

At the start of *Theatre & Everyday Life: an ethics of performance*, first published in 1993, Alan Read challenges us all – makers of, and believers in, theatre. He notes that we all too often postpone value-judgement on the merits of our art-form by simply pointing to the “difficult truism that appears to diffuse the possibility of criticism: that theatre is always as good as it can be, given what is available to it at any one time or place.” (Read, 1995, p. 1) The challenge posed is therefore an ethical one. What good does theatre do? And what are the terms by which one may begin to define ‘good’?

While I do not attempt to answer these questions, they do permeate my reflections in this article. In it, I discuss a Practice as Research project, a case study on the design and implementation of a Futures Literacy Lab, using theatre techniques and involving asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors, which took place in the island of Lesbos, Greece in July 2019. So, in spite of Read’s admonitions, and without wanting to diffuse any criticism, the writing here is nonetheless framed by the experience of a specific time and place, and perforce takes into consideration the limitations imposed by such framing.

First, however, a few definitions are necessary. According to UNESCO, “Futures Literacy is a capability. It is the skill that allows people to better understand the role that the future plays in what they see and do”. (UNESCO, 2019) Importantly, it can be nurtured and learned. Mastery of futures literacy presupposes the capacity to make sense of the anticipatory systems and processes we make use of – not only for preparation and planning, but also for discovery, invention and novelty. In other words, Futures Literacy is the almost paradoxical human ability, to coin a phrase, to reflect on our prospective thinking.

A Futures Literacy Lab, in turn, is a tool for developing Futures Literacy (Miller, 2015). It is a carefully designed workshop, customised to time and place specificities (those two inescapable frames), where collective intelligence knowledge creation processes, and learning by doing approaches are deployed to enable participants to reveal, reframe and rethink their anticipatory assumptions: in other words, to become futures literate (Damhof, 2018). They follow a learning sequence of three distinct phases:

1. REVEAL: the first phase of the process focuses on revealing participants’ anticipatory assumptions about a given topic. The objective of this phase is to

make their tacit assumptions about the future explicit.

2. REFRAME: during the second phase, participants challenge their assumptions, by engaging in a reframing process. Participants are asked to embrace complexity and uncertainty. They reflect, situate, engage and negotiate shared meanings.

3. RETHINK: the third phase asks participants to compare the two previous phases and come up with new questions and observations about the future of the topic under exploration. Participants are asked to reflect on the overall process, ideas, exchanges and feelings.

It is worth noting that Futures Literacy derives not from a renewed knowledge about the topic in question, but from understanding the contingent nature of one's assumptions, and "by expanding what we can see and what we might do. In this way Futures Literacy is a step towards integrating complexity into our understanding of what it means to be human." (UNESCO, 2019) Likewise, in a Futures Literacy Lab, the objective is not for participants to develop a scenario or a strategy for the future, but rather to be able to identify their anticipatory assumptions, to challenge them, to practice rigorous imagining, to rethink their attitude and predisposition towards the future. The theme of the Lab is generally chosen to reflect the participants' experience. In this case, the topic chosen was 'the future of education'. I will return to this later; here, it is sufficient to note that the theme of the lab is a vehicle for fomenting Futures Literacy, and not an end in itself.

My involvement with Futures Literacy Labs came about as a result of a collaboration with PRAXI Network, a unit of the Foundation for Research and Technology – Hellas (FORTH), holder of the UNESCO Chair on Futures Research. This collaboration stemmed from conversations regarding the interdisciplinary relationship between Futures Studies and Performance Studies I had been having PRAXI; at the same time, PRAXI were seeking to expand their work on Futures Literacy to include marginalised groups in Greek society, in particular migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking communities. So we decided to develop and test the concept of a Futures Literacy Theatre Lab. This was led by me, alongside Irianna Lianaki-Dedouli and Dr Epaminondas Christophilopoulos, of PRAXI Network¹.

Our working assumption was that theatre tools and games would:

[a. help participants in a Futures Literacy Lab bridge the ‘experiential gulf’, theorized by Stuart Candy (2010), as we shall see below;

[b. encourage somatic modes of perception and expression, leading to different, non-logocentric ways of imagining, which in turn would:

[c. facilitate workshops with multi-cultural groups, who may not necessarily share a spoken language (important for us here), and;

[d. be fun!

Specifically, we hypothesised that tools from the arsenal of the Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 1979, 2002) – such as Forum Theatre and Image Theatre – might be usefully deployed within the structure of a Futures Literacy Lab. We therefore proceeded to design a workshop that would allow us to investigate this, and the potential of these tools:

I. for enhancing the revelation of anticipatory assumptions (phase 1);

II. for fostering a collective process of rigorous reframing (phase 2),

and; III. for fostering introspection and reflection (phase 3).

During the workshop, tools derived from the arsenal of Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed were adapted and put to use, with the aim of de-naturalising the participants’ everyday somatic behaviours and releasing creativity. Through Image Theatre techniques, anticipatory assumptions were not only revealed but also embodied and made ‘real’; Forum Theatre techniques were used to challenge and reframe the assumptions revealed in the first phase; and Rainbow of Desire approaches were used as a means of fostering reflection.

In the Theatre of the Oppressed, not unlike in Futures Literacy Labs, the focus is not necessarily placed on finding solutions for specific problems

¹ I am grateful for their insight and support in preparing this article. Indeed some of its contents formed part of a conference paper we jointly presented at the Anticipation Conference, in Oslo, October 2019. The first person plural often used in this article henceforth refers to the three of us.

(thought it can be sometimes), but for the spectators to be conscious of the possibilities and alternatives that will allow them to challenge predominant models. It is also important to highlight that it is not necessary for anyone to be an actor or a futurist to participate in a Futures Literacy Theatre Lab.

While rehearsing the various aspects of Forum Theatre, Image Theatre, and Rainbow of Desire techniques would be unnecessary here, it is worth remembering that at its basis, the Theatre of the Oppressed posits that “all human beings are actors (they act!) and spectators (they observe!).” and that therefore theatre is a medium available to everyone – we are all ‘spectators’. (Boal, 2002, p. 15). At the same time, in Theatre & Ethics Nicolas Rideout suggests that Adam Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is significant for thinking about the relation between ethics and theatre in that “it proposes a theatrical way of thinking about ethics, in which we judge our behaviour in the guise of an imaginary ‘spectator’ within us.” (Rideout, 2009, p. 33) In this sense Boal’s ‘spectator’ becomes ethical embodiment – we are the spectators of our own actions; not the judging ‘cops in our heads’, but ethically aware subjects.

In the Theatre of the Oppressed, “the spectator is, or must do his utmost to become, the *protagonist* of the dramatic actions”. (p.255 [italics in the original]). The emphasis is on process, rather than product. In writing about applied theatre practices, Rideout further states that

In all these forms of theatre, what matters, ethically and politically, is what is done with theatre itself rather than what the theatre is about. [...] This focus on pro-cess and form goes hand in hand with an openness to the future and the unpredictable rather than a closure around a specific ethical position. (Rideout, 2009, p. 49)

We start to see here a convergence between applied theatre, ethics and Futures Literacy. This triangulation begs further examining.

Undoubtedly the theatre has a complicated relationship with the future. Of course, theatre takes place ‘in time’ and therefore has a progression which is generally future-oriented; indeed, David Wiles suggests that in ‘Aristotelian drama’ “the spectator is held in suspense, eager to know what will happen next in the story, so all sense of inhabiting the here and now vanishes.” (Wiles, 2014, p. 50) Nonetheless, theatre’s (and theatre scholarship’s) preoccupation with presentation and representation draws focus, by definition, to the present and the past. The roles played by memory have been widely examined, too,

in relation to theatre and performance – from memory’s instrumental use by actors at their job, to its evocation as a metaphor for theatre itself, a ‘memory machine’ according to Carlson (2003). Theatre is described as a bearer of cultural memory, or a palimpsest of ‘*répétitions*’, a haunted place of eternal returns. In spite of all this, or perhaps because of all this, theatre should not fear the future. In fact, theatre practice is constantly dealing with the future. Rehearsals, devising, improvisation and of course applied theatre practices are continuously negotiating the relationships between the present and the future.

In turn, Futures Studies itself has flirted with the performative for some time. From as early as the mid-nineties, Slaughter wonders, “how can future possibilities be made real enough to stimulate present-day responses?” (Slaughter, 1996 [b]). A decade later Candy argued that the so-called ‘experiential gulf’ between abstract notions on possible futures and everyday experience impedes futures thinking from entering the mainstream culture (Candy, 2010). A preliminary mapping of the various parallels between futures studies and drama has been offered by Sabina Head. Head suggests, among other things, that drama can offer “rich, layered, concrete visions of the future through performance” (Head, 2010). Beyond these ‘visions’ however, applied theatre practices often deal with communities and individuals in a transformational manner which is evidently future-oriented. Boal’s (1979) notion of theatre as a ‘rehearsal for revolution’ and life itself, turns the act of theatre-making into a political act, that of taking control of one’s own future. Theatre Arts as a wider discipline has a rich heritage of social engagement and has been theorized and practiced as a means to challenge underlying assumptions about the world – most notably, but not exclusively in Piscator and Brecht’s ‘Epic Theatre’.

Over the last decades, a growing number of foresight practitioners and researchers have been focusing on the potential of futures work for social change, transformation and emancipation (Inayatullah, 2013), (Kahane, 2012), (Slaughter, 1996[a]), (Miller, 2018), (Milojevic, 2002). Critical futures studies deploy deconstruction and critical discourse analysis to examine how the future is constructed in the public discourse. In particular, critical futures studies call for reflection on the potential reproduction and perpetuation of power structures in the culturally predominant narratives about the future. Futurists have stressed the importance of decolonizing the imagery of the future, calling for the necessity to develop capacity to critically assess the predominant images of the futures and generate new images as a means to foster agency and

empowerment. Accordingly, for Alan Read, “[t]his is the place where theatre occurs. Both theatre and ethics are concerned with possibility. [...] The theatre image unlike any other is always a possibility without closure, like the ethical relation which awaits creation.” (Read, 1993, p. 90) This leads him to ponder on the relations between an ethics and a poetics of theatre imagery. And of course, Boal’s Image Theatre, as mentioned before, formed an integral part of our Lab. I am aware that Image Theatre and theatre imagery are not the same – the former is one of many ways in which the latter may be produced and activated. And precisely because Image Theatre can participate in a poetics of theatre imagery, we do well to raise questions of ethics in the context of the Futures Literacy Theatre Lab. To put it another way, the ethical questions involved in the processes creation and reception of images are what one might call an ethics of imagination. Our role as facilitators in these processes is not without its challenges. Candy and Dunagan argue that

perhaps the central emerging challenge for foresight practitioners has less to do with generating and broadcasting ideas about the future than with designing circumstances or situations in which the collective intelligence and imagination of a community can come forth. To design and stage experiences of the future(s) is one class of activity. To attend to the design of processes whereby such experiences are designed, making scalable structures of participation, is another. (Candy and Dunagan, 2017)

And so, some words are needed about the design and planning of the Futures Literacy Theatre Lab. First of all, in designing our Lab, we sought to adhere to the following guiding principles:

1. To exercise at all times our duty of care towards this vulnerable cohort. This in fact colours all the subsequent principles:
2. The wish to foster a sense of community in participants;
3. To have an appreciation of the specificities of the particular group;
4. To nonetheless acknowledge the diversity within the group;
5. To prepare participants for disruption/reframing of their assumptions;
6. To ready participants for post-workshop

Prendergast and Saxton caution that the “potential success of any applied

theatre piece relies on the fact that the concerns, issues or ideas are available to an audience – that is, that the drama portrayed has relevance and resonance with the lives of those who witness it.” (Prendergast and Saxton, 2009, p. 23) We imagined that organising the lab around the theme of the future of education would be relevant and resonate with our young constituency, and indeed most participants had something to say about that. But a few of them, we were later told, had little or no experience of any formal education, never having been to school before their arrival in Greece – school-life in their countries of origin having been severely disrupted by conflict. So while we anticipated that there might be some difficulty in phases two and three of the Lab, we had not envisaged that even phase one might be problematic in these terms – a failure of imagination on our part. Again, Prendergast and Saxton remind us that “a facilitator should be familiar with the social structures and community contexts within which he or she may be working”. (Prendergast and Saxton, 2009, p. 17) And in our situation as guests running a two-day workshop, this familiarity could only be surmised second-hand, through the local NGO partners with whom we discussed the project. We acknowledge there are further ethical questions involved in this work, inherent to applied theatre practices and any ‘intervention’ in disenfranchised communities – questions to do with managing participants’ expectations, power relations, triggering trauma, continuity and longevity of the project.

This is crucial, because applied theatre practices often deal with communities and individuals in a transformational manner, which is, by definition, future-oriented. In the genealogy of applied theatre, Brecht’s *Lehrstücke*, with their interest in the mechanics of a situation, rather than the fate of the character, resemble Futures Literacy Labs, in that they are vehicles, not concerned with the future scenarios themselves, but with the possibility of reimagining. According to Rideout, in Brecht’s learning-plays, “[t]he text is not a finished text but an open field for a process of improvisation rewriting and discussion. [...] The practice of theatre becomes a collective labour of political and ethical exploration. (Rideout, 2009, p.48) And so the ethics-futures-theatre triad comes to focus once again. This can be surmised from the thinking of French philosopher Michel de Certeau. who affirms that “Ethics is articulated through effective operations, and it defines a distance between what is and what ought to be. This distance designates a space where we have something to do.” (de Certeau, 1986, p. 199) de Certeau’s first clause clearly places ethics as posing a future-oriented challenge; the second, places it in the territory of

action, which is of course the realm of performance in general, and theatre in particular. Applied theatre furthermore situates this action in the real world.

Indeed, theatre has an established and successful history of working with marginalised communities and young people. In particular, theatre work made with, and by asylum seekers and refugees has been well documented and theorised (Jeffers, 2012, *inter alia*). However, theatre tools had never (to our knowledge) been deployed in Futures Literacy Labs; moreover, Futures Literacy Labs themselves had also never been offered to asylum seeking participants. This meant that our research project had two variables, or unknowns, raising an important ethical problem: that we were working with a vulnerable group in a relatively uncontrolled situation, given we did not know what the application of theatre tools would do to a Futures Literacy Lab.

We were aware of this potential problem from the start and tried to mitigate for that in our preparation: before starting, we had extensive discussions with our local NGO partner, LATRA, and a pre-Lab meeting, in which safeguarding issues were raised. Among other things, it was established that the minors' care-takers would be present and actively engaged in the Futures Literacy Theatre Lab, so as to provide them with a 'safety net' of sorts. But we also had to ask ourselves, from the start: what are we offering participants in exchange for their part in furthering our research agenda? How was this a mutually beneficial encounter? As Prendergast and Saxton point out, "We need to be more careful, for example, in examining the way in which power is held and distributed, whose agendas are really being served by what we do, and how we leave the project sites." (Prendergast and Saxton, 2009, p. 188) One could argue that the prospect of becoming 'Futures Literate' might not be a sufficient reason for engagement with the workshop, from the point of view of the minors, who were invited to participate by LATRA. Indeed, the number of stakeholders involved, with a number of potentially conflicting agendas, makes the whole endeavour very complex. LATRA are a social organisation working on innovation projects, in partnership with another NGO, Iliaktida, who are responsible for accommodating and safeguarding the minors. They are the ones with a duty of care and the power to make decisions and grant permissions on the minors' behalf.

As mentioned above, we were very aware of our position as researchers, entering a space of complex and traumatic lived experience, and with an

agenda of our own. Alan Read states that, in relation to theatre in general, it is impossible not to think about ethics: “This goes for the simplest most local theatrical exchange as it does for the broadest and most international of issues concerning the entry of one to the place of the other.” (Read, 1995, p. 36) Here, we were bringing our places, real and metaphorical – theatre, futures literacy, academia, Brazil (where I am from), the UK (where I work), mainland Greece (where Epaminondas and Irianna come from and PRAXI is based) – to the place where these minors dwelled, a temporary place of refuge, the Greek island of Lesbos. More, their entry at that place is itself contested and subject to wider political debates. They were, to some extent our hosts in Lesbos, while at the same time being ‘guests’ in Greece, housed by Iliaktida, invited by LATRA to “do something with theatre” as one of the minors later told us.

As well as agreeing that Iliaktida’s social workers would accompany, and participate in, the workshop, a number of questions relating to the Lab were raised in our conversations with LATRA’s representative. One significant case regarded the use of physical contact in the workshops. We had been told that participants might be suspicious or defensive towards us, at least at the beginning of the process. However, we were reassured that if we were positive and motivated, they would be willing to engage. It was suggested that we start with a powerful ice-breaker that would also entail some physical exercise; so, in my original plans, participants would engage in a few exercises that involved touch, from the warm-up to activate their bodies and somatic responses, to some contact improvisation in the creation of images and the ‘sculpting’ of bodies in the reframing stage of the Lab. This was immediately dismissed by LATRA. “Absolutely no physical contact between boys and girls”, we were told. Of course, I should have known better. Royona Mitra has discussed the intercultural politics of touch, and described “contact improvisation as a colonising language”, especially when there is no space for participants “to negotiate different cultural codes through [their] encounters with it”. (Mitra, 2017, p. 390). The immediacy of the work in our Lab would have meant that there would be no time for this kind of delicate negotiation.

We were also warned that male participants might consider themselves superior to their female peers. This chimes with Prendergast and Saxton’s assertion that

nity defines itself as a “community” – what does that mean to them and how is it manifested? For example, you may see the independence of women in a very different way from the societal group with whom you are working. (Prendergast and Saxton, 2009, p. 193)

So we adjusted our planning to remove all exercises involving physical contact (not an easy task), and considered ways in which we might foment gender parity within the work we were doing. This included making sure Irianna had a prominent role in leading the Lab. As it turned out, the changes were unnecessary: no girls came to the workshop. While this was disappointing (and perhaps revealing), it meant, in the end, that we could reinstate the physical contact exercises, as originally planned, which in short amount of time and the confined space we had been given to work in was very welcome. I am not entirely comfortable with this, though, and with the fact that I welcome that reinstatement; it seems that my convenience is more important than female participation in the workshop – which of course it is not. Still, in practical terms, our lives were made easier, time and space again being the arbiters of possibility.

We tried to prepare as well as we could, and had a set of expectations regarding the participants, which had been discussed with LATRA. We expected our participants to be a group of up to 30 English-speaking, mixed-gender unaccompanied minors (15-18 years old) mainly from Afghanistan, and Syria – all of whom would have applied for asylum in Greece, and be awaiting to hear the result of their claim. In the end we had a group of almost 40, exclusively boys, some as young as 11, and with little to no English, from as many as ten different countries: Afghanistan, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Iraq, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Syria. Some of the minors had applied to move to other European countries, normally to be reunited with family members.

This is significant in that the participants’ relation to the future – and of course their past, which we were expressly warned not to mention or enquire about in the Lab, is fraught with a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty. And so we had to consider whether even asking our participants to engage in imaginations of the future might be trauma-inducing in itself, in that it may not be so easily dissociated with their experience of the past. In fact, many of the images of the future produced in phase one were in fact violent and dystopic. On the other hand, fostering futures literacy means encouraging people to ‘use the future’ in order to determine actions in the present, rather than seeing the present as

determined and ordained by the past. Nonetheless, Groves acknowledges the material dimensions of anticipation; that it “is dependent on capacities of bodies and of socio-technical apparatuses, distributed throughout the environments of social action” (Groves, 2017). Indeed, Arjun Appadurai sees the future as a ‘cultural fact’ formed by the configuration of three human functions, namely: aspiration, anticipation and imagination. In the same spirit as Groves, he argues that “capacity to aspire” is unequally distributed, and is associated with socio-economic disparities (Appadurai, 2013). And while the future is a cultural fact, “an applied theatre facilitator needs to be very sensitive to the particular culture of the community for which the applied theatre piece is to be played, as there are many culturally diverse practices of audience response.” (Prendergast and Saxton, 2009, p. 21) In our case, it was impossible to speak of ‘the community’ given the diversity in ages and nationalities represented. Still, they all had in common the experience of displacement and dislocation, and their response to our Lab was coloured by that – their pasts inevitably creeping in to their imaginations about the future.

Moreover, some of the younger boys encountered difficulties in engaging with futures thinking; one of the reasons for this might be the limited capacity for abstraction at their intellectual development stage. However, mimicking the elders in their use of theatre approaches allowed them to participate without feeling excluded. It was clear that older participants above the age of 15 responded much better to the process – they were much more engaged, able to perform the tasks, etc. Perhaps the structure of the Lab, formatted at over five hours of work during the first day was too long and tiring for the teenagers, especially given that some of them will not have been used to attending formal education. This is something we should have been further mindful of. Futures Literacy Labs were originally designed and structured with adults in mind. We imagined that the application of theatre tools might have been enough to counter the length of the process, with the use of physical techniques and a greater – for want of a better expression – entertainment value. According to Bell, art contributes to the field of futures studies by offering and triggering subjective experiences related to intuition, creativity and imagination (Bell, 1997). This is certainly what we hoped to achieve with the deployment of theatre tools. Boal calls for the de-mechanization of the body, in order to restore the possibility of “original action”. (Boal, 2002). So our approach was primarily physical, getting participants ‘out of their heads’ and into their bodies. “To strike the right balance between fixed structure and set content on the one hand, and free-range

creative exploration on the other, is a crucial consideration in futures pedagogy and workshops”, Candy and Dunagan caution. (2016, p. 6) This applies to any pedagogy, for that matter, and it is also at the core of devising processes in the theatre. To some extent, the work undertaken the Futures Literacy Theatre Lab was a work of devising. We wanted to foster the ability to imagine – that is, to picture and develop a felt sense, almost independent of words. Boal states that “images in an organised ensemble reflect the emotions of the observer, her ideas, memories, imagination, desires...” (Boal, 2002, p. 175) Again, the acts of performing and of watching are inextricably connected. It was fascinating to observe this in practice in our Lab.

To begin with (phase one), and to ease participants into the work, we asked them – after a physical warm-up – to produce ‘script’ (drawings, stories) about the probable future of education. The word ‘probable’ is key here: we are not asking for a desirable future or a future they particularly dread; just what they consider to be likely. This was done through a ‘Rip Van Winkle’ imaginative exercise, whereby participants are asked to close their eyes, imagine they have fallen asleep, and have woken up twenty years later: what can they see? Subsequently, in groups, they presented these scripts and each group produced collectively, and with their bodies, composite still images of the probable future that were shared in plenary –i.e. some negotiation within the groups, mediated by the facilitators, needed to occur in order for a single group image to be arrived at, stemming from the various ‘scripts’. Here, much care had to be taken by the facilitators so as not to bias the discussions, and steer them in particular directions. The difficulty was compounded by the linguistic barrier – this part of phase one was definitely the most verbal in the whole process. Due to language limitations it was difficult for some participants to engage in discussions. LATRA had provided us with two interpreters, but given that we were working in three groups, with multiple languages, we needed to make do and adapt to the circumstances, making use of some participants’ shared languages, and finding ways within the groups to communicate, and much was lost in translation. The images produced in this phase were often quite literal and illustrative – not necessarily a problem, in this context – and we helped the participants to identify the underlying anticipatory assumptions present in them, chief among which, the instrumental notion of education being associated with and leading to employment.

We then introduced the reframing context (phase two), which was that,

in 2040, work is obsolete – all basic human needs for food, transport and shelter are mechanised and there is no need for employment. The task in the break-out groups was to produce not one, but a sequence of still images about this reframed future – which would then be ‘activated’ according to principles of Image Theatre. Each group presented their images in plenary and then the audience gave feedback and asked questions. Boal describes this as “*the multiple mirror of the gaze of others* – a number of people looking at the same image, and offering their feelings, what is evoked for them, what their imaginations throw up around that image.” (Boal 2002, p. 175 [italics in the original]). Here, something extraordinary took place: one of the participants, at that point a spectator, stood up and said ‘this would not happen!’ He suggested an alternative version for that particular set of images, spontaneously transforming our Image Theatre into a Forum Theatre event! Based on his suggestions, the presenting group were pushed to further reframe. Candy and Dunagan foreshadowed this when they stated that

experiential futures differs significantly [from simple close observation] in that it does not merely bring into focus existing objects or processes at different scales, it brings into being different worlds as our attention comes to them. In futures, then, attention is not merely an act of interpretation, it is an act of creation. (Candy and Dunagan, 2016, p. 14 [emphasis in the original])

This act of co-creation of a reality is at the essence of the theatrical encounter, which happens in the intersubjective space between audiences and performers.

The next day, in phase three, participants were asked to think of three words, in their own language, describing their sentiments about the process thus far, and were asked to create a short physical score, a phrase composed of three movements informed by those words. Here, the work was at its most poetic and inspiring. Indeed, Boal argues that “we should not try to ‘understand’ the meaning of each image, to apprehend its precise meaning, but to *feel* those images”. (Boal 2002, p. 175 [italics in the original]) And so, it can be said that some of the images looked strong and empowered, others appeared to describe that their creators tried and worked hard. Others still, seemed to express that they were in a process of reflection. Regardless of their precise meaning, all *felt* happy and satisfied. “Reflecting with an audience on how and why a performance works in terms of the meanings it makes, or fails to make, is a key component in gauging the impact of applied theatre”, according to Prendergast and Saxton. (2009, p. 23) In that respect, it can be stated that the Futures Literacy Theatre

Lab was successful. The Iliaktida care-takers gave us very positive feedback, based on their participation, observation and exchanges they had with the minors. The LATRA representative was also very pleased and he told us that we should consider a success the fact that more of 50% of the participants returned for the second day of activities.

To close the workshop, we formed a circle and asked participants to briefly reflect on their experience. They came up with very pertinent questions about the value of the process; one participant also told us that in his culture, they conceive of the future as being contained in the present, since all the actions taken in the present will form the future. Two other participants told us that they enjoyed the Lab and that they would like us to run this activity twice a week. The ethical question of the longevity of such projects and commitment to a group, as opposed to the idea of simply coming, delivering, and going away was poignantly felt. Alan Read reminds us that “[i]t is impossible not to engage with ethical concerns in a process involving people in places coming together for the purposes of pleasure, education and excitement”. (Read, 1995, p. 36) We had created this ‘coming together’ and it clearly was our responsibility to manage expectations relating to its outcomes.

It is patent that we, at least, learned very much from this process, and that there is much more to learn, as well as ethical questions to resolve; but fundamentally we are convinced that Theatre of the Oppressed techniques served their purpose of de-naturalising the participants’ everyday somatic behaviours and releasing creativity. Through these techniques, anticipatory assumptions were not only revealed but also embodied and made ‘real’. In some cases, theatre tools helped participants to engage in futures thinking, overcoming an initial passive attitude towards the future that can be partially connected to religious fatalism (Godet, 1994). Indeed, at some point one of the participants said that “only god knows the future”. The goal of a Futures Literacy Lab is of course, not to know the future, but to embrace its unknowability, and in that sense the participant had already arrived at that acceptance. Moreover, since the enlightenment, de Certeau argues, “the religious or metaphysical aim of stating the truth of beings according to God’s will was replaced by the ethical task of creating or making history (*faire l ’histoire*).” (de Certeau, 1986, p. 199) So while we may accept the uncertainty, we work towards the construction of positive futures.

All the participants responded very well to physical games and exercises. Fundamentally, performance helped participants overcome linguistic barriers and express themselves. Through performance, they could work not only by illustrating their ideas, but also by engaging visual metaphors. During the third phase in particular, participants' enactment moved beyond mimesis to something deep, personal and meaningful that they felt they needed to share with us and their peers. Appadurai calls for the need "to examine not just the emotions that accompany the future as a cultural form, but the sensations that it produces: awe, vertigo, excitement, disorientation" (Appadurai, 2013). In our Futures Literacy Theatre Lab we had all these, and many more.

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