

## FORMING FORUM THEATRE

Using the Forum Theatre methodology, the DiverCidade DP set up groups within a number of communities in and around Lisbon. Following a period of training in the techniques and consolidation of their application, the groups started to work as driving and creative forces behind a space for dialogue in the community, in which solutions to the community's problems were sought, with the direct involvement of residents. In particular Forum Theatre aimed to activate citizens, as a result of:

- Gaining consciousness of self-representation and self-determination;
- Taking responsibility for leading their lives and the life of the community;
- Raising awareness of the capability and means for action for change.

The Forum Theatre was an innovative methodology that provided organisations with new skills and tools with which to tackle the problems they encountered in the course of their social intervention activities. Through the increased creative processes in the technical teams, and the stimulus to continuous reflection on the problems affecting their beneficiaries, an improvement could be seen in the communication between the population and institutions, as well as in the learning of informal ways of working with the community, which facilitated relationships, mutual learning, and a closer rapport.

The skills acquisition and enhancement among all those involved was undeniable in areas such as pedagogy and group dynamics, community work, design, implementation and the follow through of the Forum Theatre methodology.

The Forum Theatre methodology provoked interaction with the audience in the form of seeking solutions to the problems raised by the community itself. This interaction fostered the development of a critical spirit in everyone in relation to the daily life of the neighbourhood.

The training given to the target group provided added value in terms of individual and group behaviour, as well as an awareness of a new perspective on their community in particular, and society in general. It aroused new cultural interests, especially relating to theatre. Furthermore, it opened up a range of professional/occupational choices or alternatives that would otherwise probably have remained closed.

The responsibility taken on by the members of the community participant group, with encouragement from the team members in all their activities, was a gradual achievement in a process of creating a space, where everyone was equal, for joint decision-making, always in a context of individual and, especially collective and community empowerment. Additionally, new informal community leaders were seen to emerge.

***A practical step-by-step guide to the Forum Theatre technique is also available.***

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