities and discrimination is often overlooked also in intersectional research (Hearn 2017). Furthermore, hooks (2020b, 86) noticed the absence of attention to the role played by gender in the oppression of some social groups, pointing out the “sexism” which was present in Freire’s writings, as well as his masculinist perspective on liberation (hooks 2020b, 82-83 and 89). Nevertheless, Freire’s latest writings also mentioned other dimensions of inequality beyond social class, for example issues concerning sexism (hooks 2020b, 88-89). Moreover, he argued for the importance of fighting for the liberation of an oppressed group if one is against that oppression. For example, men who do not accept sexism should fight alongside women to abolish it; white people who are against racism should participate in the battle against racism (Freire cited in hooks 2020b, 90). Moreover, in recent times, various approaches to critical pedagogy (including Freirian pedagogy) have

acknowledged the importance to consider students and teachers' social positions, represented also by their "gendered, raced, and classed bodies" (Schroeter 2013, 398).

Overall, his work is key to understanding the importance of critical thinking and awareness of one's oppression in order to achieve liberation, as well as to recognise oppressed people as subjects with the "right to define [their] reality" (hooks 2020b, 86). These ideas are at the basis of Theatre of the Oppressed, which is explained in the following section.

2.6 The Theatre of the Oppressed

The Theatre of the Oppressed was created by Augusto Boal (1931-2009) at the end of the 1960s in Brazil drawing primarily on Freirian pedagogy, but also on the theatre of Bertolt Brecht and the Sociodrama of Moreno (Boal cited in Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 111; Mazzini 2011, 7; Santos 2018, 53 and 55; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 4; Tolomelli 2012, 4; Smith 2012, 49; Schroeter 2013, 397). It is often considered part of Social Theatre (Pisciotta 2016, 66 and 69), which can be broadly defined as a type of theatre that includes interventions aimed at facilitating individual and collective empowerment and community development through several techniques (Rossi Ghiglione 2011, 11).¹⁰ Augusto Boal was a Brazilian writer, theatre director, and politician. In 1964, after the coup d'état, he was imprisoned and tortured, until he fled from Brazil and travelled throughout Latin America, where he started developing several Theatre of the Oppressed techniques. In the 1970s he travelled to Europe and continued developing other techniques. When he went back to Brazil, in the 1990s, he was elected in the local government in Rio de Janeiro, and this

¹⁰ Moreover, Social Theatre is significantly focused on social relations and on the promotion of wellbeing (Rossi Ghiglione 2011, 13 and 18), and it is usually based on workshops, seminars, meetings and performances (Rossi Ghiglione 2011, 11-12) taking place in spaces such as schools, universities, hospitals, but also theatres (Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 3; Rossi Ghiglione 2011, 11). Contrary to traditional theatre (with predominantly artistic goals) which targets wider audiences, Social Theatre usually involves specific groups sharing a given experience or background (Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 19).

experience influenced his work on Theatre of the Oppressed until his death (Tolomelli 2012; Bozza 2020).

Theatre of the Oppressed includes political and pedagogical goals (Tolomelli 2012, 34; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 4; Bozza 2020, 1), including above all that of changing reality (Boal cited in Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 111; Boal 2011b, 108). Similarly to Freire, Boal observed the oppressive mechanisms that were present in Brazilian society, where power imbalances led to the domination of some social groups over others. Yet, the oppressed can overcome this situation and achieve liberation (Boal 2021, 78). Hence, the oppressed have to reappropriate of the “means of theatrical production”¹¹ in order to express and liberate themselves (Boal 2011a, 21 and 26; Boal cited in Pisciotta 2016, 69; Bozza 2020, 2; Santos 2018, 205). Hence, Theatre of the Oppressed includes a similar idea to that sustained by black feminism and intersectional scholars: people who are oppressed have the opportunity to liberate themselves starting precisely from their awareness of their marginal positions in society (cf. also hooks 1989; hooks 2020a; Collins 2000).

The two central principles of Theatre of the Oppressed are spectators being protagonists of performances and spectators preparing “for being protagonists in their own life” (Boal 2021, 95). In fact, Theatre of the Oppressed is based on people’s active participation (Castri cited in Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 112; Pisciotta 2016): all its techniques, as in the case of other types of participatory theatre (such as Social Theatre), aim at breaking the so-called “fourth wall” between actors and audience, so that anyone is both a performer and a member of the audience (Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 6; Boal 2011b, 108; Yuval-Davis and

¹¹ This clearly shows the connection with Marx (Tolomelli 2012, 30; Mazzini 2011, 8 and 10).

Kaptani 2009, 59; Opfermann 2020, 141; Santos 2018, 55). In this way, Boal re-shaped in a dialogical way the relation between actors and spectators, similarly to how Freire changed the relation between students and teachers (Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 4). This is possible because, in Boal's view, "being human *is* being theatre", and everyone can do theatre (Boal 2011b, 13 and 108; Boal cited in Tolomelli 2012, 27; Tolomelli 2012, 31; Boal 2011a, 26; Jackson cited in Day 2022, 31; Boal cited in Santos 2018, 105 and 177). Theatre allows everyone to express freely, because privileging verbal language would be a form of domination, due to people's different levels of self-confidence in utilising this type of communication (Boal cited in Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 10; Boal 2011a, 26; cf. also Bozza 2020, 7). Through theatre, people are able to both observe themselves and act – both in theatrical terms, and in the sense that they "take action" (Jackson cited in Day 2002, 31; Smith 2012, 49; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 118; Boal cited in Alshughry 2018, 171).¹² In this way, they become "spect-actors"¹³ (Boal 2021, 39; Boal 2011a; Boal 2002; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Schroeter 2013, 397; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Erel et al. 2017; Tolomelli 2012, 33-34; Boal cited in Pisciotta 2016, 69).

Precisely because everyone can do theatre, this performative art allows people to liberate themselves from oppression and change society (Alshughry 2018, 171 and 174; Boal 2021; Høghagen and Josephsson 2010, 169; Santos 2018, 205). The scenes and stories represented in Theatre of the Oppressed usually show situations where a conflict or an oppression occurs, and the public is invited to problematise it, intervene and find solutions, always sharing ideas within the group (Pisciotta 2016, 71; Tolomelli 2012, 32; Erel et al. 2017, 307). Importantly,

¹² Please refer to note 6 at page 47.

¹³ In this thesis, the word "spectators" is utilised to refer generally to members of the audience during Forum-Theatre sessions or other public performances, whereas the word "spect-actors" is used to refer specifically to members of the audience who enter the scene during Forum-Theatre sessions replacing one of the characters.

Theatre of the Oppressed focuses more on the historical and political dimensions of oppressions than on the psychological ones (Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 5; Erel et al. 2017, 307-308; Santos 2018). It aims at training people to face and overcome oppression in their “real” life, becoming a “rehearsal for revolution” (Boal 2011a, 26 and 39; Boal cited in Schroeter 2013, 397-398; Boal cited in Opfermann 2010, 141; Boal cited in Ranjan 2020, 5; Boal cited in Powers and Duffy 2016, 62), a “rehearsal for reality” (Boal cited in Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 7; Boal cited in Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 63; Boal 2011a, 26; Boal 2011b, 108) or a “‘rehearsal’ for change” (Tolomelli cited in Bozza 2020, 4). For Boal, transforming society is core to citizenship: citizens are people who do not simply live in society, but try to “transform” it (Boal cited in Mazzini 2011, 7; Boal 2011b, 14; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; Boal cited in Santos 2018, 143).

By promoting social transformation, Theatre of the Oppressed aims at facilitating empowerment, which may be defined as the “process of social action through which people, organisations and communities acquire competency on their own lives, with the aim of changing their own social and political environment in order to improve the equity and quality of life” (Nicoli et al. 2011, 3). In the case of Theatre of the Oppressed, empowerment leads to a shift “from being a victim to becoming an active participant, from spectator to doer” (Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 2; Miramonti 2017, 12). Theatre of the Oppressed is claimed to facilitate empowerment both at an individual and at a collective level (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 112; Tolomelli 2012, 22; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 11; Bozza 2020, 1). In brief, Theatre of the Oppressed is a political theatre (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011) that, similarly to Freirian pedagogy, aims at the problematisation of reality (Pisciotta 2016, 66) and conscientisation (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 115; Schroeter 2013, 397; Opfermann 2020, 141; Boal cited in Opfermann 2020, 147-

148; Pisciotta 2016, 69-70; Tolomelli 2012, 30). As in Freirian pedagogy, the concepts of power, oppression, and conflict are crucial (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 122-123).

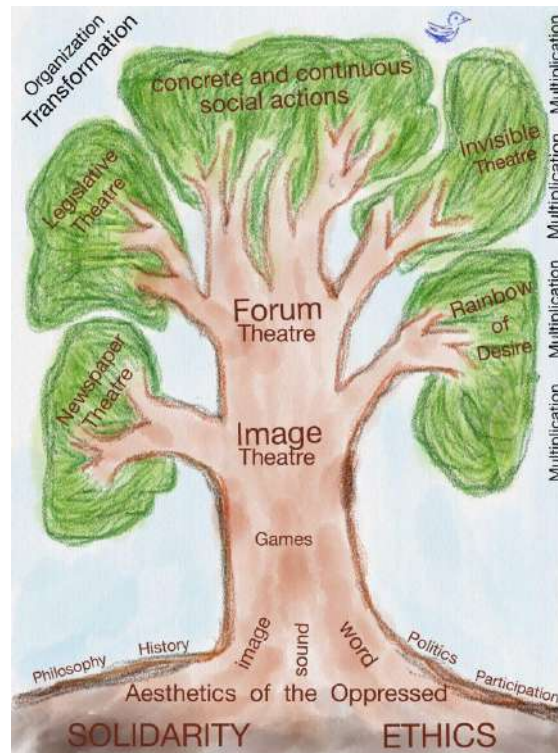


Figure 1: The tree of Theatre of the Oppressed. Source: <https://kuringa.de/en/method-en/tree-of-to-en/> (last accessed 12/10/2022). For Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed is like a tree; its roots lie in ethics and solidarity, politics, philosophy, history, and participation, whereas the trunk leads to its techniques and concrete social actions aimed at transformation, and the Aesthetics is what nourishes the tree (Boal 2011b, 108; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 4-5; Santos 2018).

Theatre of the Oppressed includes numerous games, exercises, and techniques (Boal 2002; Boal 2011a; Boal 2011b; Boal 2021).¹⁴ Invisible-Theatre is based on a theatrical performance that takes place in public spaces and which shows a situation of oppression, without people who are present being aware that what is happening is in fact a theatrical performance. In this way, spectators have the chance to intervene to change the situation

¹⁴ These were developed by Boal during different periods of his life, and were influenced also by the historical and political context in which they emerged (Bozza 2020, 2).

becoming “spect-actors” (Boal 2021, 39; Boal 2011a, 40-42; Boal 2002, 277; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 117-118; Boal cited in Pisciotta 2016, 69-71).¹⁵

Newspaper-Theatre, instead, includes eleven techniques aimed at questioning the ways in which reality is told and represented by the media, problematising these representations and trying to change them (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 117; Boal 2011a, 40).

Further, Image-Theatre is based on the use of the body to express a concept, an idea, or to discuss a problem without using verbal communication (Boal 2021, 25). A person may use their own body or the one of another person, which is modelled according to the thought one wishes to express, but without thinking about it and using directly the body (Boal 2011a, 34-37; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 118; Boal 2002; Miramonti 2017, 171-187).¹⁶

Forum-Theatre is the most famous technique of Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal 2002; Boal 2011a, 37-39; Boal 2021; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 5). It is based on a performance where an oppressive situation is shown and there is a negative ending (Ranjan 2020, 7; Day 2002, 22; Boal 2021). The scene is played for the first time by actors and/or actresses, while the audience observes. After that, the scene is performed a second time, but this time the audience is invited to participate, stopping the scene when they feel that they may go on stage to replace one of the characters (Day 2002, 22; Erel et al. 2017, 306; Boal 2021). This is usually the oppressed character, but they may also replace other characters, although not the oppressors (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 118-119; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012). In this way, the public may try out different strategies in order to change the epilogue,

¹⁵ Invisible-Theatre is the technique that perhaps resembles the most Garfinkel’s breaching experiments, although all the techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed are similar to the experiments carried out in ethnomethodology (Pisciotta 2016, 66; Garfinkel cited in Pisciotta 2016, 66).

¹⁶ This technique shows clearly Boal’s idea that bodily language is as helpful and valid as verbal language, and it is “democratic”, since particular skills are not necessary in order to use it (contrarily to verbal language) (Boal cited in Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 10; Boal 2011a, 26; cf. also Bozza 2020, 7).

trying to overcome oppression (Boal 2021; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 118-119; Alshughry 2018, 174; Erel and Reynolds 2014, 8; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis, 5; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 12; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 169). They are free to choose how to behave while in the scene, although they should not behave as oppressors (Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 9). Thus, members of the audience shift from the state of “spectators” to that of “spect-actors” (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 118 and 126; Schroeter 2013, 397; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008, 5; Erel et al. 2017, 306).

Interventions are discussed with members of the audience in order to reflect on the efficiency and helpfulness of the proposed solutions. Discussion is guided by a key figure, that is the Joker (also called Jolly or Curinga) (Boal 2021, 39-41; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 118-119; Schroeter 2013, 397; Miramonti 2017, 13-14; Ranjan 2020; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012).

The general aim of Forum-Theatre is to problematise reality, asking questions to the audience and stimulating critical thinking, rather than proposing solutions (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Boal cited in Day 2002, 32; Jackson cited in Day 2002, 32). Moreover, Forum-Theatre shows both how society is – through the representation of oppressions – and how “it could be” – by allowing to reflect about solutions to these oppressions (Boal cited in Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 11). By directly taking initiative and participating, people train in order to actively take part in the process of liberation (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Miramonti 2017, 12; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 2), and they practise their citizenship (Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 11).

The techniques explained previously were developed by Boal in the 1970s, while he was living in Latin America. In Europe, in the second half of the 1970s, he worked on other

techniques and exercises which are part of the “Flic dans la tête” (literally meaning “the cop in the head”) and of the “Rainbow of Desires” (Boal 2002, 206-207; Santos 2018, 70-73; Bozza 2020, 4). These include a variety of games and exercises aimed at working on the introspective, psychological aspects of oppression to achieve liberation (Tolomelli 2012, 34; Boal 2002, 206-207; Santos 2018, 70-71).

Subsequently, Legislative-Theatre was developed during the 1990s, after Boal’s return to Brazil and during his experience in local politics. This technique aims at discussing law proposals among citizens, in order to promote a democratic process where people choose their laws based on their needs and connect more closely with political institutions (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 120; Pisciotta 2016, 73).

Additionally, the Aesthetics of the Oppressed (Boal 2011b) constitutes Boal’s latest work. Boal argued that every social class and every social group possesses their own aesthetics through which they should be free to express themselves artistically (Boal 2011b, 11). Thus, the oppressed should learn to utilise their own aesthetics (made of word, sound, and images) to become aware of their oppressive reality, transform society and liberate themselves (Boal 2011b, 11 and 13; Santos 2018, 175-177). In sum, he stressed that both art and aesthetics are tools that allow to achieve freedom (Boal 2011b, 13). In fact, in Boal’s words, “being human is being artist” (Boal 2011b, 13 and 107).

As previously mentioned, in the activities of Theatre of the Oppressed the Joker plays a central role (Boal 2021). The Joker is “a person acting as an intermediary between the audience and the play” (Schroeter 2013, 397). The Joker explains to participants “the rules of the game” (Boal 2021, 41 and 85) and coordinates activities. In doing so, they do not judge interventions (Pisciotta 2016, 70), nor do they impose their own ideas on participants (Tolomelli 2012, 37). In Forum-Theatre, the Joker encourages the audience to intervene but

also to reflect upon proposed solutions, for example by asking them whether they consider solutions realistic or achievable in “real life” (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 118-119; Miramonti 2017, 13-14 and 195-203; Day 2002, 22; Boal 2002, 260-262; Boal 2021, 43).¹⁷ In general, the Joker does not provide participants with answers, but rather asks questions (Pisciotta 2016, 70; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 5).¹⁸ Moreover, they take care of both the artistic aspects of the activities, as well as their political and pedagogical dimensions, acting as “artist-activist” (Santos 2018, 94-95 and 240; Bozza 2020, 6). In brief, they act both as educators and as people who learn with participants through dialogue (Pisciotta 2016, 69-70; Tolomelli 2012, 37).

Theatre of the Oppressed has been criticised on various levels. For example, some have argued that it is not appropriate to work with people from marginalised social groups due to the complexity of the socio-political conditions that contribute to their social exclusion (Snyder-Young cited in Opfermann 2020, 141). Further, participants’ interventions “do not automatically orient towards social justice” (Snyder-Young cited in Opfermann 2020, 142), especially if they reproduce discriminatory attitudes that the Joker is unable to limit (Conrad cited in Opfermann 2020, 142). Others have stressed that the terms utilised by Boal, such as his emphasis on doing a “revolution” to “liberate” the “oppressed”, are too violent (Thompson cited in Opfermann 2020, 141; Opfermann 2020, 141) and may contradict the goals of the method itself. Thus, facilitators should pay attention to these aspects in order to render this theatrical method effective. Moreover, this theatrical method may be deemed utopian, similarly to Freirean pedagogy (Tolomelli 2012, 26). Yet, Theatre of the Oppressed

¹⁷ Boal defined a solution “magical” if it appeared “unrealistic” or “utopian” (Engelstad cited in Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 8).

¹⁸ Similarly to the teacher in Freirian pedagogy, the Joker should adopt a maieutic approach (Santos 2018, 148).

is in constant evolution (Bozza 2020, 2; Mazzini 2011, 7); for example, it has been influenced in recent years also by feminist movements, as outlined in the next section.

2.7 A Feminist Approach to Theatre of the Oppressed

Gender-based oppressions are the type of oppressions which Boal encountered most often (Ciurletti 2020, 82). Moreover, he was aware that gender-based oppression and sexism often intersect with racism and classism, as in the case of oppression towards women in Brazil (Boal cited in Ciurletti 2020, 82-83; cf. also Boal 2011b, 148). During the 2010s, a feminist approach to Theatre of the Oppressed (*Teatro de las Oprimidas*) developed in Brazil thanks to the work by Bárbara Santos – a black, Afro-Brazilian woman, sociology graduate, Theatre of the Oppressed practitioner, playwright, theatre director, actress, and feminist activist – supported by the Centre of Theatre of the Oppressed (*Centro do Teatro do Oprimido – CTO*) in Rio de Janeiro (Kuringa no date(b); Santos 2018, 287-288; Noy-Meir 2021, 3). Although the literature examining this approach to Theatre of the Oppressed is considerably scarce, information is available through their websites.

Santos worked for around twenty years with Augusto Boal contributing to the development of Legislative-Theatre and the Aesthetics of the Oppressed, and she is currently the artistic director of “Kuringa”, a theatre group based in Berlin (Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022; Santos 2018, 287; Noy-Meir 2021, 2-3). In 2009, Santos conducted together with Alessandra Vannucci – an Italian theatre director and university professor who worked in Brazil with Augusto Boal (Ciurletti 2020, 87, note 50) – the “Madalena Laboratory” (*Laboratório Madalena*), where women practised exercises to work on gender issues (Ciurletti 2020, 87). From this experience, several groups of women practising Theatre of

the Oppressed focusing on gender-based violence were formed (“Madalena Groups”) (Ciurletti 2020, 91). Subsequently, the Ma(g)dalena International Network (*Rede Ma(g)dalena Internacional de Teatro das Oprimidas*) was founded, which nowadays includes theatre groups from Central and Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe and of which Santos is the artistic director (Santos 2018, 289; Ciurletti 2020, 91; Kuringa no date(b)).

Through this Network, a new methodological approach to Theatre of the Oppressed has emerged, that focuses on gender and feminist issues and that tries to involve more female practitioners in projects of Theatre of the Oppressed (Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022; Kuringa no date(a); Kuringa no date(b)). This approach consists in a series of “exercises, games, and techniques” that are combined with a feminist aesthetics (Kuringa no date(a)) based on feminist principles (as well as anti-racist and anti-capitalist stances) (Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022). At the same time, various meetings, seminars and festivals are organised by the Network in order to spread the approach (Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022; Kuringa no date(b)). The Network includes a high level of diversity, and its work is shaped by the geographical areas where the various groups that compose it operate (Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022).

At the basis of this new approach to Theatre of the Oppressed lies an explicit feminist focus on the oppressions caused by a patriarchal organisation of society and the goal of fighting against it (Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022). Attention is paid primarily to the systematic oppression of women: indeed, one of the crucial topics that are tackled is gender-based violence (Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022).

Yet, the Network is centred on the idea that not only gender, but also race and social class are social constructions which contribute to the emergence of inequalities and oppression

(Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022). The work that the Network does is in fact centred on the intersection of various dimensions of inequality: its members include artists and activists who come from various countries and ethnicities, they are women and non-binary people, some come from a migrant background, they have different sexual orientations, some have experienced mental-health issues, and embody numerous others dimensions of diversity that are at the basis of their oppression (Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022). Different types of oppression are tackled by various groups. For instance, the *Rede Madalena-Anastácia* focuses on the oppression experienced by black women and works on the intersection of sexism and racism (Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022; Santos 2018, 289).

Additionally, the Network highlights how black women are marginalised both by men and by white women within Theatre of the Oppressed, similarly to what black feminist and intersectional scholars and activists did in the US (Ciurletti 2020, 104-105).

More recently, “Laboratories of Masculinities” (*Laboratórios de Masculinidades*) have emerged, reflecting on men’s position in patriarchal societies, both as oppressors and as oppressed, as well as on violence against women (Ciurletti 2020, 121-125; Santos cited in Ciurletti 2020, 121).

In general, the Ma(g)dalena International Network pays attention to oppressions caused by sexism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, but also capitalism and work exploitation (Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022). It aims at analysing critically how power is exercised, with the aim of transforming society (Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022).

Furthermore, a feminist approach to Theatre of the Oppressed encourages attention to the embodied characteristics and social positions of participants in activities. For example, during Forum-Theatre sessions, spect-actors are invited to intervene proposing solutions

considering the social positions from which they intervene, including their gender, race, social class, and profession, among others (Kuringa no date(a)).

With respect to this, Boal (2021, 94) argued that spect-actors who replace characters during a Forum-Theatre session should suffer in their “real” life from the character’s same oppression by “identity” or “analogy”. However, people who are not victims of the same oppression may go on stage, but attention should be paid to these interventions (Boal 2021, 95). In general, he claimed that when the object of activities are specific types of oppression, it is better that spect-actors experience the same oppression in their life; when, instead, the oppressions shown are more general, potentially anyone may intervene (Boal 2021, 95).

Feminist Theatre of the Oppressed develops further this argument problematising people’s specific social positions in relation to the axes of inequality that they embody (Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022). For instance, Santos (2018, 144) argues that if, in a Forum-Theatre session, oppression towards a black person is based precisely on their ethnicity, it is not helpful to invite a white person to replace the oppressed character. Yet, white people may intervene proposing their perspective, as people who are touched by the problem of racism. Similarly, a black, heterosexual person may intervene in a Forum-Theatre session on homophobia by analogy (for example because they experience the effects of racism and therefore understand those of homophobia) or one may intervene by solidarity (for instance if one recognises the social injustice which is shown) (Santos 2018, 145). In general, however, one’s social position should be critically considered.

Scholars have also underlined how spect-actors intervening from different social positions from characters may help discuss the roots of oppression and what people should do in their “real” life. For instance, in the case of migrations, trying to speak the national language correctly, or adopting the behaviour of a white, middle-class person (Erel et al. 2017, 309). Yet, it is vital to problematise these interventions to avoid going against the principle of

social transformation (Erel et al. 2017, 309; cf. also Ranjan 2020, 8). Clearly, this issue is related to the entitlement to talk about one's direct experiences as underlined by black feminist scholars (hooks 2020a, 193; Collins 1986; Collins 1989) and mentioned also by Freire (Freire cited in hooks 2020b, 90). A feminist approach to Theatre of the Oppressed helps question these issues.

To sum up, a feminist critical perspective on Theatre of the Oppressed can provide this theatrical method with several significant contributions (Noy-Meir 2021, 1). As some authors and Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners have noticed (e.g., Noy-Meir 2021, 3), Theatre of the Oppressed was created by a white man from the middle class; considering that the core of this theatrical method lies in the ending of oppression, approaches coming from non-privileged groups are essential (cf. also Noy-Meir 2021, 3). Theatre of the Oppressed has often been applied to the field of migrations, although usually considering the one created and developed by Boal, and not following a feminist approach. Discussion of the use of this theatrical method in this field is the object of the next section.

2.8 Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations from an Intersectional Perspective

Several projects have been realised applying the techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed, particularly Forum-Theatre, to migrations (McGregor and Ragab 2016, 12). Nevertheless, research on this area is still limited and recent, particularly considering sociological studies. Moreover, scholars have examined projects dealing with various aspects of migrations. Several issues have been underlined, in terms of both the positive implications of the use of this theatrical method, and several critical issues. Research has generally taken place in

English-speaking countries, although some studies have also focused on other European countries, including Italy.

To begin with, some scholars have analysed projects of Theatre of the Oppressed and migrations through an intersectional perspective. Erel and Reynolds (2014) have utilised the theory of intersectionality and black feminist thought together with participatory theatre to examine a project of Theatre of the Oppressed with mothers from a migrant background living in London, focusing on the axes of oppression that are predominant in influencing their experiences. Analysing the experiences that women tell both in a verbal and an embodied way (Erel and Reynolds 2014, 108-109), the researchers have examined how the intersections of migrant and language background, professional status, gender, ways of experiencing motherhood, as well as their family context, influence participants' lives (Erel and Reynolds 2014). These intersections help reflect on who is considered to be part of society and who is othered and remains excluded (Erel and Reynolds 2014).

Similarly, the study by Kaptani and Yuval-Davis (2008; see also Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009) shows how an intersectional perspective combined with a methodology based on participatory theatre helps reveal the multidimensionality of refugees' experiences. Indeed, by studying a project of Theatre of the Oppressed realised with refugees in London, the authors stress how refugees experience migrations in different ways depending on several categories of difference. Through theatrical activities, participants have the opportunity to show and represent numerous aspects of their identity and experiences of migration, going beyond their migration status (Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 57 and 59; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008, 2 and 7).

Additionally, Bello (2011) has investigated several European and national policies and programmes focused on youth which are aimed at promoting young people's empowerment

through nonformal education. These usually consider “youth” as a homogeneous group (Bello 2011, 349-350; Bürkner 2012, 182-183). Focusing on a project of Theatre of the Oppressed realised in North-Eastern Italy and centred on young people without a migratory background and young migrants of second generation, the author discusses how differences in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation, and religion emerge, and how these shape young people’s experiences. Differences not only between the two groups, but also among participants within groups, emerge from activities, revealing distinct ways of interpreting for example gender roles and gender relationships (Bello 2011, 354-356). Bello (2011) argues for an increased adoption of intersectionality in policies concerning young people; this would help understand the multiplicity of power relations contributing to the exclusion of certain social groups, avoid paternalistic attitudes towards participants, and promote their empowerment (Bello 2011).

Other studies, not necessarily adopting an intersectional approach, have stressed how this type of projects allow people from a migrant background to share their experiences, rendering them visible and finding a safe space to talk about them, while having a break from the difficulties that they may experience (Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 172; Ranjan 2020, 5). Some of the issues that have emerged from the stories told are situations of discrimination and oppression that participants are subjected to (Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 69). Yet, a sense of solidarity often develops among them, thanks to the use of humour and other theatrical devices (Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009; Smith 2012, 52 and 54).

Furthermore, Theatre of the Oppressed helps express people’s agency. For instance, by representing multiple aspects of their identity, participants have the opportunity to actively participate in social change (Bürkner 2012, 192; Ranjan 2020). When participants get

involved in activities, for example by intervening during a Forum-Theatre session, they utilise their agency while trying to stop oppression (Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 12). Moreover, they share reflections on what their needs are, what should be done in order to satisfy them, thereby finding ways to become part of the community (Erel and Reynolds 2014), acquiring competencies for future social action, and developing a sense of shared identity (Erel et al. 2017, 305; Smith 2012). This is key considering that people from a migrant background are often victimised, as previously underlined (Varvin cited in Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 12; see also Section 2.2). In this way, empowerment is facilitated both at an individual and a collective level, since interventions are followed by interaction between actors, spect-actors and other members of the audience (Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 11; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Tolomelli 2012).

Additionally, some studies have shown how Theatre of the Oppressed activities allow to reshape the concept of citizenship. In fact, the possibility for participants to put themselves “in other people’s shoes” and prepare for tackling oppression in their real life (Day 2002) is relevant also to enact citizenship (Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 11; Erel and Reynolds 2014). As previously mentioned, Boal argued that trying actively to change society is a central element in citizenship (Boal cited in Mazzini in Boal 2011a, 7; Boal 2011b, 14; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; Boal cited in Santos 2018, 143). In the study by Erel and Reynolds (2014), indeed, workshops of Theatre of the Oppressed are presented as a context where to discuss who is considered to be part of society, “what rights and responsibilities citizens should have” and who is entitled to have them, thereby challenging predominant ways of interpreting citizenship (Erel and Reynolds 2014, 109-110). Citizenship is conceptualised as more than simply legal status and including also participation within society and a sense of belonging; thus, it is more complex than what is

implied by dominant ideas about the notion of “good citizen” according to gender, race, and other dimensions of identity (Erel et al. 2017, 303; Lister cited in Erel et al. 2017, 303; see also Giuliani 2016). In this way, participants are conceived as “political subjects” (Erel cited in Erel et al. 2017, 304).

Another study (Schroeter 2013) shows how, while discussing citizenship, rights and identity categories during activities of Theatre of the Oppressed, citizenship is not simply associated to legal documents: for people from a migrant background, even if they obtain the citizenship of the host country, skin colour (for example being black) or language differences (for instance being heard speaking in one’s own mother tongue) or the intersection of the two may lead to undermine their citizenship status and social inclusion (Schroeter 2013, 409-410; see also Giuliani 2016). Enacting citizenship is thus considered key in developing empowerment (Erel and Reynolds 2014, 110; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 70; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 11).

Furthermore, Theatre of the Oppressed is beneficial also to put in contact people from a migrant background with native citizens, showing how integration is a not a one-way mechanism, but rather a complex process that involves both sides (Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7; Day 2002). In this way, the dichotomy us/them may disappear (Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15), since performances and workshops may help reflect on prejudice and discrimination and raise awareness about supposed “others” (McGregor and Ragab 2016, 12; Day 2002).

This aspect is central also to studies analysing projects of Theatre of the Oppressed aimed at providing professionals in the field of migrations (including social workers, cultural mediators, language teachers, among others) with tools to deal with, for example, protection

of human rights, support to refugees, and prevention of racism (see for example Zoniou et al. 2012; Choleva 2021). This type of projects is still under-studied.

The attempt at building a new expertise on these issues can be analysed through the concept of “field” theorised by Bourdieu (1993). In the context of cultural production, a “field” refers to a sector with some level of independence, characterised by complex social relations among its members as well as specific logics (Bourdieu 1993, 29-30). A field is composed of a hierarchical structure, where its members occupy various positions depending on the capital that they possess, which is circulated in the field and transferred across fields (Bourdieu 1993). Within a field, individuals try to improve their position, receiving further recognition and legitimacy (Bourdieu 1993, 30 and 37).

In sum, projects of Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations may be theorised as leading to the creation of a new professional field which is autonomous from other fields, based on the application of participatory activities, composed of professionalised workers and characterised by the circulation of various forms of capital, mainly knowledge and competences on creative and participatory approaches (Bourdieu 1993).

Nonetheless, the literature also highlights various critical issues that may emerge in projects applying the techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed to migrations. For instance, the goal of empowerment is much debated. For example, the study by Ranjan (2020) explains how, during a project realised in England targeted at refugees, power relations are reproduced: facilitators often ignore participants’ needs and do not consider their requests and priorities. Moreover, the ethnic differences between the leading facilitator and the audience (white) and the co-facilitators and participants (of colour) reinforce these power dynamics leading to the reproduction of neo-colonial attitudes, the limitation of participants’ agency, and scarce trust between facilitators and participants (Ranjan 2020). In particular, Ranjan (2020,

3 and 10) stresses the importance for facilitators to consider the ethical aspects of this type of projects. On the other side, she argues that organising a Forum-Theatre session with people from a migrant background as performers and white people from upper classes in the audience contributes to reproduce neo-colonial hierarchies (Ranjan 2020, 8).

In brief, empowerment and the ways to facilitate it should be critically analysed, since in the field of migrations they may lead to the perpetuation of neo-colonial and patriarchal relations (Rozakou 2012; Giuliani 2016; Abu-Lughod 2002; Young 2003; Grove and Zwi 2006).

Moreover, although on one side theatre encourages non-verbal communication, on the other side activities often also include the use of words (Opfermann 2020, 144; Schroeter 2013, 401). Consequently, language differences among participants and/or between participants and facilitators may hinder communication and render trust more difficult to achieve (Opfermann 2020, 140). Additionally, involving people from a migrant background may be challenging if they live in precarious conditions or if they have financial issues or if the available time to complete activities is limited (Smith 2012, 55).

Nevertheless, the literature examining Theatre of the Oppressed in the field of migrations from an intersectional perspective is still scarce. Similarly, research investigating projects which target primarily various kinds of professionals working with people from a migrant background is scant. Furthermore, research centring on how theatre treats people from a migrant background as the topic of representation and as audience but not always as actors is still limited. In fact, several studies have focused on the use of Theatre of the Oppressed and other participatory methods with people from a migrant background in educational contexts (e.g., Day 2002, Opfermann 2020), and with the aim of supporting them (e.g., Erel

and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009).

Therefore, this thesis aims at filling this gap by answering the following research questions:

How are creative and participatory approaches to inequalities, such as Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations, developed, organised and enacted? What actors are involved in the process? And how does Theatre of the Oppressed construct and communicate the topic of people from a migrant background? What factors account for specific representations?

All these questions will be answered adopting an intersectional perspective and considering the following sub-questions (which are also considered through an intersectional approach):

- 1) Who are the participants in terms of social background and through what relations, routes and motives do they come to be involved?
- 2) How do facilitators operate in the field of awareness-raising in the context of migrations? How are activities organised? To whom are they targeted?
- 3) Which aspects of the lives of people from a migrant background and which layers of social stratification and diversity are represented? How? Why? And which aspects of native Italians' lives and lines of social distinction are represented? How? Why?

The answer to the first research sub-question is included in Chapter 5, the answer to the second sub-question is included in Chapter 6, whereas the answer to the third sub-question is present in Chapter 7. These three chapters focus on the MiGreat! project. Chapter 4, together with the empirical context of the research, provides also some information

concerning the three sub-questions (particularly the first and the third ones) in relation to several projects of Theatre of the Oppressed and migrations realised in Italy.

2.9 Conclusions

This chapter has explained how intersectionality allows to capture the ways in which categories of difference, such as gender, intersect with other categories, such as ethnicity, social class, age, religion, among others, creating systems of power (e.g., Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2000; Collins and Chepp 2013). In the context of migrations, intersectionality is helpful to investigate the multidimensionality of experiences of people from a migrant background, as well as their complex identities (e.g., Anthias 2012; Bürkner 2012; Herrera 2013; Amelina and Lutz 2019; Castro and Carnassale 2019). Despite the contribution of intersectionality, people from a migrant background are generally represented as “other” through negative discourses conveyed by the media as well as migration policies (e.g., Grove and Zwi 2006; Giuliani 2016; Ahmed 2014). Thanks to the opportunity that theatre gives to represent society and identify possible ways to transform it (e.g. Pisciotta 2016; Goffman 1956; Vösu 2010), the performative arts and theatrical activities allow to express the identities of people from a migrant background and the diversity of their experiences (e.g., Degli Uberti 2007, 386; Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019; Musca 2019; Rovisco 2019), thereby contrasting the power dynamics to which they may be subjected. This is the main goal of Theatre of the Oppressed (as discussed in Section 2.6). After having outlined Freirian pedagogy, which inspired Augusto Boal, the key points and the main techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed have been outlined. Importantly, both Theatre of the Oppressed and intersectionality share an attention to power relations and oppression and argue for the active engagement of oppressed groups to liberate themselves

(e.g., Boal 2011a; Boal 2011b; Boal 2021; hooks 1989; hooks 2020a; Collins 2000). A feminist approach to Theatre of the Oppressed has been presented, which takes into account the intersectional dimensions of oppression and pays attention to the role played by the social background of facilitators and participants in activities (Santos 2018; Ma(g)dalena International Network (2022); Kuringa nodate(a); Kuringa no date(b)). Finally, the main contributions that Theatre of the Oppressed may give to the field of migrations, including from an intersectional perspective, have been discussed (see Section 2.8).

The debates that are present in the literature inspired the research questions in various ways. The recent development in and scientific attention towards the use of creative and participatory approaches to inequalities, particularly Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations, led to concentrate attention on the ways in which these approaches are developed, organised and enacted and on the social actors who are involved in this process. Moreover, research concerning the ways in which theatre and particularly Theatre of the Oppressed help represent people from a migrant background, also from an intersectional perspective, led to an attention to how Theatre of the Oppressed constructs and communicates the topic of people from a migrant background.

In particular, concerning the first sub-question, attention towards people's categories of identities and social background and the ways in which these influence their experiences and their participation in activities is relevant both from an intersectional perspective and according to a feminist approach to Theatre of the Oppressed, as previously highlighted (see Sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.7). In addition, scholars have shown that including people from a migrant background may reveal challenging for various structural issues (e.g., Smith 2012). At the same time, the (limited) inclusion of people from different ethnic and migrant

background in the performative arts is debated (e.g., Sharifi 2016; Cox 2014). Moreover, scholars have pointed out the relevance to represent migrations through theatre for both people from a migrant background and people without a migratory background (e.g., Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7; Day 2002). Therefore, attention to who participants in activities are and how they are involved is central.

As far as the second research sub-question is concerned, the importance of facilitators' role and the ways in which they organise activities, although it is less studied in the literature, is relevant in relation to the centrality of the complex role of the Joker in Theatre of the Oppressed activities (see Section 2.6) and the relations that may engender between practitioners and participants (e.g., Ranjan 2020). Further, projects aimed at training various types of professionals in the use of creative and participatory approaches to migrations have recently emerged (Zoniou et al. 2012; Choleva 2021). Thus, an examination of the ways in which activities are organised and enacted, considering facilitators' role and social background (e.g., Santos 2018; Ranjan 2020), is important to investigate how practitioners operate and how such activities are carried out.

Concerning the third sub-question, examining the ways in which people from a migrant background and people without a migratory background are represented through Theatre of the Oppressed is important given that theatre represents society and social relations (e.g., Vösu 2010, 131; Nichols 1956, 180-183; Boal 2011, 16; Boal cited in Schroeter 2013, 397; Smith 2012, 49). In particular, researchers examining the ways in which theatre, and specifically Theatre of the Oppressed, is helpful to work on migrations, have highlighted how theatrical activities and representations allow to give visibility to the identity and experiences of people from a migrant background, also considering multiple layers of social

stratification (e.g., Erel and Reynolds 2014; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009; Bello 2011). In this way, attention can be paid to whether representations perpetuate stereotypical or discriminating portrayals of people from a migrant background, or whether other representations are constructed, in line with the concept of representational intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991).

Hence, the numerous debates concerning intersectionality, migrations, and theatre contributed to the identification of these research foci. The research questions will be answered following the methodology explained in the next chapter.

3. Methodology

3.1 The Research Questions and the Abductive Logic of Research

As explained in Sections 2.8 and 2.9, this study aims at examining the ways in which creative and participatory approaches to inequalities, such as Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations, are developed, organised and enacted, which social actors are involved, as well as the ways in which Theatre of the Oppressed constructs and communicates the topic of people from a migrant background, including the factors accounting for specific representations (general research question). All these issues are analysed through an intersectional framework.

The choice of the methodology is consequent to these knowledge objectives. The study adopts a qualitative approach, which is based on a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology. This approach is appropriate to study an area which is still unexplored. In fact, although several debates are present in the literature concerning migrations and theatre, also from an intersectional perspective, the specific area of Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations is still under-researched. Considering the three research sub-questions, which focus on what the social background of participants is, how they get involved in activities, how facilitators operate in the field of awareness-raising in the context of migrations and organise activities, as well as how people from a migrant background and people without a migratory background are represented, a qualitative approach revealed more appropriate. This was important particularly because attention was placed on the meaning attributed to social actions by research participants, and on their perspectives on the topic investigated (Adler and Adler 1987, 17; Malinowski cited in Gobo 2001, 25). Further, in line with a feminist and intersectional framework (cf. also Collins

1986; Collins 1989), issues related to the researcher, as well as research participants' positioning, were central in this study, as explained in the next sections.

In particular, ethnography allowed me to investigate how the social actors involved interpreted the issues at the centre of the project analysed, how they contributed to construct representations of migrations, which dynamics emerged during the facilitation of activities, and other elements that could not be examined without being in the field (cf. also Gobo 2001, 39, 82-83). Interviews helped me deepen my understanding of several issues that I could not observe, or to ask research participants their viewpoints on various aspects of the topics investigated. The documents and videos analysed, instead, allowed me to examine the representations of people from a migrant background that are conveyed to wider audiences, as well as the ways in which practitioners presented themselves and their work (more information on how the methods were helpful is included in the following sections).

Since the majority of the data concern the Italian context, the research is not comparative. Yet, I considered the main aspects of the work that was carried out also in the other three organisations involved in the MiGreat! project.

Given the unexplored area that this study investigates, an abductive logic was followed. Abduction differs from both deductive and inductive logics in important ways. Indeed, deduction starts from a theory to then analyse a case and verify whether it confirms or falsify the theory (Timmermans and Tavory 2012, 170; Reichertz 2014), whereas induction is based on the collection of data to then infer some theoretical explanations (Timmermans and Tavory 2012, 171; Reichertz 2014). However, neither deduction nor induction lead to the generation of new theories (Reichertz 2014; Timmermans and Tavory 2012; Timmermans and Tavory 2014). Abduction, instead, "refers to an inferential creative process of producing new hypotheses and theories based on surprising research evidence" (Timmermans and

Tavory 2012, 170). To put it differently, researchers collect and analyse the data keeping in mind theoretical lenses, but paying particular attention to the discovery of new cases and insights in the data, linking them back to theory and vice versa (Timmermans and Tavory 2012; Timmermans and Tavory 2014). There is in fact a constant moving back and forth between data and theory in an iterative way (Timmermans and Tavory 2012, 168, 175 and 179-180).

This method can lead to the generation of new theories if the already existing ones are not adequate, or to the identification of causal relationships, or to the discovery of similarities or differences with cases that were previously examined (Timmermans and Tavory 2012, 171 and 179). It is in fact suitable to study research areas which are unexplored. Given the research questions and knowledge objectives previously discussed, which emerged from an under-studied field, this study was conceptualised according to an abductive logic which guided the entire research process. The case study that was chosen is outlined below.

3.2 The Case Study

The choice of the case study was based on the following procedure. First, a mapping of theatre groups, theatre companies and single theatrical artists working in Italy was carried out, focusing both on those that work on the topic of migrations, and those that tackle gender issues. This mapping took place during Summer 2021 and it was focused on these two topics since I was interested in both of them and I aimed at finding theatrical artists that potentially worked at the intersections of these two areas. Not only Theatre of the Oppressed was considered, but any kind of theatrical method. This initial mapping brought me to find around forty contexts (among companies and artists) in various parts of Italy that I reached directly (by phone, email and in some cases in person) mainly via snowball sampling through people

that I knew or via Web searches. In this phase snowball sampling was useful given that an official list or a database including all theatre artists working on the topics I was interested in does not exist; thus, reaching people operating in this field through other contacts revealed the most appropriate solution (cf. also Gobo 2001, 80).

After this initial list, I identified three case studies that were the most adequate because of practical and logistical reasons (e.g., in terms of geographical location and periods in which they were working on performances or projects). Moreover, all of them gave their availability to make me access the field both as a researcher and as an intern, since my aim was to undertake both experiences in the same context as part of my master's degree. I then opted for the MiGreat! project, since it allowed me to explore in depth the topic of migrations through a theatrical method, that of Theatre of the Oppressed, also observing in person theatrical activities directly including people from a migrant background.

MiGreat! was an EU-funded project that took place from October 2019 to March 2022 and involved four organisations based in four different countries, namely Italy, the UK, France and Hungary. The Italian Cooperative was the lead partner¹⁹ of the project and it was the context on which I based most of the research. The goal of MiGreat! was to identify and construct counter and alternative narratives on migrations as a response to dominant narratives, which are often negative and based on racist assumptions about people from a migrant background (MiGREAT! Changing the narrative of migration (no date)). The project included “international learning and capacity-building” (Malkassian et al. 2021, 6; MiGREAT! Changing the narrative of migration (no date)), and was based on spreading awareness about negative narratives, as well as knowledge about creative and participatory

¹⁹ In EU-funded projects which involve cooperation among several organisations, the lead partner is “the link between the operation, or project, and the programme” and it is “responsible overall, both administratively and financially” (Keep.eu (no date)).

methods to deconstruct them (MiGREAT! Changing the narrative of migration (no date)). It included the test and use of several activities, coming above all from Freirian pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed, to then apply them with educators, social workers, and other professionals, as well as with migrant communities (MiGREAT! Changing the narrative of migration (no date)). The project included the realisation of three “intellectual outputs” (hereafter IOs) that constitute, from a sociological perspective, three cultural products: a handbook realised in collaboration among the four organisations (IO1), one or more visual materials produced in each country with a guide on instructions about how to realise visual tools (IO2), and a theatre script, based on the technique of Forum-Theatre, realised in each country and included in another guide (IO3).

This case study was chosen firstly because it allowed me to investigate how theatre is utilised to talk about migrations, also exploring issues related to oppression, empowerment, and power relations. These are central to both Theatre of the Oppressed and intersectionality (as discussed in Chapter 2). Thus, it was suitable for the topic that I aimed at studying. Secondly, it gave me the opportunity to observe in person through ethnographic research various activities, meetings and other events that were central for the development of the project itself. Thirdly, when I contacted the Italian partner of the project in September 2021, people from a migrant background were planned to be included in the realisation of the Forum-Theatre script, which rendered this project the only opportunity that I had at the time to observe the direct participation of people from a migrant background in theatrical activities. Although this occurred only to a limited extent, as analysed in Chapter 5, I was still able to investigate how different social actors (practitioners of Theatre of the Oppressed, social workers, educators, people from a migrant background, etc.) explain and understand the issues at stake in the project, considering their different (gender, class, ethnic, among other)

backgrounds. Finally, the European nature of the project allowed me to explore how theatre is used to talk about migrations also in other countries, potentially gaining relevance outside the Italian context. In sum, this case study allowed me to answer the research questions listed at page 75. The methods of data collection are explained below.

3.3 Methods of Data Collection

Data for this research were collected through ethnography, qualitative interviews, and documentary and visual analysis. In ethnographic research, accessing the field is often a complex phase (cf. also Gobo 2001, 91-95). In the case of the context chosen for this study, this process was not too long, and it included only a few elements of complexity. In Summer 2021, during a first phone call with a person working at the Italian Cooperative and involved in MiGreat! as a facilitator and Joker, I had the opportunity to explain my goals, referring to my interest in doing an internship, but also to conduct empirical research on theatre and migrations and/or gender issues (providing some more information on both experiences). She provided me with various details concerning MiGreat! and other activities that the Cooperative was working at in that period. Then, she added that she would have spoken with her colleagues about the possibility to let me access the field as both an intern and a student doing research. Already in that moment I perceived a positive attitude about my involvement in MiGreat!. After a few weeks, I had another conversation by phone with the coordinator of MiGreat! (again from the Italian Cooperative) during which she provided me with more details regarding the project. On that occasion, we started thinking about my involvement in the project, including which tasks I could complete as an intern, which situations I would have been able to observe for my research on the basis on the activities that were planned for the subsequent months, and more generally what my role and tasks could be during the

internship and research process. In fact, I felt that the members of the Cooperative thought also about what I could do as an intern that could be helpful for the project, considering my skills and study background. In other words, my dual role was probably considered a positive element in welcoming me in their environment, since I was perceived perhaps as a person who could give some contribution to the project. This occurred also given the fact that the coordinator of MiGreat! has a background in sociology and social research, and she showed to know both the field of social research and that of projects such as MiGreat!, based on the use of creative and participatory approaches in the field of inequalities. At the same time, I was asked some questions regarding my research project, but I perceived curiosity by the members of the Cooperative rather than suspicion (cf. also Gobo 2001, 92). After a few weeks during which I was left the time to reflect on these possibilities (as well as on other case studies where people gave me their availability to welcome me as an intern and researcher), I contacted the Italian Cooperative back to communicate that I was interested in working with them, and therefore my research and internship started. After a few weeks, members of the Cooperative manifested their interest in reading the thesis once finished, explaining that they considered “research” (in general) important for their work (cf. also Gobo 2001, 92). In sum, the only elements of complexity were related to understanding and reflecting on what I could do, what my objectives were, whether these were in line with the timing and deadlines of the project, as well as some bureaucratic procedures (mainly related to the internship though). In general, I perceived enthusiasm by the members of the Cooperative about the fact of including a young student interested in migrations and theatre and with several skills that could be useful for the project and more generally their working environment, and overall they manifested a welcoming attitude. These were the main aspects concerning the negotiation of access to the field, and this phase was not too complex.

Ethnography included participant observation as the main technique. This took place from October 2021 to June 2022 for a total of around 100 hours, and I was in the field on average around three hours per week (excluding two weeks of Christmas break and one week of Easter break). However, I was not in the field every week, meaning that some weeks I was in the field around ten hours, and other weeks I was never there. Participant observation was carried out during the following situations:²⁰ the six meetings aimed at preparing a Forum-Theatre script in Trento (including rehearsals), three Forum-Theatre sessions – one took place in Trento as part of the MiGreat! project; another one took place in the same city, but was part of another European project to which the Italian Cooperative worked on (aimed at contrasting islamophobia); a third short one took place in London during the Final Conference of MiGreat!, based on the theatre script produced by the French partner. Further, I conducted an ethnographic, or informal, interview (Gobo 2001, 119-120) with two spectators from a migrant background who participated in the Forum-Theatre session that was part of MiGreat! in Trento.²¹ Although I met them on the day of the public session, I contacted them back some weeks later through an acquaintance that we had in common (who was also a participant in the realisation of the Forum-Theatre script) in order to ask for their points of view. Moreover, participant observation was carried out during “multiplier events”, which are workshops, seminars or other types of activities aimed at disseminating to an audience the products realised within the project. In particular, I observed three of them in Trento (including the first one that was split in two parts, the second one during the Forum-Theatre session, and the third one), and one in Parma.²² I also observed organisational

²⁰ The observation guide can be found in the Appendix.

²¹ The list of topics that were covered during this ethnographic interview can be found in the Appendix.

²² In Trento, the first multiplier event aimed at divulging the IO1 handbook (and it was split in two parts); the second one constituted a gathering during which the visual materials were shown to the audience, and then the Forum-Theatre session began; the third one aimed at divulging the visual materials. The multiplier event in Parma aimed at divulging the IO1 handbook.

meetings among professionals in the Italian Cooperative – sometimes in person, sometimes online – and online meetings among professionals in the four partner organisations. Additionally, I participated in two online meetings held between Social Theatre professionals (December 2021) and facilitators of Freirian pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed (April 2022). Finally, I participated in the Final Conference of the project that took place in London at the beginning of March 2022. During these last three meetings I conducted “interface ethnography”, namely participant observation during situations (“border zones” or “interfaces”) where members of professional communities or experts meet with the public (as during the London Conference) or among them (as during the two online meetings) (Ortner 2010, 213; Chan 2020, 179). These allowed me to gain knowledge on the “ways of thinking and talking and (re-)presenting themselves” (Ortner 2010, 219) of the members of these communities, particularly Social Theatre practitioners and experts of Theatre of the Oppressed.

In sum, I observed numerous different situations, but not always in depth (e.g., I observed only three Forum-Theatres), and this constitutes a limitation of this research. However, conducting participant observation in various situations allowed me to better investigate the case study. For example, during certain activities given issues emerged that I kept in mind and to which I paid attention in the subsequent situations that I was observing. In addition, being in the field during various situations allowed me to better understand social actions and the ways in which the social actors involved behaved and interpreted those actions. In brief, observing different situations helped me examine the issues I was studying in a more complete way, sometimes also making associations and comparisons. Yet, this still prevented me from observing into detail similar situations (e.g., several Forum-Theatre sessions).

The data collected through participant observation are numerous: they include above all my field notes, but also several pictures and video recordings that I took during activities both for the purposes of this research and under request by MiGreat! professionals, to keep track of the activities and include them in several official documents of the project. To these, a few posters produced for public events are added. All care was taken to protect participants' privacy.

When writing ethnography, it is important to clarify the researcher's role in the field (Adler and Adler 1987, 6-7 and 13). My role was overt, meaning that all research participants knew that I was studying this project for my master's thesis. Moreover, as previously mentioned, I accessed the field both as a student doing research and as an intern, and all people I spoke with knew about both conditions. Indeed, on several occasions I had the opportunity to introduce myself specifying who I was and the reasons why I was there. Although this transparency might have increased participants' reactivity (Gobo 2001, 85 and 87), this option was the most suitable in order to avoid complex ethical issues (Gobo 2001, 85). A few people who were involved in activities as participants were people that I already knew, whom I met during previous volunteering experiences in the field of migrations in Trentino. However, the level of reciprocal knowledge was often superficial, and in any case I was careful to maintain a professional attitude with all research participants during the research process.

Being both a researcher and an intern, I sometimes directly participated in theatrical and participatory activities, including during the meetings to prepare the Forum-Theatre script and during multiplier events. Yet, my duties were mainly related to taking notes to keep track

of the work that was carried out, and these notes constitute a small part of my fieldnotes.²³ Additionally, I supported MiGreat! practitioners in the organisation and coordination of activities. Moreover, as an intern I worked on a report and a poster focused on the production of the four Forum-Theatre theatre scripts in order to provide professionals with helpful insights for future projects.²⁴ For all these reasons, my participation was mostly active (Adler and Adler 1987; Bassetti 2021, 30; Gobo 2001, 82-83), and in some cases my roles of researcher and intern overlapped.

This dual role allowed me to oscillate between situations in which I was more involved in the context, and others in which I was more detached (Gobo 2001, 22-23 and 82-83). For these reasons I felt at times as a “stranger” according to Simmel’s definition (Simmel cited in Collins 1986, 15): several times I was treated by practitioners as both a confidant to whom they could express their opinions on activities, participants, and other aspects of the work, and a consultant on various issues related to migrations, since they were aware of my previous study and volunteer experiences in this field (Bassetti 2019, 100-101; Bassetti 2021, 40). This active role allowed me to understand with a certain level of depth the context in which I was immersed and the actions and practices that I observed (Gobo 2001, 82-83).

Additionally, I conducted ten semi-structured, informative, interviews, all online (via Google Meet or Zoom), apart from one that I conducted in person in a park in Trento.²⁵ Seven interviews are with MiGreat! practitioners: two from the Italian cooperative (one is the coordinator of the project for all four countries and the other is the Joker in the Forum-

²³ The data included in fieldnotes and interview transcriptions are partly in Italian and partly in English. I translated the excerpts that were originally in Italian and that are included in this thesis into English, paying attention not to alter the meaning of words.

²⁴ The report and the poster can be downloaded through the following link: https://www.giollicoop.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=853:migreat-risultati-da-condividere&catid=228&Itemid=132 (accessed 23/12/2022).

²⁵ Interview guides can be found in the Appendix.

Theatre; they both collaborated in all activities); two from the British organisation (one is one of the writers of the application for MiGreat! and facilitated some of the activities; the other is the Joker in the Forum-Theatre and facilitated other activities); two from the Hungarian organisation (one is the Joker in the Forum-Theatre and worked on other activities; the other is an actress in the Forum-Theatre, the coordinator of activities for the visual materials, and she collaborated in other phases of the project); and one from the French organisation (the Joker in the Forum-Theatre and facilitator of other activities). They are all women apart from one man, from the British organisation. I chose them through reasoned (or theoretical) sampling (Gobo 2001, 77; Glaser, Strauss cited in Gobo 2001, 77), considering their roles of responsibility (and because in Italy there were only two professionals directly involved in this project).

I planned to interview a second professional that worked on several activities of MiGreat! in the French organisation, but unfortunately it was not possible because of her personal and working commitments.

In the interviews, we talked about the four IOs that were produced as part of the project, including the critical issues that emerged during their realisation. These seven interviews were helpful to explore various issues about the activities of MiGreat! that I could not observe either because the project started two years before I started my research or because they took place in the three other countries and I was not able to be there. These seven interviews lasted between two hours and forty-five minutes (the shortest) and three hours and forty-five minutes (the longest). This length allowed me to investigate in depth the topics tackled, although the duration was sometimes due to language barriers and connection problems (more details on these issues in Section 3.6). These seven interviews were used also as helpful data for the report that I wrote as part of my internship, although in that report I focused only on the part of the interviews related to the Forum-Theatres.

The other three interviewees are experts of Theatre of the Oppressed working in Italy: one is the President of the Italian cooperative that worked on MiGreat! (as well as the other writer of the application of the project), the other two work in collaboration with other associations in different parts of Italy. All three were treated as key informants. I sampled these three interviewees after having carried out a mapping of groups, as well as individual people, that practice Theatre of the Oppressed in Italy, identifying around thirty different names. I then selected the three of them based on diversity (in terms of educational and professional backgrounds, geographical area, approach to Theatre of the Oppressed) and clearly on their availability.²⁶ In sum, they were selected through reasoned (or theoretical) sampling (Gobo 2001, 77; Glaser, Strauss cited in Gobo 2001, 77). They are all men, but I thought that diversity in terms of gender was not essential given the aim of these interviews, namely discussing various aspects related to how Theatre of the Oppressed is utilised in Italy, particularly when applied to migrations, identifying commonalities and differences between MiGreat! and other projects. These three interviews lasted between two hours and forty-five minutes (the shortest) and three hours (the longest), leading to the collection of numerous details and much information on the topics discussed. All ten interviews were entirely transcribed.²⁷

Moreover, I analysed three documents and a video produced for the project. I conducted content and formal analysis of these, meaning that I focused on both the topics and situations that they represent, and on the register, rhetoric, colours and other formal tools utilised. The

²⁶ I found it appropriate to select the President of the Italian cooperative also because he is a well-known expert of Theatre of the Oppressed (known also by other Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners).

²⁷ Interview transcriptions have been minimally edited to improve readability: for example, “there-there” was transcribed as “there”.

documents, produced by the four organisations together, include: a handbook regarding narratives on migrations and participatory activities (IO1; indicated in the text as “Malkassian et al. 2021”); a handbook that constitutes a tool-kit for the realisation of visual materials (IO2; indicated in the text as “MiGreat! no date(a)”); another handbook on the realisation of Forum-Theatre scripts (IO3; indicated in the text as “MiGreat! no date(b)”).

The first handbook includes three main parts: the first overviews the migration context in the four countries, providing some examples of dominant, counter and alternative narratives around people from a migrant background. The second section presents the theoretical ideas at the basis of the creative and participatory methods which are central to MiGreat!. The third and last section includes an explanation of numerous participatory activities that were tested and applied throughout the project. In the end, extracts from interviews with individuals from other organisations working on migrations in the four countries, as well as a bibliography, are provided.

The second handbook includes a brief overview of the visual materials that were produced in the four countries and explains the necessary steps to produce visual tools through participatory methods.

The third handbook overviews the technique of Forum-Theatre, underlining its main goals, summarising examples of dominant narratives around migrations, and presenting the theatre scripts that were produced in the four countries, including the context in which they were developed, the characters that they include, the narratives that they want to contrast as well as those that they aim at spreading.²⁸

²⁸ The French organisation coordinated the production of the IO1; the British organisation coordinated the production of the IO2; the Italian Cooperative coordinated the realisation of the IO3.

The targets of the three documents are educators, social workers, language teachers, activists and other people working with people from a migrant background (Malkassian et al. 2021, 7; MiGreat! no date(a), 1; MiGreat! no date(b), 2).

Finally, I analysed both the content and the form of the visual materials that were realised through participatory methods in Trento by people from a migrant background as well as Italian people not from a migrant background. These are based on six short clips that are combined in a single video of almost ten minutes. Here, some situations where the dominant narratives emerge are shown to foster reflection and awareness in the viewers in an ironic way. The target of this video, as explained by research participants, is any person who utilises social media – given that they were disseminated through this tool – and whose age is included between adolescence and sixty. Moreover, the video targets mainly people who are not racist but who are neither anti-racist activists nor people directly involved in the field of migrations (see Chapters 5 for further details on the targets of the products of MiGreat!). The target of the visual tools produced in the other three countries is slightly different, which is why I decided to focus only on the visual tool realised in Italy. Relevant passages from the videos (only those included in the thesis) were transcribed following the original English subtitles that are present on the videos (see Chapter 7).

The methods utilised were helpful for various reasons. Ethnography, particularly participant observation, allowed me to observe and capture several (also marginal or banal) aspects of the context observed (cf. also Gobo 2001, 39), adopting research participants' point of view (Adler and Adler 1987, 17; Malinowski cited in Gobo 2001, 25). This aspect is similar to Simmel and Goffman's attention to the banalities of everyday life which however reveal something important about social interaction (Gobo 2001, 39; Simmel, Goffman, Schwartz,

Jacobs cited in Gobo 2001, 39). Further, this method was crucial to observe social actions during their course and not relying on how social actors would describe them, potentially increasing the validity of the data (Lindeman cited in Converse cited in Gobo 2001, 31).

These aspects are particularly relevant in theatrical activities. In fact, the techniques utilised in the Theatre of the Oppressed have emerged from work that was carried out in the field (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 111-112), and theatre is based precisely on embodied performances that take place in a given time and space (Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008). Moreover, participant observation allowed me to deepen my understanding of relationships among research subjects, as well as details and nuances that are usually taken for granted (Gobo 2001, 39; Simmel, Goffman, Schwartz, Jacobs cited in Gobo 2001, 39). As such, this technique helped me answer all research questions.

Interviews allowed me to integrate data from fieldnotes by investigating both what I was not able to observe, but also to better understand what did not emerge from the field, exploring more in depth several issues and ask for interviewees' opinions on them. Interviews were particularly helpful to answer sub-questions 1 and 2.

Finally, documentary and visual materials were helpful to investigate the stories and themes on migrations that emerged during the project, as well as information about the four countries involved. Moreover, they helped me analyse how these cultural products contribute to convey ideas about MiGreat! professionals' work, the methods they use and how their goals are interpreted. This last method helped me to answer mainly sub-questions 2 and 3.

This triangulation allowed me to achieve more reliability of the data (Gobo 2001, 166-167; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 183). The methods of data analysis are presented in the following section.

3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

In line with the abductive logic followed in the study, data were analysed through an abductive method. During analysis I read the data considering the theoretical approach I was adopting, as well as the research questions, in order to focus on the relevant passages and to reflect on what those data revealed in relation to my research focus and theoretical framework (cf. also Timmermans and Tavory 2012; Timmermans and Tavory 2014). In other words, data analysis (as well as data collection) was based on a constant move back and forth between theory (and literature) and the data (Timmermans and Tavory 2012, 168, 175 and 179-180; Timmermans and Tavory 2014).

As shown in Section 3.3, data came from numerous different sources and considering different contexts – four different organisations and countries, and three experts of Theatre of the Oppressed working in different parts of Italy and on different projects. The quantity and richness of the data, together with the different situations and contexts investigated, rendered analysis complex, especially in terms of coding and comparisons across materials. As a consequence, a double coding procedure helped me analyse the data. After having read fieldnotes and transcripts several times, I coded the data first manually (on printed versions of all documents) to identify relevant codes and start categorising the materials across situations observed and issues that emerged (first vertical analysis). The second time, I transferred the codes into Atlas.ti, deleting those that appeared unhelpful, adding new relevant codes, and refining the relevant ones (second vertical analysis). This process allowed me to improve the quality of the codes. This procedure resulted in the identification of 242 codes; I tried to find a balance between not being repetitive and capturing the nuances and differences among items. In some cases, I distinguished the codes depending on the

context (for example, by adding codes to refer only to the projects of Theatre of the Oppressed that were realised in Italy excluding MiGreat!). At the end of coding, twelve code groups were identified, based on the similarities among codes and the issues they concerned, and some codes fitted into more than one code group.²⁹

Analysis proceeded through a thematic approach that allowed me to identify relevant themes emerging from the data, and particularly from the code groups. Again, in this phase I also considered the research questions; these allowed me to combine code groups in groups of three or four, depending on the general theme that united them.

The first theme is based on the approaches to Theatre of the Oppressed in Italy, providing a general context in which this study is included (Chapter 4). Then, the three themes that are discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 concern the MiGreat! project. These are the social actors involved in theatrical representations – namely people who participated in activities both as actors/actresses and as audience or more generally as participants (Chapter 5); the critical issues in coordinating theatrical activities and enacting creative approaches (Chapter 6); and the content of theatrical representations – namely the stories about people from a migrant background that emerged from the project (Chapter 7). I selected relevant excerpts by examining the quotations for each code (axial or horizontal analysis), considering the most relevant codes (which in any case are the majority). Given the high number of quotations, I tried to choose the most relevant ones, referring to other ones through a short summary in the text by indicating the source where they come from (e.g., “Interview with [name/pseudonym]”).

²⁹ The list of codes (with their description) and of code groups can be found in Tables E and D in the Appendix.

Before proceeding with the analysis, it is important to reflect upon some issues related to my role and experience in the field in reflexive terms (Adler and Adler 1987, 6-7; Gobo 2001, 182; Bassetti 2021, 28; Atkinson cited in Bassetti 2021, 28; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 15; Berger 2015). This is key, considering that “social researchers are part of the social world” that they investigate, particularly in ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 14; Timmermans and Tavory 2012, 172-173). These issues are explained below.

3.5 The Ethnographer’s Body while Doing Research (on Theatre)

In ethnographic research, bodies play a central role (Bassetti 2021, 32-33). Indeed, being physically in the field, interacting with people, and utilising our senses to examine reality, renders this type of research a “lived experience” leading to “embodied knowledge” and increased reflexivity (Bassetti 2021, 32-33; Goffman cited in Bassetti 2021, 32; Wacquant cited in Bassetti 2021, 32). This applies even more so when studying the theatrical field. During participant observation, indeed, I had the opportunity to observe people taking part in theatrical activities that were based on exercises, games and other physical activities, sometimes directly participating. While observing these situations and the way in which I felt, I realised that various themes, comments, and discussions were stimulated precisely from these physical activities, which often contributed to a more immediate understanding of the topics tackled. In sum, theatrical methods constitute a rich source of data too (Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008). Although I did not use theatre as a research method *per se* (e.g., Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009; Opfermann 2020; Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Powers and Duffy 2016; O’Neill et al. 2019), I noticed during participant observation various nuances and aspects of both social interaction, more

generally, and how migrations are discussed and represented, more specifically, that could go unnoticed without the role played by theatrical activities.

Nonetheless, the context of theatre could pose a challenge for researchers: using the body might not be easy, and for me it was often not – although I only took part in exercises and games, but without acting on stage. Indeed, especially at the beginning of my research, I sometimes felt uncomfortable utilising my body to express an idea or my feelings (cf. also Powers and Duffy 2016, 69). This was, first, because it was the first time that I took part directly in theatrical activities since minor experiences at school, and second because this way of using the body was not usual for me. I was not fully aware that I could voluntarily express an idea or a thought with my body while leaving aside verbal language, and I did not know how to do it.³⁰ It took me time to enjoy participation, and only towards the end of fieldwork did I start to feel more relaxed while using my body. In sum, theatre can provide researchers with illuminating insights, but also challenges, particularly if one decides to be active during participant observation without being familiar with theatre.

On top of that, there is another dimension for which the body is central in ethnographic research, and this does not apply exclusively to the field of theatre, but to this research method more generally. This is the researcher's positioning and their characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, age, beliefs, emotional responses, that are embodied and that influence the research (Berger 2015, 220). This is relevant also from an intersectional perspective (Thimm and Chaudhuri 2021, 279). This aspect emerges both in interactions with participants, and

³⁰ Here I'm referring to the use of one's body as a voluntary act with a specific purpose, as in theatre, not to non-verbal language and gestures that we use without being aware of it and which contribute to create an "impression management" that Goffman theorised (Goffman 1956, 152-153; Vösu 2010, 151; Jacobsen 2017, 216-217).

in the ways of posing questions, analysing the data and interpreting findings (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 73; Berger 2015, 220; Kacen and Chaitin cited in Berger 2015, 220; Timmermans and Tavory 2012, 172-173). For example, I am female, young, white, Italian native but with experiences of migration. Some of these characteristics are visible on my body (particularly my gender, age and skin colour) or understandable for example from how I speak when using foreign languages. These characteristics are likely to have influenced research participants' ways of approaching me. This is particularly relevant considering that during research I got in contact with numerous people who were different from me on the basis of various categories of difference. These differences shaped my relations with them, for example when it came to choose the language in which we preferred to speak (since several people and I could speak several languages), or when I was asked what I wanted to do in the future (which is a question that is usually asked to people who are socially considered young). These dynamics occurred also when I was asked where and what I studied, for example. In the context of an EU-funded project, involving much diversity among the people involved, the fact that I studied in two foreign countries, or that I spoke other languages, was often noticed as a resource, or as a common aspect with people who migrate. In sum, the social and cultural traits that I embody, as well as my background, were relevant to build rapport with research participants and to influence our relations with one another (Berger 2015; Timmermans and Tavory 2012, 172-173).

Both in the case of theatrical activities, and more generally in interactions with research participants, my positioning was similar to that of an "outsider within" (Collins 1986). There were aspects which I shared with some participants, such as the experience of migrating and living in foreign countries, or the ability to speak in foreign languages. For other reasons, however, my positioning was different: for example, I have a different migration experience

from that of various people I met in the field. This balance between “familiarity” and “strangeness”, “involvement” and “detachment”, allowed me to observe “anomalies” (Collins 1986, 27; Berger 2015, 221; Adler and Adler 1987, 10-11). Considering these aspects of my personal biography during the research process was helpful to interpret the data and carry out the analysis (Collins 1986, 29; Berger 2015). These dimensions are particularly relevant in research adopting an intersectional approach (Collins 1986; Collins 1989). Further, reflecting upon the role of the researcher’s body when doing ethnography, in general and in particular in the field of theatre, is essential to capture several factors that influence our viewpoints as researchers as well as the ways in which other people understand the social world, which is the core of ethnography (Adler and Adler 1987, 17). This type of research, however, also includes further challenges, which are outlined in the next section.

3.6 The Challenges of Doing Research with Human Subjects

As explained in the previous sections, ethnography allows to capture various details or minutiae of everyday life that would otherwise go unnoticed (Gobo 2001, 39; Simmel, Goffman, Schwartz, Jacobs cited in Gobo 2001, 39). In fact, during participant observation, I had the opportunity to assist at various situations “behind the scenes”, for example during organisational meetings, or before and after the activities with participants, that would have been difficult to investigate had I not been there. At the same time, I had the opportunity to meet numerous people from different backgrounds, and this made research a veritable social experience. It is precisely thanks to this method that I could gain a better understanding of the context that I was studying.

Nevertheless, having access to the “backstage” led me to experience several challenges. In fact, throughout the months during which I collected the data for this study, I often assisted at complex situations in the Italian context. This was mainly related to two dimensions. On one hand, organisation was often problematic. When I participated in meetings aimed at organising activities, I could often perceive that ideas about the goals and targets of activities, and about the ways of coordinating them, were unclear to facilitators. Moreover, time management was not always effective. Since I was in the field not only as a student doing research but also as an intern, these problems also affected my role. Indeed, I usually had to adapt my academic and personal commitments to the rhythm of professionals, because this was the better solution in order to allow for the smooth development of the project.

On the other hand, another dimension that revealed sometimes complex to manage was my relationship with some facilitators. During participant observation, as explained above, my role was active, and as such I sometimes expressed my opinions or suggestions on activities either because I was directly asked to do so, or because I was told in advance that my suggestions were welcome. At the same time, I also tried to utilise my transferable skills on numerous occasions, for example as an interpreter, when this was needed. After a few months, I started to realise that I was experiencing on my skin several mechanisms and oppressive dynamics that practitioners stated that they aimed to deconstruct, as part of the goals of Freirian pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed. For instance, sometimes I was ignored when I was giving suggestions or contributions to the work that had to be carried out for the activities. Other times, I received unkind responses (although not in front of participants in activities). Overall, it revealed sometimes difficult to clarify these issues with some of the facilitators.

These issues are relevant in terms of reflexivity (Gobo 2001, 182; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 15; Berger 2015; Bassetti 2021, 28): my experiences in the field did influence my understanding of the context and topics I was studying. In research, this should be seen as a useful resource: although I analysed the data as impartially as possible, the work was carried out taking into account the whole process, including these challenges. In fact, the ways in which research participants responded to my presence revealed something about how they behave in other situations (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 16); for example, I sometimes observed similar reactions with other people in the field. It is peculiar of ethnographic research to provide this further perspective that would not be possible if using other research methods. Hence, it is important to consider this aspect when reading the analytical chapters.

Finally, another major area where reflexivity is helpful is that of communication during interviews. As previously explained, interviews were long. Language barriers sometimes appeared: in certain cases both the interviewees and I spoke in our mother tongue (in the case of Italian language); in other instances, the language utilised (English) was neither the mother tongue of interviewees nor mine; in still other cases, the language utilised (English) was the mother tongue of interviewees, but not mine.

In the case of the use of English, although language skills were always advanced, language affected conversations. On one side, I could see the difficulties that sometimes interviewees had (and directly expressed to me) to answer questions and go into detail while speaking a language that was not their first language. On the other side, following interviewees was sometimes difficult for me.

In the case of interviews in Italian, communication was not always straightforward: questions were sometimes very specific, but interviewees felt the need to provide me with long answers to add further information. During coding, I realised that sometimes those

further details were not central to the topics discussed. Overall, this did not affect the validity and exhaustion of the data, but it did play a role when it came to transcription and analysis, rendering them more complex.

On top of that, the necessity to conduct interviews online, and the fact that interview guides were long, influenced interviews themselves, sometimes probably causing mental fatigue in responders, as two interviewees said to me at the end of our conversations.

These issues are related to the fact that interviews are a form of interaction where knowledge is created and meaning is produced (Holstein and Gubrium 1997). This occurs thanks to the interviewee, as much as to the interviewer (Holstein and Gubrium 1997) playing different roles in this “interpersonal drama” (de Sola Pool cited in Holstein and Gubrium 1997, 120). As such, it is a complex endeavour that necessitates constant training. Critical reflection on the interviews conducted is helpful both for improving interviewing skills, and for reasons of transparency.

To sum up, data collection and analysis were affected by various issues that rendered the research process complex, and the study should be read considering these aspects. However, from a methodological point of view, this underlines how knowledge is produced in a given context with other human beings, which is a central dimension when studying social action.

3.7 Notes on Ethics and Privacy

Before proceeding with the analysis of the context of the research, it is important to provide some information regarding research ethics. As mentioned in Section 3.3, since the beginning of the study, I had the opportunity to provide research participants with information about my thesis and its research objectives, often verbally and in the case of

interviewees also in a written form. All participants gave me consent to conduct this research, and interviewees completed and signed Informed Consent Forms (which also included information on the study) that were sent to the Department of Sociology and Social Research at the University of Trento to keep them safely stored.

Regarding the protection of participants' privacy, for reasons of clarity and uniformity, I decided to proceed as follows, after having discussed these strategies with research participants, who agreed upon them. The names of the key informants are real, since they are treated as experts of Theatre of the Oppressed. All other names of people included in the research, including the other seven interviewees, are pseudonyms.

Care was taken to protect participants' privacy also through anonymity of other names. In fact, the names of countries, cities and provinces are real, whereas the names of little towns, organisations or associations, and other projects realised (both by the four partner organisations of MiGreat! and by key informants) are referred to through a brief description into square brackets. The names of the four partner organisations of MiGreat! are referred to as "Italian Cooperative" or "French", "Hungarian", or "British organisation". In this way, the privacy of any people connected to given places or involved in the projects is protected.

3.8 Conclusions

The adoption of different qualitative methods led to a cross-fertilisation that revealed considerably important for this study. In fact, considering the variety of phases, activities, and products that MiGreat! included, as well as the different social backgrounds and roles of the people involved, utilising several methods allowed me to capture numerous aspects of the topic I was investigating, choosing the method that was most suitable to gain knowledge on the various issues studied, in relation to the research questions. At the same time, utilising

different methods allowed me to compare the data from different sources, gaining a more complete picture of the themes and topics that I was tackling. Indeed, this triangulation increased the reliability of the data (Gobo 2001, 166-167; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 183), and it allowed me to compare the materials across the four contexts involved, but also across the situations that I observed in the research process. In sum, the cross-fertilisation of the different methods contributed to provide me with the information that was necessary to answer the research questions considering the diversity and richness that were central to the context considered.

Furthermore, the adoption of an abductive logic was helpful because it allowed me to rely on previous findings as highlighted in the literature and on the theoretical approach of intersectionality. In this way, the literature provided me with various important “reference points” that guided me throughout my research. This was essential given the fact that various aspects of the topic investigated have been overlooked by scholars so far, and given the complexity and amount of data collected. Moreover, through an abductive logic I could consider my research questions an important lens through which to look at the data, which was helpful to avoid considering irrelevant aspects or on the contrary neglecting important dimensions. At the same time, an abductive logic allowed me to collect and analyse the data paying attention to differences and similarities between what I was observing in the field and what the literature underlined. In this way, I could follow an iterative process that gave me flexibility as I was proceeding with data collection and data analysis (cf. also Timmermans and Tavory 2012; Timmermans and Tavory 2014).

Additionally, the combination of different methods helped me answer the research questions. As outlined in Section 3.3, ethnography was helpful to answer all research questions,

whereas interviews helped me answer especially sub-questions 1 and 2, while documentary and visual analysis were useful to answer particularly sub-questions 2 and 3. Ethnography was central to investigate numerous aspects of the field I was studying: the ways in which social actors interpret and give meaning to social actions during the organisation and enactment of participatory activities, several aspects that may remain in the background but still reveal something important about the issues examined, various nuances concerning also the ways in which social actors behave “in the backstage”, thanks to my immersion in the field (cf. also Gobo 2001, 39, 82-83). This was particularly useful in the context of theatre. Interviews allowed me to explore the issues related to the use of Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations in Italy. Moreover, they were crucial to deepen various aspects concerning MiGreat! that I could not observe, or about which I was interested in having the interviewees’ perspectives (such as who participants were during the activities I could not observe, or how facilitators interpreted and communicated the goals of the project). Finally, the analysis of documents and visual materials was central given the focus on how people from a migrant background are represented, as they allowed me to investigate the types of representations that were conveyed to the public, as well as the ways in which the work of facilitators was presented. The findings are discussed in the following chapters. Before that, an overview of the empirical context is provided, with a discussion on the application of Theatre of the Oppressed to the context of migrations in Italy, which is the topic analysed in the next chapter.

4. Empirical Context: Theatre of the Oppressed in Italy

This chapter examines the empirical context in which the MiGreat! project was included. Further, some information concerning the development, organisation and enactment of creative and participatory approaches to inequalities, as well as the ways of representing people from a migrant background in projects of Theatre of the Oppressed and migrations in Italy is provided (general research question, with some references to the three sub-questions, particularly the first and the third ones). In particular, the chapter analyses the development of a community of Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners above all in the Italian context. It discusses the principles of this theatrical method as they are understood by the three key informants and their different ways of utilising this theatrical method. Subsequently, the central aspects of MiGreat! are outlined. Finally, the application of Theatre of the Oppressed to the field of migrations in Italy is analysed.

4.1 The Main Principles of Theatre of the Oppressed

As outlined in Chapter 2, Theatre of the Oppressed is based on several principles and goals, as Roberto Mazzini, President of the Italian Cooperative, explains below.

So, in... from what Boal said and wrote, the principles are to go-to analyse and transform oppressive situations. Analysis and transformation are two aspects that for him are closely linked, so in the moment in which I analyse, in part I also transform and by transforming, I understand reality better, so I analyse it better. [...] [T]hen there is another one that he sometimes mentions, which is to give to the people, to give back to the people, the means of theatrical production. This sounds a little like Marx, doesn't it? (Interview with Roberto Mazzini, President of the Italian Cooperative and co-writer of MiGreat! application)

Analysis is the premise to transformation, since reality needs to be firstly understood to then be changed (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Alshughry 2018, 174; Boal 2021, 42-43; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 169; Santos 2018, 205). Moreover, the two overlap: while one analyses reality, they also transform it, and vice versa (see also Malkassian et al. 2021, 27). Furthermore, Theatre of the Oppressed aims at “giving back to the people the means of theatrical production”, which is connected to the Marxist thinking at the basis of both the Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal 2011a, 21 and 26; Boal cited in Pisciotta 2016, 69; Bozza 2020, 2; Santos 2018, 205; Tolomelli 2012, 22 and 30; Mazzini 2011, 8 and 10) (see also interview with Uri Noy Meir).

Transformation is rendered possible by theatre and more generally art:

After that it is art as a space, art and theatre in particular, as a space of liberation, transformation, emancipation, therefore dialogue, right? (Interview with Uri Noy Meir)

According to Uri Noy Meir, who was born in Israel and migrated to Italy in 2012, where he has worked since then, Theatre of the Oppressed is based on the idea that art and more specifically theatre allow for “liberation, transformation, emancipation” and “dialogue” – in particular, “transformation of the self and of society” (interview with Uri Noy Meir). This is similar to the principles identified by Roberto Mazzini and recalls Freirian pedagogy (Freire 2018; Tolomelli 2012), based on giving people human dignity and fostering dialogue to achieve equality (Tolomelli 2012, 25; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 115; Freire 2018).

Nevertheless, Uri Noy Meir introduces a further dimension: the means of theatrical production should be provided not only to “the people” to achieve social transformation. Rather, also non-human beings should be included:

the principles that are important for me, [...] is to humanise humanity and, I would add, and... in an ecological way, in the sense (*smiles*), this is my addition, isn't it? Because in my opinion the risk sometimes of theatre, yes, that we become... human-centric, in the sense... right? We do not take into consideration beings who are not human, that are equally if not more important in this historical moment in which we live, therefore [...] to humanise humanity as-as a principle.
(Interview with Uri Noy Meir)

Theatre of the Oppressed emerged in a specific social and historical context with a Marxist influence, whereas nowadays practitioners adapt it to contemporary societies (interview with Uri Noy Meir). Indeed, Uri Noy Meir provides an interesting contribution to Theatre of the Oppressed: this theatrical method aims at “humanising humanity”, but in an ecological way. Theatre of the Oppressed is seen as useful not only to put humans at the centre of attention, but also to include non-human beings, and therefore consider the environment in its entirety, abandoning an approach that considers only people at the centre of attention.

As underlined by its name, oppression is central to Theatre of the Oppressed. Interviewees provide similar definitions of it and underline its relation to power, as shown in the next quotation.

So we have different powers, so oppression is when my power is... is greater than yours and therefore my influence on your life is greater than yours. Whether or not I'm intentionally aware, voluntarily put in place the mechanisms or not, etcetera, I still belong to a privileged group that oppresses other groups. [...] [T]he other misunderstanding is that oppression is done by bad people, right? Like this somewhat Catholic idea, in my opinion, of good and evil and therefore that the oppressor is an evil person who oppresses others because he likes to oppress. It is not like this, like it is often not like this, then there are also those like this, but uh... often oppression passes through, perhaps, wanting the good of the other, right? (Interview with Roberto Mazzini, President of the Italian Cooperative and co-writer of MiGreat! application)

As Roberto explains, oppression is based on the fact that people possess different amounts of power, and it manifests when some people possess more power than others and thereby influence other people's lives. In order for this to happen, people do not need to be aware of it, since the exercise of power is simply based on belonging to a privileged group (see also Malkassian et al. 2021, 27). As intersectional scholars argue, systems of power, such as sexism, racism, or classism, lead to the emergence of social groups enjoying various privileges, and others that are subordinated (e.g., Collins 2000; hooks 2021; Collins and Chepp 2013, 58-59; Cooper 2015; Lorde 1984, 115; Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991). Similarly, Roberto underlines that oppression is not due to a dichotomy between "good people" and "bad people" (cf. also Collins 2000, 288-289; Lutz and Wenning cited in Bello 2011, 351; Erel et al. 2017, 307; Pratt et al. cited in Erel et al. 2017, 307). Rather, it is due to belonging to given social groups which enjoy certain privileges. Consequently, it depends on wider social structures (Erel et al. 2017). This understanding of oppression is underlined also by Massimiliano Bozza: oppression is not caused by a dichotomy between "good people" and "bad people", and in a Forum-Theatre "the contradictions of each character" should be shown (interview with Massimiliano Bozza). Moreover, oppression can be caused by goodwill, for example leading to paternalistic dynamics, which is a central aspect when working with people from a migrant background (e.g., Young 2003; Mohanty 1984; Rozakou 2012). Additionally, Massimiliano Bozza underlines that this concept is dynamic:

The concept is dynamic, so I can be oppressor and... for example at my house and then I can be oppressed at work, right? It is a concept uh... dynamic. You must not make the mistake of thinking that the oppressed are one category and that the oppressors are another. (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

Massimiliano highlights that, being a dynamic concept, people can be oppressors in a given context and oppressed in another (see also interview with Uri Noy Meir and Roberto Mazzini; cf. also Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 126). This idea is acknowledged also by intersectional scholars, who underline how people can occupy a privileged position in a given system of power (e.g., in a patriarchal society if they are men), and a subordinate role in another one (e.g., in a racist society if they are black) (cf. also Crenshaw cited in Collins and Chepp 2013, 60; Taha 2019, 4; Bürkner 2012, 186; Samuels and Ross-Sheriff 2008; Crenshaw 1991). Indeed, discrimination, as well as oppression, are more complex than a simple dichotomy between perpetrators and victims (cf. also Collins 2000, 288-289; Lutz and Wenning cited in Bello 2011, 351; Erel et al. 2017, 307; Pratt et al. cited in Erel et al. 2017, 307). In fact, Boal himself “did never claim that the world is divided into two”, namely the oppressed and the oppressors (interview with Roberto Mazzini). Similarly, racism should not be viewed as based on a dualism between (bad) racist people and (good) antiracist people:

Then there is this idea that is introduced, how to say, that the anti-racists are the good people, the others are the bad people, right? [...] [I]n reality the situation is more complex, like we anti-racists too should question how much we are unwittingly discriminatory and racist, if nothing else because we use, like we are in a position of power, we are white, we are male, we are heterosexual, we are Christians, we are I don't know what. (Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

Racism and oppression are complex phenomena, since everybody occupies given positions of power due to their skin colour, gender, sexual orientation, religion, even if they define themselves “antiracist”. Thus, polarised positions about racism and antiracism should be avoided. In this way, an intersectional component is introduced. For instance, being white, male, heterosexual, Christian, are all factors that create privileges for those who embody

these characteristics and live in racist, patriarchal, heteronormative, Christian societies (e.g., Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991; hooks 2020a; hooks 2021). Uri Noy Meir warns against creating dichotomies:

this not only does not represent reality, but it is also counterproductive to liberation, to humanisation, because if we create dichotomies, it is precisely dichotomies the way in which we have built and are building war etcetera. [...] [T]here are people who have more power and less power in a specific context, so it's a matter of power. (Interview with Uri Noy Meir)

Dichotomies hinder liberation and humanisation, since they create conflict, as highlighted also by hooks (2020a; see also Lorde 1984, 114; Collins 1986, 19-21). Oppression is “a matter of power”. In the case of people from a migrant background, oppression is conceptualised as being strictly linked with rights.

Uh being oppressed means that-having less chance to guide your-your life according to your desires, your aspirations and to... having... I don't know, to-be uh a migrant, for example, today in Europe it means having less rights, no? Risking dying while crossing, and... risking being put in detention centres, not having the right to vote, not having the right to health except, exactly, through gimmicks, and... like it means having substantially less chance to live (Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

Being oppressed means having less possibilities to decide over one's own life according to one's desires. For people from a migrant background living in Europe, it is equivalent to having less rights, risking one's own life, as well as having less possibilities to live. In sum, through the concept of oppression, the central role that conflict and power play in this theatrical method is revealed, as argued by Massimiliano Bozza (extract from fieldnotes, 28/04/2022). Because of the centrality of these principles, Theatre of the Oppressed is strictly connected to empowerment, which is also one of its main goals (Mazzini and Talamonti

2011, 112; Bozza 2020, 1; Tolomelli 2012, 22; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012), as explained below.

the empowerment which, for me, is perhaps one of the most central elements also, I can say, sign, for the effectiveness of Theatre of the Oppressed on the fact that it creates empowerment in the sense that uh... it facilitates the taking of power of those who feel powerless, right? So empowerment is that experience of uh-of making people feel or even connect with the power that... personal [power], that you can have uh-but you don't feel to have [...] to change, [...] change the relationship that you have with [your]self, so... and-and I saw the Theatre of the Oppressed very effective in this (Interview with Uri Noy Meir)

According to Uri Noy Meir, empowerment is a crucial element of Theatre of the Oppressed, and this method is effective in helping achieve it. In particular, it allows people who feel disempowered to reappropriate their personal power in order to change the relationship that they have with themselves – being aware of the power they possess. In Theatre of the Oppressed, empowerment includes both an individual and a collective dimension (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 112; Bozza 2020, 1; Tolomelli 2012, 22; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 11):

I like to think of it more in terms of a group, so and... the idea that empowerment is a group process through which a group that in the social hierarchy we are used to has less power, manages to... uh have more power to affect reality, society, oppressive mechanisms etcetera, so I would call it more a collective empowerment. Then it is clear that the Theatre-the Theatre of the Oppressed also works on the individual one because, when it asks, right? to the spectator to enter the scene in the Forum, the individual aspect is also playing there, right? (Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

As Roberto Mazzini explains, empowerment is a “group process” through which a subordinate group manages to influence reality and society, leading to collective

empowerment. Yet, the interviewee acknowledges that Theatre of the Oppressed also includes an individual dimension, since active participation during activities, for example by spect-actors during Forum-Theatres, fosters individual empowerment. This is underlined also by Massimiliano Bozza:

So the concept of empowerment is... well basically it is the basis of Theatre of the Oppressed because... or even it is the basis of the-the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, because it is... first of all it is an autonomous process. [...] [T]he same methodology and the solicitation in the form of maieutics, let's say, makes sure that-that the-the person who is participating in the workshop discovers by themselves, what their own potentialities are, [...] this fact of wanting to participate is already a first-a first level of empowerment. The second level of empowerment [...] happens when the Forum takes place [...] Boal said this, that when you transform, like that-that the act of intervening, it is already... it is transformative, because when one enters the scene and you are and... even by acting the act of transforming, you are already transforming reality. [...] And-and then oh well, like when you start being, mastering the techniques, there it is complete, in my opinion. (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

As Massimiliano Bozza explains, empowerment is “the basis of Theatre of the Oppressed” as well as of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed. It refers to an autonomous process facilitated by a maieutic approach that allows people to discover their potentialities. In particular, Theatre of the Oppressed activities promote empowerment at various levels: firstly, at the level of participation (Boal 2021, 95; Castri cited in Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 112; Opfermann 2020, 141; Pisciotta 2016, 66); secondly, during a Forum-Theatre, when spect-actors intervene and in doing so they transform reality (Boal cited in Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 111; Boal cited in Alshughry 2018, 171; Alshughry 2018, 174; Boal 2021, 42-43; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 169; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012); thirdly, when people start to get complete mastery of the method, in order to overcome oppression. In this way, Theatre of the Oppressed becomes veritably a “theatre *of* the oppressed, *for* the

oppressed” (interview with Massimiliano Bozza, original emphasis; see also Boal 2011b, 108), allowing participants to become active citizens (Boal cited in Mazzini 2011, 7; Boal 2011b, 14; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; Boal cited in Santos 2018, 143).

There are however other types of goals of Theatre of the Oppressed, as explained below.

Yes, uh... I would say more political, but I know that Boal would not agree, [...] he also cared about the aesthetic aspect, right? [...] And... therefore the purposes for him would be threefold, right? Social, political and aesthetic. Uh... but yeah! I can agree, as long as aesthetics, indeed, does not prevail (*laughs*) over... the... over the purpose that in my opinion is the transformative one, of-of-of making a transformation, small or large, of reality, small or large, into which I intervene. (Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

As Roberto Mazzini explains, Theatre of the Oppressed includes three main goals: political, social and aesthetic. According to him, the aesthetic one should not dominate the other two, since the core issue in Theatre of the Oppressed is the transformation of reality, which is in itself a political and social endeavour. Yet, for Boal the aesthetic goal was also central, as shown by his latest work on the Aesthetics of the Oppressed (Boal 2011b), which is in fact crucial in the work carried out by Massimiliano Bozza. In fact, aesthetics should not be secondary:

Many think that Theatre of the Oppressed must be poor. It must be achieved with few means, but it must be artistically rich. [...] [I]t must not be confused either with the fact that it is a poor theatre or with the fact that it is a second-rate theatre. (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

Massimiliano Bozza underlines how Theatre of the Oppressed should be “artistically rich”, meaning that the aesthetic dimension should not be sacrificed at the expense of political and social goals. Yet, it should not be considered only an artistic performance: Theatre of the

Oppressed includes social, political and pedagogical goals which should be achieved through aesthetic means (see also interview with Massimiliano Bozza; Santos cited in Bozza 2020, 8; Bozza 2020, 2; Tolomelli 2012, 34-35). Some practitioners, such as Uri Noy Meir, consider Theatre of the Oppressed to comprise “eco-psycho-social” goals (interview with Uri Noy Meir), and therefore an attention not only to individuals and society, but also to the environment.

In the case of migrations, Theatre of the Oppressed is considered helpful for various reasons. First of all, this is due to the central position of problematisation in this theatrical method:

Well the first thing that comes to mind is the maieutic attitude that Theatre of the Oppressed brings, right? This problematising attitude, of asking questions, of not convincing people of a thesis, but trying to do a research together starting from oppressions, situations, question marks etcetera. I think it can help because migration, at least in Italy, right? it's a kind of diriment question-dichotomous question, isn't it? that divides you in two, right? the world of those who are racist and the world of those who are not racist. In reality it is a stretch because, in my opinion, there are so many people in the middle, right? a grey area that is neither explicitly racist, intentionally racist, nor anti-racist, with which one can work. (Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

As the quote above shows, Theatre of the Oppressed is based on a maieutic approach based on problematisation. According to Roberto Mazzini, this approach is particularly helpful in the case of migrations especially in the Italian context, since in this country “migration” is often explained through a dichotomy between racist and antiracist people. Thanks to its problematising approach, Theatre of the Oppressed allows to work with people who do not belong to either of these two categories, a “grey zone” that does not define itself either as racist or as antiracist.

Other reasons why Theatre of the Oppressed is helpful in the field of migrations are the attention to concrete situations of oppression and the theatrical ritual, as highlighted in the next quote.

The second is uh... the... the emphasis that is placed on micro-situations, right? so not so much “uh racism is a bad thing, you must fight it!”, as this micro-situation that I am presenting to you, right? “What do we do in this micro-situation?” [...] So beyond a big discourse on... “we want to be anti-racist”, the concreteness of the [specific] situations, right? that people experience, in my opinion, puts you in front of the need to find some strategies; two, to the complexity of the situations, [...]. Third, there is the-the use of the body and the theatrical ritual. [...] So the theatre [...] can be a nice ritual moment in which you find yourself as a community, among different [people], who have different needs and you try to put these needs together. (Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

Roberto Mazzini here explains that Theatre of the Oppressed focuses on “micro-situations”, on concrete cases of oppressions and on the search for strategies to solve them, as well as on the understanding of their complexity. This focus on the micro level recalls microsociology and the focus on everyday social interactions. In the field of migrations, this may be helpful to understand and overcome concrete situations of racism. Indeed, this attention to concrete problems may be particularly helpful when specific interventions are needed, also within institutional settings (Pisciotta 2016, 73). Additionally, Theatre of the Oppressed is based on the use of the body and of the theatrical ritual. Through the representation of reality in a performance, society might observe itself (Vösu 2010, 156-157; Pisciotta 2016, 67; Nichols 1956, 179). This may facilitate people with different needs coming together (Nichols 1956, 179; cf. also Durkheim, Goffman, cited in Bassetti 2019, 136; Shevtsova 2018, 113), trying to combine these different needs and to satisfy them. Moreover, Theatre of the Oppressed may foster dialogue between people from a migrant background and people not from a migrant background, in order to decrease the polarisation around migrations and

marginalisation of this topic (interview with Roberto Mazzini and Uri Noy Meir; cf. also Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7).

Finally, empowerment is central to Theatre of the Oppressed (interview with Roberto Mazzini, Massimiliano Bozza and Uri Noy Meir) and relevant in the field of migrations (Erel and Reynolds 2014, 110; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 70; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 11; Bello 2011), as explained below.

If Theatre of the Oppressed managed to, [...] make sure that uh... migrants took completely possession of the methodology, in such a way as to be able to manage it themselves and therefore decide absolutely, in full autonomy, [...] [D]o what we do, that is, proposing-proposing uh... some theatrical discussions on issues that [...] to that group [...] seem to be a priority, but using their codes [...] for me there should be a Magdalena movement of migrants, [...] where some migrants, after having experienced all the uh... our thing, decide to use Augusto Boal's method to do themselves what I do when... when I summon a group of people, so that they are autonomous (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

According to Massimiliano Bozza, if people from a migrant background managed to become masters of Theatre of the Oppressed, they would autonomously decide how to carry out activities with the aim of empowering their communities, proposing discussions around the issues that would be central for them (see also Malkassian et al. 2021, 27). In other words, a similar movement to that of the Ma(g)dalenas should emerge, composed and managed by people from a migrant background who should utilise this theatrical method autonomously to advance their needs and requests and challenge racism (e.g., Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Smith 2012). As such, Theatre of the Oppressed would help people from a migrant background liberate themselves from oppression (e.g., Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Erel and Reynolds 2014; Ranjan 2020).

In Theatre of the Oppressed activities, a key professional figure is represented by the Joker. Indeed, the Joker coordinates participation and discussion, and should follow a dialogical and problematising approach (Pisciotta 2016, 69-70; Tolomelli 2012, 37; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 5). Moreover, they should take care that the goals mentioned above are reached (see also Section 2.6). The Joker should possess numerous qualities and skills, as the following quotation highlights.

Yes, in my opinion uh... curiosity, authenticity and... and presence, in the sense, how-are important elements. Curiosity because... yes, it is a work of research, of exploration and you have to be genuinely curious, curious, to do it, otherwise you are doing something else, [...] not Theatre of the Oppressed, if you don't do a sincere investigation on... on reality. And... then, authenticity in the sense that it is also always linked to being sincere, being true, human, real with the people you work with because this is also what allows others to open up, to work meaningfully with you [...], because it is a theatre that demands authenticity because it is based on real story, on real experience [...]. And... yes, presence, which in this sense also means presence-being in the body, it is a work in the body, being and... also perhaps a level of charisma or possibility of being uh... with-in communication, or let's say, with the others, communicative [...] therefore surely this thing of being present at the moment is needed, present in the body, in that context. (Interview with Uri Noy Meir)

As explained in the quote above, the Joker should possess three different characteristics. Since Theatre of the Oppressed aims at researching and exploring situations and possible solutions, curiosity and attention to research and investigation are key. Then, the Joker should be authentic, real, “human”, because in activities people need to open up, and to do so it is relevant that the Joker starts opening up and being authentic in front of participants, specifically considering that Theatre of the Oppressed focuses on people's real experiences (cf. also Boal cited in Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 11). Additionally, presence is

central, because being able to guide a group of participants and an audience requires the ability to be present in one's body but also in communication with others in that context, possibly also through a charismatic attitude. In fact, as Roberto Mazzini argues, the Joker should pay attention to whether all participants are included in activities.

Moreover, the Joker is an "artistic director", given that they are responsible for theatrical activities and performances (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza; Bozza 2020, 6; Santos 2018, 94).

In addition, the Joker should utilise a maieutic approach, asking numerous questions to participants and the audience in order to question and problematise any intervention or proposed solution, without taking for granted the rightness of their own ideas (cf. also Pisciotta 2016, 69-70; Tolomelli 2012, 37 and 42), as shown below.

When you problematise everything uh-uh... it's always a way to... isn't it? even when they give you an answer that everyone applauds, so you are all happy that they applauded you, but, say: "Uh, but do you all agree? Is this the right solution, this one? But can it work? Is it magical? Is it real?" "Is it real? Is it magical?" this is a question you-you always ask, Boal always asked it, right? Like: "Oh well, but would you do it then in reality and... or not? [...] But is this real, is it feasible? [...]". (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

As Massimiliano Bozza points out, the Joker has to problematise everything. The Joker should always ask questions to the audience, for example about whether the proposed solution is "real" or "magic", namely whether they think that it could be realised or whether they deem it "utopian" or "unrealistic" (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 118-119; Miramonti 2017, 13-14 and 195-203; Day 2002, 22; Boal 2002, 260-262; Boal 2021, 43; Engelstad cited in Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 8; Santos 2018, 148). Furthermore, the Joker should be neutral in managing discussions, but should not be politically neutral:

It is not true that the host must not be politically aligned, but he must not be indoctrinating, [...] neutrality is only as a moderator [...] I never say my way of thinking, I don't indoctrinate, I don't give.... But uh... if you do one thing uh... let's say, well, against illegal recruitment, it is clear that you, inside yourself, are against illegal recruitment. [...] [Y]ou must have, you must have the situation clear because you must not allow yourself to be exploited, Theatre of the Oppressed is in any case a political weapon. (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

As Massimiliano Bozza argues, the Joker should not be “indoctrinating”, they should ask questions without expressing or imposing their thoughts on the issues discussed (cf. also Pisciotta 2016, 69-71; Tolomelli 2012, 37 and 42; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 5). Nevertheless, they should not be politically neutral. For instance, when conducting a Forum-Theatre on a contested issue, they should occupy clear political positions in relation to it, in order not to perpetuate oppression. This is key given that Theatre of the Oppressed, precisely because of its principles and goals, is a “political weapon” (cf. also Boal 2011a, 26).

However, adopting a critical approach may be difficult for a Joker when working within groups or associations. This could occur when, for example, associations are not primarily focused on Theatre of the Oppressed, but ask practitioners to intervene with this method to tackle issues that they experience with their targets, as explained below.

I realised by myself [...] that I was doing the one who criticised in some way, like in the moment in which I enter within an association [...] when you work for an institution, you tend to use Theatre of the Oppressed as a thing like... [...] a drill without a tip, I mean, like a... something that then becomes an end in itself and Theatre of the Oppressed must not be an end in itself, never. And... you become somehow uh... institutional, so you don't have then that strength to be able to contest what... what is not well (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

Massimiliano Bozza, who has worked for [cultural association aimed at social advancement] in Puglia with groups of refugees and asylum seekers since 2016, explains that his work there was limited by the fact of being part of an institution. This fact sometimes prevented him from deploying the full potential of Theatre of the Oppressed, including opportunities for critical thinking, since he had to operate respecting institutional rules and approaches to the field of migrations that hindered a problematising perspective (cf. also Pisciotta 2016; Tolomelli 2012; Erel et al. 2017, 307; see also Malkassian et al. 2021, 27). Therefore, he argues that working for an institution did not provide him with the freedom and autonomy that a Joker should have.

In sum, being a Joker is a “complex job”, which is why not being alone may help during activities (interview with Roberto Mazzini). In fact, some Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners often conduct activities in pairs, usually with a Joker of a different gender, to create a “greater balance” (interview with Massimiliano Bozza). At the same time, the Joker’s gender can impact on activities:

sometimes it was useful to have a... a reference figure of the gender you are. [...]
[T]o create a-a space for sharing... this... feminine with so... sometimes the presence of a man uh can be-inhibit to... [...] tell certain stories, for example. [...]
...it all depends on the context, [...] like if you want, for example, to work on issues that also concern the masculine, the part a bit... the most difficult stories etcetera, hmm it’s easier that they open up to this with a man, right? [...] [T]here are uh... uh... cultural elements and others. (Interview with Uri Noy Meir)

As Uri Noy Meir explains, having a Joker of the same gender identity of participants may help them discuss certain issues, which on the contrary may be hindered if a Joker with a different gender identity is present. Although this reflection reveals a somewhat simplistic understanding of gender dynamics, according to the interviewee there are certain “cultural

elements” that may facilitate or limit discussion and participation, which is why working in pairs may be helpful (interview with Uri Noy Meir). In other words, an interplay between gender and ethnicity or cultural background is also underlined, implying that gender dynamics take place especially when working with people from given ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Not only gender, but also other characteristics that the Jokers embody may play a role during activities, as outlined in the next quote.

being, let’s say, some of the stories related to being a Muslim woman, I’m not Muslim and I’m not a woman, so probably a female Muslim Jolly uh would have helped, because she would have had, right? a greater reflection, a greater sensitivity also to deal with this issue. [...] [I]t seems quite obvious to me that a person identifies themselves, right? in someone similar, therefore being... well, white... and... also old, right? (*smiles*) Anyway of a certain age, male, non-Muslim, now I don’t know what else, well, uh it could have influenced? I think so, but I can’t tell you because I didn’t have this sort of feedback, right? (Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

Referring to [European project aimed at contrasting islamophobia realised between 2019 and 2022], where participants were often Muslim women, Roberto Mazzini suggests that, since he was the Joker and he is neither Muslim nor female, having a Joker with these characteristics could have helped in the relationship with participants. Again, attention to different axes of difference, and the role they play in relationships, is underlined. This is relevant from an intersectional perspective, because a subject’s position is complex and multidimensional, and it is situated both in situations of everyday life and in situations represented in Theatre of the Oppressed (cf. Santos 2018; Kuringa (no date(a)); Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022; Collins 2000; Collins and Chepp 2013; hooks 2021; Bello 2011, 351).

These issues are tackled also in the feminist approach to Theatre of the Oppressed:

Moreover, now the Forum is set-Bárbara, Julian [Augusto Boal's son], they set the Forum using a lot the concept of allies, therefore intervening on the allies, Bárbara makes uh-the audience intervene starting from their own situation, so [...] I intervene as a male, white, adult, I do not intervene as if I were uh... indigenous, or the... the nurse, I intervene from my position and I intervene bringing my real solution, this is a bit the sense. (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

As Massimiliano Bozza explains, when conducting Forum-Theatre sessions, according to Bárbara Santos and feminist Theatre of the Oppressed, one should allow spect-actors to intervene reflecting on their social characteristics, taking into account their gender, ethnic, age background, without pretending to be someone else, or playing a character belonging to different social groups. Every spect-actor should bring about their own solution, reflecting on their social positions (cf. also Kuringa (no date(a)); Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022; Santos 2018, 144-145; Erel et al. 2017, 309).

In sum, interviewees share several principles and goals of Theatre of the Oppressed in general and in the field of migrations in particular, although some differences exist in the priorities that they attribute to some of these goals over others. Moreover, they generally agree on the skills that Jokers need to employ when coordinating activities, including the role played by their as well as participants' intersectional identities. The ways of working with Theatre of the Oppressed by the three key informants include some differences, which are in line with the diversity that is present in the use of this method in Italy, as discussed in the next section.

4.2 Theatre of the Oppressed in Italy and Around the World: An Overview

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Theatre of the Oppressed is usually included in the broad field of Social Theatre (Pisciotta 2016, 66 and 69). Practitioners of Theatre of the Oppressed are numerous and widespread worldwide (interview with Raffaella, Joker in the Italian Cooperative; cf. also Malkassian et al. 2021, 25; Pisciotta 2016, 66; Boal 2011b, 107; Mazzini 2011, 7; Bozza 2020, 1). This theatrical method is extensively present also in Italy:

So we work in this sense here, the goals is not so much that of spreading Theatre of the Oppressed in Italy anymore, because it's already very, very widespread, then you can always do more, but there are groups and people basically in all parts of Italy, we always discover new ones when there is a festival, unknown etcetera (*smiles*) (Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

As Roberto Mazzini explains, Theatre of the Oppressed is “very, very widespread”, and various groups and people practising it exist in any part of Italy, sometimes without knowing each other, due to the high number of people utilising this method. Practitioners often have a background in psychology, pedagogy, social work, and theatre (Bozza 2020, 1; see also Malkassian et al. 2021, 25). This type of theatre is applied to various areas with social, educational, political, artistic and therapeutic goals (Tolomelli 2012, 34-35), generally with the aim of fostering education and political action in situations of vulnerability and social inequalities (Pisciotta 2016, 69 and 73). Indeed, Theatre of the Oppressed, at least in the Italian context, is part of those types of theatre that are defined “social” and “political”, referring to their goals and the issues that they tackle through activities and theatrical representations (Pisciotta 2016, 69). Contrary to other types of theatre, and similarly to Social Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed does not usually take place within theatres, but rather in public spaces, such as streets, parks, but also schools and prisons, among others (Pisciotta 2016, 66 and 69; Rossi Ghiglione 2011). Moreover, it is based on people's active

participation (Boal 2021, 95; Castri cited in Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 112; Pisciotta 2016; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 59; Opfermann 2020, 141; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 6). In sum, because of these differences with more traditional theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed is often related more to the social sector than the artistic one, at least in the Italian, contemporary society.

Theatre of the Oppressed in Italy, but also at an international level, is highly varied. For example, some practitioners work autonomously, while others are reunited in groups, as explained in the quotation below.

in the world of Theatre of the Oppressed there are some individuals who do Theatre of the Oppressed alone and there are groups. So I for... a bit the coherence I feel with the method, a bit because I don't like the idea of being a single professional who does some things and... [...] with them [some people I knew from previous trainings who were enthusiastic about the method] I began to think: "But why don't we make an association?", to spread this method that almost nobody knew in Italy. (Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

Roberto Mazzini decided to found a cooperative both because of coherence with the method – which is based on a process of collective learning and dialogue (Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 4; cf. also Malkassian et al. 2021, 27) – and for his personal preference. In this way he started spreading this method that, at the end of the 1980s, was generally unknown in Italy. The variety of approaches to the method is also due to the fact that Boal never established a school of Theatre of the Oppressed (interview with Roberto Mazzini), and he did so intentionally:

Both Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal left a mountain of material and... also in bibliographic terms, of documents, but above all they left word not to be applied, but to be reinterpreted. We-we do not have fixed recipes for things and this is also

a-a being, as trainers and as practitioners, uh... always on the line of imbalance, because this questioning of the method is also a questioning of ourselves.
(Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As Raffaella, a Theatre of the Oppressed practitioner and Joker in the Forum-Theatre realised by the Italian Cooperative explains, both Freire and Boal wrote numerous works, but asked to be “reinterpreted”. Consequently, there are no “fixed recipes”, the method is constantly questioned and readapted, and it is continuously evolving (Santos 2018, 98; Bozza 2020, 2), leading to a regular questioning of practitioners themselves, as well as a high level of autonomy for practitioners (Bozza 2020, 2). However, this variety includes some downsides.

What happened, that we have examples of all kinds, but what has always worried me is this technicism, that is the idea that I explain the technique to you, then you use it as you want and there have been people who used it to sell vacuum cleaners, to t... train the police to hold the shows back, you know? [...] [I]n between there are a lot of things missing that I call “method”, that is, how do you use that technique because uh... for what purpose? Uh how do you take into account the characteristics of that group? How do you adapt it to that group, to that path? After that technique, what else do you use and why do you use it? [...] So the need arose [...] to work on the method and therefore systematise a little the-the training
(Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

Several practitioners have concentrated on the techniques and applied them as they wished, pursuing goals which are against Theatre of the Oppressed. Rather, attention to the method, including how to use techniques with a given objective and for which reasons, is often overlooked. As a consequence, Roberto Mazzini founded a cooperative which included training programmes to teach practitioners to utilise the method.

Differences in the use of Theatre of the Oppressed depend also on the geographical areas where the method is utilised and where practitioners have been trained. For instance,

Massimiliano Bozza, who worked for twenty years in Latin America, during which he started to practise Theatre of the Oppressed, underlines a crucial difference between how the method is used there and in Italy, where he has worked in the past six years, since 2016:

So what [Italian Cooperative] like other groups that were born in... in Italy are based on [is] the production of Boal when he was... in Italy, when he was in Europe, there was not a change without... there was not even on the side of the CTO [Centre of Theatre of the Oppressed] a change towards the outside and therefore, in some way, there arises, in my opinion, the fracture between how Theatre of the Oppressed is done in Latin America and... at least in the context I was telling you, right? within this network which, however, is very broad now, especially in Central America. (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

Massimiliano Bozza explains that groups based in Italy utilising Theatre of the Oppressed tend to utilise only the techniques that Boal developed while he lived in Europe, rather than the most recent ones, which emerged when he returned to Latin America during the 1990s and 2000s and that constitute the Aesthetics of the Oppressed (Boal 2011b; Bozza 2020). At the same time, the Latin American Network of Theatre of the Oppressed, which is widespread throughout Central and Latin America, and the Centre of Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio de Janeiro did not sufficiently contribute to spread to Europe the Aesthetics of the Oppressed and therefore Boals' latest work, which instead Massimiliano Bozza often utilises. This "fracture" has led to a crucial difference between the two continents, which, according to Massimiliano Bozza, should be fixed up. Moreover, according to him, the Aesthetics of the Oppressed is particularly helpful to work with people from a migrant background, as argued below.

you know that the aesthetics has-has this part of rhythm and sound, then some creative parts... I really like rhythm and sound because [...] it is very immediate and moreover I like it a lot because it is.... I interpret it very strictly this [thing] of-of reducing the word on stage, of using only the body, as much as possible

and... especially when you work with foreigners it is a thing that is totally fine, because anyway you work on the-in the meantime on... uh let's say, that which is kinesthetic, right?... (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

As explained above, the Aesthetics of the Oppressed includes various tools which are “immediate” and allow to reduce the use of words, privileging the use of the body. Massimiliano Bozza argues that the Aesthetics of the Oppressed is helpful when working with people from a migrant background since it allows anybody to express themselves without necessarily utilising verbal language, but rather using what is “kinesthetic” (Boal 2011b; Bozza 2020). The Aesthetics of the Oppressed, indeed, “opens to all expressive languages”, as Massimiliano Bozza explains (extract from fieldnotes, 28/04/2022). In this way, as Boal (2011a, 26) argued, any form of domination caused by different levels of competence in verbal language is avoided (Bozza 2020, 7; Boal cited in Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 10), and interaction and the expression of creativity are facilitated (Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 5-6).

Another source of difference between the numerous approaches to Theatre of the Oppressed is the focus that certain groups of practitioners have on certain themes, such as in the case of gender and feminism.

I also really appreciate Bárbara [...] who does an important job for TO³¹ to make it become more feminist, because there are some blind spots in TO that come from the fact that the founder is man, male and... and many of the practitioners too, still the majority of the more, let's say, recognised ones, and-as in the first circle, let's say, perhaps in the second, in the third, I already don't know, but in the first circle, direct students who are still active, there are many men [...]. And so this is a contradiction, but that is at the base and the work that Bárbara does,

³¹ “TO” stands for “Theatre of the Oppressed”.

that others do, is important for uh... how to say, feminising Theatre of the Oppressed, yes. (Interview with Uri Noy Meir)

Uri Noy Meir knows and appreciates the work done by Bárbara Santos and acknowledges the relevance of a feminist approach to Theatre of the Oppressed considering the “blind spots” that it includes. He underlines that the founder of this theatrical method was a man, and many practitioners, especially those who directly studied with Boal, are men – although nowadays, considering not only Theatre of the Oppressed but also Social Theatre, numerous practitioners are women, as I observed during participant observation. This constitutes a contradiction with the method itself: given the goal of Theatre of the Oppressed to overcome oppression, the fact that women are excluded from this theatrical method and that female practitioners constitute a minority, reproduces power relations and women’s marginalisation in this field (see also Section 2.7). Therefore, a feminist approach to Theatre of the Oppressed may bring significant contributions to this type of theatre (Noy Meir 2021, 3). Uri Noy Meir considers himself “ecofeminist” and he often takes into account issues related to masculinities in his work not only with Theatre of the Oppressed but also with Social Theatre more generally. In general, practitioners of this theatrical method bring it towards “different directions” (interview with Uri Noy Meir), rendering it a diversified field.

Before analysing the ways in which this theatrical method is applied in Italy to the context of migrations, it is important to provide some more information regarding the context in which MiGreat! developed, to which this chapter now turns.

4.3 The MiGreat! Project

This section provides an overview of the context in which MiGreat! developed, including the organisations involved, the phases that it included, and the creative approaches that were

applied. First of all, as previously mentioned, the aim of MiGreat! was to contrast dominant narratives around migrations building counter and alternative narratives (MiGREAT! Changing the narrative of migration (no date)). Within the project, narratives were defined as follows:

Narratives are stories that circulate in societies. They emerge from shared social beliefs and also act to reinforce them, while guiding decisions and actions of individuals and groups [...]. They depict reality in a partial way, through a particular point of view. Some of them are more dominant than others, but that can change. (Malkassian et al. 2021, 7; see also MiGreat! no date(a), 6)

As the quote above shows, narratives are defined as “stories” emerging from social beliefs that are shared within society and “reinforce them”. By doing so, narratives guide people’s decisions and actions. Importantly, narratives provide a partial representation of reality, through a specific perspective. Some narratives are “more dominant than others”, but this is subject to change. It is acknowledged that dominant narratives about people from a migrant background are “dehumanising”, “essentialising”, and contributing to their othering (Malkassian et al. 2021). Additionally, during the project it was acknowledged that power is central when tackling narratives about migrations:

“You can’t talk about narratives without thinking about who has power”, she says. (Extract from fieldnotes, 08/03/2022)

During MiGreat! Final Conference in London, Megan, from the British organisation, underlines that narratives are intertwined with power. Those who have power contribute to spread certain narratives more than others, shaping what will become the dominant ones. Narratives around migrations were often discussed among the four organisations that worked on MiGreat!, which are described below.

4.3.1 The Four Partner Organisations

As outlined in Chapters 1 and 3, the MiGreat! project involved four partner organisations based in four different countries. The Italian Cooperative where I did my internship and conducted my research is based in the province of Parma and it has a wide expertise in Freirian pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed, as explained below.

It is a research centre on the practices of Freire and Boal [...] we are on the side of the [both male and female] oppressed,³² we are not neutral. We have the task to... to analyse the field very-in a very broad way and... and therefore to have an attitude as hmm, how to say, as open as possible, without judgement, aimed at letting the problems emerge and finding possible solutions where they are possible. Uhm... therefore spreading – [Italian Cooperative]’s goals – spreading these practices, [...] with the aim of giving voices-voice to the oppressed categories and... and, we cannot avoid saying it, even if it sounds like, maybe naïf and... [...] what we want is to change this world, not to keep it as it is, first of all through the stage. We are not interested in representing reality, we want to change it. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As Raffaella points out, the Italian Cooperative is a research centre focused on Freire and Boal. Its members are on the side of oppressed groups. This emerged also from the interview with Roberto Mazzini, and it is part of this theatrical method. They aim at analysing the field without judgement, in order to examine problems and identify solutions. The Cooperative aims at spreading the “practices” of Freirian pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed – since these go beyond mere theoretical thinking (interview with Roberto Mazzini; cf. also Schroeter 2013, 397; Tolomelli 2012; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 111-112) – giving voice to oppressed people. The broad goal is that of “changing the world” and “reality” through theatre, rather than merely representing it. As the President, Roberto Mazzini, specifies, the

³² I am specifying the gender when interviewees specify it in interviews (e.g., “degli oppressi e delle oppresse” in the original, Italian version here), and when it is relevant for analytical purposes.

Cooperative is a social cooperative, meaning that it combines attention to social issues with the application of a “political theatrical method” in order to “liberate oppressed groups” and “work for a better world, with less oppression and less violence”, which constitutes its “ideal” element (interview with Roberto Mazzini). This ideal or “naïf” element may constitute a source of criticism towards Theatre of the Oppressed. The Italian Cooperative is the only organisation, among the four involved, with strong expertise in Freirian pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed, although the other three already knew something about these participatory methods (interviews with William and Patricia, British organisation; Fernanda, French organisations; Veronika and Jasmine, Hungarian organisation).

The British organisation has a different focus, as explained below.

Hmm ours is uhm to uh a-advance education in the field of ESOL, so to push ESOL, and to provide ESOL classes. Uh ESOL is English for Speakers of Other Languages uhm for adults, adult migrants in the UK. And the second one is about community capacity building for migrants, so developing the capacity of migrant communities to participate fully in society – and by participating I mean... affect political and economic change, social change, as well as uhm participate in the job market, in local communities, uhm socially. [...] So we bring together uhm language education and community organising, in order to take action to make London and, uhm more widely, the world, a fairer, more equal place. (Interview with William, co-writer of MiGreat! application from the British organisation and facilitator in some activities of the project)

As William explains, the British organisation is a “charity” (interview with Patricia, British organisation) based in London that aims at advancing education in the field of ESOL, providing English classes to “adult migrants in the UK” – also including “refugees and people seeking asylum” (interview with Patricia, British organisation). The organisation also operates in the field of community organising, aimed at helping people from a migrant background “participate fully in society”, fostering change. The overall goal is that of

making London and the world “a fairer, more equal place”. Thus, also this organisation includes political, “ideal” objectives. Roberto Mazzini and William were the two persons who prepared the application for MiGreat!, thus the project started from the collaboration between these two organisations.

Other two organisations were involved, including one from France, based in Paris:

[French organisation] works with uh what we call uh action research, and uh and workshops and sensibilisation uh linked to interculturality. So our goal is to develop educational tools uh in order to touch educators, uh activists uh and all people of all ages that are interested in develop[ing] uhm the intercultural dialogue and better competencies to better communicate with people from other cultural contexts. [...] Uhm and having a diverse team allows us to develop projects in link-uh that are connected with uh gender, uh environment, uh learning a new language, mostly French, as we are in France, so we have a diverse team that will explore interculturality from these different points of view. (Interview with Fernanda, Joker from the French organisation)

The French organisation works in the field of “interculturality”, particularly dealing with action research, organising workshops and other activities aimed at awareness raising. The goal is that of utilising “educational tools” to train educators, activists, and other people to promote intercultural dialogue and communication skills with people from different cultural backgrounds, particularly through the use of Critical Incident method (see also Malkassian et al. 2021, 6). The diversity in the team of the organisation allows it to deal with several topics and various aspects of interculturality. As such, the French organisation includes some similarities with the English one, mainly in its work with people from different cultural backgrounds, although its aims are different.

The last organisation involved is based in Budapest, and is different from the other three:

[Hungarian organisation] is a Theatre-in-Education company that functions as a non-governmental organisation officially, but in the day-to-day life, it looks more like a theatre company, and... we play interactive theatre performances, mainly for children, for students, and our programmes are mostly for one class at a time. [...] And the main topics are... social problems or issues, hmm and we are mostly trying to understand something better about the world and what does it mean to be human. (Interview with Veronika, Joker from the Hungarian organisation)

The Hungarian organisation is mainly based on theatre, particularly Theatre in Education. Officially considered an NGO, it operates as a theatre company that prepares “interactive theatre performances” for schools on various social issues. Overall, the goal is that of understanding “something better about the world” and what it means to be “human”. The Hungarian organisation resembles the Italian Cooperative in its focus on theatre and its “ideal” goals (similarly to the British organisation as well). Yet, the four organisations are different also in terms of their members, as explained below.

Raffaella later adds that “we [Italian Cooperative] are the most stable and monocultural people”, the other three partners instead are composed of people from a migrant background. (Extract from fieldnotes, 21/03/2022)

As the Joker in the Italian Cooperative points out, among the four organisations, the Italian Cooperative is the most “stable” one in terms of people involved and the most “monocultural”, whereas the other three partner organisations are composed of people from a migrant background. In fact, a crucial difference between the four organisations is that in the Italian Cooperative people from a migrant background are not present,³³ contrary to the other three organisations. Moreover, other characteristics of the members of the Italian Cooperative are summarised in the following quotation.

³³ With the exception of an ex-coordinator of [European project aimed at contrasting islamophobia realised between 2019 and 2022] – interviews with Roberto Mazzini, Raffaella, and Daria, Italian Cooperative.

Well they are both men and women, I think with a slight prevalence of women and... they are generally an average category, like around 30-40 years [...] they generally come from the-from the educational field, they are educators, or teachers, but less, more educators, psychologists, or even theatre practitioners, but that less as well, more the psycho-pedagogical field I would say. (Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

The composition outlined in the quote above is in line with the typical backgrounds of practitioners of Theatre of the Oppressed (Bozza 2020, 1; Malkassian et al. 2021, 25). In the other three organisations, instead, people from a migrant background, as well as from different language and cultural backgrounds, are present and were involved in MiGreat!. For instance, in the British organisation:

of the thirteen staff, uhm majority women, probably ten women, three men. Uhm majority migrant background or diaspora, so like some people maybe have parents who migrated to London. Uhm... uh age, probably average age is 30s [...] Uhm then on the trustees it's maybe similar, uhm I think it's maybe five women, four men, nine trustees. Uhm five are migrants. Uhm age, mixed, [...] hmm mostly is 30s-mostly 30s again. (Interview with William, co-writer of MiGreat! application from the British organisation and facilitator in some activities of the project)

The staff of the British organisation is composed of more women than men (it is in fact “mostly a female team” – interview with Patricia, British organisation) usually from various migrant backgrounds, and young. Moreover, they “generally are teachers by background or training” (interview with Patricia, British organisation). Similarly, the French organisation is composed of people from different backgrounds:

Uh we have a really diverse team. Uh people from different uh not only countries, but professional backgrounds, ages and... and competences. [...] Uh we have between... between I would say 18 and... and 60 years old. Uhm we speak more

than seven languages I think, [...]. Uhm we have black, white people, uh from Asia uh... (Interview with Fernanda, Joker from the French organisation)

The team is “really diverse” in terms of countries of origin, professional backgrounds, ages, and skills. Average age is around forty years old, although it is more skewed than in the British organisation. Moreover, members come from various language and ethnic backgrounds. Both in the French and Hungarian organisations there are more women than men among their members (interview with Fernanda, French organisation, and Veronika, Hungarian organisation), similarly to the British organisation. Further, differently from the other three, the Hungarian organisation involves mainly actor-teachers – people who are trained both as actors and as teachers (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation). Additionally, all organisations apart from the Italian one regularly interact with people from a migrant background since these are the targets of their activities. In contrast, the Italian Cooperative does not have a specific expertise in the field of migrations:

Not so much uh in-in our case in particular, [Italian Cooperative] is not a migrations expert, [Italian Cooperative] is an expert on method... uh on method, right? (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As Raffaella argues, the Italian Cooperative is an expert on Theatre of the Oppressed, but not on migrations. Yet, the Italian Cooperative realised several projects on racism and migrations (as discussed in Sections 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6), but also on other themes, such as gender-based violence, disability, and psychiatry (interview with Roberto Mazzini).

In sum, it is evident that Theatre of the Oppressed and other participatory and creative methods are utilised by a wide range of professionals and organisations who often differ in background and focus, as mentioned in Section 4.2. This applies also to the MiGreat! project.

The differences between the four organisations created several challenges during the project, for example in the realisation of the IO1 handbook (interview with William, British organisation; see also Sub-section 4.3.2). However, it was also considered an “asset” (Malkassian et al. 2021, 6). In addition, the four organisations are inserted in different national contexts with distinct migration histories. These differences in terms of history and politics affect the types of migrations that are present in their countries (Malkassian et al. 2021, 8 and 16). These issues impacted on the activities that were carried out, as well as on the ways of talking about migrations, although similarities were often found, for example regarding the narratives about migrations that emerged (Malkassian et al. 2021, 16). The phases and activities that characterised MiGreat! are outlined below.

4.3.2 The Phases and Activities Included

The MiGreat! project included several phases during which various “intellectual outputs – IOs” – were realised, which constituted cultural products (see also Section 3.3). Firstly, the project involved the realisation of a handbook, defined as “a guide to frame the topic of narratives and provide a set of methods and approaches about which kind of activities practitioners can design and facilitate to explore dominant, counter and alternative narratives” (MiGREAT! Changing the narrative of migration (no date)). In sum, the handbook involved a period of research on migrations, participatory methods, and activities that could be helpful (indicated in references as “Malkassian et al. 2021”). This constitutes the IO1 and was realised from the beginning of the project (end of 2019) and completed at the beginning of 2022. In 2020 the four partner organisations started working on the realisation of visual materials, defined as “a set of visual tools to sensitise chosen target audiences about narratives and a guide about how such products can be developed in a

participatory process” (MiGREAT! Changing the narrative of migration (no date)). The guide constitutes the IO2 (indicated in references as “MiGreat! no date(a)”). Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, the realisation of these materials was often interrupted or slowed down, and ended in Summer 2021 (with slight variations depending on the countries). Finally, the organisations worked on the realisation of a theatre script leading to one (or more) Forum-Theatre sessions. The scripts, together with guidelines on how to realise a Forum-Theatre, are included in the IO3 (indicated in references as “MiGreat! no date(b)”), defined as “a guide, that includes partners’ scripts, about how Forum-Theatre was used for the exploration of narratives” (MiGREAT! Changing the narrative of migration (no date)). This last product was realised in different periods. The Italian Cooperative started searching for participants in Summer 2021 but the meetings, rehearsals, and Forum-Theatre session took place in January and February 2022.

During the two years and a half that characterised the completion of the MiGreat! project, several “multiplier events” were realised (at least three per country), during which the three products were disseminated to the public. These events are “a moment to disseminate, test, and discuss with other people who are not extremely engaged in the project”, as the Joker in the Italian Cooperative explained to me. Thus, the target of multiplier events varied based on the organisation. In the Italian case, it was decided before any single event, considering various criteria (such as the products presented, any contacts with other associations or interested people, the types of activities that could be carried out). Forum-Theatre sessions and a Final Conference (held in London) were part of these multiplier events.

Moreover, three trainings and three webinars were organised to raise awareness about participatory and creative approaches and spread tools to tackle dominant narratives about

migrations. The former targeted practitioners from the four partner organisations, whereas the latter targeted various types of professionals, including “adult educators, theatre practitioners, activists, campaigners, community organisers, psychologists, and social and cultural workers”, in some cases from a migrant background (Malkassian et al. 2021, 6). The methods utilised during the project to tackle dominant narratives about migrations are presented in the next sub-section.

4.3.3 The Methods Utilised

The MiGreat! project was based on the use of participatory and creative approaches. In particular, techniques coming from Freirian pedagogy, Theatre of the Oppressed, and community organising were those mostly applied during activities. In general, the relevance of participatory methods was underlined.

When working with members of minority groups experiencing discrimination, it is important to use participatory methods because they allow free expression and critical engagement, and in doing so they promote their agency, furthering their empowerment. In fact, participatory methods are related to protagonism, or being a real participant during the learning process. (Malkassian et al. 2021, 19)

Participatory methods are deemed helpful when working with “minority groups” who suffer from discrimination because they are based on the active participation of people involved during the learning process, allowing them to express freely and think critically, thereby expressing their agency and achieving empowerment. In fact, participatory and creative methods allow people to actively “discuss” the topic tackled, rather than passively “receive information” (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative), and they are particularly suited for deconstructing stereotypes.

participants would be able to detach themselves from stereotypical representations, to think in an active way about their future, and to imagine what kind of world they would like to live in and build. (Malkassian et al. 2021, 20)

As the quote above explains, participatory methods allow participants to create a distance from “stereotypical representations”, thinking actively about the society that they wish to build. In sum, participatory methods are based on a horizontal rather than a top-down approach (Malkassian et al. 2021, 19 and 33), in line with Freirian pedagogy (Freire 2018; Tolomelli 2012; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011).

As Freire sees it, liberation from oppression has to be done through a process led by the oppressed, or one in which they are fully involved, a point that is very relevant to thinking about the process of creating alternative narratives on migration to address oppressive, dominant ones. (Malkassian et al. 2021, 22)

Freirian pedagogy places oppressed groups at the centre of action, since they should be the main actors of social transformation (Freire 2018; Tolomelli 2012; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011). This aspect is considered relevant in the construction of alternative narratives on migrations.³⁴

Beyond Theatre of the Oppressed, which was the method utilised to realise the Forum-Theatre scripts and therefore the IO3, a third method which was adopted in the project is that of community organising, which can be explained as follows:

‘Community organising’ is a process whereby people – usually people connected by sharing an identity, geographical area or campaign interest – come together to build their power and make change, specifically by taking action on their shared self-interest. (Malkassian et al. 2021, 29)

³⁴ Even though it will not always be the case in MiGreat!, as analysed in Chapters 5 and 6.

Community organising involves a group of people belonging to a given social group or having a particular interest reuniting to utilise their power to foster change, taking action to pursue their goals. Community organising, similarly to Freirian pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed, is strictly connected to power, and it is based on “ongoing collective action” (Malkassian et al. 2021, 29). In sum, MiGreat! was based on various methods which are part of participatory and creative approaches. The general aims of changing reality and the world in order to end oppressions will reveal challenging and often problematic, as investigated in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Before moving to the analysis of MiGreat!, several issues concerning the application of Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations in other projects realised in Italy need to be analysed, to which this chapter now turns.

4.4 The Types of Projects of Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations and Their Goals

The use of Theatre of the Oppressed to tackle issues related to migrations is relatively recent in Italy, emerging around ten years ago.³⁵ Several types of projects have been realised during these years. In the case of the Cooperative where I did my internship and research, nine projects were realised dealing with migrations. Ten years ago, a project was realised in Mantua to work with refugees and asylum seekers to explore the problematic experiences to which participants wished to identify solutions (interview with Roberto Mazzini).

Then, a European project was realised between 2012 and 2013 in Parma and Reggio Emilia. It was focused on tackling racism through theatre, thus it was more centred on racism than on migrations *per se*. It aimed at finding the deep causes of insecurity which, rather than

³⁵ This is shown both by the experience of the three key informants, and the mapping I made of people and groups applying this theatrical method to the field of migrations in Italy.

being due to immigration, were related to unemployment, climate change, and other broader social and economic issues (interview with Roberto Mazzini). Yet, at the beginning of the project, it appeared that people felt insecure because of increased immigration towards Europe (interview with Roberto Mazzini), which shows how migrations are often linked with danger and security threats (Giuliani 2016; Grove and Zwi 2006; Rozakou 2012; Degli Uberti 2007, 386 and 391; Rovisco cited in Rovisco 2019, 652), and how they have been treated in Italy as a “scapegoat” for wider social and political issues (Patriarca and Deplano 2018, 352).

Subsequently, the Cooperative worked on two “micro-projects” on antiracism, as outlined below:

And... let's say that the micro-projects were a couple with [...] a European network of anti-racist associations, and... that launched the campaign “[project aimed at contrasting islamophobia, in particular discrimination against Muslim women, realised between 2016 and 2018]” [...] and therefore we participated in a micro-call that they did and... tried to do a work in Italy, only in Italy, uhm doing a seminar (Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

Working with a European network that includes various NGOs and that aims at tackling racism, the Cooperative worked on a project aimed at contrasting islamophobia towards Muslim women between 2016 and 2018 (it was realised twice). The topic of this project exemplifies the centrality of islamophobia in European societies, which increased following 9/11 first, and then more recent terrorist attacks in Europe, leading to an association of people from a Muslim background with danger and security threats (cf. also Giuliani 2016; Abu-Lughod 2002; Malkassian et al. 2021). Subsequently, in 2017, the Italian Cooperative worked in collaboration with a university in Veneto organising a project with asylum seekers living in a CAS including on one side several classes on Theatre of the Oppressed for

master's students, and on the other side a Forum-Theatre with asylum seekers (interview with Roberto Mazzini). Another project, realised in 2018, was organised as part of a call of the region of Emilia-Romagna concerning participatory democracy. The work was carried out in a town in the province of Parma, and was aimed at creating a council that would facilitate dialogue between public administration and citizens (both native Italians and with foreign origins) in order to foster social and cultural integration (interview with Roberto Mazzini). Moreover, Theatre of the Oppressed was utilised by the Italian Cooperative to work with residents of a building in Modena where people from different social and cultural backgrounds lived, in order to create dialogue among residents and tackle their conflicts through theatre (interview with Roberto Mazzini; MiGreat! no date(b), 7). In addition, a volunteering project was realised in collaboration with two associations based in Parma that deal with the reception system to work with asylum seekers and create a performance with them (interview with Roberto Mazzini). The last two projects were Erasmus+ projects: MiGreat! and [European project aimed at contrasting islamophobia realised between 2019 and 2022], which were also “the biggest” ones (interview with Roberto Mazzini). In general, these two projects were aimed at “contrasting discriminations against foreigners/Muslims” (interview with Roberto Mazzini). In the case of the project aimed at countering islamophobia, the specific goal was to “empower oppressed groups”, including Muslim people and antiracist activists (interview with Roberto Mazzini), again showing the relevance of islamophobia (cf. also Giuliani 2016; Abu-Lughod 2002; Malkassian et al. 2021). Overall, the projects realised in the Italian Cooperative were mainly based in Emilia-Romagna and in North-Eastern Italy and were aimed at tackling racism, promoting integration and social inclusion, fostering dialogue among native Italians and people from a migrant background, contrasting islamophobia, and creating alternative narratives on migrations (in this last case, through the MiGreat! project).

A different experience is that of Massimiliano Bozza, who worked for several years, starting in 2016, with [cultural association aimed at social advancement] in Puglia as an educator, realising various projects with people living in (now ex) SPRAR and CAS, namely refugees and asylum seekers. Then, he worked with the same target but autonomously in various towns in Puglia. Moreover, he realised a workshop on citizenship aimed at facilitating integration and creating dialogue between Italian people and people with foreign origins, as well as at [European project on discriminations against women from a migrant background realised in 2018] – although in this last case Theatre of the Oppressed was only marginally utilised (interview with Massimiliano Bozza). These last two projects were also organised through [cultural association aimed at social advancement] in Puglia. The projects realised within CAS and ex SPRAR had slightly different aims:

The one designed for the CAS was simply uh... the goal was... let's say introspective and it was that they could tell their story uh... in a non-traumatic way, because in any case they have to do-so like... anamnestic as a goal [...]. [W]ith the SPRAR there was a further goal, because we had-[they] were in the SPRAR for longer, so we could do this anamnestic work, plus a work uh... of- about the soft skills of-of migrants [...] (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

As explained above, projects within CAS were aimed at providing asylum seekers with a tool to tell their stories in a “non-traumatic way” and “through the use of the body” (interview with Massimiliano Bozza). Rather, the projects realised within ex SPRAR were also aimed at working on people from a migrant background's soft skills.

Uri Noy Meir has had a different experience from the other two key informants. He worked mainly on four projects applying Theatre of the Oppressed to the field of migrations in

different contexts. The first two projects had an “activist nature” (interview with Uri Noy Meir): the first one was a small project realised in Rome around eight years ago for a festival that took place in a university. It was realised with people from a migrant background selling socks in the capital, it included various types of activities (such as Image-Theatre and Newspaper-Theatre) and led to the preparation of a Forum-Theatre including on one hand participants’ stories about their migration journey and their home countries, and on the other hand parts of scripts by Shakespeare (interview with Uri Noy Meir). The second project was realised in 2016 in Rome, it included Forum-Theatre and Legislative-Theatre and it was realised through volunteering activities without any funding from any associations or institutions. This project was aimed at improving “from below” the reception system in Italy (interview with Uri Noy Meir). The last two projects were realised by Uri Noy Meir working as a consultant for [association reuniting city halls and dealing with local autonomies] in Umbria,³⁶ as he tells in the quote below.

So uh... let’s say “[project A]” was more about the reception system, an action research that we realised through these means, Theory U, Theatre of the Oppressed and... on integration, on the effectiveness of reception services and then uh “[project B]” was more focused on migrants’ social and working inclusion, but also in some worktables we have done, we have expanded a bit on disadvantaged subjects in general (Interview with Uri Noy Meir)

The project realised between 2017 and 2019 was based on an action-research aimed at investigating the efficiency of the reception system, and included not only Theatre of the Oppressed but also other approaches, such as Theory U.³⁷ The project which started in 2020

³⁶ Uri Noy Meir works also with other organisations, but they are not considered here since as far as I am aware he did not work on migrations in those contexts.

³⁷ Explaining Theory U goes beyond the scope of this thesis. It may be broadly defined as a theory formulated by Otto Scharmer to tackle various social and political issues. More information on this approach may be found at <https://www.u-school.org/aboutus/theory-u> (accessed 16/11/2022).

and which is still in development is aimed at the social and working inclusion, as well as empowerment, of “citizens from third countries”, therefore people from a migrant background, but also including other “disadvantaged subjects” (interview with Uri Noy Meir). The last two projects were funded by the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (“FAMI”).

Overall, in the projects realised by the Italian Cooperative, Theatre of the Oppressed constituted the main part, and Forum-Theatres were almost always realised. Yet, European projects often included phases dedicated to research on the topics tackled and dissemination of the results produced. Sometimes, other types of artistic tools or types of theatre were utilised, such as the production of visual materials or the use of Playback Theatre (interview with Roberto Mazzini). Similarly, in the projects realised by Massimiliano Bozza, Theatre of the Oppressed was the central part, but various techniques and tools were utilised beyond Forum-Theatres (although several Forum-Theatres were realised), including those coming from the Aesthetics of the Oppressed (interview with Massimiliano Bozza). In the case of projects realised by Uri Noy Meir, instead, Forum-Theatres were rarely realised (only in the first two projects mentioned) and generally a few public performances were prepared. Usually, Theatre of the Oppressed was present alongside other types of theatre and artistic tools, including Social Presencing Theatre, visual materials, Theory U (interview with Uri Noy Meir). To sum up, the projects realised in Italy applying Theatre of the Oppressed to the field of migrations differ in the goals that they pursue, the specific focus that they have, as well as the techniques utilised. Yet, some similarities are present regarding the targets of these projects and the people involved, to which this chapter now turns.

4.5 The People Involved in the Projects of Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations

In several of the projects outlined in the previous section, both people from a migrant background and people not from a migrant background were present,³⁸ which may reveal how these projects conceived integration and anti-racism as two-way processes (cf. also Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7; Day 2002).

People from a migrant background were often young, male refugees or asylum seekers in CAS or (ex) SPRAR coming from Africa or Asia. However, in some projects people from non-EU countries who have lived for several years in Italy were included, such as in the project aimed at the social and working inclusion of third-country nationals at which Uri Noy Meir worked. Moreover, in some cases women from a migrant background were included, such as in the European project on discriminations against women from a migrant background at which Massimiliano Bozza worked. Refugees and asylum seekers often had scarce economic resources and a low level of education.

As far as participants not from a migrant background are concerned, these were sometimes social workers in the reception system. In other projects, they were Italian citizens belonging to associations dealing with the topics tackled in the projects, or interested people, or sometimes university students, and they generally came from the middle classes, as in the projects realised in the Italian Cooperative. Often Italian participants were more various in terms of age than people from a migrant background. In some cases, more women than men were present, whereas in others there were more men, but generally people of both genders were involved.

³⁸ Details on participants in the projects (excluding the audience in public events) are included in Tables A, B, and C in the Appendix.

In sum, in all projects realised in the three contexts there were often people speaking different languages and from various cultural backgrounds.

Overall, participants were recruited through previous contacts of the Italian Cooperative (interview with Roberto Mazzini) or of the [cultural association aimed at social advancement] (interview with Massimiliano Bozza) or through institutional channels of [association reuniting city halls and dealing with local autonomies] (interview with Uri Noy Meir). Moreover, social media were used in all three contexts (interviews with Roberto Mazzini, Massimiliano Bozza, Uri Noy Meir), and in some cases word of mouth (interview with Uri Noy Meir) or internet searches were used (interview with Roberto Mazzini). In the case of the Italian Cooperative, relevant associations dealing with the topics tackled in projects were contacted, such as some dealing with antiracism and social inclusion, as well as a feminist association in the case of the project aimed at creating a council in the province of Parma (interview with Roberto Mazzini).

During Forum-Theatres, both people from a migrant background and people not from a migrant background performed, and participants could choose the role that they wished to play (interview with Roberto Mazzini). All participants went on stage during Forum-Theatres and other performances also in the case of the projects coordinated by Massimiliano Bozza (interview with Massimiliano Bozza). Moreover, activities were proposed to participants who subsequently chose whether they wished to participate or not, without imposing activities “from above” (interview with Massimiliano Bozza).

Nonetheless, including people from a migrant background for the entire duration of projects was sometimes challenging (cf. also Smith 2012, 55), as explained below.

In my opinion it is a combination of other things of life and... but also sometimes the difficulty of seeing, let's say, we often worked looking for very concrete things, "I'm looking for a job", "I'm looking for a driving licence", "I'm looking for..." , no? So if they didn't find this starting immediately, they felt a little that... the waste of time, so we had to make them understand that... like for those who entered [the projects] afterwards they saw the result, but there is always this question. (Interview with Uri Noy Meir)

As Uri Noy Meir explains, participants from a migrant background sometimes did not manage to see how these projects could be helpful for them, which is why facilitators focused on concrete situations, such as searching for a job or getting the driving licence. If participants were not able to satisfy these primary needs, they found activities "a waste of time". According to Uri Noy Meir, although various participants recognised the potential of Theatre of the Oppressed and of these types of projects, this challenge was often present. Similar difficulties were encountered also in the projects realised by the Italian Cooperative including people from a migrant background, particularly refugees and asylum seekers (interview with Roberto Mazzini). This challenge emerged also in MiGreat! (interview with Roberto Mazzini) as we will better see in Section 5.2. Overall, the presence of people from a migrant background was determined mainly by the targets of the projects and the associations involved (e.g., interview with Roberto Mazzini).

As far as the audience³⁹ is concerned, differences exist between the projects. In fact, in the projects realised by the Italian Cooperative, 90% of the audience was composed of new, unknown people (interview with Roberto Mazzini). In particular, the public included

³⁹ In Theatre of the Oppressed, the distinction between actors and audience is blurred (Boal 2011b, 108; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 59; Opfermann 2020, 141; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 6; Santos 2018, 55). Here, by "audience" I refer to people who participated in Forum-Theatre sessions and other public events as spectators or spect-actors (i.e., with different degrees of active participation), but did not contribute to the development of performances and did not participate in workshops.

citizens, activists, people from a migrant background (often including asylum seekers), people interested in antiracism, but also pupils and university students. In the projects that Massimiliano Bozza worked at, the audience was composed of people from a migrant background from ex SPRAR, social workers and their families, people from various associations, including those fighting against illegal recruitment (when Forum-Theatres were centred on this issue), but also people who were curious about the performances or were friends of the people involved (interview with Massimiliano Bozza). In both cases the audience included both men and women. Less data is available for the projects to which Uri Noy Meir worked because no information was collected regarding them. Yet, they were often people who knew the associations involved in the projects, or they were people from prefectures or the field of migrations, as well as common citizens (interview with Uri Noy Meir), similarly to the projects coordinated by the other two key informants.

The composition of groups of participants and of the audience, in relation to their individual as well as group characteristics, affects the goals of activities. Massimiliano Bozza comments on his way of approaching Forum-Theatres depending on the characteristics of people who are in the audience in the following way:

Massimiliano: I use to change the Forum every time I introduce myself to a different audience, I don't always do the same Forum, like... uh... if I know that that I'm working on a scene of racism and there are no uh... immigrants, I don't do the Forum on racism. Like...

Laura: Why?

Massimiliano: ...and otherwise who passes? Like if there is only one [...] African, out of... like out of twenty people [...] who are all Italian, I can't make a Forum because who am I going to ask the question to? [...] Like the scene on the train and... in which [...] there is a girl who raises her legs, puts them on the-on the seat so as not to make [a guy] sit and she does it on purpose, like things like that that had... really happened, etcetera, right? But it's nice when in the audience [...]

there are both uh... well, Italians, whites, blacks, Africans, right? for example, because in that case it is racism on the fact of being black [...]. But uh... I was referring precisely to the fact of “ah that one has black skin, I don’t make him sit”, that-that in my opinion already as a Forum... I did it, but it is banal. (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

In the quotation above, the interviewee explains that he usually changes the Forum-Theatre anytime it is performed in front of a different audience. In particular, in order to show a scene on racism, people from a migrant background need to be present. This is explained by the fact that if people from a migrant background are not present, the Joker does not know to whom the question should be asked (about possible solutions to the oppression shown). This is relevant to debates about who and how should intervene in activities of Theatre of the Oppressed (Kuringa (no date(a)); Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022; Erel et al. 2017, 309; Boal 2021, 94-95; Santos 2018, 144-145). Massimiliano Bozza argues that, although it is possible to talk about racism also between “white people, reasoning among ourselves” (interview with Massimiliano Bozza), in order to show this type of scenes, it is important that people from different ethnic backgrounds are present, given that racism in a story as the one included in the quotation above is due precisely to the fact of being “black”. The composition of the audience is indeed relevant, as having an audience composed, for example, of white people from upper classes when performers are people of colour seeking international protection may lead to the perpetuation of power and neo-colonial relations (Ranjan 2020, 8). Nevertheless, the interviewee also specifies that this type of scene is “banal”. This aspect will be relevant for the stories examined in Chapter 7. During projects, numerous other stories were told, and various themes were tackled, some of which are analysed in the next section.

4.6 The Themes and Stories at the Centre of Representation in the Projects of Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations

In the projects outlined so far, numerous stories and themes emerged. Importantly, stories were told by participants starting from their personal experiences and needs (see for example interview with Uri Noy Meir), as foreseen by the method of Theatre of the Oppressed (Tolomelli 2012, 41; Schroeter 2013, 401; Santos 2018, 214). Yet, the projects included several objectives that shaped the themes tackled, providing guidelines on the broad focus that had to be maintained (for example, oppression caused by islamophobia). These themes were then discussed focusing on specific stories and concrete examples based on everyday-life experiences (interview with Roberto Mazzini). The stories that were represented in Forum-Theatres and in other performances were always chosen collectively by participants, usually focusing on those that appeared as more common and representative of the group (interviews with Roberto Mazzini, Massimiliano Bozza, and Uri Noy Meir; cf. also Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 5; Tolomelli 2012, 42; Santos 2018, 214). One of the themes that emerged was religion, particularly Muslim religion and islamophobia.

within the theme of islamophobia, however, we have explored all the sectors where this occurs, therefore scenes on the hospital, on the school, on social services, the relationship with the police, the mass media, so let's say in that sense we touched many sub-themes, but the general preamble was "discriminated against because Muslim". Then sometimes, obviously, things get confused, right? Looking for a house whether you are Muslim or black does not make a big difference, you probably have the same difficulties, looking for a job, even there, right? there is a lot of overlapping. [...] I don't know how distinct discrimination is at least in Italy uh, maybe in other countries it is more specific. (Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

In [European project aimed at contrasting islamophobia realised between 2019 and 2022], various contexts where discrimination towards Muslim people occurs were explored (cf. also Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 69), even though the overarching theme was discrimination based on Muslim religion. Roberto Mazzini specifies that axes of oppression often overlap, as argued by intersectional scholars (e.g., Collins and Chepp 2013, 58-59; Harris and Bartlow 2015, 261; Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991), but that certain categories of differences are often considered equivalent. For instance, in Italy black people tend to be as much discriminated as Muslim people, so that the difference between the two remains hidden. Islamophobia was often connected with gender, as shown below.

In short, the first scene shows a girl looking for accommodation, but as soon as the employee and the manager of the real estate agency find out from her name that she has foreign origins, they refuse to confirm the availability of the accommodation and to arrange an appointment to visit it, because they don't rent to foreign people. In the second scene, instead, a Muslim girl wearing a hijab is not given a job in the kitchen of a restaurant because the owner does not consider it appropriate for customers to see a woman with a "veil" in the kitchen (Extract from fieldnotes, 22/10/2021).

As explained above, during the Forum-Theatre that took place in Trento as part of [European project aimed at contrasting islamophobia realised between 2019 and 2022] and which I assisted at, two scenes were shown: one where a female character is denied a house because she has a foreign name, and the other where another female character is denied a job because she wears a Muslim veil, unless she decides to remove it when at the workplace (a similar story was told by a participant during activities, in the context of a hospital – interview with Roberto Mazzini). Notably, the focus on the veil as a symbol of Muslim religion is connected with numerous debates regarding religion and femininity, which are deeply shaped by colonial legacies, particularly in relation to women's freedom in Muslim countries (Abu-

Lughod 2002). The critical aspect of these stories is that different sources of oppression (having foreign origins and being Muslim) are depicted as equivalent in the Forum-Theatre, although they are not. Moreover, no specific reference is made during Forum-Theatre to the interplay between gender and religion, apart from the fact of wearing a veil. Nonetheless, religion, among the projects realised in the Italian Cooperative, was at the centre of only [European project aimed at contrasting islamophobia realised between 2019 and 2022], while in other projects it was not tackled (interview with Roberto Mazzini). On the contrary, religion often appeared in the projects followed by Massimiliano Bozza, where participants were Muslim and Christian (interview with Massimiliano Bozza). In this case, the relationship between religion and gender emerged more explicitly.

That is... and in that case there uh... the-[gender] was-was central because since it was based precisely on... let's say uh... the local cultures in comparison, and... gender came out a lot, actually it came out in a predominant way when-especially since there were these Afghan boys above all, who were old [read: adults] moreover, [...] so the... the theme, so, of the man-woman relationship came out-came out... let's say, trying to... uh... to win also the prejudice that-that... so, [...] the prejudice against... against... islamophobia, right? People who think that the-that Muslims are uh... against women, that they have a misogynist culture etcetera etcetera, at least this emerged because there was, prejudice existed (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

In this project, where there were Afghan, young, male participants, and participants from other backgrounds (including Italians), the theme of the relationship between men and women often emerged, for example discussing the prejudices around Muslim men as being “against women” or having a “misogynous culture” (cf. also Giuliani 2016; Abu-Lughod 2002; Crenshaw 1991, 1287). Thus, discussions around the ways of behaving between men and women, also depending on religious background, were often held (interview with Massimiliano Bozza; see also Bello 2011). As shown in the literature, including both people

from a migrant background and people not from a migrant background may help fight against prejudices and reducing the dichotomy us/them (e.g., Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7; Day 2002; Grove and Zwi 2006).

Gender emerged also independently of religion, as shown below.

And... there is another theme that has emerged in all these projects and... on gender, surely uh... let's say, this... this extra difficulty to be a woman, both within one's own culture and in the relationship with the other culture, so and... this emerged and... and for men too, let's say... this was more subtle but surely I have noticed this... dynamic and... that maybe also pushes [towards] the journey, some times, right? Of this journey that... of the hero, right? This journey of going beyond the sea to look for a sort of... realisation, right? as a man who-who has not found space in his country, in his place. (Interview with Uri Noy Meir)

As Uri Noy Meir explains, gender issues emerged in all projects, including reflections on both femininity and masculinity. On one hand, the difficulties faced by women both in their home countries and in relation with the host culture were highlighted; on the other hand, the journey undertaken by men as a process to realise one's own masculinity and express one's identity, as a "hero" who is not able to find self-realisation in the home country were debated (Sinatti 2014). In fact, migrations have been shown to shape other identity categories, including the way of experiencing masculinity or femininity, as discussed in Chapter 2. Among the difficulties faced by women, those experienced during the journey and once in Europe are particularly prominent:

Then, there is-as I said before, doing an interview in the third project, the story of the journey with this Nigerian woman of ma-many strong moments of many difficulties also [in which] she found herself and... of being right there and... in Libya, in a situation almost of slavery and freeing herself, being in the sea, in a sinking ship and then... so all these elements of the journey, right? that... that...

are a common point for many people and... of those times that they have come.
[...] Yes, there are various moments in which people tell a story of discrimination that is always touching, always... even in the third project we did these interviews even on the street of those who... got into a car and the person assumes that they are a prostitute and must say that they are not... (Interview with Uri Noy Meir)

The stories told during projects highlight experiences related to the journey to Europe and to episodes of discrimination. For instance, the interviewee mentions the story of a Nigerian woman about the “difficulties” that she had to face while she was in Libya, to then embark on a sinking boat. These elements are common to numerous stories told by people from a migrant background who arrived in Europe through the Mediterranean Sea, and elements regarding the journey that they made appeared also in the [theatre workshop and Forum-Theatre realised in Rome in 2013], together with issues related to the context of arrival as well as factors that made people flee from their home countries (interview with Uri Noy Meir). Moreover, people tell various stories about discrimination which show the interplay of race and gender and therefore of racism and sexism (cf. also Anthias 2012; Herrera 2013; Bastia 2014; Bürkner 2012; Thimm and Chaudhuri 2021; Castro and Carnassale 2019; Davis 2018[1981]). For example, women from a migrant background are presumed to be prostitutes if seen walking on the street or asking for a ride (cf. also Crenshaw 1991, 1271). Hence, the entire journey undertaken by asylum seekers, as well as the discriminations faced in Italy, are central in the stories told (see also Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 69), as outlined in the next quote.

The bottleneck was at the moment in which uh... they embark, at the moment in which they... undergo imprisonment, then and... let's say, the journey to Italy [...] by rubber dinghy, by boat, so and... [...] after the redemption at the central police station, which is a thing... it was represented as a very mechanical thing, very much like... as it really is, right? Like the fact that... to be uh... let's say, take the imprint, [...] the photo-signalling, [...] let's say, the guys' disappointment when

they overcome this whole process, the moment they arrive, in the first reception, racism is common, they live it on the territory, right? [...] [T]hey are not welcome because they are black. (Interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

Similarly to the quotes by Uri Noy Meir, Massimiliano Bozza explains that people from a migrant background often talked about the moment when they embark, are imprisoned, and then start travelling to Italy by boat. Subsequently, when they arrive in Italy, they have to undergo numerous controls at the central police station (“questura”), which they describe as something highly “mechanical”, including fingerprinting and photo-signalling. These surveillance systems have in fact been analysed in the literature as dehumanising and limiting people’s agency (cf. also De Genova cited in Carastathis et al. 2018, 5; Ahmed cited in Carastathis et al. 2018, 5; Carastathis et al. 2018, 5; Giuliani 2016, 104). The difficulties in central police stations appear also in several stories told during projects that the Italian Cooperative worked at (interview with Roberto Mazzini). However, once they arrive in the so-called “first reception”, people experience racism on the territory, mainly because of their skin colour. Thus, ethnicity is described as the main source of discrimination in the stories told (this emerged also in other projects, especially those realised by the Italian Cooperative). The reception system is also mentioned by Uri Noy Meir.

the Forum-Theatre spoke above all about the dynamics that take place inside the reception centre where the [female] social worker is... is a bit... who was also a type of protagonist, she is between the leaders who put pressure, the funds that you have time that there is not and the beneficiaries’ requests, so you see the protagonist, in fact we had one of the actresses who was in this role and brought her experience [...]. And... and the other protagonist was a refugee who was looking [...] for a job and support and in the end the only way he can find to earn and... and it’s someone who sells drugs who... let’s say, takes him, like... so you also see the whole process, right? [...] [A]nd the show ends that he is arrested uh... for this. (Interview with Uri Noy Meir)

The difficulties experienced by social workers emerged, such as the fact of being “under pressure” and the duty to satisfy requests by asylum seekers (explained by a female social worker). In addition, those of refugees were highlighted, referring to how they looked for a job and for support, but found out that they had to sell drugs in order to earn their living, ending up being arrested.

Similarly, the issues of work exploitation and illegal recruitment – by which numerous people from a migrant background are still affected in Italy (Idos 2002, 10) – emerged also in other projects (interview with Massimiliano Bozza), as well as the difficulties in finding a job due to one’s migrant background (interview with Roberto Mazzini). Yet, in rare instances stories of success appeared – although this may be related to the fact that the stories included in activities of Theatre of the Oppressed should include situations of oppression (e.g., Tolomelli 2012, 32). An example is presented in the next quote.

in the fourth [project] there are many stories, but hmm... I think it’s nice to hear the people who managed to build something in very complicated conditions, for example one from Afghanistan who in two-three years managed to open a Kebab restaurant in [town in the province of Perugia] and... and also, the thing I heard, talking to him that.... he does it for the chance to help others who were in his situation before and therefore this beautiful proof of the human resilience that they bring. (Interview with Uri Noy Meir)

As Uri Noy Meir explains, people sometimes talked about what they were able to “build” from “complicated conditions”, such as a man from Afghanistan who was able to open a kebab shop in Central Italy in order to help other people that were in the same situation as him. According to the interviewee, this testifies “human resilience” brought by people from a migrant background, but it also shows a different perspective on their lives, letting their agency emerge, beyond experiences of oppression. In this way, stories allow to introduce new elements regarding the experiences of people from a migrant background, without

providing an essentialising image of their identity (cf. also Bürkner 2012, 182-183; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008, 2; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 57) or generalising experiences of migration (cf. also Castro and Carnassale 2019, 205).

In sum, several stories and themes emerged from previous projects realised in Italy, helping participants reason about which factors contribute to their exclusion from society (Erel and Reynolds 2014, 110). Some topics arose specifically because of the aims of the projects, others emerged more spontaneously but not in all projects (such as in the case of gender). In other words, the groups did not always independently choose the themes to be discussed as it is foreseen in Theatre of the Oppressed (Schroeter 2013, 401), since these often depended on the goals of the projects. Nonetheless, personal stories emerged from participants. Migrations were not often discussed from an intersectional perspective. Skin colour, religion and sometimes the intersection of these with gender were the main categories of difference explored. Yet, an intersectional approach to people from a migrant background and migrations was not central in these projects.

4.7 Conclusions

This chapter has analysed the empirical context in which this research is located, considering specifically the application of Theatre of the Oppressed in Italy in general and in particular in the context of migrations. Furthermore, the chapter has provided an overview of the ways in which creative and participatory approaches to inequalities are developed, organised and enacted in Italy in the case of Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations, who is involved in them and how these approaches contribute to represent people from a migrant

background (referring to the general research question and to the three research sub-questions, especially the first and the third ones, listed at page 75).

First of all, the chapter has examined the main principles and goals which are at the core of Theatre of the Oppressed, including the attempt at analysing and transforming reality, overcoming oppression and facilitating the empowerment of marginalised social groups (cf. also Boal 2011a; Boal 2011b; Boal 2021; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011). The three key informants, who are all experts of Theatre of the Oppressed, agree on these common principles, although some of them slightly differ in the ways in which they prioritise some over others. Moreover, they recognise the essential and complex role played by the Joker.

Subsequently, the chapter has outlined the application of Theatre of the Oppressed in Italy. This theatrical method belongs more to the social field than the artistic one (cf. also Pisciotta 2016; Rossi Ghiglione 2011), although this distinction is relative to this country and this historical moment. Moreover, the method is widespread in Italy, although it is not always organised and utilised in the same way. For instance, Massimiliano Bozza utilises a variety of techniques coming from the Aesthetics of the Oppressed (Boal 2011b), whereas other practitioners in Italy prioritise the use of the first techniques that were developed by Augusto Boal (see Sections 2.6 and 4.2). Some practitioners work autonomously, while others work through associations or other groups. In sum, it is still a quite diversified field.

After that, to complete the presentation of the context in which this study took place, the main aspects related to the MiGreat! project have been analysed. The core concept of the project, namely “narratives”, has been defined, underlining particularly its relation with power. Further, the project included four organisations which are different in terms of the social background of its members and the creative and participatory approaches in which

they have expertise. Further, the four organisations are located in four countries with different migration histories, but where dominant narratives about migrations were seen as negative. The project included various phases during which several creative and participatory approaches were used, but the main three were Freirian pedagogy, Theatre of the Oppressed, and community organising, which are broadly aimed at transforming reality and building a more equal society (see Chapters 2 and 6, Section 4.1 and Sub-section 4.3.3).

Finally, the last sections of this chapter have analysed the data concerning other projects that were realised in Italy applying Theatre of the Oppressed to the context of migrations (excluding MiGreat!) which the three key informants worked at. Projects were of various kinds, including project funded by the EU or by national institutions and projects organised by local associations or organisations, including those in which the key informants work at. They usually attempted at contrasting racism or islamophobia and/or facilitating the inclusion of people from a migrant background.

Participants in activities were recruited either through the Italian reception system or through associations that were linked to the themes tackled in the projects. Participants included people from a migrant background and/or native Italians, sometimes together. Generally, both women and men were present, but often in different relative percentages; additionally, people from a migrant background often came from the lower classes, whereas native Italians came from the middle and upper classes.

The representations of people from a migrant background focused mainly on the following layers of social stratification: ethnicity, nationality, and migrant background; gender; religion. Although in some cases some intersections emerged from the stories that were told, an attention to the intersectional dimensions of people's identities and experiences was not present consistently. In fact, interviewees recognised the role played by multiple elements

of diversity in shaping experiences of migration and people's identities. Yet, the different categories seemed to be generally considered separately from one another, and the foci of the various projects did not include an explicit intersectional approach.

In sum, this chapter has provided some answers to the general research question as well as the three sub-questions (particularly the first and third ones) showing how Theatre of the Oppressed is organised in Italy in the context of migrations, providing some examples in terms of who participants are and how people from a migrant background are represented. This context is varied and heterogeneous, but some similarities have been identified. Overall, the analytical findings included in this chapter reveal that a new professional field (Bourdieu 1993) has started to emerge: this is composed of Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners who share common approaches to this theatrical method (although several differences exist). By applying it to the area of migrations, practitioners are starting to create a new field which is being legitimised (Bourdieu 1993) by the technical skills that they possess and the spreading of this knowledge through the projects realised and the people and associations reached. The issues discussed here are analysed more in detail in the case of MiGreat! in the next chapters.

5. The Social Actors Involved in Representation and their Engagement

This chapter examines who the people participating in activities of Theatre of the Oppressed (and to a lesser extent other participatory methods) in the context of migrations are in the case of MiGreat! (i.e., who the social actors involved in the process are, as mentioned in the general research question). Participants' social background as well as the relations, routes and motives through which they were involved, together with their engagement in the project, are analysed considering an intersectional perspective (first research sub-question). Since, as previously mentioned, in Theatre of the Oppressed and more generally in creative and participatory approaches the distinction between actors/actresses and audience is blurred (Boal 2011b, 108; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 59; Opfermann 2020, 141; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 6; Santos 2018, 55), this chapter refers to both, specifying any difference when this is relevant.

5.1 The Participants Involved

This section analyses the social background of participants in the various activities of MiGreat!, focusing particularly on the contexts through which they got involved and the motives of their participation.

5.1.1 The Social Background of Participants in Activities in Italy

In general, in all four countries both people from a migrant background and people not from a migrant background were involved. However, in Italy this did not occur consistently throughout the project, whereas in the other three countries people from a migrant background were always present, both as performers or people contributing to the realisation of the visual materials and the Forum-Theatres, and as members of the audience.

This might be due to the way in which, in Italy, participants in activities were recruited, contacting specific contexts.

the first contacts, the presentation of the project, the first contacts with single people, took place above all in the fields of Italian schools, Italian schools and uhm... of-of informal fields where people from a migrant background and supportive Italian people met to hmm... to create relationship and relationship of mutual aid. [...] [T]his is our target, this is the target of the MiGreat! project (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

In the particular case of the Forum-Theatre, various people were contacted. As far as the audience is concerned, recruitment was based on the following contexts, which are however similar to those contacted to search for actors/actresses:

The invitation was extended by [Italian Cooperative] to many of the participants that have already come into contact with the project in recent years: more or less formal schools of Italian for migrants, organisations and associations engaged in the reception and solidarity of people with migratory backgrounds, migrants who participate in Italian conversation classes or discussions with anti-racist activists, friends and acquaintances who are sensitive to, and active on, the issue of opposing the dominant narratives (including the group that participated with us in the process of creating IO2). (MiGreat! no date(b), 18)

In order to find future performers in the Forum-Theatre scene, the Italian Cooperative contacted an Italian language school for people with foreign origins, an association dealing with social inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers, and a reception room for homeless people where conversations in Italian take place between volunteers and people from a migrant background (which is managed by an association dealing with various activities in the field of migrations) – all based in Trento – among others (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative). In brief, both native Italians, including social workers, educators, Italian

language teachers, and volunteers, but also people from a migrant background were targeted throughout the project.

More or less the same people were targeted for the realisation of the visual materials.

So uh... for the part of the focus groups uh... they are mostly foreign people, uh who come from areas uh of Italian courses, [...]. Uhm... old acquaintances I would say, because uh... we activated a bit our network of people [who are] sensitive to the theme and who could easily have relationships or friendships with foreign people in Italy, who had been in Italy for... indifferent time, [...] uh with long or with... or with short-term residence in our country, [...] so we... we also invited our [female] friends, our [male] direct friends who, however, indeed uh... come from... from Colombia and have been in Italy for maybe ten years, or from Bosnia or Albania and have... more life experience in Italy than in their country of origin, they are married, have children, work here, etcetera. [...] [A]nd then, hmm, Italian people hired or engaged in-in activism regarding the defence of migrant people's rights in various ways [...], the same teachers of Italian schools (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

They were people from a migrant background attending Italian language classes or who have been living in Italy for several years, including second-generation migrants, acquaintances who are sensitive to the topic of migrations, Italian activists, and Italian language teachers. In sum, the people involved were generally related to the “reception system” and volunteering in the field of migrations in Trento (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative). Overall, around 50% of participants were native Italians, and 50% were people from a migrant background, for a total of around twenty-five participants (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative).

Before the start of the Forum-Theatre session, a multiplier event was organised, during which the visual materials were shown.⁴⁰ The characteristics of spectators from a migrant background during this event and the Forum-Theatre session are described below.

most of the people who arrive and are of foreign origins come from Africa, plus some probably Asian, perhaps Pakistani. [...] At around 8.40 pm the Forum-Theatre begins. I notice that the hall is almost full. At first sight I think I see around a third of people with foreign origins. In general, in terms of age, [...] there are adults, some of university age, the majority is between the age of 35-40 and 60, but people with foreign origins seem younger on average and they are all men. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/02/2022)

Participants from a migrant background and the drivers of their participation need to be more closely analysed. The literature shows how theatre, and more generally art, allow people coming from different backgrounds to dialogue and show each other solidarity, while at the same time overcoming prejudices (Degli Uberti 2007, 386; Netto cited in Andreone and Amore 2019, 102; Rovisco 2019, 656; O'Neill et al. 2019, 143; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7-8). Indeed, as mentioned above, people participated because of their engagement and attention towards the topic of migrations, but also because they recognised the “worth” of it:

we found people, especially people of foreign origin, [who were] very willing to – they used these words – “put their face in this”, because they recognised the value, the importance of the cause. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

⁴⁰ Although the target of the videos produced in Italy are officially people belonging to the “moveable middle” (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative), the multiplier event presenting them involved a part of the audience in the Forum-Theatre session (including both native Italians and people from a migrant background, mainly seeking international protection).

However, despite motivation, structural issues may come in the way, as it happened during the realisation of the visual materials (between Spring 2020 and Summer 2021). Indeed, the people involved changed, due to working commitments, and particularly the fact that several people from a migrant background found job opportunities during Summer 2021. In fact, adjusting working commitments to participation in theatrical or creative activities may constitute a challenge in general but particularly for people from a migrant background (Smith 2012, 55), and it impacted on the products of the project, as it will be later examined. Consequently, new people were involved (again coming from the contexts described above) in order to film the scenes, and therefore they participated as actors and actresses (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative).

During multiplier events too, people from a migrant background were not many. Participants included both native Italian people and people from a migrant background, but in the latter case they constituted a minority in all multiplier events with the exception of the Forum-Theatre session, on the basis of what I observed. Their participation is explained in the following quotation.

Uh foreign people uh participated to... to find, to look for a place to discuss and... to reflect some of their thoughts or problems. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As the interviewee points out, people from a migrant background participated in multiplier events in order to find a place where they could discuss their experiences and thoughts. Overall, people from a migrant background who were present had recently arrived in Italy and were primarily refugees or asylum seekers (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative), similarly to other projects of Theatre of the Oppressed and migrations realised in Italy (see Chapter 4). Moreover, participants in multiplier events were searched also

among people who are sensitive towards the topics of peace and non-violence, and not only strictly towards migrations, as Daria explains.

In the realisation of the Forum-Theatre people from a migrant background were not present, as the next quote reveals.

As far as the IO3 is concerned, the people we gathered in the group and who worked on the development-on the creation of the Forum, I must say, are people who are involved in this topic a lot for work too, I don't know how to say, they can't escape from this (*smiles*), [...]. This, for them, was an extra, different opportunity to-to talk, to deepen, to face, to discuss with each other at different levels, on the issue in which they are involved also as professionals uhm... of the- of the migrants and migrations issue, but also of the theatrical question, because another piece of the group uh that we managed to aggregate is composed of people who practise theatre-the Theatre of the Oppressed in particular with passion and experience. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As Raffaella explains, the people involved in the realisation of the Forum-Theatre script were people working in the field of migrations, in particular social workers and civil servants. At the same time, several people involved in an informal laboratory of Theatre of the Oppressed in Trento participated. These do not have a background in the field of migrations but are sensitive towards this topic. Thus, participants are defined as “supportive” with respect to people from a migrant background (MiGreat! no date(b), 4). Initially, around two or three people from a migrant background should have been involved, but this did not occur. The consequences of this composition will be analysed in Sections 5.5 and 7.1.1.

During the Forum-Theatre session, also the “grey zone” was present in the audience. In fact, according to Daria, the audience was composed of three main groups: people from a migrant

background coming from the “reception system” – mainly asylum seekers (30%), people who work or volunteer in the field of migrations (40%), “grey zone” (30%). The concept of “grey zone” is defined below.

Some associations were interested in doing TO, while “a part of the public were family members who are not close either to the world of TO or to the world of activism and migration”. For example, [Daria] tells us that Giuliana’s or Consuelo’s husband (she does not remember), when he saw the videos [of the IO2], told Daria: “I had never sat next to an asylum seeker” and Daria defines these people who never found themselves in a context together with asylum seekers or who do not deal with the issue of migrations as the “grey zone”, while Roberto calls them “third audience”. (Extract from fieldnotes, 28/02/2022)

The “grey zone” or “third audience” includes relatives and friends of performers in the Forum-Theatre scene, who neither knew Theatre of the Oppressed, nor the field of migrations or activism.⁴¹ Thus, new people were possibly involved. This fact was facilitated also by the location where the Forum-Theatre session took place, [cooperative based in Trento dealing with reception of and support to marginalised people], which usually organises events for a more general audience, including people who are not necessarily involved in activism, as Daria and Raffaella explain. Moreover, among Italian members of the audience I noticed the presence of some university students and lecturers, although these constituted a minority. In sum, participants in Italy came mainly from a specific field, that of migrations and the reception system. Several differences were present in the other three countries, as analysed below.

⁴¹ This is defined also as the “moveable middle”, namely people who are located between those “who already agree with you” and those “who are never going to change their minds” (MiGreat! no date(a), 10). Therefore, they are considered from a political perspective, as people who do not (at least apparently) have clear (also political) opinions on the issue of migrations.

5.1.2 The Social Background of Participants in the Other Three Countries

Participants in the other three countries had different backgrounds. This was mainly related to the different targets of the three partner organisations. In the UK, participants in both the visual materials and the Forum-Theatre were ESOL students attending classes at the British organisation, as delineated below.

Uhm this was a pre-existing group, [...]. Uhm so, these are my students, uhm mostly uh Latin American women. Uhm there was also, in the group, uh one man from Ethiopia, and uhm a husband of... uhm of one of the other students, so uhm a-a Colombian couple, but all of the students-all the rest of the students are Latin American women. Uhm mostly... m... mostly sort of middle aged, uhm some with uh young children, who also uh attend the class. [...] Uhm they've generally been living in the UK uh sort of less than ten years, but uh more than a year, uhm generally sort of three, four years... uhm yeah, some-some of them longer, some sort of six-seven years... [...] but uhm might not have had the opportunity to access a class before. (Interview with Patricia, Joker from the British organisation)

Generally, participants were middle-aged and had children. Overall, they were “beginner students”, meaning that they had quite a low level of English (interview with Patricia, British organisation), and they had been living in the UK for several years. Also members of the audience were ESOL students at the British organisation (interview with William, British organisation), and they were mostly women (interview with Patricia, British organisation). The composition of the group who worked on the visual materials (a “campaign video” – MiGreat! no date(a), 3) was similar: ESOL students with various backgrounds. Then, four of them were filmed in the videos: three women from China, India, and Poland, and a man from West Africa (interview with William, British organisation). All participants aimed at improving their language skills and acquiring some competences to overcome difficult situations that they face in their everyday life through theatre (interview with Patricia, British

organisation). In multiplier events, other people were present, including university students and professionals to which the events were advertised (interview with Patricia, British organisation). In the Final Conference of the project in London, participants included teachers, community organisers, researchers, theatre practitioners, many of which from a migrant background (interview with Jasmine, Hungarian organisation).

In France, people with various nationalities were present, as explained below.

...uhm were a little bit half men, half uh women. Uhm there were two French people and the rest of them were migrants uh from... uhm... Bangladesh, uh Ivory-Ivory Coast, uhm... Bangladesh, Ivory Coast, Brazil, Egypt. (Interview with Fernanda, Joker from the French organisation)

As the interviewee outlines, there were both men and women preparing the Forum-Theatre; two persons were French, whereas the others came from different countries.⁴² Similarly, participants in the visual materials (several posters – MiGreat! no date(a), 3) and in multiplier events came from various countries (including French oversea territories) and the majority of them were from a migrant background. These people mainly wished to play theatre and find a “safe place” where to talk about migrations (interview with Fernanda, French organisation). They were recruited through associations known by the French organisation in Paris (interview with Fernanda, French organisation). Moreover, some university students were present at multiplier events (interview with Fernanda, French organisation). Therefore, the types of migrant background of participants in the UK and in France were different from that encountered in Italy. This is related to both the targets of the organisations and the ways of recruiting participants.

⁴² In France, the Forum-Theatre session was not public, i.e., two groups were involved in the construction of two scenes and during the Forum-Theatre session one group performed the scene while the other was part of the public, and then they changed their roles (interview with Fernanda, French organisation).

In Hungary, the people working on the Forum-Theatre scene were five women, as explained in the next quote.

Uh so... it was Jasmine, who is uh employed for the MiGreat! project to co... uh to contribute, she is an Iranian-Hungarian artist, mostly theatre maker, and she's also language teacher. Uhm there were two actor-teachers from [Hungarian organisation], Eva and Margit, the two girls were from Romania, and then we had a fourth co-worker called Edit, who is also from Romania, uh she's also Hungarian, but she's not working with us anymore, she left from [Hungarian organisation] in July, and then she was replaced in the play by Panna, who is Hungarian. [...] There was an assistant, she's called Zsuzsa, and she was a volunteer [...] (Interview with Veronika, Joker from the Hungarian organisation)

All the persons involved had Hungarian origins (MiGreat! no date(b), 45), but also a migrant background (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation), and all were from an artistic background. They took part in this activity mainly to “be creative” and “construct together something meaningful” after the interruption of artistic activities due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation).⁴³ In Hungary, two types of visual materials were realised: a thinglink platform⁴⁴ and two videos. Participants realising them were different, as explained below.

Uh for the thinglink poster it was stable, and they were... yeah, migrant young adults uh from Serbia, Romania, Slovakia, who have-their mother tongue's Hungarian, but were raised abroad and now work in Hungary, and they are young adults between, I think 22 and... 29. For the [group of young people from a migrant background based in Budapest who are learning German], they are young adults who... came as children to Hungary in 20... 2013-14-15-16 with the

⁴³ In particular, these five women were involved because they were all connected to the Hungarian organisation and this allowed them to stage the Forum-Theatre scenes also after the end of MiGreat! (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation).

⁴⁴ A thinglink platform is “an interactive poster, which includes various multimedia products” (MiGreat! no date(a), 3).

refugee crisis in Europe, and... some of them were unaccompanied minors, so they live in Hungary without their families, some of them live with their families, they are mostly disadvantaged. (Interview with Veronika, Joker from the Hungarian organisation)

As the quote above shows, the thinglink poster was realised by young adults who were part of the staff and volunteers from the Hungarian organisation and who come from a migrant background (see also MiGreat! no date(a), 3). Instead, the two videos were initially devised by a group of young adults (mainly boys, but also some girls) who are learning German and come mainly from Iran and Afghanistan (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation) and arrived in Hungary during the refugee crisis. Now they are studying or working in Hungary (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation) and were recruited by Jasmine through some organisations supporting people from a migrant background (MiGreat! no date(a); interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation). Finally, the videos were realised by an artist from Afghanistan and his young son living in a refugee camp, who Jasmine got to know through an intercultural mediator working for [an association based in Budapest that supports people from a migrant background]. This artist wished to tell his story, express his creativity and be visible through this visual tool (interview with Jasmine, Hungarian organisation; see also MiGreat! no date(a), 11).

In multiplier events, that in Hungary were constituted almost exclusively by Forum-Theatre sessions that were held numerous times, the audience was usually composed by theatre practitioners, educators, and language teachers, but also people from a migrant background, also including refugees and asylum seekers, thus the “target group” of MiGreat! (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation; MiGreat! no date(b), 44).

In sum, in all the four partner organisations of MiGreat! both people from a migrant background and people not from a migrant background were included in activities, but in different relative percentages in the four considered cases.

5.2 The Structural and Procedural Barriers Limiting Participation of People from a Migrant Background

As previously mentioned, the inclusion of people from a migrant background in Italy revealed problematic and inconsistent. This was due to several reasons, analysed in this section. First of all, the precarity of the life of people from a migrant background limited their participation:

On the basis of the opportunities that we had to meet some of them [people from a migrant background], we felt that the main barrier to participation was mainly due to the high level of precarity in which they live. This would also have prevented some of them from participating in such a demanding process within a short time span. In fact, the people with whom we managed to get in touch often had difficulties in managing work, personal needs, as well as reaching the places where the meetings would have taken place. We recognised and worked within these constraints. Moreover, we believe that it is our task to report it as a significant aspect of the project in order to reflect on the phenomenon of migration within this territory. (MiGreat! no date(b), 17)⁴⁵

Although several people were contacted, people's struggles in dealing with work, personal necessities, transportation issues hindered their participation (see also interviews with Raffaella and Daria, Italian Cooperative), particularly if they are refugees or asylum seekers, exacerbated by the difficulty in finding a job (cf. also Grove and Zwi 2006, 1936; Dumont and Isoppo cited in Amelina and Lutz 2019, 54; Ferrari and Rosso cited in Carpani and

⁴⁵ I personally contributed to the writing of these sentences on the basis of what practitioners from the Italian Cooperative told me about the involvement of people from a migrant background in the Forum-Theatre.

Innocenti Malini 2019, 8; Smith 2012, 55; Erel and Reynolds 2014, 109). Consequently, these structural barriers limited their involvement in the Forum-Theatre, as it occurred in other projects (Smith 2012, 55). These issues are underlined also by Daria (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative), who however mentions several procedural challenges that were encountered both during recruitment and during events in which people from a migrant background were present:

Yes, with respect to this I think that we have been very much filtered and this is not a criticism uh but our presentation was filtered by third figures such as the [female] social workers, like we didn't manage to identify any clusters of foreign people where to go directly. [...] On the other hand, we asked participants, people who participated, an important effort, because we asked in a few weeks for an hourly availability that is not easy to-to agree upon. Then, another difficulty with migrant people is the question of the language. [...] [I]t is easier to lose enthusiasm if you have communication difficulties. I think we avoided this quite well, but I cannot avoid including it among the possible factors of... risk. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

As the interviewee reveals, invitations to participate in activities were not directly addressed to people from a migrant background, but “filtered” through social workers, Italian language teachers and volunteers operating in the associations previously mentioned (although in some circumstances practitioners from the Italian Cooperative reached directly people from a migrant background, for example through [ONG dealing with sea rescue of people from a migrant background]). This may have impacted on how the project was presented, influencing potential participants’ willingness to get involved. Indeed, as Raffaella explained during an online meeting, contrary to the British or the French organisation that directly interface with people from a migrant background, the Italian Cooperative had to search for participants through other associations. Moreover, time played a key role: the Forum-Theatre

script had to be realised by a specific deadline. Since the Forum-Theatre was realised in six meetings (twelve hours) split into three weeks (MiGreat! no date(b), 17), thus a short time span, participants had to give their availability twice a week, which was not always simple. Therefore, also this practical and procedural aspect hindered the involvement of people from a migrant background. Furthermore, other structural barriers posed various issues, particularly language. Although ways of accommodating language difficulties were thought about and often found – with participants or Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners translating (interview with Raffaella and Daria, Italian Cooperative) – the interviewee suggests that some people may have been discouraged from participating due to language barriers. In fact, language was considered at a certain point a criterion according to which to recruit participants (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative). Scholars have stressed how the absence of a common language may hinder the smooth carrying out of participatory and theatrical activities, causing communication problems and hindering the building of reciprocal trust (Opfermann 2020). The challenges posed by the language were encountered also in France, as explained in the next quotation.

Yeah, yeah, as I... I said it, it was a little bit difficult maybe for the... because of the word “migrant” that people might have... uhm... might be afraid of it, or the fact that it was in French, uh it was a little bit difficult to recruit. (Interview with Fernanda, Joker from the French organisation)

As the interviewee points out, the French language may have limited participation of people from a migrant background who did not speak this language fluently (although English was sometimes used – interview with Fernanda, French organisation). Another challenge was posed by the topic of migrations. Indeed, Fernanda suggests that people may be “afraid” of the word “migrant” and this topic may have discouraged them from taking part in activities. Another issue has to do with the specific topic of narratives.

the theme tackled by us did not deal with daily necessity, it dealt more with a level, a more meta level, let's say, okay, with respect to the-with the daily necessity. The-for-many said "yes, interesting", but it wasn't their priority at that moment. And... in contrast, do you remember [...] when we had the meeting on the house, involvement was much higher. I think that a difficulty was also that of the topic tackled, which is not a topic, uhm one, that everyone wants to talk about and two, a topic so easily declinable uh in a few meetings and of which perhaps one sees less the urgency, therefore a person who does not know where to go to sleep activates more easily in an activity on house search, than an activity on the narrative on the migrant phenomenon, although perhaps you don't find the house also because of how the narrative on the migrant phenomenon is made, the difficulty is also that of not having months and stable contexts where to meet. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

While several people from a migrant background considered the theme of narratives interesting, they did not consider it a priority at that time. It is a complex theme that is not easy to be discussed in only a few meetings and which is not perceived as urgent, in comparison to more practical issues (as it emerged also in Hungary – MiGreat! no date(a), 8; interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation). These issues are confirmed also by Roberto Mazzini (interview with Roberto Mazzini, Italian Cooperative), who followed to some extent the processes of recruitment of participants in MiGreat! activities, and was repeated to me several times by Raffaella, the Italian Joker. In sum, narratives were perceived as an "abstract" concept that is less "tangible" than other topics related to migrations (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative; see also MiGreat! no date(a), 6). This difficulty in talking about narratives was encountered also in France, where the theme was perceived as "complicated" (interview with Fernanda, French organisation). Similarly, in Hungary it was defined as a "distant", "academic" and "intellectual" concept (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation); for this reason it was not mentioned while presenting the Forum-Theatre scenes at the beginning of Forum-Theatre sessions (interview with

Veronika, Hungarian organisation).⁴⁶ However, theatrical activities are deemed helpful to better understand the concept of “narrative”, as explained below.

I recognise that theatre can do a lot in this direction, so, okay and that is surely something that I personally have taken away from this project, right? That it is not true that we can’t talk about narrative with people who don’t have a house, but it needs to be a bit uh... accompanied this path, so. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

As Daria points out, theatre may help facilitate the understanding of narratives, and for these purposes MiGreat! was helpful. Creative and participatory approaches help people comprehend a complex concept, such as that of narratives, through various activities that promote discussion and problematisation (see Malkassian et al. 2021). However, the complexity of the concept of narratives revealed challenging in the Italian context also because of the types of migrations that characterise this country:

[Roberto] explains that “the project should be recalibrated because the theme of narrative is not for refugees and asylum-seeking people: they have other priorities, it is not a generative theme, to use a Freirian term, but it can be useful for activists and community leaders”. (Extract from fieldnotes, 23/12/2021)

Daria explains this issue further referring to the differences in the types of migrations in Italy and the UK:

Daria replies: “The project was written without considering the differences between London and Italy, thinking that the migration history and therefore the way in which community development is done is the same thing between London and Italy: that type of community, of community leaders, of societal organisation,

⁴⁶ In these two countries, but also in the UK, in fact, the Jokers did not introduce the topic of narratives and explained more broadly the issues tackled in MiGreat! and in activities, precisely to render participation easier (interviews with Fernanda, French organisation; Veronika, Hungarian organisation; Patricia, British organisation). On other occasions, such as when starting working on the visual materials, the concept of narratives was discussed for example in the UK (interview with William, British organisation), as well as in Italy (see Section 6.1).

is present in London but not in Italy. [...] Also activism in Italy is a different activism from that in London”. (Extract from fieldnotes, 23/12/2021)

Since migrations in the UK are less recent than in Italy, migrant communities in the UK are better organised. Whilst in the UK the leaders of migrant communities act as “gatekeepers” between associations, in Italy these figures are more engaged in the protection of rights of people from a migrant background as well as in advancing the priorities and main needs of migrant communities. As such, they may not consider these types of activities crucial for them (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative). For all these reasons, practitioners in Italy did not “impose” the activity of Forum-Theatre to people from a migrant background. In brief, structural barriers – such as precarious lives, language barriers, different migration contexts – and procedural barriers – linked to the recruitment process, practical issues, and the complexity in understanding the relevance of narratives – led to various challenges in involving people from a migrant background. Nevertheless, the inconsistent presence of people from a migrant background, as well as several episodes of their participation, significantly influenced activities, also leading to various discussions, analysed below.

5.3 The Impact of (Limited) Participation of People from a Migrant Background

Besides the absence of people from a migrant background during activities, those who participated in multiplier events often struggled to actively participate, and this was noticed by other participants, as the quotation below shows.

Some of these [observations] strike me, above all Vanessa’s comment concerning the fact that often the dominant narrative, she says, “is white”. Vanessa in fact underlines that she feels a bit uncomfortable talking about migrations in a context in which white people are talking, but there are also people of colour who are present and who, however, do not understand what we are talking about and

above all that we are talking (also) about them. (Extract from fieldnotes, 26/11/2021)

During the first multiplier event that is held in Trento during which examples of dominant narratives on migrations are discussed, a young, female, Italian participant observes that the dominant narrative on migrations is often “white”. In fact, she notices that in the room there is a majority of white people, but there are also some people from a migrant background who do not seem to understand what the object of discussion is, including the fact that participants are talking also about them. The people to which Vanessa refers are three young men from Albania, Senegal, and Morocco who indeed are excluded from discussion, although later a man from Afghanistan will be able to participate in an activity carried out in small groups. During the multiplier event, the three men, who arrived with a young Italian woman working in an association for unaccompanied minors, remain silent and, as Raffaella will later notice, do not understand why they are there, mainly because of language barriers, but possibly also because nobody explained to them the aims of the multiplier event. Nonetheless, the facilitators partly disagree with Vanessa:

Raffaella underlines that on the one hand, this observation, even if basically correct, risks becoming a justification for “withdrawing” from talking about these themes and therefore leads to a passivity with respect to the fact of facing and discussing them; on the other hand, given that the participants deal with these themes because they work in this field, it is important that they ask themselves what is wrong with these narratives and therefore in some way it is not a talking about someone else but a talking also about oneself. (Extract from fieldnotes, 26/11/2021)

Replying to Vanessa’s comment, Raffaella argues that although her observation is “correct”, it risks becoming a justification for people to “step back” and maintain a passive attitude. On the other hand, since participants to this multiplier event work in the field of migrations,

it is important for them to question dominant narratives, and take this opportunity to reflect on their role as professionals in this field. It is not a coincidence, indeed, that the title of the multiplier event is “In the name of whom?”, which entails a “political question”, as Raffaella underlines. Nevertheless, the reasoning behind Vanessa’s comment, namely the fact that people from a migrant background should be actively included in discussion about migrations, does not seem to be completely understood. The marginalisation of people from a migrant background during some of the activities is explained by the fact that they constitute a target of the project, but only a specific group of people from a migrant background: those who could utilise the tools presented in other contexts, including within their communities, and not who simply go to those events as single users (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative, which is similar to the comments made before by Daria and Roberto Mazzini, Italian Cooperative). To put it differently, the initial idea was to spread to migrant communities theatrical tools to apply them autonomously (Boal 2011a, 21 and 26; Boal cited in Pisciotta 2016, 69; Bozza 2020, 2; Santos 2018, 205), similarly to what Massimiliano Bozza identifies as the main contribution of Theatre of the Oppressed to the field of migrations (see Chapter 4). In sum, for reasons related to the targets of the project and language barriers, people from a migrant background were not always fully included in activities. On one side, this could have hindered their empowerment, in contrast with the goals of Theatre of the Oppressed and of participatory approaches (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Bozza 2020, 1; Tolomelli 2012, 22; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012), reproducing power relations between Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners and professionals in the field of migrations and people from a migrant background (cf. also Rozakou 2012; Ranjan 2020). Yet, the attention to the role of white or native Italian people highlights how migrations concern everyone and not simply those directly experiencing it. In other words, preventing Italian people from debating on these issues risks reproducing an

“us vs them” dichotomy (Grove and Zwi 2006, 1933; Ahmed 2014, 1-2), as if the two groups were homogenous (Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008, 2; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009, 57 and 64-65; Bello 2011; Bello 2020, 9), and perpetuating a binary thinking (cf. also hooks 2020a, 52 and 193; Lorde 1984, 114; Collins 1986, 19-21), as Roberto Mazzini and Uri Noy Meir argue (see Chapter 4). This is particularly relevant thinking that integration involves both people from a migrant background and natives (cf. also Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7). Further, the emphasis on the role of Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners and professionals in the field of migrations underlines the attempt at building a professional field (Bourdieu 1993) whose members are trained with tools and methods to work with people from a migrant background, and therefore empowerment would become a further step in this direction.

Similarly, the absence of people from a migrant background in the realisation of the Forum-Theatre led to debates and reflections about who is entitled to talk about narratives on migrations and represent this theme. In fact, as outlined in Chapter 4, participatory methods are based on the direct participation of the group of people who is oppressed, since negative narratives about migrations are usually spread by people who “did not themselves experience migration” (Malkassian et al. 2021, 20). In Italy, the focus was on the problem of “how to stage the story in which a black person is the main character, without black person in our workgroup? With no black actors at all?” (MiGreat! no date(b), 18), since the story that was represented in the Forum-Theatre scene features a black young man as the (most) oppressed protagonist. During a meeting between Raffaella, Daria, and me, the Italian Joker points out that the fact of not having a black actor in the group of performers could be considered a problem, since the story shows an oppression that “would not have occurred to a white

guy”.⁴⁷ In this way, she acknowledges a potential issue with this representation. This fact is not openly debated with participants during the meetings to develop the Forum-Theatre scene, as the following quotation shows.

[Raffaella] also specifies that “we don’t have a black actor” [...]. Yet, she adds that if we do not manage to find a black actor “we must be ready to be told ‘no, this is not the way’”. I notice that no one rebuts or says anything about this. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/01/2022)

During a meeting, Raffaella explains to the group of performers that a black actor is not present in the group, and if she is not able to find one (through her acquaintances), the group needs to be prepared to criticisms from the audience. However, participants do not reply, and this occurs also during another meeting to prepare the Forum-Theatre scene. During the public Forum-Theatre session, this issue is mentioned by the Joker directly to the audience:

“We asked ourselves if everyone can do everything. We thought about whether a man can play a woman (or vice versa), if a white guy can play a black guy. [...] [W]e thought that in some cases this is possible”. [...] At this point, however, a spectator, of African origins, exclaims: “Everyone can’t do everything”. Raffaella replies: “It’s true”. The comment is let drop there. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/02/2022)

By intervening contradicting what the Joker is saying, the spect-actor exercises his agency (cf. also O’Neill et al. 2019, 131; Bürkner 2012, 192). Notwithstanding this, his comment is not brought forward, since the Joker states to agree with him, but discussion stops here. During the Forum-Theatre sessions, men go on stage interpreting women, black people interpret white characters and vice versa. This helps reflect on a central aspect of feminist Theatre of the Oppressed, related to how spect-actors should intervene, starting from the

⁴⁷ At the beginning of the Forum-Theatre scene, characters introduce themselves to the audience, in order to help them understand the role played by each actor/actress (MiGreat! no date(b), 19, 21 and 23-24). This choice is made precisely to communicate that one of the actors plays the role of a black person.

social positions that they occupy in society and taking into account the various dimensions of inequality to which they belong (cf. also Kuringa (no date(a)); Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022; Santos 2018, 144-145). Moreover, this issue is relevant to the broader question about who is entitled to talk about migrations and represent it through art (Rovisco 2019; Sharifi 2016; Cox 2014), as well as whether white people can play the roles of characters of colour (Sharifi 2016, 326). More generally, it helps reflect about who is entitled to talk about the oppression of a given community (cf. also hooks 2020a, 193; Collins 1986; Collins 1989; Freire cited in hooks 2020b, 90). However, during the Forum-Theatre session, these aspects are not widely debated. The absence of people from a migrant background in the Forum-Theatre constructed in Italy sometimes creates discomfort.

[Fiorella] tells me that the fact that there were only “white” people sometimes made her feel uncomfortable, but this does not mean that she believes that those who are not from a migrant background have nothing to say on that theme, simply a perspective went missing, that would have been important to include anyway. She specifies to me that she thought this especially in the case of Luca who “is a white guy who played a black guy”. (Extract from fieldnotes, 31/03/2022)

In the quote above, Fiorella, a young woman who contributed to the preparation of the Forum-Theatre but did not perform, explains that the presence of only “white” people sometimes caused her discomfort, because a relevant viewpoint was overlooked. This was particularly evident in the case of the protagonist, a young, black, man from Gambia, who was played by a young, Italian, white man, who imitated a supposedly “African” accent on stage.⁴⁸ A few weeks after the Forum-Theatre session, a spectator told me that in part it is true that in the Forum-Theatre it seemed that “we [were] talking about them, about someone

⁴⁸ The use of a foreign accent was discussed during the meetings, and the Joker suggested not to imitate foreign accents in order not to create a stereotyped character, but rather to utilise a few words and no long or complex sentences. Yet, during the Forum-Theatre session, Luca, the actor playing the protagonist from Gambia, adopts a slightly foreign accent, which again is connected with broader debates about European performers playing the roles of people of colour and the power (and racist) relations that this engenders (Sharifi 2016, 326).

else”, since there were only Italian people on stage (extract from fieldnotes, 10/04/2022). In other words, some spectators reflected upon whether the performance included the point of view of the protagonists of negative narratives (from a migrant background), or whether the scene was performed by Italian people talking about “them” (Cox 2014, 27). Adam, a young man from West Africa who was present at the Forum-Theatre session and was invited by a young Italian woman who volunteers in the field of migrations, commented with me on the absence of a black actor explaining that if the protagonist of the story was played by a black guy, his role would have been clearer, as well as the reason why he was being oppressed. In sum, the absence of people from a migrant background or from ethnic backgrounds other than white (categories are often not equivalent – e.g., Held 2022, 17; Salvatori and Terrón Caro 2019, 40-41), was noticed by spectators who sometimes critically reflected on it.

Nonetheless, during the Forum-Theatre session, people from a migrant background were able to participate, as shown through the picture and the excerpt below.



Figure 2: Intervention from a spect-actor. A spect-actor from Nigeria goes on stage replacing Alessandra (an oppressive character) and talking to Mamadou, the most oppressed protagonist, during the Forum-Theatre session in Trento (picture taken by me on 18/02/2022 in Trento).

A spectator of African origins, James, proposes to be the [female] ticket inspector. In this way the actors' skin colours are reversed: he, the ticket inspector, is black, whereas the passenger, even though he would be black as a character, is white, so they are the opposite of the characters they play. This immediately catches my eye (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/02/2022)

James, a spect-actor from Nigeria decides during the Forum-Theatre session to play the role of a female, Italian character (a ticket inspector on a train who acts as an oppressor), which is originally played by a white woman. As such, the ticket inspector is now played by a black man, whereas the protagonist, who is oppressed and is a black young man, is played by a white man. Participation from a person from a migrant background during the performance gives him the possibility to enact citizenship, trying to change the reality that is represented (cf. also Erel and Reynolds 2014, 109-110; Boal cited in Mazzini 2011, 7; Boal 2011b, 14; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; Boal cited in Santos 2018, 143). In fact, this spect-actor was happy about the opportunity to intervene on stage:

James tells me that he enjoyed going on stage, especially because he saw it as an opportunity to give his opinion, to make people understand how he would have behaved in the place of the [female] ticket inspector. According to him, participating could be useful to change the mind of someone who perhaps may have behaved like the [female] ticket inspector. Nevertheless, he had some difficulty with the Italian language. (Extract from fieldnotes, 06/05/2022)

As the quote above shows, James liked entering the scene because he experienced it as an opportunity to express an opinion and potentially impacting on people who may have behaved as the oppressor. In other words, he enjoyed the opportunity to try to change society (cf. also Bürkner 2012, 192; Ranjan 2020; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Boal 2021, 42-43; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 169; Santos 2018, 205). Yet, he reveals that his language difficulties may have also affected the participation of other people from a migrant

background. When asked an opinion on the limited inclusion of people from a migrant background, the Italian Joker answers as follows:

Uh in this specific of the MiGreat! project I feel that we did not... speak in the name of anyone, to quote Freire, uhm but uh that the search, let's say, for the authentic word, [...] for the person who is at the centre of the problem, because they live it on their skin, in this case, was very broad, because as we said, also us white people, Italian native speakers, of Italian origin, we experience this which we identified as a problem, that is the oppression of the dominant narrative on our skin. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

The interviewee argues that, in the case of MiGreat!, participants and practitioners did not appropriate an issue that concerns someone else. Since numerous people are involved in the “problem” of the dominant narrative on migrations, including Italian, white people, migrations are conceived as a topic that concerns everyone. The fact of tackling the problems experienced by a community that we are not part of (as well as working for its liberation) is central in Freirean pedagogy (Freire cited in hooks 2020b, 90; Malkassian et al. 2021, 22 and 24), Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal 2021), including from a feminist perspective (Kuringa (no date(a)); Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022; Santos 2018, 94 and 144-145), but also in the field of performative arts (Rovisco 2019; Sharifi 2016; Cox 2014), as well as for intersectional scholars (hooks 2020a, 193; Collins 1986; Collins 1989). The Joker seems to conceive the deconstruction of dominant narratives and the creation of alternative ones as a two-way process, similarly to integration (cf. also Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7). This premise will be central to the construction of a professional field of experts in theatrical tools to be applied to migrations (Bourdieu 1993), as examined in Section 6.1.

The fact that a black man played the role of a white female character impacts on the other characters' reactions, as the Joker explains in the following days:

Ivan was struggling to be so “vulgarly racist” in front of a black guy who played the [female] ticket inspector (Extract from fieldnotes, 28/02/2022)

The Italian Joker points out that the actor playing Ivan, another character who is a white, Italian man acting as an oppressor, struggled to act in a racist way (as part of his character) when a black person played the role of the ticket inspector to whom he had to answer rudely and aggressively, precisely because of the actor's different skin colour. Similarly, people from a migrant background participated replacing other characters, such as Adam who was the first to intervene playing the role of the (oppressed) protagonist who behaved in a more “active” way: indeed, he rebelled against one of the oppressors, although this did not help ending the oppression. Participation by people from a migrant background is key in order to take the opportunity to stop the oppression and act in order to try to transform reality (Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 10-11). In this way, they have the chance to look at oppressive mechanisms from a different viewpoint, experimenting with possible strategies to overcome them (cf. also Alshughry 2018, 174; Malkassian et al. 2021, 25), shifting from “spectators” to “spect-actors” (cf. also Boal 2021, 39; Boal 2011a, 40-42; Boal 2002, 277; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Boal cited in Pisciotta 2016, 69; Tolomelli 2012, 33-34; Schroeter 2013, 397; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Erel et al. 2017). This is particularly crucial for people from a migrant background who may often be marginalised (cf. also Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Grove and Zwi 2006; Degli Uberti 2007, 386; O'Neill et al. 2019, 143; Fassin and Kobelinsky 2012, 450; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 174; Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 5; Palmer cited in Andreone and Amore 2019, 102). In sum, people from a migrant background were not always included

in activities, and this led to various discussions and comments by the other participants. When they managed to participate, as during the Forum-Theatre session, they impacted on other actors' performance, and expressed their agency. This highlights that their inclusion in participatory activities on migrations is central. Yet, other characteristics of participants shaped the activities carried out, as analysed in the next section.

5.4 Participants' Gender (and Other Categories of Difference)

In some of the countries involved in MiGreat!, gender was a central category among both participants and facilitators of activities. For example, in Italy, in the associations in the field of migrations that were contacted to recruit participants, a specific gender dynamic was identified, as explained below.

it is a setting, it is a dynamic here, in Italy, in Trento, [which is] very uh recurrent, that social workers, teachers, volunteers are women and students, refugees... so, the other part, are men. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

This dynamic is found in the composition of the group who worked at the visual materials:

So, we have, as it has often happened – it is an evidence of the whole project – uh Italian people mostly female, uh middle aged, more... well younger than elderly (*smiles*), middle aged I would say. Could we identify about thirty? 30-35, something like that, as an average. Uhm... while foreign people are predominantly of masculine sex, uhm... and here too, well maybe, we widen a bit, from very young, from 20-25 years up to 35? (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

The interviewee points out how in the visual materials, but also throughout the project, the people involved are on the one side Italian women – the Joker utilises the expression “sex” rather than “gender” – who are on average thirty or thirty-five years old. On the other side,

people with foreign origins (or from a migrant background) are primarily men – again “sex” is repeated rather than “gender” – and on average younger. This is a dynamic that I observed during activities. For instance, as mentioned in the previous section, people from a migrant background who participated in the Forum-Theatre as spect-actors were young men, and this occurred also in the case of multiplier events (although the presence of people from a migrant background there was more limited). In contrast, social workers, volunteers and language teachers were often female. For example, this occurred in a multiplier event that was held in Trento, but also in the multiplier event that was held in Parma with volunteers, social workers or civil servants at [organisation based in Parma dealing with migrations and cooperation], where six out of seven participants were women between the age of twenty and around seventy, and one man in his sixties. Age played a relevant role in participation in multiplier events according to Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners, as the following quotation reveals.

there was also a difference between the people who participated: young [female] volunteers and [female] civil servants were much more active, [female] Italian teachers are “tired from life” and from seeing people with such “unfortunate” stories every day. (Extract from fieldnotes, 23/12/2021)

The Italian Joker explains that during the first multiplier event in Trento, young female volunteers and civil servants were more “active”, whereas Italian teachers, who are older on average, seemed “tired” of hearing the difficult experiences of people from a migrant background – which is however an example of how people from a migrant background are victimised (cf. also Rozakou 2012; Grove and Zwi 2006, 1935; Young 2003, 19; O’Neill et al. 2019, 134; Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 5). Yet, this age dynamic was present also in the multiplier event in Parma, where younger participants were often more active. This distinction according to the age of female participants reveals a further dimension: younger

women may be considered as having a higher cultural capital than older ones. In the case of the Forum-Theatre, among thirteen participants, more than half of them operated in the field of migrations. Among these, five were women, while three were men, and they were between twenty and forty years. The other participants were recruited from the informal laboratory of Theatre of the Oppressed based in Trento, and they were three women and two men between forty and sixty years of age. In sum, more women than men were present.

Referring to the Forum-Theatre session, the fact that among people from a migrant background there were more men than women is explained as follows:

well for the Forum, in my opinion, the issue of the show was also because uh... asylum seekers, in the structure of the [religious community in Trento where university students and asylum seekers cohabit], are men and therefore... many came from there, [...] certainly the involvement of migrant women is particularly difficult, it is difficult in every situation and... for various reasons. For a question also of... uh presence in public of the woman, of presence on the territory, there are anyway fewer, like a series of issues, so. [...] Like, it is not usual, for a woman, to play this type-going to the theatre, it is perhaps more so-perhaps it is not so even for a man, but for a man it is more normal, it is part of the activities that he is used to do, go out and take part in the activities that maybe he does not understand well, for a woman, no, it is not so usual. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

The interviewee suggests that during the Forum-Theatre session various people from a migrant background came from a religious community based in Trento where university students and male asylum seekers cohabit. Moreover, it is more difficult for women to be present “in public”, as well as taking part in public and social activities such as going to theatre, than for men, despite the latter may not “understand” completely these activities (probably because of language issues). In other words, the interviewee explains this

difference connecting participants' gender identity with their ethnicity, suggesting that in certain countries or cultures women are less likely to participate in public and social activities. Yet, research on this dynamic is limited. Women from a migrant background who took part in the visual materials belonged to specific groups of people from a migrant background, highlighted below.

the women who were involved in the IO2 [...], had a very different migration path, we are talking about some women-one woman, two, of... Bosnian origin, who however had worked, studied and has Italian citizenship, therefore with paths... a girl from Morocco who has lived in [neighbourhood in the north of Trento] for many years... uhm... so we cannot-we cannot... I do not feel I can compare women in the reception system, asylum seekers, that maybe their [female] social worker told them, "Come on, come" in the evening or "Come and do this activity", with a woman who heard about the event on Facebook because she always tweets on her profile, if... how to say, she always shares the news of the main situations about rights... for migrants in Trentino, like, they are two different women, do you understand? (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

As the interviewee underlines, several women contributed to the construction of visual materials, but they are women who have lived in Italy for a long time or even have Italian citizenship. Therefore, a distinction is drawn between women who are asylum seekers and may participate because they are invited by social workers, and women who autonomously decide to participate in activities because they are more independent and active from a social perspective. This explanation highlights how people from a migrant background differ in terms of migration status, nationality, but more generally in how they experience migrations and what their social positions are because of other dimensions of inequality (cf. also Bürkner, 2012; Bastia 2014, 240-241; Salvatori and Terrón Caro 2019, 38; Castro and Carnassale 2019, 205). However, this explanation is reductive. First, men from a migrant

background who were present in activities were usually invited by social workers or volunteers. Second, this distinction creates a dichotomy between women in need and emancipated women (cf. also Mohanty 1984; Abu-Lughod 2002), ignoring other reasons that may have limited women's participation. Moreover, a group of women from a migrant background meeting at [bar in Trento which also organises cultural initiatives] was contacted in order to investigate their availability to participate in the Forum-Theatre, but they had other priorities. Therefore, more data should be available in order to deepen this aspect.

A different picture is present in the British organisation, where women were prevalent both among participants and among practitioners, as outlined below.

I think ESOL is a very uh feminised sector, uhm the majority of ESOL teachers are women. Uhm when you attend, like, these conferences and events for ESOL teachers, the vast majority are women. [...] Uhm... also, like, conversely, in community language classes, the vast majority of students are also women. Uhm so whereas in a college, uhm in a more formal educational setting, it's more mixed, you'll have men and women, in community classes uhm there's-there's-there are often more women, because uhm because there's a kind of flexibility, uhm community classes are-are often in children's centres or schools that are more accessible to women. [...] the vast majority of the audience were-were also women. (Interview with Patricia, Joker from the British organisation)

As the English Joker explains, the field of ESOL, which the British organisation is part of, is "feminised": both on the side of teachers and on the side of students, the majority are women. This is explained by the fact that ESOL classes are often held in children's centres or schools that women can access more easily based on their working commitments, whereas men may not be able to do so for working reasons. Since the audience at the Forum-Theatre session was composed of ESOL students and teachers, women were prevalent there too.

Therefore, this composition of the groups in MiGreat! activities in the British organisation appears to be representative of the field which the organisation is part of.

Besides gender and age, some other categories impacted on the composition of groups of participants. For example, in the British organisation, the audience in multiplier events belonged to different social classes and educational backgrounds.

ESOL professionals, MA students and lecturers (mostly British, uhm... maybe a couple with a migrant background), Forum-Theatre was mostly our students, mostly came in groups. Uhm... then the uh video launch was quite similar, uhm a lot of students from other classes, other parts of London, uhm plus some... uhm... some students from, I think, [prestigious university in London] uhm... and... and the last uh multiplier event was the seminar which was for a range of university students and uhm a couple of lecturers as well. (Interview with Patricia, Joker from the British organisation)

As the interviewee explains, in multiplier events the public was composed mainly of ESOL students and professionals, as well as university students and lecturers. In sum, on the one side there were people from middle to upper classes, while on the other side there were people from lower classes (ESOL students), as shown by the description of participants in the Forum-Theatre (who were ESOL students):

Uhm they... many of them are engaged in cleaning work in London, uhm and... yeah, are-are generally in low-paid work, uh shift work, sometimes uh zero-hour contracts. (Interview with Patricia, Joker from the British organisation)

As the Joker in Britain points out, ESOL students who participated in the Forum-Theatre scene were often involved in “cleaning work”, “low-paid work”, “shift work”, or “zero-hour contracts”. This is common in European countries, where work such as cleaning is deeply gendered, and in general several types of work have been deskilled. As a consequence,

people from a migrant background are often hired in these sectors, working in often precarious circumstances (Dumont and Isoppo cited in Amelina and Lutz 2019, 54; cf. also Erel and Reynolds 2014, 109). Yet, some of them were engaged in other types of work, which are closer to the work of the middle class: in fact, the four participants who appear in the visual materials realised in London were teachers, a photographer and a sous-chef (interview with Patricia and William, British organisation). In sum, in London participants belonged to lower to middle classes in the case of ESOL students, whereas others were part of middle to upper classes. This dynamic was similar in the Italian context, where native Italians were often social workers, civil servants, volunteers, and to a lesser extent university students or lecturers, whereas people from a migrant background have recently arrived in Italy, and often live in precarious conditions, as previously analysed.

Yet, experiences of migration often shape categories of identity, which are fluid and socially constructed (cf. also Smith, Parreñas and Siu, Siu cited in Herrera 2013, 476; Carastathis et al. 2018, 10; Sinatti 2014). For instance, people may belong to upper classes in their home country, but then become part of lower classes in the host country due to the difficulty in finding a job or in getting recognition of one's own educational background (cf. also Erel and Reynolds 2014, 109).

In Hungary, people from various social classes, ages, and backgrounds were present at Forum-Theatre sessions, as explained below.

I think first we tried out with a high school class, young adults, [...] uh and then with the higher education courses of Psychology, Integrative Psychology and Education, [...] and... social workers... who are becoming social workers, and with the special College of Psychology. And then in December, we did it with the... the co-workers of the biggest organisation that work with migrants in Hungary, they're called [association based in Budapest that supports people from

a migrant background]. And then in January we were invited to another organisation event, with the performance, and there uh we met also professionals and experts who were journalists, uh work with migrants, work with adult education, or work through art methods in their education practices [...]. And since then, we are playing the performance for high school classes (Interview with Veronika, Joker from the Hungarian organisation)

As the Hungarian Joker outlines, the Forum-Theatre session in Budapest took place in front of audiences made of high school students, including young adults, university students, social workers in the field of migrations, and other types of professionals, including journalists and people working with people from a migrant background, adult education and art (see also MiGreat! no date(b), 44). Therefore, the Hungarian organisation reached people of different ages and social classes, although generally spectators came from middle classes. To sum up, the gender, age, and social class backgrounds of people involved in the activities as part of MiGreat! depended on various structural conditions related to the types of migrations in the countries involved, the targets of the different organisations, as well as the groups of people mostly working in a given professional sector.

The presence of university students and professionals in multiplier events in the four partner countries is interesting. Although data on this issue is limited, in the UK, for example, it was remarked that both students and researchers evaluated positively the materials produced within the project and claimed that they could be helpful for their research too (interview with Patricia, British organisation). Thus, the work of practitioners of creative and participatory approaches in the area of migrations could be considered relevant also for researchers, and this could support the creation of a new professional field in relation also with other fields. Indeed, collaboration with academia may help develop and expand this professional community as well as increase its legitimacy (Bourdieu 1993).

In Italy, a central role was played by social workers in the field of migrations, to which the next section turns.

5.5 The Role of Social Workers

As discussed above, participants in activities in Italy were searched mainly through various associations and Italian language schools working with people from a migrant background, as the quote below outlines referring to multiplier events.

Ehm Italian and foreign [male and female] friends participated, mostly Italian people and... who, of these tools, the Theatre of the Oppressed, the... in the sense of the Forum-Theatre, the participatory video, the handbook with activities and theoretical hints on various methodologies, they can think of using them in their environments, therefore, let's say, Italian people who are mostly [male and female] educators, [female] social workers, teachers, uhm they participated for- for this reason. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As the interviewee explains, native Italians who participated in multiplier events were people who could have the opportunity to utilise creative and participatory approaches at work, such as educators, social workers, teachers, as well as volunteers (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative). As such, these people represented one of the targets of MiGreat! (Malkassian et al. 2021, 6), that directly contributed to the creation of a professional community that disposes of various resources (creative and participatory methods and tools) that may be applied to work with people from a migrant background. In the case of the Forum-Theatre, the involvement of people coming from [association based in Trento dealing with social inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers] was foreseen in the project, as explained below.

Raffaella restates that the goal of MiGreat! was to involve a team that deals with communities within [association based in Trento dealing with social inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers] (the team members had contacted [Italian

Cooperative] to undertake this path) and “[Italian Cooperative] was interested in having people involved in the theme of migrations”. She specifies, in fact, that the majority of people on stage were from this association. (Extract from fieldnotes, 28/02/2022)

As the Italian Joker points out, among the objectives of MiGreat! in Italy there was the involvement of a team of workers from [association based in Trento dealing with social inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers] who contacted the Italian Cooperative in order to take part in a Forum-Theatre that could be interesting for them and their work, not least to learn to utilise this tool. On the other hand, the Italian Cooperative was interested in involving people who were into the topic of migrations. Indeed, social workers, volunteers and civil servants from [association based in Trento dealing with social inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers] constituted more than half of the group, and indeed they knew each other. However, another part of participants was composed of people who started to know the method of Theatre of the Oppressed in Autumn 2021. Indeed, another reason why participants took part in this experience was their curiosity towards theatre and in particular Forum-Theatre, as stated below.

in my opinion, yes, from the point of view of the people who participated... and if one of the expectations was experime-for them, experimenting with a new technique, a new approach to the migrant phenomenon or talking about topics they have never talked about as for example Consuelo had said, I think so. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

As the interviewee explains, several participants wished to “experiment a new technique” (that of Forum-Theatre), a new way to approach the topic of migrations, as well as have the opportunity to talk about this topic. According to the interviewee, these expectations were met – although it is important to notice that this observation comes from the interviewee’s

words, and not from participants, from the feedback that I received during participant observation I believe that these expectations, at least for some of the participants, were met. In sum, given the presence of numerous people operating in the field of migrations, practitioners from the Italian Cooperative treated them as “experts” because, as the Italian Joker stated before the multiplier event held in Parma, “they [participants] are experts of migrations, not us from [Italian Cooperative], because [Italian Cooperative] is expert of Theatre of the Oppressed but not of migrations” (see also Section 4.3). The central role of people working in the field of migrations is motivated also through the topic of narratives, discussed in the next quotation.

[Raffaella says that] it is difficult to propose alternative narratives with people from a migrant background, it is more feasible to reason on this issue with those who work with people from a migrant background; the project also wants to question this system of support to people from a migrant background [...] and therefore we talk about these things with those who work in this sector precisely to call into question and ask ourselves what works and what does not work, if it works also for someone else or not. (Extract from fieldnotes, 06/12/2021)

As Raffaella explains, talking about narratives was easier with professionals working with people from a migrant background, rather than with people from a migrant background themselves. This is related to the fact that, as she stresses, the MiGreat! project aimed at questioning the functioning of the Italian reception system and the support that people from a migrant background are provided with. This reflection made by the Italian Joker highlights the scarce clarity in the targets of the project, but also the difficulties encountered in Italy (these issues are discussed also in Chapter 6). In any case, the centrality of social workers in MiGreat! as well as in the use of creative and participatory methods is often underlined (see for example Malkassian et al. 2021, 33). In general, native Italians involved in activities “joined for a sensitivity, an interest and a willingness to discuss the subject matter”

(Interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative). Therefore, taking part in the construction of a Forum-Theatre script allowed them to act in solidarity towards people from a migrant background, which is something that theatre in fact allows to do (Degli Uberti 2007, 386; Netto cited in Andreone and Amore 2019, 102; O'Neill et al. 2019, 143). At the same time, these people experienced a feeling of discomfort towards negative narratives about people from a migrant background, that were discussed during the realisation of the visual materials:

the thing that made us click was: there are many Italian people who are uncomfortable, not equally, but are deeply uncomfortable in front of racist acts or speeches, not as those who experience it on their own skin in the sense, not as the subject who is foreign, who is black, who is uh... okay? But with an equal level of discomfort (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

The interviewee stresses how numerous Italian people experienced a deep level of discomfort when they witnessed or listened to racist acts or discourses, although these were not the same feelings of people who are directly targeted. Interestingly, the reference is made to being a “foreigner” or being “black”, thus oppression is explained through these categories and not their intersection with others (such as gender or social class). These issues emerged also during a multiplier event in Parma, where participants (who were all native Italians) were asked to indicate where dominant narratives on migrations hurt or where they originate, and through which means they are spread (indicating the parts of the body on the drawn figure).⁴⁹ This is shown through the picture below and relative fieldnotes.

⁴⁹ This activity helps understand the concept of “narrative” (in this case, dominant narrative), but focusing on concrete examples and parts of the body.

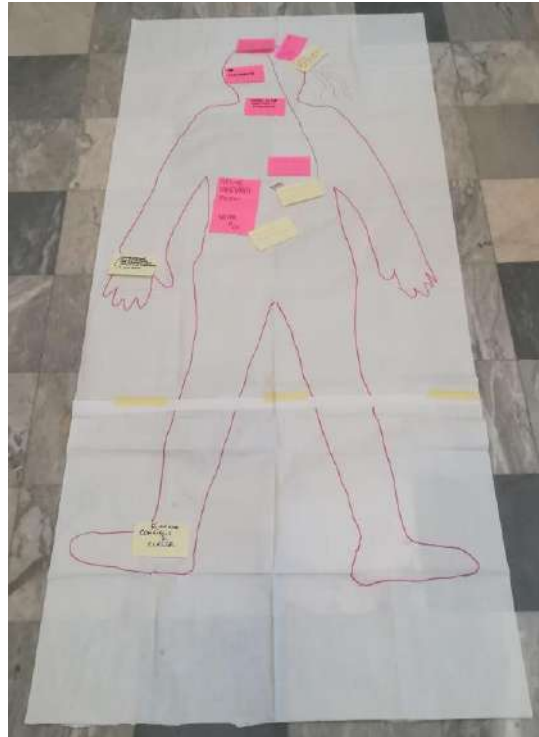


Figure 3: Dominant narratives: Who? Where? Through which means?

Activity to stimulate reflection upon dominant narratives

(picture taken by me on 22/01/2022 in Parma).

[P]articipants then explain why they placed the post-it notes in certain positions:

- Luigia: the populists “make you feel unwell, a lot” [...].
- Nicoletta: hearing certain narratives from social workers “hurts here and here” (she points to the heart, the chest and the belly).
- Emanuela: draws the nerves near the head to underline the feeling of wanting to vent, say, do, when she hears these narratives.
- Nicoletta: mentions the feeling that remains of not knowing how to answer, what to do in order to change. Raffaella asks her: “Okay, so the feeling of ‘I can’t find an idea’, ‘my nerves are blocking my ideas’”. Nicoletta confirms that it is precisely that feeling.

Raffaella notes that the post-it notes have been placed either where it hurts or at the starting point where a dominant narrative is generated. (Extract from fieldnotes, 22/01/2022)

The picture and excerpt above point out that, according to participants, people spreading dominant narratives on migrations “hurt a lot”, especially indicating the heart, the chest, and

the stomach. Other feelings include the need to vent, to react, but also an impossibility to act, the fact of not knowing what to do. Dominant narratives on migrations are said to come from “populists”, among others, but Nicoletta, a young volunteer at [organisation based in Parma dealing with migrations and cooperation], specifies that also social workers may contribute to spread negative narratives on migrations, and she will repeat it during another activity during the multiplier event. Indeed, during this multiplier event, the questions about how social workers act in relation to narratives, whether they contribute to spreading negative narratives or not, and how they relate to power relations are discussed.

Nicoletta has to answer the question “How can we ensure that the work on liberation from oppression related to the narrative on migrants and migrations is guided or fully involves the affected migrants?”. She says that the involvement and the work on liberation from oppression must also start “from us social workers, we must accept that the other frees themselves. We are part of that power dynamic. We talk too little about this, even in the profession. Until this is taken apart, I think it’s hard”. (Extract from fieldnotes, 22/01/2022)

During the multiplier event, participants discuss several “Freirian questions”, related to power and oppression. Answering the question about the complete involvement of people from a migrant background in their liberation from oppression, Nicoletta explains that liberation should be facilitated by social workers, who should be the first to allow it to occur. In fact, social workers are defined as “part of that power dynamic”, but this is not often discussed within that professional field. Yet, the participant warns against the fact that if these issues are not taken into consideration, it will be difficult to allow people from a migrant background to liberate themselves. Interestingly, critical reflections such as this are generally made by younger participants, and this critical approach is encouraged also by practitioners (Malkassian et al. 2021, 26 and 76). The power dynamics existing in reception centres and associations supporting people from a migrant background in Europe have been

widely debated in the literature (e.g., Rozakou 2012). Several activities that were carried out aimed precisely at questioning the role of social workers, helping participants reflect on their job, as explained below.

Like looking for... playing... proposing theatrical games, like also for-for... (*smiles*) with the typical difficulty, the typical resistance that adults have towards the game, trying to introduce that dimension, in order not to repeat the comfort, the usual comfort zone of the people involved, who often have a precise role, in this project in particular, right? a bit wrapped up, (*smiles*) wrapped up in the sense, packaged, of... in fact, I repeat, educator or *facili-or...* [female] social worker... or [male or female] volunteer and... maybe exactly, bringing to-the discussion to a more human-beings level beyond the role can also lead to discussing the role at some point, but in a somewhat different and indirect way. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As the interviewee points out, activities and games (which are part of creative and participatory methods) showed the difficulty and “resistance” that adults often have in playing games and stepping out of their “comfort zone”.⁵⁰ However, games and activities are essential to exit from one’s usual role which, in the case of social workers (as well as educators and volunteers), is highly rigid (the interviewee also explains that theatrical games may help reducing the division between “us” – social workers, professionals in the field of migrations, Italian people – and “them” – people from a migrant background, interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative). This occurs through the stimulation of creativity, humour and feelings of joy (cf. also Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 5-6), facilitating the establishment of trust and the de-mechanisation of the body (cf. also Powers and Duffy 2016, 62; Smith 2012, 51; Bozza 2020, 1; Tolomelli 2012, 31-32 and 36; Boal 2002; Boal, Ellsworth, Perry and Medina cited in Schroeter 2013, 402). Nevertheless, participants do not

⁵⁰ This aspect emerged also during a Forum-Theatre session in Hungary (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation).

always easily take part in activities. The following quote includes a reflection that I made after a multiplier event at [building in Trento dedicated to political and social initiatives] listening to the answers that some participants gave to the question “How are you?”, as part of an activity devised by the Italian Cooperative.⁵¹ Importantly, the activity is based on the freedom to answer as one wishes (provided that they do not answer with a single word). These are examples of the answers:

Leonardo defines himself as “overwhelmed”; he, Cristina and Pamela refer to their work. Leonardo thinks about the people from a migrant background who are hosted in the dormitory, Cristina and Pamela about the “guys” who have not shown up for their meetings today. Fiorella has arrived at the workshop in a hurry and so she says laughing that she needs to understand a bit where she is and what is happening. Enrico and Daria say that they are sorry that there are just a few of us [at the multiplier event]. However, it seems to me that these references to one’s work [...] [related to the place where the multiplier event takes place] and to the number of those present at the multiplier event is a way to answer the question without stepping too far out of one’s “comfort zone” and without revealing too personal things. In fact, the participants tend to talk about others (people from a migrant background with whom they work), about the multiplier event, but in their words I do not perceive an attention to how they really are, while in my answer I was honest and focused on me, because that was asked to me by the question. (Extract from fieldnotes, 10/12/2021)

During the activity, I notice that some participants (there are only eight persons, including me) provide generic answers. These refer to people from a migrant background who are not present or were absent from Italian classes, or to other details concerning participants’ work, or to the fact that there are only a few participants at the multiplier event, whereas Fiorella provides a more personal answer (although still quite generic). Nonetheless, I perceive these

⁵¹ After a participant has answered this question, other three participants should create a sculpture using their body which represents that participant’s answer. This activity is explained in Malkassian et al. (2021, 43-44).

answers as a way to provide general information about “how they are”, without providing personal details and focusing on themselves. In contrast, when my turn arrives, I answer in a very personal way (referring to the tiredness and stress that I am experiencing in this period). In sum, I notice that, as the Italian Joker mentioned in the previous quotation, stepping out of one’s comfort zone is not simple (cf. also Powers and Duffy 2016, 69), which is something that I told her also after the multiplier event to comment on my feelings during the activities. Difficulties may be related to embarrassment in answering a question which is perceived as “intrusive”, as some participants underline. Yet, this shows also how difficult it is, for social workers, to detach from their role and participate in activities that they do not normally take part into. Moreover, as the quote above points out, social workers and volunteers often showed paternalistic attitudes towards people from a migrant background, as shown by the use of the word “guys” (*ragazzi* in Italian) to refer to them. I noticed the use of this word several times also during the multiplier event in Parma. In particular, a young female volunteer specified that she names the people that she supports “*i miei ragazzi*” – “my guys” in English. These expressions highlight a paternalistic language, given that this is an infantilising term, even though it might also be due to the fact that the people that they support are often young men. As discussed in Chapter 2, feminist and post-colonial scholars have underlined how paternalism towards women and people of colour reproduces a masculinist and colonial dynamic according to which men must save women, Westerners must save people from the South of the world, and white people must save people of colour (cf. also Giuliani 2016; Abu-Lughod 2022; Young 2003; Mohanty 1984). During the meetings, comments and ways of naming people from a migrant background perpetuate this dynamic, which may seem benevolent, but hides complex power relations (Young 2003, 6). Further, this dynamic entails a gendered dimension: while this form of power resembles masculinist protection, it is also centred on a (traditionally conceived as) feminine care

towards the “weak”, which contribute to the victimisation and disempowerment of people from a migrant background (cf. also Young 2003, 19; Grove and Zwi 2006; Rozakou 2012). Although in the project attention to avoid “paternalistic dynamics” is deemed central when working with people who face some form of oppression (Malkassian et al. 2021, 21 and 32), according to Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners these are typical dynamics, as the next quote reveals.

and then there is instead another question which is that of age, which is, working with the migrant paths of foreign women, of foreign people, the question of... a bit, doing the mother, right? So that is another question that emerges strongly in volunteering, like hmm doing of... assistance, but this does not necessarily depend on age, you can do it even at twenty uh, but the question of... wanting to be important to someone. [...] [T]here, that day, we had some slightly evident examples of this, among those who needed to do something for others, considered them a bit poor ones... etcetera (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

The interviewee underlines that when volunteers support people from a migrant background, they often tend to act as their “mother”, particularly when volunteers are not very young (the interviewee here is referring to the multiplier event in Parma, where almost all participants were women). Volunteering, according to Daria, is connected to the desire to be “important for somebody”, which is something that emerged in that multiplier event. Some participants tended to consider people from a migrant background as “poor people” (*poverini* in Italian), as shown by the use of the term *ragazzi*. Therefore, the presence of social workers and volunteers in the field of migrations often led to paternalistic and infantilising attitudes. This emerged also during the construction of the Forum-Theatre script, when participants told some stories where oppression of people from a migrant background occurred.

“I really noticed the fatigue of the phone calls when you pronounce the foreign name of the guy who is there next to you [he gives an example of a foreign name] pretending that it is for a friend of yours” (sighs deeply and underlines the term “fatigue”). “After that they continually say no to you, in the end you say ‘oh well, at this point I prefer to go to live with my compatriots’ and therefore you go to live together with even 8-9 people. This can go on even for years, perhaps changing group of people”. I notice that Renato tells the story in the first person, as if he were the person from a migrant background, in a quite passionate way (“Oh well after a while you get to the point that you say ‘but fuck off! I’m going to live with my compatriots even if there are ten of us in the same place’”). (Extract from fieldnotes, 11/01/2022)

During the first meeting to prepare the Forum-Theatre in Trento, Renato, an educator who worked with people from a migrant background, tells about the support that he gave to people from a migrant background who were searching for a house, phoning estate agents saying that the house was for a “friend”, in order not to mention that the person looking for it is from a migrant background. He underlines the reaction that people have when they hear him pronounce a foreign name and refuse to rent a house or a room to a person from a migrant background. At this point, Renato starts speaking in the first person, as if *he* was the discriminated person. He also emphasises his tiredness and frustration (again, as if *he* was a person from a migrant background), by raising his voice and swearing. The use of the first person shows how volunteers, educators or social workers identify with people from a migrant background: this means that, on one hand, they express their frustration, rather than focusing on the negative narratives *per se* (as underlined also by the reference to the “fatigue” that Renato experiences); on the other hand, they assume a paternalistic attitude, taking the initiative on behalf of people from a migrant background. A few days after the first meeting the Italian Joker comments on this speech:

Raffaella acknowledges that there have been some comments in which you could see a lot that social workers talked thinking more about how they felt than how people from a migrant background might feel, in fact she tells us that she got the “shivers” when there was the comment of a person who said “I guarantee for him”, that is for the guy from a migrant background. [...] “look, at this guy maybe it’s not a good idea to give him the house, he’s not so reliable, but this guy is”. Raffaella on that occasion asked herself: “But then... like where do you put the dominant narrative in this way? Like if a social worker begins to say: ‘This is my friend, you can give him the house, but not to this one’, it is a way to reproduce the dominant narrative and oppression anyway! Because one might say: ‘And who the fuck are you to decide if this guy can have a house and the other can’t?’”. (Extract from fieldnotes, 14/01/2022)

Raffaella is aware of the fact that during the first meeting, several comments were made that showed how social workers took the opportunity of the Forum-Theatre to talk about their problems as social workers more than to focus on how negative narratives on migrations could be represented and tackled. She refers to the comment made by Renato (included in the previous quotation) arguing that by defining some people from a migrant background as more “reliable” than others, an oppressive mechanism is reproduced. This hierarchy risks being built by social workers making these distinctions, which is another example of how the presence of professionals working in the field of migrations contribute to perpetuating paternalistic and disempowering dynamics, against the goals of the project. Nonetheless, given their presence and direct involvement in the field of migrations, the Joker highlighted that social workers’ point of view would have been “inevitably” included in the scene represented in the Forum-Theatre. At the same time, both Daria and her suggested that the story should involve everyone, both in the group of performers (since not all of them worked in the field of migrations),⁵² and in the audience, particularly if people from a migrant

⁵² In fact, attention to the power structures that may emerge in a group of participants when some of them share some social positions is mentioned also in the IO1 handbook (Malkassian et al. 2021, 34).

background would have been present. In fact, the aim of the Forum-Theatre was not that of creating an opportunity for social workers to express their frustrations and discuss the difficulties of their profession (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative). As Daria explained, talking about the difficulties in working in the field of migrations is not equivalent to talking about the dominant narratives on migrations, although the two may be related. These challenges revealed a problematic aspect of the project itself: targeting both people from a migrant background and people working to support them uncovered different priorities of these two social groups, and rendered the ultimate goals of the project unclear. In any case, the need to focus on a story that could be relevant to both native Italians and people from a migrant background was underlined several times by the Joker also during the meetings in preparation of the Forum-Theatre (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative), together with the goal of identifying alternative narratives on migrations. According to the Joker, the influence of people operating in the field of migrations on the Forum-Theatre was limited thanks to the composition of the group:

in my opinion we didn't need so much to explain, to stem even with a-with a risk of castrating someone who could find that moment, that environment, so suitable for sharing their professional difficulty or their human frustration in the role of the person who accompanies, who helps, who... uh... how to say... leads towards emancipation by mission. It would have been harder if there had not been these other people who balanced, who... on their own expressed some perplexity, but who simply didn't understand the level of the speech and... and-and-and we, in our internal discussion, said to ourselves: "The right level is the level of these second people, like we would-we need to get out of the social worker's brain or heart beating for sorrow". (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As Raffaella points out, during the meetings there was not often the need to interrupt social workers from telling their experiences, if they considered that context an opportunity to share

their professional difficulties or frustration – interestingly, she refers to the goal of social workers as the “emancipation” of people from a migrant background and a “mission”, which lead to view this job as similar to a religious endeavour with colonialist elements (cf. also Abu-Lughod 2002; Giuliani 2016; Mohanty 1984), and which is repeated also by the reference to social workers’ “heart beating for sorrow”. Nonetheless, thanks to the presence of people not operating in this field, a “balance” was found. As such, the “right level” was identified, according to the Joker, based on participants who did not operate in the field of migrations. Moreover, as Daria mentions, younger participants (still operating in the field of migrations) or people who were not part of that field seemed more willing to propose concrete actions against negative narratives. Social workers’ frustration emerged also during a Forum-Theatre session in Hungary (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation). To sum up, the composition of the groups of participants affected the goals of the project in various ways.

5.6 Conclusions

This chapter has examined who the social actors involved in representation and activities were (as mentioned in the general research question), focusing on their social background and their engagement. In particular, the chapter has tried to answer the first research sub-question (indicated at page 75), analysing who participants in activities were, how and why they were involved and how they participated, following an intersectional approach. The chapter has discussed several key points that were helpful to answer this sub-question.

In all four countries, both people from a migrant background and people not from a migrant background were present, but in different relative percentages. Participants were recruited mainly through the fields in which the four partner organisations operate, and the field of

migrations. In Italy, participants were searched for through the reception system (both in the case of native Italians and of people from a migrant background), and to a lesser extent through people who were becoming familiar with the Theatre of the Oppressed (in this last case recruiting only native Italians). All participants expressed their interest in and curiosity towards the topic tackled in activities as well as the approaches utilised, and they perceived the relevance of the project.

However, in Italy the involvement of people from a migrant background was challenging, due to several structural barriers – related to the precarity of their lives, language difficulties, the necessity to overcome more “practical” issues, and differences in migration contexts between countries – and various procedural obstacles – concerning the recruitment process, time availability, and the difficulties in tackling the topic of narratives which was perceived as “abstract”. Thus, people from a migrant background were always included as the topic of representation and often as audience, but not always as actors or actresses in representations. This led to various debates about who is entitled to talk about migrations and people from a migrant background (this issue is further discussed in Chapter 8). At the same time, the fact that several people from a migrant background participated actively contributed to show the opportunity that theatre gives to exercise agency and overcome oppression (e.g., Ranjan 2020; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Boal 2021; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010; Santos 2018; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011).

Moreover, other categories of participants’ identity were analysed, such as gender, age, social class, educational and professional background, in line with an intersectional perspective. Specific dynamics were present for example in Italy, with people from a migrant background being generally men from lower social classes, whereas participants not from a

migrant background were often women from middle and upper classes. The fact that participants belonged to certain social groups more than others often depended on the contexts through which they were recruited. Yet, more data on this issue is needed in order to better understand the causal relations leading to higher participation of some people than others.

Additionally, the constant presence of social workers and other people operating in the reception system in Italy revealed two important aspects: on one side, they perceived the relevance of the goals of MiGreat! in relation to their working environments, highlighting also some critical issues that are present in the reception system. On the other side, the ways of participating by several people operating in the reception system led to power and infantilising dynamics towards people from a migrant background (this will be further discussed in Chapter 7).

In summary, in relation to the first research sub-question, the analytical findings included in this chapter underline that participants in activities were recruited through the contexts in which the four organisations operate. In Italy, they came mainly from the reception system and were both people from a migrant background (mainly refugees and asylum seekers) and people not from a migrant background (native Italians operating above all in the field of migrations). The inclusion of people from a migrant background was hindered in Italy by several structural and procedural barriers. All participants were generally involved for an interest in the topic tackled and the methods utilised. In line with an intersectional perspective, other categories of difference to which participants belonged have been examined (including gender and social class), although more data is needed to better comprehend how they shape participation. In any case, people's social background impacted on the organisation and carrying out of activities, leading to several debates and various

dynamics in participation, particularly concerning Italian people operating in the field of migrations and people from a migrant background. Organising and enacting participatory activities with people from various social backgrounds while working on the goals of MiGreat! involved several critical dimensions, which are analysed in the next chapter.

6. The Organisation and Enactment of Creative and Participatory Approaches

This chapter examines the ways in which creative and participatory approaches to inequalities, and particularly Theatre of the Oppressed (and to a lesser extent other methods) in the context of migrations, are developed, organised and enacted (as mentioned in the general research question), paying attention to the role of facilitators and to how they communicate the goals of MiGreat! and enact activities. In other words, the ways in which facilitators operate in the field of awareness-raising in the context of migrations, organise and facilitate activities with various targets are investigated considering an intersectional perspective (second research sub-question).

6.1 The Complexities of Working on the Goals of MiGreat!

This section examines some of the complex issues involved when MiGreat! professionals operated in the field of awareness-raising in the context of migrations and shared knowledge about the use of creative and participatory approaches. In particular, the focus here is on the complex goals of MiGreat! that they had to consider when working on the various phases of the project.

6.1.1 Communicating the Goals of MiGreat!

The ways of communicating the goals of the project, as well as those of explaining the principles to which it referred (such as the concept of oppression), need to be carefully analysed. Indeed, the ways of communicating these objectives is likely to have played a role on the issues examined in the previous sections concerning the participation of people from a migrant background and the involvement of people operating in the field of migrations.

Moreover, the ways of understanding these concepts are central to the creation of a professional community with shared knowledge.

To begin with, presenting the goals of MiGreat! was generally considered “difficult”:

So the presentation of the MiGreat project! uh... was difficult, it is difficult in my opinion, [...] so, either one falls into thinking that it is a media project and therefore that it goes to... fight hate speech, which it is not, or one falls into thinking that-like, one does not fall into thinking, but one tends to assimilate it to awareness-raising projects, which it is not, uh... or one tends to assimilate it to... uh... collection of examples of acts of-of discrimination, we do not talk about discrimination, like that is a bit the difficulty. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

The aims of MiGreat! could be misunderstood. Neither did it concern the media and hate speech, nor did it aim at awareness-raising or at addressing discrimination. In sum, presenting the goals of the project was perceived as complex. When presenting the project to potential participants in Italy, practitioners referred to the main goal of contrasting dominant narratives about migrations and constructing counter or alternative narratives.

Uh... the mi-MiGreat project! arises from a need-from an discomfort and... from when someone who represents the organisations that are partners uh... felt, felt disturbed, put in a difficult position and stimulated to find a “to do” uh... from the increase at a certain point in the last... we are talking... about 2017 something like that, eighteen uh, of... of the... of the increase of the violent, discriminatory, racist narrative really, uh... in Europe, rampant with not only uh... verbal statements anymore, but also acts, and... measures, and... discriminatory laws, so. So, I restated: “If we agree that this narrat-if we are here it is because we agree that this narrative has some parts that we don’t like, that disturb us and that must push us to react”. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As the Italian Joker points out, MiGreat! was presented as a project that emerged from a “discomfort” felt by the four partner organisations following the spread of “violent,

discriminatory, racist narrative” in Europe not only through “verbal declarations”, but also through acts and laws. Indeed, the literature has analysed how, in recent years, government policies have contributed to the othering process towards people from a migrant background (cf. also Giuliani 2016, 98; O’Neill et al. 2019, 134; Musarò and Parmiggiani cited in Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 5; Grove and Zwi 2006), as well as how the management of asylum requests has moved towards increased restriction, border controls, and surveillance, contributing to a discriminatory and dehumanising treatment towards asylum seekers (cf. also Fassin and Kobelinsky, 2012; Rozakou 2012, 568-569; De Genova cited in Carastathis et al. 2018, 5; Ahmed cited in Carastathis et al. 2018, 5; Carastathis et al. 2018, 5; Giuliani 2016, 104; Erel and Reynolds 2014, 107). The four partner organisations decided to take action with respect to the spread of these narratives. Therefore, the interviewee explains how she introduced the project, stating that “we don’t like” these narratives, they “disturb us”, and thus they “must push us to react”, through the identification of counter and alternative narratives (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative). Here, the use of the first person plural may refer to MiGreat! practitioners and participants showing interest in the project. These words were utilised, for example, to introduce MiGreat! during the multiplier event held in Parma. Daria, coordinator of MiGreat!, explains the presentation of the project in a similar way, but adding that the lines analysed above are often unclear, as she explains in the next quote.

And then, since this doesn’t mean anything, we always moved on to-to the practical aspects, namely “the project therefore sets out-sets out to collect all people’s experiences, on the-on a territory and create three things: one, a handbook that teachers, volunteers, people who deal with-with groups also with foreign people can use to propose some activities that push to talk about these issues as well. The second is a visual tool, therefore understanding that one can speak of migration even without the great speeches in the square or the assemblies and... made only by the word. The third is to use precisely the Forum-Theatre to

create, to a-activate on this thing”. This was kind of the... presentation. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

The interviewee specifies that talking about narratives and the increase in negative narratives about people from a migrant background was unclear (“this doesn’t mean anything”). As a consequence, she underlines how mentioning “practical aspects” of the project was important, referring to the realisation of three products. Thus, concrete information on the activities and products to be realised were provided. The reference to creative and participatory activities may be interpreted as a way to make the concept of “narrative” and the goals of the project more understandable, as Daria mentioned (see Section 5.2). However, not in all countries was reference to narratives made; sometimes, general information about the project was given, focusing then on specific activities and the goal of language learning, as well as talking more broadly about difficulties that people may have encountered once arrived in Europe (interview with Patricia, British organisation). Other times, the concept of narratives was examined among participants (interview with William, British organisation). Yet, the concept of narratives was often not mentioned, due to its perceived complexity, for example in France and Hungary, as mentioned in Section 5.2. In any case, narratives were the core concept in MiGreat!.

Uh... in the case of MiGreat! instead it was a bit narrower, because it was the issue of uh... how is mi-migration portrayed by the mass media, right? by politicians and how would you like it to be told instead? So there it was much narrower and... and it was not about oppressions in general, but just about this specific dimension, wasn’t it? of oppression, which is how you become-how you are narrated. (Interview with Roberto Mazzini)

As Roberto Mazzini explains, MiGreat! focused on how “migration” is depicted by the media or by politics, thus dominant narratives are conceived as diffused by these two social

institutions. This is in line with what has been shown by the literature, namely the fact that policies and the media have significantly contributed to othering people from a migrant background (Giuliani 2016, 98; O'Neill et al. 2019, 134; Musarò and Parmiggiani cited in Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 5; Erel and Reynolds 2014, 107; Grove and Zwi 2006). The goal was thus that of identifying alternative ways of depicting migrations. Hence, the project concerned this “specific dimension” of oppression, i.e., narratives (see also Malkassian et al. 2021, 27).

When reflecting on the distinction between dominant, counter, and alternative narratives, MiGreat! practitioners focus on slightly different aspects of this concept. For instance, dominant narratives are defined as a “noise” with an often-unclear origin, as outlined below.

Dominant narrative is a... noise, uh a background noise uh that almost has no origin any longer, a mouth, that we no longer know who is... who is producing it, who is spreading it, who is carrying it uh and therefore it is easily manipulated, manipulable and... and it influences, [...] uh it poisons the air, the water without... without there being a reading, without it being easy to read its origin. And... the... it is often partial, often false, it often has hidden agendas. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

The interviewee defines a dominant narrative as a “noise” that almost does not have a clear origin anymore, and for this reason, it is easy to “manipulate” it. Thus, it seems that dominant narratives pervade the environment to the extent that the actors producing them remain hidden. At the same time, a dominant narrative negatively “influences” the phenomenon it talks about, as the Italian Joker explains metaphorically referring to something that “poisons the air, the water”. Importantly, dominant narratives are often partial, false, and they often have “hidden agendas”. Therefore, dominant narratives are considered as profoundly negative, but also having a significant impact on society. In this way, the interviewee seems

to refer implicitly to the concept of power, without mentioning it. According to other practitioners, dominant narratives are directly related to power:

So, dominant narratives are the ones that have most power in society, they may be the ones that are produced by uhm... uh politicians and mass media. Uhm we also use that word to slightly... like, synonymously with negative narratives, but it doesn't have to be, uhm you could have a dominant sort of positive narrative, uhm and this changes over time as well, but generally, we agreed that the-the dominant narratives were less positive about migration. (Interview with William, co-writer of MiGreat! application from the British organisation and facilitator in some activities of the project)

Dominant narratives are those with “most power in society”. The idea that dominant narratives detain power to depict a given issue or a social group is underlined also by other practitioners (interviews with Fernanda, French organisation, and Patricia, British organisation). Again, the reference is made to politicians and the media as their main producers. Thus, in this case, specific actors are identified as spreading dominant narratives (William wrote the application for the project with Roberto Mazzini, which may be the reason why they both refer to these two social institutions). Precisely “mainstream media” and the government are identified as the most responsible actors for spreading the dominant narratives also in Hungary (interviews with Veronika and Jasmine, Hungarian organisation), and more generally in all the four countries involved (Malkassian et al. 2021, 16). William stresses that dominant narratives could also be positive, and this is subject to change, but in the case of migrations they are negative, as argued in Malkassian et al. (2021, 7).

Another dimension of negative narratives is identified, which considers them as causing generalisation of a given issue:

negative narrative can be bad, it's bad, because it's somehow uh putting everybody in a box and say, “okay, or-everybody's like this and that and point”,

I think this is a dictatorship (*laughs*). (Interview with Jasmine, actress from the Hungarian organisation)

In the quotation above, the interviewee highlights how dominant narratives are usually “bad”, since they are based on “putting everybody in a box” without leaving any opportunity for debating and examining differences and nuances (these aspects will be relevant also in Section 6.4). Indeed, they are described as a “dictatorship”.

In contrast, counter and alternative narratives are defined in relation to dominant narratives.

the counter narrative is another force and... of the opposite and contrary direction and of the same power (*she makes the gesture of two fists colliding*). It often uses the same words, it uses the same channels uhm it wants to confute, it wants to contradict, it wants to deny hmm on the same track. It is often a way uh... to affirm something equally uh... but... which does not have great possibilities for manoeuvre, [...]. The alternative narrative uh... could come to touch and dismantle the dominant narrative from another direction, [...] it's another direction, another origin, uh try to exaggerate and to focus on other points, [...] to arrive directly at telling a different story (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

The interviewee explains that a counter narrative is a force that goes in the opposite direction to the dominant narrative but has the same power. She explains this by placing her fists against one another, as she does during the multiplier event in Parma to explain this concept to participants. The counter narrative often uses the same words and channels in order to deconstruct the dominant narrative, almost contributing to the polarisation of a debate. Yet, it is usually not very effective. Contrarily, the alternative narrative has more potential to deconstruct the dominant narrative from a different perspective. In sum, while the counter narrative is directly related to the dominant one, the alternative narrative takes a different perspective, and exists independently of the dominant narrative (Malkassian et al. 2021, 7),

as explained by Daria during a multiplier event in Trento. Furthermore, the alternative narrative opens up new possibilities for narration.

the alternative narrative uh... does not-does not focus on going face to face, but on producing other types of narrative that it aims to be more truthful, heterogeneous, diversified and precisely for this reason uh... responds more to what is the diversity that is present in society. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

The alternative narrative is here defined as the production of new types of narrative that aim to be more “truthful”, “heterogeneous”, “diversified”, representing more faithfully the diversity that characterises society (Malkassian et al. 2021, 7 and 21). Alternative narratives are more likely to be effective since they are more “open”, they allow to show that “every migrant is not the same, so, there are very different kinds of migrants” (interview with Jasmine, Hungarian organisation) – these aspects will be relevant also in Section 6.4. Moreover, alternative narratives are more “democratic”, particularly when they are built through the use of participatory methods, as discussed in the following quote.

I think that Forum-Theatre is good in this, we don't end the event with one conclusion, by with either a question or every participant with their own conclusion, which I think is already an alternative narrative, because dominant narrative, stating something as the one truth, as the one possible uh truth, yes, and... So, I think also for the alternative narrative, uhm... the participatory small events where everybody becomes a creator, because the dominant narratives are produced by very few people, for masses of people without their participation or opinion, and then the alternative narratives, it's a democratic process, we spend time together with a small group, and we all contribute to something that is being created (Interview with Veronika, Joker from the Hungarian organisation)

Forum-Theatre is helpful in the creation of alternative narratives. In fact, the Forum-Theatre is based on asking a question to the audience (interview with Massimiliano Bozza), and a

definitive answer or solution is not usually found. In addition, in the specific case of the Forum-Theatre scenes realised for MiGreat!, these did not aim to be “resolutive” but rather “exploratory”, as the Joker stated during the Forum-Theatre session in Trento. Participatory methods are considered useful by Veronika since they allow everybody to get involved and become a “creator” of new narratives through a “democratic process”.

Among creative and participatory methods, Theatre of the Oppressed was considered central to the goal of constructing alternative narratives on migrations. Theatre of the Oppressed was utilised above all for its potential for change, in this case to change narratives about migrations. The emphasis on the possibility for transformation through this theatrical method is underlined by the title of the handbook on Forum-Theatre (IO3), which is “Playing migration narratives. Forum-Theatre *for change*” (my emphasis) (MiGreat! no date(b)).⁵³ The creation of alternative narratives is considered possible particularly thanks to the opportunity to step into another’s role to understand different points of view (Malkassian et al. 2021, 26), which is made possible precisely by theatre (cf. also Day 2002; Pisciotta 2016, 67; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 118). The goal of changing reality was often repeated by the Joker in Italy during the meetings to prepare the Forum-Theatre scene. Quoting Boal by claiming that “Everyone can do theatre, also actors!” (cf. also Boal 2011b, 13 and 107-108; Boal cited in Tolomelli 2012, 27 and 31; Boal 2011a, 26; Jackson cited in Day 2022, 31), the Joker often underlined that Theatre of the Oppressed aims at transforming reality, which is indeed the most general goal of Theatre of the Oppressed, as analysed in Sections 2.6 and 4.1. During the Forum-Theatre session, this idea was further emphasised:

⁵³ It should also be noted that the decision to include the term “Playing” in the title may refer to the use of participatory and creative methods.

in a Forum-Theatre “the audience has the possibility, which never exists in theatre, of changing history”. In this way Raffaella tries to invite spectators to intervene by becoming spect-actors. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/02/2022)

As the Joker explains, a Forum-Theatre provides the audience with the possibility to “change history”, which is a peculiarity of Theatre of the Oppressed in contrast to more traditional types of theatre. The Joker repeatedly emphasised this aspect to encourage spect-actors to actively participate, stressing that the room where the Forum-Theatre session is taking place is a “protected space where we can make the revolution”, quoting Augusto Boal. Therefore, the Joker utilises the direct language used also by Boal (cf. also Boal 2011a; Boal cited in Schroeter 2013, 397-398; Boal cited in Opfermann 2010, 141; Boal cited in Ranjan 2020, 5; Boal cited in Powers and Duffy 2016, 62) and for which the theatre director was often criticised (cf. also Thompson cited in Opfermann 2020, 141; Opfermann 2020, 141). Yet, the Joker does this on one side to stimulate the public to intervene, and on the other side to explain the social and political essence of Theatre of the Oppressed (cf. also Tolomelli 2012, 34; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 4; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 112; Pisciotta 2016, 69; Bozza 2020, 1), as discussed also in Chapter 4. In the case of the Forum-Theatre scenes produced in the context of MiGreat!, the goal was to change narratives on migrations by creating new ones (Malkassian et al. 2021, 60). In fact, there was a further dimension that had to be considered by the Joker, namely not simply oppressive mechanisms happening on stage, but also the subtler dimension of narratives on migrations emerging both from the audience, and from the other characters (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative; MiGreat! no date(b), 9-10).

Nonetheless, also the more general concept of oppression was central in MiGreat!, given the key role played by Theatre of the Oppressed, as explained below.

Its [of Theatre of the Oppressed] aim is to fight oppression by empowering oppressed people and enabling them to find their own solutions to oppression. (Malkassian et al. 2021, 25)

Oppressed people have to be involved in the construction of a Forum-Theatre and in the autonomous identification of possible solutions (Malkassian et al. 2021, 27). In fact, preparing a Forum-Theatre is a “group work” (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative), and “co-construction” is key, following a Freirian approach (MiGreat! no date(b), 6 and 11; Freire 2018). Oppression and empowerment are mentioned numerous times throughout the project. Oppression is defined in relation to power:

oppression is the impossibility to realise one’s will, due to causes uh... which depend on something or someone who has more power than you. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

A similar definition is provided by the Joker in the UK (interview with Patricia, British organisation), and it is similar to that provided by Roberto Mazzini (see Section 4.1). Importantly, during the meetings to prepare the Forum-Theatre in Trento, the Joker explains to me that “there is a difference between victim and oppressed”, underlining the agency and capacity to act that an oppressed person has, in contrast with a victim (cf. also Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 125-126; Freire cited in Opfermann 2020, 151; Freire 2018, 94-95; Boal 2021, 78). The focus on power is emphasised also by the Joker in France:

Uh oppression is uh... some uhm concept... wait, I don’t know how to define it. I think it’s some consequence-consequence of unfair system that gives some privilege for some people and will uhm... will uhm... cause some negative consequences for some other people. Normally, people with power are people with privileges and people with less power, are... are [oppressed] people. (Interview with Fernanda, French organisation)

As the interviewee argues, oppression is difficult to be defined, indeed she hesitates at the beginning of her answer. In fact, the concept of oppression is defined as “complex and related to so many layers of society” also by the Joker in Hungary (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation). Fernanda defines it as a consequence of an “unfair system” that creates “privilege[s]” for some people, who are powerful, and “negative consequences” for others, who are oppressed. Hence, a structural dimension of oppression is underlined, as coming from a “system”, namely from a given context, including society, and not from the individual. In fact, Theatre of the Oppressed concentrates predominantly on oppression at a socio-political level, rather than a psychological one (Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 5; Erel et al. 2017, 307-308; Tolomelli 2012, 34; Santos 2018). This aspect is relevant from an intersectional perspective, since intersectional scholars underlined the role played by systems of power in shaping people’s oppression, rather than their personal identities (Crenshaw 1991, 1244-1245; Cooper 2015, 389-391; Smith cited in Cooper 2015, 401; see also Bello 2020, 14). The structural dimension is in fact highlighted in the following quotation, hinting also at an intersectional dimension of oppression:

Uhm... so, oppression uhm for me is... is to do with uhm... being treated differently and badly as a result of a power imbalance. Uhm so it’s not just somebody being rude to me in the shop, it’s because of who I am, and the fact that the-the other person feels like I’m less important, less powerful, less valuable, because of who I am, uhm because of my gender or race, uhm uh sexuality, uhm so it’s to do with, like, the structural power that that group or that identity has in society. (Interview with William, co-writer of MiGreat! application from the British organisation and facilitator in some activities of the project)

These lines, which are similar to the definition of oppression provided by the Joker in the UK (interview with Patricia, British organisation), effectively summarise the main argument at the basis of intersectionality, namely the fact that certain groups are oppressed because

they find themselves within (usually interrelated) systems of power according to which they are subordinated (cf. also Collins and Chepp 2013, 58-59; Harris and Bartlow 2015, 261; Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2000; hooks 2020a; hooks 2020b; hooks 2021). People from a migrant background may be oppressed precisely because they are from a migrant background, but also for other axes of inequalities, such as their gender, ethnic background, religion, or others, and their intersections (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2). Various aspects of oppression in the field of migrations are underlined by practitioners, as explained in the following quote.

So, in general, oppression, with respect to people from a migrant background uh... it must be divided... it has many facets, it has the institutional facet, the- therefore an institutional oppression due to the lack... and which is closely linked to... the non-recognition of rights, which in my opinion is still uh... existing in- in Italy, [...]. Then there is a... media oppression? [...] which is a bit closer to the first terminology of narrative that we may have. Then there is an oppression in daily life, so with oppression of migrant people I would say... a bit the... lack of recognition of the rights and the prejudices to which they themselves are uhm... of which they themselves, however, are in turn the bearers perhaps towards other migrants, so I don't see an oppression only by Italians and foreigners (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

As Daria stresses, oppression towards people from a migrant background entails various layers: institutional oppression, media oppression, as well as oppression that affects people's everyday life. Moreover, oppression may constitute the absence of rights, and the presence of prejudices towards people from a migrant background. Yet, these may be reproduced also by people from a migrant background themselves towards other people from a migrant background (this idea emerges also from the interview with Jasmine, Hungarian organisation). Thus, a dichotomy between natives (oppressors) and people from a migrant

background (oppressed) is rejected. At the same time, people working in the field of migrations may be oppressed.

the difficulty in Italy is to speak of oppression towards migrants and this acts as a bridge, in my opinion, with what is the oppression instead of those who work with migrant people, who find themselves having to mediate and having to work in an environment where often, being uh... a worker-a person who works with migrants is... is object of attack and... for various reasons so, because it is considered unworthy, because the figure of the migrant is called into question and, in addition, the difficulty of uhm... managing uh... a very complex phenomenon (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

In the quote above, the interviewee points out that, given that in Italy it is “difficult” to talk about oppression towards people from a migrant background, also those working with people from a migrant background may be oppressed, due to the prejudices towards people from a migrant background which contribute to portray their job as “unworthy”. Moreover, the difficulties in working in such a complex environment contribute to rendering this job even more challenging and oppressive. This relates to the fact that MiGreat! targets both people from a migrant background and professionals working with them (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative; see also Chapter 5), as the entire field of migrations and anti-racism is considered a territory affected and oppressed by dominant narratives on migrations (Malkassian et al. 2021, 27). In sum, the complexity of this concept, and the key role that power and privilege play within it, are underlined (see also Malkassian et al. 2021, 27). Oppression is presented as a complex issue involving multiple layers of power relations and not a strict dichotomy between oppressors and oppressed (Erel et al. 2017, 307-308; see also Chapter 4).

As part of the goal to overcome oppression, Theatre of the Oppressed entails that of promoting empowerment of those who are oppressed. Empowering people from a migrant background or professionals working with them is explained in various ways:

So, people from a migrant background, uhm... the growth of uh... alternative narratives, like linked to ours I would say adhering to some-the possibility of showing alternative narratives and... linked in particular to the project. More generally, adhering to the claim uh... of the rights in which one believes, [...] in which one believes above all that one has the right to them, okay? [...] With respect to people who work, uhm... in my opinion, what is missing is not so much an empowerment, but rather a recognition of one's own role (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

According to the interviewee, empowerment of people from a migrant background consists of the creation of alternative narratives, and more generally the claiming of rights. In the case of professionals working in the field of migrations, empowerment is related to the recognition of this profession which in Italy is considered missing. The role of conscientisation and power within the concept of empowerment is highlighted by the Joker in France:

Uh people with migrant background is having conscience of the oppression they're... like they suffer from a system that is not fair, and for the people that work with migration is uh how they make part like, as allies, like some... yeah, in-in... and giving some more power with people that had-had less power, like in the system. (Interview with Fernanda, Joker from the French organisation)

The necessity to become aware of one's subordination is considered central in order to achieve liberation, in line with a Freirian approach (cf. also Freire 2018; Schroeter 2013, 397; Tolomelli 2012, 23 and 25; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 129) and with Theatre of the Oppressed (cf. also Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 115; Schroeter 2013, 397; Opfermann 2020, 141; Boal cited in Opfermann 2020, 147-148; Pisciotta 2016, 69-70; Bozza 2020, 3;

Tolomelli 2012, 30). In fact, becoming aware of one's oppression leads to "individual transformation" according to Boal (Boal cited in Opfermann 2020, 147-148). Moreover, consciousness of oppression was crucial also for the development of intersectionality, since women of colour fought for their liberation from patriarchal and racist oppression after gaining consciousness of their "difference", as hooks (2021, 111) argued (see also Davis 2018[1981]). Professionals working in this field are seen as "allies" of people from a migrant background who may provide them with power. Nevertheless, the idea of "giving power" to people with less power is critically considered.

Uhm so I think-well, I don't always relate very well to the word "empowerment", it sounds a little bit like it's... people with power giving power to people with less power. Uh uh uhm... but that's the way it's used, you know, intrinsically, it can be-it can be an important word, but I suppose I feel like power is uhm is taken, not given, and it's taken by people organising together with other people in order to make demands, and to take power from people who are more powerful, uhm so related to organising and... uhm and taking action. (Interview with William, co-writer of MiGreat! application from the British organisation and facilitator in some activities of the project)

The quotation above starts by questioning the concept of empowerment itself, precisely its definition of "people with power giving power to people with less power". Empowerment is in fact debated also in the literature, where it is argued that it may reproduce the victimisation of given people or social groups and the reproduction of power relations, for example in the context of migrations (cf. also Ranjan 2020; Rozakou 2012; Grove and Zwi 2006). Although the term is often used in this way, the interviewee explains that in his opinion power is "taken" rather than given, and this occurs when people organise themselves, "make demands", and take action, which is the rationale behind community organising (see Section 4.3 and Malkassian et al. 2021, 29-31). This way of conceiving empowerment is underlined

also by researchers (Swift and Levin cited in Nicoli et al. 2011, 4). Moreover, it is related to Freire's view according to which liberation is not something that can be given, but rather it needs to be fought for (cf. also Freire 2018, 50 and 52; Macedo 2018, 37; Freire cited in Macedo 2018, 22). Thus, empowerment is associated with power and people's active participation (cf. also Santinello cited in Nicoli et al. 2011, 4; Zimmerman cited in Nicoli et al. 2011, 6). For these reasons, professionals in the field of migrations should support this process of taking power by those who are oppressed, as it occurs in community organising (interview with William, British organisation). Further, when defining empowerment, the accent is placed on people's agency.

I think when we say empowerment, we... we aim for participants to become agents of the... their own situation, of their own life, of their own group, of their own oppressed situation, maybe. So, it's an attitude that I'm not a victim of my life, of uh of my story, but I'm a creator of it (Interview with Veronika, Joker from the Hungarian organisation)

As the Joker in Hungary explains, empowerment means to become "agent" of one's own life, to actively contribute to shape one's life and become its "creator". This definition is in line with one adopted in Social Work (Nicoli et al. 2011, 3 – see Section 2.6; Rappaport cited in Nicoli et al. 2011, 3), but also with the shift from victim to person with agency that is central in Theatre of the Oppressed (Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 2). In brief, oppression and empowerment are central to both Theatre of the Oppressed and MiGreat!, but they are contested terms. In addition, MiGreat! included another goal which goes beyond the specific goals of Theatre of the Oppressed. This is discussed below.

6.1.2 The Building of a New Professional Field

In MiGreat!, not only the goal of facilitating the empowerment of people from a migrant background and overcome their oppression was central. Indeed, a further crucial objective was to spread these theoretical concepts but also the practical knowledge on creative and participatory approaches to various types of professionals, in order to construct a community of experts that can contribute to foster people's liberation from oppression:

Uhm to help uhm practitioners, particularly adult educators, uhm to uhm create, uh to challenge negative uhm discourses around migration, negative mi... narratives, and to work with migrants themselves on building uhm alternative and counter-narratives in creative ways, particularly using theatre methods. (Interview with William, co-writer of MiGreat! application from the British organisation and facilitator in some activities of the project)

As the interviewee outlines, MiGreat! aimed at supporting various types of professionals or practitioners, especially “adult educators”, to tackle dominant, negative narratives around migrations, and work with people from a migrant background to build counter and alternative narratives through creative approaches, in particular theatre. “Participatory” approaches are emphasised also by Patricia (interview with Patricia, British organisation), as well as the focus on “non-formal education” (i.e., Freirian pedagogy), and art (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation). At the same time, both William and Veronika underline that groups of people from a migrant background should be directly involved (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation).

The necessity to communicate the concepts and methods at the centre of both Theatre of the Oppressed and MiGreat! does not concern exclusively the (external) targets of the project,

but also the members of the four partner organisations. Indeed, the other practitioners also emphasise the “exchange of practices” on which MiGreat! was based:

So, the main goal, for me, is the exchange of practices between hmm organis-
between these four organisations, hmm? Knowledge of the different working
contexts, in particular on the theme of the project, hmm? Uhm... and stimulating
uh the-the various territories, obviously with respect to the target and to the
stakeholders, uh... on the possibility of narrating migration in another way.

(Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

In the quotation above, the interviewee explains how the “main objective” of the project was the “exchange of practices” among the four partner organisations, and the knowledge of the different working contexts regarding the topic of MiGreat! (this is mentioned also in the IO1 handbook – Malkassian et al. 2021, 6). Indeed, the four organisations have different goals and work with different methods, as explained in Section 4.3. Subsequently, the goal was to stimulate the respective territories and stakeholders on alternative ways in which migration could be represented (here the interviewee refers to “migration” as a singular noun, hiding the multiple dimensions that it entails). This reference to the “exchange of practices” constitutes a central step in the process of creation of a new field of expertise, composed of practitioners who master creative methods and utilise them in order to build alternative narratives on migrations and facilitate the empowerment of both people from a migrant background and those working with them. In fact, several times I was explained by practitioners that “the project is based on the exchange of good practices”, and the trainings that were held served precisely this goal. MiGreat!, indeed, was an Erasmus+ project, which is a type of project that foresees an “exchange of competences” in the field of education, as I was explained by Daria, the coordinator. Moreover, the trainings were also aimed at testing the various activities included in the IO1 handbook (Malkassian et al. 2021, 40), whereas the multiplier events were organised to test the participatory methods, as well as the specific

products (visual tools and Forum-Theatre scripts) realised in the four countries. The overall goal was that professionals could apply these activities in their respective working environments (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative).

The three handbooks produced within the project correspond to this goal. Indeed, the IO1 handbook is titled “Migration Narratives. The Migreat Project Guide: concepts, methods, activities and good practices”: the handbook constitutes a “guide” including “concepts” (i.e., the theoretical basis of the methodologies utilised), “methods” (i.e., what the approaches consist of), “activities” (i.e., practical activities and exercises to be carried out), and “good practices” (i.e., examples of what should be done and how, with examples taken from other organisations in the four countries). Moreover, this handbook starts from the assumption that “sharing” experiences and expertise (Malkassian et al. 2021, 6 and 40) is helpful to support “educators, activists, social workers, and all interested people” (Malkassian et al. 2021, 40). The reading in fact targets “educators and activists in the field of social work, migrants or other, who have some practical experience” (Malkassian et al. 2021, 7), as well as language teachers and volunteers (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative). Similarly, the other two handbooks (on the production of visual tools – IO2 – and on the realisation of a Forum-Theatre – IO3) target similar audiences (MiGreat! no date(a), 1; MiGreat! no date(b), 2). These are the types of professionals that were reached also through the trainings and webinars (Malkassian et al. 2021, 6). In general, exchanging expertise was seen as part of social transformation:

We believe that our project is a tool for social transformation through the exchange of knowledge, so our learning methodologies should reflect the model of society we imagine; an egalitarian, horizontal one. (Malkassian et al. 2021, 19)

As shown in the quote above, MiGreat! was based on the assumption that social transformation can be achieved also by exchanging knowledge on methodologies that are centred on a horizontal approach, in order to build an egalitarian society. This exchange of knowledge was essential given that the professionals involved come from different backgrounds, as the quote below points out.

Certainly what is underlined to us is that to use these tools you need to be a bit trained, these creative, active and participatory tools are a bit scary, uhm for the a bit more traditional [male or female] trainer, hmm? And so there is certainly enthusiasm, outburst, recognition of the power and of the value, but also a bit of fear for... “oh-oh how am I going to use them?”. And then that not all of these tools can be used with all targets. Probably, dealing with people who do this, I mean facilitators, educators, social workers, [female] teachers, all of this, in daily life, they have many more nuances of the scenario than we can actually understand and also, in the presentation stage, it all becomes a bit more two-dimensional, right? It has less depth. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As the interviewee explains, people who participated in multiplier events in Italy highlighted that participatory and creative approaches are not easy to be applied by professionals working in the field of migrations who usually adopt more traditional teaching methods. Although these participants recognised the importance of these approaches, some expressed fear about using them, and stressed that training is important for this purpose. Further, the targets that professionals interact with are different (for example in terms of language skills and cultural background – interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative). Thus, training is key. The goal of exchanging practices in order to acquire knowledge and competences on creative and participatory approaches reveals the attempt at professionalising this field. Indeed, adopting the theoretical perspective on cultural fields by Bourdieu (1993), it can be seen how MiGreat! practitioners try to build an autonomous area of expertise, where people

composing it are professionalised and competent. The trainings, multiplier events, and all other situations during which creative and participatory approaches are tested and transmitted to other professionals contribute to confer legitimacy on this field. In other words, not only are practitioners collectively contributing to shape the creation of a professional field through their work on the project (material production), but also participants and audience who “consume” the cultural products presented confer meaning and value to them (symbolic production) (Bourdieu 1993, 37). Importantly, the institution of this field is related to social and political changes (Bourdieu 1993, 54-55), such as those mentioned at the beginning of the previous sub-section about the emergence of MiGreat!: the increase in discrimination and racism in recent years, the higher relevance of migrations in government policies and the media, but also the spreading of creative and participatory approaches thanks to the work done by Freire and Boal’s followers. However, people involved have different skills: on one side, experts of participatory and creative approaches who do not know in depth the field of migrations, and on the other side experts of migrations who are not used to apply participatory methods. MiGreat! tried to fill this knowledge gap, but this created various challenges, as it was mentioned previously and as it is analysed in more detail in the next section.

6.2 Coordinating Activities among a Diverse and Distributed Group of People

This section focuses on the main challenges that MiGreat! practitioners had to face when coordinating activities including groups of people (both in terms of participants and audience) from different social backgrounds and embodying several levels of diversity. The focus is on the coordination of the participation of: Italian people during the preparation of the Forum-Theatre scene in Italy, people from a migrant background during public events

(including the Forum-Theatre session) in Italy, other groups of people during multiplier events.

6.2.1 Coordinating People's Active Participation in the Construction of a Forum-Theatre Scene

In the facilitation of MiGreat! activities, practitioners had to consider various issues, keeping in mind the goals of the project previously explained. Indeed, as analysed in Chapters 2 and 4, the role of the Joker is complex, and this concerns not only the coordination of a Forum-Theatre session, but also more generally the facilitation of participatory activities. The management of people's participation included some challenges during the realisation of the Forum-Theatre scene in Italy. It is important to note that a Forum-Theatre should be constructed through the active contribution of the group of participants, following a bottom-up approach, as outlined in the previous section (MiGreat! no date(b), 6 and 11; see also interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative; Opfermann 2020, 148-149). Nevertheless, some degree of "imposition" of the topic occurred, as the Joker explains.

The final result is this because we also picked from there, clarifying very well that it was a uh... a spot work, on an already given theme, which is not what we normally do, like this was a goal-oriented work, hmm? (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

In the quotation above, the interviewee points out that the result of the process of construction of the Forum-Theatre depended also on the participants involved (coming from the field of migrations or an informal laboratory on Theatre of the Oppressed). Yet, the theme to be discussed was determined by the goals of the project, which is not what usually occurs, given that in Theatre of the Oppressed the topics to be discussed and the oppressions to be overcome should emerge directly from the group (cf. also Tolomelli 2012, 41; Schroeter

2013, 401; Santos 2018, 214). Nonetheless, this way of working is typical in this type of projects: the overall theme is already determined, but then it is developed in various ways depending on participants (interview with Roberto Mazzini, Italian Cooperative; see also Section 4.6).

People's active participation during the meetings was not always constant. The Joker asked several times to participants whether they agreed with her proposals, but I noticed that silence often followed, as shown below.

Raffaella asks: "Is the train fine as a setting for the story?" Nobody says to be against it. [...] Raffaella asks: "Do we feel up to it?". I notice the silence that follows her question. Yet, Raffaella goes on, like nothing happened. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/01/2022)

During the meetings and the rehearsals, the Joker encourages participants to give their opinion regarding her proposals. However, silence often follows her comments, for example when she asks if everyone agrees with the context in which the story occurs, or if they feel ready to proceed with the preparation of the Forum-Theatre scene. Despite the reticence in answering the Joker's questions, the Joker and the coordinator of the project highlight that participants have to actively contribute also to the choice of the story to be staged, since the story needs to be one that participants consider significant for them. Given the centrality of participants' active involvement in the construction of a Forum-Theatre scene, the Joker argues that she always asked for participants' opinions during the process:

[Raffaella] says that she brought a plot outline, but asking participants: "In these written things, are there some things that you have never said? They had to acknowledge that it was all their stuff." (Extract from fieldnotes, 28/02/2022)

During a meeting with Raffaella, Daria, Roberto Mazzini and me, the Joker explains that she

wrote the Forum-Theatre script, but then asked the participants if she added something that they did not say during the previous meetings. She states that they admitted that the script included only things that they expressed. Yet, on the day in which she reads the script to participants, nobody answers her question.

Finally Raffaella exclaims: “We made this!” lifting up the script and looking at participants who clap smiling (I can see it from their eyes above the face masks). [...] Raffaella then asks: “Do you feel up to it?” I notice that the faces of those present are a bit serious – especially Donatella’s – and everyone remains silent. Raffaella invites them to start. (Extract from fieldnotes, 24/01/2022)

After the Joker finishes reading the script, she exclaims that “we made it” and I can clearly see participants’ enthusiasm. Yet, when she asks participants if they are ready to rehearse (considering also that this is the penultimate meeting), silence pervades the room. She also specifies that the script does not need to be learnt by heart, since in Forum-Theatre the script only constitutes a “plot outline”. The moments of silence by participants may be interpreted in various ways: on one hand, the meetings were held in the evening, after that participants finished their working shifts. Thus, fatigue may have impacted on their participation, since some of them communicated that they were tired because of work. Moreover, silence after a question concerning the will to perform may be due to the initial reticence to step out of one’s comfort zone. On the other hand, time is an important factor: during the meetings, the Joker repeated several times that due to the scarcity of time, it was important to continue with the work. Participants acknowledged that it was necessary to reach decisions due to time constraints, as a participant points out in the following excerpt.

[Fiorella] realised that in some cases Raffaella went a bit in a hurry, for example in the phase of construction of the characters, and she realised that it was Raffaella, Daria and I (she includes me because she knows that I’m doing my internship at [Italian Cooperative]) to make decisions regarding characters’

identities and features, but she didn't consider this negatively, because she realised that time was limited anyway and therefore at certain times it was suitable to proceed with the work. (Extract from fieldnotes, 31/03/2022)

As a participant explains, the Joker sometimes had to speed up, for example when the characters of the Forum-Theatre scene were constructed. For instance, it was the Joker, sometimes discussing with Daria and me, who took several decisions about characters' identities and characteristics. Yet, Fiorella is aware that time was limited, and it was important to proceed with the preparation of the scene. In fact, several meetings were held between Raffaella, Daria, and me to discuss the characters and particularly who would have played them, since it was not possible to discuss everything collectively with the group (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative). Sometimes, decisions on who would have played certain roles were made by the Joker according to similarities between participants and characters, but also because of other factors.

For example, who played Matilde, that was not Matilde but... etcetera like, with respect to the scene we also had to choose based on who was there, who was not there... with respect to the dates, at a certain point we had to prioritise the dates where there were more people. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

As explained above, the facilitators had to make decisions about the roles to be played. As Daria points out, decisions were often related to practical reasons, such as the presence or absence of participants. Similarly, when the dates for the meetings and rehearsals had to be decided, as well as the date for the Forum-Theatre session, participants' availability was key, and precedence was given to those dates where there were more available people. In sum, on one side the Forum-Theatre was prepared through "participation and consensus" (MiGreat! no date(b), 17). On the other side, choices were made according to various

practical reasons, related mainly to participants' availability and time constraints. These factors shape the realisation of an artistic performance more generally (cf. also Becker 1982, 3; Bassetti 2019). Indeed, the literature stresses how coordination among numerous people – in this case, participants and facilitators – time management, as well as other practicalities, influence the process of construction of a performance (cf. also Becker 1982; Bassetti 2019; Atkinson 2006; Shevtsova 2018, 113; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 169; Smith 2012, 55). Consequently, the management of people's participation was based on a compromise between the opportunity for everyone to give their contribution and express their opinion, and on facilitators' decisions based on the goals of the project and the time available. Similar issues emerged during the Forum-Theatre session and other public events, as analysed below.

6.2.2 Coordinating Participation of People from a Migrant Background during Public Events

The management of people's participation is vital also during Forum-Theatre sessions. In fact, MiGreat! practitioners underline the key role of the Joker, who should act as a “co-researcher” who, rather than judging, should problematise proposals from the audience (Malkassian et al. 2021, 25), constantly asking questions and encouraging spectators to actively participate (cf. also Pisciotta 2016, 70; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 5; Day 2002). This is in fact what the Joker in Italy tried to do, as outlined in the following quotation.

So uh how did I facilitate? Asking many questions, listening to all possible answers. [...] [A]s, however, our IO3 handbook also teaches, uh... the-the warming-up of the audience is important and so I created a climate of lightness uh a bit of dynamic and... and I asked many questions. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As Raffaella explains, her way of facilitating participation from the audience consisted mainly of “asking many questions” while “listening to all possible answers”. At the beginning, however, it was crucial to stimulate participation by coordinating some simple physical exercises as a form of warm-up and a tool to create a context of “lightness” and “dynamic” (cf. also Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012). Also in the other countries the Joker asked several questions (interview with Fernanda, French organisation, and Patricia, British organisation), and physical exercises were carried out at the beginning of the Forum-Theatre sessions (interviews with Patricia, British organisation; Fernanda, French organisation; Veronika, Hungarian organisation), in order to facilitate people’s de-mechanisation (cf. also Powers and Duffy 2016, 62; Smith 2012, 51; Bozza 2020, 1; Tolomelli 2012, 31-32 and 36; Boal 2002; Boal, Ellsworth, Perry and Medina cited in Schroeter 2013, 402) and create an atmosphere where spectators could feel comfortable and relaxed, preparing for active participation (cf. also Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Day 2002).

In Italy, however, participation was not always smooth (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative).⁵⁴ I noticed that particularly people from a migrant background were sometimes hindered in their possibilities to participate, although several comments were made by them (as analysed in Section 5.3). An example of this is presented in the following excerpt.

Later, a spectator of African origins intervenes saying that he has already witnessed a similar scene in Milan. He thus begins to tell it. Raffaella interrupts him saying: “Instead of telling the story...” to invite him to go on stage. With a

⁵⁴ This occurred particularly in relation to interventions on stage, i.e., spect-actors who entered the scene to replace the characters. In contrast, comments made even by simply remaining seated were several (referring to both people from a migrant background and people not from a migrant background).

tone that seems a bit annoyed by this interruption, he interrupts Raffaella in turn, saying: “That’s what I’m saying, I’ve already seen this story”. He therefore continues to tell it, saying that in that case a black passenger without a face mask was forced to get off the train, whereas white passengers with the face mask pulled down or without a face mask were left on the train. From here I understand that Raffaella and this spectator did not understand each other. The spectator felt the need to tell his experience, but she almost did not give him space, because she wanted to urge the audience to go on stage replacing a character. After his comment, in fact, Raffaella asks the audience for other comments. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/02/2022)

Around an hour after the beginning of discussion, a spectator with African origins intervenes to tell what he perceives as a “similar story” to that shown on stage but which occurred in Milan. As soon as he starts telling this story, the Joker interrupts him, since she wants to encourage him to go on stage. Yet, the spectator seems slightly annoyed by the Joker’s interruption. Continuing to tell the story, the spectator tells about a similar case of oppression towards a black person. In sum, the spectator wants to highlight that he observed a similar story to that shown in Trento, where a person was discriminated against on the basis of their skin colour (further details are analysed in Sub-section 7.1.1). In other words, the spectator and the Joker misunderstand each other, since the spectator feels the urgency to tell this story, whereas the Joker is insisting for people to intervene. In fact, right after this spectator’s speech, the Joker immediately asks other people to go on stage. The impression that the Joker, during the Forum-Theatre session, tried to guide spectators towards a specific direction, without always leaving space for discussion to the audience, was that of a young native Italian participant, who had this feeling also during some comments by Italian spectators, including hers. However, spectators from a migrant background are limited in their participation also in other occasions:

I realise that, in general, comments by white spectators have much more space. People in the audience who are not native Italian speakers (which can be heard from the accent) speak little and with some difficulty. I realise that Raffaella does not ask, she does not deepen the comments of these people. On the contrary, Italian native speakers talk much more, both in the sense that there are more comments, and in the sense that they make longer comments and Raffaella asks them for clarifications regarding their comments. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/02/2022)

Furthermore, this distinct way of interacting with audience members is shown by subtle dynamics:

Furthermore, I find it curious how she asks almost all [spectators] to say their name before making their comment (for example with Simona and Costanza) and how she repeats it. The same thing however does not happen with people of foreign origin. After the first time when she was not able to repeat that spectator's name, she did not ask for the name of anyone who seemed to be of foreign origin anymore or in any case did not try to repeat it anymore. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/02/2022)

During the Forum-Theatre session, I realise that the Joker asks almost all participants for their names, before they intervene (after that they have raised their hands or started talking). The Joker then repeats their name, probably as a way to let them feel more included, or to compare different comments and consult spectators later during the discussion remembering their names. Nevertheless, when people from a migrant background ask for permission to speak or make her understand that they wish to speak, she does not ask for their names. Indeed, when at the beginning of the discussion, the Joker asked a spectator from a migrant background for his name and she was not able to repeat it (the name was quite long, and the Joker simply replied by saying "Okay"), she never asked for the names of people from a migrant background, or never repeated them in the rare cases in which she asked for them. These issues limit participation of people from a migrant background, although attention to

power structures as well as to the groups that are present in Theatre of the Oppressed activities is repeatedly underlined in the handbooks (e.g., Malkassian et al. 2021, 28, 32-34). Some spectators told me that the Joker coordinated appropriately the discussion, including two spectators from a migrant background. Nevertheless, the dynamics observed expose the complexity in coordinating participation. The fact that some people from a migrant background are limited in participation presents relevant challenges given the aims of the project and the emphasis that is placed on people's direct participation in participatory methods as a key aspect to promote empowerment (Malkassian et al. 2021; see also Section 4.3). In the interview with the Italian Joker, she acknowledges that participation from people from a migrant background was limited:

So, a bit of dis-a bit of discomfort, as far as I'm concerned, with respect to the time to be able to dedicate to the comments that I glimpsed in the looks, but which then did not develop. Uh on the other hand, I've seen some comments, instead, even being seated, without taking a seat on the stage uh... that came directly from non-native Italian speakers and this comforted me. I'm sure that with a bit more time and also with help from someone who could have done what they did not feel like doing due to the difficulty with the language, it would have enriched.
(Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As the interviewee points out, she had a feeling of "discomfort" during the Forum-Theatre session because of the reduced time that she could dedicate to some comments that did not develop. At the same time, however, there were some comments that took place even if spectators did not go on stage, and these came also from people from a migrant background (moreover, a few of them also entered the scene, as I discussed in Section 5.3). The Joker argues that if she had had more time and the help of someone who could act what they did not feel comfortable to act because of language barriers, discussion would have been "enriched". In other words, the Joker acknowledges that some people from a migrant

background were not given enough space to participate, mainly because of language barriers and time constraints. She also stresses how the necessity to produce a “result” hinders an accurate consideration of all these different aspects of activities:

Because-because when-when it is urgent to produce a result, to take a path that produces a result, you overlook, in the end, due to time or lack of strengths, some possibilities which, in my opinion, instead, exist. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As the Joker explains, projects such as MiGreat!, which include specific objectives and deadlines, force practitioners to “produce a result”. Nonetheless, this leads to the neglect of possibilities to include participants that however would require more time and energy. An example of this is the realisation of performances that include a greater use of the body.

There are some Forums that are built very thea... much more theatrically. This scene was very realistic, and... there was very little body because people were sitting on a train, no symbolic scenes occurred, they were very realistic scenes and-and so I wonder... and I saw Forums made only of movements, of dances, of noises and-where you have-you have no doubts that the theme is, for example, arranged marriage in India... okay? And perhaps at that level there, a more instinctive, more aesthetic level, it would be possible to engage with more fluidity even people who have this language barrier. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

Raffaella highlights how Forum-Theatre scenes may be constructed in a more “theatrical” way. Whilst the scene that was presented in the Forum-Theatre in Trento was mainly based on dialogues and only marginally on the use of the body, other Forum-Theatre scenes include much more “movement” and aesthetic elements that make spectators immediately understand the topic that is represented. This is something that is explained also by Massimiliano Bozza, who adopts this approach when working with people from a migrant background utilising particularly techniques from the Aesthetics of the Oppressed (see

Chapter 4). Further, Boal himself stated that using the body renders activities more “democratic”, since nobody is limited because of language or verbal communication skills (Boal cited in Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 10; Boal 2011a, 26; cf. also Bozza 2020, 7). This more “instinctive” or “aesthetic” level may help with the involvement of people with different mother tongues. According to the Joker, issues related to ways of accommodating language barriers should be considered already in the phase of project management (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative). Similarly, Daria argues that, although ways of overcoming linguistic barriers were considered and some strategies were adopted, such as participants translating sometimes between each other, and although several comments from people from a migrant background were present, it is possible that some spectators did not participate because of linguistic difficulties (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative). During other phases of the project, for example before multiplier events, ways to involve people from a migrant background are often debated among practitioners in Italy, for example proposing solutions for language barriers. Yet, people from a migrant background are not always supported, as remarked also by some Italian participants in multiplier events, and probably these strategies are insufficient to facilitate participation, such as during the Forum-Theatre session. Nevertheless, the difficulties encountered seem to downsize the goals of the project, as the next quote highlights.

We cannot even pretend that this does not happen, but it is like uh talking-doing a show about-about the female component-I do not know, doing a show in a room of ten men, there is only one woman, young, all the others are... like we have also internalised some stereotypes, some-some let's say forms of respect that are not forms of respect so, but forms of subordination or else that we cannot think of them being dismantled just because we are doing an activity of TO, like... (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

In this quotation, the interviewee argues that it is not possible to “pretend” that people from a migrant background do not remain excluded because of language barriers. Similarly, this would occur in a show where only men are present in the room apart from one woman – interestingly, the interviewee emphasises the presence of a young woman, to underline the different social position of this person from that of men. To put it differently, the interviewee argues that we all have “internalised” various “stereotypes” and “forms of subordination” (that she firstly considers “forms of respect”, while they are in reality power relations), that cannot be deconstructed simply through an activity of Theatre of the Oppressed. In this way, however, the broad goals of changing reality and revolutionising society seem to remain unattended, and the ambitions of the project are reduced. This occurs also after the first multiplier event in Trento, when, during a conversation with the two facilitators from the Italian Cooperative, I ask how the empowerment of people from a migrant background may be facilitated if they are not always actively included in activities. Yet, the coordinator of the project explains to me the following:

“We do not do narrative, we do not have the goal of constructing a narrative and in any case through this type of project we cannot promote everyone’s empowerment. It is true that the dominant narrative is white, but we cannot think that these problems will be solved like this, from today to tomorrow. We cannot keep saying that the narrative is white and expect to see from tomorrow a non-white person on TG1. This is a project that lasts thirty months, such a complex problem cannot be solved in thirty months”. (Extract from fieldnotes, 06/12/2021)

Daria argues that through the project “we do not do narrative”, and in any case, this project is not able to promote everyone’s empowerment. However, the goal of MiGreat! is precisely that of identifying alternative narratives on migrations, thus this comment seems an attempt to justify a limit of the multiplier event itself: the reduced participation of people from a

migrant background. Referring to the criticism made by a participant during the multiplier event about the fact that the dominant narrative on migrations is often “white” (see Section 5.3), she argues that these issues cannot be quickly solved, and we cannot expect to see “a non-white person” on TV news on the national public broadcasting company. Interestingly, she argues that a project lasting thirty months as MiGreat! does not allow to solve “such a complex problem”. This comment is relevant to the extent that it significantly downsizes the goals of the project. Indeed, the difficulties in involving people from a migrant background are justified by the impossibility of changing the current state of things. This seems to deny the initial goals of “changing reality”, transforming society, and doing a “revolution” explained in Sub-section 6.1.1. Moreover, the IO1 handbook includes various suggestions on how to facilitate activities, as mentioned in previous sections and in Chapter 5, including the importance to pay attention to power relations and the questioning of the social positions that practitioners occupy with respect to participants (Malkassian et al. 2021). Nevertheless, the difficulties in including people from a migrant background shows how these instructions are often neglected. Facilitators’ comments hide the complexity of these issues, but also the scarce attention which is often paid to the participation of all people involved. Further, these comments reveal that probably the goal of MiGreat! was possibly that of (limitedly) changing the world by creating and professionalising a community, rather than by creating counter and alternative narratives and spread them throughout the world. These challenges arose also during some multiplier events with other people, as discussed below.

6.2.3 Coordinating Participation from Other Groups of People during Multiplier Events

As discussed in Section 6.1, among the goals of MiGreat! there was the attempt at creating a professional community mastering participatory methods, and for this reason social workers, language teachers, volunteers and other people operating in the field of migrations were targeted. Yet, coordinating a variety of people from different social and professional backgrounds sometimes revealed problematic, for instance during multiplier events, as explained below.

While participants prepare their stories, Daria comes close to me and quietly says the following words: “These activities should be done only with people like Filomena and Nicoletta. These workshops are not meant for people with problems and for people to vent about their problems. There are people who do not understand that these are not opportunities to vent their frustrations on others. Those who volunteer after the age of sixty do so because they are frustrated or they have not yet managed to give meaning to their life. *(pause)* I’m joking, of course. [...]” (Extract from fieldnotes, 22/01/2022)

The excerpt above refers to the multiplier event that was held in Parma. While participants are asked to invent a story in couples starting from some images that they chose, Daria, one of the two facilitators, tells me separately that these activities should be carried out with younger people (Filomena and Nicoletta are respectively a social worker and a volunteer – as well as two university students – at [organisation based in Parma dealing with migrations and cooperation]), and not with older people or people who show “problems” and try to “vent their frustrations”. Moreover, she argues that older people volunteering do so either because they are frustrated, or because they have not managed yet to “give meaning to their life”. Subsequently, she makes me understand that she is joking. Notwithstanding this comment which is made during a break for facilitators and me, these lines unveil something

which remains obscured in the official descriptions of the goals of MiGreat!: the project targets specific types of social workers or volunteers, rather than this social group in general. In other words, MiGreat! practitioners target various groups of people for the production of the IOs and for multiplier events, but then only those who show to be particularly interested in and able to apply these tools are considered appropriate targets.

in the world of volunteering, according to my experience, there are also people who turn to external help because in fact they have personal problems. It often happens, right? [...] [W]e often try to help others in order not to think about our own problems. This, in my opinion, is something that should be taken into consideration when working with this target. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

In the quote above, Daria refers again to the multiplier event held in Parma where almost all participants were volunteers at [organisation based in Parma dealing with migrations and cooperation]. In particular, the interviewee argues that in the field of volunteering, several people “often” engage in activities in order to solve or get distracted from their “personal problems”. Arguing that in Parma this issue emerged from at least three participants, the interviewee states that this factor should be considered when working with this target. However, she does not seem to positively welcome people who show their frustration or “personal problems”, as shown below.

Like, everyone has the right to speak unfortunately and... well, but I wouldn't define these as difficulties, I would define them as management issues of a heterogeneous group of people. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

The interviewee argues that “everyone has the right to speak *unfortunately*” (my emphasis), revealing that although various groups of people are invited in activities, only those showing professional interest are the suitable target, building a hierarchy between more suitable

participants and less appropriate ones. Moreover, the idea that everyone's right of expression is deemed an unfortunate fact contradicts the principles of Theatre of the Oppressed, which is attentive towards the oppressed and tries to nurture everyone's expressive and creative skills (Boal cited in Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 10; Boal 2011a, 26; Bozza 2020, 7; Boal 2011b). While in the realisation of the Forum-Theatre the necessity to set aside social workers' frustration or other personal issues was explained by the priority to involve as many people as possible both in the group of participants and among the audience (as shown in Section 5.5), here the issue is related to the type of contribution that people may give in multiplier events, and the opportunity and interest that they later have in utilising the tools presented. According to Daria, these issues are part of "management issues of a heterogeneous group of people". Nevertheless, this problem often emerged in activities (as the reference to the impact that participants' age has on their participation, as discussed in Section 5.4). In sum, participants' dimensions of identity, including age, background, and personal circumstances played a role in activities, but these were not always considered when inviting people to participate. Therefore, attention to the peculiarities of groups of participants was sometimes overlooked, despite the fact that it is considered important in the IOI handbook, particularly in relation to people's "age", "story", and "previous experience" (Malkassian et al. 2021, 28).

From an intersectional perspective, other categories of difference that influence people's participation in activities should be considered. Although data on these are scarce, an example from the Final Conference of the project that was held in London is relevant. In the afternoon, the groups of participants to the conference were split into three groups, each following a different workshop on participatory methods. I followed the one on Theatre of

the Oppressed, coordinated by Fernanda, the Joker in the French organisation, together with a colleague from the French organisation and two others from the British one.

Stand[ing] in a circle, each participant has to say their name to the person on their right. Then, repeat by saying one's name in different ways: happy, scary, angry, flirty, etc. Participants laugh a lot during this activity. After this activity, one of the two actresses, the facilitator, asks why the coordinator made us do this activity while standing if she had said at the beginning of the workshop that she has difficulties in walking and standing (I remember her telling this to Fernanda). She acknowledges that participants were not "forced" to stand but, as we were asked to stand for this specific activity, she felt excluded. She adds that she asks this also because she is a facilitator. Fernanda thanks her for this feedback and replies that if we prefer to sit, we can, and that next time she will ask to discuss this issue in the group to find an agreed-upon solution. (Extract from fieldnotes, 05/03/2022)

Although at the beginning of the workshop Fernanda specified that "we will do some activities while standing, others while sitting, but we can choose whether we want to stand or to remain seated", while explaining this specific activity she asked us to stand. The participant acknowledges that the Joker did not force us to stand, but since at the beginning she communicated that she had some difficulties in walking, she felt excluded. She highlights that she is interested in this also because she is a facilitator herself (as well as an actress). Fernanda seems to recognise the importance of this comment, indeed she suggests that next time it would be better to discuss this issue with the group and reach a collective decision about how to carry out such an activity. This issue will be discussed at the end of the conference in front of all participants and MiGreat! practitioners, who re-state how they will consider these aspects in future activities. This episode reveals an important aspect in the coordination of participatory activities: that of considering the characteristics of a group

of participants, taking into account other axes of inequality, such as health and disability.

Fernanda explains to me that adaptation of activities is key in these circumstances:

I think it didn't have an impact, like [...] we could do everything with some of people being seated, and some of them being uhm uhm not seated, and I think it-it made her feel better, and the group accepted really easily, and... and I think it's-it's important to-to make everyone feel comfortable, and... and yeah, that's it. (Interview with Fernanda, Joker from the French organisation)

As Fernanda explains, adapting activities would not have negatively impacted on the goals of the activity, since it could be carried out with some people being seated and others standing. This instruction, given for subsequent activities during the workshop, made the participant feel more comfortable, which is an important goal in participatory methods. Boal himself argued, referring to activities of Theatre of the Oppressed carried out with people having mental health issues and with people with disabilities, that it is important not to expect from people to do something that they cannot do, although people's skills should not be undervalued (Boal 2011b, 138). However, he recognised that activities and games can be adapted according to people's abilities, and that "normality" is a relative concept (Boal 2011b, 138). These issues are particularly relevant from an intersectional and feminist perspective. Indeed, feminist Theatre of the Oppressed recognises the multiple systems of oppression which contribute to people's oppression and which should be explored through theatre, exploring for example the case of mental health issues (Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022). At the same time, intersectional scholars have recognised the subordination of people with disabilities in ableist societies (e.g., Winker and Degele cited in Bürkner 2012, 184; Bürkner 2012; Amelina and Lutz 2019, 47). Given the attention that is placed on the characteristics of social groups, including people's abilities, in Theatre of the Oppressed

activities as part of MiGreat! (Malkassian et al. 2021, 28), this type of challenges should be more carefully considered.

To sum up, both practical issues (mainly related to time constraints) and the neglect (in some cases) of participants' social background and categories of identity posed several challenges in the active involvement of all the people included in activities. Yet, also some categories of difference embodied by practitioners may have influenced the facilitation of activities, particularly in the case of gender, as explained in the next section.

6.3 The Role of Practitioners' Gender

Although the literature on the impact that facilitators' gender may have on participatory activities, and particularly in Theatre of the Oppressed, is scant, from an intersectional perspective it is relevant to reflect on the possible ways in which it may have affected activities and interaction with participants. Almost all practitioners involved in the MiGreat! project were women. In Italy, even if Roberto Mazzini wrote the application of the project, the three persons directly facilitating activities were women: Raffaella (the Joker), Daria (coordinator of MiGreat!), and partly me (only for the last six months, supporting Raffaella and Daria). According to the Joker, her gender impacted on the Forum-Theatre session, as she stresses in the following quotation.

at a certain point everything depends on the Joker and I believe I have a component, if we really want to trivialise, a masculine component that is quite accentuated, that is the one that is a bit more practical uh or sometimes deaf to hmm emotional nuances and... I have it and surely it's the one that works for me during the twenty minutes before going on stage, like I have to abandon everything that concerns care, the... no? [...] (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As the interviewee stresses, she has a “masculine component” that is necessary before going on stage, that is a more practical approach that ignores emotions and care. Here, a stereotypical view of gender identities is conveyed, which sees femininity connected with care and emotions, whereas masculinity with rationality and a practical attitude (Connell 2011; Catrin 2012, 5 and 7-8; Wikström 2008, 71). This idea is pointed out also referring to the relationship with the audience:

Well I have to say no uh not my gender, but a-a capacity that however I saw and found also in Jokers not of my gender and... to uhm mix, how can I say, depth and also a bit sympathy, but in the etymological sense of the term to-to manage to feel together with people. I don't believe that this is a quality that is specific to my gender. Maybe it can have a part of major seduction, such-such an important role as I described it, when it is worn by a woman, but I say this now and I might change my mind in five minutes, looking at a male Joker capable of being as magnetic, because this is a bit what is needed at a certain point, people's attention uh... should not be forced, it should be created exactly. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

As Raffaella explains, it was not specifically her gender that influenced the Forum-Theatre session, but rather the ability to “mix” depth with sympathy, defined as the capacity to “feel together with people”. Yet, she argues that this skill is not linked to her gender. However, according to her, her gender may include a higher level of “seduction”, although she is not sure of this, and she explains that she may change her mind observing a male Joker with the same capacity to be as “magnetic” and able to catch spectators' attention, which is central for a Joker. In these lines, a stereotypical assumption on femininity is present: her gender is connected to care, sympathy, and seduction (Connell 2011, 35; Catrin 2012, 5 and 7-8; Wikström 2008, 71). At the same time, according to Raffaella, three women coordinating activities (during the preparation of the Forum-Theatre scene) positively affected the process

(interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative). A similar reflection is made on the realisation of the visual materials:

in this one maybe a bit yes, in the sense that it was very uh... difficult to hire people, to keep them for so long. I have talked to-never talked to so many people and... non-native Italian speakers about the project and our aims and... and since they are mostly guys, males, I thought more than once that this... possibility of explaining oneself, of hearing again each other, of texting each other etcetera was easier because of the fact that I'm a woman. [...] So not so much because, I don't know, for-for seduction or for charm, as for uh facility of recognition of the role. [...] Then again, I add because in my opinion it is important, there was me, but there was Daria, who was the other person proposing [activities] together with me and who oversaw, right? the-the... the focus of-of the project, the intentions, even the mood, and the video-maker is again a woman. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

During the production of the visual tools, Raffaella points out that it was difficult to recruit participants and above all to keep them involved for a long time (given that the videos were produced in a year). During this phase, she spoke with numerous people who are not native Italian speakers. These were mostly young men, and for this reason she thought that keeping constantly in contact was made easier by the fact that she is a woman. Referring to the gender dynamics between male asylum seekers and female social workers explained in Section 5.4, she argues that the relationship between participants and her was more simple not because of possible “seduction” or “charm” (which again would provide a stereotypical view of femininity), but because participants could more easily recognise her role, being used to relate with female social workers or volunteers. Again, she explains that working together with a female colleague (Daria) and a female video-maker positively impacted on this phase, probably again because of this relationship with male participants. Daria, however, has a different opinion on these issues, as she argues below.

Well not directly, in the sense that not-not not directly, but I don't know how to say, not in an important way. And... in my opinion no, it was an environment where this thing didn't bring about great difficulties. It did... but I-I make the comparison with the moments of... of creation of the IO2, where in my opinion gender influenced a bit, because uh... people felt less involved perhaps, having so much – I mean the guys – they were all younger – well less... a bit more inhibited by the fact of having women... (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

The interviewee states that gender did not directly impact on the realisation of the Forum-Theatre, neither during the public Forum-Theatre session, since the context where these phases took place did not favour this. In contrast, during the realisation of the visual materials, gender probably did exercise an influence, but for a different reason from that explained by Raffaella. Here, Daria claims that people may have felt “less involved” (probably due to the length of this phase), and the fact that various participants were young men may have contributed to make them feel “inhibited” due to the fact that the facilitators were women. She clarifies these aspects in the next quote.

No, there weren't any real difficulties, but I can't think that texting so much and hearing, and... insisting on some people seeking asylum as a woman is the same thing as doing it as a man, not because they don't respect me, but because anyway it's an activity to which they're not... not all people are used to. Like... [...] the people from Afghanistan that we involved, an Afghan woman coming from the same city, from the same university where they studied, would have never texted them, even if we were of the same age, to involve them in this type of activity. I can't think that this doesn't have an effect, like, in the sense, but even there it is a... gender also linked to the habit situation. On other people no, surely not in the power dynamics of not being respected or something like that, so. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

The interviewee explains that facilitators' gender did not really create difficulties, but she suggests that a woman contacting participants several times, particularly asylum seekers, is

not “the same thing” as a man doing it. This is not related to a matter of respect, but to the fact that participants may not be “used” to this. Contrary to Raffaella, who argues that asylum seekers are used to interacting with female social workers or teachers or volunteers, Daria claims that male asylum seekers are not used to being contacted by women to carry out this type of activities in their countries of origin. According to Daria, this had an effect, but it is not only a matter of gender, but also of “habit” and, from an intersectional perspective, ethnic and national background. In the case of other participants, instead, gender did not play a role. Nevertheless, the interviewee is not entirely sure of these reflections:

Like in my opinion maybe that, but I don’t have expe-certain evidence of this thing and I don’t think so. Similarly in the Forum-Theatre show, I think that gender was not relevant, even in relation to the themes. In my opinion, the gender issue could have had a different weight on different issues. On this issue, no, I don’t see the great influence that our being women had. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

Daria specifies that she does not have “certain evidence” of the impact that facilitators’ gender may have played in the realisation of the visual materials. Similarly, in the Forum-Theatre session gender was not “relevant” according to her, also “in relation to the themes” tackled. In her opinion, the theme of negative narratives about migrations did not lead to specific gender dynamics between facilitators and participants. During multiplier events, instead, gender did never play a role (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative). Unfortunately, data is not available to deepen this issue. From what I observed during the preparation of Forum-Theatre, the fact of being three females did not have a significant impact (neither positively nor negatively), but this may be related to the fact that the majority of participants knew at least one of the three facilitators (including me), not to mention those who have known Raffaella and Daria for a long time. Therefore, these previous relations may have reduced the effect of gender. Notwithstanding this, it is interesting to note how

facilitators explain the effect that their gender may have had, in some cases referring to a view on femininity and masculinity which confirms gender stereotypes (Connell 2011; Goffman 1979; Catrin 2012, 5 and 7-8; Wikström 2008, 71).

A couple of participants from a migrant background who participated as spect-actors in the Forum-Theatre session in Trento commented positively on the fact that the Joker was a woman, as discussed below.

[Adam argues that] the Joker knew which questions to ask, when it was appropriate to stop the scene or the audience's participation and helped to reflect on possible solutions. He also tells me that it was fine that it was a woman, even if [in his home country] it works differently. I ask him what he means because I'm not sure I understood. He tells me that he has never done theatre, so he doesn't really know either [...], but he mentions that he wouldn't be used to seeing this type of role played by a woman. (Extract from fieldnotes, 06/05/2022)

Adam noted that the Joker knew which questions were to be asked, and how to coordinate the discussion, helping the audience think about possible strategies to overcome the oppression, as a Joker should do during a Forum-Theatre session (cf. also Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 118-119; Miramonti 2017; Day 2002, 22; Boal 2002, 260-262; Boal 2021, 43; Pisciotta 2016, 70; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 5). According to him, it was "fine" that the Joker was a woman, although in Senegal this would not be the case. Even though he never played theatre in his home country, he points out that he would not be "used" to see a woman playing this role. In this way, he argues something similar to what is explained by Daria, namely the fact that women would probably not exercise the role of facilitators in other countries. This comment allows to reflect on the accessibility of different social spheres to women, as well as whether theatre and the coordination of theatrical activities is conceived as a men's territory (similarly to the reflection made by Uri Noy Meir in Section 4.2), even

though this issue goes beyond the scope of this thesis. James, instead, explains something similar to what is argued by Raffaella, stressing that women are better at showing “sympathy” than men. Nevertheless, a binary and stereotypical view of gender is reproduced, which risks reproducing dominant perspectives on masculinity and femininity.

In the other three countries, gender was not generally seen as having a considerable impact on activities, such as in France (interview with Fernanda, French organisation). This was partly due to the constant presence of numerous women.

Fernanda: No, I think it didn't influence because we always would be lots of-lots of women, so it was completely okay for me, like being surrounded by... really, we always had men, like there was no workshop where we were only women, but always uhm I think the fact that I would see some other women, I would be... I would feel safe, so.

Laura: So, if you were with a majority of men, would you feel less safe?

Fernanda: It depends on the context, yeah, but uh... normally at the beginning, yeah, if it's a majority of men, maybe it could uh it could affect, yeah. (Interview with Fernanda, Joker from the French organisation)

As Fernanda explains, in her opinion gender did not have a significant impact during multiplier events because women were always present among participants. This presence made her feel “safe” and contributed to mitigate the impact of gender which, according to her, would have been higher if more men were present. In other words, the presence of other women is related to a matter of “safety” for a female facilitator. A similar answer is provided by Patricia, who argues that the fact that during multiplier events and the Forum-Theatre session there were numerous women led to gender having no impact on activities (interview with Patricia, British organisation). However, she states that the fact that her working sector is very “feminised” (as discussed in Section 5.4) may have affected her relationship with participants, but she is not sure of this, neither of the ways in which this may have been the

case (Interview with Patricia, British organisation). Her colleague, William, who facilitated a group of participants who started working on the visual tools, explains that working with a pre-existing group who already knew him and where women constituted the majority of participants may have reduced the impact of his gender (interview with William, British organisation). Yet, it was still relevant:

Well also personality, but... so-so I think if I propose something, it carries weight. And it might be because of uhm gender, age, uh personality, uhm I mean, in our case, we're both white peoples [Patricia and I], but it could be to do with... you know, race. Uhm but... I think people... my students tend to be positive and receptive about my proposals, and uhm maybe a-a-a woman colleague might make the same proposal and-and to-to have a little bit more kind of scepticism or resistance or uhm... and that's good and bad, because in participatory education, you want that dialogue, and you want the students to be able to express themselves and-and-and-and to have that, like, power dynamic, where you're negotiating, and you're struggling for what you do in the group. Uhm but I think in-in my case, partly because I'm a man, uhm my suggestions are received with enthusiasm, particularly when it's women uhm in the group as well uhm so... (Interview with William, co-writer of MiGreat! application from the British organisation and facilitator in some activities of the project)

In the quote above, the interviewee argues that when proposing activities several factors may play a role, including personality, gender, age, and race. Thus, from an intersectional perspective, attention to various categories of difference is shown. Yet, his being a man helps him to confer importance to his proposals ("it carries weight"). In fact, students are generally positive about his proposals, whereas for his female colleagues it might be more challenging, since students may show some scepticism, precisely because of their gender identity. The interviewee points out that in participatory education and activities this difference may be an opportunity for discussing power relations between teachers and students in connection with their gender identity. In any case, being a man usually leads to enthusiasm among

students when proposing activities, especially if women are present. As such, a power relation may engender between a male facilitator and female participants: women may consider a male facilitator as trustworthy and able to take decisions and “guide” them in learning, following a patriarchal logic (cf. also Young 2003; Connell 2011, 36; Catrin 2012, 8; Wikström 2008, 71). The Joker in Hungary argues that being five women and her preparing the Forum-Theatre facilitated communication, although she is not sure about the reason why this was the case. In contrast, during Forum-Theatre sessions gender did not play a role, mainly because people in the audience were “gender-sensitive” and “open-minded”, and mostly they were women (interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation), similarly to the context in France.

A final reflection on facilitators’ gender is made by the Italian Joker regarding the relationships between MiGreat! practitioners, as she stresses in the following excerpt.

I would say no, uh if anything positively from the point of view... (*smiles*) [...] from the point of view of-of management, of organisation, of patience so, I recognise (*giggle*) in some women, not even all, this capacity, especially when they are more, right? when they are a group of women. [...] A lucky uh... team of women uh... for the MiGreat project! that worked well, as it can work well from-at all levels, the affective point of view even, not only emotional, affective, that is of good, warm and affectionate relationships, and it is not taken for granted at all, it is not required by Europe (*smiles*), and... up to the ability to solve the problems, to solve them in good times, to know... to discuss difficulties, all characteristics that I can think of attributing to a good group of women. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

According to the interviewee, the fact that almost all MiGreat! practitioners were women positively influenced the management and organisation of the project, thanks also to their “patience”. As she stresses, slightly laughing, “some” women have this capacity, especially

when working in a group of women (the giggle may be due to the reference to women having patience, which again reveals a stereotypical understanding of femininity). In MiGreat!, the group of female colleagues worked well at various levels, including the affective/emotional one, which led to the creation of “good”, “warm” and “affectionate” relationships. Moreover, female practitioners managed to solve problems sharing views in difficult situations, which are skills that according to the Joker are typical of women (as the Joker remarks, the team was enriched by the fact that the majority of them also have a migrant background – interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative). In brief, practitioners’ gender is seen as contributing positively also to relations among them. Nevertheless, these assumptions reflect a stereotypical idea of femininity, which is associated with care, patience, affection, sympathy: qualities that are also connected to the idea of the “good mother” (cf. also Connell 2011, 35; see also Goffman 1979; Catrin 2012, 5 and 7-8; Wikström 2008, 71). The presence of two men (Roberto and William) adapted well to this situation, as Raffaella explains below.

The... two or three men who were present in the international team of the project, uh they’re... I don’t know how to say... uhm they have-they have a figure... they have a leading role, I would say, because they are the persons who conceived the project, but in the two and a half years of development, hmm how to say, they never unbalanced the activities too much, on the contrary they were considered... how to say, some-some reference points precisely for this reason, because of the fact that the first thought on this project was put by them. I’m talking about Roberto and William. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

In the quote above, the interviewee argues that Roberto and William occupied positions of responsibility in the project, since they wrote the application after having thought about and designed it. Nonetheless, during the development of the project, they did not compromise activities, but rather acted as “reference points”. As such, the interviewee seems to stress that the two leading figures were men and this impacted positively, although their presence did

not dominate on female colleagues. Again, this perspective underlines how the two men held leading positions in the project. In particular, their role as “reference points” reproduces the idea of masculinity as related to decision-making power and ability to rationally guide those in a weakest position (cf. also Young 2003; Connell 2011, 36; Catrin 2012, 8; Wikström 2008, 71).

To sum up, MiGreat! practitioners have different opinions on the ways in which their gender may have impacted on the project, although they often seem to think about gender and gender relationships according to dominant and stereotypical views. Nonetheless, it should be noted that all interviewees showed a high level of uncertainty while answering questions regarding the role of their gender in the project. Unfortunately, the literature has neglected gender issues in the field of creative and participatory approaches. Indeed, even in feminist Theatre of the Oppressed a clear analysis on gender relationships between facilitators and participants is limited, and it is even more so in academic research. For all these reasons, a deeper understanding of these issues seems crucial. Nevertheless, examples of awareness about an intersectional perspective on migrations, particularly when dealt with through creative approaches, have emerged during the research. This is analysed in the next section.

6.4 Any Room for an Intersectional Perspective?

Throughout the project, references to the multiple factors affecting migrations and the experiences of people from a migrant background, as well as the various axes of differences that shape their oppression, emerged from various sources. For instance, in the IO1 handbook, the “homogenisation” of people from a migrant background (in this case in the UK) is explicitly criticised:

Underpinning all of the above is also a homogenisation of migrants as one ‘block’, with no factoring in of diversity in ethnicity, class, gender, religion or other identity category. (Malkassian et al. 2021, 8)

Homogenising people from a migrant background as composing one single “block” is seen as contributing to their oppression, as well as a central part of dominant narratives. Indeed, the literature has critically examined the ways in which people from a migrant background and natives are often portrayed as two homogenous groups, although they are not (cf. also Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008, 2; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009; Bello 2011; Bello 2020, 9). This is also theorised by intersectional scholars, who argue that it is precisely the neglect of the intersection of multiple axes of oppression that contribute to subordination and invisibility (Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2000; hooks 2020a; hooks 2021; Bello 2020, 9; Samuels and Ross-Sheriff 2008). Thus, attention to categories such as “ethnicity, class, gender, religion” is encouraged. Feminist black thought and intersectionality are also directly cited:

Feminist thought, for example the work of Patricia Hill Collins, has shown that agency is unequally distributed among members of society, based on criteria such as race and gender (36).⁵⁵ (Malkassian et al. 2021, 19)

Historically, the Black feminist movement, with authors like Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Angela Davis and others, has insisted on the necessity that the people who face forms of oppression need to be able to speak for themselves. (Malkassian et al. 2021, 20-21)

The two quotations above show that practitioners take into consideration the work of intersectional scholars regarding the role played by multiple systems of power in limiting

⁵⁵ Here “Patricia Hill Collins, ‘U.S. Black Feminism in Transnational Context’, in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 227-249. <https://uniteyouthdublin.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/Black-feminist-thought-by-patricia-hill-collins.pdf>” is cited (Malkassian et al. 2021, 85 note 36).

people's agency (Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2000; hooks 2020a; hooks 2020b; hooks 2021). Moreover, the contributions of black feminist researchers in underlining the importance for, as well as the opportunities of, oppressed people to raise their voice are acknowledged (hooks 2020a, 120-134; hooks 1989).⁵⁶ Furthermore, practitioners are advised to take into account the composition of a group of participants, for example in Theatre of the Oppressed activities, considering their different dimensions of identity, including age, disability, gender, class, ethnicity (Malkassian et al. 2021, 28, 34 and 61), paying attention to how these may shape group dynamics. These aspects are underlined particularly with reference to power relations, that may be present within groups of participants due to their belonging to different social groups (such as a majority of men and a minority of women – Malkassian et al. 2021, 34). As a consequence, practitioners should be attentive towards the reproduction of power relations which may hinder participants' empowerment. To do so, suggestions are given either to form groups among people sharing similar identities, such as "only people from a migrant background, or women from a migrant background, or vulnerable people, or Black women from a migrant background, or trans women from a migrant background" (Malkassian et al. 2021, 34), or to organise more mixed groups but paying attention to power dynamics. Therefore, multiple aspects of participants' identities, in relation to systems of power, are considered as impacting on activities and relationships. The potential for an intersectional perspective is highlighted also by the explanation of the concept of alternative narrative, which is considered a possibility to explore various aspects of migrations and of the experiences of people from a migrant background, without generalising or essentialising their identity (e.g., Castro and Carnassale

⁵⁶ It is relevant to note here that the IO1 handbook was realised following research carried out in the four partner countries about the themes tackled in the project, which is why several academic references are included.

2019, 205; Bürkner, 2012; Herrera 2013; Bastia 2014; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009; Erel and Reynolds 2014).

With respect to the migrant phenomenon, obviously the dominant narrative is: males, ugly, thieves, bad, like to emphasise it, right? The counter narrative is: there are also women, there are also children... the alternative narrative is: within the Albanian community there are strong conflicts because it is becoming a widespread practice xxx, like, do you understand? (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

As Daria explains, an example of dominant narrative about migrations is that people from a migrant background are men, they are “ugly”, they are “thieves”, they are “bad” (although she is exaggerating it here). A counter narrative would highlight that people from a migrant background are also women and children (responding to the dominant narrative). In contrast, an alternative narrative would show that, for instance, within a given community of people from a migrant background something is happening and then various details would be provided. To put it differently, an alternative narrative allows to articulate the complexity of migrations, highlighting its multiple dimensions. In fact, migrations are perceived as a complex issue, as discussed in the following quotation.

a very complex phenomenon that... we call the migrations are a huge theme, like we can't speak of oppression of migrant people, [...] the oppression of... second-generation Chinese girl will not be the same oppression, or not completely in all aspects, as the oppression of a woman [who is a] victim of trafficking, but if we talk about migrations we have to put them in the same melting pot. [...] So I-I see it very difficult to define the theme of migra-linked to the migrant phenomenon because it is very broad, so, okay. (Interview with Daria, coordinator of the MiGreat! project from the Italian Cooperative)

The interviewee stresses here how complex migrations are, and that talking about the oppression of people from a migrant background includes numerous dimensions. For

instance, oppression towards a second-generation migrant woman is likely to be different from oppression towards a woman who is a victim of trafficking. Since many different aspects are involved, and people's experiences are different, generalisation is impossible. This idea is shared by the Joker in France, as the following excerpt reveals.

I think it's important to say that we... with this project, we only talked about uh... the... real-the real the top of the iceberg, the subject of uhm... migration narratives, how to change it, how to understand them, what do they uhm do they mean, in our society and in the news, like we uh only-we only talked about the top of the iceberg, like, we still have a lot of work to do, a lot of things to learn, and it's important to have conscience of that, even that we learnt a lot, like it's a really vast and huge subject that really-really made me, like, even more curious and I want-I really want to keep working on it, because it's really interesting
(Interview with Fernanda, Joker from the French organisation)

Fernanda claims that in MiGreat! only the "top of the iceberg" was tackled. Narratives about migrations constitute only the most superficial aspect of migrations. This theme is however much broader, and awareness of this is important. She expresses curiosity towards this topic, but underlines how much work is still needed in order to understand this field. In sum, MiGreat! practitioners seem to recognise that migrations are a complex field, and an intersectional approach is helpful in analysing, understanding and working on it. Moreover, some references to intersectionality in relation to interactions between facilitators and participants are made. Nevertheless, considerations such as those examined above are not numerous, either in the materials produced or in interviewees' words. In addition, the project did not include an explicit intersectional focus, nor did it directly aim at exploring different dimensions of migrations, which were usually referred to in a general way. Overall, an intersectional perspective on migrations was not prominent.

6.5 Conclusions

This chapter has examined the ways in which creative and participatory approaches to migrations are developed, organised and enacted (as mentioned in the general research question), focusing in particular on how practitioners facilitated activities in the field of awareness-raising in the context of migrations through an intersectional perspective, answering the second research sub-question (indicated at page 75). The chapter has analysed various important issues that were relevant to answer this sub-question.

The complexities of organising and enacting creative and participatory approaches in the field of awareness-raising in the context of migrations have been analysed. To begin with, the dual goal of MiGreat! has been underlined: on one hand, the project aimed at working on the representation of people from a migrant background and on their inclusion in participatory activities, in order to create more positive narratives on migrations, foster their empowerment, and overcome their oppression. On the other hand, MiGreat! attempted at creating a new professional field (Bourdieu 1993) composed of experts of creative and participatory approaches who apply them to the field of social inequalities in order to overcome them. In fact, a community of practitioners is being built thanks to the sharing of knowledge about creative and participatory approaches to inequalities, similarly to previous projects (Zoniou et al. 2012; Choleva 2021). Communicating the goals of MiGreat! revealed sometimes challenging given the abstract and complex dimension of concepts such as “narratives”, “oppression” and “empowerment”, but facilitators generally agreed on the goals of the project.

Yet, these goals were quite ambitious, and it was complex to achieve them. Indeed, sometimes participants were not fully involved, due to practical reasons (mainly time

availability). Moreover, during public events (Forum-Theatre sessions and multiplier events), the diversity of the targets of activities (e.g., people from different migrant and language backgrounds, of various ages, with different health conditions) was not always taken into account. This led to a partial exclusion of some participants, as well as to some power dynamics (cf. also Ranjan 2020). In sum, the general goals of participants' empowerment and of the transformation of society into a more equal reality (e.g., Boal 2011a; Boal 2011b; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011) were not always achieved, whereas the goal of creating a new professional field (Bourdieu 1993) is in progress.

In addition, the role of practitioners' gender has been analysed. According to some interviewees, the fact that facilitators were almost always female influenced positively the relationships with participants and between practitioners, although this was often explained through stereotypical assumptions about gender. For other practitioners, gender did not always play a relevant role, or it did in connection with other categories of difference (in line with intersectionality). Overall, more research is needed to better comprehend how gender impacts on creative and participatory approaches also from an intersectional point of view.

Finally, some practitioners considered an intersectional perspective on the identities of people from a migrant background, acknowledging the diversity across experiences of migrations, the multiple axes of oppression that characterise them and the complexity of this phenomenon (e.g., Bürkner 2012; Herrera 2013; Bastia 2014; Anthias 2012; Amelina and Lutz 2019). However, this was not underlined by all facilitators, and an intersectional approach was not central to the project.

In brief, considering the second research sub-question, the analytical findings discussed in this chapter reveal that operating in the field of awareness-raising in the context of migrations

through creative and participatory approaches included various complex issues that impacted on both the organisation and the enactment of activities. These challenges were due both to the diversity in terms of participants and facilitators' background and to practical issues. More specifically, the ambitious goals of the project, the inclusion of different targets (i.e., people belonging to various categories of difference), the scarce consideration of the intersectional dimension of people's identities and experiences, together with time constraints led to several critical issues, including the limited involvement of some (groups of) participants. These critical aspects concern also the ways of constructing representations of people from a migrant background through the Theatre of the Oppressed, which are investigated in the next chapter.

7. The Content of Representation

This chapter analyses from an intersectional perspective the ways in which Theatre of the Oppressed constructs and communicates the topic of people from a migrant background, analysing also the factors accounting for specific representations (as indicated in the general research question). The focus is on the stories and themes that emerged from activities, paying attention to how and why certain aspects of the lives of people from a migrant background and layers of social stratification and diversity are represented, as well as how and why given aspects of native Italians' lives and lines of social distinction are represented (third research sub-question). The chapter concentrates particularly on the Italian context, since it is the one that I studied more in depth and on which I collected the majority of the data, but some references to the other three countries are included when relevant. The analysis concentrates mainly on the Forum-Theatre, although some hints at the visual materials and the multiplier events are made.

7.1 The Portrayal of People from a Migrant Background

The stories that were told and the themes that emerged during MiGreat! activities highlighted some layers of social stratification and aspects of the lives of people from a migrant background. In particular, the Forum-Theatres, and to some extent the visual materials, were realised precisely with the aim of representing the experiences of people from a migrant background, as well as to show the dominant narratives on migrations and propose counter and alternative narratives. This is analysed in this section.

7.1.1 The Portrayal of People from a Migrant Background in the Forum-Theatre Scene in Italy

The Forum-Theatre realised in Italy represented a story that was told by a participant (a man, university lecturer, involved in an informal laboratory of Theatre of the Oppressed in Trento) during the first meeting of the six aimed at constructing the Forum-Theatre scene, but it also included details that came from comments and reflections from other participants.⁵⁷ Importantly, the story was based on something that the participant telling it witnessed, and therefore it was based on a real episode, which is central in Theatre of the Oppressed (Tolomelli 2012, 41; Schroeter 2013, 401; cf. also Malkassian et al. 2021, 49 and 61; Santos 2018, 214), as it will be further pointed out in Section 7.4. The story is the following:

Amedeo tells his story: several years ago he was on a train [...], on a regional train Trento-Verona. There was a foreign, black guy, sitting close to him, who was sleeping, with his feet on the opposite seat, without having his shoes on and who did not have a ticket. The [female] ticket inspector, finding out that the guy did not have a ticket, wanted to get the guy off the train and in order to convince him, she took his shoe and carried it to the train exit, believing that the guy would follow her, but [he] did not move. At that point the [female] ticket inspector threw the shoe out of the train and said that the *carabinieri* were arriving (Amedeo specifies: “I don’t know if it was true or false news”). The guy then got off the train, demanding however that the [female] ticket inspector pay for his shoes since he had not paid for the ticket, but she had deprived him of his shoes. She gave [him] 50 euros. Amedeo asked the [male] ticket inspector for explanations about the reasons why to behave that way towards the guy and he told him: “These only understand the law of the jungle, there is no other way”. Amedeo specifies that the [male] ticket inspector therefore did not move from his position even more due to the fact that the passenger from a migrant background would have extorted 50 euros from his colleague (the [female] ticket inspector). The [female] ticket inspector also told Amedeo: “You can’t understand how we are,

⁵⁷ The Forum-Theatre scripts produced in the four organisations are included in MiGreat! no date(b). The one produced in Italy can be found in MiGreat! no date(b), 17-29.

we are threatened, it's a difficult job" [...]. [...] Leonardo then refers to a course that was proposed a few years ago to ticket inspectors of public transports within a project that concerned migrations on the [migrant route in North-Eastern Italy], but the ticket inspectors did not want to do it because they declared that "if there is a problem we call the police". [...] Raffaella then reminds Amedeo that when he had told her the story, he told her that he had proposed to pay for this guy's ticket since the priority was for the train to leave (it remained still for this fact), but in saying so everyone took sides against him (both the guy and the [female] ticket inspector) [...]. (Extract from fieldnotes, 11/01/2022)

One of the first issues underlined in the quotation above is that the main reasons why the passenger is oppressed and discriminated against in the story are his nationality and ethnicity (or skin colour): as Amedeo explains, the guy was discriminated against because he was "foreign"⁵⁸ and "black". Not having the ticket is only an apparent reason why the ticket inspector throws one of his shoes out of the train. Indeed, as the male ticket inspector explains to Amedeo, "these" (people from a migrant background) only understand "the law of the jungle". In other words, one of the dominant narratives on migrations that is included in the script is that people from a migrant background are savage and do not respect "our rules" (cf. also MiGreat! no date(b), 20). This idea is exaggerated during an activity of Image-Theatre (cf. also Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008, 6-7; Boal 2021, 25; Boal 2011a, 34-37; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 118; Boal 2002, 174-185; Miramonti 2017, 171-187) by the colleague (the male ticket inspector) stating this while assuming a position which is similar to that of a monkey, as shown in the picture below.

⁵⁸ The emphasis on the character's foreign nationality was probably due to the fact that this person did not speak Italian well, although it could also be due to the stereotype according to which all Italian people are white (which is clearly not the case), reinforcing skin colour as the main reason for oppression (see also Schroeter 2013, 409-410; Samuels and Ross-Sheriff 2008, 7; Patriarca and Deplano 2018, 350-351; Giuliani, Lombardi-Diop cited in Castro and Carnassale 2019, 216). The idea that Italians are conceived as being white without reflecting on the possibility that one may be black but also Italian emerged also from another story told during the meetings in preparation of the Forum-Theatre scene.



Figure 4: The law of the jungle. During an Image-Theatre activity, the man at the centre of the picture adopts a position which resembles that of a monkey to sculpt the narrative “These only understand the law of the jungle” (picture taken by me on 14/01/2022 in Trento). Similar pictures from the same day can be found in the IO3 handbook (Migreat! no date(b), 17).

In this way, people from a migrant background are shown to be oppressed through a process of othering and dehumanisation (cf. also Grove and Zwi 2006; O’Neill et al. 2019, 134; Ahmed 2014), since the reference to the “law of the jungle” compares people from a migrant background to animals in a deeply racist way. This narrative entails colonialist assumptions: people from a migrant background are portrayed as less civilised than Westerners (cf. also Giuliani 2016). This narrative – that people from a migrant background are “savage” – emerged also from another story during the first meeting in preparation of the Forum-Theatre scene. Nevertheless, in the way in which the story was told, from an intersectional perspective the only two axes of oppression that were considered are nationality (or migrant background) and ethnicity (or skin colour). This allows to reflect on how people from a migrant background are not treated equally: indeed, during the construction of the Forum-Theatre scene, it is often repeated also by the Joker that if the passenger would have been white, he would not have been oppressed, and it is presented as a central issue in the script too (MiGreat! no date(b), 19). In this way, the script underlines that certain nationalities and

skin colours are less oppressed than others (cf. also Castro and Carnassale 2019, 205; Carmel and Paul cited in Amelina and Lutz 2019, 51; Malkassian et al. 2021, 16): for example, being a white person from a migrant background would probably lead to less chances of being discriminated against than being a person of colour. Moreover, the emphasis on the protagonist's skin colour suggests that people from a migrant background are othered through discourses based on race: whiteness has historically been connected to superiority, and following colonialist assumptions, all those who are not white are inferiorised and treated as "monsters" or "abject" (Giuliani 2016, 97 and 106; Kristeva 1982). Beyond his nationality and ethnicity, the protagonist's socioeconomic condition is uncovered: indeed, he cannot afford to buy a ticket, suggesting that he belongs to lower classes and is economically and socially marginalised (MiGreat! no date(b), 18 and 22).

At the same time, the protagonist from a migrant background reacts actively: indeed, on the train, he "resists the inspector's insistence to make him get off the train", as the script highlights (MiGreat! no date(b), 22) and the quote above shows. Moreover, once all passengers get out of the train since they have arrived in Verona, he insists that the ticket inspector gives him the money to buy another pair of shoes. Hence, the protagonist is not portrayed as a passive subject, but rather as having agency (O'Neill et al. 2019, 131), although this is not sufficient to avoid oppression. His resistance is central to the concept of oppression (cf. also Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 125-126; Freire cited in Opfermann 2020, 151; see also Freire 2018, 94-95), and was discussed by the Joker and me in order to reflect on how we could show the audience that being oppressed does not mean to be completely passive. The second part of the story, however, reveals other oppressive dynamics and features that convey various ideas of Italian characters, but these are analysed in the next section. Overall, this story was commented upon by several participants during the meetings,

who explained that they witnessed similar oppressions of passengers from a migrant background or of people of colour on public transports. Hence, the main factor determining oppression seemed to be, again, one's nationality or skin colour.

This Forum-Theatre scene was positively evaluated by spectators, both in general during the Forum-Theatre session, when almost all spectators claimed the scene to be “real”, and by a couple of spectators from a migrant background whom I interviewed and who told me that the scene is “realistic”. In particular, James explained to me that he was forced to get out of the train because he did not have the train ticket and added that nationality makes a crucial difference:

James tells me that when he attended the Forum-Theatre he thought that certain things happen, that the ticket inspectors ask people from a migrant background why they don't have a ticket as if to ask for explanations, which they don't ask Italian people. (Extract from fieldnotes, 06/05/2022)

James underlines how the Forum-Theatre scene represented something that people from a migrant background experience, but he suggests that Italian ticket inspectors do not treat their co-nationals in the same way. In fact, they do not ask them for an explanation about the reasons why they do not have a ticket, they do not expect them to declare their socioeconomic status (of poverty). Adam agrees with the importance that skin colour has in these situations.

In relation to this, Adam says that in general, “colour makes a difference”, exactly in life, in the sense that black people struggle not only in the case of the train scene, but also to find a house or a job. As soon as people realise that a person is black, they treat them differently. He tells me: “I don't see myself as black, I realise I am when others make me notice it and so I look at myself [he looks at his arm] and think: ‘Oh yes, I'm black!’”. (Extract from fieldnotes, 06/05/2022)

As Adam argues, skin colour plays a key role in various contexts, such as on public transports, or when searching for a house or a job, and it leads to oppression. Interestingly, he shows how skin colour becomes relevant only when put in contrast to whiteness, as to suggest that an othering process takes place through a dichotomy between white and black, and this binarism leads to a dominance of the former over the latter (hooks 2020a; Lorde 1984, 114; Collins 1986, 19-21).

Although in the Forum-Theatre script only three axes of inequality are emphasised (foreign origin, skin colour, and socioeconomic condition) regarding the protagonist from a migrant background, during the meetings of construction of the scene his identity is debated by participants, leading to the emergence of stereotypes but also other dimensions of inequality. For instance, a discussion takes place regarding his name and nationality, as shown below.

A discussion begins on the black passenger's nationality [...]: participants discuss how he could be named and begin to propose several names. It is above all social workers/volunteers/civil servants who propose the names of men of African origin from a migrant background whom they know for working reasons. Raffaella says that it's better that they choose them because they understand it better than her. They then reflect on the nationality of this character and do so through a series of stereotypes and jokes. Ludovica, Luca, Emma suggest that he is Gambian; Donatella says it would be better from Mali: "I'm thinking about mine"; Matilde says, smiling, that a "Nigerian would have thrown her [the female ticket inspector] off the train"; Leonardo says that Gambian is better because "young Gambians are more aggressive". Daria jokes about the fact that in this discussion "we are giving vent to stereotypes", [...]. I listen to participants and in the meantime I see that they are joking with each other and then making proposals aloud, while Daria and Raffaella write on the big sheet. [...] In the end they decide that the protagonist is Gambian and his name is Mamadou. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/01/2022)

As the quote above reveals, it is above all professionals in the field of migrations who reach decisions about the protagonist's identity, and are encouraged to do so by the Joker since they are conceived as experts (as discussed in Section 5.5). Yet, the belief in social workers' higher competences in this field confer them decision-making power which shape the representation of migrations, in some cases perpetuating stereotypes and dominant narratives. First of all, participants decide to define the protagonist as a "black guy" rather than a "guy of colour", as it is deemed more correct. The name is chosen thinking about people from a migrant background known "for working reasons". However, the main discussion concerns his nationality. Unfortunately, this is based on several stereotypes, as ironically remarked by one of the facilitators, although she does not interrupt. Donatella (a volunteer) claims that he imagines the character as Malian, "I think about mine": this comment reveals a paternalistic attitude towards people from a migrant background, who are considered almost as a possession of volunteers or social workers, and it is highly problematic. Another participant, Matilde, jokes about "Nigerians'" presumed violence or incapability to control, whereas Leonardo makes fun of "Gambians'" supposed aggression, producing racist assumptions which connect nationality or ethnicity with gender. In sum, racist jokes and stereotypes govern the discussion, although in the IO3 handbook they are considered part of dominant narratives on migrations (e.g., MiGreat! no date(b), 12). In the end, it is decided that the protagonist is from Gambia, his name is Mamadou, and later it will be decided that he is twenty-three years old (MiGreat! no date(b), 21).⁵⁹ In the last meeting before the Forum-Theatre session, participants who will play the various characters take part in an activity that the Joker names "interview with the characters" (see Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008, 6-7). This consists of a series of questions that participants ask to an actor or

⁵⁹ Mamadou's age was suggested by Amedeo when he told the story, since he explained that the passenger was young ("*ragazzo*" in Italian).

actress who is seated at the centre of the room and answers the questions while playing his or her character. During the interview with Mamadou (played by Luca), various elements of his identity emerge.

Mamadou: “‘I’ve been living in Italy since I was 17, now I’m 23. I arrived by sea, also crossing Libya.” [...]

Donatella: “How is it to have black skin?”

Mamadou: “Here in Italy it’s a bit of a problem.”

Leonardo: “What do you think of Italians?”

Mamadou: “Some people fine, others bad, like in Africa. I was fine with the educators of the community.”⁶⁰ (Extract from fieldnotes, 26/01/2022)

In this part of the interview, the protagonist reveals that he arrived in Italy a few years ago, and he arrived through the Mediterranean Sea after having crossed Libya. This shows an important element: the protagonist is portrayed as a seeker of international protection, and is in line with various stories that are told during the activities of MiGreat! which I observed, where people from a migrant background are usually thought of as refugees or asylum seekers – this is probably due also to the context where the project develops and the associations that are involved (MiGreat! no date(b); Malkassian et al. 2021).⁶¹ Moreover, Mamadou underlines that skin colour plays a problematic role in Italy. Further, he reveals that he lived in a community before, suggesting that he did not live with his family in Italy. Further information is provided below.

Raffaella: “When you were in your country, did you go to school?”

Mamadou: “I went to school for a short time. [...] If things will go well in Italy, I would like to bring my family here, but in the meantime I have to find a job.”

Leonardo: “Don’t you think that you have to pay for the ticket on the train?”

⁶⁰ As mentioned in Section 5.3, Luca does not talk Italian perfectly during his performance, to make the audience understand that he plays the role of a non-native Italian speaker.

⁶¹ The focus on asylum seekers and recent migrations emerged also from other projects on Theatre of the Oppressed and migrations realised in Italy analysed in Chapter 4.

Mamadou: “Yes, but I have little money and I need it for other things too, you have to eat.”

Leonardo: “What’s the worst thing you have ever done in your life?”

Mamadou: “To leave my mother and sister in Gambia, but there were no alternatives.”

Amedeo (*smiles*): “Where did you buy your shoes?”

Mamadou: “Near the station, from some people who help.”

Samuele: “Do you have a dream?”

Mamadou: “I would like to play football, I’m good [at it].” (Extract from fieldnotes, 26/01/2022)

Mamadou’s level of education is imagined to be low. Moreover, he hints at the fact that his family is not in Italy yet, and he wishes to bring it into the country. Indeed, he later reveals that his mother and sister have remained in Gambia. At the moment, his priority is to find a job. Thus, also his working status is uncovered. Subsequently, he stresses to live in poor economic conditions, given that he has to spend his money on food and cannot afford to buy a train ticket. In fact, he bought his shoes from some people who help other people (probably referring to some volunteers). Then, a more positive accent is placed on the protagonist: he has the dream to play football. Hence, attention is given to people from a migrant backgrounds’ aspirations, which contribute to humanise them (this dream of playing football is present also in a story represented in the visual materials produced in Hungary – interview with Jasmine, Hungarian organisation; MiGreat! no date(a), 3). Finally, other elements of Mamadou’s identity are highlighted.

Amedeo: “Do you use drugs?”

Mamadou: “I smoke every now and then in the evening”.

Samuele: “But are you not Muslim?”

Mamadou: “You can smoke.”

Samuele: “But... weed?”

Mamadou: “What is available”.

Raffaella: “Oh, are you Muslim?”

Mamadou: “Yes, it’s Ramadan now.” (Extract from fieldnotes, 26/01/2022)

As the quote above shows, Mamadou is asked whether he uses drugs. Already this question may make one think that people from a migrant background are associated with the use of drugs and therefore to illegality and crime (which is also a dominant narrative that is deconstructed in the visual materials produced in Italy). The character answers stating that sometimes he “smokes”. The participant asks him whether he is Muslim, supposing that Muslim people cannot smoke. Mamadou answers by claiming that he can smoke, and he smokes “what is available”. Again, this reaffirms a stereotype about people from a migrant background (and probably specifically about *young, black, men* from a migrant background) as drug users (if not, in a worst connotation, drug dealers). However, these questions may be asked by participants to explore the character’s identity also in relation to dominant narratives on migrations, reflecting on how they could be deconstructed. Finally, the Joker highlights Mamadou’s religious background, which is however not mentioned either in the Forum-Theatre script or in the Forum-Theatre session. In sum, participants hint at other characteristics of the protagonist’s identity during the meetings, but these remain in the background both in the script and during the *mise-en-scène*. The most central categories of inequality which are shown to lead to his oppression are the fact of being a foreigner, his skin colour, and his socioeconomic status. His gender is never questioned; participants take for granted that the character is a man, that he is young and Muslim, similarly to the person met by Amedeo in the story that he told (also in the visual materials realised in Italy, characters from a migrant background are all male, apart from an Italian woman from Southern Italy). Thus, only a few dimensions of diversity are underlined in the theatrical representation. This is similar to what emerged from other stories that were told in Italy, analysed below.

7.1.2 Other Examples of Stories on People from a Migrant Background

During the meetings to construct the Forum-Theatre scene, several other stories were told by participants. Although it is not possible to include all of them here, it is relevant to analyse a story told by another participant that highlights another, possibly subtler, basis on which people from a migrant background are oppressed. The story is the following:

Ten years ago, in a school where [Giuliana] worked, there were some foreign children, she doesn't remember exactly from where, maybe Pakistanis. A complaint emerged because each child had a locker which they shared with other children in which to store their spare clothes. However, a complaint emerged from the parents of another girl, [who was] Italian, who shared her locker with that of these Pakistani children because they said that their clothes smelled of Pakistani cuisine, therefore very spicy, which was going to drench also their children's clothes. Therefore, the little girl's parents asked the teachers to change their daughter's locker in order not to be close to that of the Pakistani children, a request that the teachers did not welcome. Raffaella asks Giuliana to imagine what the problem was for these parents. She replies [...]: "Those [people] cook food with a different smell", "They don't wash clothes with Dash", "They cook where they sleep", "If they have to share a locker, why do they bring clothes that taste of food?". (Extract from fieldnotes, 11/01/2022)

During the first meeting in preparation of the Forum-Theatre scene, Giuliana (a nursery teacher who in that period started to be involved in the informal laboratory of Theatre of the Oppressed based in Trento) told a story dating back to ten years ago and taking place in a nursery where she worked. The oppression that she witnessed there was again based on children's skin colour and nationality. Nevertheless, the dynamic in this case is slightly different to that shown in the previous story. Here, in fact, parents complain about the habits of a family from Pakistan and the oppressed characters are children (together with their family). Moreover, oppression is based on the smell of the children's clothes. Interestingly,

the teachers decide to oppose this oppression and in fact do not accommodate Italian parents' request. Nonetheless, this story, which is similar to another episode recounted by the same participant and which occurred, again, in a nursery, highlights how people from a migrant background, but also people coming from different countries and ethnicities, are discriminated against on the basis of their habits, including food and hygiene, namely their embodied characteristics. For example, black people are often considered by Westerners as having a specific odour that the former might deem unpleasant (Bassetti 2021, 186-187). More generally, the assumption that people may have worse hygienic conditions than "us" is a form of racism, based on the idea that what is different from us is associated with dirt and danger, and it constitutes a source of disgust (Douglas 2003[1966]; Ahmed 2014). As Giuliana states by imagining what the child's parents may have thought (similarly to the activity named "thought bubbles" described in Erel et al. 2017, 308), the dominant narrative conveyed in this case calls into question people from a migrant background's food habits and hygienic conditions, and this will be included in the Forum-Theatre script, as analysed in Section 6.2. Yet, also in this case, the protagonists' ethnic and national backgrounds are presented as central, together with the children's age (although this is mainly related to the context where the story takes place). Other categories of difference are not mentioned.

These axes of inequality are central also in the video produced in Italy. The episodes shown in this video constitute alternative narratives on migrations, which was in fact the aim of the visual materials. In particular, a story that is shown, and which is based on participants' real experiences,⁶² is included in the next quotation.

⁶² All the stories represented in the visual materials come from participants' real experiences (interviews with Raffaella and Daria, Italian Cooperative). Nevertheless, the actors and actresses that appear in the video are in almost all cases different from those who participated in the meetings in preparation of the visual materials, as pointed out in Sub-section 5.1.1.

Is everything fine in the hotel?

Receptionist: Good morning!

Man (*entering from the main entrance*): Good morning!

Receptionist: Sir, do you have a reservation here?

Man: Reservation? I work here!

Receptionist (*using informal language – second person singular in Italian*): Ah well, then please... the entrance for the cleaners is at the back, ciao!

Man (*looking at the receptionist with a disappointed look, exits from the hotel*)

[After a while]

Man (*puts something in the wardrobe behind the reception desk*)

Receptionist (*gives back keys at the reception desk after having finished her shift*): I'm done. Here are the keys of the locker room and I have to deliver a letter to the manager.

Man (*turning towards the receptionist*): Yes, give it to me (*smiling*).

Receptionist (*looking at the manager with an embarrassed expression*)

Man (*looking at the receptionist with an ironic expression, gives her a small box with the word "Oops!" written on it*)

Receptionist (*looks at the small box, smiles, and looks at the manager in an embarrassed way*).⁶³

In the script above, the "Man", who is a person from a migrant background, is assumed to be either a guest or a cleaner at the hotel. Interestingly, the Italian receptionist addresses him in a very informal way when he states that he works at the hotel, thereby creating a hierarchy between white people (or natives) and people of colour (or people from a migrant background). Nevertheless, she then discovers that the man is in fact the manager of the hotel. This story deconstructs a stereotype according to which people from a migrant background occupy subordinated working positions. In fact, the manager gives the receptionist a little box with the word "Oops!", which is the title of the video produced in

⁶³ These lines constitute the English subtitles included in the original version of the video, which is in Italian. They have been slightly modified (mainly in terms of punctuation, as well as adding the characters' behaviours) to make them more understandable. The video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aU-oqPXW9zo> (accessed 18/11/2022).

Italy. The video, which has an ironic style, includes short stories such as this, which show moments of “misunderstanding” (interviews with Daria and Roberto Mazzini, Italian Cooperative; MiGreat! no date(a), 12) that cause embarrassment for Italian people but also make them realise how spread prejudices and power relations are, contributing to the oppression of people from a migrant background. The underlying comment of the entire video is in fact “Everything’s fine, but it takes a lot of patience!”. Yet, throughout the video, again, misunderstanding (or oppression) is shown to arise because of people’s supposed nationality as perceived by their skin colour or accent, whereas other categories of inequality are overlooked. After watching these visual materials before the Forum-Theatre session, participants from a migrant background claimed that they enjoyed them and that they represent something that occurs in reality. Some of them took this opportunity to tell similar stories that they experienced, as the one included in the following excerpt.

Adam tells Daria that the video reminded him of the difficulties that he had in looking for a house. Daria proposes to him to share this experience with the other people present. At the beginning he seems shy, but then instead tells us about it. He tells us that it happened to him to be looking for a house in Trentino and that once he took an appointment and showed up at the set place, the owner told him that the room was no longer available, exactly after seeing him in person and realising that he has foreign origins. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/02/2022)

As the excerpt above points out, Adam explains that he experienced similar oppressions to those shown in the video. With the encouragement by the facilitator, he tells that when he was searching for a house in Trentino, a landlord refused to rent it to him because of his foreign origins and the fact of being black. Italian participants in the room seem shocked and surprised. Later in the multiplier event he also improvises a short scene with a girl who also participates in the Forum-Theatre session to stage his search for a house. Discrimination when looking for a house is at the centre of the stories told also by three participants in the

meetings to prepare the Forum-Theatre scene in Trento. Moreover, it is presented as an issue also in the Forum-Theatre scene realised in Hungary (interview with Jasmine, Hungarian organisation; MiGreat! no date(b), 44), and in [European project aimed at contrasting islamophobia realised between 2019 and 2022], as examined in Section 4.6. Oppression in all these cases usually centres on the protagonist's ethnicity, nationality, or language skills. In sum, in Italy only certain categories of difference are highlighted, and these are usually nationality, ethnicity or skin colour, and to a lesser extent social class, which are presented as the central factors at the basis of oppression towards people from a migrant background. Hence, from an intersectional perspective, other categories remain hidden and simplify the problem of oppression towards people from a migrant background. Moreover, when these or other characteristics are mentioned (as the fact that the protagonist from a migrant background is black), they are usually taken for granted rather than discussed among participants, which contributes sometimes to the reproduction of racist stereotypes. Some similarities but also some differences were identified in the other three countries, discussed below.

7.1.3 The Portrayal of People from a Migrant Background in the Other Three Countries

In the other three countries, the way of representing people from a migrant background was similar, although not equivalent to the Italian case. For example, in France and the UK, language skills were highlighted, together with characters' supposed origins, and oppression towards people from a migrant background was often caused by their (supposed) scarce language skills (MiGreat! no date(b), 30-43). For instance, this was shown in the field of health-care in the UK, similarly to the study by Erel et al. (2017). Nonetheless, language

skills were often associated with a foreign origin, a different ethnicity and belonging to lower social classes, therefore the intersection between these four categories was shown (MiGreat! no date(b), 32). In France, where two Forum-Theatre scripts were realised, the oppressed protagonists from a migrant background have recently arrived in the country (one is an asylum seeker), a man from Bangladesh and a woman from the Ivory Coast and her children. Discrimination takes place in a bakery and in a prefecture (MiGreat! no date(b), 30-38). In the UK, two Forum-Theatre scripts were realised, but only one was performed. Here, the protagonists are a woman from Eastern Europe and her child, and a migrant whose nationality and gender are not specified. The scenes develop at the A&E (Accident and Emergency department at hospital) and at a pharmacy (MiGreat! no date(b), 39-43). Both in France and in the UK, these stories emerged from discussions among participants during activities in preparation of the Forum-Theatre scenes (interview with Fernanda, French organisation; interview with Patricia and William, British organisation). In Hungary the Forum-Theatre script was more complex and included numerous scenes (this may be due to the fact that the Hungarian organisation is composed of theatre practitioners). The protagonist is a family from Iran, the characters are all females, and various levels of oppression are present: although protagonists from a migrant background are oppressed when searching for a house, elements regarding gender oppression are present (see Section 6.3). In comparison with the other three organisations, the story represented in the Forum-Theatre in Hungary included some other categories of difference (e.g., gender, religion, age). Yet, the protagonists' foreign origin was presented as the main source of oppression (MiGreat! no date(b), 44-53). Hence, considering the perspective of representational intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991), people from a migrant background were represented in a reductive way, with a main focus on their nationality or skin colour. Nevertheless, the Forum-Theatres provided interesting representations also of characters who were not from a

migrant background, and this applied particularly to the Italian case, where all characters apart from the protagonist are not from a migrant background. These aspects are examined in the following section.

7.2 The Portrayal of People Not From a Migrant Background in the Forum-Theatre Scene in Italy

In the Forum-Theatre scene realised in Trento, Italian characters were represented including several lines of social distinction. Characters were imagined on the basis of both the story told by Amedeo, and stories and comments by the other participants. A common trait of characters is that they also experience some form of oppression. Indeed, a peculiarity of this Forum-Theatre scene is that it includes “multiple layers of power relations”, as stated by the Joker. As explained in the script, they “are oppressed by their life situations, by scenes of verbal or physical violence they do not want to see, by the rampant injustice or by the impossibility of finding spaces of reconciliation”, and dominant narratives on migrations contribute to this (MiGreat! no date(b), 19).

Vincenzo is a university professor who remains “shocked” when he sees the ticket inspector throwing the protagonist’s shoe out of the train. This character would like to help end social injustice and build a more equal world (MiGreat! no date(b), 21). In fact, he proposes to pay the ticket for the person from a migrant background, but everyone attacks him, as Amedeo tells in his story. He is played by two participants (Amedeo or Samuele) exchanging the role during rehearsals (in the Forum-Theatre session Samuele, the younger one, will not be able to participate). During the “interview with the characters” in the last meeting before the Forum-Theatre session, Vincenzo (Samuele) argues:

“I would like to develop critical thinking in young people. Teaching anthropology, I recognise the importance of suspending judgement.” (Extract from fieldnotes, 26/01/2022)

As the quote above shows, Vincenzo would like to transmit the importance of critical thinking to his students. As a spect-actor remarks during the Forum-Theatre session, he is oppressed because he lives in a society where “the act of solidarity” is not allowed.

A similar character to Vincenzo is Anna, who was added by participants on the basis of various comments. For example, Giuliana told that she witnessed a similar situation to that recalled by Amedeo, where she added 2 euros that a person from a migrant background did not have to pay for his train ticket. She explained that she did this in order to avoid a situation of “tension” that may have emerged if she did not help this passenger. Moreover, Donatella, another participant, commented on the importance of creating dialogue when people make racist comments, rather than simply deny what they claim. In other words, dialogue and a “balance of power” were considered more efficient and humanistic strategies (Malkassian et al. 2021, 27). Anna, in fact, is described in the following way:

She wants softness and serenity to be in everything, she wants justice and honesty. She is afraid of conflict and violence. She does not want to get involved in situations where someone is suffering. She wants to pay for Mamadou’s ticket not so much out of generosity as to prevent the situation from becoming dangerous and the tension from rising. (MiGreat! no date(b), 21)

Anna tries to solve the situation because of fear of violence and in order to avoid rising tension. During the Forum-Theatre session she explains that she feels anxious in a situation of injustice. In sum, Vincenzo and Anna try to act in solidarity, fight for a more equal society, and foster dialogue and comprehension, thereby proposing an alternative narrative (MiGreat! no date(b), 20). This representation contributes to portray these two characters as “good

citizens”: indeed, they try to overcome oppression and change society (cf. also Boal cited in Mazzini 2011, 7; Boal 2011b, 14; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; Boal cited in Santos 2018, 143). In this way, they are presented as “good Italians” who help end dominant narratives on migrations, show a humanising approach and act in solidarity with the oppressed.

The other characters act as oppressors. The female ticket inspector who throws the shoe out of the train, Alessandra, is oppressed by her working conditions, as she explains during the “interview with the characters”:

Raffaella: “Was it your dream to do this job?”

Alexandra: “No.” [...]

Raffaella: “Are you happy with your salary?”

Alexandra: “No.” (Extract from fieldnotes, 26/01/2022)

As Alessandra explains, she is dissatisfied with her job as well as with her pay. Regarding foreign people, she reveals different ways of treating them:

Leonardo: “What was the most beautiful journey you’ve ever done?”

Alessandra: “A journey to South America.”

Leonardo: “Don’t you think about that journey when you see some foreigners?”

Alessandra: “No, what I don’t tolerate is disrespect of the rules, the arrogance of disrespect of the rules.”

Raffaella: “Who are the foreigners for you?”

Alessandra: “My friends that I met abroad.” (Extract from fieldnotes, 26/01/2022)

Alessandra claims that her friends who are living abroad are foreigners, assuming that she considers people from different countries who are not her friends in a much more discriminatory way – probably she does not consider them at all. This “hierarchy of cultures” (Malkassian et al. 2021, 16) is similar to the hierarchy between white people from a migrant

background and people of colour from a migrant background previously mentioned (cf. also Castro and Carnassale 2019, 205; Carmel and Paul cited in Amelina and Lutz 2019, 51). She specifies however that she does not tolerate people who do not follow the rules, who appear as “arrogant”, as to justify her racist behaviour. In this way, she states how tied she is to rules and order, which allows her to exercise power over the oppressed protagonist. Indeed, when she gives Mamadou 50 euros after having realised the gravity of her action, Mamadou is kneeling on the floor while she looks at him from the top, which is a way to represent a power relation between the two (MiGreat! no date(b), 22).

Her colleague, the male ticket inspector, is portrayed as a 55-year old “family man” who does not love his wife and has a “stereotyped opinion on foreigners”, as Amedeo notices (extract from fieldnotes, 26/01/2022). Interestingly, the male ticket inspector does not have a name. Participants in fact prefer to name it “the colleague”. Although this choice is not openly debated during the meetings, the Joker and Daria explain this fact by arguing that anonymity is in line with this character’s personality: he does not take a clear stance with respect to oppression and conflict, and he does not deepen what he observes (interview with Raffaella and Daria, Italian Cooperative). Therefore, his anonymity confers him a negative connotation. As the Joker claims, he represents one of the targets of the Forum-Theatre (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative), namely the so-called “moveable middle” discussed in Sub-section 5.1.1.

Another character who is added by participants is Ivan. This choice is proposed by Donatella:

Donatella proposes to show “human degradation” by including a character who does the video-maker, that is, who films what happens to the black passenger to then post the video on social media. Raffaella jokes proposing “Human degradation” as the title of the Forum-Theatre. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/01/2022)

Although through an ironic tone, Donatella proposes to include a character who films what happens on the train and later posts it on social media. Social media are in fact discussed several times throughout activities (not only as part of the Forum-Theatre scene) as a tool which is widely used to spread dominant narratives on migrations (see also MiGreat! no date(b), 19-20 and 22-23). In general, the literature has in fact shown how mass media contribute to spreading othering and negative discourses on people from a migrant background (cf. also O'Neill et al. 2019, 134; Musarò and Parmiggiani cited in Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 5; Erel and Reynolds 2014, 107). Ivan is a 35 year-old man living in Trentino with his mother and having no job. He is defined as “[d]isillusioned and cynical” as well as “angry” (MiGreat! 2020b, 21). During the discussion on the train, he often complains (both during the Forum-Theatre session and during rehearsals) about the way of managing these situations in Italy, claiming that the country has become “a toy country” (“*paese dei balocchi*” in Italian, translated as “Italy sucks” in the script – MiGreat! no date(b), 24), a popular expression often used to criticise Italy by Italians themselves. During the “interview with the characters”, he reveals his priorities and beliefs:

Ivan: “[...] ...I’m chatting with a girl who lives in the United States. [...] [N]o, she’s not foreign, she’s American.” [...]

Ivan: “[...] Meloni is a reference point for me.”

Amedeo: “Have you ever fought with someone?”

Ivan: “Yes, at school, sometimes, but I usually lost.”

Raffaella: “Oh really? This surprises me a bit, because seeing you, seeing the body you have, you give me the idea of a person who knows how to take out some arrogance. Have you ever attacked someone or have you ever been attacked?”

Ivan: “We have all been attacked.”

Renato: “What is the thing you would like to break the most?”

Ivan (*answers abruptly and confidently, which leaves me a bit shocked*): “My mother”.

“What car do you have?”

Ivan: “A Lancia, but it’s a bit modified.”

Amedeo: “How many points do you have on your driving licence?”

Ivan: “I have to ask.” (Extract from fieldnotes, 26/01/2022)

Ivan re-confirms a hierarchy among nationalities, claiming that being from the US does not mean to be a “foreigner” (probably because the US is part of the Western world). His reference point is Giorgia Meloni (leader of the far-right party *Fratelli d’Italia* and current Head of the Italian Government), hinting at his political orientation (far-right and against immigration). His violent character emerges, referring to episodes of violence at school and to the wish to “break” his mother. Yet, he also plays the role of a frustrated person and a victim, claiming that “we have all been attacked”. He also refers to his criminal behaviour hinting at his car and his driving licence. In brief, Ivan is oppressed in some way, for example by the fact of being unemployed. The Joker pointed out that he was perceived as the most oppressive character by the audience. As Raffaella explained, this character “brings the negative narrative, which is a superficial, vulgar narrative, he stays a lot on social media” (extract from fieldnotes, 28/02/2022).

Another character that was added by participants is Carla. The idea to include her came from a proposal to include a person who seems indifferent to what Mamadou is experiencing, prefers not to take a stance, and represents “people who do not want to see or listen”, for example pretending that they are sleeping or keeping their earphones on. Carla is defined primarily by her social class: she belongs to the upper class and is a classist and aporophobic person, as described below.

She wants to be successful and maintain a high standard of living. She earns a lot and works a lot. [...] She wants all the poor to disappear from the face of the earth,

and for herself she wants to stay in a clean and beautiful environment (MiGreat!
no date(b), 21)

Carla cares only about her job and her earnings, but shows no empathy towards Mamadou and no interest in the oppression that is taking place in the train. Moreover, she does not tolerate people from lower classes. Her classism is shown by her accent and her preference for high-speed trains ("*Freccie*"). In fact, as the Joker explains during the Forum-Theatre, she cannot stand this situation because she feels as if she were in a "cattle wagon". Moreover, during the journey Carla screams: "I HAVE NO IDEA WHICH CLASS I ENDED UP IN!" "I'M GOING TO ASK FOR A REFUND" "YOU HAVE NO IDEA OF THE SMELL HERE" (MiGreat! no date(b), 24 – capital letters in original). In this way, she is portrayed as an intolerant, classist person. The emphasis that she puts on smells and the fact that people from lower classes and from a migrant background have an unpleasant smell emerges several times also during rehearsals, and in fact this character is introduced also to include a theme that emerged in the story told by Giuliana (see Sub-section 7.1.2). As argued above, this is another way in which systems of power (racism and classism) manifest (cf. also Douglas 2003[1966]; Ahmed 2014; Bassetti 2021, 186-187): in this case, the emphasis on people's embodied features (smell and hygiene) is not only associated with their migrant background, but also with their social class. Moreover, she also re-establishes a hierarchy among nationalities: although she works in Austria, people from a migrant background arriving in Italy are considered inferior. The dynamics between these characters emerge several times during the Forum-Theatre scene, for example in the dialogue included below.

ANNA: What's going on? (asking everyone but no-one in particular). Doesn't the boy have a ticket? (everyone nods with their own intention) From here to Verona... can I pay for his ticket, madam? This would solve the situation and no one gets upset?

ALESSANDRA: Listen, don't you start creating problems too! Please, madam!

We have enough problems already, don't you think?

ANNA: (insisting) But...

IVAN: Sure, why not, let's pay for his ticket too! And how about coffee?

Shouldn't we also buy him a coffee?

CARLA: Besides, this won't solve anything, the train is running late already, and now we've wasted another 5 minutes because the train won't start until this guy gets off. Does this seem normal to you?! (to Anna who is petrified and stops in her tracks). (MiGreat! no date(b), 26 – capital letters in original)

While on the train, Anna notices that Mamadou is arguing with Alessandra, the ticket inspector, and asks what is happening. She proposes to pay for Mamadou's ticket in order to avoid the situation worsening and tension between passengers and the ticket inspector rising. Alessandra answers in an angry and frustrated tone, showing that she also feels oppressed ("[w]e have enough problems already"). Anna is not able to reply since Ivan answers aggressively and sarcastically. Therefore, Anna is portrayed as a good, rational person who shows solidarity towards the passenger from a migrant background and tries to solve the situation. Alessandra appears as an oppressor but also as a frustrated woman who is also oppressed. Ivan, instead, is depicted as an oppressor who brings with him the dominant narrative on migrations and is oppressed by it. Carla shows her indifference and distance to what is occurring: her only priority is to arrive on time for the "call" she has in Verona and to exit from that train. As such, Alessandra, Ivan, and Carla represent the "bad" citizens who contribute to the oppression of people from a migrant background and perpetuate inequality of treatment. Rather than changing society, they reproduce a power system that oppresses people from a migrant background. Finally, although not a character appearing on stage, the police (that are mentioned in the story told by Amedeo) are introduced only towards the end of the scene, and represent a securitarian approach to migrations: the ticket inspectors prefer to call the police when they are facing difficulties such as the one represented, rather than

searching for dialogue and peaceful solutions (MiGreat! no date(b), 19 and 28). As such, an approach to migrations based on surveillance, control and punishment is criticised (cf. also Rozakou 2012, 568-569; De Genova cited in Carastathis et al. 2018, 5; Ahmed cited in Carastathis et al. 2018, 5; Carastathis et al. 2018, 5).

As it can be noted, the Forum-Theatre scene realised in Italy was complex: it included characters with numerous different characteristics, and Italian characters were analysed more deeply than the protagonist from a migrant background. Several dimensions of inequality were considered and these played a role in the interactions between characters and contributed to the oppression towards Mamadou. As part of this complexity, the portrayal of Italian characters conveys a new approach to citizenship: given that Boal himself claimed that citizens are those who try to change society (Boal cited in Mazzini in Boal 2011a, 7; Boal 2011b, 14; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; Boal cited in Santos 2018, 143), Italian characters are divided into two groups: good citizens, Anna and Vincenzo, try to solve a situation through dialogue, non-violence, solidarity and show a desire to fight against social injustice. The other characters represent the “bad” citizens who perpetuate various systems of power (above all classism and racism) and by doing so contribute to the oppression experienced by people from a migrant background. Yet, they are also portrayed as oppressed. This issue is discussed during the Forum-Theatre session, as the next excerpt points out.

Raffaella then asks another question to the audience: “In your opinion, who is the oppressed person [in this scene]?” Iacopo replies by saying that according to him there are several oppressed people, for example Ivan, “who is oppressed by a culture dictated by the media, by the fact that he is a commuter who sees this type of scenes every day; but also Anna is oppressed, who is in the throes of anxiety”. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/02/2022)

Spectators recognise that various characters are oppressed: Ivan, for example, is oppressed by the media and the narratives that they convey, but also by the fact that he may often witness similar situations. Anna is anxious and cannot tolerate oppression. As previously explained, Vincenzo is perceived as oppressed by a society that does not foresee solidarity towards oppressed people, and Alessandra is also seen as oppressed. Nevertheless, several spectators recognise that the most oppressed character is Mamadou, as it is highlighted in the script (MiGreat! no date(b), 19). An Italian spectator appreciated this complexity of the scene and argued that it helped the audience understand that oppression is complex. Indeed, oppression should not be considered as a dichotomy between oppressors and oppressed, but rather as involving multiple levels of inequality and complex relations (cf. also Erel et al. 2017, 307-308; Collins 2000, 288-289; cf. also Lutz and Wenning cited in Bello 2011, 351). Another Italian spectator, instead, told me that characters were too numerous, and that the scene was “too complex”. According to the Joker, this complexity was in line with the idea that we are all immersed in the dominant narrative on migrations (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative), which is something that the Forum-Theatre scene aimed to convey (MiGreat! no date(b), 18). Overall, the portrayal of the protagonist from a migrant background was more reductive than that of Italian characters, whose categories of identity were much more deepened. In fact, intersectionality is helpful to analyse oppression of any social group, namely also that of people not from a migrant background (Bello 2011, 350). At the same time, however, this moved the focus on native Italians, providing a critical perspective on how Italians (should) behave with respect to oppression towards people from a migrant background. Thus, the central actors seemed to be Italian themselves, whereas people from a migrant background were considered mainly as the theme of the scene and possible spectators. Italian characters are portrayed in a specific way also in terms of their gender identity and the relationships between each other because of their gender. In contrast,

the gender of people from a migrant background is usually not considered, as if they did not have a gender identity. Further, gender appears in some of the stories that are told during activities. These issues are examined in the next section.

7.3 The Marginalisation of Other Axes of Oppression: The Case of Gender

Gender issues emerged during the second meeting to prepare the Forum-Theatre scene, when a participant told a story about gender-based violence, included in the following excerpt.

Subsequently Giuliana tells us another story which she tells us was told to her by a girl she knows, when this was little more than a teenager. The story concerns a very heated quarrel between a couple from Eastern Europe where they were about to come to blows. The girl who told the story to Giuliana positioned herself between the man and the woman and the woman called the police. When the police arrived, the man ran away. The thing that the girl noticed is that when the policeman (or the *carabiniere* – Giuliana did not know exactly who had arrived since she was not present) arrived, he did not ask the woman how she was, but he immediately moved on asking for her personal information, thus who she was, what her name was, where she came from, in a very cold way and without worrying about how she was, “without asking her ‘Is everything fine? What happened? Did he hurt you?’” This attitude of the policeman was “traumatic” for the girl who witnessed the scene and who told the story to Giuliana, because she would have expected a different behaviour. (Extract from fieldnotes, 14/01/2022)

The story told by Giuliana includes several relevant aspects. The couple from a migrant background who is at the centre of the story is from Eastern Europe, and therefore has a different background from that of other people from a migrant background at the centre of other stories that were told. Moreover, oppression occurs at two levels: on one hand, the man and the woman are arguing. By specifying that the woman calls the police while the man runs away, Giuliana suggests that it was a case of gender-based violence against the woman. On the other hand, the police oppress the woman from a migrant background and do not

show empathy towards her. Rather, they ask for her identity, and this shocks the girl witnessing the episode. The police, indeed, appeared in at least three stories told by participants (included the one told by Amedeo and staged), and it was portrayed as oppressive towards people from a migrant background. Giuliana argued that the dominant narrative on people from a migrant background in this case may have included an intersection between gender and nationality, as explained in the next quote.

Raffaella therefore asks Giuliana: “What could have been present in the policeman’s head?”. Giuliana answers her by saying that the policeman could have thought things like: “Goodness! Another story!”, “But look at how these men from the East treat their women!”, “But what did you do to the man to make him react like this?”, because then” – adds Giuliana – “there is also the gender issue”. Giuliana therefore tells us that this story came back to her mind thinking about the theme of the police and the role that the police have. (Extract from fieldnotes, 14/01/2022)

According to Giuliana, the policeman may have felt tired of “another story” concerning people from a migrant background (alluding to the fact that the police may deal with several crimes including people from a migrant background and be exhausted by this). Yet, he may also have thought that “men from the East” treat “their” women badly, to imply that gender-based violence is considered almost a “cultural” issue which is typical of Eastern Europe. At the same time, the policeman may have dumped responsibility for the violence on the woman, implying that she provoked him causing his violent behaviour. As Giuliana rightly notices, “the gender issue” is included in this story, although she thought about it in relation to the police. In sum, the couple from a migrant background is oppressed both in relation to their gender-based relationships and to their national background. Gender-based violence is mentioned also in the IO3 handbook, where the list of examples of dominant narratives includes narratives on men from a migrant background being violent and harassing

especially European women (MiGreat! 2020(b), 11-12). This form of racism includes a complex interplay between gender, ethnicity and migrant background: on one side, societies other than the Western are seen as less egalitarian in terms of gender; on the other side, men of colour from a migrant background are seen as violent and therefore dangerous for Western, white women (cf. also Giuliani 2016; Crenshaw 1991, 1271 and 1287). This dynamic is similar to that occurring in Europe in the mid-eighteenth century, when society was composed of proletarians and the bourgeoisie, and the former were seen as violent. Therefore, racism intersects with assumptions concerning gender and sexuality of people from a migrant background (Giuliani 2016; Crenshaw 1991; Davis 2018[1981]). The interplay of sexism and racism is present also in a story told by a spectator in the Forum-Theatre session during the multiplier event that was held before the Forum-Theatre session in which the video produced in Italy was shown. The story is the following:

This Italian language teacher thus tells an episode that happened to her, I don't understand exactly when, anyway in Trento. "I was walking with him [pointing to a guy who is present in the room, of African origins] when a car with a couple inside stops, like they stopped exactly on purpose uh, they roll down the window and shout at me – it's heavy uh, now here there is a girl so I don't really say the exact words – 'Look at this bitc... who goes with the blacks because they have it looon...' [she does not entirely pronounce the words due to a young girl's presence] right? Did you understand? Like I didn't know what to say, I started crying! He [points to the guy who was with her] pretended not to understand, they told him something but he pretended not to know Italian, I really burst out crying, I was speechless!" (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/02/2022)

A female Italian language teacher (who arrived at the multiplier event with two young men with African origins) explains an episode that occurred to her that highlighted a case of sexual racism: the man that she was walking with (one of the two who arrived with her to the multiplier event) and her were verbally harassed addressing her with a sexist insult and

offending him with a comment that denotes sexual racism. Indeed, scholars have stressed how people from certain ethnic backgrounds are often sexualised (Davis 2018[1981]; Crenshaw 1991, 1271 and 1287), leading to narratives about their supposed dangerousness (particularly of men towards women) or exoticism (Giuliani 2016; Cervulle and Rees-Roberts, Klesse and Lelleri cited in Castro and Carnassale 2019, 217). As such, the interplay between the man's ethnicity and sexuality was at the basis of the oppression against him and the teacher. While the teacher told this story, the man remained silent.

Gender-based violence or sexual racism are not included as a theme in the Forum-Theatre scene. Yet, various details on characters' gender identity are discussed during the meetings:

A discussion then begins between some participants on the age of the female ticket inspector who throws the passenger's shoe. [...] Samuele imagines her to be young, inexperienced and without the tools to intervene. He also introduces a gender issue: "I mean, I [the female ticket inspector] ask for help from my older male colleague precisely because I have no tools, I give 50 euros to the passenger because I don't know what to do for an unforgivable act" [...]. Consuelo, instead, imagines her to be 45, a woman who has experience but can't stand it anymore. Donatella, instead, imagines her not to be more than 40 years old, maybe 30-35 years old. She says that "women over 40 years of age are extremely mature and know what they're doing", but she says it as if it was a way of joking about herself (I deduce that she's over 40 years old), in fact we laugh. Ludovica, Emma and Consuelo share the idea of the frustration of a woman with experience, therefore not very young. Two different characters thus derive from this discussion, Raffaella leaves the question pending and says that we will have to decide. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/01/2022)

During the meeting in which the characters' identities are discussed, participants share ideas on the ticket inspector's age (Alessandra). Samuele imagines that she is young and commits the extreme act of throwing Mamadou's shoe out of the train because she does not have the

experience or the skills necessary to handle this situation. Samuele argues that in the end she may ask her male colleague for help precisely because, as he is a man, she feels reassured by him. Consuelo, imagines that she is around forty-five years old because she is tired and frustrated of her job precisely because she has a longer working experience. Donatella, however, disagrees with this view, because she argues that a forty-five-year-old woman is mature enough not to commit such an extreme act. Although ironically, she connects youth with scarce experience and limited awareness of one's actions. In sum, some participants think that the character should be younger and unexpert, while others think that she should be older but frustrated with her job. This discussion reveals how participants interpret the intersection between gender and age: younger women are seen as weak, scarcely prepared, and in need of men's help to deal with a situation of conflict, according to a masculinist perspective (cf. also Young 2003). Older women, instead, are considered mature, self-aware, but frustrated and dissatisfied, and therefore incapable to control their frustration and anger, which again perpetuate stereotypes. Alessandra's frustration emerges from the "interview with the characters" when she talks about her relationships with her male colleagues (in this activity, Alessandra is played by Donatella, although during the Forum-Theatre session she is played by Emma, a younger participant in her thirties), as the quote below reveals.

Renato: "How is your relationship with your colleagues?"

Alessandra: "There is a lot of competition with female colleagues, while there is disparity with male colleagues, because the man in uniform has power even in front of a woman in uniform. I feel forced to change when I put on my uniform."

(Extract from fieldnotes, 26/01/2022)

As Alessandra explains, her relationship is troubled both with female colleagues and male colleagues. If with female colleagues she feels in competition, with male colleagues inequality persists. Power relations between genders are said to exist and this forces

Alessandra to change attitude when she is working. This comment underlines the way in which gender is said to impact on relations between characters, as well as how it constitutes an element of oppression: Alessandra is portrayed as oppressed by her male colleague but also by a sexist society. Indeed, it is defined as a person who “is afraid of not being good enough” and who “wants to stand up to men” (MiGreat! no date(b), 21). Carla is also portrayed as a woman who had to fight against men’s oppression:

Donatella: “What woman are you?”

Carla (Fiorella): “A woman who knows what she wants. I’m independent, I’ve been my own master in a man’s world.” (Extract from fieldnotes, 26/01/2022)

As Carla explains (during the “interview with the characters” in the last meeting she was played by Fiorella, but in the Forum-Theatre session she was played by Matilde), she is a self-confident, independent woman who achieved success in a “men’s world”. Therefore, gender is included in the scene as another level of oppression. Gender-based power relations are highlighted also by the words of the male ticket inspector:

Amedeo: “Do you prefer to work with women or men?”

Giorgio: “But it’s not a matter of sex, it depends on how strict they are with their job. Maybe women tend to be less strict”.

Raffaella: “Is it maybe the maternal instinct?”

Giorgio: “Yes, also.” (Extract from fieldnotes, 26/01/2022)

The male ticket inspector (who only during this activity is named Giorgio, but in the final script remains anonymous, as previously explained) has a masculinist and sexist view on women, which tend to see them as naturally tending towards care and a maternal attitude (cf. also Connell 2011, 35; Catrin 2012, 5 and 7-8; Wikström 2008, 71), which render them less “rigorous” in their job. Indeed, the colleague is “sexist”, as the Joker explains (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative), as well as racist (MiGreat! no date(b), 21), and his

power derives also from the uniform that he wears, as Samuele notices, and it contributes to reinforce his hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005[1995]; Sinatti 2014; Rinaldi 2021).

Another character showing a sexist behaviour is Ivan, as he remarks in the scene:

Ivan: [...] “Finally someone with balls” (when the male ticket inspector arrives): according to Ivan, in fact, a female ticket inspector is not able to keep abreast of the situation, while men are better able to handle similar situations. (Extract from fieldnotes, 20/01/2022)

When Ivan sees the male ticket inspector, he looks relieved, since “finally” a person with authority and the capacity to handle the situation has appeared. Clearly, his comment is sexist, and uncovers a patriarchal and sexist assumption according to which men are more powerful and competent in acting to solve conflict. Although this comment is not included in the script (MiGreat! no date(b), 23-28), the actor repeats it another time during the rehearsals, as he does when Renato plays the role of Alessandra during the Forum-Theatre session under request of a spectator and throws Mamadou’s shoe out of the train. Moreover, similarly to the male ticket inspector who feels safe when wearing his uniform, Ivan claims to have done the military service and having learnt important “values” there, especially “respect” (extract from fieldnotes, 26/01/2022). Ivan’s sexist behaviour is noticed by the audience during the Forum-Theatre session, in particular by two Italian women, who recognise that a gendered dimension of oppression is present among Italian characters. Moreover, a single comment is made during the “interview with the characters” on Ivan’s homophobia, revealed below.

Amedeo: “Do you have a girlfriend or boyfriend?”

Ivan: “But who do you take me for? What does it mean if I have a boyfriend?!”

(Extract from fieldnotes, 26/01/2022)

When answering Amedeo's question at the beginning of the "interview with the characters" with Ivan, the latter gets upset and utilises a defensive tone, highlighting his heteronormative idea on affective relationships. This homophobic attitude allows him to reaffirm his hegemonic masculinity as well as his heterosexuality (Rinaldi 2021, 195; Connell 2005[1995]; Sinatti 2014). Moreover, during the Forum-Theatre session Ivan often utilises curse words, insults, and vulgar expressions which serve him to reaffirm his domination over women and people from a migrant background (Rinaldi 2021). Similarly to the male ticket inspector, Ivan is both sexist and racist, and through these two characters the Forum-Theatre aims to question both systems of power. In other words, the theme of gender is present in the Forum-Theatre scene, as the Joker rightly notices (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative) also during the Forum-Theatre session. Notwithstanding this, it is present as part of the interactions between Italian characters and the oppression to which they are subjected. Italian society is therefore presented as unequal and oppressive also from a gender perspective and not simply towards people from a migrant background. Both racism and patriarchy are criticised. Yet, the two issues are treated separately and not considering the intersection that having a migrant background may have with gender. People from a migrant background are treated as a homogenous group, even though practitioners underline the diversity of migration experiences. Intersections are considered primarily between migrant background, ethnicity, skin colour and social class for the protagonist from a migrant background, and in terms of working conditions, social class, age and gender for the Italian characters. Hence, a certain level of complexity is considered concerning both people from a migrant background and native citizens, although not all these aspects are deepened and numerous other axes of inequality remain in the background.

In Hungary gender oppression was at the basis of one of the protagonist's decision to emigrate. Azura, in fact, is a forty-eight-year-old Iranian mother who flees from her home country due to oppression by her husband (MiGreat! no date(b), 13 and 45-52; interview with Veronika, Hungarian organisation). Indeed, participants decided to show gender oppression in Iran and included this element in the story represented in the performance – considering also that one of the actresses has both Hungarian and Iranian origins (interview with Jasmine, Hungarian organisation). Yet, the main theme of the Forum-Theatre is oppression due to the protagonist's migrant background and her difficulties in finding a house (MiGreat! no date(b), 45-52). Also in France and the UK gender issues are not tackled in the scripts. In summary, the importance of gender and sexuality seems to be acknowledged in Italy and Hungary, but it remains a quite marginal issue and is not brought to the centre of representation in relation to migrations. The factors accounting for specific representations are various, and they are analysed in the next section.

7.4 How a Story Emerges and Is Staged

The choices to represent specific stories, dimensions of oppression, and elements of people's lives (both concerning people from a migrant background and people without a migratory background) were due to several factors. In fact, the stories represented in Theatre of the Oppressed and participatory approaches were chosen following several rules. Before the beginning of rehearsals, the Joker asked future participants to think about a story with certain characteristics:

Theatre is made of stories, of events, of things that happen and above all of personal involvement, so what I asked was... each of them, to focus and be able, in the conditions, to tell a story that had-that included these... this dominant narrative (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

The Joker asked participants to think about a story based on their “personal involvement” but which also included a dominant narrative on migrations. This is why the style of the Forum-Theatre script realised in Trento is defined as “realistic” (MiGreat! no date(b), 19). Theatre of the Oppressed should in fact be based on experiences that participants have had in their real life (cf. also Malkassian et al. 2021, 49 and 61; Tolomelli 2012, 41; Schroeter 2013, 401; Santos 2018, 214), and therefore it should represent personal stories (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative). This criterion of personal experience was followed also in France and the UK (interviews with Fernanda, French organisation, and Patricia, British organisation). In Hungary, it was partly followed, meaning that stories came both from what the actresses experienced and from stories that several people from a migrant background told them (MiGreat! no date(b), 45; interview with Jasmine, Hungarian organisation). Moreover, personal stories were also at the basis of the contents included in the visual materials in all the four countries (interviews with all the seven MiGreat! practitioners). In Theatre of the Oppressed, a story is chosen according to specific criteria, which were adopted for the Forum-Theatre realised in Trento, as explained below.

Participants position themselves standing on the long side of the room, with their eyes closed. Raffaella tells them to stay in a comfortable, neutral position, with not too tense legs, shoulders down. [...] She tells participants to close their eyes and go back to their story, to revise it in their minds. In the meantime, she asks some questions, and people for whom the answer to these questions is “yes” have to take a step forward [...]:

- 1) Is the story real? [...]
- 2) Do you know the characters? Do the characters have their own depth? [...]
- 3) Is it a Forum-Theatre story, that is, one that has a beginning, a peak (where something problematic happens) and a negative conclusion, where the situation is not solved [...]?
- 4) Does the story include a clear question? Several people say that they do not understand this question, therefore Raffaella tries to rephrase it by explaining that

it is about understanding if the stories include a question to ask ourselves to change reality. She says that she prefers not to give examples in order not to influence participants, but the questions can be “Who?”, “How?”, “Why?”. [...]

5) Are both a micro dimension (what happens) and a macro dimension (the broader context) represented in the story? Are you able to put the micro one into the macro one? Raffaella specifies that in some stories there may also be only the micro dimension and not the macro one.

6) Can the story be represented theatrically? How could the story be staged?

(Extract from fieldnotes, 11/01/2022)

Through the activity described above, participants are encouraged to reflect on the story that they have thought about and would like to share with the group during the first meeting in preparation of the Forum-Theatre scene. Six criteria should be considered (explained also in Malkassian et al. 2021, 61): the story should be real, it should have a clear structure (beginning, oppressive situation, negative conclusion), it should include a clear question, characters should have a certain level of “depth”, both a “micro” and a “macro” situations should be present (for example, an oppression happening in a very specific context can be related to broader social and political issues). Moreover, the story should be suitable for a *mise-en-scène* (in Italian she asks: “La storia è *teatrabile*?” – my emphasis). These criteria are important since they facilitate theatrical representation and are based on the principles of Theatre of the Oppressed, including its focus on social and political issues, and its attention to oppressions, and therefore to negative situations which then should be solved through the strategies proposed by spect-actors (as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2). During the Forum-Theatre session, the Joker explained to the audience that the scenes shown in a Forum-Theatre are “examples of reality, they are not the entire reality”. In this way, she referred to the fact that the scene represented in Trento shows various aspects of oppression and power relations, but is not exhaustive of all possible dynamics and axes of inequality that may contribute to the episode shown on stage. Spectators recognised the “reality” of the scene

shown, as previously analysed. Moreover, two spect-actors from a migrant background recognised how helpful Forum-Theatre can be in making people reflect on migrations and racism.

The story told by Amedeo was selected considering these different criteria, but the process of selection included active participation by participants – which is also part of the method of Theatre of the Oppressed (Santos 2018, 214) – similarly to the study by Opfermann (2020, 148-149). In fact, this story is the one that other participants commented upon most often. For example, one participant appreciated the fact that in this story it was not clear who the oppressor is because of the numerous power relations that are shown. Further, this story stimulated other participants to tell other stories containing similar elements (such as the context of the train, or the presence of the police). Moreover, the choice was made after having carried out various activities with the group: Image-Theatre to start visualising the scene, brainstorming, aggregations among different stories, relevant themes emerging from the various stories that were told. Indeed, although the central part of the story is the one told by Amedeo, other elements and characters were included by participants, as explained in previous sections (see also interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative), and is therefore the result of a collective endeavour. Indeed, both Raffaella and Daria underlined several times that it was important to choose a story that could involve all actors and actresses as well as all spectators, as mentioned in Section 5.5. Furthermore, the Joker highlighted that the story told by Amedeo included “different levels” and multiple layers of power relations that may be shown, as she stressed also during the Forum-Theatre session. This allowed to reveal that tackling racism and dominant narratives on migrations is complex and requires attention to multiple power dynamics (cf. also Erel et al. 2017).

Moreover, an important criterion was the facility in theatrically representing the story (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative). Indeed, during rehearsals certain issues were proposed that however could not be shown through theatre as the Joker explained to participants, whereas the “train” appeared as a more suitable context:

According to Raffaella, the story told by Amedeo is interesting also for the place in which it is set, because “the train is like a stage, you can add and remove characters in a simple way, because you have to justify the fact that the characters are there and in that case the justification is that they are on the train”. (Extract from fieldnotes, 18/01/2022)

As the Joker points out, the train constitutes a stage, because characters are already there since they play the role of passengers. Thus, it is easier to introduce them and less scenes are necessary to let them enter on stage. Moreover, the train plays a symbolic role, as Raffaella stresses below.

The train is very symbolic. Then, we wanted to put ourselves on this train, Italian people ourselves, [both females and males] immersed in this dominant narrative that we don’t like and the fact that this train is in motion, that it is impossible to stop it, that all of us are on it – it is a hyper, hyper-reading that we haven’t even proposed to the audience too much, because we thought that, in reality, the reading of this scenario is immediate, it includes us all – that it is in motion and that it seems impossible to stop [...]. (Interview with Raffaella, Joker from the Italian Cooperative)

The interviewee argues that the train allows not only to include all characters, but also to welcome the audience, who become part of the scene (in fact, at the beginning of the Forum-Theatre session, when spectators enter the room, the seats are positioned in a way which resemble the seats on a train, and some participants play the role of ticket inspectors asking spectators for their train tickets – MiGreat! no date(b), 22-23). The Joker explains that this choice was aesthetic: the train allows to create a context where everyone is included and

surrounded by the dominant narrative on migrations. Moreover, this narrative is emphasised by the characters on stage while the train is moving, and it seems impossible to stop the train from moving but also the dominant narrative from spreading, as the Joker points out (MiGreat! no date(b), 17-28). As such, the story was chosen also for aesthetic and theatrical reasons. Again, it helped convey the idea that Italian people are part of the dominant narrative and that migrations do not concern exclusively people from a migrant background (cf. also Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7; Day 2002).

Additionally, practical issues influenced the choice of the story to be staged and the ways in which it was represented. In particular, as it was discussed in Chapters 2 and 6, time plays a key role in the preparation of a theatrical performance, and several decisions may be taken for practical reasons such as time availability (Becker 1982; Bassetti 2019). An example of how time impacted on the preparation of the Forum-Theatre scene is presented in the following quotation.

Giuliana asks how we will deal with the people who were not present today and who will be present at the next meeting. She asks if we should agree with them on the choice of the story. Raffaella replies to her [by saying] that “we can’t go back” because of the availability of time that we have, so “on Tuesday we’ll go on and think about how to build the scene” on the story that was chosen today.
(Extract from fieldnotes, 14/01/2022)

As the quote above reveals, time significantly influenced the choice of the story for the Forum-Theatre scene and its *mise-en-scène*. In fact, the first two meetings were dedicated to the sharing of stories, and already in the second meeting the story was chosen. In sum, participants were involved in the process of selection of the story, but not all of them were always included (for example if they were absent) and discussion could not take too much time. The IO1 handbook suggests spending between twelve and thirty hours to prepare a

Forum-Theatre “with a mixed group” (Malkassian et al. 2021, 60). The Forum-Theatre in Trento was prepared in six meetings each lasting two hours (MiGreat! no date(b), 17). The Joker and Daria recognised that time was limited (interview with Raffaella and Daria, Italian Cooperative). According to the Joker, this amount of time was sufficient. Nevertheless, several factors reveal that this was not completely the case. For example, during a phone call between Raffaella, Daria and me to organise the Forum-Theatre session (after the end of the six meetings with participants), the Joker revealed that some participants manifested their surprise about the fact that between the 26th January (date of the last rehearsal) and the 18th February (date of the Forum-Theatre session) no meetings were foreseen. Performers’ disorientation manifested when, on the day of the Forum-Theatre session, some of them were not aware that in a Forum-Theatre session the scene is repeated several times while spectators intervene replacing a character, suggesting that they expected a more traditional performance. Participants showed their surprise and satisfaction in their ability to construct a Forum-Theatre scene in such a short period of time, as Donatella highlights at the end of the Forum-Theatre session, and as the Joker reveals to me (interview with Raffaella, Italian Cooperative). In sum, time was limited. This may have impacted both on the complete inclusion of all participants and their familiarisation with the technique, and on the room for discussing the story to be chosen and the ways of developing and representing it.

The factors outlined above were considered also to choose the stories included in the visual materials in Italy. For example, the aesthetics of the video, the ironic style (conveyed, for example, through a cheerful music and the widespread use of humour), the refusal to show a paternalistic attitude towards people from a migrant background were all aspects chosen by participants (interview with Daria, Italian Cooperative; MiGreat! no date(a), 3 and 12). These criteria were utilised also in the realisation of the visual materials in the other three

organisations (interviews with Fernanda, French organisation; Patricia and William, British organisation; Veronika and Jasmine, Hungarian organisation; MiGreat! no date(a)).

Moreover, the context where the Forum-Theatre scenes were realised probably influenced the emergence of given stories, as the Joker in Britain suggests below.

...uhm and I-I wonder, to what extent that's because of obviously the context that we're in, so... you're going to an English class, and you kind of expect that you're going to be talking about language and English. Uhm and to what extent it's actually true that, like, the vast majority of negative experiences are somehow related to language. (Interview with Patricia, Joker from the British organisation)

As Patricia suggests, probably participants shared experiences where they were oppressed because of language barriers because they perceived that this was expected from them in an ESOL class, although she is not sure of this. In France, language-based oppression was explained as central in discrimination in France, together with skin colour (MiGreat! no date(b), 30 and 34; Sharifi 2016, 349). Moreover, the topic of activities was often explicitly presented as linked with migrations; for example, participants were often asked to share experiences about oppression due to the fact of being a “migrant” or “foreign”, without referring to other dimensions (interview with William, Joker from the British organisation). Also in Trento the emphasis was placed on dominant narratives about migrations, as shown in Chapter 6, but the intersection of migrant background with other axes of oppression was not explicitly debated, unless further elements emerged from participants' comments, such as in the case of gender. Therefore, given that the project itself did not directly include an attention to the intersection of multiple axes of oppression, the focus remained on migrant background rather than on other dimensions of inequality. To sum up, representational intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991) was limited: migrations were not discussed taking into

account multiple factors that may affect the experiences of people from a migrant background. In contrast, the portrayal of Italian characters revealed more complex, and intersectional oppression shaped the relationships between characters. In particular, some intersections were considered with respect to Italian people's behaviour, including a new idea of citizenship based on what would be "good" and "bad" behaviours to try to overcome oppression, whereas the experiences of people from a migrant background were presented in a more reductive way.

7.5 Conclusions

This chapter has analysed the ways in which Theatre of the Oppressed constructs and communicates the topic of people from a migrant background, and what factors account for specific representations (as stated in the general research question). The focus has been on the Forum-Theatre scene and to a lesser extent on the visual materials in Italy, with some references to the other three countries. In particular, the chapter has discussed the ways in which given aspects of the lives of people from a migrant background and layers of social stratification and diversity, as well as certain aspects of native Italians' lives and lines of social distinction, are represented. Moreover, some reasons why certain aspects have been included in representations, whereas others remained excluded, have been investigated (third research sub-question, indicated at page 75). The chapter has analysed several dimensions that helped answering this sub-question.

Firstly, the representation of people from a migrant background has been examined. In the Forum-Theatre scene realised in Italy, people from a migrant background were represented focusing mainly on their nationality, ethnicity and skin colour, migrant background, and to some extent social class. Other layers of social stratification were overlooked. These were

the main elements that were underlined also in the stories that were told during the preparation of the Forum-Theatre scene, as well as during some multiplier events, and in the scenes shown in the visual materials. In sum, an intersectional dimension of the identity of people from a migrant background was not often considered. Moreover, several categories of identity of characters from a migrant background were decided by Italian participants without a migratory background and often operating in the field of migrations. This led to the emergence of several stereotypes, in some cases reinforcing racist assumptions.

In the other three countries, although some different layers of social stratification were included, the diversity of the identity and experiences of people from a migrant background was not fully considered, and the focus remained above all on their migratory and language background, as well as on their ethnicity or nationality.

As far as the representation of native Italians is concerned, more lines of social distinction were included. Indeed, the Forum-Theatre scene realised in Italy revealed how relations between characters and oppressive mechanisms are influenced by their gender, social class, age and working conditions. Through the representation of the diversity of native Italians' identities and of their behaviours towards people from a migrant background, the scene helped reframe the concept of citizenship (e.g., Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Schroeter 2013). Indeed, Italian characters conveyed ideas on what are considered "good citizens" who try to stop oppression towards people from a migrant background, and "bad citizens" who instead perpetuate power and oppressive relations. As such, the Forum-Theatre scene showed that in order to create alternative narratives on migrations, an assessment of how native citizens behave is necessary, and multiple power relations should be considered.

Throughout various activities, several themes related to gender and sexuality emerged. These sometimes intersected with ethnicity to represent negative stereotypes about people from a migrant background (cf. also Giuliani 2016; Crenshaw 1991; Davis 2018[1981]; Castro and Carnassale 2019), or they helped understand social relations between native citizens in the Forum-Theatre scene realised in Trento. Gender issues also appeared in the Forum-Theatre scene realised in Hungary. Nevertheless, gender and sexuality were not represented as central in relation to people from a migrant background.

Finally, the chapter has investigated the reasons why certain dimensions of diversity were included in representations, whereas others were ignored, and more generally which factors accounted for specific representations. This is related to methodological, aesthetic, and practical issues. In fact, in order to represent a story in a Forum-Theatre scene or in a video, several criteria linked to the theatrical method of Theatre of the Oppressed as well as to aesthetics had to be considered, which led to the exclusion of certain stories. Moreover, practical issues mainly related to time constraints limited the process of construction of representations (e.g., Becker 1982; Atkinson 2006; Bassetti 2019), including the possibility to discuss in depth various aspects of characters and stories. Yet, choices were often reached collectively following comments by and discussions among participants.

In short, considering the third research sub-question, the analytical findings examined in this chapter highlight that people from a migrant background were represented through Theatre of the Oppressed (and to a lesser extent other creative and participatory approaches) in quite reductive ways, mainly considering ethnicity, nationality, social class, language and migrant background. Thus, an intersectional approach to migrations was not frequently adopted and various layers of social stratification were neglected. However, a certain level of complexity was present in the representation of the power relations that lead to the oppression of people

from a migrant background by native citizens. In fact, native Italians were represented taking into account several lines of social distinction, such as gender and working conditions, (although other aspects could have been considered), underlining the importance to consider also native people's identities when representing the oppression to which people from a migrant background are subjected. Various methodological, aesthetic and practical factors influenced the process and contributed to creating these representations.

8. Discussion and Conclusion

8.1 The Challenges Involved in the Application of Creative and Participatory Approaches to the Context of Migrations

This thesis has examined the ways in which creative and participatory approaches to inequalities, particularly Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations, are developed, organised and enacted, and how the topic of people from a migrant background is communicated and constructed through theatre. The study has adopted a qualitative approach, based on ethnography, interviews and documentary and visual analysis. It has investigated from an intersectional perspective how Theatre of the Oppressed and other creative and participatory approaches are utilised in Italy to represent people from a migrant background and how the Erasmus+ project MiGreat! and its facilitators operated in order to communicate this topic. The focus has been mainly on the Italian context, although the other three partner organisations of MiGreat! – based in the UK, France, and Hungary – have been considered. Intersectionality has been helpful precisely to focus on inequalities, to analyse the social background of participants and of practitioners, the ways in which it influenced the relationships between them and the role they played during activities, as well as the dimensions of social stratification that were underlined, or overlooked, in the cultural products and representations realised.

To begin with, the formation of a professional community of Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners in Italy has been examined. Throughout the country, practitioners operate working either autonomously (but collaborating with various associations as part of the so-called third sector) or as members of associations or organisations, applying this theatrical method (Boal 2011b, 108; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 112) to various areas, including that

of migrations. As underlined by the three key informants, practitioners generally agree with several principles of Theatre of the Oppressed, including its profoundly political and social focus (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Tolomelli 2012; Santos 2018; Boal 2011a; Boal 2021). Moreover, they recognise the centrality of oppression and power relations, as well as the essential goal of empowerment (Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Tolomelli 2012, 22; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 11; Bozza 2020, 1; Boal 2021, 42-43; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 169). However, they differ in the ways in which they approach the method, as well as the techniques that they use. For instance, some recognise the value of a feminist perspective on Theatre of the Oppressed and consider a gender dimension central to it. Others extensively utilise Boal's most recent work through the Aesthetics of the Oppressed (Boal 2011b; Bozza 2020). In some cases, Forum-Theatre is extensively utilised, whereas in others Theatre of the Oppressed is used together with other theatrical methods. Overall, several common points have been identified.

Furthermore, in the last ten years Theatre of the Oppressed has been utilised to work on migrations. Projects were of various kinds (European, local, etc.) and generally aimed at contrasting racism, islamophobia, or supporting the social inclusion of people from a migrant background. They usually included either native Italians or people from a migrant background, in some cases together. Generally, participants from a migrant background arrived recently in Italy and were refugees or asylum seekers, whereas native Italians were often people either operating in the reception system or recruited through other channels that however were connected to the topics tackled in the projects.

The themes and stories that emerged from the projects were quite varied. They included islamophobia, gender issues, and the difficult experiences of people from a migrant background both during their journey and in Italy. In general, however, stories centred on

discrimination based on one's migrant background, nationality, skin colour, religious background or the intersection between gender and ethnicity. An intersectional approach to migrations was sometimes highlighted, but it did not constitute the explicit focus of the projects. Moreover, stories were generally negative, with a few exceptions. Nonetheless, this could be related to the focus of Theatre of the Oppressed, which usually deals with negative (and oppressive) experiences to identify solutions (e.g., Pisciotta 2016; Tolomelli 2012, 32; Erel et al. 2017, 307; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011).

Finally, it has been shown that the professionalisation of the field of Theatre of the Oppressed in general, and of Theatre of the Oppressed applied to migrations in particular, is undergoing (Bourdieu 1993). The foundation of training programmes for practitioners as those organised by the Italian Cooperative, the completion of numerous projects aimed at producing performances and other cultural products which are shown to an audience in order to acquire legitimacy, as well as the sharing of ideas, techniques, and opinions on the application of this method testify the emergence of a professional community that applies Theatre of the Oppressed to deal with migrations and generally inequalities (Bourdieu 1993; see also Hall 1968; Abbott 1991; Christensen 2018).

The issues summarised so far are relevant also to the MiGreat! project. First of all, the social background of participants in activities has been discussed. In all four countries, people from a migrant background were present, although they differed in their experiences of migration. In Italy, participants were either people from a migrant background recently arrived in Italy (with some exceptions), or native Italians operating in the field of migrations or interested in the topic of migrations and/or Theatre of the Oppressed. In particular, in Italy people from

a migrant background were always present as the topic at the centre of representations (and activities), and often as audience, but not always as actors/actresses.

The study has underlined that the involvement of people from a migrant background in theatrical and participatory activities in Italy included various challenges. Indeed, several structural barriers curbed their participation, such as their precarious working and living conditions, linguistic difficulties, different migration contexts in the four countries and the necessity to prioritise more practical and urgent problems. Moreover, various procedural barriers, related to the recruitment process, time availability, and the complex topic of narratives, which was perceived as difficult to explain as well as understand, limited their involvement. These issues are in line with previous research findings, which underlined the precarity of the lives of people from a migrant background as part of the discrimination and social marginalisation to which they are subjected (Sorgoni 2013, 133; Grove and Zwi 2006; Smith 2012, 55; Amelina and Lutz 2019, 54; Dumont and Isoppo cited in Amelina and Lutz 2019, 54; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 174; Smith 2012, 55).

These aspects are problematic: the literature has in fact highlighted how limited the presence of people from a migrant background in the artistic and theatrical field is (Sharifi 2016; cf. also Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 174). Nonetheless, there are numerous positive contributions that theatre and the performative arts can give to the field of migrations, including the promotion of dialogue and solidarity (Degli Uberti 2007, 386; Netto cited in Andreone and Amore 2019, 102; Rovisco 2019, 656; O'Neill et al. 2019, 143), the facilitation of social inclusion and integration, higher visibility and empowerment (Sharifi 2016, 366; Rovisco 2019; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7-8; Zoniou et al. 2012, 5; Carpani cited in Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 15; Bello 2011; Ranjan 2020; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017). Indeed, participation from several people from a migrant background during MiGreat! activities was important to show

the opportunities that particularly Theatre of the Oppressed can give to exercise one's agency and try to stop oppression (e.g., Ranjan 2020; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Boal 2021; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010; Santos 2018; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011). Nevertheless, the fact that various obstacles curb the access of people from a migrant background to creative and participatory activities is a serious problem that deserves attention.

Moreover, the absence or (sometimes) limited participation of people from a migrant background led to various discussions throughout the project about who is entitled to speak "for" and "about" (Alcoff 1991) people from a migrant background. This area is highly debated in the literature too. Although on one side theatre and the performative arts provide alternative ways of representing migrations (Musca 2019; Carpani and Innocenti Malini 2019, 19), the fact that people with experiences of migrations are not always included raises serious questions about who should be entitled to talk about migrations and how they should do so, considering the various power relations that may emerge (Sharifi 2016, 324; Rovisco 2019; Cox 2014; Ranjan 2020).

In Italy, the fact that the participation of people from a migrant background was often marginal was sometimes criticised by participants. On the other hand, practitioners argued that avoiding talking about migrations by people who did not experience them may correspond to remove one's responsibility from issues related to oppression, racism, and discrimination, as well as deny that these issues concern everyone, underlining that integration and social inclusion involve both sides (Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 15; McGregor and Ragab 2016, 7; Day 2002).

To sum up, the debate remains open. Yet, the problematic aspects of the limited inclusion of people from a migrant background should be considered.

At the same time, the involvement of people operating in the field of migrations led to both some relevant contributions and to several problematic consequences. On one side, the power relations that are present in the reception system and in the relationships between people from a migrant background and social workers were highlighted by some participants. Moreover, the difficulties in working in this field emerged. These issues contributed to considering the critical aspects that are present in the reception system in Italy as well as in the ways of managing migrations (cf. also Rozakou 2012; Marchetti 2014, 65; Sorgoni 2013; Idos 2022). On the other side, the goals of the project were sometimes overlooked, giving more priority to the difficulties experienced by social workers than on the marginalisation of people from a migrant background. Further, this was exacerbated by the emergence of power and infantilising dynamics.

In brief, the study argues that targeting simultaneously both people from a migrant background and natives working in the field of migrations may not be ideal: these two social groups have different priorities, but also distinct experiences and social backgrounds. The inclusion of both of them caused several drawbacks and ultimately resulted in a higher involvement of natives and a partial marginalisation of people from a migrant background.

Second, the issues related to practitioners' ways of operating and facilitating activities have been examined. At the basis of the MiGreat! project the goal of sharing knowledge and good practices to deal with migrations through creative and participatory approaches is central. In fact, it has been argued that the project contributes to the formation of a new professional field (Bourdieu 1993). This is composed of Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners who act as experts in this theatrical method (together with other participatory approaches) and in its application to the field of migrations, sharing its principles and goals and trying to acquire

legitimacy and autonomy for their work (Bourdieu 1993; see also Hall 1968; Abbott 1991; Christensen 2018). This is in line with a recent increase in the use of creative and participatory approaches to migrations (e.g., Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009; Horghagen and Josephsson 2010; Smith 2012; Opfermann 2020; Bello 2011), as well as of projects aimed at training various categories of professionals to utilise them (Zoniou et al. 2012; Choleva 2021).

Nevertheless, although the project indifferently targeted social workers, educators, language teachers and other categories of workers, further dimensions of participants' background and of their participation were often overlooked, for instance their age, disabilities, migrant background, or the drivers of their participation, as well as the emergence of paternalistic dynamics. This shows that probably the target of the project was very broad and the diversity among participants was not always considered. At the same time, the goals of the project, such as empowering participants and changing the dominant narratives on migrations, sometimes remained unattended. Not only are these aspects problematic with respect to the goals of the project, but they also downsize the goals of Theatre of the Oppressed, which aims at transforming society, as well as empowering and giving voice to marginalised groups (Boal 2011b 108; Boal cited in Mazzini 2011, 7; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Santos 2018; Tolomelli 2012; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011). In contrast, on several occasions these critical aspects led to the reproduction of power dynamics and oppressive mechanisms (cf. also Ranjan 2020). It is important to notice that these issues were also related to practical challenges, such as time availability, specific deadlines, and the (sometimes rigid) requirements foreseen by the project itself.

In summary, the study argues that the broad goal of creating a community of professionals is still undergoing, but the goals that they aim at achieving and the ways in which they practically operate deserves further attention.

At the same time, practitioners showed to consider an intersectional dimension to their work. On one hand, some of them pointed out how their gender, ethnicity, and generally social position affected their relationship with participants. On the other hand, facilitators recognised the complexity of the topic of migrations and the diversity of experiences of people from a migrant background. Creative and participatory approaches were usually considered a useful tool to represent and account for this diversity (cf. also Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009; Bello 2011).

Nonetheless, in practice an intersectional approach was not often considered. The oppression to which people from a migrant background are subjected, as represented in the visual materials and the Forum-Theatre scenes produced, usually centred on characters' skin colour or ethnicity, nationality and therefore migrant background, or language skills. In some cases, however, further axes of inequalities were considered, such as social class in Italy and gender identity in Hungary.

The inclusion of these dimensions of inequality were helpful to reveal that various categories could be analysed through Theatre of the Oppressed, whereas Freirian pedagogy focused primarily on social class (Macedo 2018, 15-16). Moreover, the consideration of social class in Italy should be evaluated positively, given the frequent neglect of this dimension in intersectional research (Hearn 2017) as well as in feminist movements (hooks 2020a, 191-192).

Yet, people from a migrant background were not usually portrayed taking into account their intersectional identities. In Italy, during the preparation of the Forum-Theatre scene, some further dimensions were discussed, but were not included in the script or during the Forum-Theatre session. Moreover, the construction of the identity of the protagonist from a migrant

background was based on the knowledge and experiences of Italian participants operating in the field of migrations, and discussions contributed to the emergence of several stereotypes. The reductive representations of people from a migrant background and their experiences hindered the goal of Theatre of the Oppressed to change reality (Boal cited in Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 111; Boal 2011a; Boal 2011b; Boal 2021; Tolomelli 2012), as well as that of MiGreat! to identify counter and alternative narratives on migrations. Further, in all four organisations, neglecting other categories of difference was detrimental to the representation of migrations since it led to generalisations.

However, in Italy, the ways of representing native Italians included various axes of inequality which were highlighted to stress the complexity of oppression. This has been underlined as a positive aspect of the Forum-Theatre scene.

This is relevant to the concept of citizenship. Previous research has shown how participatory theatre helps deconstructing dominant notions of citizenship reflecting on how gender, ethnicity, nationality impact on this concept, excluding certain people while including others (cf. also Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Rovisco 2019; Schroeter 2013; Giuliani 2016). Further, people participating in theatrical activities have the opportunity to attempt at changing society and thereby exercising their citizenship (cf. also Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Rovisco 2019). The portrayal of people who are not from a migrant background in the Forum-Theatre scene realised in Italy leads to a further re-conceptualisation of citizenship: characters who show solidarity with the protagonist from a migrant background and try to intervene to overcome oppression are portrayed as “good citizens”, whereas oppressive characters are portrayed as “bad citizens” that hinder the building of a more egalitarian society. Thus, the Forum-Theatre scene

suggested that in order to reflect on inequalities and oppression towards people from a migrant background, a critical analysis of the host culture should be undertaken.

Additionally, these representations allow to reflect on how natives talk about their fellow citizens as well as people from a migrant background. In line with one of the main functions of theatre, which is to give society the opportunity to observe itself (Pisciotta 2016, 67; Nichols 1956, 179; Boal cited in Mazzini and Talamonti 2011, 111), Forum-Theatre on migrations appeared as a tool to allow Italian spectators to observe how they behave, contributing to or stopping the oppression of people from a migrant background.

The choice to focus on given stories and axes of oppression were also due to time availability, aesthetic reasons and the necessity to find stories that could be represented through theatre or the visual materials, which are practical aspects that always affect the realisation of performances (e.g., Becker 1982; Atkinson 2006; Bassetti 2019). Further, the choice of the stories and themes to be tackled was the outcome of collective decisions in which participants were involved.

Nevertheless, an intersectional focus was overall absent in the project. Again, the choice of a given target revealed problematic, since it risked sectorising the topic of migrations according to the types of migrations considered or the professionals working in a given sector (e.g., the reception system in Italy, or ESOL in the UK). This reductive representation and restricted focus impeded the comparison of experiences between various groups of people from a migrant background. Further, it could hinder the development of a new professional field dealing with several types of migrations.

In sum, the research argues that a more careful attention to further dimensions of inequality would render creative and participatory approaches to migrations more effective. Overall, it is likely that the twofold objective of MiGreat! – proposing alternative narratives and

representing the diversity of experiences of migration and, on the other hand, building a professional community – may have hindered the achievement of the goals of the project, above all the first one.

Throughout the project, gender played a role. First, specific gender dynamics were present among participants: in Italy, people from a migrant background were often men, whereas Italians were often women (although not always, since male participants were present, for example in the construction of the Forum-Theatre scene). In the UK, women constituted the majority of participants. These issues are related to the people living or operating within the reception system in Italy, to the targets of the organisations involved in the projects, and to the gender composition of given working sectors. However, more research is needed to explore the reasons why people from given gender identities participate more than others, particularly in relation to the intersection between gender and other categories.

Similarly, practitioners were for the majority women, and some of them argued that this aspect influenced positively on activities. However, these explanations were usually provided taking into consideration a binary and stereotypical view of gender identities (cf. also Connell 2011; Goffman 1979; Catrin 2012, 5 and 7-8; Wikström 2008, 71). Unfortunately, research has neglected the role that practitioners' gender play in participatory activities. This applies also to a feminist approach to Theatre of the Oppressed. Hence, further investigation of this aspect is necessary.

Finally, gender issues sometimes appeared in the stories and themes tackled, for instance in the Forum-Theatre scene realised in Italy. This dimension of oppression could have been explored by reflecting also on the gender identity of protagonists from a migrant background, who instead were often portrayed as not having a gender identity.

In general, the thesis has highlighted the relevance to study Theatre of the Oppressed in the context of migrations through an intersectional perspective.

Theatre of the Oppressed helps represent various dimensions of inequality and their intersections, contributing to shape perceptions about the topic of migrations. This occurs through representations of various social groups, not only of people from a migrant background but also natives. In brief, it allows to show and reflect through an intersectional approach upon the complexity of oppression, power relations, and inequalities.

At the same time, it is helpful to assess the ways in which certain social groups, for example people from a migrant background, are represented in performances and other cultural products. This allows to investigate whether these portrayals contribute to convey the complexity of people's experiences and show them as "whole[s]" (Bello et al. 2022, XVI; Samuels and Ross-Sheriff 2008, 6), or on the contrary are simplistic, partial, and perpetuating stereotypes (cf. also Crenshaw 1991; Samuels and Ross-Sheriff 2008, 6). Intersectionality is in fact an important "analytical tool" (Erel and Reynolds 2014, 106; Bello et al. 2022, II; Cooper 2015, 405) to investigate the ways in which participants' social background impact on activities, as well as how various dimensions of diversity influence the relationships between practitioners and participants. In sum, intersectionality constitutes a helpful approach to examine participatory activities as well as artistic performances dealing with inequalities, examining also their critical aspects.

Both Theatre of the Oppressed and intersectional scholars argued that liberation from oppression should start from the oppressed themselves, since oppression and a life at the margins entails opportunities for resistance and empowerment (Boal 2011a; Boal 2021; Freire 2018; hooks 1989; hooks 2020a; hooks 2021, 111; Collins 2000; Dill cited in Collins and Chepp 2013, 58; Bürkner 2012, 192; Crenshaw 1991, 1297). Given the profoundly political goals of both intersectionality and Theatre of the Oppressed, they are important

tools for sociologists to examine opportunities for social change and social transformation as well as for overcoming inequalities.

8.2 Some Limitations of the Study

As with any research, this study also includes several limitations. First of all, it is important to note that the MiGreat! project lasted two years and a half, entailing several phases during which numerous different activities were carried out. Moreover, four different organisations were involved, comprising various differences in terms of both their targets and professionals' background, as well as the national contexts in which they are immersed. As explained in Chapter 3, I got involved only in the last part of the project, and I focused mostly on the Italian context. In order to realise a coherent study, I had to select the materials to be analysed, prioritising the most relevant sources to answer the research questions and compensating for my absence in the other three countries through long semi-structured interviews. A more in-depth study, following the entire project, and focusing on the four different contexts through a comparative approach, would have resulted in a more complete picture, but this would have gone beyond the scope of this thesis.

Similarly, in the Italian context, I observed numerous different situations, and this resulted in observation not being always in depth. As in any qualitative study – and particularly ethnographic study – I also had to adapt my research aims according to the activities that were organised and the possibilities of the Cooperative in relation to the requirements of the project. Yet, observing more similar situations – for example several Forum-Theatre sessions – would provide a more detailed analysis of the ways in which people from a migrant background are represented through Theatre of the Oppressed.

Additionally, this research has been based on the use of various methods to collect the data. Future research could focus on specific aspects of the use of creative and participatory approaches to migrations analysing them more in depth and privileging one method. For example, participant observation of the construction of several Forum-Theatre scenes and of various Forum-Theatre sessions could provide interesting insights on the ways in which this technique is utilised and the process of construction of this type of performance, similarly to previous research on performative arts (e.g., Becker 1982; Atkinson 2006; Bassetti 2019; Bassetti 2021). Similarly, the analysis of the visual tools realised through the use of creative and participatory activities could lead to important results on how a different type of art helps represent certain topics. This is relevant also because creative and participatory approaches include a variety of activities and products that may be realised, as well as different methods. These issues should be further explored adapting the methodology obviously depending on the research questions.

Further, research involving subjects with different mother tongues entails several challenges, as explained in Chapter 3. The involvement of people from various national and linguistic backgrounds was at the basis of MiGreat! and enriched this study. Yet, in general, when analysing the data, it should be noted that translation affects interpretation. Similarly, conducting interviews when different language skills are present may include various challenges. Future research should take into account these aspects too.

Finally, this research focused on Theatre of the Oppressed as a case study but not as a research methodology. In recent years, social scientists have underlined the important contribution that participatory theatre as a research methodology can give to the social sciences (e.g., Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008;

Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009; Opfermann 2020; O'Neill et al. 2019; Powers and Duffy 2016). For example, through embodied performances and non-verbal language, interesting issues may emerge, and research participants may be facilitated by this approach, particularly in the case of people from different linguistic backgrounds (Erel et al. 2017, 309). Moreover, participatory theatre may be helpful to favour the emergence of themes and experiences that would be challenging to express verbally (Erel et al. 2017, 309; see Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008 and Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009 for details about further contributions that such an approach may give to social research). Hence, future studies could consider the use of this methodology.

8.3 Suggestions for Future Research

The study has touched upon several issues that deserve further investigation by social scientists. To begin with, the field of migrations and performative arts is broad, and several aspects need further attention concerning the ways in which people from a migrant background are represented through theatre – including both participatory theatre and more traditional types of theatre – as well as through other performative arts. Indeed, as it was specified in Chapter 2, this field is still in development.

On one side, other projects dealing with migrations and performative arts could be examined, focusing on the representation of various aspects of migration processes and the ways of organising creative and participatory (or other artistic) approaches to this area. In particular, the relation between creative and participatory methods and the field of migrations should be analysed in more detail, as well as any obstacles that may hinder collaboration. In fact, recruiting people from a migrant background may be complex for practitioners of creative and participatory approaches, as it occurred in the Italian Cooperative. This is likely to

influence the extent to which people from a migrant background are involved and directly participate in activities. Hence, increased attention should be paid on the channels through which people from a migrant background could be recruited, the ways of doing so (for example, reflecting on how to introduce the projects and their goals), but also on possible strategies to facilitate their participation once they are present in activities. These aspects are essential in order to include people from a migrant background and facilitate their empowerment, so that they become actors of the representation.

More generally, other questions could be investigated concerning the field of theatre and performative arts, for instance the presence in Italy and throughout Europe of artists of colour and from a migrant background (also through quantitative analyses), the performances realised, the ways in which people from a migrant background access theatre and the performative arts. In fact, the accessibility of certain types of arts, as well as the criteria according to which some people are deemed more “qualified” than others to perform and are more easily deemed “artists”, are relevant sociologically (Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 174; cf. also Boal 2011a; Boal 2011b). Indeed, as Becker (Becker cited in Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 174) argued, some social groups enjoy certain privileges that allow them to access the artistic field, or they are expected to do so precisely because of their social background. In the case of people from a migrant background, discrimination exists in European theatres (Sharifi 2016; cf. also Horghagen and Josephsson 2010, 174). Thus, more data is needed to better comprehend the structural factors influencing the access to the arts. This should be analysed from an intersectional perspective, given that inequalities in access exist also in terms of people’s gender identity, sexuality, and disability (Sharifi 2016, 325).

These questions lead to another important issue that was discussed in this thesis: who is entitled to speak “*for*” and “*about*” someone else (Alcoff 1991, 8-9, my emphasis)? This issue is central in the performative arts: migrations pose various ethical challenges, given that they lead to questions regarding social positions and power relations (Musca 2019, 4-6; Corrêa cited in Musca 2019, 6; Cox and Zaroulia cited in Musca 2019, 5-6; Rovisco 2019; Cox 2014). The fact that people from a migrant background are still excluded from the arts leads us to reflect upon how migrations are represented by those who have not directly experienced them (Sharifi 2016, 324). The absence (or scarce presence) of people from a migrant background or from different ethnic backgrounds is problematic since it often re-establishes power dynamics: for example, characters of colour are often played by white performers who utilise practices such as the so-called “blackface” (Sharifi 2016, 326). Yet, these practices have been defined as racist, and contribute to the perpetuation of exclusion of people from a given social background from the artistic and cultural fields (Sharifi 2016).

Therefore, where do we derive our authority to speak for others – as well as represent others – and who gives us that authority? In general, the social position from where one speaks impacts on the meaning of what they are saying and contributes to give them (or remove from them) the authority to speak (Alcoff 1991, 6-7 and 14).

These questions have been long discussed in social research and particularly by ethnographers (Clifford 1993[1988]; Clifford 1997[1986]; Alcoff 1991). In anthropology, for example, the power relations at the basis of ethnography have been questioned particularly since the end of the Second World War (Clifford 1997[1986], 33; Clifford 1993[1988], 38). Indeed, the ethnographer was considered for a long time a subject with the authority to represent other cultures and write about them producing objective analyses as a consequence of their “experience” on the field (Clifford 1993[1988], 44-55). Nonetheless,

with the end of the war and decolonisation, issues were raised concerning the extent to which (Western) researchers were entitled to speak about and for other (non-Western) cultures (Clifford 1997[1986], 32-33, 39; Clifford 1993[1988], 58; see also Trinh T. Minh-ha cited in Alcoff 1991, 6). “Who speaks? Who writes?” Who gave them the power to produce given representations (Clifford 1997[1986], 36 and 41; Clifford 1993[1988], 39)? Contributions to these issues have come not only from post-colonial perspectives, but also from feminist studies (see also Alcoff 1991, 6): it has been acknowledged, in fact, that ethnographic studies often drew inferences on cultures taking into account only men’s positions, ignoring the roles played by women (Clifford 1997[1986], 42-43).

These issues are still debated within the discipline (Clifford 1997[1986]; Clifford 1993[1988]). Scholars have underlined how, by talking for and about someone else, we always say something about us (Clifford 1997[1986], 34 and 48; Alcoff 1991, 9-10). This is in line with processes of othering: by defining an “other”, we reaffirm our own identity, which is placed in opposition to what is different from us (Giuliani 2016, 98; Grove and Zwi 2006). Ethnographic approaches have recently included the voice of autochthonous people (and particularly those of informants) in their studies, in order to give them the opportunity to speak for themselves and discuss the researcher’s analysis (Clifford 1997[1986], 32-33, 41; Clifford 1993[1988], 62-69). Nowadays it is acknowledged that ethnographic accounts are never impartial or neutral (Clifford 1997[1986], 42-44). They are instead based on power relations and inequalities, and this is a political dimension that should be constantly considered when conducting research (Clifford 1997[1986], 28 and 32; Clifford 1993[1988], 38-39 and 72).

These issues are relevant in the context of intersectionality. In fact, intersectional scholars, but more broadly feminist and African-American theorists, argued that the study of

inequalities and oppression as well as the responsibility to resist and challenge power structures lied precisely on those directly experiencing that oppression and social exclusion (Alcoff 1991, 7; Collins 1986; Collins 1989; hooks 1989; hooks 2020a, 127-128 and 193). Moreover, the impact of one's social location is recognised also by a feminist approach to Theatre of the Oppressed (Santos 2018, 144-145). Some argue that if a subject occupies a position of power or privilege and speaks for and about those who are oppressed or less privileged, they perpetuate this power relation and therefore reproduce oppression (Alcoff 1991, 7 and 29; Ranjan 2020; Ma(g)dalena International Network 2022).

The complexity of this issue becomes even more intricate if we consider that the boundaries of specific social groups are contested (Alcoff 1991, 7-8): in the case of migrations, should we consider ourselves entitled to speak about migrations only if we come from non-white backgrounds? Is a young person studying abroad entitled to speak about the migration experience of a refugee?

Further, is it better to simply avoid speaking for and about someone else in order not to run the risk of reproducing power dynamics? In this way, however, we may fall into the trap of removing responsibility from ourselves (Alcoff 1991, 8).

It is not possible to identify definitive answers to these questions (Alcoff 1991, 8). Alcoff (1991, 23) follows Spivak's (Spivak cited in Alcoff 1991, 22-23) suggestion according to whom replacing speaking for and about with "speaking with and to" could be a strategy to engage in speaking while providing the opportunity to the "other" to respond, creating dialogue (Alcoff 1991, 23). This would also be in line with a Freirian approach to dialogue as opposed to oppression and the exercise of power (Freire 2018; Tolomelli 2012; Mazzini and Talamonti 2011; Capobianco and Vittoria 2012, 4).

Certainly, these issues involve complex political and epistemological issues (Alcoff 1991, 15), and providing definitive answers is well beyond the scope of this dissertation. However,

this thesis argues, in line with Alcoff (1991), that it is essential to consider carefully one's social positions and the power relations at stake, question whether one's choices contribute to oppress or rather empower those we speak for and about, but also accept and reflect upon critical feedback in order to engage politically in these contested issues (Alcoff 1991, 24-26 and 29).

Moreover, the notion of citizenship should be scrutinised more attentively, deepening the ways in which it is reshaped through theatre. Indeed, as other researchers have pointed out, beyond constituting only a legal status, citizenship increasingly determines who is included in or excluded from a community on the basis of embodied characteristics and layers of social stratification, as well as of forms of participation within society and belonging to a community (Rovisco 2019; Hartley cited in Rovisco 2019, 649; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012; Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Lister cited in Erel et al. 2017, 303; Schroeter 2013; Giuliani 2016). However, as this thesis has argued, theatre allows people to provide new ways of looking at citizenship, for example showing which behaviours contribute to the perpetuation of systems of power and which ones instead facilitate the overcoming of oppression and people's empowerment. Yet, (participatory) theatre also gives participants the opportunity to advance requests and proposals for active participation within society, thereby defending their rights and practising citizenship (Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Songe-Møller and Bjerkestrand 2012, 11). Further analysis could explore more in depth these issues.

In addition, a broad area of research that deserves further investigation in the context of migrations and theatre is the role played by the body. We all utilise the body in our everyday interactions (Goffman 1956; Goffman 1979; Atkinson 2006, 56-57; Barba cited in Atkinson

2006, 56-57; Vösu 2010; Jacobsen 2017). Clearly, in the performative arts the use of the performer's body is central. Here the body is utilised consciously and this requires training, technique, and considerable effort (Atkinson 2006, 56-57; see also Bassetti 2019; Bassetti 2021). Several sociologists and anthropologists have studied the roles played by bodies and embodiment in the performative arts (e.g., Atkinson 2006; Bassetti 2019; Bassetti 2021). Several of these issues apply also to creative and participatory approaches (cf. also Boal 2011a; Boal 2021; Boal 2002), although the level of training is often reduced in comparison to more traditional types of theatre.

Nevertheless, the issue of the body in relation to migrations and the performative arts is complex. Indeed, when working with people from different cultural backgrounds, it should be kept in mind that differences exist in how people are used to utilising their bodies both in social interaction and in performances, as well as in the meaning that they attribute to different gestures and bodily movements. These issues emerged only marginally in the present study, which is why it was not possible to discuss them. Therefore, increased understanding of these dynamics is relevant both sociologically and as a way to facilitate the active participation of people from a migrant background.

Furthermore, the role of gender should be examined at various levels. First, the ways in which participants' gender identity influences their participation in activities should be investigated. Participants with different gender identities should be included in order to explore different ways of experiencing migrations precisely because of one's gender (see also Bürkner 2012; Herrera 2013; Sinatti 2014).

Moreover, the presence of participants with certain gender identities is likely to influence the relations among them and between practitioners and them. Yet, more data is needed to better understand these issues.

On top of that, from an intersectional perspective, it would be relevant to better analyse the possibilities to include participants with various gender identities and sexual orientations, given that people from a migrant background are often doubly marginalised both in their home country and in Europe both as people from a migrant background and as non-heterosexual subjects and/or subjects with a non-normative gender identity (Castro and Carnassale 2019; Held 2022). Therefore, the impact of gender and sexuality on the access to creative and participatory approaches by people from a migrant background should be analysed.

Relatedly, the role played by facilitators' gender identity should be further investigated. As part of an intersectional understanding of inequalities, it is urgent to increase awareness of how practitioners' gender identity – but also other dimensions of diversity that they embody – shape their work. This could be relevant both in terms of the interaction with participants, and regarding the relationships between practitioners.

Likewise, increased consideration in theatrical representations of gender and sexuality as dimensions of inequality that impact on experiences of migration (while also intersecting with other categories) is urgent. It is here suggested that future projects should directly consider these aspects, precisely because a given gender identity or sexual orientation shapes experiences of migration and often contribute to people's oppression (Castro and Carnassale 2019; Held 2022; Bello 2011; Bürkner 2012; Herrera 2013; Sinatti 2014; Harris and Bartlow 2015). These issues should be scrutinised also in relation to a feminist approach to Theatre of the Oppressed, which is still under-explored. In summary, a thorough understanding of the centrality of gender and sexuality is encouraged.

A further area that deserves attention is the adoption of an intersectional approach in projects such as MiGreat!. In other words, it is necessary to expand knowledge about how

intersectionality should be considered in these types of projects utilising creative and participatory approaches to represent and tackle inequalities already in the phase of application and in project management.

Moreover, intersectionality should be increasingly implemented in EU as well as national policies regarding migrations and inequalities more generally. In order to examine how intersectionality should be more consistently utilised in policies and measures concerning migrations and inequalities, increased understanding of the professionals who should take care of this aspect is needed.

In particular, this thesis has shown how the field of creative and participatory approaches to inequalities is currently trying to become a professionalised community (Hall 1968, 92). This new professional field (Bourdieu 1993), however, is still in development, and as in any field, the process of professionalisation is complex (Abbott 1991, 380). Some scholars conceptualise professionalisation as “boundary work”, since it is based on setting boundaries between what is considered a profession and a non-profession (Catrin 2012, 4; Wikström 2008). Moreover, both “boundary setting actions” – aimed at separating one’s professional field from others in order to render it autonomous – and “boundary spanning actions” – based on dialoguing and interacting with other professional communities – are seen as essential in a process of professionalisation (Wikström 2008, 74).

Among the criteria that help set boundaries, “the presence or absence of scientific knowledge, adequate or deficient autonomy, the presence or absence of a specific professional code of ethics and systematic methodology” are included (Catrin 2012, 7), together with “forming professional organi[s]ations, increasing educational requirements, and promoting speciali[s]ed skills” (Wikström 2008, 61; see also Nordegraaf cited in Christensen 2018, 7).

At the moment it seems that certain elements are present in the field of creative and participatory approaches, while others are still absent or in development. For example, knowledge – or cultural capital (Larson cited in Abbott 1991, 363; Bourdieu 1993) – is being disseminated and practitioners possess a variety of skills to facilitate activities. Moreover, practitioners show to have a quite strong service ethic, namely a motivation that what they do is for public good and a “sense of calling” and dedication that goes beyond material reward (Christensen 2018, 7 and 11; Hall 1968, 93), as shown by the belief in the potential of creative and participatory approaches to change reality and create a more equal society discussed in Chapters 4 and 6.

However, creative and participatory approaches include several methods, techniques, skills, and theoretical frameworks which are not systematically shared by all practitioners yet – although projects such as MiGreat! aim to build a specific expertise in this field (cf. also Christensen 2018, 10; Abbott 1991, 357 and 363; Catrin 2012, 8). Further, although practitioners may have experience in facilitating participatory activities, they still lack a deep understanding of migrations and the multidimensionality of this phenomenon, as well as of ways to facilitate activities with people from different social backgrounds in an inclusive way. This is also related to the fact that the educational and professional background of practitioners is varied (Christensen 2018, 13; Lee and Polletta cited in Christensen 2018, 13). Additionally, although the meetings and materials produced contribute to give guidelines on how to conduct the work and the ethical principles to follow (see also Chapter 6), these guidelines refer to shared principles more than to a specific system of control and code of ethics (Black et al. cited in Christensen 2018, 9; Catrin 2012, 7). Further, trainings are being organised, but an association reuniting all practitioners and a system of supervision do not exist – various associations, organisations, and groups exist, as well as autonomous workers, but the field is still diversified and heterogeneous (Nordegraaf cited in Christensen

2018, 7; Christensen 2018, 8; Abbott 1991, 357 and 361-364; Hall 1968, 92-93; Wilensky cited in Hall 1968, 92-93). In sum, the field of creative and participatory approaches to inequalities is still fragmented (cf. also Christensen 2018, 17).

In order to systematically adopt an intersectional perspective in these projects as well as foster the consideration of this approach in the policy-making process, a more specific training should be undertaken. Research could investigate whether the most appropriate solution would be to involve professionals with expertise in both creative and participatory approaches *and* migrations or to encourage collaboration between professionals trained in several creative and participatory approaches *and* professionals trained in the field of migrations. This could also help understand how the access of people from a migrant background to participatory activities could be encouraged. Furthermore, a way to monitor and regulate the adoption of such approaches in the area of migrations may be introduced (see also Wilensky cited in Christensen 2018, 3). Moreover, increased interaction with other types of professionals, such as policy-makers, as well as researchers could be pursued through boundary setting and boundary spanning actions (Wikström 2008).

Practitioners of creative and participatory approaches could give an important contribution to discussions around policies aimed at contrasting inequalities, given that they can facilitate the emergence of various dimensions of participants' experiences allowing them to highlight their priorities and needs (e.g., Erel and Reynolds 2014; Erel et al. 2017; Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008; Yuval-Davis and Kaptani 2009; Bello 2011).

Moreover, similarly to the field of social work (Catrin 2012, 9-10), practitioners constantly deal with inequalities; they have to critically consider the ways in which several dimensions of inequality affect activities as well as the relationships among participants and between participants and practitioners (Catrin 2012, 11). Given that practitioners of creative and

participatory approaches aim at overcoming oppression and facilitating participants' social inclusion and liberation from systems of power, this professional community could actively contribute to the implementation of policies aimed at contrasting inequalities by accounting for an intersectional dimension of oppression and social exclusion. Nevertheless, further research is needed in order to deepen the ways in which they may be involved in policy-making processes.

In conclusion, an intersectional approach to migrations helps reveal how multifaceted people's experiences are. If only single axes of oppression are considered in a mutually exclusive way, the risk is that analyses of inequalities lead to misleading results, and the potential of creative and participatory approaches to tackle them is diminished. Instead, accounting for multiple categories of difference helps capture the complexity of people's experiences, which is indispensable to then reflect on how power relations can be resisted and changed, in order to create a solidarity movement that should be as broad as possible. Further, accounting for the complexity of experiences would allow us to identify the centrality of a migratory background that intersects with several dimensions of inequality depending on individual social positions, recognising however that experiences still have a single common point: precisely that of a migratory background. Hence, scrutinising the ways in which multiple dimensions of inequalities are intertwined through an intersectional approach would benefit both sociological analyses and practitioners of creative and participatory approaches in order to encourage social transformation.

References

- Abbott, A. (1991). The Order of Professionalization: An Empirical Analysis. *Work and Occupations*, 18(4): 355-384.
- Abu-Lughod, L. (2002). Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others. *American Anthropologist*, 104(3): 783-790.
- Adler, P. A., Adler, P. (1987). The Past and the Future of Ethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 16(1): 4-24.
- Ahmed, S. (2014). *The Cultural Politics of Emotions. Second Edition*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Alcoff, L. (1991). The Problem of Speaking for Others. *Cultural Critique*, 20: 5-32.
- Alshughry, H. (2018). Non-violent communication and theatre of the oppressed: a case study with Syrian refugee women from the Kareemat Centre in Turkey. *Intervention*, 16(2): 170-174.
- Amelina, A., Lutz, H. (2019). *Gender and Migration: Transnational and Intersectional Prospects*, London and New York, Routledge.
- Anderson, B. (2006[1983]). *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London and New York, Verso.
- Andreone, M. Amore, E. (2019). "Il Sogno di Enea. Se possiamo ridere per le stesse cose non siamo poi così diversi": spettacolo teatrale comico con attori migranti. [Il sogno di Enea

(Aeneas Dream). If we can laugh for the same things, we are not so different]. *Rivista Italiana di Studi sull'Umore*, 2(2): 101-108.

Anthias, F. (2012). Transnational mobilities, migration research and intersectionality. Towards a translocational frame. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 2(2): 102-110.

Atkinson, P. (2006). *Everyday Arias. an Operatic Ethnography*, Lanham, New York, Toronto and Oxford, AltaMira Press.

Bassetti, C. (2019). *Genesi dell'opera d'arte. Fare danza assieme*, Milano, Mimesis.

Bassetti, C. (2021). *Corpo, apprendimento e identità. Sé e intersoggettività nella danza*, Verona, Ombre Corte.

Bastia, T. (2014). Intersectionality, migration and development. *Progress in Development Studies*, 4(3): 237-248.

Becker, H. (1982). *Art Worlds*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.

Bello, B. G. (2011). Empowerment of young migrants in Italy through nonformal education: putting equality into practice. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 16(3): 348-359.

Bello, B. G. (2020). *Intersezionalità. Teorie e pratiche tra diritto e società*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.

Bello, B. G., Lykke, N., Moreno-Cruz, P., Scudieri, L. (2022). Doing Intersectionality in Explored and Unexplored Places [Editorial]. *About Gender*, 11(22): I-XXXIII.

Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2): 219-234.

Boal, A. (2002). *Games for actors and non-actors (second edition)*, London and New York, Routledge.

Boal, A. (2011a). *Il Teatro degli Oppressi. Teoria e Tecnica del Teatro Latinoamericano*, Molfetta, La Meridiana.

Boal, A. (2011b). *L'Estetica dell'Oppresso. L'Arte e l'Estetica come Strumenti di Libertà*, Molfetta, La Meridiana.

Boal, A. (2021). *Metodo e Pratica per un Teatro Politico*, Roma, Dino Audino Editore.

Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production*, New York, Columbia University Press.

Bozza, M. (2020). L'Estetica dell'Oppresso e la Prassi Curinga: l'eredità viva della Pedagogia di Augusto Boal. Unpublished paper.

Bürkner, H.-J. (2012). Intersectionality: How Gender Studies Might Inspire the Analysis of Social Inequality among Migrants. *Population Space and Place*, 18(2): 181-195.

Camera dei deputati Ufficio Rapporti con l'Unione Europea (2022). Politiche dell'UE in materia di migrazione e asilo. Dossier n° 5: 1-9. Available at <https://documenti.camera.it/Leg19/Dossier/Pdf/AT005.Pdf> (accessed 22/11/2022).

Capobianco, R., Vittoria, P. (2012). Dalla narrazione al teatro sociale: l'esperienza del Teatro Forum. *Revista Querubim*, 8: 1-8.

Carastathis, A., Kouri-Towe, N., Mahrouse, G., Whitley, L. (2018). "Introduction" in Intersectional Feminist Interventions in the 'Refugee Crisis' (Special Issue). *Refuge*, 34(1): 3-15.

Carpani, R., Innocenti Malini, G. (2019). Introduction. *Comunicazioni sociali*, 1: 3-20.

Castro, A., Carnassale, D. (2019). Loving More Than One Color: Bisexuals of Color in Italy Between Stigma and Resilience. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 19(2): 198-228.

Catrin, H. (2012). Setting and crossing boundaries: professionalization of social work and social work professionalism. *Social Work and Society*, 10(2): 1-14.

Centro Astalli (2021). Rifugiati in Italia. Available at: <https://www.centroastalli.it/rifugiati-in-italia-2/> (accessed 05/12/2022).

Chan, C. S., Joosse, P., Martin, S. J., Tian, X. (2020). Ethnography in calamitous times. *Etnografia e ricerca qualitativa*, 2: 175-184.

Chetail, V. (2016). Looking Beyond the Rhetoric of the Refugee Crisis: The Failed Reform of the Common European Asylum System. *European Journal of Human Rights*, 5: 584-602.

Choleva, N. (2021). It could be me - It could be you; Drama/Theatre in Education methodologies and activities for raising awareness on human rights and refugees. Available at:

http://theatroedu.gr/Portals/0/main/images/stories/files/Books/ki_an_isoun_esy_En/Ki_An_Hsoun_Esy_BOOK_EN_WEB_SWMACOVERS_29-8-21.pdf?ver=trwkcW_4UhIIC8mX9PfaQw%3d%3d (accessed 30/09/2022).

Christensen, H. E. (2018). Community engagement and professionalisation: Emerging tensions. In: Grant, B., Drew, J., Christensen, H. E., (eds.), *Applied Ethics in the Fractured State (Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations, Vol. 20)*, Bingley, Emerald Publishing Limited: 117-133. Pre-print version (pp. 1-26) available at: <https://opus.lib.uts.edu.au/handle/10453/128254> (accessed 26/11/2022).

Ciurletti, L. (2020). Dal Teatro dell'Oppresso al Teatro delle Oppresse. Contrastare collettivamente e artisticamente la violenza di genere con un approccio femminista intersezionale in Brasile. Unpublished dissertation submitted to the University of Trento.

Clifford, J. (1993[1988]). Sull'autorità etnografica. In: Clifford, J., *I frutti puri impazziscono. Etnografia, letteratura e arte nel secolo XX*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri: 35-72.

Clifford, J. (1997[1986]). Introduzione: verità parziali. In: Clifford, J., Marcus, G. E., (eds.), *Scrivere le culture. Poetiche e politiche in etnografia*, Roma, Meltemi: 23-52.

Collins, P. H. (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of Black feminist thought. *Social problems*, 33(6): 14-32.

Collins, P. H. (1989). The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought. *Signs*, 14(4): 745-773.

Collins, P. H. (1998). It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation. *Hypatia*, 13(3): 62-82.

Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment (second edition)*, New York and London, Routledge.

Collins, P. H., Chepp, V. (2013). Intersectionality. In: Waylen, G., Celis, K., Kantola, J., Weldon, S. L., (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*: 58-87. Available at: <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199751457.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199751457-e-2> (accessed 12/12/2022).

Connell, R. W. (2005[1995]). *Masculinities. Second Edition*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press.

Connell, R. W. (2011). *Questioni di genere (seconda edizione)*, Bologna, Il Mulino.

Cooper, B. (2015). Intersectionality. In: Disch, L., Hawkesworth, M., (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*: 385-406. Available at: <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199328581.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199328581-e-20> (accessed 15/12/2022).

Cox, E. (2014). *Theatre and Migration*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Cox, E., Wake, C. (2018). Envisioning asylum/engendering crisis: or, performance and forced migration 10 years on. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 23(2): 137-147.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics. *The University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1: 139-167.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6): 1241-1299.

Davis, A. (2018[1981]). *Donne, razza e classe*, Roma, Edizioni Alegre.

Day, L. (2002). 'Putting Yourself in Other People's Shoes': The use of Forum theatre to explore refugee and homeless issues in schools. *Journal of Moral Education*, 31(1): 21-34.

Degli Uberti, S. (2007). Migrazione ed Esperienza Teatrale. Dinamiche Transnazionali ed Integrazione nell'incontro tra un migrante senegalese e la società italiana. *Ethnorema*, III(3): 385-418.

Douglas M. (2003[1966]). *Mary Douglas Collected Works. Volume II. Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, London and New York, Routledge.

Erel, U., Reynolds, T. (2014). Open Space Research Note: Black Feminist Theory for Participatory Theatre with Migrant Mothers. *Feminist Review*, 108: 106-111.

Erel, U., Reynolds, T., Kaptani, E. (2017). Participatory theatre for transformative social research. *Qualitative Research*, 17(3): 302-312.

European Commission Migration and Home Affairs (no date). person with a migratory background. Available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/pages/glossary/person-migratory-background_en (accessed 23/11/2022).

Fassin, D., Kobelinsky, C. (2012). How Asylum Claims Are Adjudicated: The Institution as a Moral Agent. *Revue française de sociologie*, 53(4): 444-472.

Freire, P. (2018). *Pedagogia degli Oppressi*, Torino, Gruppo Abele.

Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana (2018), “Decreto-Legge 4 ottobre 2018, n. 113”, Serie Generale, Anno 159°, Numero 231. Available at: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/gu/2018/10/04/231/sg/pdf> (accessed 02/12/2022).

Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana (2020), “Decreto-Legge 21 ottobre 2020, n. 130”, Serie Generale, Anno 161°, Numero 261. Available at: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/gu/2020/10/21/261/sg/pdf> (accessed 02/12/2022).

Giolli Coop. (2021). STORIE DI OOPS - Video del progetto Migreat!. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aU-oqPXW9zo> (accessed 01/03/2022).

Giolli Cooperativa Sociale (no date). MIGREAT! Risultati da condividere. Available at https://www.giollicoop.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=853:migreat-risultati-da-condividere&catid=228&Itemid=132 (accessed 23/12/2022).

Giuliani, G. (2016). Monstrosity, Abjection and Europe in the War on Terror. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 27(4): 96-114.

Gobo, G. (2001). *Descrivere il mondo. Teoria e pratica del metodo etnografico in sociologia*, Roma, Carocci editore.

Goffman, E. (1956). *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, Edinburgh, The Bateman Press.

Goffman, E. (1979). *Gender Advertisements*, New York, Harper Torchbooks.

Grove, N. J. and Zwi, A. B. (2006). Our health and theirs: Forced migration, othering, and public health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 62(8): 1931-1942.

Hall, R. H. (1968). Professionalization and Bureaucratization. *American Sociological Review*, 33(1): 92-104.

Hammersley P., Atkinson, M. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice. Third edition*, London and New York, Routledge.

Harris, A., Bartlow, S. (2015). Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Class. In: DeLamater, J., Plante, R. F., (eds.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Sexualities*, Cham, Switzerland, Springer: 261-271.

Hearn, J. (2017). Di cosa parliamo quando parliamo di intersezionalità. Available at: <https://www.ingenere.it/articoli/di-cosa-parliamo-quando-parliamo-di-intersezionalita> (accessed 15/12/2022).

Held, N. (2022). “As queer refugees, we are out of category, we do not belong to one, or the other”: LGBTIQ+ refugees’ experiences in “ambivalent” queer spaces. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*: 1-20.

Herrera, G. (2013). Gender and International Migration: Contributions and Cross-Fertilizations. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39: 471-489.

Holstein, J. A., Gubrium, J. F. (1997). Active Interviewing. In: Silverman, D., (ed.), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, London, Sage Publications: 113-129.

hooks, b. (1989). Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 36: 15-23.

hooks, b. (2020a). *Elogio del margine / Scrivere al buio*, translated and edited by Nadotti, M., Napoli, Tamu Edizioni.

hooks, b. (2020b). *Insegnare a trasgredire. L'educazione come pratica della libertà*, Milano, Meltemi.

hooks, b. (2021). *Il femminismo è per tutti. Una politica appassionata*, Napoli, Tamu Edizioni.

Horghagen, S., Josephsson, S. (2010). Theatre as Liberation, Collaboration and Relationship for Asylum Seekers. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 17(3): 168-176.

Idos (2022). Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2022. Scheda di sintesi: 1-11. Available at: <https://www.dossierimmigrazione.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Scheda-di-sintesi-Dossier-Statistico-Immigrazione-2022.pdf> (accessed 22/11/2022).

Insee (2022). L'essentiel sur... les immigrés et les étrangers. Available at: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/3633212> (accessed 22/11/2022).

Istat (no date) Stranieri residenti al 1° gennaio. Available at: http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCIS_POPSTRRES1 (accessed 22/11/2022).

Jacobsen, M. H. (2017). Erving Goffman: – Exploring the Interaction Order Through Everyday Observations and Imaginative Metaphors. In: Jacobsen, M. H., (ed.), *The Interactionist Imagination. Studying Meaning, Situation and Micro-Social Order*, London, Palgrave Macmillan: 195-232.

Kaptani, E., Yuval-Davis, N. (2008). Participatory Theatre as a Research Methodology: Identity, Performance and Social Action Among Refugees. *Sociological Research Online*, 13(5): 1-12.

keep.eu (no date). Lead partner. What is it? Available at: <https://keep.eu/faq/lead-partner-what-is-it/#:~:text=The%20lead%20partner%20is%20the,when%20meaning%20%27lead%20partner> (accessed 19/09/2022).

Kristeva, Julia. (1982). *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, New York, Columbia University Press.

Kuringa (no date(a)). Feminist Theatre of the Oppressed. Available at: <https://kuringa.de/en/method-en/to-feminist-theatre-of-the-oppressed-en/#sdendnote1anc> (accessed 29/10/2022).

Kuringa (no date(b)). Ma(g)dalena International Network. Available at: <https://kuringa.de/en/madalena-network/> (accessed 29/10/2022).

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Freedom, California, Crossing Press.

Macedo, D. (2018). Introduzione all'edizione per il 50° anniversario. In: Freire, P., *Pedagogia degli Oppressi*, Torino, Gruppo Abele: 7-38.

Ma(g)dalena International Network (2022). *Teatro de las Oprimidas. Red Ma(g)dalena Internacional*. Available at: <https://teatrodelasoprimidas.org/> (accessed 16/05/2022).

Malkassian, C., Hanssen, M., Cambert, Y., Elwakil, A., Crosse, C., Ioriatti, C., Ruggieri, M. G., Mazzini, R., Sinai, S., Jozifek, Z. (2021). Changing Migration Narratives. The Migreat Project Guide: concepts, methods, activities and good practices. Available at: <https://migreateducation.files.wordpress.com/2022/03/changing-migration-narratives.pdf> (accessed 30/07/2022).

Marchetti, C. (2014). Rifugiati e migranti forzati in Italia. Il pendolo tra “emergenza” e “sistema”. *REMHU - Revista Interdisciplinar da Mobilidade Humana*, 22(43): 53-70.

Mazzini, R. (2011). Introduzione. In: Boal, A., *Il Teatro degli Oppressi. Teoria e Tecnica del Teatro Latinoamericano*, Molfetta, La Meridiana.

Mazzini, R., Talamonti, L. (2011). Teatro dell’Oppresso, potere, conflitto, empowerment. In Nicoli, M. A., Pellegrino, V., (eds.), *L’empowerment nei servizi sanitari e sociali. Tra istanze individuali e necessità collettive*, Roma, Il Pensiero Scientifico Editore: 111-132.

McCall, L. (2005). The Complexity of Intersectionality. *Signs*, (3): 1771-1800.

McGregor, E., Ragab, N. (2016). The Role of Culture and the Arts in the Integration of Refugees and Migrants. European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA), United Nations University. Available at: <https://migration.unu.edu/publications/reports/the-role-of-culture-and-the-arts-in-the-integration-of-refugees-and-migrants.html> (accessed 10/10/2021).

MiGREAT! Changing the narrative of migration (no date). MiGREAT! Changing the narrative of migration. Available at: <https://migreateducation.wordpress.com/> (accessed 15/12/2022).

MiGreat! (no date(a)). Migreat! Handbook: Creative approaches to changing the narratives on migration through visual tools. Available at: <https://migreateducation.files.wordpress.com/2022/02/migreat-handbook-creative-approaches-to-changing-the-narratives-on-migration-through-visual-tools-2021.pdf> (accessed 30/10/2022).

MiGreat! (no date(b)). Playing migration narratives Forum-Theatre for change (from MiGreat! project). Available at: <https://migreateducation.files.wordpress.com/2022/03/migreat-tool-kit-io3-theatre-1.pdf> (accessed 30/10/2022).

Miramonti, A. (2017). *Come usare il Teatro Forum nel dialogo di comunità. Manuale di conduzione*, Lulu.com.

Musca, S. (2019). Theatre and Migration between Ethics and Aesthetics [Editorial]. *Performing Ethos: International Journal of Ethics in Theatre and Performance*, 9(1): 3-8.

Nichols, D. (1956). Theatre, Society, Education. *Educational Theatre Journal*, 8(3): 179-184.

Nicoli, M. A., Zani, B., Marcon A. (2011). Aspetti teorico-storici del costruito di empowerment. In Nicoli, M. A., Pellegrino, V., (eds.), *L'empowerment nei servizi sanitari e sociali. Tra istanze individuali e necessità collettive*, Roma, Il Pensiero Scientifico Editore: 3-26.

Noy Meir, U. Y. (2021). Review of Theatre of the Oppressed - Roots & Wings: A Theory of Praxis. *Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Journal*, 6(1): 1-4.

O'Neill, M., Erel, U., Kaptani, E., Reynolds, T. (2019). Borders, risk and belonging: Challenges for arts-based research in understanding the lives of women asylum seekers and migrants 'at the borders of humanity'. *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture*, 10(1): 129-147.

OECD iLibrary (2021). International Migration Outlook 2021. Hungary. Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/f8c87bfe-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/f8c87bfe-en> (accessed 22/11/2022).

Online Etymology Dictionary (2001-2022a). theatre. Available at: https://www.etymonline.com/word/theatre#etymonline_v_25860 (accessed 17/10/2022).

Online Etymology Dictionary (2001-2022b). drama. Available at: https://www.etymonline.com/word/drama#etymonline_v_15880 (accessed 17/10/2022).

Opfermann, L. S. (2020). Language, trust and transformation: exploring theatre as a research method with migrant youth. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 23(2): 139-153.

Ortner, S. B. (2010). Access: Reflections on studying up in Hollywood. *Ethnography*, 11(2): 211-233.

Patriarca, S., Deplano, V. (2018). INTRODUCTION. Nation, 'race', and racisms in twentieth-century Italy. *Modern Italy*, 23(4): 349-353.

- Pisciotta, A. (2016). [Sul rapporto tra sociologia, teatro e società] Elementi per una etnometodologia teatrale: il Teatro dell'Oppresso. *Cambio. Rivista Sulle Trasformazioni Sociali*, 6(11): 65-76.
- Powers, B., Duffy, P. B. (2016). Making Invisible Intersectionality Visible Through Theater of the Oppressed in Teacher Education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(1): 61-73.
- Ranjan, D. (2020). Resisting Neo-colonialism in Participatory Theatre. *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Equality and Diversity*, 6(2): 1-13.
- Reichertz, J. (2014). Induction, Deduction, Abduction. In: Flick, U., (ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, London, Sage Publications: 123-135.
- Rinaldi, C. (2018). Fare il crimine (per) fare il genere. Maschilità, devianza e crimine tra approcci teorici e analisi empirica. In: Antonelli, F., (ed.), *Genere, sessualità e teorie sociologiche*, Milano, Wolters Kluwer: 176-201.
- Rossi Ghiglione, A. (2011). Fare un progetto di Teatro Sociale. In Rossi Ghiglione, A., Pagliarino, A., (eds.), *Fare teatro sociale*, Roma, Dino Audino Editore: 11-30.
- Rovisco, M. (2019). Staging citizenship: Artistic performance as a site of contestation of citizenship. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 22(5): 647-661.
- Rozakou, K. (2012). The biopolitics of hospitality in Greece: Humanitarianism and the management of refugees. *American Ethnologist*, 39(3): 562-577.
- Salvatori, S., Terrón Caro, T. (2019). L'approccio intersezionale e quello transnazionale nello studio dei flussi migratori: elementi per una proposta analitica. *Collectivus: revista de ciencias sociales*, 6(1): 35-46.

- Samuels, G. M., Ross-Sheriff, F. (2008). Identity, Oppression, and Power: Feminisms and Intersectionality Theory [Editorial]. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, 23(1): 5-9.
- Santos, B. (2018). *Teatro dell'oppresso. Radici e ali*, translated and edited by Demozzi, S., Tolomelli, A., Bologna, Clueb.
- Schroeter, S. (2013). "The way it works" doesn't: Theatre of the Oppressed as Critical Pedagogy and Counternarrative. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, 36(4): 394-415.
- Sharifi, A. (2016). Theatre and Migration. Documentation, Influences and Perspectives in European Theatre. In: Brauneck, M., ITI Germany, (eds.), *Independent Theatre in Contemporary Europe. Structures – Aesthetics – Cultural Policy*, Bielefeld, Transcript Verlag: 321-415.
- Shevtsova, M. (2018). Interdisciplinary Approaches and the Sociology of Theatre Practices'. In Guccini, G., Petrini, A., (eds.), *Thinking the Theatre – New Theatrology and Performance Studies. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi (Torino, 29-30 maggio 2015 – Aula Magna Cavallerizza Reale)*, Arti della performance: orizzonti e culture 7, Dipartimento delle Arti, Alma Mater Studiorum-Università di Bologna: 105-125.
- Sinatti, G. (2014). Masculinities and Intersectionality in Migration: Transnational Wolof Migrants Negotiating Manhood and Gendered Family Roles. In: Truong, T.-D., Gasper, D., Handmaker, J., Bergh, S. I., (eds.), *Migration, Gender and Social Justice. Perspectives on Human Insecurity*, Hexagon Series on Human 215 and Environmental Security and Peace 9, Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London, Springer: 215-226.

Smith, A. (2012). Creative approaches in community work: Developing a collective analysis for change: using forum theatre with migrant domestic workers. *Working for Change: The Irish Journal of Community Work*, 3: 44-57.

Songe-Møller, A. S., Bjerkestrand, K. B. (2012). Empowerment of Citizens in a Multicultural Society. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 30: 1-19.

Sorgoni, B. (2013). Chiedere asilo. Racconti, traduzioni, trascrizioni. *Antropologia*, 15: 131-151.

Taha, D. (2019). Intersectionality and Other Critical Approaches in Refugee Research. An Annotated Bibliography. *Local Engagement Refugee Research Network Paper*, 3: 1-17.

The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford (2022). Migrants in the UK: An Overview. Available at: <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migrants-in-the-uk-an-overview/> (accessed 22/11/2022).

Thimm, T., Chaudhuri, M. (2021). Migration as mobility? An intersectional approach. *Applied Mobilities*, 6(3): 273-288.

Timmermans, S., Tavory, I. (2012). Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis. *Sociological Theory*, 30(3): 167-186.

Timmermans, S., Tavory, I. (2014). *Abductive Analysis: Theorizing Qualitative Research*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press.

Tolomelli, A. (2012). Dalla pedagogia degli oppressi al teatro dell'oppresso. Da Freire a Boal. *Educazione Democratica. Rivista di pedagogia politica*, 3: 21-42.

U-school for Transformation by Presencing Institute (2007-2021). Theory U. Available at: <https://www.u-school.org/aboutus/theory-u> (accessed 16/11/2022).

Võsu, E. (2010). Metaphorical analogies in approaches of Victor Turner and Erving Goffman: Dramaturgy in social interaction and dramas of social life. *Sign Systems Studies*, 38(1/4): 130-166.

Wikström, E. (2008). Boundary work as inner and outer dialogue: dieticians in Sweden. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 3(1): 59-77.

Young, I. M. (2003). The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State. *Signs*, 29(1): 1-25.

Yuval-Davis, N., Kaptani, E. (2009). Performing Identities: Participatory Theatre among Refugees. In: Wetherell M., (ed.), *Theorizing Identities and Social Action*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan: 56-74.

Zoniou, C., Tarján, E., Cao, M. L. F., Várhegyi, V., Szabó, V. (2012). Art of adaptation. Manual of artistic tools for migrants. Available at https://issuu.com/artemisiz/docs/ariadne_emanual_english (accessed 30/10/2022).

Appendix

A. Observation Guide

1) Meetings for the construction of a Forum-Theatre scene

- Who participates in these meetings?
- Why do people participate (if someone mentions this)?
- Who participates more actively? Who stays more in the background?
- Which activities are carried out? How are they introduced, framed, and explained by practitioners?
- How do participants interact with each other?
- How are stories talked about by participants?
- How do participants understand the concept of “dominant narrative” about people from a migrant background?
- How are themes such as discrimination and racism towards people from a migrant background represented and talked about by participants?
- Which aspects of participants’ (both from and not from a migrant background) lives are included and represented in the activities? Which ones remain excluded?
- How is power exercised over the choice to (not) represent certain aspects of participants’ lives?
- How do practitioners work at the co-construction of the scenes and at other activities?
- How do practitioners facilitate or on the contrary hinder the (active) participation of the group? How do they exercise power over participants’ involvement in the activities?
- How are themes such as discrimination and racism towards people from a migrant background talked about by practitioners?
- How do practitioners explain the concept of “empowerment”?

- How do practitioners explain the aims of Theatre of the Oppressed?
- Which types of relationships are built between practitioners and participants during the activities?
- Do difficulties emerge during the activities? If so, which ones? How are they dealt with by practitioners?

2) *Forum-Theatre sessions*

- How do practitioners present Forum-Theatre to the audience (in general)? How do they present the specific scene that will be shown to the audience?
- Which scene is represented in the Forum-Theatre?
- How is the scene developed by the actors?
- How does the Joker promote participation by the audience?
- Who participates as spectators (simply being there and listening)?
- Who participates *actively* as spect-actors?
- How does the audience respond to the Forum-Theatre and the themes represented in it?
- Which difficulties emerge during the audience's participation?
- Which strategies are proposed by the audience to solve the problem(s) (the oppression) that emerged in the scene?
- How does the rest of the audience respond to the strategies proposed?
- How does the audience understand the concept of "oppression" (if observable)?
- How does the audience understand the concept of "empowerment" (if observable)?
- How does the Joker promote discussion and active participation?
- Which power relations emerge between practitioners, actors, and the audience?
- Are people from a migrant background present during the Forum-Theatre session? If so, how do they respond to the Forum-Theatre scene(s)?

- Why do people from a migrant background participate in Forum-Theatre session (if someone mentions this)?
- How do people from a migrant background understand the concept of “oppression” (if observable)?
- How do they understand the concept of “empowerment” (if observable)?
- Which power relations emerge between participants from a migrant background and participants not from a migrant background?

3) Multiplier events for the presentation of the handbook on dominant narratives about migrations realised for the project (IO1 handbook)

- Who participates in these events?
- Why do people participate (if mentioned)?
- Who participates more actively? Who stays more in the background?
- Which activities are carried out? How are they introduced, framed, and explained by practitioners?
- Are people from a migrant background present? If so, how do they respond to these activities?
- Why do people from a migrant background participate in these activities (if mentioned)?
- How is discrimination against people from a migrant background talked about?
- How do participants understand the concept of “dominant narrative” about people from a migrant background?
- How do practitioners promote discussion and active participation?
- Which power relations emerge during the multiplier events between participants and practitioners?

- Which power relations emerge between participants from a migrant background and participants not from a migrant background?

4) Multiplier events for the presentation of the visual materials on dominant narratives about migrations realised for the project

Same questions as at point 3 plus the following questions:

- Are people who participated at the realisation of the visual materials present? If so, how do they participate in the workshops? How do they talk about the themes represented in the videos? How do they frame the issue of discrimination and stereotypes towards people from a migrant background?
- How do participants comment on the content of the visual materials? What do they agree with? What do they criticise?
- How do participants understand the themes represented in the videos (if observable)?

5) Meetings with the members of the Italian Cooperative (to organise events, such as multiplier events, Forum-Theatre sessions, etc.) and with those from the other three countries involved in the project

- How do practitioners understand the aim of the project?
- How do practitioners comment on completed activities?
- How do practitioners respond to the criticisms and discussions that emerged during the activities?
- How do practitioners plan on tackling the difficulties that emerged during the activities?
- How do practitioners discuss the presence of different groups of persons during the meetings/workshops (social workers, Italian teachers, volunteers, civil servants, people from a migrant background etc.)? How do they categorise and label groups of people?

Which characteristics are salient to them and hence build up to the label itself (e.g. gender, age, nationality, profession, migrant background, etc.)?

- How is discrimination against people from a migrant background talked about?
- How do practitioners discuss the concept of “oppression” and ways to tackle it?
- How do practitioners discuss the concept of “empowerment” and ways to foster it?

6) Final Conference in London

Same questions as at points 3 and 4

B. Questions and topics to be discussed during the ethnographic interview with two spect-actors from a migrant background

Introduction of myself, my role in [Italian Cooperative], the topic of my research

General questions

- How old are you?
- Where are you from? And when did you arrive / how long have you been here?
- What do you do in Trento (study, work, etc.)?
- How did you get to know [Italian Cooperative] / people from [Italian Cooperative]?

Questions on the scene

- (in general) What do you think about the Forum-Theatre session that took place on 18th February?
- What do you think about the story that was performed? Did you understand it? Did it represent something that happened to you or to some people that you know? Or did you think that it was not realistic?

Comments on participation

- Did you feel encouraged to intervene? What would have fostered your/people's participation in your opinion?
- How did you feel when you entered the scene to play? For example, did you feel scared, happy, judged, welcomed, supported?
- Did you experience any linguistic difficulties? Did you feel encouraged to participate or, on the contrary, did you feel that you were not given much time/many opportunities to intervene? Was this because of the language?

- How did the Jolly make you feel? How did the presence of a female Jolly make you feel?

Comments on the usefulness of Forum-Theatre to talk about migrations

- Do you think that this type of activity can help talk about migrations and some of the problems experienced by people from a migrant background? Is there something you would have done differently the day of the Forum-Theatre session to make it more helpful?
- Are there any other stories you would like to see represented in a Forum-Theatre scene? Why?

Some questions on the videos that were shown before the Forum-Theatre session (as part of the MiGreat! project)

- What did you think about the videos?
- Did they show something that happened to you as well?
- Was there something in the videos that you particularly liked or that you disliked? Why?

C. Interview Guide 1

Professionals working in the four associations involved in the project (seven interviewees)

1) Personal and professional background

- Where are you from? *[Nationality, migrant background or not – pay attention also to cases of internal migration or migration from border countries, particularly in the case of Hungary]*
- How old are you?
- What and where did you study? What is your educational and work path?
- Could you please tell me how long you have been working for [name of cooperative/association], and what is your role in it, particularly in relation to MiGreat!?

2) The organisation/cooperative

- What does [name of cooperative/organisation] do? Which are its main goals?
- Who are the persons working at [name of cooperative/organisation]? *[Gender, migrant background, professional background]*
- Do you normally use Theatre of the Oppressed and/or other participatory methods as part of your activities? Or was this a “new entry” and maybe even a learning opportunity?

3) Construction and public performance of the Forum-Theatre scene

- *[not for Italy]* How long did it take to complete the construction and public performance of the Forum-Theatre scene? When did you work on this process?

- Where were the meetings held? How did you choose this/these place/s? Was it a pre-existing setting (e.g., pre-existing classes or recreational circles) or did you create any ad hoc moments? *[Both for rehearsals and public performance]*
- *[not for Italy]* Who were the people involved in the construction of the scene(s) of Forum-Theatre? *[Gender, age, migrant background, type of migration, social class, general situation, e.g. full-time workers, homeless people etc. Pay attention to whether it was a homogeneous or a heterogeneous group]* Did the group remain stable across time or did it change during the process?
- *[not for Italy]* *[if other people were present, such as participants' children]* What did children/other people who were there but did not participate in the construction of the scene do during the meetings?
- How did you recruit participants to Forum-Theatre as actors/actresses? *[e.g., advertisement to search for participants]* Did you encounter any difficulties in recruiting them?
- Which expectations did participants have in your opinion/as far as you know? Were they met, you think? *[Consider to ask this also if interviewing participants in the Italian context]*
- *[not for Italy]* Which activities were carried out during the preparation of Forum-Theatre? *[Pay attention to both the informal level, such as ice-breaking activities, including Image Theatre and warming-up, and the activities which were more related to Forum-Theatre, such as the definition of the characters of the scene, who wrote the script and how]*
- How did you introduce, frame, and explain activities to the participants (actors/actresses), before the meetings (such as when recruiting them)? How did you introduce the MiGreat! project? And what about during the meetings? How did you keep

participants up-to-date regarding the process of construction of the scene? And what about during the public performance of Forum-Theatre: how did you introduce, frame, and explain Forum-Theatre to the audience and how did you present the specific scene(s) that was/were shown to the audience? How did you introduce the MiGreat! project to the audience?

- *[not for Italy]* How did people participate in the meetings? Were some of them more active than others? If so, how did you try to facilitate their participation?
- *[not for Italy]* Which were the stories that were told about migrations during the construction of the scene(s)? How were they talked about? What were the comments about/around such stories?
- How did you choose the scene(s) to be performed during the Forum-Theatre?
- *[not for Italy]* Are people who told the stories the same that performed during Forum-Theatre?
- Did participants have already had the chance to participate in theatrical performances?
- Which language did you use? Did participants speak fluently [the language of the country]? Did you experience any linguistic difficulties? If so, how did you try to overcome them? *[E.g., Did someone translate? Did you prioritise physical/theatrical exercises over words/speech?]* Which effect did the use of a language which is not your mother tongue have on you as a Jolly? And on participants? Do you think that the fact of not knowing the language (as native speakers) by you and/or by participants might have discouraged people from participating?
- Which effect did the use in the Forum-Theatre session of a language which is not your mother tongue had on you as a Jolly? And on the audience? Do you think that the fact of not knowing the language (as native speakers) by you and/or by the audience might have discouraged people from participating?

- *[not for Italy]* How many people were involved in the organisation of the event (e.g., technicians)?
- How did you advertise the event? How did you recruit participants to the Forum-Theatre session as spectators? Did you encounter any difficulties in recruiting them?
- Who participated in the Forum-Theatre session as an audience? Were people part of a “friends’ circle” or were they new (and in which percentage more or less)? Were they native people or were they foreigners/people from a migrant background?
- *[not for Italy]* How usual is this type of activity (Forum-Theatre and TO more generally) in your organisation?
- Did the audience know what a Forum-Theatre is?
- *[not for Italy]* How did people participate? Were some people more active than others?
- How did you facilitate discussion and active participation by the audience as a Jolly? How did you feel? Were you struggling to make the audience participate? Or did you feel that people could easily follow your instructions and participate?
- Did you encounter any difficulties in preparing the scene(s) with participants and/or in coordinating the participation of the audience as a Jolly? If so, which ones? How did you try to manage these difficulties? Had you already conducted a Forum-Theatre session before?
- Did you experience any moments of discomfort caused by a comment/a reaction by someone in the audience? How did you manage them?
- Did your gender influence your relationship with participants during the meetings and/or with the audience? If so, how? Did you experience any difficulties because of this? *[E.g. a female Jolly working with a majority of male participants]*
- How did actors/actresses feel, in your opinion? *[Consider to ask this to actors/actresses in the Italian context]*

- Did you organise any follow-up events? Which feedback did you get?
- Did people ask to repeat the Forum-Theatre session in another place? Did you have a multiplier event? Did the group (of actors/actresses) meet again?
- How has Covid-19 pandemic influenced the whole work?

4) Preparation of the handbook (IO1)

- How long did it take to complete the handbook and when did you work on its realisation?
- Who were the people involved in the construction of the handbook? [*Gender, age, migrant background, social class, professional background*] Did you ask for advice from any “experts”? If so, who were they? Did they come from other organisations?
- How did you and your colleagues work on the production of the handbook? Who decided which themes to include? Who did the research? How did they do it?
- Who read the handbook first? How did you disseminate it? What are its main targets?
- What were the difficulties in the production of the handbook? How did you try to face them?
- Which feedback did you receive from people who read the handbook? [*Pay attention to feedbacks from different countries, since the handbook was published in at least four different languages*]

5) Preparation of visual materials

- [*not for Italy*] Which visual materials did your association produce? Who chose to realise this type of visual tools?
- How long did it take to complete the visual materials and when did you work on their realisation?

- Where were the meetings to construct these materials held? How did you choose this/these place/s? Was it a pre-existing setting (e.g., pre-existing classes or recreational circles) or did you create any ad hoc moments?
- How usual is this type of activity (producing this type of visual materials) in your organisation? Did you have already realised similar materials before?
- Who were the people involved in the construction of the visual materials? [*Gender, age, migrant background, type of migration, social class, general situation, e.g. full-time workers, homeless people etc. Pay attention to whether it was a homogeneous or a heterogeneous group*] Did the group remain stable across time or did it change during the process?
- [*if other people were present, such as participants' children*] What did children/other people who were there but did not participate in the construction of the materials do during the meetings?
- How did you recruit participants? [*e.g., advertisement to search for participants*] Did you encounter any difficulties in recruiting them?
- Which expectations did participants have in your opinion/as far as you know? Were they met, you think? [*Consider to ask this also if interviewing participants in the Italian context*]
- Which activities were carried out during the preparation of the visual materials?
- How did you introduce, frame, and explain activities to the participants, before the meetings (such as when recruiting them)? [*not for Italy*] And what about during the meetings? How did you keep participants up-to-date regarding the realisation of the visual materials?

- How did people participate in the meetings? Were some of them more active than others? (In case, who were the more active and who the more passive?) If so, how did you try to facilitate their participation?
- Which were the stories that were told about migration during the construction of the visual materials? How were they talked about? What were the comments about/around such stories?
- How did you choose the stories to be shown in the visual materials?
- Are people who told the stories the same that have appeared in the visual materials?
- Did participants have already had the chance to participate in similar activities?
- Did you encounter any difficulties in preparing the visual materials with participants? If so, which ones? How did you try to manage these difficulties?
- Did your gender influence your relationship with participants during the meetings? If so, how? Did you experience any difficulties because of this? [*E.g. a female facilitator working with a majority of male participants?*]
- How did participants feel? [*Consider to ask this to participants in the Italian context*]
- Which language did you use? Did participants speak fluently [the language of the country]? Did you experience any linguistic difficulties? If so, how did you try to overcome them? [*E.g., Did someone translate? Did you prioritise physical/theatrical exercises over words/speech?*] Which effect did the use of a language which is not your mother tongue had on you as a facilitator? And on participants? Do you think that the fact of not knowing the language (as native speakers) by you and/or by participants might have discouraged people from participating?
- Who are the targets of these materials?
- How has Covid-19 pandemic influenced the whole work?

6) Workshops and other events aimed at spreading the materials produced (handbook and visual materials), as well as the “results” of MiGreat!, including the Final Conference in London

- *[not for Italy]* Where did these events take place? *[also for Italy]* How did you choose this/these place/s?
- How did you advertise these events? How did you recruit participants to the events as spectators? Did you encounter any difficulties in recruiting them?
- Who participated in the events as an audience? *[Gender, age, migrant background, type of migration, social class, general situation, e.g. full-time workers, homeless people etc.]*
Were people part of a “friends’ circle” or were they new (and in which percentage more or less)? Were they native people or were they foreigners/people from a migrant background?
- How usual are these types of events in your organisation?
- How did you introduce, frame, and explain the goals of these events to the audience? How did you present the materials that were shown to the audience? How did you introduce MiGreat! project to the audience?
- *[not for Italy]* How did people participate? Were some people more active than others?
- How did you facilitate discussion and active participation by the audience as a Jolly? How did you feel? Were you struggling to make the audience participate? Or did you feel that people could easily follow your instructions and participate?
- Did you encounter any difficulties in coordinating the participation of the audience as a Jolly? If so, which ones? How did you try to manage these difficulties?
- Did you experience any moments of discomfort caused by a comment/a reaction by someone in the audience? How did you manage them?

- Did your gender influence your relationship with the audience? If so, how? Did you experience any difficulties because of this? [*E.g. a female facilitator during a workshop where there are mostly men in the audience*]
- Which effect did the use in these events of a language which is not your mother tongue had on you as a facilitator? And on the audience? Do you think that the fact of not knowing the language (as native speakers) by you and/or by the audience might have discouraged people from participating?
- Did you organise any follow-up events? Which feedback did you get?
- Did people ask to repeat these workshops in another place? Did the group of participants meet again?

7) Final questions on the themes tackled in MiGreat!

- What are the main goals of the MiGreat! project?
- How do you understand the concepts of “dominant narrative”, “alternative narrative”, and “counter narrative”? And with specific reference to people from a migrant background?
- How do you understand the concept of “oppression”, particularly in relation to people from a migrant background? And to professionals working in this field?
- How do you understand the concept of “empowerment”, particularly in relation to people from a migrant background? And to professionals working in this field?

Final question: Do you have anything to add that might be relevant to our conversation? Something that we haven't touched upon, an important issue that we haven't mentioned...

D. Interview Guide 2

Three key informants (the language used is Italian because all three interviewees speak Italian)

1) Background personale e professionale

- Da dove viene?
- Quanti anni ha?
- Cosa e dove ha studiato?
- Potrebbe dirmi brevemente da quanto tempo lavora per [nome della cooperativa/associazione] e qual è il suo ruolo al suo interno?
- Quando, dove e come ha iniziato a praticare e/o lavorare con il Teatro dell'Oppresso (TdO)?

2) L'associazione (se non rilevante, passare al punto 3)

- Di cosa si occupa [nome della cooperativa/organizzazione]? Quali sono i suoi obiettivi principali?
- Chi sono le persone che lavorano presso [nome della cooperativa/organizzazione]?
[Genere, background migratorio, background formativo e professionale]

3) Il TdO

- Quali sono i principi e gli obiettivi principali alla base del TdO?
- Come definirebbe il concetto di “oppressione”? Che cosa significa essere “oppressi”?
Che cosa significa essere “oppressori”?
- Come definirebbe il concetto di “empowerment”?

- Potrebbe spiegarmi come [nome della cooperativa/organizzazione/lei] organizza e lavora a un progetto in cui viene utilizzato il TdO? Si tratta di progetti europei, nazionali o di altro tipo? Lavorate anche in collaborazione con altre/i associazioni/enti, magari anche di altri paesi?
- Come decidete se prendere parte a un progetto oppure no?
- Quanto tempo dedicate solitamente alla realizzazione di un progetto? E quanto tempo dedicate alla parte specifica di TdO, ad esempio alla costruzione di un Teatro-Forum?
- Quali sono le competenze e le capacità che dovrebbe avere una persona che coordina attività di TdO (ad esempio nel ruolo di Jolly durante un Teatro-Forum, ma anche un/una coordinatore/coordinatrice di altre attività)? C'è qualcosa a cui il coordinatore (o la coordinatrice) deve prestare particolare attenzione affinché le attività si svolgano senza problemi? Se sì, cosa? Come si fa a favorire la partecipazione delle persone coinvolte?
- Qual è lo scopo che secondo lei il TdO dovrebbe avere? Si tratta di finalità artistiche, sociali, o di altro tipo?

4) Progetti di TdO nell'ambito dei fenomeni migratori

- Quali sono stati i progetti in cui avete applicato il TdO al tema delle migrazioni? Che tipo di progetti erano (europei, nazionali, ecc.)? In che periodo avete lavorato a questi progetti (di recente, molti anni fa, ecc.)?
- Di che tipo di migrazioni vi siete occupati all'interno di questi progetti? *[Migrazioni recenti o no, paesi di provenienza delle persone coinvolte, motivi delle migrazioni ecc.]*
- Quali sono stati i temi che avete affrontato in questi progetti (ad es., questioni di genere, religione, salute ecc. in relazione ai fenomeni migratori)?
- Quali erano gli obiettivi di questi progetti?
- Quali fasi comprendevano questi progetti? Quanto tempo ci avete dedicato?

- Chi erano i/le professionisti/professioniste coinvolti/e in questi progetti? Che ruoli svolgevano (es. educatori, pedagogisti, attori professionisti, tecnici ecc.)?
- Come avete presentato questi progetti a possibili futuri/e partecipanti?
- Chi erano le persone che hanno partecipato a questi progetti come attori/attrici, persone che hanno preso parte a laboratori, workshop, ecc.? [*Genere, età, background migratorio, tipo di migrazione, classe, situazione generale ecc., gruppo omogeneo o eterogeneo*] Come siete andati alla ricerca di queste persone? Si trattava di persone di vostra conoscenza? Avete cercato anche partecipanti provenienti da contesti “nuovi”? Se sì, che contesti erano e perché li avete coinvolti? Si trattava di persone che avevano già avuto esperienze di teatro e/o di TdO oppure no?
- Ci sono mai stati/e partecipanti più attivi/e di altri/e? Se sì, ci sono state delle somiglianze tra i progetti rispetto a chi era più attivo/a e chi lo era di meno?
- Dove hanno avuto luogo le varie attività, quelle di preparazione e quelle aperte al pubblico? Come avete scelto questi spazi? Avete preferenze per determinati spazi piuttosto che altri (ad es., spazi all’aperto piuttosto che al chiuso)? Perché? Questi spazi hanno in qualche modo influenzato il vostro lavoro (ad es., per delle norme di comportamento che eravate tenuti a seguire, perché c’erano delle stanze molto piccole ma eravate lì con molte persone ecc.)?
- Quali attività avete svolto durante i laboratori, i workshop, la costruzione di un Teatro-Forum, ecc.? (Sia le attività più informali per riscaldarsi e rompere il ghiaccio, sia le attività specifiche, ad esempio la scelta dei personaggi per un Teatro-Forum) Qual era lo scopo di queste attività?
- Potrebbe farmi qualche esempio dei repertori di storie che sono state raccontate durante le attività? Chi ha scelto poi quali storie portare avanti, ad esempio per rappresentarle nei Teatri-Forum? Come sono state scelte queste storie?

- Come avete scelto chi sarebbe andato in scena nei Teatri-Forum o in altre performance?
- Quale lingua avete usato normalmente durante le prove e/o le esibizioni, laddove fossero presenti persone non di madrelingua italiana? Avete mai riscontrato difficoltà linguistiche, da parte di chi coordinava le attività o da parte dei/delle partecipanti? Se sì, come avete provato a superarle? *[Es., qualcuno ha tradotto? Avete dato la priorità a esercizi fisici/teatrali rispetto alle parole?]*
- Che tipo di eventi aperti al pubblico avete organizzato (es. Teatri-Forum o altro)?
- Chi sono stati i fruitori degli eventi aperti al pubblico che avete organizzato? Di che tipo di pubblico siete andati in cerca? Come? Si trattava di persone che già conoscevate? Se sì, in che modo? Avete cercato anche persone che non conoscevate ma che magari provenivano da contesti che secondo voi potevano essere interessanti? Se sì, in che percentuale all'incirca? Come avete fatto questa scelta? Si trattava di persone che conoscevano il TdO oppure no?
- Come avete presentato questi progetti al pubblico?
- Attraverso quali canali avete pubblicizzato gli eventi aperti al pubblico? Chi ha assistito a queste iniziative/eventi come pubblico, ad es., ai Teatri-Forum?
- Che tipo di feedback avete ricevuto dal pubblico riguardo a questi progetti e alle/ai singole/i attività/eventi?
- Sono mai emerse delle difficoltà o dei momenti di disagio durante le attività che avete svolto? Se sì, in che tipo di attività sono emerse (es. prove o eventi aperti al pubblico)? Quali erano queste difficoltà? Da che cosa erano causate? Come avete cercato di affrontarle?
- Durante queste situazioni, il/la Jolly/coordinatore/coordinatrice è riuscito a gestire le difficoltà? Se sì, come? Se no, perché?

- Il genere del/della Jolly ha mai influenzato il suo rapporto con i/le partecipanti durante le attività? Come? Questo ha mai causato delle difficoltà? *[Ad esempio nel caso di una Jolly che lavorava con molti partecipanti uomini]*
- Secondo lei, che contributo può dare il TdO quando si affrontano una serie di tematiche e di problematiche legate alle migrazioni (ad es., razzismo, discriminazione, emarginazione ecc.)? Come può il TdO aiutare ad affrontare certe questioni? *[Esempi]*
- Oltre al TdO, avete mai utilizzato altre tecniche/strumenti artistici e/o creativi per parlare di migrazioni, ad esempio materiali visuali? Se sì, in che occasioni? Con chi li avete utilizzati? Che impatto hanno avuto?

Domanda finale: C'è qualcosa che vorrebbe aggiungere che pensa sia rilevante alla nostra conversazione? Qualcosa di cui non abbiamo parlato, una questione importante che non abbiamo menzionato...

Table A. Participants in Projects on Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations (from interview with Roberto Mazzini)⁶⁴

Projects	Gender	Age	Countries of origin	Status	Other relevant information
Project realised in Mantua in 2012			Africa, Asia	Refugees and asylum seekers	Scarce economic resources
European project aimed at contrasting racism through theatre realised between 2012 and 2013 in Parma and Reggio Emilia	Both women and men	Young people and some people in their 60s	Italy	Common citizens	
Project realised in a CAS and in collaboration with a university in 2017 in Veneto	Men	Young	Africa, Asia	People from a migrant background living in CAS (asylum seekers), social workers	Scarce economic resources (asylum seekers)
Project aimed at creating a council that would facilitate dialogue between public administration and citizens on social and cultural integration realised in 2018 in the province of Parma	Both women and men	20-60	Italy, other	Italians, people with foreign origins, Italians with foreign origins	
Volunteering project in the reception system realised in Parma	Men		Africa, Asia	Asylum seekers	Scarce economic resources
Two projects aimed at contrasting islamophobia, in particular discrimination	More women than men	Young			

⁶⁴ Tables A, B, and C refer to participants who contributed to the realisation of activities in the projects, i.e., they do not refer to the audience during public events. Empty cells are due to non-availability of data.

against Muslim women, realised between 2016 and 2018					
Project aimed at creating dialogue among residents realised in a building in Modena	Both men and women	Various	Italy, other		
European project aimed at contrasting islamophobia realised between 2019 and 2022	More women than men	20-35	Italy, other	Some people with foreign origins, some people from a migrant background (incl. second, third, and fourth-generation migrants), antiracist activists, university students	Non-Muslim Italian activists, Muslim people, people from the middle classes

Table B. Participants in Projects on Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations (from interview with Massimiliano Bozza)

Projects	Gender	Age	Countries of origin	Status	Other relevant information
Projects realised in CAS in Puglia since 2016	Men	18-20, some people in their 30s	Mali, Guinea, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Gambia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bengal, Tunisia	Asylum seekers, a few social workers or educators or coordinators of the projects	Asylum seekers: Muslims and Christians; low level of education; attended language classes
Projects realised in SPRAR in Puglia since 2016	Men	18-20, with some people in their 30s	Mali, Guinea, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Gambia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bengal, Tunisia	Asylum seekers, a few social workers or educators or coordinators of the projects	Asylum seekers: Muslims and Christians; low level of education; attended language classes
Workshop on citizenship realised in Puglia	More women than men among Italians, men from a migrant background	Various (Italians), 30 (asylum seekers)	Italy, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Guinea, Somalia	Asylum seekers, Italian volunteers at the local parish	
European project on discriminations against women from a migrant background realised in 2018 in Puglia	Women	18-40	Afghanistan, Nigeria, Cameroon, Italy	Asylum seekers (those who were not Italian)	

Table C. Participants in Projects on Theatre of the Oppressed and Migrations (from interview with Uri Noy Meir)

Projects	Gender	Age	Countries of origin	Status	Other relevant information
Theatre workshop and Forum-Theatre realised in 2013-2014 in Rome	Men	Young	Africa	Asylum seekers or people with some form of international protection, including refugees	Participants sold socks on the street
Project on Legislative-Theatre realised in 2015-2016 in Rome	Men	Young	Africa, Italy	Asylum seekers, refugees, social workers	
Project aimed at capacity building and improvement of the reception system realised between 2017 and 2019	Both women and men		West Africa (Senegal, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana)	Asylum seekers, refugees, stakeholders of the reception system	
Project aimed at the social and working inclusion of third-country nationals, in particular vulnerable subjects, started in 2020 and still ongoing	Both women and men		Extra-EU countries: South America, Asia (e.g., Afghanistan), North-African countries (women, esp. Morocco), a few Italian citizens	People who have lived in Italy for twenty or thirty years, second-generation migrants, people who have recently arrived in Italy, stakeholders of the reception system	

Table D. Codes

Code	Comment	Grounded
"We" talking about "them"	References to the question of who is entitled to talk about migrations, and to the fact that Italian/European people are talking for/about people from a migrant background	22
Activities during MEs ⁶⁵	Activities carried out during MEs as part of the MiGreat! project in all four partner countries	9
Activities in TO ⁶⁶ projects on migrations in Italy	Activities carried out during projects of TO and migrations in Italy (including both ice-breaking or warming-up activities, and activities which are more specific to TO, such as to choose a story or characters for Forum-Theatre)	33
Activities to prepare Forum-Theatres	Activities carried out in the four partner countries to prepare the Forum-Theatre scenes for MiGreat!	22
Activities to prepare the visual materials	Activities carried out in the four partner countries to prepare the visual materials for MiGreat!	47
Actors' participation during the preparation of Forum-Theatres	General references to the ways in which actors and actresses participate during the preparation of the Forum-Theatre scenes of MiGreat! in the four partner countries	6
Actors' previous experiences of TO and/or theatre	References to whether actors and actresses in the four partner countries of MiGreat! have already had any experiences of TO or theatre more generally before, or not	16
Adults and game	Resistance that adult people show to have or express when playing games during activities, or facilitators noting it during activities	4
Aesthetics	References to either the Aesthetics of the Oppressed or to the use of aesthetics and aesthetic elements in Forum-Theatres, visual materials or other products	33
Age difference between actors and characters	References to the differences in terms of age between actors/actresses and characters in Forum-Theatres, and problematisation of this issue by themselves or by MiGreat! practitioners	3

⁶⁵ "MEs" stands for "multiplier events".

⁶⁶ "TO" stands for "Theatre of the Oppressed".

Agency vs victim	References to people from a migrant background as having agency and not being victims, and to the differences that exists between being oppressed and being a victim (usually referring to characters from a migrant background)	14
Approaches to TO	Different ways of working with TO and of applying this theatrical method in Italy	26
Associations with aggression and violence	References to characters' traits that include the use of (physical or verbal) violence and to criminal behaviours in the Forum-Theatre scene in Italy	10
Audience's participation during Forum-Theatre sessions	General level of participation and ways of participating by the audience during Forum-Theatre sessions in the UK, France and Hungary	15
Audience's participation during public events in TO projects on migrations in Italy	General level of participation and ways of participating by the audience during public events (including Forum-Theatre sessions) during projects on TO and migrations in Italy	6
Audience's previous experiences of theatre in TO projects on migrations in Italy	References to whether members of the audience during public events (including Forum-Theatre sessions) in projects on TO and migrations in Italy have already had any experiences of TO or theatre more generally before, or not	4
Audience's previous theatre experiences	References to whether members of the audience during Forum-Theatre sessions in the four partner countries of MiGreat! have already had any experiences of TO or theatre more generally before, or not	4
Being a foreigner	Stories, narratives or episodes where people from a migrant background are discriminated against because they are foreigners, therefore they come from a foreign country, and this is presented as the main reason for their discrimination	34
Boal's teachings on TO	References to what Boal taught about TO in terms of its principles and goals, and in terms of his approach to TO	22
Bottom-up approach	Idea that TO, and more generally creative and participatory approaches, are based on the active participation by people who take part in activities, and that practitioners should not impose anything on them, but rather listen to participants' ideas and allow them to make their own choices	50

Characteristics of a Forum-Theatre story	Characteristics that a story should have in order to be considered suitable to be performed in a Forum-Theatre scene. These criteria influence the choice of a story	26
Church	Moments in which the presence of the Church as an institution emerges, e.g., in the spaces that are utilised, in some organisations supporting people from a migrant background that are mentioned	9
Collection of materials for the IO1 ⁶⁷	Techniques adopted to collect materials for the IO1 handbook, such as through interviews with experts	10
Combination of TO with other theatrical or creative/artistic tools in Italy	Instances where TO was utilised together with other creative or artistic tools (e.g., visual materials, other theatrical methods) by organisations utilising/experts of TO in Italy	18
Communication problems	Presence of communication problems among characters in stories, where these problems are explained as the main cause of conflict and discrimination (also against people from a migrant background)	8
Complexity of the topic of migrations	References to how complex the topic of migrations is since it includes numerous different dimensions and it is difficult to be discussed	4
Conflict between Italian people	Instances in which conflict among Italian people emerge in stories, but playing a role also in the discrimination against people from a migrant background	3
Consensus	Instances in which consensus is underlined, in particular referring to the importance to receive consensus from participants when utilising creative and participatory approaches, in order to do something that they agree with, and not imposing anything on them	18
Critical issues in IO1	Critical issues that characterise the IO1 handbook, both in terms of those that are present in the final product, and of the difficulties that emerged during its production	23
Critiques of the ways of doing TO in Italy	Critiques towards certain approaches to the use of TO in Italy	9
Critiques towards Italian asylum system	Critiques towards the Italian asylum system, particularly in relation to how people from a migrant background are supported	9

⁶⁷ “IO” stands for “Intellectual Output”.

Cultural differences in creative and participatory approaches	References to different ways of interpreting non-verbal language, physical movements and other aspects of creative and participatory approaches because of cultural differences	12
Definitions of narratives	Ways in which narratives are defined, both in general and according to the distinction between dominant, counter, and alternative narratives	40
Definitions of oppression	Ways in which oppression is defined	29
Demographic characteristics of actors in Forum-Theatres	Demographic characteristics of people who participate as actors/actresses in Forum-Theatres or who contribute to their preparation (without acting) in the four partner countries of MiGreat!. They include, for example, gender, age, migrant background, professional background	88
Demographic characteristics of audience in TO projects on migrations in Italy	Demographic characteristics of members of the audience during public events (including Forum-Theatre sessions) during projects on TO and migrations in Italy. They include, for example, gender, age, migrant background, professional background	13
Demographic characteristics of participants in London Conference	Demographic characteristics of people who participate in the Final Conference of MiGreat! in London. They include, for example, gender, age, migrant background, professional background	13
Demographic characteristics of participants in MEs	Demographic characteristics of people who participate in multiplier events in the four partner countries of MiGreat!. They include, for example, gender, age, migrant background, professional background	44
Demographic characteristics of participants in the visual materials	Demographic characteristics of people who participate as actors/actresses in the visual materials or who contribute to their preparation (without being shown in the visual materials) in the four partner countries of MiGreat!. They include, for example, gender, age, migrant background, professional background	82
Demographic characteristics of participants in TO projects on migrations in Italy	Demographic characteristics of people who participate as actors/actresses in Forum-Theatres or in other types of activities or who contribute to their preparation (without acting) during projects on Theatre of the Oppressed and migrations in Italy. They include, for example, gender, age, migrant background, professional background	65

Demographic characteristics of practitioners in the four organisations	Demographic characteristics of practitioners in the four partner organisations of MiGreat!. They include, for example, gender, age, migrant background, professional background	40
Demographic characteristics of the audience in Forum-Theatre sessions	Demographic characteristics of members of the audience during Forum-Theatre sessions in the four partner countries of MiGreat!. They include, for example, gender, age, migrant background, professional background	63
Demographic characteristics of TO and/or Social Theatre practitioners	Demographic characteristics of practitioners of TO or Social Theatre in Italy and at an international level. They include gender and migrant background	3
Details about characters' gender identity in Forum-Theatres	Details about the gender of characters in the Forum-Theatre scenes in the four partner countries of MiGreat!, including their behaviour and the relationships among them related to their gender	20
Dialogue	References to the importance of dialogue as a possible solution to conflict and discrimination, both in stories and as part of the method of TO and of Freirian pedagogy	15
Dichotomy oppressor/oppressed	Idea that a dichotomy between oppressor and oppressed does not exist, that the distinction between the two is not clear-cut	30
Differences between the four partner organisations	Differences between the four partner organisations of MiGreat! especially in terms of their members, goals, and targets	9
Differences in migration contexts between the four partner countries	Differences between the four partner countries of MiGreat! in terms of the number/percentages of people from a migrant background that they have, the ways in which migrant communities are organised, and other aspects related to migrations	34
Difficult moments during participation in Forum-Theatre sessions	Difficulties and difficult moments that emerge during participation by the audience during Forum-Theatre sessions in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	11
Difficulties during TO projects on migrations in Italy	Difficulties that emerge during projects on TO and migrations in Italy, related for example to participants, audience, organisational issues	11
Difficulties in including people from a migrant background	Difficulties encountered when searching for people from a migrant background to be involved in activities as participants	32

Difficulties in participation during MEs	Difficulties that people show to have to actively participate during multiplier events in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	13
Difficulties in realising the visual materials	Difficulties that emerge during the realisation of visual materials in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	33
Difficulties in talking about migrations	References to the difficulties in talking about migrations because this is perceived as a difficult or controversial topic or because it is seen as having a negative connotation	7
Difficulties in talking about narratives	References to the difficulties in talking about narratives because this is perceived as a difficult, unclear, controversial or irrelevant topic	31
Discomfort experienced by actors	Discomfort that actors/actresses experience because of comments by the audience during Forum-Theatre sessions, or because of the topics tackled in Forum-Theatre scenes, or due to things that they have to say during rehearsals or during the performances	7
Discrimination at school	Stories where discrimination against people from a migrant background happens in schools	8
Discrimination at work	Stories where discrimination against people from a migrant background happens at workplaces	8
Discrimination in health-care	Stories where discrimination against people from a migrant background happens in the health-care system or because of health-related issues	19
Discrimination in the legal/bureaucratic sector	Stories where discrimination against people from a migrant background happens in offices or associations providing legal support, and stories referring to the difficulties in obtaining international protection because of legal or bureaucratic procedures	8
Discrimination on public transports	Stories where discrimination against people from a migrant background happens on public transports	18
Dominant narrative is white	Idea that one of the characteristics of dominant narratives is that the dominant narrative is white, since it is produced by white people	4
Embarrassment	Moments where participants express embarrassment and this poses difficulties to their participation	9
Empowerment	Definitions of empowerment and references to it	29

Ethnic/Skin colour difference between actors and characters	References to the differences in terms of ethnicity or skin colour between actors/actresses and characters in Forum-Theatres, and problematisation of this issue by themselves or by facilitators	20
Every migration story is different	Idea that people from a migrant background are not "all the same" and that there are numerous different stories about migrations	12
Examples of counter or alternative narratives	Examples of counter or alternative narratives about migrations as they emerge during activities or are included in the three IOs (handbooks)	55
Exclusion of people from a migrant background	Situations in which the participation of people from a migrant background during activities is hindered by practitioners or because of other factors	21
Expertise on migrations	References to the expertise that the Italian Cooperative has in the field of migrations	5
Explanation of activities	Ways in which practitioners explain activities to participants and audience during activities in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	22
Feedback on specific characters after Forum-Theatre sessions	Feedback that MiGreat! practitioners, actors/actresses and the audience provide after the Forum-Theatre session of MiGreat! in Italy	10
Feedback on the Forum-Theatre scenes and sessions from actors	Feedback that actors and actresses provide after the Forum-Theatre sessions in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	31
Feedback on the Forum-Theatre session in Italy from spect-actors from a migrant background	Feedback that spect-actors from a migrant background provide after the Forum-Theatre session of MiGreat! in Italy	9
Feedback on the IO1 by external readers	Feedback that MiGreat! practitioners state to have received on the IO1 handbook by readers that are not part of the four partner organisations of MiGreat!	7
Feedback on the London Conference	Feedback that both MiGreat! practitioners and participants provide after the Final Conference in London	14
Feedback on the MEs by MiGreat! practitioners	Feedback that MiGreat! practitioners provide after multiplier events in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	22
Feedback on the MEs by participants	Feedback that MiGreat! participants provide after multiplier events in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	16

Feedback on the visual materials from MiGreat! practitioners	Feedback that MiGreat! practitioners provide on the visual materials realised in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	19
Feedback on the visual materials from participants	Feedback that participants in the visual materials provide on them in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	14
Feedback on TO projects on migrations in Italy	Feedback that key informants provide on projects on TO and migrations in Italy, referring to either their opinion or the feedback that they received from participants and/or the audience	9
Feminist TO	References to a feminist approach to TO, including to the Ma(g)dalena International Network	7
Forced migrations	References (in stories or during activities) to people from a migrant background as arriving to Europe seeking asylum or other forms of international protection	23
Foreign name	Stories, narratives or episodes where people from a migrant background are discriminated against because they have a foreign name, and this is presented as the main reason for their discrimination	3
Gender difference between actors and characters	References to the differences in terms of gender between actors/actresses and characters in Forum-Theatres, and problematisation of this issue by themselves or by practitioners	13
Gender of volunteers and/or social workers	Gender of volunteers and/or workers in the field of migrations participating in MiGreat! activities	6
Gender relationship between volunteers and/or social workers and people from a migrant background	Relationship between the gender of volunteers and/or social workers and people from a migrant background, and how this is commented upon by MiGreat! practitioners	8
Gender-based violence	Stories and narratives about gender-based violence	2
General feedback from the audience on the Forum-Theatre sessions	General comments and feedback that the audience provide after the Forum-Theatre sessions in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	23
General feedback on Forum-Theatres from MiGreat! practitioners	General comments and feedback that MiGreat! practitioners provide after the Forum-Theatre sessions in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	30
Goals of community organising	Goals of community organising	5

Goals of Forum-Theatre	Goals of Forum-Theatre both as a technique of TO and with reference to Forum-Theatres for MiGreat!	28
Goals of Freirian pedagogy	Goals of Freirian pedagogy	12
Goals of MEs	Goals of multiplier events	7
Goals of MiGreat!	Goals of MiGreat!	47
Goals of other organisations utilising TO and/or Social Theatre	Goals of other organisations utilising TO and/or Social Theatre with which some of the key informants collaborate	4
Goals of participatory methods	Goals of participatory methods	9
Goals of the four organisations	Goals of the four partner organisations of MiGreat!	18
Goals of the IO1	Goals of the IO1 handbook	4
Goals of the visual materials	Goals of the visual materials realised for MiGreat!	12
Goals of TO	Goals of TO	49
Goals of TO projects on migrations in Italy	Goals of various projects on TO and migrations realised in Italy	25
Hierarchy among nationalities and types of migrations	References (in stories, narratives or other situations) where a hierarchy among nationalities or "types" of migrations is built, for example by considering people coming from certain countries as more dangerous or unreliable than those coming from other countries	18
Hope	References (in stories or during activities) to hope and the belief that conflicts or discrimination can be tackled	15
House search	Stories where discrimination happens while people are looking for a house but cannot find it because they come from a migrant background (or other characteristics on the basis of which they are discriminated against)	22
Human trafficking	Stories where people from a migrant background are victims of human trafficking	3
Impact of the gender of MiGreat! practitioners	Gender of MiGreat! practitioners and ways in which it influences (or not) the relationships both between MiGreat! practitioners and with participants in activities	20
Impact of the Joker's gender	Ways in which the Jokers' gender might have influenced their role during Forum-Theatre sessions in the four partner countries of MiGreat! (in their opinion)	14

Infantilisation	Instances in which people from a migrant background are infantilised, by participants in activities (including people working in the field of migrations), practitioners, or other people	28
Interplay of racism and sexism	Elements in stories about not only racist, but also sexist, attitudes and ideas, especially by certain characters	18
Intersectional thinking	References to an intersectional approach to migrations that considers various dimensions of inequality that influence experiences of migration and oppression	19
Interventions from spect-actors during Forum-Theatre sessions	Examples of specific interventions from spect-actors during Forum-Theatre sessions in the four partner countries of MiGreat!, including specific sentences, questions or performances	14
Irony	Use of irony and an ironic style in the visual materials produced in Italy	7
Islamophobia	References (in stories, projects or other situations) to the theme of islamophobia as a source of discrimination	15
Italian people's negative feelings in front of racism	References to Italian people's anger, discomfort or other negative feelings when assisting at or hearing about stories of racism	13
Job hunting	Stories where discrimination happens while people are looking for a job but cannot find it because they come from a migrant background (or other characteristics on the basis of which they are discriminated against)	9
Joker's feelings	Feelings of the Jokers during Forum-Theatre sessions in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	21
Jokers in pair	Impact that being a pair of Jokers (instead of only one Joker) facilitating the preparation of a Forum-Theatre scene and its public session can have on the process (in the opinion of key informants)	3
Joker's skills	Skills that a Joker should have in order to successfully facilitate various TO activities	29
Level of education	References to the level of education of characters from a migrant background in the Forum-Theatre scene in Italy	2
Linguistic barriers	Difficulties in communicating during activities because of different languages and mother tongues in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	52

Linguistic barriers during TO projects on migrations in Italy	Difficulties in communicating during activities because of different languages and mother tongues in projects on TO and migrations in Italy	7
Main traits of the characters in the Forum-Theatre scenes as presented in the IO3	Main characteristics of the characters in the Forum-Theatre scenes of MiGreat! as presented in the IO3 handbook	11
Media	References to the media, especially as one of the main means to spread narratives about migrations, as elements in the stories, and as parts of the characters' behaviours	50
Migrants ⁶⁸ are a burden	Dominant narrative according to which people from a migrant background are a burden for European countries	2
Migrants are ignorant	Dominant narrative according to which people from a migrant background are ignorant and lack education or knowledge on numerous things	8
Migrants are irregular	Dominant narrative according to which all people from a migrant background are irregular or illegal	4
Migrants are lazy	Dominant narrative according to which people from a migrant background are lazy	13
Migrants are savage	Dominant narrative according to which people from a migrant background are savage	13
Migrants are unreliable	Dominant narrative according to which people from a migrant background are unreliable	4
Migrants' arrivals by boat	References (in stories or during activities) to people from a migrant background arriving by boat via the Mediterranean Sea	7
Migrants do not integrate	Dominant narrative according to which people from a migrant background do not integrate (also because they do not want to)	9
Migrations and crime	Dominant narrative according to which people from a migrant background often commit crimes	17
Migrations and loneliness	Idea that experiences of migration often include loneliness	5
Migrations and travel	References (in stories and during activities) to migrations and the experience of travel	13

⁶⁸ In this table the term “migrants” is used rather than “people from a migrant background” because the generalising term “migrants” is part of dominant narratives on migrations and people from a migrant background.

Migrations and work exploitation	References in stories to people from a migrant background being exploited at work (also including illegal recruitment)	10
Migrations as a threat	Dominant narrative according to which people from a migrant background represent a threat and a danger to European countries	29
Migrations as an invasion	Dominant narrative according to which people from a migrant background are invading Europe	5
Multiple layers of power relations	References to the existence of multiple layers of power relations in the stories shown in Forum-Theatre scenes	28
My feelings	My feelings when participating in activities and in other situations during participant observation	9
Other references to gender in stories	Other elements related to gender in the stories told	10
Other themes emerged in other projects	Other themes that emerged in other projects (not in MiGreat!) and that are not included in other codes	15
Othering/Us vs them	References (in stories and narratives) to othering dynamics and to a distinction between "us" and "them"	12
Parenthood	References to parenthood and to the relationship between parents and children related to characters or stories	14
Participants' feelings about doing theatre	Feelings of people who participate in activities about the fact of doing theatre (often for the first time) in Italy	15
Participants' previous experiences of theatre/TO in TO projects on migrations in Italy	References to whether participants in activities (including as actors/actresses) in projects on TO and migrations in Italy have already had any experiences of TO or theatre more generally before, or not	2
Participation during MEs	Level of participation and ways of participating during MEs in the UK and France	5
Participation during the realisation of visual materials	Ways of participating by people during the realisation of visual materials in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	5
Participation of people from a migrant background	Instances in which people from a migrant background actively participate in MiGreat! activities in Italy	18
Paternalism	Instances in which people (participants in activities, practitioners or other people) show paternalistic attitudes towards people from a migrant background, and instances in which paternalism is problematised	27

People who play in performances in TO projects on migrations in Italy	References to who performs in theatrical activities in projects on TO and migrations in Italy, and how these choices are made	6
People's participation during TO projects on migrations in Italy	Ways of participating by actors/actresses and other participants during activities in projects on TO and migrations in Italy	6
Phases included in TO projects in Italy	Phases included in TO projects in Italy	6
Police	References (in stories) to the police, where they are often presented as oppressors	10
Positive aspects of the IO1	Positive aspects of the IO1 handbook that render it helpful for readers	4
Positive stories	Examples of positive stories about people from a migrant background, for example related to their success or to solidarity towards them	10
Power	References to power, including in relation to narratives, oppression, empowerment, and power relations	43
Preparation before Forum-Theatre sessions	Ways of of preparing right before Forum-Theatre sessions by actors/actresses and Jokers, for example rehearsing	3
Presence of TO in Italy	Extent to which TO is present in Italy and approaches to its application	4
Principles of community organising	Principles of community organising	9
Principles of Freirian pedagogy	Principles of Freirian pedagogy	26
Principles of participatory methods	Principles of participatory methods	14
Principles of TO	Principles of TO	54
Problematism in TO	Importance to problematise in TO, for examples in the case of interventions from the audience during Forum-Theatres or of comments related to oppression and power also during activities	14
Professional backgrounds of key informants	Key informants' professions and professional paths	13
Professionals involved in TO projects on migrations in Italy	Professional figures that contributed to the realisation of projects on TO and migrations in Italy (apart from key informants)	8
Quest for non-violence and peace	References to the importance to pursue non-violence and peace when tackling oppression and power	11
Racism between Italian people	References to the presence of racism not only towards people from a migrant background, but also among native Italians	2

Reactions from the audience during Forum-Theatre sessions	Examples of general ways of reacting (for example laughing, or making general comments without entering the scene) during Forum-Theatre sessions in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	28
Reactions from the audience on the visual materials	Examples of ways of reacting from the audience when looking at the visual materials realised in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	10
Reality	References to reality as a key concept in TO, for example as a criterium according to which a story to be represented should be chosen, or as the importance to represent reality in theatre	45
Reasons and expectations to participate in Forum-Theatre as actors	Reasons why people decide to take part in Forum-Theatres as actors and actresses or as people participating in activities for their preparation, and expectations that they have	16
Reasons and expectations to participate in the realisation of visual materials	Reasons why people decide to take part in the visual materials as actors and actresses or as people participating in activities for their preparation, and expectations that they have	9
References to politics	Instances where politics (in the sense of political parties, political orientations, politicians, etc.) is mentioned, for example to refer to how migrations are managed or to the parties showing hostility towards people from a migrant background	45
References to the relations among TO practitioners	References to how TO practitioners discuss, share or criticise approaches to the method and act as a community of practitioners (or not) around the world	7
Relationship between gender and ethnicity	Instances where gender is talked about with reference to ethnicity, for example in terms of gender roles or gender relations in different ethnicities	30
Relationships between MiGreat! practitioners	References to the ways in which MiGreat! practitioners work together, including their different roles and the ways in which they interact with each other	6
Religion	References to religion as an element which appears in characters' identity or in narratives about people from a migrant background	10
Religion and gender	Instances in which the interplay between religion and gender is relevant in discrimination or in other situations also in the stories told	12

Representing personal stories	Emphasis placed on the idea that in TO it is relevant to represent personal experiences and tell personal stories, instead of referring to what one has generally heard from someone else	21
Rights	References to rights as a central element for the empowerment of people from a migrant background and of people in general	9
Role of the Joker's gender during TO projects on migrations in Italy	Ways in which the Joker's gender influenced activities during projects on TO and migrations in Italy, for example in the relationship with participants, in the opinion of the key informants	4
Searching for actors for Forum-Theatres	Ways of recruiting people as actors/actresses for Forum-Theatres in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	29
Searching for participants for the MEs	Ways of recruiting participants for MEs in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	15
Searching for participants for TO projects on migrations in Italy	Ways of recruiting people as actors/actresses for Forum-Theatres or to take part in other activities in projects on TO and migrations in Italy	17
Searching for participants for the visual materials	Ways of recruiting participants to realise the visual materials in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	22
Searching for the audience for Forum-Theatre sessions	Ways of recruiting the audience for Forum-Theatre sessions in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	36
Searching for the audience in TO projects on migrations in Italy	Ways of recruiting the audience for public events (including Forum-Theatre sessions) in projects on TO and migrations in Italy	14
Skin colour	Stories, narratives or episodes where people from a migrant background are discriminated against because of their skin colour, and this is presented as the main reason for their discrimination	41
Smell and hygiene	References in stories to people from a migrant background being discriminated against because of issues related to smell and hygiene habits, and to characters being sensitive to smell and hygiene, in the Forum-Theatre scene in Italy	6
Social class	References to characters' social class, especially in the Forum-Theatre scene in Italy	16

Social workers' central position	References to the central role played by social workers (and other people operating in the field of migrations) during activities in MiGreat! and to the central role played by people operating in the social sector in TO more generally, and instances in which this is evident	37
Social workers' frustration	Feeling of frustration in relation to their work expressed during activities by social workers and other people operating in the field of migrations in Italy	14
Sorrow	References to sorrow as an element that is often present in experiences of migration	3
Space-related issues	Issues and difficulties that emerge because of the space where activities take place	25
Speaking a foreign language	Stories, narratives or episodes where people from a migrant background are discriminated against because they speak a foreign language, and this is presented as the main reason for their discrimination	49
Stereotypes about nationality	Stereotypes about certain nationalities that emerge when discussing about the characters of Forum-Theatre scenes in the four partner countries of MiGreat! or in dominant narratives about people from a migrant background	8
Style of the visual materials	Style chosen for the visual materials in the four partner countries of MiGreat! and reasons for choosing it	14
Targets of Forum-Theatres	Targets of Forum-Theatres in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	22
Targets of MEs	Targets of MEs in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	11
Targets of MiGreat!	Targets of MiGreat!	22
Targets of the IO1	Targets of the IO1 handbook	16
Targets of the IO2 and IO3 (handbooks)	Targets of the IO2 and IO3 handbooks	2
Targets of the visual materials	Targets of the visual materials in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	16
Targets of TO projects on migrations in Italy	Targets of projects on TO and migrations in Italy	8
The difficulties of being a person with a migratory background	References to the difficulties included in experiences of migration	19
Time	References to time as a factor influencing activities, events, and generally the MiGreat! project	45

Time dedicated to TO projects in Italy	Time taken to complete a project of TO in Italy	19
Top-down approach	Instances where activities and various aspects of the projects are decided by practitioners for participants	8
Types of public events realised in TO projects on migrations in Italy	Types of public events realised as part of TO projects on migrations in Italy, such as Forum-Theatre sessions or other public performances	17
Types of TO projects on migrations realised in Italy	Types of TO projects on migrations realised in Italy, such as European, national, regional, local projects, etc.	35
Types of TO projects realised in Italy	Types of TO projects realised in Italy (in general, not necessarily about migrations), such as European, national, regional, local projects, etc.	5
Ways in which TO is helpful in the field of migrations	Ways in which TO is considered helpful in the field of migrations according to key informants, MiGreat! practitioners, as well as spect-actors	17
Ways of accommodating people's needs	Ways of considering people's needs (such as in relations to disabilities) and of accommodating them by MiGreat! practitioners	10
Ways of building characters	Ways in which the characters of the Forum-Theatre scenes are built in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	47
Ways of choosing spaces for TO projects on migrations in Italy	Ways in which the spaces where to hold activities of TO projects on migrations in Italy are chosen	7
Ways of choosing the stories to be represented in the visual materials	Criteria according to and activities through which the stories to be represented in the visual materials are chosen in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	14
Ways of choosing the stories to be represented in TO projects on migrations in Italy	Criteria according to and activities through which the stories to be represented in TO projects on migrations in Italy are chosen (for example in Forum-Theatres)	6
Ways of choosing the story to be represented in Forum-Theatre scenes	Criteria according to and activities through which the stories to be represented in the Forum-Theatre scenes are chosen in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	41
Ways of choosing types of visual materials	Discussions made around the choice of the visual materials to be realised in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	8
Ways of commenting on stories by MiGreat! practitioners	Ways in which MiGreat! practitioners comment on the stories that are told by participants, also (but not exclusively) with	15

	the aim to choose those that will be represented in the Forum-Theatre scenes	
Ways of commenting on the stories by participants	Ways in which participants comment on the stories told, also (but not exclusively) with the aim to choose those that will be represented in the Forum-Theatre scenes	22
Ways of coordinating MEs	Ways in which MiGreat! practitioners coordinate MEs	16
Ways of encouraging participation during Forum-Theatre sessions	Ways in which the Jokers facilitate participation by the audience during the Forum-Theatre sessions in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	22
Ways of including everyone during Forum-Theatre sessions	Comments made by MiGreat! practitioners in order to find ways to include all members of the audience during the Forum-Theatre sessions, particularly in relation to the choice of the stories to be represented	9
Ways of interacting between the Joker and the audience during Forum-Theatre sessions	Ways in which the Joker interacts with the audience during Forum-Theatre sessions, including with spect-actors	13
Ways of overcoming linguistic difficulties	Strategies adopted to overcome linguistic barriers during activities in the four partner countries of MiGreat!	73
Ways of overcoming linguistic difficulties in TO projects on migrations in Italy	Strategies adopted to overcome linguistic barriers during activities in TO projects on migrations in Italy	14
Ways of presenting activities/projects to participants in TO projects on migrations in Italy	Words and tools used to present the activities that will be carried out, their goals, as well as the projects, to participants in activities in TO projects on migrations in Italy	13
Ways of presenting activities/projects to the audience in TO projects on migrations in Italy	Words and tools used to present the activities that will be carried out, their goals, as well as the projects, to the audience in public events in TO projects on migrations in Italy	4
Ways of presenting the activities/MiGreat! project to participants	Words and tools used to present the MiGreat! project, the activities that will be carried out, and the goals of the outputs, to participants contributing to the preparation of the IOs	33
Ways of presenting the activities/MiGreat! project to the audience	Words and tools used to present the MiGreat! project, the activities that will be carried out, and the goals of the outputs, to the audience during Forum-Theatre sessions and other MEs	19

Ways of representing theatrically a scene in Forum-Theatre	References to the possible ways of representing a scene in Forum-Theatre through theatrical tools	24
Ways of representing theatrically oppression in Forum-Theatre	References to the possible ways of representing oppression in Forum-Theatre through theatrical tools	41
Ways of spreading the IO1	Ways, people and places through which the IO1 handbook has been spread	11
Ways of taking initiative by the Joker during the construction of Forum-Theatre scenes	Ways in which the Joker takes initiative and makes decisions regarding the construction of the Forum-Theatre scenes, for example during rehearsals	31
Ways of talking about racism	References to racism and ways in which it is explained and talked about	30
Ways of telling stories	Ways in and activities through which the stories are told by participants during the meetings in preparation of the Forum-Theatre scenes in France and the UK	4
Ways of working on the IO1	Ways of organising the work to realise the IO1 handbook between the four partner organisations of MiGreat! and within each of them	16
Ways of working on TO projects in Italy	General ways of working on TO projects in Italy, for example on projects based on European or national calls, in collaboration with other organisations or not, etc.	22
We/they are all the same	Dominant narrative according to which "we" (natives) are all the same and "they" (people from a migrant background) are all the same, as a way to generalise and homogenise the identity of both social groups	5
Wearing a uniform	References to the role played by the uniform worn by some characters in the Forum-Theatre scene in Italy, particularly in relation to gender identity and power	3
Working conditions	Working conditions of characters in the Forum-Theatre scenes in the four partner countries of MiGreat! or in the visual materials realised in Italy	17

Table E. Code Groups

Code Group	Codes	Code
Theatre of the Oppressed in Italy	43	<p>Activities in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Aesthetics</p> <p>Approaches to TO</p> <p>Audience's participation during public events in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Audience's previous experiences of theatre in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Combination of TO with other theatrical or creative/artistic tools in Italy</p> <p>Critiques of the ways of doing TO in Italy</p> <p>Critiques towards Italian asylum system</p> <p>Demographic characteristics of audience in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Demographic characteristics of participants in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Demographic characteristics of TO and/or Social Theatre practitioners</p> <p>Difficulties during TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Feedback on TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Goals of other organisations utilising TO and/or Social Theatre</p> <p>Goals of the four organisations</p> <p>Goals of TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Jokers in pair</p> <p>Linguistic barriers during TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Participants' previous experiences of theatre/TO in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>People who play in performances in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>People's participation during TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Phases included in TO projects in Italy</p>

	<p>Presence of TO in Italy</p> <p>Professional backgrounds of key informants</p> <p>Professionals involved in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Reality</p> <p>References to politics</p> <p>References to the relations among TO practitioners</p> <p>Role of the Joker's gender during TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Searching for participants for TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Searching for the audience in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Targets of TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Time dedicated to TO projects in Italy</p> <p>Types of public events realised in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Types of TO projects on migrations realised in Italy</p> <p>Types of TO projects realised in Italy</p> <p>Ways of choosing spaces for TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Ways of choosing the stories to be represented in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Ways of overcoming linguistic difficulties in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Ways of presenting activities/projects to participants in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Ways of presenting activities/projects to the audience in TO projects on migrations in Italy</p> <p>Ways of representing theatrically a scene in Forum-Theatre</p> <p>Ways of working on TO projects in Italy</p>
--	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>Narratives on migrations and people from a migrant background</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>"We" talking about "them" Church Dominant narrative is white Examples of counter or alternative narratives Hierarchy among nationalities and types of migrations Media Migrants are a burden Migrants are ignorant Migrants are irregular Migrants are lazy Migrants are savage Migrants are unreliable Migrants do not integrate Migrations and crime Migrations as a threat Migrations as an invasion Othering/Us vs them References to politics Ways of talking about racism We/they are all the same</p>
<p>Stories on migrations and people from a migrant background</p>	<p>47</p>	<p>Agency vs victim Being a foreigner Communication problems Conflict between Italian people Dialogue Dichotomy oppressor/oppressed Discrimination at school Discrimination at work Discrimination in health-care Discrimination in the legal/bureaucratic sector Discrimination on public transports Every migration story is different Forced migrations Foreign name Gender-based violence Hierarchy among nationalities and types of migrations Hope House search Human trafficking Interplay of racism and sexism Islamophobia Italian people's negative feelings in front of racism Job hunting</p>

		Media Migrants' arrivals by boat Migrations and loneliness Migrations and travel Migrations and work exploitation Multiple layers of power relations Other references to gender in stories Other themes emerged in other projects Parenthood Police Positive stories Power Racism between Italian people Relationship between gender and ethnicity Religion Religion and gender Representing personal stories Skin colour Smell and hygiene Sorrow Speaking a foreign language The difficulties of being a person with a migratory background Ways of commenting on stories by MiGreat! practitioners Ways of talking about racism
Characters of Forum-Theatres in MiGreat!	14	Associations with aggression and violence Details about characters' gender identity in Forum-Theatres Hierarchy among nationalities and types of migrations Interplay of racism and sexism Level of education Main traits of the characters in the Forum-Theatre scenes as presented in the IO3 Media Smell and hygiene Social class Stereotypes about nationality Ways of building characters Ways of talking about racism Wearing a uniform Working conditions

<p>Ways of facilitating activities by MiGreat! practitioners</p>	<p>26</p>	<p> Bottom-up approach Church Collection of materials for the IO1 Consensus Difficulties in realising the visual materials Exclusion of people from a migrant background Explanation of activities Impact of the gender of MiGreat! practitioners Impact of the Joker's gender Infantilisation Joker's feelings Paternalism Relationships between MiGreat! practitioners Space-related issues Time Top-down approach Ways of accommodating people's needs Ways of coordinating MEs Ways of encouraging participation during Forum-Theatre sessions Ways of including everyone during Forum-Theatre sessions Ways of interacting between the Joker and the audience during Forum-Theatre sessions Ways of overcoming linguistic difficulties Ways of presenting the activities/MiGreat! project to participants Ways of presenting the activities/MiGreat! project to the audience Ways of taking initiative by the Joker during the construction of Forum-Theatre scenes Ways of working on the IO1 </p>
------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Demographic characteristics of people involved in MiGreat! as participants and/or audience	24	<p>"We" talking about "them"</p> <p>Actors' previous experiences of TO and/or theatre</p> <p>Age difference between actors and characters</p> <p>Audience's previous theatre experiences</p> <p>Demographic characteristics of actors in Forum-Theatres</p> <p>Demographic characteristics of participants in London Conference</p> <p>Demographic characteristics of participants in MEs</p> <p>Demographic characteristics of participants in the visual materials</p> <p>Demographic characteristics of the audience in Forum-Theatre sessions</p> <p>Differences in migration contexts between the four partner countries</p> <p>Difficulties in including people from a migrant background</p> <p>Dominant narrative is white</p> <p>Ethnic/Skin colour difference between actors and characters</p> <p>Gender difference between actors and characters</p> <p>Gender of volunteers and/or social workers</p> <p>Gender relationship between volunteers and/or social workers and people from a migrant background</p> <p>Reasons and expectations to participate in Forum-Theatre as actors</p> <p>Reasons and expectations to participate in the realisation of visual materials</p> <p>Searching for actors for Forum-Theatres</p> <p>Searching for participants for the MEs</p> <p>Searching for participants for the visual materials</p> <p>Searching for the audience for Forum-Theatre sessions</p> <p>Targets of Forum-Theatres</p> <p>Targets of MEs</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>Theoretical concepts at the basis of MiGreat! and Theatre of the Oppressed</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>Agency vs victim Boal's teachings on TO Complexity of the topic of migrations Definitions of narratives Definitions of oppression Dichotomy oppressor/oppressed Empowerment Feminist TO Goals of community organising Goals of Forum-Theatre Goals of Freirian pedagogy Goals of participatory methods Goals of TO Intersectional thinking Joker's skills Power Principles of community organising Principles of Freirian pedagogy Principles of participatory methods Principles of TO Problematisation in TO Quest for non-violence and peace Rights Ways in which TO is helpful in the field of migrations</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Participation during MiGreat! activities	26	<p>Actors' participation during the preparation of Forum-Theatres</p> <p>Adults and game</p> <p>Audience's participation during Forum-Theatre sessions</p> <p>Cultural differences in creative and participatory approaches</p> <p>Difficult moments during participation in Forum-Theatre sessions</p> <p>Difficulties in participation during MEs</p> <p>Difficulties in realising the visual materials</p> <p>Difficulties in talking about migrations</p> <p>Difficulties in talking about narratives</p> <p>Discomfort experienced by actors</p> <p>Embarrassment</p> <p>Exclusion of people from a migrant background</p> <p>Infantilisation</p> <p>Interventions from spect-actors during Forum-Theatre sessions</p> <p>Italian people's negative feelings in front of racism</p> <p>Linguistic barriers</p> <p>My feelings</p> <p>Participants' feelings about doing theatre</p> <p>Participation during MEs</p> <p>Participation during the realisation of visual materials</p> <p>Participation of people from a migrant background</p> <p>Paternalism</p> <p>Reactions from the audience during Forum-Theatre sessions</p> <p>Reactions from the audience on the visual materials</p> <p>Social workers' central position</p> <p>Social workers' frustration</p>
------------------------------------------	----	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Ways of creating representations in MiGreat!	17	Activities during MEs Activities to prepare Forum-Theatres Activities to prepare the visual materials Aesthetics Characteristics of a Forum-Theatre story Irony Preparation before Forum-Theatre sessions Reality Style of the visual materials Ways of choosing the stories to be represented in the visual materials Ways of choosing the story to be represented in Forum-Theatre scenes Ways of choosing types of visual materials Ways of commenting on stories by MiGreat! practitioners Ways of commenting on the stories by participants Ways of representing theatrically a scene in Forum-Theatre Ways of representing theatrically oppression in Forum-Theatre Ways of telling stories
Characteristics of the four partner organisations of MiGreat! and of their members	6	Demographic characteristics of practitioners in the four organisations Differences between the four partner organisations Differences in migration contexts between the four partner countries Expertise on migrations Goals of the four organisations Impact of the gender of MiGreat! practitioners

Feedback on activities and products of MiGreat!	13	<p>Critical issues in IO1</p> <p>Feedback on specific characters after Forum-Theatre sessions</p> <p>Feedback on the Forum-Theatre scenes and sessions from actors</p> <p>Feedback on the Forum-Theatre session in Italy from spect-actors from a migrant background</p> <p>Feedback on the IO1 by external readers</p> <p>Feedback on the London Conference</p> <p>Feedback on the MEs by MiGreat! practitioners</p> <p>Feedback on the MEs by participants</p> <p>Feedback on the visual materials from MiGreat! practitioners</p> <p>Feedback on the visual materials from participants</p> <p>General feedback from the audience on the Forum-Theatre sessions</p> <p>General feedback on Forum-Theatres from MiGreat! practitioners</p> <p>Positive aspects of the IO1</p>
Targets and goals of MiGreat! and of its activities and products	9	<p>Goals of MEs</p> <p>Goals of MiGreat!</p> <p>Goals of the IO1</p> <p>Goals of the visual materials</p> <p>Targets of MiGreat!</p> <p>Targets of the IO1</p> <p>Targets of the IO2 and IO3 (handbooks)</p> <p>Targets of the visual materials</p> <p>Ways of spreading the IO1</p>