Participatory Theatre as a Social Research Method to Engage Marginalized Participants
Online Learning Resource from PASAR project

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This presentation is based on our research project Participatory Action Research (PAR): Participatory Theatre and Walking Methods' Potential for Co-producing knowledge with Migrant families

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In this project we worked with 3 groups:
a) Migrant mothers b) girls from migrant families c) Black migrant mothers with No Recourse to Public Funds to look at how these methods
   • generate research data,
   • engage participants in dialogue with other social groups
   • policy makers and practitioners in an integrated way from research, to dissemination.
We collaborated with Counterpoints Arts, Praxis, RENA ISI, The Runnymede Trust

For more resources see
http://fass.open.ac.uk/research/projects/pasar
Participatory Performance Practice
(Kaptani, 2005-2017)

- Playback Theatre, drawing on Jonathan Fox
- Forum Theatre, drawing on Augusto Boal

- Psychosocial exercises including:
  - Physical theatre exercises of everyday movements and interactions,
  - emotion based mapping of the participants’ localities,

- ‘Talking to the Policy Panel’
Participatory Theatre methods emphasise dialogic, performative and embodied ways of knowing (Kaptani & Yuval-Davis 2008)

• the exploration of research questions pertaining to lived experiences which are difficult to verbalize, such as experiences of discrimination, which may be conveyed through bodily postures and gazes. (Erel/Reynolds/Kaptani, 2017)
- Augusto Boal (1979) developed Forum Theatre as part of the Theatre of the Oppressed,

- based on principles of collective empowerment and emancipation by Paulo Freire, theorist and practitioner of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed.
Forum Theatre is useful:

• to reflect on the social construction of reality
• to identify social structures which lead to oppressions
• to try out interventions for social action
• to validate participants’ local, subjugated knowledge.
Challenges of using participatory theatre for social research

• Working across academia and participatory arts’ different practices.
• In Forum Theatre it is important not to simplify analysis of power or oppression to interpersonal relationships or individualise social problems and their solution.
• Ensuring that participants are invited to give shape to the themes and issues they want to explore in order to avoid a hegemonic gaze which casts them only as having problems.
Participatory Theatre Methods

• contribute embodied, dialogic and affective knowledges to social research.
• hold the potential to articulate subjugated knowledges collectively
• through research dissemination can reach wider audiences.
• participants can co-produce knowledge about themselves and contribute to developing policy and practice about the issues affecting them.
For more information visit
www.ncrm.ac.uk