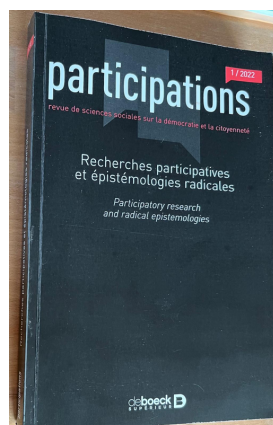


To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In Revue *Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>



Forum Theatre in participatory action research: at the service of epistemological pluralism?

Body, emotions, knowledge

S. Lewandowski¹, A Molina Valdivia²

Abstract

Forum Theatre, invented in the 1970s by Augusto Boal in Brazil, is a radical approach to political theatre which offers neither answers nor questions. It aims to equip participants with the power to (self-)think, to (self-)talk and to act. Based on a participatory action research project carried out in South America on forest water services, the article explores the capacity of forum theatre to reduce today's social and epistemic inequalities. The article shows that this theatrical form has enabled researchers and NGO staff members to understand previously overlooked power relations, as well as to experience an alternative form of knowledge where cognitive, physical and emotional dimensions are interconnected. But this enhanced awareness was not part of a long-term collective transformation and may even, at times, have contributed to effects that were the opposite of the original intention, such as withdrawal into the groups they belong to and their own knowledge.

Keywords

Forum Theatre, participatory action research, Latin America, epistemological pluralism, body, emotions, knowledge

¹ Research fellow in social anthropology, IRD, Aix Marseille Univ, LPED, Marseille, France, Sophie Lewandowski works on knowledge, education and training in intercultural environments (Andes, West Africa, Mediterranean countries). She trained in Forum Theatre with Augusto Boal in Paris in 2001; observed then created forum theatre experiments in the sphere of international cooperation in France, Senegal and Bolivia. She co-created participative action research projects with workshops combining Forum Theatre and Non-violent Communication. She is interested in the anthropology of performance and in new forms of alternative writing in the humanities and social sciences. Postal address: LPED - UMR 151, Aix Marseille Université, case 10, 3, Place Victor Hugo, CS80249, 13331 Marseille, Cedex 03, France. Email: sophie.lewandowski@ird.fr

² Professor of Dramatic Art, actor and pedagogue, Bolivia. Licenciante in Dramatic Art (UCB San Pablo). Alejandro Molina Valdivia discovered forum theatre in 2012. He is currently involved in a holistic school at Santa Cruz, Bolivia. He is the author of a play on the Chaco war: "*Las Cartas del Cabo*" (Edition Astillero, Madrid 2011 and Edition La Hoguera, Santa Cruz, 2011). He has worked on joint workshops with the *Teatro de los Andes*, and has taken part in the *Teatro Duende* and the *Teatro de la Obeja Negra*. With S. Lewandowski, he has co-produced a full-length documentary film on alternative educational experiments in Bolivia (Lewandowski, Molina Valdivia, 2020). Email: aleandromo@gmail.com

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

Le théâtre forum en recherche-action participative : au service du pluralisme épistémologique ? Corps, émotions, savoirs

Résumé

Le théâtre forum, créé dans les années 1970 par Augusto Boal au Brésil, est une approche radicale de théâtre politique qui n'apporte ni de réponses, ni même de questions. Il incite les participant.e.s à gagner en pouvoir de (se) penser, de (se) dire et d'agir. À partir d'une expérience menée en Amérique du Sud dans un projet de recherche-action participative sur les services hydriques forestiers, l'article interroge la capacité du théâtre forum à réduire aujourd'hui les inégalités sociales et épistémiques. Le texte montre que cette forme théâtrale a permis - au moment de l'expérience - aux chercheur.e.s et aux membres d'ONG une compréhension de rapports de force auparavant ignorés, ainsi que l'expérimentation d'une autre forme de connaissance où les dimensions cognitives, physiques et émotionnelles sont reliées. Mais cette prise de conscience ne s'est pas inscrite sur une transformation collective de long terme et a pu même contribuer - par moments - à des effets opposés à l'intention de départ comme le replis sur les groupes d'appartenance et leurs savoirs.

Mots clés

Théâtre forum, recherche-action participative, Amérique Latine, pluralisme épistémologique, savoirs, corps, émotions.

Introduction

Emerging during the period of dictatorship in Brazil in the 1970s, Forum Theater was invented by Augusto Boal for the purpose of freeing awareness and the power to act. It is an interactive form of theatre where the audience come onstage to change the course of the (social) story that is being represented. This original form of theatre has been a worldwide success which has resulted in it often being diverted for purposes of prevention, insertion or social appeasement in the framework of 'development' projects³ in various continents and social projects in Europe. Recently, forum theatre has become a resource that is increasingly deployed for citizen science projects: it is generally used as a tool (i) to collect scientific data, for example on the perceptions of populations on the environment (Euzen et Bordet, 2008); (ii) to facilitate the transition from research to action (raising awareness on sustainable development and "eco-citizen" action) (Debos et al., 2008); (iii) to deliver the results of research, as in the case of clinical trials in Senegal (Ashley Ouvrier). It is more rarely used from the outset of a research project so that all the stakeholders may really play a role in the construction of the subject of the investigation⁴. The present article is based on a theatrical experiment in a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project funded by the European Union in South America (Bolivia, Chile, Argentina) where forum theatre was used from the outset of

³ In line with theoreticians and movements critical of development (François Partant, Gilbert Rist, Wolfgang Sachs, Serge Latouche, etc.), we feel that the conceptions of progress, then development and sustainable development (and their international political ramifications) are related to social and cultural factors and are not universal (despite improvements in the definitions since Amartya Sen, among others).

⁴ CIRAD has been a pioneer in investigating the use of forum theatre in the perspective of just and equitable research. See in particular the works of Frédérique Jankowski (Jankowski, et al., 2020) and François Bousquet ("*Le Théâtre de la Complexité*" co-written with Anne Berchon, to be published).

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

the research project to define the project outline in the most collegiate way possible⁵. On the basis of this experiment, the aim of the paper is to examine whether or not forum theatre can help to reduce social and epistemic inequalities between the possessors of academic knowledge and the possessors of local knowledge⁶.

Since the mid-20th century, local knowledge has undergone a far-reaching process of reevaluation). In our view, this has led to two pitfalls. The first is epistemological relativism: all types of knowledge are of equal value and there is no breach between common sense and knowledge. The second is to be stuck in a form of epistemological monism where only Cartesian science is valid and where local knowledge is selected, legitimised and transformed in order to correspond to this cognitive framework. This second pitfall has been developed at global scale by actors promoting a knowledge economy, such as the World Trade Organisation and the World Bank. It has also spread within the research community in certain participatory sciences (Leduc, 2015) embedded within a perspective which is above all utilitarian (cutting costs, saving time, mobilisation of highly varied competencies, mobilisation of the public) (Houllier, Joly et Merilhou-Goudard, 2017). Local knowledge is presented in these studies, as in the international databases, mainly from its utilitarian angle. It undergoes a process of scientification) (particularisation, validation, generalisation) which deforms and instrumentalises it (Agrawal, 2002: 329). To avoid the pitfalls of relativism and of monism, Jewsiewicki proposes seeking an epistemological pluralism which consists in "formulating a model which is not the generalisation of any particular historical experience. The universal as horizon of the expectations of various epistemological fields might then allow both comparativism and a dialogue freed of the trap of translation into a single language" (2001 : 625-626). But this epistemological pluralism is not easy to implement: I myself (SL) have shown, for example, that the encounters between local knowledge and academic knowledge may lead to processes of hybridisation that do not exclude hierarchisation (Lewandowski 2012).

In the present article, we⁷ seek to examine whether it is possible to propose spaces of participatory research which would enable greater equity between the possessors of local knowledge and the possessors of scientific knowledge, in addition to the recognition of the existence of different valid systems of thought. To that end, we focus in particular on the way science can take into account systems of thought which intrinsically associate the body and

⁵ The data were constituted during three weeks of experimentation, one year of preparation and experience capitalisation. The experiment described here is relatively short, but we feel it is ideal-typical of what we have encountered in this field. Our corpus includes twelve interviews (eight interviews just after the experiment, one interview one year after and three interviews nine years later), written archives and a video recording of the process. The diversity of the materials is linked to our own involvement in the project, then departure from it. We shall analyse our position as a self-ethnology (Ellis, Bochner, 2000) necessary for a critical approach to science "*en train de se faire*" ("in the process of emerging"), to use Latour's expression.

⁶ By the expression 'local knowledge', we refer to knowledge, know-how and behavioural knowledge produced outside the academic sphere. The adjective 'local' refers to the origin of this knowledge (although we consider local knowledge as always hybrid - Lewandowski, Jankowski, 2017, and academic knowledge as always situated and not its scope, which may be universal. For a historical analysis of the definitions and pitfalls of the recognition of local knowledge in the academic sphere and in international organisations, see Lewandowski, 2007.

⁷ This article was produced by co-writing: we sometimes use "we", to designate SL and AM when it concerns a joint analysis by the two authors, sometimes "I" (with the initials specified in brackets) to describe an experiment or a contribution specific to one or the other of us.

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

the emotions with the very nature of knowledge⁸. The terms and the definitions designating the different modes of thought are varied both in the literature of the neurosciences and in that of the humanities and social sciences (primitive forms of classification of Durkheim and Mauss, ethnoscience and folk science, as well as the uses of rationalisation of Max Weber). In our case, we employ a distinction which makes no claim to perfection or exhaustiveness, but which is operational for the purposes of our research. We use the term "analytical thought" to designate a mode of reflection that calls above all for deductive or inductive reasoning, based on concepts and experiments intended to be detached from the affects and a search for causalities according to a principle of non-contradiction. And we borrow the term "holistic thought" to designate a mode of reflection that calls preferentially for analogical reasoning, based on symbols and experiences in continuity with the senses and the emotions, and where superimpositions of meaning and of principles of causality are possible. For example, in Gurma society in Burkina Faso "having holes in the heart" represents the mode of knowledge *par excellence* (Lewandowski, 2012). We distinguish these two modes of thought from common sense in that they may both give rise to universally valid knowledge. These two modes of thought (Cartesian and holistic) are present in all individuals and in all societies. But they have been developed differentially according to the societies and the social groups. Since social groups have non-egalitarian relationships with each other, these modes of thought have also been treated socially in a non-egalitarian manner. The aim here is to see whether it is possible to re-establish conditions of exchange of knowledge which might be more equitable between these modes of thought.

We have chosen an experiment in sharing knowledge carried out with forum theatre because this approach takes into account in particular the emotions and the feelings, on one hand; and deals with power relations on the other hand. The paper firstly describes the origins of forum theatre in Latin America in the 1960s -1970s, and the adjustments made in the course of its deployment during the project studied. It then analyses the enhanced awareness among participants during the experiment with regard to knowledge relative to the social architecture and the sensitive dimension of knowledge. Finally, it explores its ultimate uses in the collective action of the project.

Participatory action research, epistemic equity and forum theatre

In the 1960s-70s, the South American continent played an important role in the development of participatory action research by combining "activities of research, education and action" (Godrie, 2020). The aim was to re-establish a form of justice in a continent where colonisation, then the dominant actors, endeavoured to jointly take control over resources, bodies and minds (to borrow the trilogy expressed by McAll, 2017). We shall see how forum theatre was constructed at that time, the epistemic openings we have sought using this approach, then the form of forum theatre we have been able to develop in the project.

Freire, Fals Borda, Boal: origins, purpose and structure of Forum Theatre

⁸ Various disciplines have emerged to break free of the rift between thought, on one hand, and the affect and the body on the other (Bernard, 2015). The cognitive and affective neurosciences, for example, have gradually moved away from programmatic, behaviourist and cognitive conceptions of the emotions, to adopt more balanced approaches to interactions (Deluermoz et al. 2018).

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

Paolo Freire, the figurehead of 20th century critical pedagogical thinking, considered research as a practice of oppression by the dominant classes (that of the knowledgeable over the ignorant), and proposed a kind of participatory action research (PAR) conceived as "a democratic production of speech which cannot be achieved without liberating the oppressors and the oppressed from the structural constraints that weigh on them" (Casabianca and Albaladejo, 1997, p.133). It is thus a matter of a double liberation of the oppressors and the oppressed which concerns situations of research as of teaching. As was stressed by Monteagudo (2002), Freire defended, from his first work (*Education as the Practice of Freedom*, 1967) to his last (*Pedagogy of Freedom*, 1996), not forgetting the book that made him famous (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970), the idea that there is no teaching without learning; and that the teacher like the learner are engaged in a joint process of liberating knowledge: "The learners rather than being simply receptacles are now critical researchers, in dialogue with the educator, who is also a researcher" (Freire, 1970: 63, cited by Monteagudo). It is this process that is also adopted by Orlando Fals Borda, a Colombian sociologist inspired by Freire among others (Fals-Borda, *et al.*, 1985) and considered as one of the fathers of PAR. Fals-Borda saw research as a dialogical experiment involving the interrelating of "subjects producing knowledge", claiming to derive from an "epistemic pluralism". But, as Godrie points out, in the way in which participatory action research had been developed at that time, he endorses the belief that "researchers may construct a science that serves as a support for the revolutionary struggles of groups which they do not belong to" (Godrie, 2020). It is on this point that Augusto Boal, a Brazilian playwright close to Freire, sought to take a decisive step by founding the Theatre of the Oppressed.

The theatre of the oppressed (so named in homage to Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) includes different forms: invisible theatre, forum theatre, newspaper theatre, myth theatre, image theatre, sitcom theatre (Boal, 2004, p 23)⁹. Forum theatre originated from a breach with the two straitjackets of political theatre as it was then practised (and is still widely practised today under the names of 'political', 'social' or 'development' theatre). It generally involved a troupe of actors who went on tour spreading predefined emancipating and educational messages among groups designated as "oppressed" or "dominated", positioned as spectators who are the receivers of the messages. The first breach introduced by Boal is that the external actors (performers, researchers, teachers) do not choose the theme to be adopted: "The great merit of the theatre of the oppressed is to create doubt, not to offer certainty [...] political theatre provided the right answers. What we are trying to do today is to ask the right questions, the best of them being in my view: 'What question do you want to ask?'" (Boal, 2004, p. 39). The second breach Boal introduced is that it is the social groups concerned, the spectators, who go on stage: the actors no longer take possession of the stage, the space of the power to say and to act: "When the spectators themselves go on stage and act out the action they imagine, they do it in a personal way that is unique and non-transferable" (Boal, 1990, p.15). They thus become spect-actors, who become more aware. This awareness is individual, and at the same time serves a collective purpose: "Forum theatre makes it possible to transit from "I" to "everyone", to bring out what is in common. It triggers the objectification of a lived experience within an interpretative framework constructed in common" (Lenel, 2011).

⁹ Boal also created a theatre called "the rainbow of desire": after being imprisoned and tortured in Brazil, Boal went into exile in Europe and realised that there "the cop is in the head". He then developed exercises designed to visit the systems of oppression internalised by individuals both as persons and as members of a social group (Boal, 1990b). These exercises developed an aspect already taking root in forum theatre: in-depth work on the emotions and the perceptions.

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In Revue *Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

Boal achieved these breaches through criticisms that villagers addressed to him when he went on tour with the Arena theatre. His accounts of them are precious (Boal, 2000), since he shows there the process of forum theatre in its essence: an offspring of the dominant classes¹⁰, Boal learns, thanks to people he met, that he was reproducing the processes of domination that he was specifically trying to combat. In this way, he breaks free of the blindness of the dominant that was analysed by Médina (2012): a cognitive cecity that masks their contribution to the reproduction of inequalities, and an affective cecity that prevents them from being affected to understand and to listen to the point of view of others. Boal allows himself to be affected and shares his enhanced awareness with his colleagues of the Arena theatre: the troupe then transforms his way of conceiving, saying and practising political theatre for the ensuing decades.

From that moment on a forum theatre method gradually took shape. Although the texts by and about Boal do not all describe the same stages, we can here outline five of them, in addition to the decision to use forum theatre:

¹⁰ A. Boal is an urbane character with a PhD in chemistry from a westernised Brazilian university, a world famous playwright, theatre director and politician.

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

Stages of forum theatre

- 1/ Identification of the theme and the issue by the group,
- 2/ Working out by the group of a story with an unhappy ending (with characters and sketches on the issue up to a dénouement) and rehearsals of the play,
- 3/ Performance of the story by one part of the group before an audience constituted of the other part of the group,
- 4/ Replacement of the volunteer actors by spect-actors who come on stage to change the course of the story in favour of the oppressed¹¹. Before and after each replacement, the facilitator (called the joker) encourages exchanges between the spect-actors on what they have seen. Only one character is replaced at a time. The spect-actor chooses the moment for the replacement. The other actors maintain their positions (and in the case of the dominant continue to exert pressure on the dominated actor) until they *feel* that there is a reversal in the situation.
- 5/ Construction of a new future model of action¹².

It is in this minimalist input - reduced to an interactive theatrical form - that forum theatre, although the opposite of the political theatre of the time, sometimes appears as the ultimate stage of political theatre (Neveux, 2014). Poirson summarizes it thus: "This empowerment, the prelude to any form of emancipation, may appear in a mode that is economic, social, political, professional, affective. It constitutes precisely the disintermediated action of emancipation (refusal of any delegation of speech, acting or action) that is the basis of forum theatre" (Poirson and Madancos, 2007).

According to this logic, using the theatre of the oppressed in the framework of a participatory action research project would involve providing neither the question nor the solution, nor the power to provide a response, but solely a 'midwifery' approach. The aim is not to provide knowledge for a group which the researcher does not belong to, but to offer a process, the lightest possible, to enable the emergence of the knowledge of others who themselves express their knowledge and transform it into action. It is also a matter of enabling the progression of the knowledge and postures of the dominant actors, a necessary precondition for greater epistemic equity.

Epistemic equity and forum theatre

If epistemology has long been confined to the critical analysis of the production of knowledge, it is taking on new life today, among other things around the "epistemology of ignorance"(Charles Mills, 1997): that of the "knowers" in their incapacity to even see the hierarchies they have created and the knowledge which is not theirs (Godrie and Dos Santos, 2017). José Medina (2012), referred to earlier, shows that this incapacity of the dominant to think the others is not shared by the dominated, who possess a double consciousness: their

¹¹ Let us point out from the start that there is a risk that the oppressed may in turn play the role of oppressors. That is why, in our practice of forum theatre, we insist at once on the balance of power and on the common good.

¹² For this stage, see Boal (2004, p 61).

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

own and that of the dominant, as Du Bois has shown in the relations between blacks and whites (1994 [1903]). According to Médina, this deficit in the dominant is not solely cognitive, but also *affective*, which would result in an incapacity to listen to and to understand others. On the other hand, the dominated groups are likely to develop, of necessity during social interactions, the capacity for open-mindedness, curiosity and humility that engender a form of metalucidity. Médina's proposition enables us to focus on the interface between the researcher and the person who is not them.

With forum theatre, we have sought to open researchers to the reality of the other, to become feeling-thinking (*sentipensant*) in the double sense intended by Fals Borda: that is to say, beings whose intelligence is linked to the heart; and who manage to break free of a division of the world between reason and emotions, mind and body (Godrie, 2020). The first meaning of the term indicates that the researcher is open to a form of empathy¹³ as a capacity for listening necessary to break free of the cecity of their own mechanisms of domination. The second meaning encourages Western researchers to escape *otherwise than intellectually* from the dichotomies that prevent them from seeing the holistic knowledge of many non-Western societies referred to in the Introduction.

With regard to this second aspect, one of the advantages of forum theatre is that it calls for a physical, symbolic and oral narrative of the world. Without minimising the major possibilities offered by writing in the forms of cognition, including orally (Goody 1994), it is important to recall inversely that the oral dimension offers the possibility of acceding to certain kinds of knowledge and other forms of thought that are inaccessible in written form¹⁴. We have shown that the oral tale, for example, presents a relation to knowledge based on the logic of the parable that enables a distancing and a research positioning relative to the real. This is then presented as an enigma to be understood, rather than an equation to solve. The enigma has the specificity of being multidimensional and of calling for several dimensions of the real: political, economic, social, cultural, and also natural, supernatural and artistic. It also possesses the characteristic of offering an approach based on going deeper, that is to say perceiving at the same time, or successively, several dimensions of the same reality. Finally, it does not separate the thinking of the body and of the emotions to achieve its ends. Similarly, forum theatre represents a multidimensional enigma to resolve. Offering researchers the opportunity to practise it may offer them the possibility to open up to the knowledge of others and to holistic modes of thought.

Implementation of a forum theatre experiment: multiple adjustments

In the PAR programme we took part in, forum theatre was used in the framework of an exchange of knowledge between researchers and staff members of NGOs on the uses of water in three South American forests. The programme involved nine partners from seven countries (France, United Kingdom, Spain, Austria, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile)

¹³ Here, it is not the 'empathy' described by Boal that the spectator feels for this or that character in classical theatre and which contributes to their falling asleep (Boal, 2000), and which in reality is, in our view, rather a form of 'sympathy' that leads to the spectator losing their autonomy.

¹⁴ In Bolivia, for example, the Andean Workshop of Oral History (THOA) sought to valorise knowledge in the humanities resulting from the oral sphere (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2007) in the complex turmoil of postcolonialism (Amselle, 2008).

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

with a substantial budget from the European Union for four years on the theme of the impact of climate change on the forest water services in Bolivia, Chile and Argentina.

The process has been very different from what Boal recommended. The project did indeed mention, in the text submitted for the funding application, the wish to work on the relations between knowledge and power (citing Foucault), but from the outset there were difficulties in co-constructing the programme with all the stakeholders (researchers, staff of NGOs, villagers and other actors in the territory). It had in fact been drafted mainly by researchers; and during the launch week, researchers and NGOs met without including the villagers and other actors in the territory.

I personally (SL) came into the project after it had been drafted, and since it was not possible to change the participants in the launch, I suggested using forum theatre (and working with AM, an actor and theatre director) with the aim of enhancing awareness of the difficulty of breaking with the patterns of transmission and uptake of knowledge, starting with the relations between researchers and NGOs, which meant it was possible to start working on raising awareness among 'dominant' groups possessing a certain socio-economic capital. Epistemic justice indeed requires a two-fold process of awareness-raising: (i) that of the dominated, as extensively described by Freire and Boal, since: "the right to express your thoughts is meaningless unless you feel capable of having thoughts that are your own", as the American sociologist and psychoanalyst Erich Fromm put it (cited by Coudray, 2016); (ii) and that of the dominant (understanding of the hitherto ignored power relations, and learning another way of knowing). The process of awareness-raising of the dominant may be considered as a temporal prelude favouring attempts to meet the other groups. But I had not anticipated to what degree forum theatre could be accepted by certain members of the project as a "participatory tool" accumulated with others tested during that week¹⁵; we shall discuss this further.

Furthermore, because of the limited time allowed by those in charge of the project to carry out the experiment and the distance between the seven countries, we were unable to write the synopsis of the play from the outset with the group involved in the experiment. I myself (SL) began to write the scenario remotely: after reading the project outline, I wrote a storyline based on my experience as a NGO staff member (1999-2003), then as a researcher (since 2003, IRD) in the field of development in Latin America and especially in Africa. Then, AM wrote the dialogues with examples taken from the eastern region of Bolivia (where the meeting was located and one of the territories for the application of the project), and taking into account the pace and changes of scene. It was only then that the synopsis was read by the other researchers and NGO staff (four times remotely and in person). The participants thus missed out on one part of the process of maturation of the theme and of their own position with regard to it, which is provided by the writing of the synopsis. Below is a summary of it:

¹⁵ In this case, a brain storming session, a march in pairs to exchange ideas, an exercise of visualisation of the future, a knowledge fair and a role play on ecosystem services.

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

Scenario: The hydrologist's machine

"A rural community is faced with a lack of water. An action research project is seeking a solution to the problem, but a of interest develops between a hydrology researcher, the editor of a scientific journal, a governor, a business entrepreneur, an anthropologist, a peasant farmer leader and a peasant woman¹⁶. The project then imposes on the peasant woman a range of technical solutions (represented by a machine), theoretical justifications (symbolised by labels with concept words) and financial offers (materialised by a case full of money), passed around from hand to hand with rhetorical comments and withdrawals of money. In the final scene, one year after the beginning of the project, everyone has benefitted in one way or another from the project and from local knowledge, except the peasant woman who is left without any recognition of her knowledge, without water, without money and with a machine that costs her more work than before."

Seven members of the team (five researchers and two NGO staff) volunteered to finalise the synopsis, to rehearse on four evenings (two or three hours), then to put on the play on the last day of the week in front of the whole group. The five researchers came from European countries (three French, one Franco-Bolivian working in England, one English) and two of them were the director and co-director of the project. The two NGO staff were Chilean and Argentinian. The remainder of the group present during the meeting consisted of fourteen NGO staff and eight researchers. We jointly prepared the content of the rehearsals (SL based on the training I had received from Boal and his works, AM based on his experiences directing actors). AM ran the rehearsals. The forum theatre performance for the other members of the group was done in eight stages:

Stages of the forum theatre performance for the audience during the experiment

- 1/ Presentation of the session by the Joker (purpose)
- 2/ Group dynamic with the audience led by the Joker
- 3/ Presentation of the rules of the game by the Joker
- 4/ Performance of the play by the actors
- 5/ Interplay between the Joker and the audience, discussion and ranking of the characters according to whether they are more or less 'oppressed' or 'oppressors'
- 6/ Short reminder of the rules of the game by the Joker
- 7/ Interventions by members of the audience to replace the characters
- 8/ Debriefing on the discussion and the replacements

The final order of the 'oppression' ranking of the characters was as follows: the peasant woman, the NGO head, the peasant farmer, the anthropologist, the hydrology researcher from the north, the business person, the governor. The NGO staff present in the audience discussed at length the 'oppressors' role of the NGO. This ranking enabled them to work on and to adjust self-critical approach. But in hindsight, we think that it may also inhibit change as it may associate in a fixed manner a social function (possessing a greater or lesser degree of power) with a posture relative to power (a way of exercising power that is unjust, inequitable, self-

¹⁶ Translation of the term *campesina*, without any negative connotation, here without specifying the profession or ethnic origins.

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

centred, etc., or exercising an absence of power in a way that is submissive, evasive, etc.)¹⁷. This may for some people have given rise to fears regarding the forum theatre approach and contributed to its being abandoned: see below.

Numerous replacements were carried out and the session lasted longer than planned (3h). Most of the spect-actors replaced the NGO (three quarters of the audience were NGO staff members, having identified with the character), no one replaced the 'most dominant' characters of the business entrepreneur and the governor (a rule proposed at the beginning by the forum theatre but which could have been broken), nor the most 'dominated' (the peasant woman): we shall come back to this later.

The knowledge evoked in the dialogues was: (i) the knowledge of the hydrology researcher, represented as sometimes highly theoretical, sometimes in its technical applications (patenting of a machine for extracting water), in any case separated from the humanities and the social sciences, and with a distinctly higher valorisation, (ii) the knowledge of the NGO presented as field experience-based knowledge tainted with the vocabulary of development (participation, gender approach, civil society, etc.), thus presented as socially instrumentalised, (iii) the knowledge of anthropology researcher, presented as fairly theoretical and tainted with populism and folklorism with regard to local knowledge, (iv) the knowledge of the peasant woman, presented as experience-based knowledge and as a kind of animist concept of human - non-human relations, generally rarely seen and understood by the other possessors of knowledge, as in this extract of a dialogue between the peasant woman and the anthropologist:

Dialogue extract

[The peasant woman hands the anthropologist a large sheet of yellow paper that symbolises her knowledge].

"Peasant woman: Our well has been dry since the company went up the mountain. I wanted to talk about it to the people in the NGO and the government. But it's complicated.

Anthropologist: [looking at the yellow paper] Hmmm ... a water problem ... very interesting. Do you think it's the fault of the spirits that haunt the community?

Peasant woman: Not exactly the spirits

Anthropologist: [cuts part of the yellow paper] Let's say, something supernatural?

Peasant woman: Supernatural? Is there something 'higher' than nature?

Anthropologist: [Getting tired, cuts more of the yellow paper] Ok, ok, I'll put: "Problem of relations between humans and nature"

[In the wings, a child can be heard crying].

¹⁷ In the forum theatre experiments that I (SL) am currently running in participative action research projects in working class neighbourhoods in Marseille and Morocco, we move on from the performance of the play to the replacements without any ranking. We ask the audience (1) to describe what they have seen, (2) whether the scene is a good representation of reality, (3) whether they want to change what they have seen or not, (4) for their analysis of the social system represented (see the practices of Hosni Almoukhli of the Theatre of the Oppressed in Casablanca). I have replaced in the rehearsals and the discussions the term 'oppressor' by 'character with power over'. That enables us to clarify two aims of forum theatre: a better distribution of power, and a better use of power ('power with' and 'power of'). The expressions 'power on/under', 'power with/of' are borrowed from Marshall Rosenberg in *Communication non Violente* (Rosenberg, 2008).

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

In this scene, the peasant woman's knowledge about water is evoked in the form of (i) technical and practical knowledge (her observation of the time frame of changes in the flow rate of the river)¹⁸, (ii) social knowledge (the power relations between the stakeholders for water issues), (iii) ways of envisaging the relations between humans and non-humans (animist relationship with water)¹⁹. In this scene, the anthropologist repudiates this kind of knowledge by symbolically cutting a sheet of yellow paper with scissors which she cuts up, trims and deforms as she sees fit in order to make it fit with her way of thinking. She knows of the existence of spirits in the cosmogony of the village, but does not grasp the animist relationship with nature: remaining within her naturalist mindset²⁰, she only uses one notion (the spirits) which she cuts out of her animist framework of interpretation (symbolised by the yellow paper). Furthermore, she is ignorant of knowledge relative to the economic and social organisation of the region, whereas the peasant woman can grasp the power relations which are unfavourable to her and that the entrepreneur's dam is one of the causes of the lack of water in the village. This scene provides an example of the relative blindness of a researcher compared to the knowledge possessed by a peasant woman. The participants, playing various scenes of this type and seeking to move them forward, have become more aware of certain factors that we shall now analyse.

Bodies, emotions and knowledge

The interviews carried out just after the experiment show that it enabled the participants to better grasp the social issues and the power relations between the possessors of knowledge. For example, during the performance, a French agro-economics researcher replaced the NGO character and was very surprised: the character of the peasant leader opposed his strategy instead of following it. The researcher reports: "I didn't think he would block me [...] in fact *I didn't think about him* in reality! [our emphasis ...] forum theatre threw right back in my face [my view of the peasant leaders]". This researcher was thus also made aware of his failure to understand the villagers, their internal power relations, their aspirations. He said in his interview that he realised too that the NGOs might have this same type of "cecity" (to use Medina's expression). Finally, he was aware of the fact that the researcher is an actor with an agenda of their own: "Finally, as a researcher, you also have a social role [...] you are an actor with an agenda too". This new awareness was made possible because of the character incarnated in the forum theatre, as he made explicit: "The difference of power, you feel it more strongly when you live it like that behaviourally, you really feel it, it's quite something", "you feel more strongly [than in the role plays] the position of being someone else", "you take on the whole emotional load [of the character]". Indeed, the forum theatre work drove the volunteer actors and the spect-actors towards a de-mechanisation of the body and of their personality so that the character's emotions might be expressed freely through the actor's body (Boal, 2004). Forum theatre enabled the participants to better perceive the social game they were contributing to.

¹⁸ We might have referred to know-how related to water, such as techniques for conserving the humidity of soils, the alteration of cycles of production of livestock grazing and breeding to adapt to drought, etc.

¹⁹ Animist in the sense intended by Descola: continuity of interiority between humans and non-humans (mind, intention, etc.) and discontinuity of exteriorities (physical appearance) (Descola, 2005). For example, the Chiquanos Monkos cosmogony in Eastern Bolivia considers the existence of a spirit of water (*Jichi*) which has relations of mutual help or attack with humans (Gutierrez, Chuvesanta, 2007).

²⁰ In contrast to the animist concept, in the naturalist approach beings are considered as a physical continuity and a moral or cultural discontinuity (Descola, 2005).

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

This enhanced awareness may be experienced by the spect-actors when they go on stage. But it goes further for the volunteer actors who experience the process of rehearsals. These are focused on the issue of social systems by addressing through the play the various assets of the characters, the relations of power and equilibrium, the alliance systems, the social perceptions, each person's wishes and counter-wishes, etc. An Argentinian NGO staff member, by training a social psychologist, explains how she prepared for the role of the peasant woman: "I thought of peasant women, things about them that upset me when I see them - that is to say my own prejudices - in order to be able to play it out in reverse and see how I would feel in her place, with me and my prejudices in front of her". This increased awareness of the NGO professional *about herself* was enhanced during the performance by an increased awareness *about the group* she belonged to as a member of the project:

"It was difficult to find anyone for the role of the peasant woman during the initial casting; and the role was never replaced after the performance. But it is not only that no one played the peasant woman, it's also that there were several moments when it was: everyone here [centre stage], a space [empty], and the character of the peasant woman over there [further away]. She was like a thing .. as if non-existent... [...] It was a long job we had to do on ourselves to be consistent with our own discourse!"

The NGO staff member was in tears while acting out the substitutions. At the time, we interpreted these tears as sadness and compassion for the peasants. According to an interview nine years later, it seems that it was more tears of dismay: "I found myself in tears in the final scene, because suddenly *I could see* how we were going to use these people for money and prestige". Thus forum theatre can contribute to broadening the field of awareness of the dominant, but this is a delicate process as it calls for people to de-identify from certain of their behaviour patterns of their own group (profession, ethnic group, etc.). As Neveux wrote, "Emancipation is a break with the historically regulated order of place and condition. It is an operation of de-identification" (Neveux, 2014, p. 203). Working on the body and the emotions makes it possible to profoundly transform the perceptions of the world and of social realities. It is as if the bodily staging facilitates the social mobilisation: the participants play an identity and make it evolve in the course of the power relations which are activated during the improvisation.

This movement necessitates the creation of a space at once of trust and of freedom which seemed to take form in the course of this week. A professional hydrologist from an NGO thus considered that "forum theatre made us more in tune" and a NGO staff member noted that "this developed our sensitivity and solidarity". One of the researchers in charge of the project also stated: "a joint project calls for trust, language, communication and that is based on corporal presence .. and for that, the theatre helped us a lot". Building trust in this way enabled the researchers to experiment, during the launch week, with different emotional regimes. During their PowerPoint presentations of scientific issues for the team, the researchers activated an emotional regime that is usual in the exercise of their profession which requires the neutralisation of the emotions to limit expression to "low-intensity" emotions (Blondiaux, Traïni, 2018). But when they took part in theatrical rehearsals, we encouraged them on the contrary to delve into their emotions, to feel them, to express them; to talk and act without minimising them. We thus made them enter an alternative emotional

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

regime²¹. During the first rehearsal, the physical and emotional responses were rather slow and restrained; from the second rehearsal, the participants got into the spirit of things and began to offer suggestions to such an extent that at some point I (AM) had to stop them. By changing the emotional regime, forum theatre can solicit or introduce changes at the three levels of emotion described by Jasper: the reflex emotions (surprise, anger, fear), the medium-term moods and the long-term feelings shaped by affective involvement (relations with specific objects: people, places, things) and by moral commitments (shame, pride, compassion in relations with institutions, moral values) (Jasper 2019). As for the feelings related to the affective commitment to the group, forum theatre may potentially enable the deconstruction of the "cognitive and emotional closure" (Jasper's expression) inherent in the identity of the social group. In our case, the interviews show that the researchers took account, *a minima*, (i) of the role played by the social group they identified with, (ii) of the importance of the body and the emotions in understanding the power relations between the possessors of knowledge. One of the researchers in charge of the programme explained it this way: 'forum theatre enables us to understand the systems of pressure from a corporal point of view, especially when the members of the audience come on stage: nothing is planned, so you have to feel the action in your body where you have internalised it and you have to transfer it into the play in real time'.

Thus the theatrical experience enables us to become aware of social issues and make them evolve, while beginning to assimilate a non-Cartesian mode of thought. By (re)opening different possibilities in the domain of the body and the emotions while activating the critical faculties, forum theatre may enable researchers and professionals to become more "feeling-thinking" in the double sense intended by Fals Borda. The researcher may become tangibly aware of a mode of knowledge which is not situated solely in their brain, but in the whole of their head, body, emotions, behaviour, modes of relating with others and with the world. In a forum theatre experiment, "the practitioner, like the researcher, develops knowledge that is incorporated in the literal meaning of the term" (Jankowski, 2019). In this sense, theatre may be considered as a "form of knowledge" in its own right (Boal, 2004, p. 22), holistic not dual, "feeling-thinking". But we shall now see that the increased awareness of the participants may prove transitory for some, and even give rise in others to effects that are the contrary of those intended. Furthermore, if becoming aware takes on a collective character at the time, it may not take root in the group, nor translate into real action in the medium and long term.

Conditions of the project and difficulty of recognising the 'knowledge of others'

The performance did not give rise to a post-production meeting to revisit with hindsight alternatives proposed by the replacements and to take a collective decision on the measures to adopt (fifth stage of forum theatre described in the first part of this article). Furthermore, forum theatre was not adopted for reuse with the villagers. We were (SL, AM) thus in some way left the project. We do not know what exactly happened next, we will only mention here a few elements that resulted: written documents (an intermediate report on the exchanges of knowledge in the project, articles published by the researchers and others published jointly by researchers and NGOs, the information bulletins with the free expression texts, the project

²¹ It would be interesting to analyse the specific emotional regimes created by the participatory processes if we had more space.

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

website)²², a filmed interview (with the project leader one year after the experiment), informal discussions with two people who had occasionally taken part in the project, and visio-conference interviews (with the project leader, one of the researchers and an NGO staff member, nine years after the experiment, or five years after the end of the project). This is not representative of everything that happened during the project according to the participants, the phases, the territories.

Forum theatre has made it possible to be forewarned against possible issues arising from the project in terms of social justice. In an interview filmed one year after the experiment, one of the project leaders offered the analysis that "after one year, we have seen that the problem that we sketched out in the forum theatre has been realised. Perhaps not with the same intensity, but it has been realised". The project leader described in particular the power of the funding provider, the position of the researcher vis-à-vis the NGOs and the peasant farmers, the real empowerment of the NGOs, the position of the peasant farmers. This warning has on occasion made it possible to reactivate the dialogue during tensions between researchers and NGOs, as is stated in the final report: "The forum theatre characters were referred to later when certain of the potential problems of communication between scientists and civil society organisations [*Organismes de la Société Civile*] that had been anticipated actually occurred". But at other stages in the project, this warning caused divergences, in particular with regard to relations with the villagers. For example, the NGO staff member who played the peasant woman published mid-way through the project some remarks of her own: "We are aware that the work is focused not on the others but on ourselves and with the others. Why this inward-looking focus on ourselves who are running the project? Because we are no strangers to the citizenship which we are referring to. Because even while making the effort and with the conviction that we are participatory actors, we have been shaped by these relations where the power of decision and the power of action are held by a few people". This text gave rise to tensions between its author and the other members of the project team which led, among other things, to her giving up: "I gave up: I stayed on the project, but I delegated everything and I was no longer involved" she said in an interview five years after the end of the project. She explained: "Forum theatre can generate a resistance to change: people realise what they could lose, and they get frightened of losing it (their power, their peace of mind). The experiment has to be systematic [reiterated during the course of the project]; otherwise, it can crystallize the power of some, and the others can only see confirmation of their powerlessness"²³. But the work was not reiterated because the team did not wish to continue to use this method. The reasons were never clearly communicated to us, but it is not impossible that fear was part of it, as one of the project leaders explained: "Forum theatre can be dangerous. Since it delves much more deeply into the feelings, we have to be take care, and before using it".

With regard to knowledge, the researchers made less progress in their conception of knowledge than did the NGO staff. The final report (mainly drafted by the researchers) mentions that the NGOs gained in competencies through their contact with the researchers. "The organisations of civil society now have a broader vision regarding water security, have adopted a more systemic approach, master certain tools for modelling or assessment, are stronger and better organised and have a better idea what to expect from the scientists on local

²² The references of reports and articles are not mentioned in the text in order to maintain the anonymity of the project.

²³ On the shocks induced by the raising of awareness, see Carrel M., et al.; and on the different strategies for resolving the cognitive dissonance, see Vaidis D. and Halimi-Falkowicz S., 2007.

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

development projects". On the other hand, the researchers do not mention any major lessons learned from their contacts with the NGOs. They rather stress the difficulties in carrying out scientific work as they understand it.

Similarly, the researchers and the NGO staff members do not mention in their writings any increase in awareness through their contact with the villagers who they rather sought to "make aware of the problem" regarding hydrological and climate issues (intermediate report on the exchange of knowledge) as a matter of urgency (article published in 2017). The absence of the villagers and the other local actors at the kick-off seminar was justified as follows: "[...] The Model Forests teams [NGO] preferred to familiarise themselves by their own means with the concepts, methods and tools needed for the collection of information before identifying and involving the agents of change". This text (written midway through the project) shows that the villagers were finally considered as providers of information ("collection of information) and activators of decisions taken elsewhere ("agents of change") who needed to be mobilised with "participatory" tools. The authors of the report describe local knowledge as technical or experience-based knowledge to be uploaded and integrated in the scientific knowledge (as was denounced by Agrawal). According to these authors, it was a matter of "valorising the tacit knowledge and *integrating it* in the scientific knowledge [our emphasis], on the basis of interactive methods such as testimony, in situ discussions, the preparation and discussion of charts and transects, and the representation of local situations through theatre" (Intermediate Report on the exchange of knowledge). In this perspective, the NGO staff members are considered as "mediators" of knowledge between the researchers and the villagers: "the teams are positioned at the interface between scientific knowledge and tacit knowledge. They have one foot in each of the two worlds (they do research and know the realities of the territory and its inhabitants) and are thus a bridge for the integration of knowledge". It was thus mainly the NGO staff members who carried out the field surveys for the monographs and for the selection of participants. That creates a distance between the researchers and the villagers and constitutes a major bias, highlighted by an article from the project published in 2016. But even reduced to technical know-how collected by the NGOs, the authors recognise that local knowledge was little taken into account. We are thus far removed from any possible recognition of other forms of thought including the affective dimensions glimpsed during the theatrical experiment. In the light of this recognition of the poor level of co-learning of knowledge, one of the project coordinators explained: "I expected more radical change, many fell back into their old habits".

The causes cited by the interviewees are many: the difficulty of changing the mode of operation, the workload, an NGO focused more on the protection of nature than on social issues, the power relations within the team (mode of governance of certain members at once directive and vacillating), connivance of local authorities with the "model forests" (for example, a NGO manager with the town hall), personal pressures (for example one agent who was building a house and was rarely available for the project), pressure from the European Union, etc.

With regard to the type of programmes imposed by the European Union, several factors reveal a concept of development that is different from the approach proposed by the forum theatre.

Firstly, as mentioned in an article published in 2017, in the 7th Framework Programme of the European Union (axis "Research for the Benefit of Civil Society Organisations"), the focus was on intermediate organisations such as the NGOs (not on the village communities), on

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

knowledge relative to solutions (and not on knowledge structuring other socio-environmental models) and on the conservation of nature (rather than on the societal or socio-environmental issues).

Then, the size of the project is so great that it represents a handicap for relations both within the project and with the local actors in the territory: "The project and the process are complex, we should make them more transparent, easier to understand and to manage. Otherwise, people might feel overwhelmed and paralysed by this complexity" (Report on the exchanges of knowledge).

Finally, the European Union gives contradictory injunctions, which might be summarised as follows: be participatory, but plan everything. Be participatory: include the civil society organisations, use participatory tools, be innovative (which inevitably generates the unanticipated and the unexpected). Plan everything: plan your day-by-day work schedule over four years, produce monitoring sheets and reports on everything you do for all matters, administrative, financial, scientific, operational, communications, etc.

This system of funding finally contributes to a standardisation of the populations and territories concerned according to the neoliberal bureaucratic norms such as those described by Béatrice Hibou: "The social programmes are conceived as business models, the programmes to combat poverty are focused on income-generating activities [...] the programmes of compassionate or humanitarian policy seek to manage flows and stocks effectively" states Béatrice Hibou, who concludes: "For the policy of compassion, as for the combat against poverty, the production of indifference derives from a process of collective de-politisation and de-responsibilisation" (Hibou, 2013, pp 131,135, 136). It is the exact opposite of the intention behind forum theatre. Introducing forum theatre in such a context is inevitably a hazardous undertaking.

On this point, our case study highlights various factors - non-exhaustive - which merit attention: 1/ the intentions of the funding providers - apparent for example in the call for projects - (the place of the actors with the least power? The ultimate goal?) 2/ the origins of the project (intentions of the coordinators, the participation of the various actors in the writing, in the launch, etc.), 3/ the time allowed for the forum theatre process with the dominant groups, and the least socially advantaged groups, 4/ the methodological precision in the decision making process used in forum theatre, the writing of the synopsis, the rehearsals, the performance(s), the discussions, the decisions taken (for example, the choice of vocabulary relative to power), 5/ the adaptation of the intensity of the proposition in relation to the level where each group is ready to alter its position, 6/ the reiteration of the experiment with each group in order to provide regular support for the changes of posture, 7/ the decision-making sessions following performances and the flexibility of the project for refocusing – according to the results - both for internal governance and for field actions, 8/ permanent vigilance regarding the distribution of material and symbolic gains from the process. Without vigilance on these points, forum theatre may induce changes that are the opposite of those sought. Forum theatre creates an experience of liminality (Turner, 1986), that is to say a moment when the participant is no longer who they were before the experience and not yet who they will become afterwards. This is what Barbara Denis was describing when she saw the use of forum theatre in research as a critical ethnography of performance (Denis, 2016). Boal stressed the performative nature of forum theatre: "The oppressed participate simultaneously in these two worlds, the world of reality and the world of images [of theatricalised oppression] become real" (Boal, 2004, p. 280). Forum theatre requires a prolongation in a form of collective action in order "to use the performance to do politics" and

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In Revue *Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

to transform the structures (Boal, 1998). This is what Boal did when he created legislative theatre when he returned to Brazil after his exile²⁴; and this is what the participatory action research projects sometimes have difficulty achieving.

²⁴ As an elected town councillor in the legislative chamber at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Boal succeeded in promulgating fourteen laws with this approach. See too http://fr.jurispedia.org/index.php/Th%C3%A9%C3%A2tre_1%C3%A9gislatif

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

Conclusion

Paolo Freire with the Pedagogy of the Oppressed and following him Orlando Fals Borda with Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Augusto Boal with Forum Theatre all sought to reestablish forms of social and epistemic equity. Just as PAR is distinct from the dominant research mode, including in its engaged form, the Theatre of the Oppressed was a break with the political theatre of the time. It was a radical approach which provided neither answers, nor even questions; and where the habitually dominated groups were encouraged acquire the power to think themselves and to speak themselves and to act. For Boal, the spect-actor, like the researchers and members of communities for Fals Borda or the educator and the learner for Freire, engage in a process of co-evolution, co-delivering, which can only be achieved in a dialectical manner. For these three authors, knowledge is created by performative processes followed by real collective action. Along the same lines, we have explored the possibility of creating by action research the conditions for a plural epistemology which recognises different modes of thought: an analytical Cartesian mode of thought, and a holistic mode of thought integrating the body and the emotions.

But present day uses of forum theatre in PAR projects may have variable effects, as shown by our experiment carried out in a programme concerning the forest hydrology services in Bolivia, Chile and Argentina. In the course of the experiment, forum theatre proved to be a powerful tool in plural epistemology where "the knowers" in the dominant groups began to see the hierarchies they had created, and the knowledge that was not theirs. The researchers and the NGO staff members who were involved began to become aware of their social position and to de-identify with certain habitual practices of their group with regard to others. They also experimented with a process where thought is intimately linked with the body and the emotions, as they recount in their interviews. They could thus open up to local knowledge which presented characteristics of this kind. But the theatrical experiment was not continued either within the team nor with the villagers and the other actors concerned. The structure of the project funded by the European Union was particularly restrictive because of its size, the expectations in terms of effectiveness and the weight of the bureaucracy. Individual and collective raising of awareness thus did not lead to sustainable collective action in terms of taking into account heterogeneous knowledge; and the memory of forum theatre during the project contributed sometimes to dialogue, sometimes to a withdrawal to people's own groups.

The use of forum theatre in PAR merits particular attention to the structure of the projects concerned in order to guarantee the possibility of altering them. Because of the movements that forum theatre seeks, and the cumbersome nature of the structures, the experiment needs to be reiterated regularly with the same groups and followed by negotiated decision-making sessions in order to contribute to long-term changes for the individuals, the groups and the structures. Boal worked on the psychic architecture within individuals (rainbow of desire), on the interactions between groups (forum theatre, image theatre, invisible theatre, etc.) and on the structures (legislative theatre). These three approaches being closely linked, we felt it was preferable that the forum theatre experiments should not neglect any of these dimensions if they aspired to serving social and epistemic change.

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

Bibliography

- Agrawal A., 2002, "Classification des savoirs autochtones : la dimension politique", in Agrawal Arun Ed., "Les savoirs autochtones", *Revue internationale des sciences sociales*, Sept. 2002, N°173: 325-337.
- Amselle J.-L., 2008, *L'Occident décroché : enquête sur les postcolonialismes*, Stock, 1 vol., 320 p.
- Bernard J. , 2015, "Les voies d'approche des émotions", *Terrains/Théories* [Online], 2 | 2015, Online since 17 October 2014, connection on 22 January 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/teth/196> ; DOI : 10.4000/teth.196
- Boal A., 2004, *Jeux pour acteurs et non-acteurs. Pratique du théâtre de l'opprimé.*, Paris, La Découverte, 307 p.
- Boal A., 2000, *Théâtre de l'opprimé*, Paris, La Découverte, 207 p.
- Boal A., 1998, *Legislative Theatre. Using Performance to Make Politics*, 271 p., ISBN 9780415182416
- Boal A., 1990, *Méthode Boal de théâtre et de thérapie. L'arc-en-ciel du désir.*, Paris, Ramsay, 254 p.
- Carrel M., Loignon C., Boyer S., De Laat M., 2018, "Les enjeux méthodologiques et épistémologiques du croisement des savoirs entre personnes en situation de pauvreté, praticien.ne.s et universitaires : Retours sur la recherche ÉQUIsantÉ au Québec", *Sociologie et sociétés*, 49, 1, p. 119-142.
- Coudray S., 2016, "Le théâtre de l'opprimé: Quelles perspectives émancipatrices pour un théâtre d'éducation populaire ?", *Recherches & éducations*, 16, p. 65-77.
- Debos F., Boillot F., Lacroix C., Cyrulnik N., Cadel P., 2008, "L'appropriation de la notion de développement durable par l'intégration du théâtre forum écocitoyen dans la politique de communication interne d'une organisation", in *Interagir, transmettre, informer, communiquer: quelles valeurs ? quelle valorisation ?*, Franco-Tunisian Conference, SFSIC/ISD/IPSI, 17-19 Avril 2008, Tunis.
- Deluermoz Q., Dodman T., Mazurel H.(dir.), 2018, Controverses sur l'émotion : neurosciences et sciences humaines, in *Sensibilités. Histoire, critique et sciences sociales*, N°5, Paris Ana@mosa.
- Dennis B., 2016, "Acting Up: Theater of the Oppressed as Critical Ethnography", *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Volume: 8, issue: 2, pp. 65-96.
- Descola P., 2005, *Par-delà nature et culture*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. Folio essais, 800 p.
- Du Bois W. E. B., 1994 [1903], *The Souls of Black Folk*, New York , Dover.
- Ellis, C., Bochner, A., 2000, "Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity. Researcher as subject", in Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. S., (Eds.) *The handbook of qualitative research* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 733-768.
- Euzen A., Bordet V., 2008, "Méthode anthropo-sociologique introduisant le théâtre forum comme outil d'analyse d'une recherche scientifique pluridisciplinaire", *VertigO. La revue électronique en sciences de l'environnement*, 8, 2.
- Fals-Borda O., 1985, *Conocimiento y poder popular: lecciones con campesinos de Nicaragua, México y Colombia: estudio preparado para los grupos de base y para la Oficina Internacional del Trabajo*, Bogotá, D.E., Colombia, Punta de Lanza; Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 177 p.
- Fassin D., 2009, "Les économies morales revisitées", *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 64e année, 6, p. 1237-1266.
- Frega R., 2013, "L'épistémologie des dominés", *Critique*, n° 799, 12, p. 978-991.
- Freire P., 1967 [1964], *L'Éducation: pratique de la liberté*, Paris, éd. du Cerf

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

- Freire P, 1974 [1968], *Pédagogie des opprimés*, Paris, éd. Maspero.
- Freire P. 2013 [1996], *Pédagogie de l'autonomie*, Toulouse, Éd. Érès, 166 p. (ISBN 978-2-7492-3637-7 et 2749236371, OCLC 829991518)
- Freire P., Macedo D., 1987, *Alfabetización. Lectura de la palabra y lectura de la realidad*, Barcelona, Paidós.
- Gerhardt H. P., 1993, "Paulo Freire (1921–1997)", in *Prospects: the quarterly review of comparative education*, Paris, UNESCO, International Bureau of Education, vol. XXIII, no. 3/4, pp.439–58.
- Godrie B., 2020, "Orlando Fals Borda, figure de l'intellectuel décolonial engagé", in *Décoloniser les sciences sociales*, Québec : Éditions science et bien commun.
- Godrie B., Dos Santos M., 2017, "Présentation: Inégalités sociales, production des savoirs et de l'ignorance", *Sociologie et sociétés*, 49, 1, p. 7.
- Goody J., 1994 [1987], *Entre l'oralité et l'écriture*, Traduit de l'anglais par Denise Paulme et révisé par Pascal Ferroli, PUF, Ethnologies, Paris, 323 p.
- Gutiérrez M. A., ChuvéSanta A. V., 2007, *Saberes y conocimientos del pueblo Monkox*, Informe por el ministerio de educación y culturas, Programa de educación intercultural bilingüe unidad desconcentrada, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 150 p.
- Hibou B., 2013, "La bureaucratisation néolibérale", *La Découverte, Recherches*, 326 p.
- Houllier F., Joly P.-B., Merilhou-Goudard J.-B., 2017, "Dossier: Des recherches participatives dans la production des savoirs liés à l'environnement – Les sciences participatives : une dynamique à conforter", *Natures Sciences Sociétés*, 25, 4, p. 418-423.
- Jankowski F., Louafi S., Kane N.A., Diol M., Camara A.D., Pham J.-L., Berthouly-Salazar C., Barnaud A., 2020, "From texts to enacting practices: defining fair and equitable research principles for plant genetic resources in West Africa", *Agriculture and Human Values*, 37, 4, p. 1083-1094.
- Jankowski F., 2019, "Théâtre forum. Rencontres transdisciplinaires", in journée *Théâtre forum sur un rejet polluant (inspiré de la controverse des boues rouges)*, 21-1-2019, IMERA, Marseille.
- Jasper J., 2019, "Emotions, Identities, and Groups", in Metzler J.B., *Emotionen*, Springer-Verlag Deutschland, pp. 346-351. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-476-05353-4_49
- Jewsiewicki B., 2001, "Pour un pluralisme épistémologique en sciences sociales", *Annales. Histoire, sciences sociales*, mai-juin 2001, p. 625-641.
- Leduc M., 2015, "Comets Avis 2015-31 - Les sciences citoyennes", p. 20.
- Lénel P., "Théâtre de l'opprimé et intervention sociale Aux sources de l'éducation populaire ?", in *Agora débats/jeunesses*, 2011/2, N°58, pp. 89-104.
- Lewandowski S., Jankowski F. coord., 2017, "Circulation des savoirs et lieux d'apprentissage au Sud. Acteurs, hybridations, pratiques", *Autrepart N°82*. 190 p.- ISBN 978-2-7246-535-5.
- Lewandowski S., 2016, *Savoirs locaux, éducation et formation. Les enjeux des politiques internationales en Afrique*, Karthala, 216 p.
- Lewandowski S., 2012, "Les savoirs locaux face aux écoles burkinabè. Négation, instrumentalisation, renforcement", *L'Homme*, n°201, 1, p. 85-106.
- Lewandowski S., 2007, *Le savoir pluriel. École, formation et savoirs locaux dans la société gourmantchée au Burkina Faso*, Doctoral thesis in sociology, Dir. J. Copans, École des Hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), Paris, 673 p.
- McAll C., 2017, "Des brèches dans le mur : inégalités sociales, sociologie et savoirs d'expérience", in *Injustices épistémiques*, Volume 49, N°1, pp. 89–117
- Medina J., 2012, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination*, Oxford ; New York, OUP USA, 352 p.

To cite this article: Lewandowski S., Molina Valdivia M., 2022/1, « Le théâtre-forum en recherche-action participative : au service des épistémologies radicales ? Corps, émotions, savoirs », In *Revue Participations*, N°32, Épistémologies radicales et recherches participatives, pp 155-181. Online : <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-participations-2022-1-page-155?lang=fr>

Mills C., 1997, *The Racial Contract*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

Monteagudo J. G., 2002, Les pédagogies critiques chez Paulo Freire et leur audience actuelle, in *Revue Pratiques de Formation / Analyses*, Université de Paris 8, France, n° 43, edition coordinated by Hélène Bézille and Jean-Louis Le Grand, ppp. 49-65. ISSN : 0292-2215).

Neveux O., 2014, "Difficultés de l'émancipation: Remarques sur la théorie du 'Théâtre de l'opprimé'", *Tumultes*, 42, 1, p. 191. Pascal B., 1670, *Géométrie-Finesse II – Fragment n° 1 / 2 – Papier original : RO 405-1 et 406-1, Copies manuscrites du XVIIe s. : C1 : n° 83 p. 321 à 323 / C2 : p. 401 à 403, Éditions de Port-Royal : Chap. XXXI - Pensées diverses : 1669 et janvier 1670 p. 319-323 / 1678 n° 2 p. 314-318.*

Poirson M., Madancos L., 2007, "'Un taon au flanc de la société' : le théâtre forum en France aujourd'hui", *Etudes théatrales*, N° 40, 3, p. 75-91.

Rivera Cusicanqui S., 2007, "Décoloniser la sociologie et la société: Entretien avec Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui réalisé par Pascale Absi", *Journal des anthropologues*, 110-111, p. 249-265.

Rosenberg M., 2008, *Communication et pouvoir*, Esserci, 176 p.

Slaby J., Von Scheve C. dir., 2019, *Affective Societies: Key Concepts*, Routledge. ISBN: 978-1-138-48886-1

Turner, V., 1986, *The anthropology of performance*. New York, PAJ Publications.

Vaidis D. et Halimi-Falkowicz S., 2007, "La théorie de la dissonance cognitive : une théorie âgée d'un demi-siècle", in *Revue électronique de Psychologie Sociale*, n°1, pp. 9-18.