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Toward Post-Qualitative Research: Social Theatre on Maidan

Abstract

The paper focuses on the problem of relevance of a “post-qualitative” approach in sociological research. The post-qualitative approach implies a freer format for data analysis and presentation than it is required in qualitative studies. Actually, various types of case studies move towards post-qualitative inquiry in order to save unique, vivid visual and verbal evidence gathered during a social event and to make the obtained evidence useful for sociological knowledge. However, this problem needs further methodological discussion. The authors pay special attention to a social Forum Theatre, which appeared during Maidan protests in the winter of 2013/2014 when Ukraine was experiencing systemic turbulence and a state of “emergency”. The Forum Theatre served as an illustration of how an individual’s civic consciousness was being formed through their self-revelation as participants of the theatrical action. The representation is based on a methodology of the “Theatre of the Oppressed” developed by Augusto Boal. The content of theatrical performances is analysed in order to reconstruct the main dilemmas related to value and meaning as communication topics for theatrical plays and discussions (e.g., personal responsibility vs. paternalism, love vs. hate); besides, to test the range of variability for social and cultural identities. The case study confirms that interactive theatrical techniques are effective since they teach to understand the Other’s problems, develop a culture of dialogue, help a person reflexively enter into social space and produce new collectivities that are ready for social changes.

Keywords: a state of “emergency” in the society, “post-qualitative” approach, Boal’s theatre methodology, interactive theatrical techniques, development of a culture of dialogue, new collectivities ready for social changes

A Society in the State of “Emergency”

Due to Euromaidan (also known as the “Revolution of Dignity”), Crimean annexation and subsequent armed conflict in Donbas, Ukrainian society suddenly found itself in a state of “*emergency*”, which is increasingly being discussed in connection with today’s financial, economic, political and cultural crises [Žižek, 2010; Adey, Anderson, Graham, 2015; Kostenko, 2015]. Systemic turbulence, political instability, economic downturn, which is likely to be long-lasting, and atmosphere of “temporality” related to what is happening now are the main distinguishing features of the present-day Ukraine. Tangible vibrations of common and private existence do not allow ordinary citizens to trust any guarantees (no matter if they are institutional or personal) about how long the state of “emergency” will last. Therefore, a culture of “emergency” is being transmitted to people’s mode of life, as well as into their intuition, intentions and actions.

The reality of “emergency” can undoubtedly be inscribed in spatial and temporal coordinates of today’s culture, which are *multiplicity* and *simultaneity*. But it also possesses a set of special ontological characteristics, thus apparently violating the established order of interaction between the global and the local in favour of the latter and putting a picture of the world taken “here and now” at the centre. Geographic boundaries have been distorted; some territories have unexpectedly become inaccessible while other countries and cultures are becoming closer. The space for mass media’s access is now deformed as a result of “information wars”; cultural consumption in most social groups is decreasing because of straitened financial circumstances. As regards a temporal dimension, there is either “pulsating” apologetics or discredit of long and short historical periods as a stake in legalisation of the present, the near and far future. However, an individual’s internal time, our “deep-seated self”, as Henri Bergson called it [Bergson, 2001], is often strikingly different from both astronomical clocks and cultural or political ones started according to various versions. Despite the fact that these circumstances may challenge an existential and physical threshold of survival, people get new opportunities to gain the experience of solidarity and fortitude. They also hope that there will be positive changes in society, including those taking place through cultural participation by using open emancipatory resources.

An Innovative Theatrical Perspective

It is a well-known fact that artistic and cultural phenomena effectively accompany the present-day forms of civil protest and inspire them, contributing to justification of values and ideals and creating an atmosphere of romanticism around uncommon events. These phenomena urge to recognise self-identity and identity of others, reduce psychological tension, arouse enthusiasm and produce aesthetic catharsis. Both in the capital of Ukraine and other cities, Maidan’s cultural effects evoked artistic creativity and increased cultural and symbolic capi-

tal common to the participants and sympathisers. Suffice it to recall that the national anthem of Ukraine topped the list of the most popular melodies in 2014, which united spontaneously gathering people of different ages and statuses. It is also worth mentioning that lots of fences around public gardens and along highways were painted yellow and blue, which are the colours of the Ukrainian flag. Maidan will always be associated with a medieval catapult (although it could hardly be used for real self-defence) and the night-time chime of St. Michael's Cathedral, which called on Kyivites to gather in the city centre shortly before the protesters were violently dispersed. And what about a piano on Hrushevs'kyi Street, which both unknown performers and stars like a pop-singer Ruslana played under tyre smoke, or an unforgettable concert of Sviatoslav Vakarchuk and his team at the evening cold square illuminated with thousands of mobile phone lights? The urban environment sheltered protesters, changing in accordance with utility and aesthetics. Live streaming cameras and other gadgets worked day and night not only to inform *ad locum* the whole world about what was happening but also to make shortly after an authentic and comprehensive documentary. At last, as Judith Butler once described public protests of the last decade, "Revolution happened because everyone refused to go home, cleaving to the pavement, acting in concert" [Butler, 2011].

That was the time when the "Theatre of the Oppressed" appeared in Ukraine. The Theatre's first trainings and performances were held in the Ukrainian House (Ukrains'kyi Dim)¹ in February 2014 [Tiahlo, 2015] (see Photo 1). Euromaidan, its support and defence, contradictions among participants (including the most active ones), as well as opinions of their opponents were the main topics for discussions and performances. The Theatre came into being just days before over 100 protesters were killed and wounded by snipers on Kyiv's Instytuts'ka Street on February 18–20. It is hard to overestimate the role of socially active art and artistic resistance against violence after those tragic events. Peaceful but not indifferent, the "Theatre of the Oppressed" turned out to be "a rehearsal for reality" [Declaration of Principles, 2015].

In other words, people needed to learn how to speak of conflicts and contradictions, how to reach consensus and oppose violence without bloodshed, and, finally, how to search for a projection of personal and common future. Moreover, they desperately needed to develop their intuition in order to be able to act correctly for the good of others, especially after the Maidan Massacre where almost 100 protesters (known as *Heavenly Hundred Heroes*) were killed. That was the time when voluntary communities actively functioned all over Ukraine and direct social actions prevailed. The society was going to be split into "friends" and "foes" and become a thing of black and white. Conducting dialogue training sessions for people who were violently, randomly or voluntarily deprived of basic rights, including the right to life, was rather a difficult task, especially in the whirl of political events problematising the actions of new authorities and during the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. The training sessions were semantically

¹ The Ukrainian House is a conference and exhibition centre located in the centre of Kyiv. It was used by protesters during Maidan events.

loaded with problems that seemed to have neither immediate nor far-reaching solutions, which was typical of a society in the state of “emergency”.



Photo 1. The International Theatre of the Oppressed Organisation (ITO). Kyiv, February 16, 2014. Inscription on the pediment of the building: “Combining True Values”.

However, the energy of civil resistance in 2014 contributed to the formation of a number of artistic phenomena (some of them continue being formed). These phenomena are beyond the scope of “revolutionary art” and constitute the basis for substantial transformations of citizens’ cultural participation, when engagement in cultural processes implies direct (for both body and mind) participation in cultural events and creation of artistic phenomena, rather than consumption of cultural products. Both ordinary people and communities all over the world are increasingly tending to construct cultural phenomena. In Ukraine, there are two factors favouring this process: (1) growing need for cultural participation, especially among young people, “middle class” and intellectuals; (2) lack of finance, which impedes access to traditional cultural forms.

The increasing role of communities and growing engagement of ordinary citizens in the public sphere have resulted in the emergence of new formats for interaction between culture and society, like independent public media which are not controlled by government, citizen journalism which came into being due to social networking services, or educational projects (non-commercial and non-governmental public initiatives, aimed at disseminating information and making an accessible cultural product of high quality). Alternative formats for theatrical arts also emerged due to a new wave of civic enthusiasm. As a rule, theatre, cinema (though to a lesser extent) and, later, fiction are always first to react to social changes that have not yet been explained by social sciences.

The “Theatre of the Oppressed” is a widely used theatrical practice for discussing the current social contradictions by performing different roles; for example, modelling situations like “how can we live together” without intentionally oppressing other people and humiliating ourselves, when “everyone is a leader at

least of themselves”. However, it has not been familiar to Ukrainian society so far. Despite the fact that similar theatrical and performative techniques had previously been practiced as a part of educational and psychological training programmes, they have not become popular. In January 2014, three-day theatrical workshops were held simultaneously in Kyiv, Chernihiv, L’viv, Chernivtsi and Donetsk. Facilitators from Belgium, Germany, Italy and other countries, who had been invited to participate in the workshops, expressed solidarity with Ukrainians [Joker Tsunami in Ukraine, 2015]. They used a technique developed by a Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal in the 1960–1970s and based on his understanding of the social theatre as a platform, where individual and collective expectations of social changes are generated with the help of psychological and artistic techniques [Boal, 1993]. The final goal of the workshops was to represent Euromaidan events from the viewpoint of participants in a forum performance. Another goal was to establish autonomous centres of the “Theatre of the Oppressed” across Ukraine, in order to meet new social challenges. Both tasks have been accomplished: in 2015, a non-profit organisation called the “Theatre for Dialogue” was founded. The organisation stages performances and conducts training sessions in almost all of Ukraine’s cities where social demand exists.

The flow of internally displaced persons from Crimea and Donbas, personal tragedies experienced by these people and growing social contradictions brought about new topics for theatrical dialogues like problems of IDPs, people’s distancing from each other, family conflicts and helplessness of a person facing social challenges. The “Theatre for Dialogue” deals with problems like these with the help of performances created and staged by Ukrainian jokers¹, who have done a training course. Educational workshops (with the use of theatrical techniques) for volunteers, trade union activists, organisations defending women’s rights and LGBT rights have also enjoyed popularity. By now, the “Theatre for Dialogue” has considerably widened the scope of its activities [Theatre for Dialogue, 2015].

Methodological Assumptions for Analysis of Theatrical Techniques

According to the definition given by ideologists of the “Theatre of the Oppressed” (foreign activists-jokers, who came to Ukraine to teach techniques used in the Forum Theatre; all of them had worked in various countries experiencing social or political conflicts), the T.O. model is neither a therapeutic method for solving a person’s socio-psychological problems nor a social activism technique. It is not a purely aesthetic phenomenon either, though this component is especially significant. The main goal of the Theatre is to prepare and promote social transformations within certain communities and later in society overall. Hence, we are especially interested in how relevant may be this unique, “live” material (training sessions, spectacles, discussions held in the framework of the Forum Theatre) to using in sociological research and social cognition.

Theatrical metaphors have obtained a foothold in sociological discourse due to role theory in symbolic interactionism, Erving Goffman’s “dramaturgical version” for the use of modes and techniques of symbolic communication between

¹ In Boal’s terminology, joker is an interactive actor of facilitator. In most cases, but not all, joker would be a drama workshop leader.

people in everyday situations [Goffman, 1959]. Later on, after youth protests in France (May 1968), public attention was focused on a critical essay “The Society of the Spectacle” written by Guy Debord. The “spectacle” was understood as a way of establishing and solidifying power relations, dominance and status hierarchies in the consumer society, where truth and lie are interconvertible [Debord, 1994]. In the context of postmodernism, play as a theatrical construction of everyday personal and social life by means of feigned characters being in a combinatorial relationship with reality, is one of the basic concepts. Whatever terms are used by a researcher to describe the play, bearing in mind its spontaneous and premeditated aspects, it is constantly present in today’s sociological theorisation as well. Suspiciousness towards human motives, verbal acts, behaviour and actions along with nonhuman ones has always been peculiar to sociology in the most different paradigms and conceptions, making us look “behind the scenes” of visible, obvious social existence, comprehend its nature having multiple meanings and senses, spot manipulation of “authorities” and people’s tactics for “getting around the rules”, as Michel de Certeau noted [de Certeau, 1984], identify latent mechanisms of social organisation, etc. Besides, we should try to do all this in an unprejudiced manner.

Who would not agree with Goffman’s assumption that “when an individual appears before others he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation” [Goffman, 1959: p. 15]? Both the individual and their partners follow this rule, with more or less success, while interacting with each other. Therefore, the “**fundamental asymmetry of communication**”, which is present in everyday interaction, may hardly be eliminated. A “working consensus” based on a short-term agreement (spoken or not spoken) to define the situation seems to be quite possible. Establishing a dialogue is even more problematic; however, daily life has hardly anything in common with ideal models of dialogues, which, for example, imply a “fusion of horizons” of the interpreter and the interpreted [Gadamer, 1989], or include sincerity in “validity claims” during communicative action [Habermas, 1979].

In this regard, dramaturgy of real life with all of its conventionalities, ambiguities and manipulative actions of social actors is far more complicated than scenic performances of the Forum Theatre. The latter, nevertheless, provides a wide range of practices (though they are quite typical) for involving, without any compulsion or edification, participants and spectators in learning cultural techniques to reach “working consensuses”. From a socio-cultural viewpoint this kind of theatrical training may be regarded as an inoculation of *cultural technique for being attentive to the Other*. This technique, if we try to paraphrase Jacques Derrida, would call into question the existing idea of complete audibility of someone else’s speech [Derrida, 1967]. It is difficult to conceptualise this cultural technique unambiguously and unconditionally in both everyday consciousness and scientific discourse. However, the question: “Which comes first: cultural techniques or concepts?” is being actively discussed, owing to different understandings and interpretations of today’s media technologies and media competence [Winthrop-Young, 2013]; thus, the concept of *technique for being attentive to the Other* is remaining to be generated.

Another methodological assumption in the analysis of theatrical techniques concerns the relevance of the concept of **performativity**, which is primarily associated with Judith Butler’s performative theory of gender. This theory argues

that gender identity is constructed through repeated actions, but it is neither predetermined nor invariable [Butler, 1999]. It would also be advisable to mention John L. Austin, who introduced the term “performative” and referred it to performative utterances. The latter are both statement and action since they incite action [Austin, 1975]; they are often used for impressing audience and improving public images. So, it is no surprise that performative research (which is an entirely new paradigm) is practice-led, starts out with real facts and states; and it is considered as “an alternative to the qualitative and quantitative paradigms by insisting on different approaches to designing, conducting and reporting research” [Haseman, 2006]. It seems quite reasonable to class research strategies like these with post-qualitative studies, as they imply a freer format for data analysis and presentation [St. Pierre, 2011; Sommerfeldt, Caine & Molzahn, 2014]; but this approach requires special discussion.

Sociology, even if it sticks to qualitative research paradigm, needs a guarantee of validity and reliability of research results. In any case, it is still recommended not to neglect triangulation, i. e. to compare the data obtained through a qualitative study with data of other types, including quantitative [Denzin, 1970]. It is also important to avoid “absolutism traps”, as David Silverman identified “tourism” and “romanticism” with reference to qualitative methodology. The former means a superficial point of view, when only new or exotic things can be noticed; the latter indicates that a researcher gets emotionally attached to those who are being studied [Silverman, 1994: p. 4–6].

Being analysed, the Forum Theatre’s spectacles can be regarded as a case study, observation, or “projective focus group”. However, that is only an attempt to put an original method of qualitative knowledge in the same category as other available ones, in order to reveal distinctive features of artistic imagination related to moral and social values, a phenomenon which was generated by the “Theatre of the Oppressed” during Euromaidan.

Value Dilemmas Addressed in the Forum Theatre’s Spectacles about Maidan

Topics for plays in the Forum Theatre were not aimed merely at representing political sphere. They depicted lives of ordinary citizens, mainly young people, who had found themselves in a state of “emergency”, getting involved in Maidan events. Family, business, leisure, relationships with close and distance friends, real life situations anyhow related to social reflection and civil reaction, “here and now” actions, images of the near and distant future, etc. were brought to light. Footages of the entire cycle “Joker Tsunami” consisting of 11 performances staged in major cities of Ukraine reveal some reasons for justifying conflicts, which, having broken out, made the society even more disintegrated. The Forum Theatre’s evidence (narratives, language of gestures, images, symbols, scenic design, etc.) not only illustrates how people perceived what was happening (in a contradictory, uncertain or uncompromising way) and sought to mend social and psychological ruptures; it also provides room for accessing changeability of vectors describing sense-based intentionality of people involved in a dramatic situation (for example, Euromaidan where the “Theatre of the Oppressed” was functioning).

Imperatives

Spectacles and discussions taking place in the Theatre represented a wide range of meanings, senses and values; however, only a few value implications could prove to be “the most important”, unambiguous ones, which, with minor exceptions, evoked neither immediate refutations nor counter-arguments (see Table). These implications primarily included value priorities concerning **changes in the society** and concurrently **maintenance of status quo**, or the order which was before Maidan, as well as values of **humanism** and **civic identity**. In general, value segments articulated by the Forum Theatre’s participants are similar to those obtained through focus group discussions held on Maidan at the same time. The focus groups used the Schwartz Value Inventory identifying 10 motivationally distinct value types [Schwartz, 2006]. Euromaidan participants shared the values of *benevolence*, *independence* and *social justice* while, according to the data of the European Social Survey where the same tool was used, Ukrainians tended to hold the values of *traditionalism*, *conformity* and *achievements* [Naumova, 2015: p. 321–328].

Table

Value Priorities Addressed in Spectacles about Maidan
(Ukraine, February 2014)

Changes	Status quo maintenance	Humanism	Civic identity
<i>Protest, revolution</i>	<i>Stability and order</i>	<i>Love</i>	<i>Patriotism</i>
<i>Civic position</i>	<i>Labour discipline</i>	<i>Personality</i>	<i>Consolidation</i>
<i>Social activity</i>		<i>Social and ethical values</i>	
		<i>Memory</i>	

However, these sets of moral values and motives can contribute to situational tension and represent intrinsic conflicts. For example, the values of **changes** correspond to social justice, patriotism, ethical values, struggle for civil rights, freedom, personal choice and creation of a better future. At the same time, they are strongly opposed to the values of **stability** destroyed by Maidan, which resulted in “chaos”, split of Ukrainian society, people’s distancing from each other, deterioration of labour discipline and infringement of some personal rights (when a person cannot freely express their own opinion or do what they love), as it is demonstrated by actors’ dialogues:

“I have come to Maidan to build a new Ukraine!”

“You had better go away and work! We need stability!” (Kyiv, “The Birthday”)¹

“Glory to the heroes! Ukraine is above all!”

“This movement on Maidan is pure nationalism, I don’t support it” (Kyiv, “The Three Pieces about Maidan”).

Humanism and love for people stand for peaceful protests, mutual aid, compassion, tolerance, patience, faith and world harmony. But these values may be called into question if they impede social activity and readiness to act decisively, which “corrodes” civic position:

¹ The title of the play and the city where it was staged.

Priest: *"They are the same people as us; a prayer is stronger than an attack"*.
A balaclava-clad young man: *"We don't need any prayer; it is time to act!"*
(Kyiv, "What's Next?").

Civic position and patriotism is a self-evident imperative both for Euro-maidan activists and sympathisers, which was clearly demonstrated by songs performed on the stage of Maidan. Nevertheless, patriotism manifests itself in different forms. For example, a young girl declines her best friend's offer to leave for a more prosperous country because she cannot imagine leaving her parents, friends and homeland. Her decision sounds performative, as if she is giving an oath to herself:

"I will make my fate myself; this will be my own fate in my own country" (L'viv, "The Market of Fate").

As a value, patriotism can be opposed to "patriotic" declarations made by politicians or officials. They are ironically represented as those who are unable to settle the conflict because each of them has their own interests:

"Patriotic" revelation of a politician: *"I was born on this land and, being a true politician, I will grow rich here"*; at an auction: *"45 million [population of Ukraine, Ed. Note] going one, two, three, sold!"* (Kyiv, "The Three Pieces about Maidan").

As a result, the image of today's Ukraine presented to the audience differs considerably from an ideal image (see Photos 2, 3). However, the discussion held right after the performance concludes on an optimistic note:

"Despite being torn apart by different opinions and actions, Ukraine keeps its balance and, moreover, speaks with confidence" (Olena, 29 years old).



Photo 2. The current image of Ukraine
("The Three Pieces about Maidan";
Kyiv, February 16, 2014)



Photo 3. An ideal image of Ukraine
("The Three Pieces about Maidan";
Kyiv, February 16, 2014)

The Values-Based "Cross of Reality"

The "Cross of Reality" is a metaphor coined by Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, who developed an original approach to the idea of *dialogic thinking*. The metaphor symbolises crossed spatial and temporal coordinates of reality where both an individual and human communities are staying at the moment. The reality is divided into two directions of time, "forward" and "backward", and two directions of space, "inward" and outward" [Rosenstock-Huussy, 1970: p. 52]. The axes forming a "cross of conflict" or "cross of tension" in spectacles about Maidan

may be interpreted in terms of moral and social values: “**paternalism – personal responsibility**” and “**love – hate**” (see Figure).

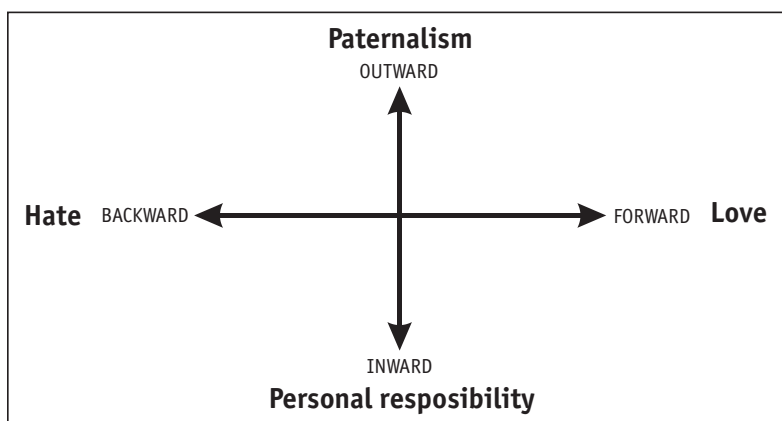


Figure. A space of tension represented in the Forum Theatre’s spectacles (Ukraine, February 2014)

Paternalism is understood as a complex of motivational directives which take the causes and control of a person’s behaviour “outwards” and stimulate certain expectations towards external subjects and structures (like state, traditional or non-traditional communities, colleagues, family circle, friends, strangers or even concurrence of circumstances). For example, in a spectacle performed in Donetsk the situation of hiring a poorly qualified employee by recommendation of an influential person is regarded as normal, no one thinks that it is a kind of corruption. An attitude like this is typical of an individual with external locus of control and low aspirations. A considerable number of Ukrainians, the elderly in particular, find it rather difficult to assume responsibility for their own life (personal, social and professional) because of paternalistic inclinations taken root in their motivational structures ever since the Soviet period. At that time, it was the prerogative of the state to control and regulate a person’s behaviour. As regards youth, socially and professionally active middle-aged people (though not a considerable part), they display quite different attitudes, recognising the right to personal choice and human dignity. These kinds of attitudes were strikingly demonstrated during Euromaidan events.

A person who is going to voluntarily take responsibility for their own life and for others should be not only aware of the situation but also ready to make a considerable effort of will. What helps them do it is mutual support they need to feel:

*“I would be a civil activist
And defend human rights,
If everyone else except ministers
Asked me to help people going on strike.
I would pass from words to deeds,
Would forget all the ‘what ifs’.
If someone tore the clouds apart,
Showed us the road in the dark”.*
(Kyiv, “What’s Next?”).

“Let’s take part in Maidan”.

“Well, can you understand where the truth is and where the lie is?” (Chernihiv, “The Ukrainian”).

“I am going to fight for my rights for the first time in my life. I used to think that I was alone and could do nothing. Now I am sure that together we will succeed” (Kyiv, “What’s Next?”).

Constructive solidarity is accompanied by *love*. *Hate*, being the opposite of love, is able to produce different forms of negative solidarity including armed violence. Hate is just as powerful as, if not more so, than love. Hate is depicted as a movement “backward” within a temporal continuum (see Figure) since Ukraine had not experienced armed conflicts for more than 20-year period of independence; therefore, events in the Crimea and Donbas were initially seen to be unnatural and incomprehensible. On stage at the Forum Theatre, hate was represented as being weaker than love; albeit violence is not excluded. Hate was not articulated in any special manner; moreover, it avoided verbalisation. The performers tried to convey hate by using special intonation, gestures, facial expressions, bodily motions (e.g., when they were acting out scuffles); in other words, by purely theatrical techniques. Judging from the audience’s reaction, these techniques turned out to be effective (see Photos 4, 5).



*Photo 4. Love (“Not Unkind Maidan”;
Kyiv, February 16, 2014)*



*Photo 5. Hate (“What’s Next?”;
Kyiv, February 16, 2014)*



*Photo 6. Confused identity (“The Birthday”;
Kyiv, February 16, 2014)*



*Photo 7. Consolidation (After the spectacle;
Donets’k, February 16, 2014)*

The above-mentioned “cross of tension” actually superimposes upon a special atmosphere created during the performance and delineates the space for an identity, which, feeling anxious and confused, can do nothing but fidget. The “cross” begins to grow dim only when there are attempts to overcome the ongoing conflict and start the dialogue (see Photos 6, 7).

Donets'k Precedent: Beyond the Stage

Local conflicts represented in the Forum Theatre's spectacles are usually rather dramatic, but all of them are anyhow settled – when both sides either compromise or leave the area of conflict. For example, friends having opposite viewpoints on Maidan might go to a concert or take part in another entertaining event to stay away from politics, at least for a while. Anyway, life goes on. However, we remember that in real life conflicts were unlikely to be resolved in a positive way. Political disagreements profoundly affected interpersonal relationships: friendships ended, families broke up. The problem of relationship between *reality* constructed and represented *on stage* and *real life itself* was discussed a lot: for example, the actors offered to move the stage to Kyiv's Hrushevs'kyi Street (best known for being the epicentre of protests), to more precisely interpret what was happening around them.

When an *artistic event* “collides” with reality, the problem of dialogue becomes even more complicated. Once in Donetsk, during the performance, a group of people representing a political youth organisation loyal to the previous authorities gathered outside the theatre. They behaved aggressively and demanded meeting with the Theatre's representatives. For reasons of security, both the performers and the spectators decided not to enter into dialogue with them, as “the dialogue should be started only with those who are ready for it”. The young people were not allowed into the theatre because of being late and threatening to disrupt the performance. But the Theatre's participants were not sure if they had made the right decision: “*Well, that was so ambiguous. We were going to make a theatre for dialogue, but we refuse to begin the dialogue when it is proposed. It is clear that one of the parties manipulates attempts to establish a dialogue... We are still asking ourselves: if we had acted otherwise could it have changed the course of events, at least a little bit? Would it be happening in Donets'k what is happening now?*” [Joker Tsunami in Ukraine, 2015].

This is an illustration of how the theatre has to go beyond the stage (in other words, beyond the space of conventionality) and deal with reality of conflict. Besides, the following issues should be addressed: methodological basis for theatrical techniques of dialogue and how they can be used in different environments (with different degree of social tension). The following factors make these techniques successful: understanding of what is going on, special psychological approaches, social and cultural sensitivity, wise and well-pondered decisions of participants (however, sometimes bold decisions are welcomed). The role of joker assumes much greater importance as well.

Two Years Later

At present, the “Theatre for Dialogue” has a well-developed system for interactions (between both persons and organisations) aimed at improving educational, social, psychological and creative activity. Naturally, not all of those who

participated in the Theatre's first performances in February 2014 are still engaged in its projects. Continuously being in a state of "emergency", many people have given up, consciously or intuitively, the idea and attempts to conduct theatrical dialogues with the society; they either have chosen a more efficient, more "real" method of participation in social life or have been occupied with their personal problems.

However, both the interviews conducted with some actors two years later (February – March 2016) and the blogs of those who are enthusiastically engaged in this work even now indicate that the actors' experience of participating in the Theatre's performances, which held on the eve of the power's armed attack at Maidan protesters, left a mark on them. Most actors keep vividly in mind how they felt about themselves while acting out their roles; they were deeply impressed by civic spirit and social usefulness of the Theatre, as well as by special symbolic reality which a theatre can generally produce. Some of them confessed to coming out on stage for the first time in their life; therefore, they felt inspired by the opportunity to perform different roles before the audience. The actors, as they noted, gained "*golden experience*" of displaying their civic position; moreover, they greatly enjoyed acting. But they gave different answers to the question: "How would you play your roles today, two years after Maidan?" Some of those appearing as Maidan opponents would strongly refuse to play these characters because of having contrary political views. However, the others would agree to play these roles again since they symbolised distrust in government (in fact, this is the same thing the Ukrainians are witnessing today) and confidence in people's ability to act cohesively. The idea of revising the roles in today's political and social context is seen as expedient too. In addition, the actors appreciated the significance of interactive theatrical techniques as they "*highlight the problems worrying different classes of the society and stimulate reflection*" (Oleksandr, 31 years old).

Belonging to a community of congenial souls, feeling the authenticity of participation in collective actions to improve the life of the society was also important to the Forum Theatre's actors. A Ukrainian joker Oksana Potapova said that she had realised "a new definition of activism" after first performances: "*I understood that I could do something important to me and I could do it together with other people. This is activism too. Activism does not always mean people standing with placards in the street...*" [Joker Tsunami in Ukraine, 2015]. The joker continues to work for the Theatre in several towns of eastern Ukraine (including Donbas). She tries interactive theatrical techniques for people with opposing political viewpoints to help them avoid direct conflicts and find common ground to solve their social problems: "*I hope that [these techniques] will inspire the people to create the life of their city as they want it*" [Potapova, 2015].

Conclusions

It is probably too early to make any categorical judgments, classifications, generalisations or definitions concerning the social explosion which occurred in the winter of 2013/2014 and subsequent dramatic events. Timeline and details of these events, as well as acts and deeds of their participants seem too significant so far; therefore, it is difficult to separate a researcher's position from their emotions

and personal experience related to these events. All what happened in Ukrainian society two years ago and continues to happen these days is remaining to be comprehended and re-comprehended. Yet, some conclusions regarding Ukrainian “Theatre of the Oppressed” and the sociologist’s role during social upheavals can be drawn.

1. Through the sociological optics theatrical interactive methods can be seen as teaching techniques for “being attentive to the Other”, developing a “culture of dialogue”, “reflexively entering into social space” and producing new collectivities; that is what is deficient in both everyday and civil communication in today’s Ukraine.

2. The Forum Theatre’s material can serve as quite informative and non-trivial evidence explaining social life of ordinary people and communities and providing a more precise understanding of cultural segmentation and social disintegration of the society. This material may be useful in explicating sources of conflicts (with reference to senses and values) since it allows testing the range of variability for social and cultural identities and demonstrating how vulnerable or resistant to external influences they are.

3. At present, researchers are increasingly tending to use post-qualitative approaches due to a freer format for semantic description of verbal and audio-visual information dynamically circulating in media. These approaches can be regarded as new and promising techniques for qualitative analysis. But this issue needs a thorough methodological discussion.

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