



Theatre as a Social and Educational Experience: A Case Study With Homeless People in Spain

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Annotation. This paper focuses on the exploration of the possibilities of theatre with a group of homeless people. Using qualitative research procedures, the experience is described through the narratives of its participants, in order to explore the educational impact of the proposal. The results tell us about its strengths to deconstruct harmful stereotypes, to understand the complexity of vulnerability and to deepen into the value of theatre as a socio-educational tool.

Keywords: *applied theatre, vulnerable groups, homeless people, ethnography of education, theatre in education.*

Introduction

We have a wide scientific literature demonstrating the immense possibilities of performing arts applied to education and social intervention in a broad sense (Massó-Guijarro et al., 2021). As studies show, performing art encourages social cohesion and empowerment strategies, promotes collective and individual development (Allan, 2014), and the learning of new codes of expression and dialogue (Cordero Ramos & Muñoz Bellerin, 2017), and prepares people to face conflict situations peacefully and creatively (Fernández-López, 2015).

This growing interest in expanding knowledge about the arts as an educational tool is reflected in the high profusion of studies and scientific journals on the subject experienced by academia in recent years. In this vast area of research, there are studies

on the impact of arts methodologies for professional development and teacher training (Dobson & Stephenson, 2018; García Gómez & De Vicente Hernando, 2020; Tomas Motos & Navarro-Amorós, 2011; Sedano-Solís, 2015); others focused on the applicability of theatre in school improvement and its contribution to the development of creativity in primary school students (Flensner et al., 2019; Nuri & Topdal, 2014). There is also research interested in the socio-educational impacts of theatre and drama (Méndez-Martínez & Fernandez-Rio, 2020; Onieva, 2011; Teruel et al., 2019), music (Lage-Gómez & Cremades-Andreu, 2020; Palkki, 2020) or dance (Conesa & Angosto, 2017; Rokka et al., 2019) for secondary school students.

Research highlights the importance of the arts as an important educational platform and resource because of their ability to call for participation and embrace differences, considering them as potentialities rather than deficiencies (Gjærum & Rasmussen, 2010). In this sense, the arts can facilitate challenging processes where the capacities of human beings emerge and are enhanced and develop the creative and critical capacity that allows us to question our assumptions about the world and deconstruct prejudices (McKenna, 2014).

This article focuses on describing the development of the socio-artistic activity of *Fuera de la Campana* ('Out of the Bell'), an applied theatre experience developed in the city of Granada with homeless people. In previous research (Massó-Guijarro et al., 2020; Massó-Guijarro & Pérez-García, 2021a) we have intensively investigated the social and educational effects of the experience based on the experiential accounts of the homeless participants.

However, in this research we pose the following question, with a strong Freirean resonance (Freire, 2012): what do those of us who dedicate ourselves to implementing artistic and educational projects learn? How does our understanding of art and otherness change through the implementation of these projects? Through a qualitative ethnographic approach, we will investigate the transformations that the experience generated in the people who participated as educational and artistic mediators/instructors of the experience: two students of social education and social work about to finish their degrees and with artistic careers already completed.

First of all, the logic and development of the project 'Out of the Bell' will be described. We will then focus on the narratives of the mediators in order to analyse the educational repercussions that this experience had for them, through the qualitative exploration of in-depth interviews, focus groups and a large number of informal conversations held with them.

Theoretical Framework

Applied theatre as an emerging discipline

Performing arts as an educational and social tool is a broad and diverse field that is difficult to define. The great variety of practices and disciplinary approaches it encompasses

requires a general framework that facilitates its rigorous study. Applied Theatre (AT) offers us a formidable example focused on the systematisation of the theories and practices that make use of theatre for different purposes. AT emerged in the 1990s in England, and is currently in a phase of full expansion in the academic arena, as shown by the periodic congresses organised by the International Association 'Drama in Education' (IDEA) and the existence of scientific journals specialising in the field, such as *RiDE: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, in the Anglo-Saxon world, or *APES: Revista de Artes Performativas, Educación y Sociedad*, in the Spanish context.

According to Nicholson (2005a), TA encompasses those 'dramatic activities that exist primarily outside conventional theatrical institutions and that are specifically intended to benefit individuals, communities and societies' (Sedano-Solís, 2019, p. 106). Motos and Ferrandis (2015) specify that AT must be.

a praxis that generates critical knowledge from practice to guide it to practice, with the will to contribute to social change in favour of respect, equality, access to goods and solidarity through the educational capacity of the arts. (p. 11).

Applied theatre with vulnerable groups

In our contemporary world, numerous national and international reports attest to the worsening of inequality and social gaps (Alvaredo et al., 2018) and the emergence of new forms or definitions of exclusion and violence (Nations, 2020), such as "aporphobia", the neologism coined by the Spanish philosopher Adela Cortina to describe the hatred of the poor (2017). The data are increasingly worrying in a globalised world where not only economic interests but also problems are shared, and in the opinion of some (Vidal-Fernández, 2009), it is to be hoped that solidarity will begin to be shared (or 'globalised'), making it possible to imagine and implement solutions to these common problems.

In this context, the performing arts can act as devices that enable speech and enrich the expressive possibilities of the disadvantaged groups that suffer the brunt of these global problems. As the seminal work of Augusto Boal (2011; 2015) shows, theatre can trigger processes of reconquest of social and cultural rights, as it enables a conception of people as subjects of their own aesthetic and educational experience.

Consequently, performing art can be understood as a tool for empowerment, understanding this as a 'process of insubordination and an attempt to overcome oppressive individual and social structures' (Torres, 2009, p. 97).

For this reason, there is a growing scientific interest in studying the educational and social possibilities of the performing arts for work in contexts of vulnerability, which is another fundamental dimension of this study. Art as an instrument for transforming inequalities requires an interdisciplinary approach due to the hybrid nature of its object of study, where political, social, and educational converge.

Thus, we can highlight studies on inclusive dance and performance (Brugarolas, 2015; Koppers, 2004) or participatory theatre (Cordero Ramos & Muñoz Bellerin, 2017). Also, those that examine the effects and complexities of the incorporation into the artistic sphere (professional or amateur) of subjects traditionally excluded from the art world, such as people with disabilities, as in the works of Brugarolas (2015), Eckard & Myers (2009), or García-Santesmases & Arenas (2017). We also find perspectives that focus more specifically on theatre as an instrument of social transformation (García-García et al., 2017; McKenna, 2014), or on the relationship between theatre, research, and transformation (Mackey, 2016).

Also, in the field of the performing arts, the current emergence of a varied amalgam of initiatives and projects that work from the confluence between the artistic and the social reflects the growing interest in generating cultural policies that combat unequal access to cultural rights. While the concern in the past focused mainly on developing strategies of cultural democratisation, where 'vulnerable' people could access culture as consumers, there is currently a tendency towards positions that vindicate the need to call for their participation as producers of art, both in the amateur environment and in the more professionalised circuits.

The effort and concern for the artistic participation of people traditionally outside the arts world is also reflected in the work of various theatre and dance companies and schools that collaborate with different social groups at different levels of professionalisation. In Spain we find initiatives focused on the inclusion of people with functional diversity, such as the dance schools and companies Psicoballet Maite León (Madrid), Su-perarT (Granada), Ruedapiés (Murcia), Danzamobile (Seville) and the theatre companies and schools Teatro Brut (Madrid). Also, the Municipal Theatre School of Úbeda (Jaén), led by Natividad Villar, which works with various social groups, whose artistic-social work has recently been recognised with the Max Award for Social Character 2020. Other artistic initiatives focus their work on the inclusion of homeless people and are of particular relevance to this study, as it was the disadvantaged group that participated directly in the experience we are studying, as will be detailed below. Also noteworthy are the proposals of 'Caídos del cielo', led in Madrid by Paloma Pedrero, an actress with a recognised trajectory in the professional theatre circuit. Likewise, the recent production of the show 'Postales para un niño' (2018), by the Murcian company Teatro Más, which starred homeless people who are users of the Jesús Abandonado Foundation.

Other relevant experiences include the 'Imarginario' project, promoted by the Centro Internacional de Investigación Teatral (TNT) in Seville, which produced two plays starring homeless women from 'El Vacie', one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the Andalusian city. The social impact and complexities of this project have been explored by anthropologist da Silva Perez (2015). In the same city, the project 'Mujereando' also stands out, led by social worker and actress Carmen Tamayo, who works with women also from 'El Vacie'.

But undoubtedly, the forerunning project when it comes to highlighting theatre as a tool for transformation with the homeless in Spain was ‘Teatro de la Inclusión’, a group mediated by the social worker, actor, and doctor in applied theatre Manuel Muñoz Bellerín. This company has been working for more than twelve years through collective theatre creation and the social, artistic, and educational repercussion of its work has been analysed in numerous publications of great relevance, impact, and originality (Cordero Ramos & Muñoz Bellerín, 2017; Del Campo-Tejedor et al., 2019).

Likewise, another theatrical experience applied with homeless people is the same as the one discussed in this paper, ‘Fuera de la Campana’, which has been working since 2018 in the city of Granada with the group, and which has also been investigated in previous publications (Massó-Guijarro et al., 2020; 2022; Massó-Guijarro & Pérez-García, 2021a; 2021b).

Models of Applied Theatre

To conclude this theoretical framework, we provide a proposal to situate applied theatre experiences in vulnerable contexts. It is necessary to make explicit the differences between the different models when considering AT practices with disadvantaged groups, where theatre would occupy a differential role in each case.

One of them would be centred on intervention, in the search for an effective response that modifies a concrete reality. In this approach, artistic practice is conceived as an instrument, as one more variable within a preventive and reintegration programme. Additionally, it is contingent in nature, as it could be substituted by another strategy that appears to be more effective. Usually, the person who implements this type of intervention is a professional in the social field but not in the artistic one. The projects framed in this model can be approached from critical and awareness-raising approaches (Freire, 2012) but also from the preventive and welfare paradigm aimed at modifying risk behaviours and ‘normalising’ people on the margins.

The other is an approach where theatre is not a variable but the constitutive core of the project itself. These experiences are based on the postulates of theatre as a tool for social and political transformation, following authors such as Bertold Brecht, Erwin Piscator or Augusto Boal. In these projects, the facilitators do have specialised theatre training. Theatre is not made to obtain social or political results previously delimited on the basis of an intervention programming process, although theatre does indeed have beneficial effects for the people and communities that practice it. This is the case of the experiences of ‘Imaginario’, ‘Teatro de la Inclusión’ or ‘Fuera de la Campana’ recently mentioned.

However, and despite the radical differences in their initial postulates, both models share an instrumental approach, where theatre is seen as an ‘instrument’ and this implies that there is a risk of mystifying its potential and reducing its content to mere instruments, instead of highlighting its main attribute of being guided by the logic of access and enjoyment of enriching artistic experiences, inspired by the extension of citizenship rights (Roitter, 2009, in Infantino, 2020, p. 19).

Finally, it should be noted that the distinction we propose does not configure two watertight compartments. In many cases, projects involve hybridisations between one approach and the other. For example, Infantino (2020) points out the strategy followed by some mediators, who justify their projects on the basis of arguments taken from the first model in order to obtain funding. Although in order to obtain funding, they align their lines of action with the political agenda defined by the establishment, their projects later become processes more closely aligned with the second approach.

Methods

This study is framed within a doctoral thesis on applied theatre carried out by the first author (Massó-Guijarro, 2022), whose empirical body was an ethnography developed during 29 months (from June 2018 to December 2020) within a social theatre group called 'Fuera de la Campana'. This group was generated collaboratively with homeless people in various situations of vulnerability in the city of Granada.

To investigate AT practices, the most used methodology is 'practice as research' (Nicholson, 2005) where social intervention and research merge. This hybridisation makes it possible to work jointly on various objectives, such as producing new knowledge through research techniques, modifying specific realities because of innovative practices or promoting social learning and the participation of the agents involved (Sales-Oliveira et al., 2019). In this study we have opted for a strategy that is closer to 'participation with observation' or 'observant participation' than to the usual participant observation, because in the research scenario the first author assumed a triple role: as researcher, theatre teacher and artistic creator. The enquiry, therefore, was not limited to theory and ethnographic data collection, but the body itself was used to feel and think the experience from an "embodied" place, where affective engagement in the research experience was understood more as an epistemological strength (Esteban-Galarza, 2016) than as a limitation.

Participants

In order to facilitate the identification of the interlocutors and protect their identity, initials will be used in the case of the homeless participants. In the case of the mediators, they will be identified as 'Instructor 1' and 'Instructor 2'. Regarding the profile of the mediators, Instructor 1 was a 26-year-old man with a degree in Fine Arts and a final year student of Social Education, with experience in socio-educational work through the arts in prison contexts. This young man spent six months participating as a volunteer mediator in the experience. Instructor 2 was a 30-year-old man with a degree in Dramatic Arts and a final year student of a degree in Social Work, with no previous experience in the socio-educational field, who participated for four months as an unremunerated mediator.

Data collection

The data collection instruments included:

- a) the field diary, which provided a narrative description of the most relevant aspects of the educational and artistic development of the group, including the main critical incidents;
- b) the audiovisual recording of all training sessions and rehearsals, which was carried out systematically for seven months (from November 2018 to May 2019);
- c) in-depth interviews with the two theatre mediators, held at two different points in the educational process;
- d) audio-visual records of the two focus groups conducted together with the homeless participants of the project, with the aim of jointly analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the group's artistic and social performance and exploring possibilities for improvement and future expectations;
- e) audio recordings of the meetings with the two trainers to prepare the formative sessions, and of all the informal conversations we had afterwards to evaluate the development of the project.

This last data collection tool was particularly relevant because these preparation and evaluation spaces allowed us to maintain a stable forum for interpretative evaluation with the mediators and constant enrichment of the workshop. In these dialogues and inter-subjective encounters, we triangulated our visions on the development of the project, something that allowed us to engage in a dialectic exercise with great reflective value.

In this sense, a common form of triangulation in qualitative studies is team research, which occurs when two or more researchers study the same or similar scenarios; in fact, Taylor and Bogdan (1986) recommend this type of dialogical approach as opposed to "solo" research. This dialogical starting point allowed us to risk our own interpretative horizon and to move away from self-univocity and monological essentialism to develop mobile and flexible points of view with which to look at the world. Conversations with both instructors allowed us to explore the learning implications of the experience we were participating in. This provided us with relevant material to answer the research purpose of this article, aimed at describing the logics and development of the experience and at the same time discussing the social and educational repercussions of it on the people who implemented the project.

Data analysis

Regarding the data processing and analysis of our research, we followed the procedures of interpretative thematic analysis (Crowe et al., 2015) and grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 2002). Thus, interviews, focus groups, and field diaries were fully transcribed. In the case of the audio-visual records, we transcribed only those interactions that were

judged to be particularly interesting for our research purposes, as the large amount of material collected made their complete transcription unfeasible and unnecessary.

Based on the assumption that data do not speak for themselves, but require interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), the material taken from the field was reread in contrast to the theoretical corpus and successively reorganised into different themes and sub-themes. The process of coding and analysing the material was undertaken gradually, with successive coding of the information collected at different points in the research. In this way, the process of analysis was simultaneous with data collection, as is usual in qualitative case studies investigating dynamic, living realities (Simons, 2011).

Thus, the themes and sub-themes changed throughout the research and analysis process, but ultimately the data were coded into two broad dimensions of analysis, as can be found in the 'Results' section. On the one hand, the dimension that addresses the ethnographic description of the project itself, detailing the key milestones of its implementation and achievement. On the other hand, the one focusing on the narratives of the theatre mediators who participated in its application with the aim of analysing the social and educational effects that "Fuera de la Campana" had for them. As can be seen in the "Results" section, this second dimension of analysis unfolds in four categories that were constructed in correspondence with the aforementioned research objective, namely: a) deconstruction of stereotypes about homeless people; b) construction of a more complex and dialectical vision of "vulnerability" and of the care relationship; c) recovery of enthusiasm for the profession; d) discovery of the potential of theatre as a socio-educational tool and acquisition of tools for the future professional.

Results

'Fuera de la campana' project

The theatre workshop from which 'Fuera de la Campana' (FDC) emerges was born within Calor y Café, a charity association from Granada that focuses its work on homeless people or people with difficulties in accessing basic services, where I started teaching a theatre workshop in September 2018.

There was no similar initiative in Granada and at that time there was already a group of people interested in participating, as a result of contacts developed in a course on inclusive art, as part of the fieldwork for their doctoral thesis. The workshop consisted of an introductory course in acting, using acting training exercises from physical theatre. The conditions were gradually laid for a theatrical project in which the artistic tool was at the service of the members of the group and their specific needs, generating a climate of freedom and openness to any possibility that might emerge during the work process.

The workshop gained strength and definition during the first months, until in one of the meetings we decided to proclaim ourselves a 'theatre group', transcending the initial

approach as a workshop within the framework of an association and creating a more ambitious project. The participants expressed their desire for the workshop to gradually emancipate itself from the context of the association, to focus the work on more artistic aims and less related to the welfare-oriented approach that they perceived in the association. It was also decided to increase the frequency of rehearsals and to move them to a classroom at the University, which provided greater intimacy and comfort than the association's multi-purpose room where the meetings had been held. This spatial change had an important symbolic resonance, as they moved from a habitual setting for them (the association, where many of the actors went to have breakfast, have a snack, and take part in other workshops), to a space with a different social status, which changed the qualitative nature of their experience perceptions.

We can highlight three milestones of relevance in the evolution of FDC. The first of these was the course on Collective Theatrical Creation, held at the Faculty of Education Sciences of the UGR in May 2018, which we convened to self-train as a group in this methodology and to disseminate it in the academic context as well. To carry it out, we invited Manuel Muñoz Bellerín, a professor specialising in collective theatre creation and director of 'Teatro de la Inclusión', a leading theatre experience with homeless people in Seville. This course was open to the university and non-university community, and 17 people participated, 4 of whom were members of FDC. It provided a setting for a dialogue between secular and academic knowledge and encouraged the inclusion of people from FDC in a normalised environment. For two of the actors, it was the first time they had visited the university (as at that time we had not yet moved the rehearsals). It also opened up the group to new members. Until then, the theatre project had been very limited to the association and its environment (volunteers, workers, and users). This course was a turning point in the development of the project by breaking this endogamic tendency. In the same way, the new additions boosted the possibilities of work at a time when the complex life circumstances of the participants had been weakening the group and allowed FDC to take on a more heterogeneous form. Thus, because of the course, two new members joined the group, one of whom continues to participate as an actor.

The third milestone was the first public performance, also held in May 2018, where we premiered our play 'El Funeral de la Campana'. The fourth milestone was the celebration of the I Jornadas de Artes Escénicas, Educación y Transformación Social, in February 2020 at the same Faculty, where the group had the opportunity to repeat the play. Both performances were followed by a colloquium with the audience. These links with the university environment were particularly significant for the group as they gave visibility and recognition to the work carried out by the group.

Participants of the project

The group decided to nominate themselves 'Fuera de la Campana' (Out of the Bell), in a reference to the statistical formula of the Gaussian bell that establishes the normal distribution of the mean. The group's participants considered themselves 'dissidents from the norm' and decided to vindicate this supposed lack as a potential, hence the name of the project. Also, the bell was a key reference point for the collective imaginary of the group, as it referred to the collective and personal awakening they wanted to summon through theatre.

FDC is characterised by the diversity of its participants, which goes beyond any possible effort to categorise a specific profile. Nevertheless, certain features of their life situation that are relevant to an overall understanding of the experience can be summarised. The actors of the group according to Castel's (2002) categorisation move between the zones of 'marginalization' and 'vulnerability'. Apart from two participants, they are all unemployed and suffer from different forms of residential exclusion. Among them we find people who are homeless or sleeping in shelters and hostels, others living in overcrowded or illegally squatted houses. Most of them have mental health complications because of extremely complex life circumstances.

The number of FDC actors is changing due to the complicated life circumstances of many of them. However, there are four founding members of the project who remain involved to this day. Currently, we have a permanent group of four actors (one of whom is a transgender man) and four actresses, five of whom are regular users of the association, one is a volunteer and the other participant joined as a result of the Collective Theatre Creation course. The youngest participant is 24 years old, 67 the most mature, and most of them are Andalusian, except for one. However, throughout the group's trajectory, there have been participants from different origins (Senegal, Mexico, etc.).

The diversity of motivations for participation was an emerging dimension from the beginning. Every participant enjoyed the workshop in a different way, a fact that can be illustrated in an anecdotal record, when one of the participants humorously declared: 'I don't like theatre, but I come because there are good people here' (R.N.). This factor, together with the diversity in the intensity and frequency of their participation, meant that certain people who were less committed to the project stopped attending when we began to celebrate the rehearsals at the faculty.

As mentioned above, it was necessary to move the weekly rehearsals to the faculty, as the space at the association's headquarters became increasingly scarce and less and less intimate. To develop the physical exercises, the Body Expression room was ideal, and the group's move to it was key to the artistic growth of the project. However, we kept one of the weekly sessions at the association so as not to exclude those who were not sufficiently committed to move to the faculty, but who were interested in participating in the experience.

Four of the participants, however, were strongly committed to the project from the beginning. They regularly and punctually attended rehearsals at the faculty, despite its location far from the association's office, the usual meeting place for the participants. They managed to combine the FDC activities with the rigid schedules of the soup kitchens and shelters. An anecdote that highlights this strong commitment can be seen in the case of an actress who was hospitalised due to a respiratory crisis and asked to be discharged voluntarily in order to attend the general rehearsal before the group's first performance.

Artistic production and performances

'The Bell Funeral' is the name of the group's first and only performance to date. It was premiered in the usual rehearsal room at the University in May 2019 and repeated in February 2020. The audience was composed, on the first occasion, of friends, members of the association and other sympathisers. On the second occasion, it was made up of those attending a conference on performing arts and social transformation organised at the faculty with the collaboration of the group.

Both performances were followed by a colloquium with the audience, which generated an interesting dialogue between the cast and the audience. The dramaturgy of the play was created collectively during the rehearsals, using own texts (written by the participants) and those of others (a poem by Walt Withman was used). In the resulting creation, the social problems of the group were shown in metaphorical form, which had constituted the main material of scenic exploration during the rehearsals.

As a result, their work communicated an acknowledgement of adversity and vulnerability in a dynamic interaction with hope and empowerment. We also sought to strengthen the relationship between the audience and the cast through a direct and constant gaze towards the audience. Our approach was based on the premise that the audience was also a participant in the 'theatrical conviviality' and on a conception of the theatrical act as a relational and performative process created by all those involved in the act (Bruun, 2017).

Perceptions of mediators

As mentioned above, this study focuses specifically on the effects that the experience had on the mediators who participated in it. Thus, this section will study the subjective perceptions of the two instructors, through the accounts collected in the interviews and the participant observation carried out.

Challenging stereotypical images of the homeless community

The first dimension that emerges from the analysis of the mediators' interviews is the possibility that the experience offered them to question stereotypical images and negative social representations of the homeless. Despite their previous training in social work, both mediators expressed that they still had certain negative stereotypes about homeless people due to their lack of contact with the community to date, as the following excerpts show:

'I thought my head was free of prejudices, but maybe not so much... it's not the image we see on TV, in the movies, is it? When you're there, having a very philosophical and meaningful conversation, you say: 'Oh, and these are the people who are supposed to be on the fringes of society... I wish they were more involved! (Instructor 2).

'One of the things that struck me the most was (...) that they were people with a great desire to learn, a great interest in new things and a tremendous amount of curiosity, and that surprised me a lot, to tell you the truth. And the prejudice I had about homeless people was broken a little bit, that in the end, regardless of the fact that we are professionals and we are dedicated to this world, you go with this prejudice, and until you don't come up against reality you don't realise that it can be different' (Instructor 1).

In their accounts, there is a sense of surprise at the capacity for dialogue and reflection shown by the participants, and at the intellectual level of the conversations. Also at the proactive attitude and 'the desire to learn' and, more generally, at the multiple concerns and abilities of the participants.

Transition towards a dialectical vision of vulnerability and the support relationship

They also tell how the experience made it possible to reconceptualise and turn the concept of 'vulnerability' into something ductile, dialectical, which not only characterised the homeless participants but was inherent to the human condition. The workshop thus became a space of mutual care and help, where not only the mediators' relationship with the 'needy' participants was one of assistance. The artistic work process made it possible to expose the fragilities, limitations and vulnerabilities of all the people involved, independently of their initial social status or their role (as mediator or participant). This was also linked to the challenge of prejudices and the stereotype of the social professional who gives help in a unidirectional and messianic way, as one of the mediators commented:

'Help is reaching you from whom you least expect it' (Instructor 2).

This same view was shared by a young doctoral student from Mexico who came to the group for a few months. She was from an upper-class background and signed up for the group without knowing beforehand that it was partly made up of homeless people (as the information posters did not include this information). During her stay in Granada, she went through a bad personal period and the theatre group gave her the help she needed at that time:

'They were always very kind to me, very attentive to me. I don't forget that when I was living in the other flat, which was just across the street from the Association, when I had little problems with my flatmates, they all came looking for me and knocked on my door... and [said]: 'We're looking for G.' Like those uncles... that family, rather, that you need somewhere' (G.d.R).

As the narratives show, in the workshop, relationships of mutual care emerged independently of the social status of the participants. In this sense, ‘vulnerability’ was no longer associated only with the social condition of some of the participants, but became a dialectical and ductile concept.

Recovering enthusiasm

The workshop was also perceived as an experience that enabled the mediators to regain the enthusiasm for social work, which they felt their academic career had taken away from them:

‘the workshop (...) has made me recover a bit of hope, because it is true that I was a bit lethargic about the world of social work, and what the workshop has done is make me recover a bit more spark and interest in the work’ (Instructor 2).

‘[the workshop] demonstrates the fact that you can, that you can transform and that art is useful, that it is useful for something... the truth is that one of the things I have taken away most, it sounds a bit corny, but honestly, is hope’ (Instructor 1).

Discovery of social and educational potentialities of theatre

In a related way, the mediators commented that they had found in the workshop an opportunity to reinforce their confidence in the potential for social and educational transformation of art, and in particular, of theatre. This was shown in their discourses:

‘In the society in which we now live, the arts as an end in themselves are a source of profit. But using the arts as a resource gives options for many more interesting things. First, discovery of yourself and then discovery of the world around you’ (Instructor 1).

Likewise, one of the potentialities they highlighted in the theatre experience was the possibility of balancing the expression of individuality with the discovery of commonalities that generate a feeling of community:

‘The workshop has made me see that such different people can find common ground... I think one of the successes was that within the workshop we were able to make them feel that they were in a group but at the same time we respected their individuality’ (Instructor 1).

Finally, in the second round of interviews, the mediators emphasised that in the workshop they had acquired skills that they were extrapolating to other work contexts involving other groups:

‘I took away tools that I have later applied in other jobs’ (Instructor 2).

In this sense, trainer 1 later recounted in an informal conversation that months later he had worked in a residential care unit with unaccompanied foreign minors. In that setting, he implemented daily one of the somatic discharge body exercises that we did at the beginning of the sessions, as a stress management strategy with the adolescents.

Discussion and Conclusions

The term 'aporophobia' was coined by the philosopher Adela Cortina. It can be translated as 'fear of the poor' and is defined as 'a peculiar type of rejection, distinct from other types of hatred or rejection, among other reasons because involuntary poverty is not a feature of people's identity' (Cortina, 2017, p. 42). From sociology, Bauman describes 'mixophobia' as the fear of mixing with the different and how the lack of contacts increases prejudice and increases social exclusion (Bauman, 2006).

As we have seen, FDC as a political, social, and artistic proposal, impelled precisely the mixture, the crossbreeding with the 'different', with the one who lived 'outside the bell'. In this sense, Allport's contact theory (1954) establishes a good interpretative framework for understanding the effects of the human mixture proposed by FDC. This theory has been used to investigate the reduction of prejudice towards certain groups, such as people with disabilities (Zitomer & Reid, 2011). Allport (1954) established that people naturally tend to group themselves with those who are most similar (in-group) and establish generalisations and categories, and concepts about those who, for different reasons, they consider different (out-group). According to the theory, repeated interaction between the two groups would result in a reduction of prejudice when certain contact conditions are met (participants have a shared status and common goals and exercise intergroup cooperation).

In the context of our research, we could establish an arbitrary division to understand what happened, imagining an 'in-group' composed of the more socially affluent members (mediators and Mexican PhD), and an 'out-group' composed of the homeless and socially marginalised. The stories studied from the external group show this overcoming of prejudices that would allow us to deduce the potential of the theatrical experience applied to reduce aporophobia and the fear of the 'different' (mixophobia), namely, the one we simply reject due to ignorance and lack of spaces for contact and coexistence.

Also, as exemplified in our case, the arts can be 'resources' (Yúdice, 2002) for the construction of spaces of recognition and visibility for marginalised sectors; 'tools' to build counter-hegemonic narratives that embrace diversity as a value and facilitate processes for the reconquest of cultural rights of excluded sectors (Boal, 2015). Not surprisingly, theatre has been a classic object of interest for disciplines such as work or social education, given that culture and art are intimately linked to quality of life and well-being.

Likewise, many authors in social work and social education research denounce the growing technification and bureaucratisation of the hegemonic paradigms of social intervention (Hill & Laredo, 2020; Núñez, 2002). As some works on 'Applied Theatre' (Del Campo-Tejedor et al., 2019) show and as illustrated in our case (especially in the perceptions of the instructors about the 'loss of illusion' towards the work), to counteract this technocratic tendency and to call for more humanistic views, theatre can offer an inexhaustible source of potentiality.

Furthermore, theatre thus stands out for its capacity to appeal to the group while at the same time allowing for the expression of singularity. As we have seen in the FDC experience, arts enable working from a plurality of perspectives and emphasise the richness of the processes of joint construction and exchange of knowledge. In this sense, according to the researcher Marián Fernández-Cao (2015):

The ability to get involved when we are part of a theatrical, musical, or dance project involves knowing that we are part of the group and how the group is the one that shapes the identity [...] The artistic group exercise reeducates us in humility, in the common project, in responsibility, co-responsibility and beyond, in the experience and shared pleasure of the process, the product and its exhibition to others. In all these processes we learn to recognise mistakes in front of others, to exchange criticism, to support and sustain, to contain the group, to learn to let ourselves be helped (95).

As discussed in this paper, ‘Fuera de la Campana’, as a theatre experience applied in a vulnerable context, had numerous beneficial effects, not only for the homeless participants but also for the theatre mediators who worked on it. In the case of the latter, the analysis of their stories shows that FDC provided a framework in which they were able to: a) deconstruct stereotyped images of the group; b) transcend towards a more complex and dialectic vision of ‘vulnerability’ and the caring relationship; c) recover their enthusiasm for the profession; d) deepen their practical theoretical knowledge of theatre as a socio-educational tool and acquire new tools for their professional future.

Finally, it can be concluded that it is necessary to reinforce the role of art and culture as a resource for social intervention in contrast to the technocracy and bureaucratisation of care practices. In our research context, the artistic experience made it possible to work based on the ethics of care and a valuing of affection in the context of work. This made possible a challenge to the instrumental rationality characteristic of neoliberalism and a ‘decommodification of lived experience’, something key according to certain critical approaches to social work (Hill & Laredo, 2020).

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Teatras kaip socialinė ir edukacinė patirtis: benamių atvejo tyrimas Ispanijoje

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Santrauka

Kaip rodo daugybė besiformuojančios „taikomojo teatro“ srities tyrimų, menai gali būti galinga edukacinė priemonė socialinei transformacijai įvairiuose kontekstuose. Šiame straipsnyje tyrinėjamos kai kurios teatro galimybės Granados mieste (Ispanija) pagal sukurtą projektą su benamiais, kurie buvo tiriami taikant kokybinę etnografinio pobūdžio metodiką. Tyrimo tikslas – aprašyti patirties logiką ir raidą ir kartu aptarti projekto socialinius ir edukacinius aspektus su projektą vykdžiusiais žmonėmis. Pirma, buvo aprašoma projekto logika ir raida. Antra, sutelkiamas dėmesys į teatro instruktorių – tarpininkų – pasakojimus, siekiant išanalizuoti edukacinį šios patirties poveikį jiems. Kokybinis giluminių interviu ir tikslinių grupių tyrimas buvo naudojamas šios patirties edukaciniam poveikiui iširti. Tyrimo išvados rodo teigiamą projekto poveikį ne tik benamiams dalyviams, bet ir prie jo dirbusiems teatro instruktoriams – tarpininkams. Tarpininkams tai suteikė galimybę: a) dekonstruoti stereotipinius benamystės įvaizdžius; b) pereiti prie sudėtingesnio ir dialektiškesnio požiūrio į „pažeidžiamumą“ ir globos santykius; c) atgauti entuziazmą profesijai; d) gilinti teatro, kaip socioedukacinės priemonės, teorines ir praktines žinias ir įgyti naujų priemonių savo profesinei ateičiai. Galiausiai daroma išvada, kad būtina sustiprinti meno ir kultūros, kaip socialinės intervencijos prieš technokratiją ir priežiūros praktikos biurokratizavimo šaltinio, vaidmenį.

Esminiai žodžiai: taikomasis teatras, pažeidžiamos grupės, benamiai, ugdymo etnografija, teatras švietime.

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