

# MPP tool Sheet : when theatre becomes a tool for raising awareness



## Background to the initiative

From its very inception, the MPP has been part of the Brazilian popular education movement inspired by Paulo Freire<sup>1</sup>. With this in mind, the organization pays particular attention to the various methods that can be used to raise awareness amongst communities.

Among the range of possible tools, the MPP has been experimenting for many years with sociodramas and 'mystiks', which are forms of social/popular theatre that enable a group of actors to reflect quickly on a specific issue.

The MPP, therefore, has a small team of trainers who are particularly skilled in these tools and who have consolidated their practices through training seminars in the Caribbean in conjunction with La Via Campesina, of which the MPP is a founding member.

These sociodramas or mystiks are used both in training sessions and during large gatherings organised by the MPP.

## Definition and usage

Mystik and sociodrama are dramatized forms of engagement that can be used on various occasions. They can be used as a facilitation tool to start a working day on a specific theme or to round off a day. These are facilitation techniques that allow for the exploration of all possible topics, however abstract, ranging from environmental degradation to solidarity.

For participants, this involves:

- Choosing a theme or an idea that you want that the actors have to reflect on
- Then, within the framework of the mystik, identifying a symbol, a phrase or a song that evokes this idea. The essence of the 'mystik' lies in the solemnity of the moment devoted to observing the symbolic object or act, and the interpretation that each person can make of it and subsequently discuss. This is slightly different for the "sociodrama", which refers to short theatrical scenes built around a single subject and are therefore rarely performed in silence.
- Next, the mystic or sociodrama must be presented
- And finally, there is the phase of discussing what the audience has seen.

<b>CARACTERISTICS OF THE SCOCIODRAMA AND THE MYSTIK</b>		
	<b>SOCIODRAMA</b>	<b>MYSTIK</b>
<b>FORM</b>	Always a theatrical form	Can have a theatrical form but it is possible to use a symbol, a song, an object : the idea being that we want to show a simple element on which people will be able to reflect
<b>ELEMENTS IMPORTANT TO RESPECT DURING THE TRAINING SESSION</b>	Importance of silence during the representation or presentation of the symbol : silence and seriousness on the part of the public and the people who lead the exercise. Also it is important to give time once the scene has been presented so that everyone can express themselves.	
<b>SPACE OCCUPATION</b>	No rule about this	The group should form a circle and the scene/object/symbol is presented inside the circle, wherever it is possible

Mystik and sociodrama provide ideal opportunities for participants to address and present the issues that concern them. Both exercises are based on the symbolic expression of a topic and encourage participants to question their understanding and perceptions of that topic.

Once the representation is complete, these exercises open the way for dialogue in which everyone can express their understanding and their view of the issue presented.

Mystik/sociodrama can also be used as an animation tool when working with peasant collectives. But then, it is up to the facilitator, alone and/or with the participation of the members of the group, to prepare and present it.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/paulo-freire/>

## A step-by-step methodology for facilitating the exercise during a training session

	STEP 01	STEP 02	STEP 03	STEP 04	STEP 05
<b>GOAL</b>	<b>Form a subgroup</b>	<b>Build the mystik</b>	<b>Present to the assembly the mystic or the sociodrama</b>	<b>The discussion</b>	<b>The conclusion</b>
<b>DURATION</b>	10 min	30 min	5-10 min	20 min	10 min
<b>ROLE OF EACH PARTY</b>	<p>A sub-group of participants meets. The circle forms in order to prepare their exercise. This sub-group is formed on a voluntary basis, or the trainer may appoint the participants. The trainer explains the rules.</p>	<p>Every member of the sub-group must participate in this effort. The trainer must not influence the choice of content for the sociodrama or the symbol selected. The circle is formed. The group that has prepared the activity either takes their place in the centre of the circle or places the object(s) there.</p>	<p>The circle forms. The group that has prepared the activity either takes their places in the middle of the circle or places the object</p>	<p>All participants remain silent and one person speaks freely to express what they have understood or not. Everyone is free to add to the discussion, taking turns whilst respecting what has been said.</p>	<p>A member of the group must speak to summarise the ideas exchange.</p>
<b>GUIDELINE OR POINT TO NOTE</b>	<p>The group must choose a theme or a message that they wish to explore and encourage all the participants to reflect upon. They must then decide how to engage with this theme : do they want to perform a sociodrama, or do they want to choose a symbol ?</p>	<p>It is very important that the message chosen by the sub-group is clearly stated. There must be a clear guiding principle, and the presentation must not be overloaded with ideas. The form of presentation must be striking.</p>	<p>The other participants must remain very quiet and pay close attention to what is being presented to them.</p>	<p>The group organising the mystic must be prepared to guide people and ensure they follow the line of through the organisers wish to encourage : they must keep track of everything that is happening and be ready to facilitate the collective discussion. Please note, the aim is not to arrive at the best possible analysis, but to express a feeling, to express what the mystic evokes within oneself.</p>	

<b>RULES</b>		The mystik or sociodrama to be presented must not exceed 10 minutes in length.	It's very important that there is no noise throughout the performance. There is a ceremonial aspect that must be respected. This reflects the importance placed on everyone's voice, but also on the collective effort undertaken: to better understand the issues in order to change reality.
<b>REQUIRED TOOLS/ MATERIALS</b>	Depending on the chosen topic, learners are free to use whatever they consider useful and appropriate for both the audience and the idea.	Anything that might be useful : a costume, props, etc.	The group responsible for preparing and leading the exercise may have prepared a few questions in advance to facilitate the discussion: what did you see ? What did you make of it ? What does this teach us ?

