The Use of Popular Theatre in Community Organizations:
A Case Study of *L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu*

Joliane Allaire

A Thesis

in

The Department

of the Special Individualized Program

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Special Individualized Program) at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

Joliane Allaire, 2011

School of Graduate Studies

This is to certified that the thesis prepared

By: Joliane Allaire

Entitled: The Use of Popular Theatre in Community
                 Organizations: A Case Study of *L'équipe*
                 d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu.

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Magisteriate of Arts (Special Individualized Program)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

          _____Chair
          Dr. Zeynep Arsel
          _____External Examiner
          Dr. Catherine Graham
          _____Examiner
          Dr. Edward Little
          _____Examiner
          Dr. Warren Linds
          _____Supervisor
          Dr. Eric Shragge

Approved by   _____
                 Dr. Davie Howes
                 Graduate Program Director

_____20__   _____
                 Dr. Graham Carr
                 Dean of Graduate Studies

Abstract

The Use of Popular Theatre in Community Organizations:
A Case Study of *L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu*

Joliane Allaire

This thesis is a case study of *L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu,* a Montreal-based Popular Theatre company founded in 1991. This case study examines two of Mise au jeu's projects: *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal* and *Acquis de Droit!* Throughout this analysis I identify the strategies they use to support the community members who are involved with the projects. I also analyze the Popular Theatre techniques they have implemented and what impact their interventions have had among the communities in which they have worked. I highlight the use of an inclusive and participatory process that *Mise au jeu* leads, as well as how they allow the community members to identify issues that affect them. I describe how *Mise au jeu* builds alliances with other organizations in order to better their chances of achieving their directives and how they addressed local authorities and other community members with the issues that these projects dealt with. This case study is based on documentation, individual interviews, and my personal observations of the projects' workshops and performances.

Resumé

L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu

Joliane Allaire

Cette thèse est une étude de cas de *L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu,* une compagnie de théâtre d'intervention fondée à Montréal en 1991. La recherche s'appuie sur deux projets menés par la compagnie: *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal* et *Acquis de Droit!* L'analyse porte tout d'abord sur l'identification des stratégies utilisées par la compagnie pour faciliter l'engagement des membres de la communauté dans le cadre de ces projets. J'examine ensuite les différentes techniques de théâtre populaire à partir desquelles *Mise au jeu* a développé une intervention qui lui est propre, ainsi que les répercussions que son approche a sur les communautés avec lesquelles elle collabore. Je souligne la démarche inclusive et participative de l'organisme, permettant aux membres des communautés de cibler les enjeux qu'ils souhaitent résoudre. Je décris aussi l'aspect du travail de *Mise au jeu* qui consiste à créer des alliances avec différentes organisations et à élaborer des rencontres entre les membres de la communauté et les dirigeants locaux, améliorant ainsi les chances d'atteindre les objectifs établis. L'analyse des projets est fondée sur de la documentation, des entrevues individuelles et mes observations personnelles lors des ateliers et représentations théâtrales de la compagnie.

Acknowledgement

Table of Contents

Introduction

I enjoyed working as a tour guide for a road biking company partly because it allowed me to travel throughout Québec, Nova Scotia, Europe, and Mexico, but more specifically because I enjoyed watching how the people I accompanied were strengthened by the experiences of tasting the local foods, biking in the rain and wind, and encountering new people along the way. These were the moments that always seemed most memorable and those that the guests were most grateful for.

In between biking seasons, I worked for a community organization based in Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, Canada. As a foreigner, I had to develop an understanding of the environment while building trust amongst my new community members. I was invited to take part in a traditional Inuit community meal. I was surprised to realize that the meal consisted of two raw seal carcasses and a caribou. Since I was not accustomed to such a dinner, I found myself sharing in much conversation with the people around me. Asking questions about their lives, and sharing my stories with them was helping me to shape what this meal meant. Sharing this meal allowed us to meet one another and taught me a crucial element in carrying out any kind of community work; and that is the need to establish trust. I realized that in order to gather people and develop interest in community based projects, support and sharing in others' experiences is paramount. It is apparent that celebration is a good opportunity to meet and share.

L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu is a Montréal-based

theatre company that offers the members of various communities the opportunity to act

on social issues using art. *Mise au jeu* offers a chance to explore problematic elements of

their lives using theatrical workshops and performances. *L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale*

participative Mise au jeu has for its mission: "(…) *d'éveiller une culture de participation*

en favorisant la prise en charge du changement par l'entremise du jeu et de l'intervention

théâtrale participative" ("*Mise au jeu: Équipe*"). Through my experiences with them and

other Popular Theatre practices such as Jonathan Fox's *Playback* and David Diamond's

Theatre for the Living, I discovered the world of Popular Theatre. I was amazed to see

how this medium provided me with the opportunity to connect with others and how it

provided a wonderful setting for a group of people to meet and share each others' stories.

By way of exchanging stories and sharing thoughts and emotions, this theatre spawns the

practice of compassion, listening, acting, and honouring others' feelings. Throughout the

years, *Mise au jeu* has worked with a variety of Montreal's communities, using theatre as

its catalyst to reveal the hidden stories of the city. *Mise au jeu* has built alliances with

many community organizations.

Community organizing has a long history of supporting people to participate in

politicized actions and offering encouragement for them to fight for their rights against

unfair governmental policies. Herbert and Irene Rubin explain:

> Community organizing creates a capacity for democracy and for sustained social
> change. It can make society more adaptable and governments more accountable
> (…) Community organizing means bringing people together to combat shared
> problems and to increase their say about decisions that affect their lives (2).

Community organizers wish to facilitate the mobilization and creation of community

solidarity in order for their members to act upon their shared self-interest with long-term

objectives. The elaboration and maintenance of these relationships is key to the results of

Mise au jeu's projects and these alliances are a magnificent asset to mobilizing people in

favour of social change.

Mise au jeu is strongly influenced by the work of Paolo Freire and his philosophy of

liberatory pedagogy:

> The important thing, from the point of view of libertarian education, is for the
> people to come to feel like masters of their thinking by discussing the thinking and
> views of the world explicitly or implicitly manifest in their own suggestions and
> those of their comrades. (124)

Freire's work upholds an ideal of education that promotes critical and liberating dialogue,

where student and teacher alike cultivate an appreciation of the dialectical nature of

knowledge and thought. Eric Shragge explains: "education with community organizations

can be formal sessions or informal learning situations. In either case, people develop an

analysis of interest and power and come to understand the political and social stake they

have in the larger society" (204). Freire's practices offer an occasion for members of a

community to identify the underlying social issues that affect their lives.

Contrarily to educational structure where the educator (and the institution) controls

the curriculum; Freire argues that it is not the role of critical educators to establish a

curriculum, but rather to engage in dialogue that stimulates thought and understanding. He

argues that: "education starts with the conviction that it cannot present its own program

but must search for this program dialogically with people" (124). It invites teachers to transform their authoritarian status into one of equality with their students. As Meredith Minkler and Nina Wallerstein explain: "Freire proposes a dialogic problem-posing process, with equality and mutual respect between learners-teachers and teachers-learners. Problem-posing contains a cycle of listening-dialogue-action that enables all participants to engage in continual reflection and action" (41). The objective is to demythologize reality and transform it through the development of a more critical way of thinking that in turn questions the status quo. *Mise au jeu* is influenced by Freire's process by which participants begin to listen to each others' stories, engage in questioning, analyze and collect information in order to address inequalities based on the group's assessment of their community.

The leadership must arise from the plans, ideas and energy of the community itself. Such educational dialogue establishes the foundation on which community projects are built. *Mise au jeu*'s emphasis is on the importance of involving and encouraging community members to take charge of the changes they would like to see implemented in their communities. They invite participants to partake in an artistic dialogue that uses theatre, and, more recently, film, as the medium to explore the themes that are relevant to them. Essentially, *Mise au jeu* strives to support the community members to pursue an enhancement of their living conditions.

Mise au jeu is a practitioner of Popular Theatre.1 Mise au jeu is strongly influenced

_____

1 I will discuss Popular Theatre in detail in Chapter 2

by the work of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed which is also inspired by Freire's work. Boal's technique aims at developing theatrical skills and creates dialogue to identify community issues. Based on this philosophy, Mise au jeu's premise is to provoke concrete action. Throughout the experiences of the theatrical workshops they provide, participants mould an understanding of the events and their reactions to these events are considered from different perspectives. When someone commits to participating in a workshop or intervenes in a performance, this person concretely acts on the situation. Dorothy Heathcote, an expert in dramatic-inquiry approaches to teaching and learning explains: "The most important manifestation about this thing called drama is that it must show change. It does not freeze a moment in time, it freezes a problem in time, and you examine the problem as people go through a process of change" (200). The experience provides an opportunity to explore and analyze the varying and differing reactions to events. The process evolves into organizing and mobilizing concrete action in the realization of the change the members aspire to see. The seeds for such mobilization are sowed with this initial step of critical and liberating dialogue. This is what Mise au jeu's work aims to accomplish. These explorations, discussions and presentations also provide opportunities to prioritize specific concerns that have been raised throughout the process.

Mise au jeu

Substantial differences exist between popular theatre and traditional theatre, Luc Gaudet, founder and artistic director of *Mise au jeu* explains: "*Au niveau des jeunes (…) l'expérience de théâtre qu'ils ont eux autres ou qu'ils ont pu avoir s'est passée dans un*

auditorium, alors qu'on leur demandait de se taire, ce n'est pas des expériences très positives" (Personal Interview). *Mise au jeu* breaks the convention of a traditionally passive audience watching a play. Instead they invite the audience to participate in the play and to have direct impact on the outcome of the play. *L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu* describes its philosophical inspiration as such:

> *Inspirés par le courant de théâtre d'intervention développé au Québec, du théâtre populaire dans le reste du Canada et ailleurs dans le monde, notamment des techniques du théâtre de l'opprimé (Augusto Boal) notre compagnie vise à produire des œuvres théâtrales originales reflétant les enjeux vitaux des milieux et des gens qui font l'objet de la dramatisation. La participation active du public à l'œuvre est un élément central de notre création. Nous cherchons à faire en sorte que le spectateur sorte de sa position d'observateur désincarné, protégé par l'anonymat et le silence d'une salle confortable et noire en l'amenant à prendre une part active dans le jeu dramatique, dans la détermination de l'environnement sonore et scénique afin qu'il devienne aussi acteur du sort de l'œuvre.* ("*Mise au jeu: Équipe*")

Luc Gaudet explains: "*Notre pratique se fonde sur le fait que les gens qui vivent des situations opprimantes sont les mieux placés pour trouver les solutions adaptées à leur réalité*" ("Apprendre" 1). Bestowing respect and trust in their participants' capacities is in turn primordial for the participants to take charge of the changes they would like to see in their communities.

Mise au jeu's core objective is to create a solid network of allies to share in their cause. They have links with other artistic and community organizations, and with many schools, universities, and research agencies. The company has built a network of people and organizations that share an interest in exploring different themes by way of creative Popular Theatre. Luc explains the motivation behind pursuing a strong network of allies

since *Mise au jeu*'s beginnings:

> (...) *que Mise au jeu soit une espèce d'équipe, de centre de ressources où il y a des personnes, de l'équipement, des ressources documentaires sur les costumes et tout ça, une liste de réseaux et que cette équipe et ce lieu et ces ressources soient investis dans un volet recherche et création, dans de la formation pratique populaire professionnelle comme on décrivait; qui s'offrait aux jeunes, aux groupes ethno-culturels, aux femmes, aux intervenants, CLSC, des intervenants en violence etc.* (Personal Interview)

From this core objective, *Mise au jeu*'s work can be subcategorized into three different spheres. First, they have developed an expertise in participatory research. *L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu* explains:

> *Pour que les gens deviennent acteurs de changement dans leur milieu, l'équipe Mise au jeu a développé dans les dernières années une approche créative à la recherche participative. Cette approche se concrétise par l'élaboration d'une série de sessions d'activités créatives et de discussions de groupes, permettant l'évaluation participative, l'expression de besoins communs et la définition d'un éventail de solutions appropriées pour les membres de la communauté participante.* ("*Mise au jeu: Recherches*")

Mise au jeu uses Popular Theatre techniques such as forum-theatre, focus-groups, interviews, and theatre workshops to gather information and allow community members to address common issues they face in their communities. Second, they structure training sessions and workshops for the participants to acquire basic theatrical techniques and acting skills. Third, community organizations hire *Mise au jeu* to present a pre-established play that address specific issues, or they can hire *Mise au jeu* to elaborate a costumed theatrical intervention.

The primary challenge that *Mise au jeu* and similar Popular Theatre companies face in terms of their ability to effect social change is a lack of time and resources. Kees

Epskamp explains: "(…) it has been shown very clearly that the performance in itself was not sufficient. Next to building up an information infrastructure, a firm organizational infrastructure still needed to be initiated" (*Theatre* 146). Networking with other organizations is crucial in *Mise au jeu*'s attempt to build such an infrastructure, it helps to counter time and resource constraints, and gives them access to a broader range of population and professionals who are intent on addressing the raised issue.

One organization they have developed a strong collaboration with is the *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse* (BCJ). Founded in November 1969, BCJ offers services to youth aged between 14 and 25 years. Their main services consist of offering individual and group counselling, access to low income housing, and financial and moral support and accompaniment for youth who desire to develop community projects or organize collective and political action (*Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse,"BCJ-Acceuil"*). BCJ's values are aligned with those of *Mise au jeu* with regards to the importance they lend to having community members take responsibility for their projects.

For this case study, I will describe and analyze two projects: *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal* which was conducted by *Mise au jeu* (2001 - 2005) and *Acquis de Droit!* (2005 - present), a project *Mise au jeu* conducted in partnership with *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse*.

Projects

 Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal began with the support of the City of Montreal. *Mise au jeu's* objective was to offer youth, specifically but not exclusively from marginalized populations, the possibility to partake in a participatory democratic project. Using Popular Theatre techniques, *Mise au jeu* led a series of workshops with the youth, allowing them to identify issues that resonated with them and their community. The participants were then invited to give their requests, recommendations, and possible solutions to local authorities. The project culminated with the presentation of a legislative theatre performance where youth, local leaders and community members were invited to share their ideas and opinions about the issues raised.[2] *Mise au jeu* mounted this project in twenty of Montreal's boroughs.

 Acquis de Droit! started in 2005 where the participating youth organized a one-day community forum to further explore an issue raised during the *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal* project regarding their unharmonious relationship with police officers. Upon completion of the forum, the participants from BCJ returned to *Mise au jeu* and asked them to support their creation of a participatory forum theatre play[3] relating to this issue. Working alongside the participants, *Mise au jeu* developed a play entitled *Acquis de Droit!*, based on the stories collected from the youth. *Mise au jeu* helped them to organize the presentation of the play and *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse* continues to support the youths in developing strategies to bring about concrete change in their relation with

---

[2] I will discuss legislative theatre on page 13

[3] I will discuss forum theatre on page 13

police officers. Their strategies include inviting police officers and local authorities to the opening of the presentation of the play, continuing the dialogue with these authorities and building a network of allies that support their cause. *Acquis de Droit!* is still pursuing its objectives in 2011.

This case-study is an opportunity to examine *Mise au jeu*'s strategies and to describe how they use theatre as a medium to inspire and support personal and community development through the celebration and promotion of the diversity, talent and skills within socially excluded communities. In this case study, I identify and analyze the strategies *Mise au jeu* uses for both projects. I will examine how they promote the participation and inclusion of community members; what artistic choices they make to facilitate the group's process; and what strategies they use to make a social impact. Chapter 1 consists of the theoretical framework and related literature. Chapter 2 discusses the methodology used to conduct this research. Chapters 3 and 4 explore the participatory, artistic and logistic strategies used by *Mise au jeu* for the two projects under study.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I will describe the origins and history of Popular Theatre, including the works of Bertold Brecht and Augusto Boal. I will also detail some recent influences of Popular Theatre and its evolution through the work of non-governmental agencies. Since the process of Popular Theatre finds its energy and purpose through the involvement of community members, each practice is shaped by unique circumstances, leading to culturally-specific adaptations that are influenced by the differing social and physical environments. Community artists do not pretend to go as far as community organizers in the fight for social justice; however, they both attempt to pursue the exploration of various ways to improve community members' capacity to think critically, to better analyze their environment and to be more aware of injustices that affect them. Community art can be a tool alongside the work of community organizers to bring people together around a project that represents the community. It can be a practice to get one's voice heard and to collectively address oppressive community issues. In order to situate *Mise au jeu*'s work in its field, I will describe the evolution of Popular Theatre in Québec. I will also describe the values, practices and aesthetic attributes of Popular Theatre.

Popular Theatre practitioners have often associated with community organizations. *Mise au jeu* and *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse* are good examples of this. Community organizing offers the possibility for Popular Theatre practitioners and their participants to carry their message through to a broader audience. It aims to establish alliances in the political realm that constitutes higher leverage in its intent of obtaining concrete social

change. In this chapter, I will describe social action and community development, two

approaches used in community organizing that actuates the power of individuals to work

collectively and make the changes they want to see in their communities.

Philosophical Influence and Origins of Popular Theatre

The work of Bertolt Brecht in the 1930s influenced the development of Popular

Theatre in how it adjusted theatre for political and community functions. The objectives

of Brecht's theatrical theory and practices were to encourage the audience to develop a

critical awareness of the forces of power and domination that influenced their lives.

Epskamp explains that Brecht "wanted a form of drama and theatre that would stimulate

an increased sense of political awareness in the mind of the spectator of his own situation

in society" (*Theatre* 13). Brecht's techniques inspired many others to explore theatrical

forms that are geared to empower traditionally marginalized sectors of society. The

substructure of all these forms attempts to augment the critical consciousness of its

participants with regards to their social environment and encourage them to question the

status quo.

One of Brecht's most influential artistic descendants is Augusto Boal (*Theatre of the*

Oppressed). Boal's techniques have had a major impact on the development of Popular

Theatre. Boal "regards the making of theatre as a laboratory situation in which the

participants can prepare themselves by means of theatre games to deal with future social

interventions within the community or within the society as a whole" (Epskamp, *Theatre*

13). Boal's theatrical techniques allow the participants to 'rehearse' possible solutions to

community issues that have been identified. One of Boal's most practiced techniques is

forum-theatre, Epskamp explains:

> Here the play is performed in front of an audience twice, inviting the audience to
> participate directly during the second performance. Audiences now join in, change
> the play, argue with the characters and with each other, and generally explore the
> problem the play raises. Forum theatre as a process of analysis explores the limits
> and possibilities for actions while unveiling contradictions and structures
> underlying everyday reality. (*Theatre* 13)

The audience members of such performances are called *spect-actors*, this appellation is

an invitation to the audience to challenge their role as passive observer and to influence

the actions on stage.

> The spectator does not give the actor the power to act, or the power to think for
> him. On the contrary, the spectator himself uses the occasion to play and act, and
> thus to think and act in the role of the protagonist. The actor decides on the acting,
> changes the dramatic action, brings in solutions of his own when problems
> threaten to leave the dramatic action at a dead end, and thus prepares himself,
> while acting, for real actions that could be taken later in the every day reality. In
> that sense Boal does not speak so much of revolutionary theatre, but of theatre as a
> rehearsal, a preparation for societal reforms. (Epskamp, *Learning* 53)

Boal also contrived Legislative Theatre in the 1990s while he was an elected member of

the City Council in Rio de Janeiro. This technique has the objective:

> (…) of transforming the citizen's legitimate desires into Laws. After a normal
> Forum session, we create a space similar to a Chamber where laws are made, and
> we proceed to create a similar ritual of lawmaking, following the same official
> procedure of presenting Projects based on the spect-actors interventions, defending
> or refusing them, voting, etc. At the end, we collect the approved suggestions and
> try to put pressure upon the lawmakers to have those laws approved. ("Legislative
> Theatre")

Boal pursued Legislative Theatre as a way to engage citizens in the political realm,

allowing them to present their concerns and opinions directly to the relevant authorities. He wanted the population to develop a democratic praxis that included the faculty to affect concrete social change. During Boal's mandate, the active involvement of the population led to the passing of dozens of new laws ("Theatre of the Oppressed").

Popular Theatre practitioners around the world have adapted these techniques to the realities of their own communities. This has led to the creation of a diverse range of theatrical theories and practices that Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston describe as 'Applied Theatre':

> 'Applied Theatre' has emerged in recent years as a term describing a broad set of theatrical practices and creative processes that take participants and audiences beyond the scope of conventional, mainstream theatre into the realm of a theatre that is responsive to ordinary people and their stories, local settings and priorities. (9)

Applied Theatre is an umbrella term they includes: Popular Theatre, theatre for development, participatory theatre and community theatre among other forms. Diane Conrad adds: "Better defined by its intentions of personal and social transformation, than by the various forms it may take, Popular Theatre draws on participants' experience to collectively create theatre and engage in discussion of issues through theatrical means" (2). What is common to all these practices is the importance of using a creative process that aims to gather people and create a space to express the participants' individuality and discover commonality in order to use theatre in the service of social and community change.

In the 1990s, theatrical practitioners within Non-Governmental Organizations in Latin America, Africa and South and East Asia used Popular Theatre to develop a more participatory process. It is in this context that theatre artists, development workers and adult educators explored ways to join forces to develop techniques that use theatre as a tool for development. According to Epskamp, using this strategy "seems to avoid the problem of illiteracy by using the language of people, performs free of charge in public places, and deals with local problems and situations with which everyone can identify" (*Theatre* 20). Theatre was used as a way to spread messages in a most engaging way. However, Tim Prentki and Jan Selman warn us that it is a "very subtle and politically sophisticated business to facilitate without becoming a prey to the agendas of sponsors; agendas that may contradict those of the participants" (14). To avoid such conflict of interest, Popular Theatre practitioners and theorists have come to an artistic process that fosters the values of participation, democracy and inclusivity.

> With the increasing belief in the importance of two-way communication and deep involvement of communities in decision affecting their own development, theatre practice shifted in some areas to a highly participatory process, with members of communities participating in the making and performing of theatre about their community, its problems and possible solutions. (Prentki and Selman 10)

The aim is to promote dialogue amongst community members, to strengthen relationships and to facilitate personal and social processes.

The Popular Theatre Movement in Québec

The emergence of Popular Theatre in Québec during the 1970s (called *théâtre d'intervention*) commenced as an artistic method employed by social groups to convey a political message. Maureen Martineau and Danielle Lepage explain "*Dans les années 70, au Québec comme en Europe, la notion de changement social est fortement rattachée au projet de renversement des pouvoirs économiques et politiques dominants*" (2). The early 1970s was also when *Théâtre Parminou* was founded. This is how they explain the context out of which they emerged:

> Born in the turbulence of the social movements and the anti-establishment currents of the 70's the troupe rapidly defined itself through its desire to break out of the confines of repertory theatre and that of the establishment. Since it's founding in May 1973 by graduates of the Dramatic Arts Conservatory of Montreal and Québec, Theatre Parminou's mission has been one of creation and touring. Because we believe in regionalization and because the prevalent politics of decentralization appealed to us, we set up shop in Victoriaville in 1976 with a view to reaching out to the whole of the region. (*Théâtre Parminou,* "About us")

This desire to use theatre in small communities as a means for community members to express themselves publicly has always been a conscious objective. Catherine Graham situates *Théâtre Parminou*: "The Parminou conceives of its work as a collaboration with other groups who are trying to stimulate public debate around issues that affect the society in which they live" (117). *Théâtre Parminou* still exists to this day, making it a pioneer of Popular Theatre in Québec and maintaining its relationships with local communities and others around the world.

In the 1980s, Popular Theatre companies in Québec were subject to increased

financial pressure:

> The economic crisis of the early 1980s seemed to have affected the alternates and the *jeune théâtre* ... The recession hit small companies especially hard and the lack of government funding pushed many to look more seriously at commercializing their enterprise. Some troupes collapsed from exhaustion after years of struggling to get by on below-poverty-level incomes and others become more and more accepting of the mainstream marketing culture. In some cases the original leaders moved on to greener pastures and a new generation of theatre workers found their way blocked by an intermediary level of 'established' alternative theatres who already had a foot in the door of government agencies. (Graham 13-14)

The ferocious competition to accumulate funding dismantled the weaker theatre companies and closed the door on emerging ones. Some theatre companies that were sustained with the support of the government abandoned their objectives of empowering and emancipating popular culture through theatre and transmogrified into professional troupes.

The 1980 Québec referendum brought with it a restructuring of funding arrangements and the demobilization of Québec left-wing ideology. This had a large impact on the objectives of Popular Theatre companies, Martineau and Lepage explains that "*Les années 85-95 voient le théâtre d'intervention se replier vers ses publics*" (3). The tendencies of the theatre companies were more often geared towards building resistance instead of fighting for political power:

> *Pour la première fois, l'enjeu de la lutte n'est plus le renversement des pouvoirs. On ne rêve plus de supprimer la tempête mais on veut plutôt apprendre à lui résister. Ce mouvement de résistance rassemble un ensemble d'expériences alternatives qui s'opposent dans l'action et dans leurs pratiques, au pouvoir dominant.* (3)

With this new objective of building resistance came the elaboration of strong structures

that would help solidify a network between Popular Theatre companies in Québec. In

order to do so, *Théâtre Parminou* organized in 2003 and 2004 two meetings called:

Rencontres Internationales du Théâtre d'Intervention (RITI). Martineau and Lepage

explain:

> *Animé par le besoin de se solidariser avec le mouvement de Théâtre Action en Europe, le Théâtre Parminou, en collaboration avec le Centre du Théâtre Action de la communauté française de Belgique, a organisé en 2003-2004, pour la première fois au Québec, les Rencontres Internationales du Théâtre d'intervention (RITI). Ceci a donné lieu à deux colloques (Montréal et Québec) et a culminé vers un rassemblement à plus grande échelle, soit les Rencontres de Victoriaville en juin 2004.* (1)

The result of this initiative spawned the inception of an official committee responsible for

improving the networks of Popular Theatre companies. Martineau and Lepage explain:

> *Le premier pas étant de se doter de mécanismes de communication et de lieux de rencontres, ceci s'est traduit par la mise sur pied du CPTI (comité provisoire du théâtre d'intervention)... La tenue de ce colloque a permis de constater que le théâtre d'intervention au Québec, malgré le phénomène d'isolement des troupes, malgré le peu de liens entre les praticiens, malgré le sous-financement, demeure non seulement actif mais affiche un dynamisme nouveau.* (3)

Even if Popular Theatre companies are faced with adversity, companies such as *Mise au

jeu* in Montréal and *Théâtre Parminou* in Victoriaville, amongst others, are still pursuing

their endeavour.

Values Embraced by Popular Theatre

Over the years, the practice of Popular Theatre has evolved, constantly adapting to a

myriad of community needs, desires, issues and dilemmas. The elements that constitute

Popular Theatre do not lie in a precise order of events, but more so in the values it adheres to.

The collaboration of community members is a fundamental aspect that drives a community project. Baz Kershaw explains participation: "its fundamental purpose is to ensure identification with the community, to reassure the community that the company has *its* interests, *its* needs, demands and desires, centrally at heart" (245). Community workers cannot force people to collaborate, they endeavour to support the notion, knowing full well that it is the members' feeling of ownership that will insure the genuine evolution of a project. According to Edward Little, Popular Theatre "shares a common commitment to include socially or culturally marginalized members of society in the creation of the work of art" (153). It establishes an arena for the opinions and stories of the marginalized not only to be heard, but it also provides a platform for them to organize a plan of action.

Power dynamics are another central concern in community artwork and generally the community artist wishes to defy normative power dynamics. "Artists and community members work together to create varying types and degrees of authorship involving the aesthetic expression of both shared and individual experiences and concerns" (Little 159). Community artists must recognize the existence of these power issues and facilitate the participation of community members in as many phases of the process as possible in order to be able to affect the direction of the project.

Practice of Popular Theatre

Popular Theatre emphasizes a theatrical process that stems from the participants'

stories. Prentki and Selman explain:

> (…) the process of making and showing the theatre piece is owned and controlled
> by a specific community, that the issues and stories grow out of the community
> involved, and that community is a vital part of a process of identifying, examining
> and taking action on matters which that community believes need to change. (9)

The first step for the participants is to develop a deeper critical sense of their social

environment:

> Lived experience is thus given meaning and transformed into a source of
> knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. The transformation of lived experience
> into 'story' requires a process of interpretation and it is through this interpretation
> that experiences are brought to consciousness, enabling people to develop a more
> critical understanding of their lives. (Stuart-Fisher 135)

This realization is a powerful one: the private-public divide is therefore broken down

allowing for a better understanding of the circumstances in which various issues arise.

This process has to happen in a place where participants feel safe to engage in personal

revealing.

Popular Theatre workshops are used to explore the social themes, problems and

oppressions of the group.

> Workshops enable people to work together on a common concern in a structured
> but informal and participatory setting. The meetings provide welcome
> opportunities for the participants to meet others who have confronted similar
> problems and to discuss how they have been solved. (…) Because the experiences
> and stories of participants are taken seriously they stimulate cultural understanding
> at a practical level and enable a deeper level of social analysis. (Epskamp, *Theatre*
> 47)

Community artists have developed a large number of techniques and games that are implemented in their workshops. Augusto Boal groups his games in the following categories: feeling what we touch, listening to what we hear, seeing what we look at and memory of the senses (*Games*). These games are conducive to expanding the physical and emotional vocabulary of the participants. According to Graham, games in workshops "(…) serve in part to introduce future actors to the basic skills they will need to perform their play. But games are also used to accelerate the process though which a group of people who barely know each other learn to function as a unit" (136). It is important that the participants feel free to explore this new vocabulary, but there is also a need to have enough structure to do so in a productive manner.

The first proceeding of any Popular Theatre workshop is to establish a sense of trust among the participants. The games are meant to transcend the participant as a passive observer of life, with their everyday stresses and personal shyness into an active contributor, where as their belief system actually moulds and affects the authenticity of the project.

> The workshop context must therefore provide a supportive, safe, learning
> environment in which participants feel confident about sharing and analyzing
> experiences. Under such condition risk taking is encouraged, errors are regarded
> as necessary and acceptable, and effective participation can occur. (Epskamp,
> *Theatre* 47)

Once a sense of trust has been established, it allows the '*joker*' (Boal's name for the leader of the workshops and later of the performances) to conduct games that are increasingly challenging. One example includes asking the participants to close their eyes

and move in the space blindly. "The game induces a new form of subjectivity because, in order to succeed at the tasks it sets, players must adjust their body style to take into account not only individual goals but the movement of the other members of the group" (Graham 139). During this process the joker, must be very attentive to the participants' limits. Going too far or too fast might create resistance, causing a breach of trust among the participating members, consequently hindering the process. The objectives of these workshops are to attain a degree of comfort wherein the participant feels secure to tell his/her story and deal with the issues that affect his/her life, not force them into dealing with something they are not ready to address:

> If the Joker sets up the mechanism very early on that no one in the group needs to feel obliged to do anything s/he does not want to do, and reinforces this throughout the workshop, then individuals in the group will take the responsibility for themselves. Some people will push themselves further than they thought they would go – they will use the workshop as a vehicle for personal exploration. Others will only go as far as they feel comfortable. The Joker must be confident enough to allow this self-regulation to happen and set clear understandings that each person extend their own boundaries, not push or pressure each other. (E. Diamond 8)

These workshops also involve learning particular acting skills and initiating the preparation of a possible performance. Theatrical acting skills require that the participant acknowledges and sometimes pushes their own limits, these trials include developing the ability to work with other people and conveying their emotions as truthfully as possible. The participants get to know each other on many levels, through the act of sharing personal stories, which may include vulnerable aspects of the self, and by listening to the experiences of others, they become partners in the creation of an original piece of art.

As participants are encouraged to pay attention to personal emotional responses

and to consider them valuable sources of knowledge about the group and its functioning, people will sometimes start to notice social habits that are structuring relationships within the group. (Graham 142)

The self-reflection that occurs throughout the process of these workshop games permits the participants to become more critical of their environment and communities. This process can quickly become chaotic as one is found having to deal with both personal issues and community dynamics. This artistic and social process does not follow a linear and simple path. Little is more than conscious of this aspect of community work: "Complicating matters, the discourse of Popular Theatre is by nature shifting and dynamic as it responds to exigencies within host communities and groups and in order to avoid colonization by the mainstream" (153). Flexibility and adaptability are imperative attributes for community artists in order to accommodate to community members' realities and limits. The sustainability of the project relies on the dedication of all its participants, the structure must be adaptable to the nonlinear relationship that exist between variables.

Aesthetics of Popular Theatre

In order for Popular Theatre to be successful in its ambition to empower its participants and effect social action, it needs to appeal to its audience. Working with professional artists, Popular Theatre can augment the aesthetic value of its work, in turn escalating the level of impact it has on the audience.

If the participation of the community members is palpable, if what they represent

emerges from a place of authenticity, then their message will be understood. Little

explains: "Such spectacles, exhibited within the powerful context of imaginative

theatrical presentation and transformation, encourage community solidarity by

celebrating a sense of collective accomplishment extending to cast and audience

alike" (73). These performances carry personal stories into the public realm, they shed

light on community issues for cast and audience alike.

Community workers are expected to enter into a community with an open-mind and

an open heart, hoping to spark inspiration for change of the social issues and negative

commonalities that affect the community. The full potential of this medium can only be

attained if community workers encourage the involvement and integration of all

participating members, by being sensitive and adaptive to the ups and downs of the

participants, and by allowing them to take charge of the direction of the project.

It may be overly optimistic to claim that Popular Theatre can provide a solution for

all oppressive social issues. However, as explained by Prentki and Preston: "there is no

mystery or magic processes of Applied Theatre that are subject to the same discourse of

power that contain all the other cultural endeavours of humankind" (14). The difference

lays between encouraging people to work together to fit in society, and encouraging

people to work together to change society. Prentki explains that there is an

> (…) assumption that Applied Theatre practices are to be located in the territory of
> the victims of personal and social oppression; empowerment for the
> disempowered. Such practices may serve the participants well in terms of
> confidence building and social skills but are unlikely to make much impact in
> terms of wider questions of structural transformation. ("Introduction" 182)

The question is: can Popular Theatre alter the structure of society, rendering it more

equitable? In order to take a step in this direction, community artists must collectively

join forces with community organizers to carry out the message that is shrouded in the

artwork and affect positive change. According to Bruce McConachie: "No performance

by itself can alter the routines of everyday lives, but community theatre can provide 'what

if' images of potential community, sparking the kind of imaginative work that must

precede substantial changes in customary habits" (38). These 'images' will not become

reality without persistent pressure to relevant authorities. Prentki corroborates: "Whether

these narratives ever coalesce into meaningful social action, may depend alike upon the

interventionist strategies of the facilitator and the capacity of activist organizations to

support the discourse developed by the theatrical process" ("Applied" 364).

Community Organizing

Community organizers bring a skill set that can mobilize and organize large numbers

of people and reinforce alliances with similar organizations and constituencies. Meredith

Minkler and Nina Wallerstein explain:

> As individuals engage in community organizing efforts and community building,
> community empowerment outcomes can include increased sense of community,
> greater participatory processes and community competence, and outcomes of
> actual changes in policies, transformed conditions, or increased resources that may
> reduce inequities. (41)

The objective is to empower community members adequately to influence structural and

institutional legislation. Rubin and Rubin explain: "Community organizing is a search for

social power and an effort to combat perceived helplessness through learning that what appears personal is often political" (2). This 'perceived helplessness' undermines people's belief in their power to mobilize, misleading the population to believe that the actual social structure is unchangeable.

There are two main approaches by which community organizations attempt to generate durable 'power' for an organization representing a community: social action and community development.

> The first comes out of a social action tradition and involves exerting pressure on specific targets — governments, corporations, etc.— in order to force these bodies to implement some kind of change in policy or behaviour. The impact of these changes improves the lives of people at the local level. (Shragge 67-68)

Social action directs its energy to challenge power outside the community. "The second tradition is the creation of a service or a program or a developmental process at the local level that can ameliorate the problem" (Shragge 68). Community development focuses on fostering power within the assets of the community through the strengthening of bonds amongst its members. I will describe how these two perspectives emerged.

The emphasis of social action attempts to adjust and alter the distribution of power and resources. The issues faced by community members derive from a source that is external to them. Minkler and Wallerstein explain:

> Social action organizing stressed redressing power imbalances by having outside organizers help to create dissatisfaction with the status quo among the disenfranchised, build community wide identification, and assist members in devising winnable goals and nonviolent conflict strategies and other means to bring about change. (32)

Saul Alinsky is considered to be the founder of this philosophy. According to Robert

Fisher, Fred Brooks, and Daniel Russell, Alinsky "believed that organization building,

strong leadership, and innovative tactics were the recipe for winning victories,

developing indigenous leaders, and building a mass people's organization" (557). The

assumption is that the dominant groups of our society retain the balance of power, and

social change organizations challenge this power by mobilizing less powerful groups by

raising the issue as a conflict and using, amongst other strategies, strong resistance and

protests against abuse of power. Alinsky explains:

> The job then is getting the people to move, to act, to participate; in short, to develop and harness the necessary power to effectively conflict with the prevailing patterns and change them. When those prominent in the status quo turn and label you an 'agitator' they are completely correct, for that is, in one word, your function—to agitate to the point of conflict. (117)

This implies that there is a need to mobilize, educate and support communities, providing

them with the opportunity to engage in addressing these imbalance issues of power.

Alternatively, community development focuses on the internal strengths of a

community, with the belief that solidifying the relationships amongst the community

members will enable them to address their own issues. Lee Staples explains "Community

development involves participants in constructive activities and processes to produce

improvements, opportunities, structures, goods, and services that increase that quality of

life, build individual and collective capacities, and enhance social solidarity" (7). The

focus is invested on the available resources within the community: "There is an

assumption that the affected community has the resiliency and strength to organize its

own assets and resources to rebuild the social infrastructure and resolve its own problem" (8). Organizing, reassuring, nurturing, and supporting communities becomes the focal point. The community sector becomes responsible for implementing their own projects and addressing the logistics necessary to provide these services.

Community development and social action can coexist since both approaches share a common goal. Although they have profound differences, Staples describes their similarities:

> Both feature large numbers of participants taking collective action on their own behalf under the guidance of indigenous leadership. Each has a dual emphasis on participatory processes and successful outcomes. And there is a common goal of developing effective organizational structures as vehicles for social change. (7)

Addressing the human needs for belonging, and being heard are fundamental in retaining people's interest and involvement. The anger that comes from feeling injustice can also be the fuel that feeds the mobilization of a large number of people and leads to collective action.

Principles of Community Organizing

Having someone realize that they can learn to be critical about society and that they can actually play a democratic role in achieving change is one of the main challenges that community organizers face. Shragge explains: "Democracy has to be understood in the widest sense possible as the process by which people gain control of aspects of their own lives through organizations in which they have a voice" (42). In direct democracy, the

population has an ongoing responsibility to exercise equal control over the matters and decisions which affect their interests. Community members retain that power because they are uniquely qualified and capable of investigating their lived experiences and can appropriately define what areas and elements of their community are problematic. They are the only ones that understand the dynamics of their community on an intimate level. Community organizers try to apply this ideal and provide support throughout the long quest for social change.

James Defilippis, Robert Fisher and Eric Shragge support the importance of diversity found within communities:

> The diversity of identities between individuals in communities, and the multiple identities that constitute those individuals, should not be seen as making collective action either impossible or oppressive. Instead, shared experiences in places, which form part of our identities, can be, and certainly are, mobilized to fight against collective threats and collective goals. (681)

When dealing with a marginalized community, the challenge is to reach out to them. Being isolated both socially and culturally makes it hard for community organizers to establish a trusting relationship. They need to be able to foster a space that is inclusive in order to be able to truly support the sharing of participants' personal stories. This can lead to a better understanding of the realities in which participants live.

Gathering the attention, energy and commitment of marginalized populations is difficult but mobilization is yet another key challenge for community organizers.

> Mobilization is a key element; without it, there is little an organization can do. There are two good reasons for this. First, the power of an organization to win

issues is built on the number of people involved actively within it. Second, in the process of participating in local struggle, people gain awareness, form solidarity with others, and create democratic opportunities. (Shragge 19)

Popular Theatre can be a valuable asset for community organizers with regard to mobilization strategies. Not only can it provide an appealing reason for people to assemble, it also tends to create strong connections amongst its participants.

Community organizers and community artists share similar values such as the importance of working in a democratic, inclusive, anti-discriminatory and participatory manner. They both share strong philosophical influences, inspired by the work of Paulo Freire who emphasizes a necessity to develop critical consciousness in order to have an impact on one's personal life and community. Both community organizers and community artists argue that their task is to facilitate this development, not through an abuse of their power, but through the sharing of it with community members. They both have at heart the regaining of power by community members in order to bring about meaningful change.

Community organizers have vast practical experience in terms of dealing with government and with communities. They have developed organizational skills that may affect social change. Community-based art does not pretend to go as far as community organizing in the fight for social justice, but it can be a tool to bring people together around a project that represents them, a practice to get one's voice heard individually and collectively, and to develop one's capacity to think critically, address issues of discrimination and fight artistic hegemony.

Chapter 2: Methodology

These case studies are meant to explore the artistic processes and organizing strategies used by *Mise au jeu.* According to Robert Yin: "As a research method, the case study is used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena" (4). In order to illustrate *Mise au jeu*'s work and contribute to the Popular Theatre literature, I have chosen to analyze two of their community projects: *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal* and *Acquis de Droit!* I will identify and analyze how *Mise au jeu* included participants in the projects, what aesthetic choices were made regarding the creative process of the projects, as well as what strategies were implemented. I will also describe the organizational relationship *Mise au jeu* shares with *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse*, illustrating the potential of a long-term collaboration between a community organization and an arts-based organization.

The potential benefits that *Mise au jeu* stands to gain from participating in this case study include the opportunity to partake in a critical analysis of their work as well as to have their work disseminated academically. As raised by Blackstone *et al*. for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Special Working Committee on research involving creative practice:

> Whereas researchers in many disciplines may be concerned with protecting a research participant's privacy, artist-researchers may more often be concerned with assuring adequate public acknowledgement of research participants for their creative contribution. (8)

This case study is aimed at acknowledging *Mise au jeu*'s work as well as to contributing

to a wider knowledge of the various practices of Popular Theatre.

It is also important to understand that for *Mise au jeu*, this analysis carries the following possibility: "For individuals who may become the subject of arts-based critique or satire, protection comes through the very public dissection, review and debate to which arts-based research is subjected by popular audiences or readers, journalists and academics" (Blackstone *et al.* 7). I addressed these concerns throughout the research process, by including the voice of *Mise au jeu*'s founder and general director, Luc Gaudet, in as many phases of the research as possible. I shared all phases of the methodology with him and consulted with him regularly throughout the research process. I included his reflections and thoughts about the collection and interpretation of the data, as well as through the analysis and representation of *Mise au jeu*. Luc was informed of the process of the research and the writing, reducing the risks of misrepresentation. A copy of the institutional consent form is included in the appendices.

Documentation

Mise au jeu provided me with documentation about both *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal* and *Acquis de Droit!* This documentation consisted of the final project reports for each neighbourhood, reports of the overall results of both projects, newspaper articles, videotapes, as well as published academic papers. For the analysis of *Acquis de Droit!* I also consulted reports from the community forum organized by *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse*, Annual Reports for the years of the project, as well as reports and working notes from *Mise au jeu*'s archives.

During *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal*, *Mise au jeu* hired the *Coopérative de travail Interface* to conduct an independent evaluation of the project. This organization wrote three different reports, one after each year of activity: 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003. This allowed *Mise au jeu* to restructure the project after each year. The objectives of *Coopérative de travail Interface's* evaluation were:

- *Recueillir des informations permettant de faire une appréciation des activités.*
- *Démontrer les impacts des activités sur les participants tels que perçus par eux*
- *Dégager des pistes d'action concrètes à entreprendre à partir des constats qui seront faits* (*Coopérative, 2002* 7)
- *Permettre une réflexion critique sur l'ensemble du projet, tant sa réalisation que ses impacts* (*Coopérative, 2004* 13)

The strategies that *Coopérative de travail Interface* used to collect information and evaluate the project consisted of reports made by workers after each workshop and performance. Evaluation forms were filled out by both youth and local authorities. They also conducted a total of fifteen phone interviews with the participating youth from various neighbourhoods.[4] Their evaluation offered an additional perspective to this case study because it included direct quotes of the participants' thoughts and reflexions on the process.

This documentation allowed me to understand the history of both projects. It became clear that *Mise au jeu* used various ways and adapted their process to the various circumstances in which communities were found. For example, they did so by adapting the number of performances in certain neighbourhoods in order to reach more people and to mobilize youth directly in their high schools.

---

[4] *Coopérative, 2002* 11; *Coopérative, 2004* 21.

Workshop Observation and Presentation

In order to observe *Mise au jeu*'s processes in action, I observed six rehearsals for the

project *Acquis de Droit!* Workshop participants were verbally advised of my role, the

goals and objectives of this research and they gave verbal consent to being observed.

(The names of all participants have been changed to protect their identity). Observing

these workshops allowed me to witness how *Mise au jeu* includes community members

in the artistic process. Sharing meals, theatrical rehearsals, questioning, discussing, all

constitutes ways by which *Mise au jeu* establishes a trusting environment that allows the

youth to develop a critical sense and to explore ways to explore personal and community

issues.

I also participated as an actor in the presentation of *Acquis de Droit!* in Park-

Extension. I was asked to replace an actress who was absent, fifteen minutes before the

beginning of the show. This was an opportunity for me to experience *Mise au jeu*'s work

directly, to act in front of an audience and to perform in the forum play. According to

Valerie Walkerdine, Helen Lucey, and June Melody:

> We suggest that far from opening up the simple confessional, an engagement with
> emotions and unconscious processes is absolutely crucial for understanding not
> only how multiple subjectivities are held together, but also the tricky place of
> emotions, ours and the participants', within the research process. (193-194)

This opportunity allowed me deepen my understanding of *Mise au jeu*'s work in a more

concrete and emotional way.

Interviews

For this case study, I interviewed Luc Gaudet from *Mise au jeu*, Alerte Avril from
Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse as well as Katherine (her name has been changed at her
request), a participant in *Acquis de Droit!* In order to recruit them, I used a purposive
sampling, Deborah Padgett explains: "As a general rule, qualitative researchers use
purposive sampling—a deliberate process of selecting respondents based on their ability
to provide the needed information" (53). In order to obtain information of differing
perspectives I selected three interviewees.

Luc Gaudet was an obvious choice for the first interview. As *Mise au jeu*'s founder
and artistic director, his dedication to the company since its beginnings provided me with
generous observations and open-minded analysis of the organization and the projects. He
also participated in the overall case study. He shared his opinion during the development
of the research questions, in the selection of the projects, and in the elaboration of the
methodology and in the analysis of the data.

He provided me with information about the beginnings of *Mise au jeu*, the
experiences he had working with community members, his values and opinions on the
importance of involving those member in both the creative and organizational process.
We talked of the benefits and challenges they face from using theatre to address social
issues. He also provided me with his comments and feedback about both *Jeunesse
enJEUX Montréal* and *Acquis de Droit!*

Alerte Avril has been a worker at *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse* for more than twenty years. During his interview, we discussed the importance of allowing youth to take on a role of leadership for projects that are meaningful to them. He believes in the youths' learning capacities to develop a critical analysis of their life situation. He emphasized the importance of establishing a trusting relationship with the youth and allowing them to gain trust in their own abilities. He was a participant in *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal* in the *Parc-Extension* version of the project and has been working with the project *Acquis de Droit!* since the beginning. We discussed their collaboration with *Mise au jeu* and what he perceived to be the challenges and benefits of using theatre as a medium for expression.

Katherine is a participant in the project *Acquis de Droit!* She has participated in the project since 2003 and has been closely involved in the exploration and writing processes. She offered the perspective of a participant regarding her own involvement in the project. She explained that she learned a lot about herself throughout the process and explained how she developed a better understanding regarding her social responsibilities and abilities to use her power to denounce what she believes to be unjust.

My goal was to study the participants' perceptions of *Mise au jeu*'s work as well as their experience with the company. I established an interview questionnaire with open-ended questions with the intention of letting the participants talk freely and in depth about their perception of community involvement, the use of theatre, and its impact on social change.

For the interviewees, this was an opportunity to reflect on their experience with *Mise au jeu*. Patricia Leavy explains that, in the context of arts-based research:

> (...) the creative process and verbal follow-up could be an empowering experience for the research participants as well, where they retain control, share their experiences, and have their feelings and perspective taken seriously (which is a form of validation). (229)

Their generosity with their explanations, descriptions and analysis of their experience with *Mise au jeu* allowed me to acquire in-depth information about the potential use of Popular Theatre among community organizations. All interviewees were presented with a consent form before acquiescing to be interviewed (see consent forms in the Appendices).

Themes Collected From Data

Throughout my analysis of the data, I focused my attention on the following questions:

Community Involvement

- What are the processes followed by *Mise au jeu* in order to allow community members the possibilities for people to get involved?
- What is the nature of the relationship between *Mise au jeu* and the members of the different communities in which they worked?

Artistic Choices

- What are the artistic techniques (aesthetic choices) that were used by *Mise au jeu*?
- What Popular Theatre techniques were put into practice?
- What intentions and values were reflected by these choices?

Social Change

- What were the objectives and results of the projects or interventions?

- What notable social changes resulted from the projects?

In order to analyze this data, I decided to use coding to create, classify and organize the data. I was able to extract meaningful information relating to the case study's three main themes: community involvement, artistic choices and social impacts of the projects. According to Padgett, "(…) coding involves close and repeated readings of the transcript (or other text) in search of 'meaning units' that are descriptively labeled so that they may serve as building blocks for broader conceptualization" (152). I analyzed the documents first, then the workshop observations, and the interviews' verbatim. I used the same coding for all this data, but always added categories when new themes emerged. "As coding proceeds, the analyst remains cognizant of similar incidents in other interviews as well as the larger context, searching for patterns but also remaining alert to negative instances and irregularities" (Padgett 155). I analyzed the data relevant to *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal* and *Acquis de Droit!* using the same coding.

For the project *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal* I specifically examined the strategies they used to involve community members in their process. I discussed the objectives they established, the mobilization methods they used, the kind of democratic experience they offered to their participants, the way they evaluated the project, and taking all this information into consideration, how they adapted to the various neighbourhoods. I also examined their artistic choices and how they used theatre during various events. In the end, I examined the impact of the project on the community: to do so I discuss the relationships they've established between the youths and the adults, how they involved

local authorities, and the project's follow up.

Studying *Acquis de Droit!* allowed me to further examine the strategies used to involve community members in the process. *Mise au jeu* co-wrote the forum play *Acquis de Droit!* in collaboration with the youths. The script is inspired by hundreds of stories collected by youth relating to encounters they have had with police officers. I will describe the artistic process *Mise au jeu* facilitated with participants in order to write and perform the play. The analysis of this project also provided a good opportunity to further examine the nature of the alliances between *Mise au jeu* and *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse*. Their partnership has allowed for the project to continue since 2005. I will describe the impact of such an alliance on the participants and on the progress of the project, as well as future recommendations thought up by participants.

Chapter 3: *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal*

The main objective of the project *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal* is to provide youth

aged between fourteen and nineteen years old from sixteen different neighbourhoods with

a possibility to address and question certain issues related to their communities: "*Le but

du projet est de susciter la prise de parole et la participation des jeunes à la vie

démocratique, en particulier les jeunes exclus et ceux des communautés ethnoculturelles

et de minorités visibles*" (*Coopérative*, 2004 11). In order to reach their goals, *Mise au jeu*

used a basic structure throughout the project. First, they contacted various community

organizations that work with youth among the targeted neighbourhoods and decided on

the best place and time to meet with them. Second, they organized a minimum of two

consultation gatherings with the participating youth. During those events, *Mise au jeu*

used theatre techniques that consisted of interactive animations and games to stimulate

creative expression and facilitate the process of raising issues and potential solutions for

their communities. These workshops lasted between forty-five minutes and two and a

half hours. Third, they arranged a meeting between the participating youth and the local

authorities. This meeting also embodied theatre techniques that enabled the youth to

directly express their concerns to the local authorities. The essential elements from all

these meetings were compiled and presented as a legislative forum play that was made

accessible to the entire community. A final report of all of the discussions, ideas,

suggestions and requests was written and made available online. *Mise au jeu* then

appealed to the participating youths and the local authorities to implement the

recommendations raised by the process.

Community Involvement

In order to effectively mobilize the participants, it was important for *Mise au jeu* to

learn about the unique characteristics of each neighbourhood. The fact that *Mise au jeu*

was an theatrical organization apart from the communities in which they worked was

advantageous because of the neutrality they brought, however, certain detrimental factors

were made apparent:

> *Le fait que l'équipe Mise au jeu soit une ressource externe du milieu est parfois un avantage, entre autre, cela permet d'éviter certaines dynamiques internes au milieu (...). Par contre, il est complexe et ardu de rejoindre les groupes, de les rencontrer, de pénétrer le milieu et de se faire accepter.* (*Coopérative*, 2001 35)

Their strategy was to contact the various community organizations that provided services

to youth and invite them to take part in the project. These organizations' main function

was to mobilize the participants.

> *Dans un premier temps, l'équipe de coordination de Mise au jeu s'est efforcée d'établir des contacts avec les divers organismes du milieu travaillant auprès des jeunes pour les informer de la démarche proposée, fixer le calendrier et choisir les lieux pour tenir les rencontres.* (*L'équipe, Parc-Extension* 4)

Finding community organizations that were interested in the process and willing to

commit to it was not an easy task. Luc Gaudet explains: "*C'est un gros travail de*

mobilisation, ça prend des agents… on faisait des listes de tous les intervenants du

quartier, on les informe, on les invite, on fait des suivis" (Personal interview).

Establishing relationships with partnering community organizations was a key element of

effective mobilization. *Coopérative de travail Interface* explains: "(...) *il est*

généralement plus facile pour ces intervenants de convoquer non seulement les jeunes

mais aussi d'approcher les décideurs locaux pour obtenir des ressources du milieu ou,

tout simplement, leur participation." (2004 29) The knowledge of the community

dynamics, which these organizations were part of, led *Mise au jeu* to broaden their

understanding of the community-specific issues and adapt their process accordingly.

Without the assistance of these organizations, *Mise au jeu* would not have had as much

success in reaching their target population concerned with the project.

    Working along side the various community organizations, *Mise au jeu* provided them

with a comprehensible plan for mobilizing the participants. Some of *Mise au jeu's*

actualized strategies consisted of: placing posters in community centres, sending out

invitations using email lists, and contacting potential participants in person at their

school. Informing participants about the project was one thing, actually convincing them

to take an active part in the process was something else. *Mise au jeu* concluded that

meeting the participants in person was the most efficient way to have them partake in the

project, although this task was not always a simple one. *Coopérative de travail Interface*

explains:

> *Il se dégage des résultats que les meilleures façons de rejoindre les jeunes sont,*
> *soit de passer par un organisme qu'ils fréquentent, soit d'utiliser une approche*
> *individuelle (rencontrer en personne les jeunes, les appeler, leur envoyer des*
> *courriels). Il a été observé qu'il faut déployer énormément d'efforts afin de*
> *rejoindre les jeunes. Dans le cas des communautés culturelles nouvellement*
> *arrivées, la barrière de la langue rend souvent le démarchage beaucoup plus long.*
> (2001 27)

Another reason why this was the best approach was because certain marginalized youth

did not have access to traditional channels such as the internet nor were they frequent

visitors of the community organizations where the posters were mounted. Meeting them in person offered a chance to the participants to understand and evaluate that their participation can have an impact on the project. *Coopérative de travail Interface* describe: "*Les jeunes sont parfois désillusionnés quand aux changements qui pourraient découler de leur implication*" (2001 28). Countering the participants' doubts of having persuasive influence on such issues was another huge challenge for *Mise au jeu* to surmount. Luc Gaudet explains: "*Il faut trouver leur point d'ancrage à elles pour les amener, pour ne pas travailler en sauveur mais à travailler en connaissance de ce que c'est d'amener du monde à trouver des solutions à leurs problèmes ou difficultés*" (Personal Interview). Establishing a real and genuine contact with the group was fundamental to the mobilization process and the project as a whole.

In order to mobilize local authorities, *Mise au jeu* decided to adapt its strategy:

> *Les responsables du projet ont opté pour que l'invitation soit faite par Maryse Bouchard du Comité du maire pour les jeunes de la Ville de Montréal. Ainsi, l'invitation revêtait un caractère personnalisé, plus officiel qui assurerait un meilleur taux de participation des décideurs publics.* (*Coopérative,* 2001 27)

Establishing a sense of legitimacy was important in order to convince the local authorities to participate in the project. The project's objective was to have at least two participating elected authorities (either from City Council or from the School Board), two administrative authorities (either from the municipality, the school board, or a funding organization), and two local authorities (from community organizations) from each neighbourhood where the project was to be presented (*Coopérative*, 2002 23). In total from all of the neighbourhoods, more than 239 representatives from various organizations

and government agencies participated in one of the project's activities.[5] This number was

significant proof that the overall objective was met, yet some issues became apparent

with regards to the participation of these authorities. Their availability was not always

possible and coordinating a schedule that was aligned with their own became a difficult

endeavour. For example, during the version mounted in Verdun, the school principal

unexpectedly changed the date of the meeting and local authorities were invited with only

one-week notice (*Coopérative,* 2004 53). This is too short of a notice for many local

leaders to accommodate within their busy schedules.

The main issues were questions of planning versus time in attempting to coordinate

and entertain all of the participating parties. This lack of time had consequences, for

example, in Park-Extension:

> *La multitude des groupes intervenant à Parc-Extension, la nouveauté de la*
> *démarche proposée et le resserrement de l'échéancier de réalisation proposé dû*
> *aux élections municipales ont incité l'équipe d'animation à démarrer le processus*
> *des rencontres sans avoir réussi à contacter tous les intervenants du milieu de*
> *manière satisfaisante* (*L'équipe, Parc-Extension* 4).

During the final year of the project *Mise au jeu* refined their mobilization strategy,

working directly with the school system itself and investing more effort on sustaining

communication with youth organizations (*Coopérative,* 2004 28). *Mise au jeu*'s efforts

were rewarded and these modifications to their strategy allowed them to reach a wider

audience. Previous to the implementation of these strategic changes the project was able

to mobilize 533 youths over the span of its first two years, where as during the final year

---

[5] Information based on the 3 reports from *Coopérative de travail Interface* and from 3 of the final
neighborhood reports by *L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu*

the number of participants climbed to 1298.[6]

Mise au jeu worked in accordance with the ideals of Popular Theatre with respect to the importance it gave to invoking democratic practices. According to *Coopérative de travail Interface*:

> *Cette approche se veut une façon de favoriser la promotion d'une culture démocratique comme moyen de prise en charge. De plus, elle constitue une approche originale pour consulter les jeunes à la base, dans leur arrondissement et leurs milieux de vie immédiats.* (2004 7)

In order to be true to these ideals, *Mise au jeu* strived to establish trust amongst its participants, allotting them freedom to express their disagreements and raise questions about the workshops and the overall direction of the project. As Luc explains: "*C'est d'établir un lien de confiance assez fort pour que la personne soit capable de dire: non, ça me tente mais je veux pas le faire à cause de d'autre chose que toi t'as pas pensé parce que t'es pas dans leur peau*" (Personal Interview). The level of trust was augmented as *Mise au jeu* constantly adjusted the process to take the observations, ideas and concerns of the participants into account.

Mise au jeu's idea of recruiting *Coopérative de travail Interface* as an independent observer to evaluate the project was another way in which they tried to maintain their dedication to working in a democratic manner. Luc Gaudet describes the benefits of this evaluation: "*Ça c'est intéressant parce que ça nous a permis de donner assez de recul pour ajuster à chaque fois nos cohortes d'activités. C'est vraiment à partir des forces et*

---

[6] Information based on the 3 reports from *Coopérative de travail Interface* and from 3 of the final neighborhood reports by *L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu*

des faiblesses qu'on a apprit à développer" (Personal Interview). These evaluations

provided insight that led to certain adjustments to the process.

Mise au jeu demonstrated flexibility and adaptability to the requests from participants

and to the reality of each neighbourhood (*Coopérative,* 2004 9). Based on the

participants' stories and evaluations, *Mise au jeu* adapted the project to the

recommendations made by participants in many ways:

> *Un constat qui ressort de l'intervention de cette année est la flexibilité dont les responsables du projet ont fait preuve en l'adaptant aux réalités des milieux. Ainsi, dans tel arrondissement, le nombre de rencontres entre les jeunes seulement a augmenté pour rejoindre un plus grand nombre de participants, dans tel autre, le projet s'est inséré dans d'autres projets en cours.* (*Coopérative,* 2004 75)

In response to the participants' critique regarding a lack of time dedicated to discussing

specific issues, and a request to have ample time to prepare meeting with the authorities,

Mise au jeu increased their number of meetings from a minimum of two to a minimum of

five. In one of the neighbourhoods thirteen meetings were conducted to satisfy such

concern on behalf of the participants (*Coopérative,* 2004 9).

It is under this premise that *Mise au jeu* included the participation of *Le Centre*

d'encadrement des jeunes filles immigrantes. This organization was planning to conduct a

one-day community forum called: *Jeunes filles immigrantes dans les milieux décisionnels*

(*Coopérative,* 2004 9-10). Collaborating together on this project, *Mise au jeu* brought

their wealth of knowledge and seamlessly mounted the same workshops that they had

refined throughout their work in the other neighbourhoods over the course of a day, and

included a meeting with the local authorities. Although this specific project was based on a community that was comprised of people who shared similar living conditions (young immigrant women) and not one based on a shared neighbourhood, the process itself was easily applied due to the previously amassed experience of *Mise au jeu*.

Including a possibility for youth to directly express their views to local authority was an important step in validating the practice of democracy:

> *On voit aussi dans le projet une opportunité d'encourager la pratique de la citoyenneté pour les jeunes, de tisser des liens avec les décideurs ainsi que les autres acteurs du quartier et de susciter l'implication des jeunes, comme le montrent ces commentaires:*
>
> *(...) montrer aux jeunes qu'il y a des façons d'utiliser le système pour faire changer les choses. Ça leur montre les rouages du fonctionnement de la démocratie et qu'il y a de la place pour s'exprimer (intervenant).* (*Coopérative,* 2002 41)

This process allowed youth to view themselves as being personally connected to the possibility of inspiring change within their community, the by-product of this being a bolstering of one's feeling of empowerment. According to results from *Coopérative de travail Interface*'s research:

> *De manière générale, en agissant directement sur la place qu'occupent les jeunes dans la vie démocratique, ce projet favorise le développement de leur sentiment d'appartenance de même que leur insertion sociale et communautaire par l'entremise de la prise en charge de leur devenir et de leur présent en tant qu'acteurs de changement dans leur milieu.* (2004 7)

Equally important was the feedback and viewpoints of the youth that the authorities were allowed to receive in such an intimate manner, information that they rarely have access to while fulfilling their duties. It was an opportunity for them to get in touch with a group of

citizens who have formulated clear demands. It was a chance for them to consult with a group that is often unheard.

> *Pour les jeunes: occasion de formuler leurs points de vue, leurs demandes. Expérience de démocratie très positive. Peut changer les mentalités. Pour les décideurs: utile de connaître les points de vue et les attentes des jeunes. Peut modifier l'approche (décideur, Côte-des-neiges). (Coopérative, 2001 36)*

In order to make it more feasible for local authorities to include this event in their busy schedules, the project was restructured to include the shared workshop between youth and authority members with the presentation of the legislative theatre performance in one day. "*Cette année, les rencontres entre jeunes et décideurs et l'activité de théâtre législatif ont été regroupées en une seule rencontre*" (*Coopérative,* 2004 9). The objective of this change to the scheduling was an attempt to accommodate the needs of all those involved, bettering the project's odds of having an impact on as many people as possible.

Artistic Choices

Throughout this process, *Mise au jeu* used many Popular Theatre techniques. Based on Augusto Boal's philosophy of developing means of expression that incorporate various senses, *Mise au jeu* used participatory theatrical games during their workshops. These active games were the tools that created a space for the participants to tell their stories. *Mise au jeu* also used other Boal techniques such as forum theatre and legislative theatre. The techniques allowed the participants to present the outcomes of their discussions while serving as a platform for both the youth and local authorities to coexist. The use of forum theatre during the presentation allowed the audience to transfer their role as

passive observer into one of being an active participant of the process.

Workshops

The first workshops led by *Mise au jeu* in each of the neighbourhoods were attended

by participating youth and some community organizers solely. This was the elaboration

phase of the project and these workshops were geared towards allowing the participants

to identify their concerns, ideas and perceptions of their community."*Par le biais*

d'animations interactives et de jeux d'expression créative, nous avons discuté avec les

jeunes pour des périodes variant entre 45 minutes et deux heures trente

minutes" (*L'équipe*, *Parc-Extension* 4). Throughout this time, the exercises were

strategically designed to induce the participants to tell stories from their lives. This is

how *Coopérative de travail Interface* explains the company's strategies:

> *Sachant que les gens comprennent plus facilement lorsque l'on fait référence à leurs expériences personnelles, et respectant les principes d'éducation populaire élaborés par Paolo Freire, le projet démarre par la récolte du vécu des jeunes et de leur perception de leur environnement: ce qui leur convient, ce qui leur déplaît, ce qui leur manque. En ce sens, les perspectives personnelles des jeunes sont le point de départ qui les amène à une première mise en commun de leur observations, de leur analyses avec d'autres jeunes de leur milieu et ce, au-delà de leurs réseaux d'appartenance ethnologique, organisationnelle ou même académique. Cette étape où les jeunes s'expriment sur leur vécu peut s'étendre sur plusieurs rencontres.* (2004 8)

Collecting these stories allowed the participants to listen to each of their concerns and

offered an opportunity to explore possible solutions to these concerns. Their objective

was to create a meaningful experience, to create the most conducive environment to

allow for dialogue to arise using techniques such as image theatre and improvisation.

This is how Gaudet explains their pedagogy:

> *Il a été démontré que des participant (e) s en formation retiennent davantage ce qu'elles (ils) ont appris si on leur donne la chance d'en parler et de mettre en pratique leurs nouvelles connaissances. Plus nous faisons appel à d'autres sens que la vue et l'ouïe dans nos actes de communication, plus la rétention de l'information est efficace. C'est la raison pour laquelle les artisans de notre équipe misent sur une communication expérientielle. Nous tentons de faire vivre aux gens une expérience provocante (de manière à transformer les spectateurs en acteurs. Lorsqu'on agit, on se souvient.* (1)

By being active and involved in the process offered by *Mise au jeu*, participants find an

opportunity to clearly express their needs and ideas:

> *Il semble que la formule soit adaptée aux jeunes. Les intervenants ont fait remarquer que l'approche est basée sur «la participation directe des participants et de fait les engage dès le début du processus» et qu'il y a «un grand besoin d'expression en groupe». Les jeunes saisissent généralement l'espace qui leur est offert pour s'exprimer. Il a été noté par les intervenants que les jeunes affirment souvent dans l'informel qu'ils aiment les rencontres parce qu'ils ont l'impression d'être écoutés, d'être entendus. Ils apprécient la chance qui leur est donnée de s'exprimer. Il est également intéressant de noter que le fait qu'il y ait de la nourriture est un élément qui contribue à attirer les jeunes.* (*Coopérative,* 2001 28)

The issues that were frequently defined through these initial workshop in frequent

fashion were as follows:

- to have more places for youth to hang out and/or to play sports
- to have better relationship with police officers
- to be able to express their needs directly to authorities and to participate in the elaboration of the rules and regulations
- to have better access to information about the services already offered
- to improve their environment by adding more gardens
- to have prostitution practiced in closed houses

(*L'équipe, Synthèse* 1-2)

Forum and Legislative Theatre

Upon completion of these initial workshops, *Mise au jeu* conducted another

workshop that also included the local authorities. These workshops served to allow the

participants to present the identified issues and their potential solutions directly to the

appropriate authorities. This was the first opportunity for both parties to meet and share

their views. I will discuss the ramifications of these meetings later on in this chapter.

Finally, everyone was invited to the presentation of the legislative theatre

performance of the play *Le Feu sacré*. This play was adapted in each neighbourhood to

include community specific issues:

> *La pièce Feu sacré est créée à partir des éléments clés qui émergent d'un processus de rencontres interactives entre jeunes d'un même arrondissement et décideurs locaux. Cette présentation a pour but de stimuler la réflexion menant à la formulation de projets de lois, de règlements et d'énoncés qui visent à améliorer la qualité de vie des jeunes dans leur milieu.* (L'équipe, "Le Feu sacré")

After the presentation of the play, *Mise au jeu* conducted a forum theatre inviting the

audience members to participate as well. As described by *Coopérative de travail*

Interface:

> *De cette activité peuvent émerger des pistes de solutions collectives aux enjeux présentés, desquelles pourront se dégager des initiatives concrètes de changements dans le milieu. Ultimement, cela pourrait même mener à l'identification d'une série de changements législatifs qui actualiseraient les appareils réglementaires et législatifs des villes et équiperaient les citoyens, jeunes et moins jeunes, de cadres renouvelés d'intervention.* (2004 8)

As explained, forum theatre allows the spectator to become an actor and to actively

participate in the discussion. It is noted in *Coopérative de travail Interface's* evaluation

that:

> *Dans le cadre de ces rencontres entre jeunes et décideurs, il y a généralement présentation d'un théâtre législatif où les enjeux qui ont été soulevés lors des discussions entre jeunes seulement sont mis en scène. Les participants peuvent, à tout moment, prendre la place d'un personnage. Cette forme d'expression permet aux jeunes ainsi qu'aux acteurs et intervenants de la communauté en présence de s'adresser les uns aux autres par le biais du jeu théâtral. (2004 8)*

Overall, according to *Coopérative de travail Interface*, this opportunity of open dialogue was appreciated by the participants: "*La formule interactive permet toujours une meilleure participation du public, les spectateurs peuvent aussi s'exprimer*" - *Décideur, Côte-des-Neige* (2001 29). By elaborating a dynamic participatory process the audience remains engaged and has a higher level of attachment to the message.

Social Impact

Mise au jeu's objective was for participants in their respective neighbourhoods to identify at least five issues relating to their community and clearly formulate a minimum of three requests to present to local authorities. According to *Coopérative de travail Interface*'s reports, they have more than successfully reached these objectives:

> *Le critère de réussite d'identifier cinq problématiques existantes dans l'arrondissement au terme du processus a été atteint dans tous les arrondissements. De plus, pour tous les arrondissements, beaucoup plus de cinq problématiques ont été identifiées. Celles-ci concernent surtout les jeunes, leurs besoins et leur réalité, mais touchent aussi des sujets qui concernent la population plus large de l'arrondissement. (2004 36)*

For example, in Park-Extension participating youth identified twelve issues. From these twelve issues, participants chose to address four of them with local authorities. The

following issues were prioritized: "*Dans le cadre de ce bilan, quatre sujets principaux on été retenus: les activités pour les jeunes, les relations avec la police, la communication et la circulation de l'information de même que de formation possible d'un comité de jeunes*" (*L'équipe, Parc-Extension* 5). Identifying specific issues is fundamental in an attempt to formulate clear demands to local authorities. With respect to the Park-Extension version, the following suggestions to local authorities were presented:

- *Créer un ligue de soccer*
- *organiser une discothèque*
- *organiser des spectacles de danse dans les parcs*
- *créer plus de lieux pour que les filles puissent pratiquer la danse*
- *ouvrir un club pour les 12-17 ans*
- *rendre une salle accessible pour organiser des fêtes*
- *inventer un Publi-sac jeunesse*
- *utiliser une journal de diffusion*
- *instaurer des portes ouvertes dans différents lieux*
- *les jeunes pourraient prendre une part de responsabilité de l'entretien et de l'animation des parcs publics*

(*L'équipe, Parc-Extension* 6-13).

In all of the participating neighbourhoods, both objectives of finding five issues and formulating three clear requests were met.

According to *Coopérative de travail Interface* there was a step lacking in *Mise au jeu*'s strategy to concretize the participants' proposed solutions: "*Ainsi, il était souhaité qu'une action concrète soit réellement initiée et menée par les jeunes au terme du processus*" (2004 40). Taking *Coopérative de travail Interface*'s suggestion into consideration, groups of youths formulated small interventions in their neighbourhood. In total, twelve concrete actions were organized among four of the participating

neighbourhoods (2004 40-42). The concrete actions that were elaborated as follows:

- a video production that requested a basketball court
- the involvement of a group of young women in an organizing committee to design cultural activities that are suitable for them
- the creation of a separate project to combat the problematic relationship between themselves and the local police officers (*Acquis de Droit!*)

The opportunities for local authorities to have direct contact with youth, who are prepared, who make concrete observations on their community and who formulate clear demands are rare. A majority of authority representatives also appreciated this consultation:

> *Les décideurs et intervenants sont nombreux à affirmer que la consultation des jeunes s'inscrit dans leur mission. Ces rencontres ont permis aux uns d'approfondir leur connaissance des besoins et perceptions des jeunes sur leur réalité et aux autres de valider ce sur quoi ils travaillent déjà.* (*Coopérative*, 2004 60)

One young participant explains why he also appreciated this encounter with local authorities:

> *Une rencontre que j'ai aimée c'est quand on a rencontré la Ville. J'ai aimé qu'eux puissent savoir ce qu'on veut, par exemple des centres, des services plus élaborés. Et j'ai aimé les discussions intenses: on disait nos besoins et ils nous disaient pourquoi on peut pas avoir telle ou telle chose. Quand on le sait pas, on chiale, mais là au moins, ça donnait des réponses à nos questions et eux peuvent avoir une idée sur les besoins. Ils peuvent pas toujours savoir!* (*Coopérative*, 2004 37)

This is a viable method to challenge traditional relationships with people of power and it also serves to demystify the path required for citizens to exercise their rights to express their opinions and questions.

Upon completion of the process, *Mise au jeu* compiled a final report for each of the

participating neighbourhoods. This report encompassed all the themes, issues, questions raised, as well as excerpts of significant interaction.

> *Au terme du processus, nous présentons ici un bilan des échanges s'étant réalisés entre les jeunes et les décideurs. Il en revient aux jeunes, intervenants et décideurs du milieu d'agir pour actualiser les recommandations qui ont émergé des rencontres.* (*L'équipe, Parc-Extension* 5)

Within this report, the names and comments of the local authorities were identified with the objective of increasing their level of accountability in terms of what they proposed during the events. This also provided the various community organizations with the necessary documentation to support their possible choice of action. This final report was distributed to all participating local authorities and was made available to all participating community organizations. The reports were also available on-line.

Limitations

The process is limited in its capacity to sustain social pressure on those in power after the artistic process is complete. In the end, *Mise au jeu* invited the community members and local authorities to take the next step:

> *En espérant que cet exercice soit utile pour inciter les jeunes du quartier à prendre en charge leur réalité et leur devenir, et que ce bilan serve d'outil pour appuyer la réalisation d'actions concrètes d'amélioration de la qualité de vie des jeunes et des autres citoyens du quartier.* (*L'équipe, Parc-Extension* 5)

Beyond the elaboration of these final reports, the pursuit of concrete social change lay in the hands of community organizations and the members of the communities themselves.

The lack of follow up on behalf of the community, combined with unmet promises by the authorities are a major weakness of this process. One worker observed: "*il n'y a pas eu suffisamment d'insistance sur la prise d'engagements de la part des décideurs administratifs et politiques*" (*Coopérative,* 2002 26). Community artists require allies in the continuation of this work, allies that will take the role of leadership as agents of social betterment. *Mise au jeu* aspires to be a stepping stone with respects to this ultimate goal, but they need to find support from community organizations in order to make this a realistic goal. *Mise au jeu* is conscious of its limitation and does see the value in establishing such working relationships.

Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse answered *Mise au jeu*'s invitation for continued and sustained support and took measures to elaborate a project based on the recommendations that stemmed from *Mise au jeu*'s artistic tactics during the *Parc-Extension* version of the project. BCJ realized that the relationship between youth and police officers was a valid and real social issue and this recommendation from *Mise au jeu* gave them the legitimacy they needed to take on such an initiative. This led to the creation of the project *Acquis de Droit!*

Chapter 4: *Acquis de Droit!*

The collaboration between *Mise au jeu* and *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse* is successful because it is based on a shared philosophy. Both organizations believe that a community itself can provide accurate assessment of its situation, and that given the space to express themselves, participants are able to identify those problematic areas and find the appropriate solutions. Alerte describes:

> (…) *assez souvent on pense que les intervenants sont des experts, or nous c'est pas comme ça qu'on veut travailler, on croit que les jeunes peuvent être aussi une ressource pour d'autres jeunes. Donc quand on arrive dans le groupe, les jeunes mettent certaines situations qu'ils vivent sur la table et avec ça, ce qu'on veut qu'ils arrivent à faire c'est que assez souvent ils sont victimes de ces situations-là, ils sont victimes de ces réalités-là, donc on veut pas qu'ils soient victimes qu'ils soient plus des acteurs.* (Personal Interview)

The *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse* believes that an unbalance in power exists in which adults maintain a position of authority over youth. BCJ attempts to concede their position of power when working with youth and share responsibility equally. Katherine, a young member of *Acquis de Droit!* describes how she appreciates this way of working:

> *J'aime le fait qu'ils soient, je ne sais pas le mot… Mais il n'y a pas de patron, tout le monde est au même niveau, même avec les jeunes. Avec les jeunes, je ne suis pas plus haut que toi, on est au même niveau, on travaille ensemble. (…) on a pas plus d'idées que vous, on est pas plus intelligents que vous, on n'est pas meilleurs que vous, on est vraiment tous ensemble, on met toutes nos idées ensemble. C'est ça que j'aime, c'est ce concept là que j'apprécie beaucoup du BCJ.* (Personal Interview)

Participating members of a project mounted by BCJ are responsible for all aspects of the project, from defining clear objectives to organizing and evaluating a concrete action plan. Because this philosophy deviates from the traditional way in which adults work

with youth, this sharing of power is initially an unfamiliar process and comes with

uncertainties for both parties. This process takes time, energy and a lot of patience.

Margaret Libby, Maureen Sedonaen, and Steven Bliss explain:

> These notions of power can lead to confusion when adults take steps to empower
> or share power with young people. In supporting youth leadership, it is key for
> practitioners to try to utilize positive youth-adult partnerships as a strategy to build
> leadership skills through mentoring and shared power. (21)

The *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse* tries to offer this belief to youth, asking them to

take responsibility for their own lives while accompanying them in the process. As

explained by Alerte: "*On laisse le pouvoir, l'espace est là pour que les jeunes puissent*

l'exercer. Et pourquoi c'est difficile cette façon de faire, c'est que ça va à contre-courant,

les jeunes ne sont pas habitués. Ils sont habitués à être organisés" (Personal Interview).

Establishing an equal partnership between youth and adults requires a constant effort of

consultation. Katherine explains:

> (…) *tout ce qu'ils font ils nous le ramène: est-ce que c'est bon, est-ce que c'est*
> *correct, est-ce que ça vous reflète? Tout, tout, tout, ils ne prennent aucune décision*
> *tout seul et je trouve ça superbe, vraiment. C'est bon. C'est bon de développer ça,*
> *je réfléchis plus à plein de choses* (Personal Interview).

They must take full responsibility for the project and the achievement of their goal lies

strictly within their own hands.

Community Involvement

Based on the recommendation submitted by *Mise au jeu*, *Bureau de Consultation*

Jeunesse Montréal along with the *Parc-Extension* Youth Organization decided to

investigate if the youths within their organizations were willing to participate in the

elaboration of a day long community forum exploring the issue related to their

relationship with police officers. Katherine has been active with the project since the

beginning. She explains how *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse* first introduced the

project:

> *Ça a commencé en 2006, 2005-2006. Le Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse est venu au PEYO, qui était dans le centre William Hingston, le centre de loisirs de Parc-Extension. Ils sont venus nous présenter le projet qui voulait qu'on travaille les relations qu'ils y avaient entre les jeunes et la police, parce qu'il y en a beaucoup qui se sont plaints (…) ils disaient que la police était pas juste envers eux, que la police faisait beaucoup de racisme et ils donnaient beaucoup de contraventions pour des affaires banales comme cracher par terre ou traverser la rue pas à la bonne place. C'est ça, ils faisaient ça plus aux noirs, aux latinos; les québécois se faisaient moins achaler par la police à Parc-Extension.* (Personal Interview)

BCJ mobilized youth with similar interests and provided the arrangements for them to

discuss this issue and decide on a course of action. Alerte describes: "*On va les mobiliser*

à partir d'un intérêt, on sait qu'on mène une action, on sait comment ça nous touche,

comment ça les touche et décider ensemble quel impact ça a sur eux autres, donc ils vont

décider ensemble de l'action à mener" (Personal Interview). Each participant had their

own personal reasons for becoming involved with the project, establishing why this

project was meaningful to them. Katherine explained her reasons for getting involved

with the project:

> (…) *personnellement, je pense que les policiers sont plus achalants vis à vis des garçons que des filles. Alors personnellement ça me touchait un peu moins que les policiers étaient chiants envers nous. Mais ils harcèlent aussi les noirs et moi je suis noire, alors j'étais comme un peu au milieu et tout. Et jouer la pièce (…) me met un peu dans leur position, ça me fait mieux comprendre que oui les gars, c'est vrai qu'il y a de l'injustice et que c'est plate. Ça me permet vraiment de plus me*

positionner vis à vis ça. Je me bats pour le droit des jeunes. On a des droits et il faut qu'ils les respectent que ce soit les policiers. (…) *C'est les jeunes, minorités visibles, noirs, latinos, arabes.* (Personal Interview)

Her motivation to partake in this project was not because of unjust police practice directed toward her, but because she felt that unfair practice was more commonly experienced by non-caucasians. As a black woman herself, she wanted to take a stance against this perceived lack of fairness.

After the preliminary recruitment of participants for *Acquis de Droit!*, the youth conducted interviews among their peers and logged their stories relating to the issue. Alerte explains:

> (…) *on essaie de regarder de plus près, qu'est-ce ça veut dire, qu'est-ce que ça voulait dire pour les jeunes, comment ça les touchait quotidiennement, quel impact que ça avait dans leur vie, donc les témoignages, ce qu'ils ont fait, donc on dit recherche-action de type qualitative. C'est à partir de ces histoires-là qu'on a été cherché auprès de 130 jeunes.* (Personal Interview)

They also interviewed eight police officers and compiled the information in order to clearly identify the issues that were raised. They then proceeded to elaborate a community forum that included police officers from the neighbourhood. Katherine explained that during this community forum: "*On allait tous être là pour discuter entre nous, pour essayer de savoir ce qui se passe, pour avoir l'avis des policiers, il y aurait des polices et des jeunes, on allait se confronter au forum. Donc, c'est ça on a travailler là-dessus*" (Personal Interview).

Since they appreciated working with *Mise au jeu* during the *Jeunesse enJEUX*

Montréal project, the participating youth of *Acquis de Droit!* suggested that *Mise au jeu*

assist in facilitating the dialogue between themselves and the police officers, Alerte

explains:

> (…) *parce qu'on s'est dit on allait présenter le résultat de ces témoignages-là, partager ces témoignages-là, dans les quartiers avec les acteurs, les citoyens, et donc pendant l'organisation du forum on demandé à Mise au jeu de participer à un moment dans le forum comme déclencheur de débats pour les ateliers dans l'après-midi.* (Personal Interview)

Inspired by the collected stories, *Mise au jeu* produced and presented a short play at the

onset of the community forum. Using forum theatre techniques, they facilitated the

dialogue between the participants of the forum, allowing everyone who was involved an

opportunity to express their opinion.

Katherine explains that the police officers did not appreciate the way in which the

event unfolded. According to her recollection of the events, the police officers felt

attacked and blamed by the youth, that the community workers did not appropriately

prepare them. She explains that during the forum:

> (…) *on a juste discuté, ils ont dit ce qu'ils vivaient, ce qu'ils ressentaient, ils ont jamais accusé personne. Ils ont vraiment dit comment ils se sentaient par rapport aux policiers et ils se sont sentis attaqués. Ce qu'on voulait faire c'est travailler avec eux, trouver des moyens pour améliorer la situation avec eux. Mais à cause de ce qu'il s'est passé au forum et comment ils se sont sentis les policiers, ils ont tout brisé* (…) *ils nous ont dit qu'ils ne voulaient plus travailler avec nous que c'était pas juste ce qu'on faisait nous autres, qu'on blâmait tout sur eux et ils ne voulaient plus travailler avec nous. Suite à ça, on leur a envoyé des lettres, on leur a demandé de travailler avec nous. On s'est même excusés… On leur a proposé quelques dates et ils nous ont dit: oui, oui on va le faire… ils sont jamais venus, jamais de réponse, rien.* (Personal Interview)

The exact course of events that led to this miscommunication is unclear, however

what is certain is that trust had been broken between the two parties at this point, leading

to the failure of this strategy.

After the forum, youth evaluated the situation, deciding to change their strategy.

Upon analysis of the outcome from the community forum, the group decided to key in on

establishing what their rights actually are:

> (…) *ils ont regardé les recommandations des ateliers et ils ont priorisé une*
> *recommandation: qui est sur toute la questions des droits et puis dans l'espace*
> *publique* (…) *on concertait que les jeunes ne connaissaient pas leurs droits non*
> *plus et ils voulaient trouver une façon, non seulement qu'on puisse discuter encore*
> *de cette question-là avec les jeunes et en même temps donner des informations par*
> *rapport aux droits et aux attitudes aussi qu'il faut faire ressortir les attitudes des*
> *deux côtés.* (Alerte, Personal Interview)

It was clear at this point in time that the forum did not provide any improvement to the

problem and they agreed to take on a new objective.

Before the community forum, the group's objective was to create a better relationship

with the police officers, but because of this conflict the group decided to approach youth

organizations from other neighbourhoods to examine how their relationship was with

police officers. In order to achieve this, they recontacted *Mise au jeu* and asked them to

assist them with the creation and presentation of a forum-play to be enacted among the

surrounding Montreal neighbourhoods. Through the re-enactment of this play, the group

attempted to justify their feeling that this problem was a valid one.

> *Fais que c'est ça, on a décidé de créer une pièce de théâtre qui démontre vraiment*
> *la réalité des jeunes et c'est ce qu'on vit vraiment. Quand on a fait la pièce c'était*
> *plein (d'histoires). Et c'est vraiment ce qu'ils vivaient, ils ont donné des idées pour*
> *faire la pièce et le but c'était d'aller dans plusieurs quartiers pour leur montrer la*

pièce, pour avoir leurs opinions et pour savoir aussi comment ils vivaient ça dans leur quartier à eux, pour voir si vraiment c'était un gros problème partout. (Katherine, Personal Interview)

Alerte explains why he really appreciated *Mise au jeu*'s assistance in this process and decribes why their work helped them to come full circle with regards to their new objective:

> *Voyez, on a commencé avec Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal, Mise au jeu qui a commencé, le BCJ a pris le relais en fonction de ce qui est ressorti pour faire une première partie qui est la recherche, ensuite le forum ensuite les recommandations, il y a un comité de jeunes qui les ont regardés et ont priorisé une recommandation et est allé chercher Mise au jeu pour leur dire que nous, on aimerait que vous travailliez cette partie-là par rapport à tel élément qui est ressorti dans le forum. C'est comme si on était en train de boucler la boucle.* (Personal Interview)

Artistic Choices

Mise au jeu chose to conduct improvisation sessions encompassing different scenarios that stemmed from the youth' stories, exploring various story lines with the participants. Together they decided on the most effective ones and elaborated the script, trying to adhere as closely as they could to the collected stories. Alerte describes *Mise au jeu*'s process to write the collective play:

> *Ils l'ont écrit en même temps avec eux. Ils ont pris ce que les jeunes ont pris, les ont écrits, les ont ramenés, les ont discutés pour qu'ils le partagent avec les jeunes, ils ont distribué les rôles, et ce n'est pas Mise au jeu qui les a distribués, tout le processus de création c'est Mise au jeu et les jeunes qui l'ont décidé ensemble. Qui joue tel rôle, qui joue tel rôle en fonction de comment ils se sentent à travers ce rôle-là et qu'est-ce que ça lui faisait vivre aussi. Il y a eu des discussions extraordinaires à travers les rôles, comment ils étaient habités par les rôles, ce que ça leur faisait vivre et des fois ils vivaient des situations par rapport au rôle effectivement.* (Personal Interview)

Creating the characters and the storyline was one thing, but in order to act out their roles in the forum concept, the participants have to acquire certain acting skills. Because a forum-play requires its actors to improvise while incorporating the audiences' suggestions, the actors have to stay in character and react as their character would react faced with an alternative suggestion. Clearly defining a character's stance on certain situations also allows the actors to demonstrate a potential resistance or inclusion of the audiences' interventions.

The play is based on the story of a character called Xavier, named X for short, a young orphan who lives in Montreal with his aunt and his cousin. The story takes place on the day before X's eighteenth birthday. During the day, X meets with his friends at the metro station and in a local park, and having three separate encounters with the police. These events turn for the worst and X is brought in by the police, then released with a promise to appear in court.

The play was performed three times through 2008 and 2009: at the *Rendez-vous International des jeunes*, at BCJ's annual assembly, and for *La Coalition solidarité Montréal Nord*. The last show stood out because of certain special circumstances that had recently taken place in the area:

> *Enfin, suite aux évènements reliés à la mort du jeune (...) sous les balles des policiers, la Coalition solidarité Montréal-Nord et des jeunes impliqués dans certains quartier, ont sollicité une représentation de la pièce (...). Il est alors convenu que la présentation servirait d'événement déclencheur pour créer un espace de dialogue pour les jeunes et les citoyens permettant d'identifier des moyens de continuer la mobilisation vers une recherche de solutions à l'image de cette communauté. (Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse, Rapport d'activités 27)*

Acquis de Droit! and BCJ organized the presentation in hopes of taking an advantage of an opportunity to share what they worked on and use it to serve their community. More than two hundred people attended the show and many actively participated in the discussion. After the show, it was clear that many of the people in attendance also experienced similar issues with police officers. Inspired by the success of their presentation, the group decided to present the play in as many of Montreal's neighbourhoods as they could.

Workshops and Rehearsals

At the beginning of every rehearsal, BCJ provided the participants with dinner. Food is an important element in keeping participants interested. Not only because when participants are well fed, they are more concentrated and actively engaged, but also because food sharing is an informal way of creating a closer bond with people and establishing a sense of trust. Luc explains:

> *Il y a des fois des craintes… Juste vendredi encore: Je suis découragé, les gens se mobilisent pas, qu'est-ce qu'on fait avec ça? Comment est-ce qu'on reprend ça? Il faut soutenir et s'assurer que le monde se brûle pas non plus. Toujours rentre ça l'fun. La bouffe, la pizza c'est la clé aussi!* (Personal Interview)

Offering food also acts as an incentive for community members to persevere throughout the course of a project.

Since the play had already been written, *Mise au jeu*'s role consisted of teaching the appropriate acting skills and leading the rehearsal sessions of the play. Some of the acting

techniques they taught include improvisation, voice projection, movement on the stage, and group cohesion. *Mise au jeu* implemented games to help the participants feel more comfortable in their respective roles. One example of this assistance in terms of character building was to have the actors not rely solely on the script. Luc helped the actor to clearly define his/her character's objectives and worked to enhance their improvisational skills. This allows an actor to better understand his role on stage and diminishes the stress that comes with reciting one's lines through sheer memory alone. Importance was emphasized on the actor navigating through the various scenes from that character's point of view. In certain cases, some youth needed to portray characters that they didn't necessarily agree with, such as the police officers. Learning to listen to each other and to be true to their character were essential attributes for the actors to acquire in order to accommodate the audiences' input and successfully fulfill their roles.

With the hopes of strengthening the aesthetic values of the play, *Mise au jeu* also incorporated the use of professional actors. Their advice and expertise also led to the improvement of the participants' theatre skills and techniques. Apart from enacting their roles, these professionals were also incorporated to share their experience with the youth and demonstrate what made for an effective rehearsal.

Mise au jeu's work goes far beyond teaching theatrical skills. According to Alerte:

> *Pour moi, c'est sur qu'il y a la partie artistique et tout, mais l'élément essentiel dans l'expertise que Mise au jeu a l'élément d'intervention, d'éducation populaire. Ils savent travailler avec la réalité des gens, d'autant plus avec la situation avec les jeunes et les respecter là-dedans, et croire qu'ils sont capables et les faire croire qu'ils sont capables et ils sont capables.* (Personal Interview)

This process is not always an easy one and it can be emotionally challenging. Participants are not always in agreement with one and other, they may have trouble concentrating at times, they may be dealing with difficult personal situations, and they often find acting to be harder than they had initially expected. *Mise au jeu* needs to find ways to curb all of these above difficulties. Alerte explains:

> *C'est le groupe qui va le faire qui va s'auto-régulariser. Il faut faire confiance au groupe. Il faut faire confiance aux jeunes qui sont là. Ils sont capables de se régulariser, de discuter, de débattre et même des fois, quand ça monte, le ton monte, il peut y avoir une certaine agressivité. Au Québec on a peur beaucoup de l'agressivité, nous on a pas de problème avec ça. Et si on avait des problèmes avec ça le projet ne serait pas là. On regarde comment Mise au jeu pendant tous les moments où on sentait qu'il y avait de la tension, on sentait: «c'est correct». La tension est là, qu'est-ce qu'on fait avec. Tout le monde prend connaissance de la tension, comment on le fait, vers quoi on s'en va.* (Personal Interview)

Sometimes it is the professional actors who become impatient and aggravated with the group's lack of experience and level of concentration. Even though the participants have more control over the process of the project, certain occasions arise that require more structure. In these moments, the role of *Mise au jeu* is to act as a bridge between the needs of the professional actors and those of the other participants.

Throughout the workshops I attended, youth demonstrated the development of critical thinking and abilities to identify a problem and provide a resolution for it. Two representatives of the CREMIS (*Centre de recherche de Montréal sur le inégalités sociales et les discriminations*) were also present during the first workshop I attended. Leonel Bernard and Christopher McAll had concluded a separate study on racial profiling in Montréal. According to their research, young black males in Montreal were 4.2 times

more likely to be intercepted by police officers than their white counterparts. Bernard and McAll explain: "*Les données convergent vers la conclusion que les jeunes identifies par les policiers comme 'Noirs' sont davantage surveillés par eux et par les agents de sécurités que les jeunes identifiés comme 'Blancs'*" (12). They did not go as far as to say that police officers are racists, rather they raise an interesting point: "*On peut penser que les policiers ne sont que les dignes représentants d'une société, majoritairement blanche, qui exerce la discrimination envers les Noirs dans tous les domaines de la vie sociale*" (13). They were present at this meeting to ask the group if it would be possible to incorporate their findings in the original script. After much conversation with the researchers, the participants of *Acquis de Droit!,* although acknowledging the researchers' findings, preferred to present it in its original form.

The morning of the show in *Parc-Extension,* Bryan Myles published the result of the research on police discrimination on the front page of *Le Devoir* (March 19, 2010). These results and conclusions supported the youth's message. This information became useful for legitimizing *Acquis de Droits!*'s endeavour.

The researchers revealed their results to the media the day of the presentation with the hope of drawing more attention to the issue. This also provided some added publicity for the show. During the presentation of the play, they acted as consultants for the audience members. In the end, they were true to their word, not interfering with the show, respecting the youths' desire not to alter the script.

Beginning of the Show

Luc was the joker for the presentation of *Acquis de Droit!* At the onset of the play, he

welcomed the public and asked some questions to better distinguish the makeup of the

audience. Luc explained how the play was conceived and provided an overview of forum

theatre. Establishing this dialogue immediately with the public is meant to demonstrate

that this form of theatre openly welcomes their feedback and opinions. Luc also invited

the public to briefly share their encounters with police officers. He then introduced the

play, asking the audience to be attentive to any moments throughout the play where they

could offer an alternative action on behalf of the characters. They will have had this

chance to intervene during the second presentation of the play.

The stage setup was very simple, it consisted of six chairs, a few accessories, and

some simple costumes. The play itself serves as a canvass for sharing a common

experience. Katherine explains:

> *Pourquoi une pièce, c'est une bonne question… Parce que la plupart du monde est*
> *visuel* (…) *Je pense que c'est moi qui ai voulu l'idée de la pièce de théâtre. Je crois*
> *que c'était mieux de montrer aux gens ce qu'on vivait, au lieu de juste aller*
> *s'asseoir et bla bla bla bla bla… Pour ce qui est de la raison de la pièce, après il y*
> *a un forum, c'est vraiment au forum que tout ce passe, c'est vraiment au forum*
> *qu'on discute. Et tout le monde dit ce qu'ils vivent aussi et ils disent, oui, la pièce*
> *reflète vraiment la réalité* (…) *en montrant la pièce, c'est plus facile de discuter,*
> *ça fait un thème.* (Personal Interview)

To promote the participation of the audience, Luc facilitated the transition between the

play itself and the forum aspect of the presentation. He provided the necessary structure

for the audience to intervene and suggest alternative solutions. According to Katherine:

"*Je trouve que tout le jus, le cœur du projet on le pogne plus au forum, c'est au forum que ça ce fait. Si on montrait juste la pièce de théâtre pis on dirait ok, c'est fini. Je ne verrais pas vraiment le travail, je ne verrais pas vraiment où on s'en va (…)*" (Personal Interview). It is through this form of art and open dialogue that the forum hopes to explore possible solutions to an oppressive situation. Alerte describes:

> (…) *ce n'est pas l'art dans le sens que quelqu'un créé, mais c'est une création collective avec des gens qui ne sont pas des experts mais c'est de raconter les histoires des gens à travers l'art, à travers le théâtre forum. Faire en sorte aussi que quand tu vas aller dans un milieu que d'autres personnes puissent raconter des histoires et avoir la possibilité de jouer leurs histoires.* (Personal Interview)

Each time the play is performed, the group gathers more stories, hears different ideas, and understands the issue from another point of view. The following illustrates some ideas and suggestions raised through audience intervention.

The first intervention was carried out by Luc inviting a member of the audience to ascend onto the stage and have a discussion with X. The audience member encouraged X to learn more about his rights and to persevere in his opposition to abusive police practices.

Another suggestion was to assemble a committee of citizens willing to observe the work of police officers in their neighbourhood. However, another audience member pointed out that similar projects have been attempted with little success. They require far too many resources and coordinating to sustain over time.

One other participant talked about an organization that had produced small cards

denoting citizens' basic rights and responsibilities, and police officers told community workers in that particular neighbourhood that it was a lot easier for them to carry out their work when youth were educated about the laws and their rights. The idea of this being taught in school was also brought up. At the end of the forum, an overall consensus was shifted to the importance of knowing one's rights.

Bernard and McAll were happy to provide information regarding their findings as well: "*La peur, attisée par une attention médiatique importante pour tout ce qui concerne les gangs de rue, pourrait ainsi être un élément central dans la sur-surveillance des jeunes Noirs, que ce soit de la part de la police ou de la part des citoyens eux-mêmes*" (13). The attention that the media invests regarding this issue might have pivotal significance in understanding causes of racial profiling.

The youth received encouragement from the audience, collected more stories, and created new allies; all helpful elements in attempting to improve their relationship with police officers. Some of the group members were critical about their own acting skills, none the less, the overall feeling was that the forum had been a success.

A future objective of *Mise au jeu* is to train the youth to take on the role of the joker themselves and for them to be fully responsible for the technical requirements of the play. Katherine explains: "*Mais je pense qu'au départ, le but c'est pas qu'ils jouent avec nous mais plus pour nous coacher, nous guider et nous montrer comment faire, parce qu'on voulait vraiment jouer comme eux*" (Personal Interview).

Social Impact

This whole experience from the initial collection of stories, content creation, through to its presentation had a clear impact on the participants. Alerte remarks:

> *Pendant toute la démarche il y a des apprentissages, il y a la confiance en soi qui se développe, l'estime aussi, et dans une démarche comme ça, ça permet aux jeunes d'avoir une certaine perspective aussi. Parce qu'en même temps qu'ils font des apprentissages ils sont en train de se sensibiliser, ils sont en train de mobiliser des gens, ils sont en train de faire des choses qui ont un impact dans leur milieu, mais qui a aussi un impact dans leur vie. Ça donne un sens à leur vie. Et si on parle des jeunes qui sont impliqués dans ce projet, ils ont tous un autre projet maintenant* (Personal Interview)

When participants realize that they are the initiators of something that has an impact on their community it is accompanied by a feeling of achievement and personal accomplishment. The steps that lead up to this realization may stem from one or few individuals, but as the group grows and gains belief in what they are doing is authentic and valid, those same gains are evident in their capacity to attain their goal.

This also grows one's capacities to be critical towards the functioning of their society, realizing that they can become involved and concerned citizens who can question social structure and express their point of view. Katherine explains how she changed her perspective about what she observes from certain police officers:

> (…) *je vois plus aussi quand il y a de l'injustice qui se passe, je suis prête à y aller, je sais que c'est de l'injustice. Je peux y aller et dire, c'est pas juste ce que tu fais. Dans le temps, j'aurais dis c'est normal, c'est sa job. (...) j'ai appris parce qu'il y a des avocats qui sont venus nous expliquer nos droits et tout. On est mieux équipés, on est mieux enrichis par rapport au sujet. Je trouve que ça m'a apporté beaucoup.* (Personal Interview)

She has learned that she has a right to have her questions answered, and she has acquired

tools and a support system to fall back on. According to Alerte, *Acquis de Droit!* is a total

success with regards to understanding this concept of right versus responsibility:

> *On est gagnant sur tous les bords. Non seulement, ils sont capables de comprendre dans quel milieu ils vivent, dans quelles sociétés ils vivent, ils sont capables d'exercer leur citoyenneté et en même temps aussi, ils sont capables d'avoir un projet de vie personnelle* (…) (Personal Interview)

The group was able to break the walls of silence and clearly denounced what they

believed to be unjust behaviour. According to Benhabib: "All struggles against

oppression in the modern world begin by redefining what had previously been considered

'private', non-public and non-political issues as matters of public concern, as issues of

justice, as sites of power which need discursive legitimation" (100). The inaugural

participants of *Acquis de Droit!* began with their personal stories and grew more

confident as they realized that the issue indeed touched a wide range of youths. They

were able to identify what they considered to be an act of oppression and they chose to

denounced it through *Acquis de Droit!*, as Katherine clearly explains:

> (…) *de voir que je peux faire un changement, que c'est pas juste les adultes, c'est pas juste le gouvernement, en tant que citoyen j'ai des droits et j'ai la possibilité de faire changer les affaires qui sont injustes* (…) *Pour moi les citoyens c'était tu obéis et ta gueule. Mais là non, je vois que on peut faire un changement. C'est un pays démocratique quand même.* (Personal Interview)

For Katherine, this experience was the catalyst that incited her to become interested and

concerned with other political issues: "*Comme même la politique, avant j'étais pas*

vraiment dedans, mais maintenant je vois ça d'une autre façon. J'entends qu'ils veulent

couper de l'argent pour l'éducation et je suis prête à aller lutter contre ça

maintenant" (Personal Interview). This shows how a project such as this can be useful in

leading young citizens to become critical of how their society functions.

Originally, the community forum was to be the end of this project, but the group felt

the need to take another step and move forward with their action plan. Alerte explains:

"*c'est quand ils mènent une action, ils constatent que ça touche, que ça peut toucher la*

communauté, que ça peut faire la différence" (Personal Interview). This project acted as a

stepping-stone for the youth to further express their discontent with the status quo,

although, it must be stated that often projects such as these are aborted for numerous

reasons. Some of the more common reasons for a project's collapse include; lack of

funding, lack of human resources, or a diminishing interest from its participants. In the

case of *Acquis de Droit!* the positive feedback and strong response from the community

has helped the group to maintain a certain momentum and level of interest. *Acquis de*

Droit! has been ongoing for over six years. Alerte explains:

> *c'est pour ça que je dis que ça prend du temps, il faut de la patience.*(…) *C'est un*
> *processus intégré, le milieu doit se consulter, rencontrer les jeunes voir les jeunes,*
> *est-ce que les jeunes sont partie prenante? Est-ce qu'ils sont intéressés, motivés?*
> (Personal Interview)

The participants gained a lot of experience over the years and have come to realize that

they need to establish strong relationships with other organizations in order to push the

project forward. Katherine explains: "*quand il y a plein de monde qui lutte, un moment*

donné, il y a quelque chose qui change. S'il y en a plein de gens! Il faut aller chercher des

alliés, si on a toute une armée derrière nous ça va fonctionner je pense" (Personal

Interview). Collaborating with other organizations expands potential tactics, strategies

and resources. It increases the pressure on those in position of authority and provides

legitimacy to the message. The youth are continuing to build new alliances and

partnerships with other organizations. Alerte explains:

> (...) *c'est ça, l'autre apprentissage de voir qu'on peut se réunir pour faire avancer encore plus notre dossier, ça donne encore plus de force, ils ne pensaient pas qu'ils pouvaient être aussi importants pour que d'autres puissent les considérer comme des partenaires.* (Personal Interview)

They have targeted the following organizations to partner with for the continuation of the

project:

> - *La ligue des droits et libertés*
> - *La commission des droits de la personne et de la jeunesse*
> - *Le Centre de recherche-action sur les relations raciales*
> - *Le Centre de recherche sur les inégalités sociales, les discriminations et les pratiques alternatives de citoyenneté*
>
> (*Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse, Rapport d'activités* 28)

In the end, Katherine describes the objectives of *Acquis de Droit!* quite simply:

"*Notre but c'est pas de faire chier, notre but c'est d'améliorer la situation. Je comprends

que c'est important le rôle de policier. Mais on veut des policiers qui nous respectent là-

dedans aussi*" (Personal Interview). Her response to why she remains committed to this

project is as follows:

> *Je continue parce que je veux vraiment que ça se fasse cette amélioration entre les jeunes et la police. Vraiment j'ai encore de l'espoir et j'espère qu'un jour les policiers vont voir les jeunes dans la rue au lieu de les pointer du doigt, qu'ils disent: allo, ça va? Comment va l'école? ou je sais pas, les aider. Je ne sais pas, que ça devienne, que les policiers deviennent comme une affaire communautaire, on dirait que c'est privé, c'est privé leur affaire? Je ne sais pas. Oui, j'ai encore ce rêve là.* (Personal Interview)

This play became a demonstration of the commitment of the group towards the

betterment of their community. This type of commitment has the potential to create a

turning point, to create momentum for others to adopt the same ideal of improving their

living conditions, highlighting the promising benefits of Popular Theatre. It is yet to be

seen that this project will have a direct impact on the existing laws, but it is more than

apparent that the level of pressure which these governing bodies feel with regards to this

issue continues to increase, as so does the overall critical eye of the community.

Conclusion

Mise au jeu creates an atmosphere in which its participants can connect with each other and share their lived experiences. As they use theatrical games, both during workshops and performances, they are building the tools and exercises which they implement with the aim to promote constructive dialogue. Enhancing community empowerment and creating positive social change within their communities is the ultimate goal. Often it is believed that people who are oppressed cannot engage in social change, nor have any responsibility to do so. John Mighton argues that such a belief is a by-product of the school system: "By having to compete and be compared to their peers, many lose faith in their intelligence and their imagination; by having to struggle so hard to keep up, many come to believe that the world is beyond their understanding" (4). Laws may be altered, court decisions may be handed down, officials may be voted in and out of office, but authentic and long-lasting change is concretized when the majority of people within a society support a common cause. In this sense, *Mise au jeu* aspires to play a key role and the process becomes a political act. The exercise of freedom demands the preferment of free expression and social equity implies fair and equal access to livelihood, education, and resources. As a consequence, power becomes a collective act at which point opportunity and responsibility of participation in the political and cultural life of the community must be shared equally. I will describe in this chapter what I have learned regarding *Mise au jeu*'s strategy for involving community members in their project management processes, their artistic influences and choices, and their dedication to use theatre as a catalyst for social change.

Community Involvement

As demonstrated in the example of *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal, Mise au jeu* is capable of coping with a wide range of social contexts. This includes an understanding of 'community' that is comprised of people within a shared geographical location, groups sharing a sense of historical and cultural continuity, or people who are dedicated to a particular belief or religion. By involving community members within its process, *Mise au jeu* provides a democratic practice where community members can discover and express their needs and offer possible solutions. As a way of sharing their power with the community members, *Mise au jeu* tries to involve its participants in the early stages of the process. During the onset of *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal*, they met with community organizers and youth in person, they took the time to listen to the participants and establish a genuine relationship. *Mise au jeu* enables community members to participate by involving them in most decision making processes regarding the direction of the project. They also extend the possibility of mounting concrete action plans. Margaret Libby, Maureen Sedonaen and Steven Bliss emphasizes:

> We believe that youth have the right to participate in the decision making that affects their lives not only because it provides a key developmental process, but also because the systems in place to address their needs will be better positioned to achieve positive youth outcomes when they have integrated young people into their planning and decision-making process. (14)

As suggestions of possible ways that youth's participation could have been increased are their involvement in the preliminary project committee, during the writing of the grants and discussion with funders representatives, in the evaluation committee from the very beginning, during the elaboration of the strategies or with the mobilization committee.

The *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse* offered a good example of this process in the compilation of their community forum. The involvement of youth was omnipresent throughout the elaboration of the project, including among the organizing committees, as animators and participants during the day of the event. They also evaluated the information collected during the day and decided to hire *Mise au jeu* to guide them in an artistic project for community members to share their stories and their ideas about the topic: *Acquis de Droit!* This process is based on the principle that people are experts of their own circumstances and have the capacities to exercise their democratic rights to do something to improve their own community.

In hiring the company *Coopérative de travail Interface* to conduct interviews, develop questionnaires, gather information, and compile and analyze the data, *Mise au jeu* established a process through which community members can evaluate the project *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal*. This resource yielded insightful ideas and adaptations to the process and allowed for adjustments to be made to adapt to the participants and their social environment. It also illustrates the need to be flexible and adaptable to accommodate the various communities they worked with. *Mise au jeu* adapted their process to be inline with each of the sixteen neighbourhoods they worked with, adjusting to the social circumstances in which the project took place.

An important lesson I took from this is in the act of food sharing that in itself plays a substantial role in building relationships with the participants. In this manner, *Mise au jeu* forges an opportunity to fraternize in an informal way with the participants, permitting

relationships to evolve in another context; one that is accommodating and more comfortable for many. During *Acquis de Droit!* it was particularly clear that celebration and sharing food have always been known as forms of reciprocal altruism and provide an excellent setting to meet and converse with other community members. These moments offer a place to express, discuss, agree and disagree with more ease and simplicity. Luc explains: "*Tu ne réunis pas du monde sans nourrir. Entre autre les ados, mais n'importe qui dans le fond… Toujours trouver le plaisir dans la rencontre et la bouffe (…)*" (Personal Interview). *Mise au jeu*'s flexibility towards community members' personal and collective situations also constitutes one of their strengths.

Artistic choices

Mise au jeu uses theatre in order to challenge some of society's deepest assumptions... such as the boundaries between self and other, 'artist' and 'conformist', present and past, male and female, young and old, black and white, etc. *Mise au jeu* builds upon the power of artistic creation and expression to spark new ideas and elicit new actions for both the participants of the creative process during the workshop and those who witness its result in the audience. *Mise au jeu* can compel critical thinking, inspire individuals to work together to obtain their objectives, alleviate their frustrations, and enhance compassion towards others.

Being present at *Mise au jeu*'s rehearsals for *Acquis de Droit!* was particularly insightful and allowed me to witness first-hand the process they use with the participants.

Most of the participating members had been in the group that wrote the script for the play in collaboration with *Mise au jeu*. Together they built and rehearsed the characters and carefully formulated a scenario they felt best represented the stories of the community members and the police officers. When I began to attend their workshops, they were rehearsing their parts and helping new members get accustomed to the characters and storyline. Throughout my stay I witnessed many of the decisions the youth had to make regarding the project. In addition to these logistical decisions, they rehearsed and deepened their acting skills while dealing with the dynamics of including new members. By sharing personal stories using theatre techniques such as image theatre, improvisation exercises, forum theatre and other forms of games, *Mise au jeu* assists the participants in developing their theatrical and creative vocabulary.

Mise au jeu offers a process of individual expression that leads to the elaboration of a group's identity. It develops the skills, community spirit, and artistic sensibilities of those who participate; it contributes to the social improvement of the community by helping to define the concerns and desires of its citizens. The creative expressions of the individuals require the use of an artistic vocabulary that is distinguishable and recognizable by the community. By basing the script of *Acquis de Droit!* on the stories collected from community members in alliance with their own stories, the participants elaborated a play that was representative of the situation from both groups' perspectives. Professional and trained actors working with *Mise au jeu* to endeavour to raise an issue, then allocate an occasion for more people to tell their stories. When a show is done and applause is

shared, there is something communicated to the actors and also to the audience. An effort

has been made with the objective of changing something, regardless of the magnitude,

perhaps something we will never know about. Luc Gaudet gives this example:

> (…) *il y avait les gens du quartier qui avait toujours des problèmes avec la police*
> *ils ne se sentaient pas outillés, armés pour parler avec les agents. Le soir on a*
> *présenté la pièce. Après la représentation ce soir-là un agent de police a interpellé*
> *un des jeunes présent à la rencontre. Il nous a dit que c'était la première fois qu'il*
> *se sentait en position d'égal à égal avec un policier. C'est comme si la pièce*
> *l'habitait avec tous les débats qui ont eu lieu au cours de la pièce, il a pu rester*
> *calme et discuter convenablement, sans avoir peur de la police. (…) Donc ça c'est*
> *des résultats directs qu'on ne peut pas comptabiliser et on ne peut pas, mais c'est*
> *des choses qui vont habiter ces jeunes-là pendant une bonne partie de leur vie*
> (Personal Interview)

Acting skills embody listening, compassion and confronting your fears. Such a

demonstration of courage can be cathartic for the members of the audience. In addition,

all the work required on behalf of the actors can be profoundly transforming. *Mise au jeu*

demonstrates these transformational capacities in their workshops, where members of the

group have to improvise, explore the different sides of a situation, agree on the objective

of the play, the desire and intention of each character, and on the relevance of their own

truth while honouring the stories of the community members.

   Mise au jeu holds a strong belief that participating members' creative and artistic

capacities are a community asset and are treated as such, offering them confidence and

respect which is in turn is transmitted through to the audience. Alerte explains:

> *Je crois que la force qu'ils ont c'est qu'ils arrivent à faire confiance et ils croient*
> *au potentiel des gens, des jeunes et ils croient à leurs histoires, ils fonctionnent*
> *avec leur rythme. Ils respectent le rythme des gens, ils s'adaptent beaucoup même*
> *je dirais, même complètement. Tu sens que oui, la pièce est là, mais il la donne*
> *toujours aux jeunes. C'est votre histoire, c'est votre pièce. Même s'ils ont*

> *participé, toutes les techniques c'est eux autres qui l'ont fait. C'est des*
> *intervenants, ils interviennent d'une autre façon, mais c'est des intervenants.*
> (Personal Interview)

The telling and listening of personal stories breaches the private and public divides and brings to light hidden issues that need to be addressed. The fuel that is produced from this undertaking can be used by community workers to pursue the fight and direct the demands toward the proper authorities.

Social Impact

I consider the development of critical thinking to be an important element of *Mise au jeu*'s work. Aligned with the objectives of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal, *Mise au jeu* aims to support the development of the participants' level of confidence and critical sense, encouraging them to shed a critical eye on their society and bolsters their power to act as agents of change. Fostering this trust has a great potential of enhancing the energy required to commit to an action that is a step closer in the betterment of their community and society.

For Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal, as well as for Acquis de Droit! Mise au jeu organizes meetings with community members, organizers, and local authorities, constantly attempting to bridge the gap between the two sides and build a platform where community members can voice their concerns directly. It also offers a creative opportunity for groups of people to share their ideas and possible solutions to the raised issues. Mise au jeu, however does not possess the power or the resources to pursue

pressure on these institutions to insure that action is taken at the appropriate level. This emphasizes the importance of building a network and becoming allies with other groups becomes primordial. Mise au jeu's work with Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse is a good example of a strategic alliance. From the recommendations of Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal, the group Acquis de Droit! was formed and the writing and performing of the play was brought to fruition. They have now also made alliances with other organizations such as *Centre de recherche de Montréal sur les inégalités sociales et les discriminations* (CREMIS). The participants gain greatly from such alliances. Alerte explains:

> (…) *la pédagogie des opprimés, ça c'est le résultat. C'est donner la parole à des opprimés, à des gens qui étaient victimes et en leur donnant la parole et tout d'un coup ils deviennent des acteurs. Et acteurs dans les deux sens. Et maintenant ces acteurs réussissent à démontrer leur propre vécu, mais en leur partageant à travers une scène avec un groupe d'individus et tout d'un coup ils constatent qu'ils ne sont plus seuls à vivre cette situation-là et que d'autre gens sont en train de vivre la même situation et ces personnes essayent de trouver des solutions. Mais c'est ce qu'on vit dans ce projet et essayent de trouver des solutions ensemble. C'est quelque chose d'extraordinaire.* (Personal Interview)

Mise au jeu finds itself in both the categories of community development and social action. One of their main objectives is to foster a sense of cohesion and collaboration amongst community members. During the creation of *Acquis de Droit!,* they strived to build strong bonds amongst the members of the group so they could come together in the creation of the play. Support and solidarity is required to insure the solidity of the group. However, their objectives are also to partake in the momentum created by the presentation of the play to support the group in their endeavour to change the attitude of police officers.

Mise au jeu finds itself short of energy and resources when it comes to the implementation of long-term strategies. *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal* is a good example of this shortage. Even though they created the opportunity for community members to address their concerns with local authorities directly, they invited other community organizations to take on the challenge of bringing about the proposed social changes within the different neighbourhoods.

The creation of relationships with other community organizations such as *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse*, allow for these recommendations to be taken over by organizations that do possess the resources to support the community members' causes for a longer period of time. The alliance between community organizations and community artists are the key for community members to take advantage of what both professions can offer. *Mise au jeu* cannot achieve all this, but I believe that they share such similar principles and values that it would be a great asset to include art into community organizers' pallet of strategies. Fritjof Capra argues in the foreword to David Diamond's book: "As our global economic system increases social inequality, accelerates environmental destruction, and threatens local communities around the world, creativity and potential for change has become a critical task" (18). *Mise au jeu* have proven that going through creative and artistic processes allows a community to practice democracy and envision a better world. It cannot, in itself, achieve social change, but it can be a powerful ally.

I gained a lot of respect for *Mise au jeu* workers who are embracing the values of

equality, solidarity, with respect and openness in their every-day practice. It takes courage and humility to engage in a learning process with every group they work with. I have learned that it is possible to offer an experience of a more democratic fashion and encourage community members to exercise their power as concerned citizens. In addressing community members as experts of their own reality, *Mise au jeu* allows them a favourable arena to thoroughly formulate solutions and address social inequalities. I have also come to understand the value of being adaptable to social and cultural circumstances and trusting in the community members' capacities. This trust can be established through the sharing of food and through the basis of artistic creativity. Art is a fabulous medium to establish such trust and to deepen relationships. As *Mise au jeu* begins with participants' stories and using theatre to share these stories for the improvement of one's community is a powerful act. It is a first step leading toward an objective the participants have they themselves conceived. Power resides in the strength of collectivity.

The cardinal quality needed to work successfully in this field is a profound love for people and a desire to help others free themselves from oppression and social injustice. This is in alignment with Freire's belief, he writes: "Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people" (89). This love for people is what will fuel the artist and the organizer to pursue his or her objectives in spite of the many pitfalls, roadblocks, inconveniences and stresses that come with the territory.

The lesson I keep from this research is the fundamental importance of genuine human

contact and the significance of meeting face-to-face in order to share, discuss and express one's concerns and opinions. Whether it is during workshops or shows, it is important that Popular Theatre practitioners establish a welcoming atmosphere to fully share in this art. During these meetings, participants get to see each other, listen to one another, discuss, and share food and ideas. It is through these multi-sensorial experiences that participants deepen their understanding of themselves and of others. It is during these moments that new ideas and new actions are initiated; ideas and actions that may lead to changing our attitudes and our perspectives of community.

As community organizers, artists and educators, the decision to share our power in a compassionate and loving fashion with the people we work with is paramount. This is not an easy task. Popular Theatre requires a certain level of flexibility, but respecting and trusting in people's capacities to learn, to engage and to commit to changing something in their environment can produce a true collective result. My hope is that this reflexion will empower professionals of all fields to share their talents with others, for the betterment of our communities.

…And that's food for thought.

Work Cited

Alinsky, Saul David. *Rules for Radicals: a Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals.*
    1989 ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1971. Print.

Alerte. Personal Interview. 12 mars 2010.

Benhabib, Seyla. *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in*
    Contemporary Ethics. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Bernard, Leonel, and Christopher McAll. "La Mauvaise Conseillère." *Revue du*
    CREMIS: La Souffrance Psychique et les Lieux du Social 3.1 (Hiver 2010): 7-
    14. Print.

Blackstone, Mary, Lisa Given, Joseph Lévy, Michelle McGinn, Patrick O'Neil, Ted
    Palys and Will van den Hoonaard. *Research Involving Creative Practices: A*
    Chapter for Inclusion in the TCPS. Social Sciences and Humanities Research
    Ethics Special Working Committee (SSHWC). Montréal: Interagency Advisory
    Panel on Research Ethics, February 2008. Print.

Boal, Augusto. *Theatre of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal
    McBride. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985. Print.

---. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.

---. "Legislative Theatre." *International Theatre of the Oppressed*
    Organization. Theatre of the Oppressed, 2004. Web. 27 Feb. 2011.
    http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/en/index.php?nodeID=81

---. "Theatre of the Oppressed." *International Theatre of the Oppressed*
    Organization. Theatre of the Oppressed, 2004. Web. 10 March 2011.
    http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/en/index.php?nodeID=3

Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse. "BCJ-Accueil." *Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse.*
    Bureau de Consultation Jeunesse, n.d. Web. 27 February 2011.
    http://www.bcj14-25.org/

---. *Rapport d'activités 2008-2009*. 18 June 2009. TS. Montréal.

Capra, Fritjof. Foreword. *Theatre for Living: The Art and Science of Community-Based Dialogue.* By David Diamond. Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2007. Print.

Conrad, Diane. "Exploring Risky Youth Experiences: Popular Theatre as a Participatory, Performative Research Method." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 3.1. 2004. Web. 27 Feb, 2011. http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_1/html/conrad.html.

Coopérative de travail Interface. *2001 du Projet Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal: Une expérience créative d'expression démocratique pour la jeunesse montréalaise.* August 2001. TS. Montréal.

---. *Rapport d'évaluation du Projet Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal: Une expérience créative d'expression démocratique pour la jeunesse montréalaise.* May 2002. TS. Montréal.

---. *Rapport d'évaluation du Projet Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal – Phase 2: Une expérience créative d'expression démocratique pour la jeunesse montréalaise.* September 2004. TS. Montréal.

Diamond, David. *Theatre for Living: The Art and Science of Community Based Dialogue.* Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2007. Print.

Diamond, Elin. "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory: Towards a Gestic Feminist Criticism." *TDR* 32.1 (1988): 82-94. Print.

DeFilippis, James, Robert Fisher, and Eric Shragge, "Neither Romance Nor Regulation: A Re-Evaluation of Community." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research.* (September 2006): 673-689. Print.

Epskamp, Kees. *Learning by Performing Arts: From Indigenous to Endogenous Cultural Development.* The Hague: CESO, 1992. Print.

---. *Theatre for Development*. London: Zed Books, 2006. Print.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2006. Print.

Fisher, Robert, Fred Brooks, and Daniel Russell, ""Don't be a Blockhead" ACORN, Protest Tactics and Refund Anticipation Loans." *Urban Affairs Review* 42.4 (March 2007): 553-582. Print.

Fox, Jonathan. *Acts of Service: Spontaneity, Commitment, Tradition in the Nonscripted Theatre*. New Paltz: Tusitala Publishing, 1986. Print.

Gaudet, Luc. "Apprendre à se défendre sur scène par le jeu? Affirmatif!" *Info FCDP Fondation Canadienne des Droits de la Personne* 2.2 (Winter 2002): 1-2. Print.

---. Personal Interview. 8 February 2010.

Graham, Catherine. "Dramaturgy and Community-Building in Canadian Popular Theatre; English Canadian, Québécois, and Native Approaches.*"* Diss. McGill University, 1996. Print.

Heathcote, Dorothy. "Drama as a Process for Change." *The Applied Theatre Reader.* Ed. Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston. New York: Routledge, 2009. 200-206. Print.

Katherine. Personal Interview. 4 June 2010.

Kershaw, Baz. *The politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention.* New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Leavy, Patricia. *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice.* New York: The Guildford Press, 2009. Print.

L'équipe *:*
Parc-Extension. September 2002. TS. Montréal.

---. *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal: Petite Patrie.* January 2002. TS. Montréal.

---. *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal: Saint-Michel.* September 2002. TS. Montréal.

---. *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal: Sud-Ouest.* September 2002. TS. Montréal.

---. *Jeunesse enJEUX Montréal: Synthèse des demandes, propositions et engagements.* November 2002. TS. Montréal.

---. *"*Le Feu sacré–Synopsis." *L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu.* Mise au jeu, n.d. Web. 27 February 2011. http://miseaujeu.org/francais/theatre_legislatif.html

---. *"*Mise au jeu: Équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative." *L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu.* Mise au jeu, n.d. Web. 27 February 2011. http://miseaujeu.org/francais/qui_sommes_nous.html

---.*"Mise au jeu: Recherches participative."* *L'équipe d'intervention théâtrale participative Mise au jeu.* Mise au jeu, n.d. Web. 27 February 2011. http://miseaujeu.org/francais/recherches_participatives.html

Libby, Margaret, Maureen Sedonaen, and Steven Bliss. "The Mystery of Youth Leadership Development: The Path to Just Communities" *New Directions for Youth Development* 109 (Spring 2006): 13-25. Print.

Little, Edward. "Towards a Poetics of Popular Theatre: Directing and Authorship in Community-Based Work." *Collective Creation, Collaboration and Devising.* Ed. B. Barton. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2008. 152-166. Print.

Martineau, Maureen, and Danielle Lepage. "Le théâtre d'intervention au Québec, une pratique plurielle et des défis." *Conseil québécois du théâtre.* Sous-comité reconnaissance du comité permanent en théâtre d'intervention, n.d. Web. 27 February 2011. *www.cqt.ca/importation/idoc_70/files/141/141.pdf*

McConachie. Bruce. "Approaching the 'Structure of Feeling' in Grassroots Theater." *Performing Democracy: International Perspectives on Urban Community-Based Performance.* Ed. Susan C. Haedicke and Tobin Nellhaus. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004. 29-57. Print.

Minkler, Meredith, and Nina Wallerstein. "Improving Health through Community Organization and Community Building: A Health Education Perspective." *Community Organizing and Community Building for Health*. Ed. Meredith Minkler. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999. 30-52. Print.

Mighton, John. *The End of Ignorance: Multiplying Our Human Potential*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2007. Print.

Myles, Brian. "Les Noirs dans l'oeil de la police." *Le Devoir* 19 March 2010: A1+. Print.

Padgett, Deborah K. *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research*. 2nd ed. New York: Sage Publication, 2008. Print.

Prentki, Tim. "Applied Theatre in a Global Village." *The Applied Theatre Reader.* New York: Routledge, 2008. 181-183. Print.

---. "Introduction to Intervention." *The Applied Theatre Reader.* New York:

Routledge, 2008. 181-183. Print.

---, and Jan Selman. *Popular Theatre in Political Culture: Britain and Canada in Focus.* Portland, OR: Intellect Books, 2000. Print.

---, and Sheila Preston. "Applied Theatre: An Introduction." *The Applied Theatre Reader.* New York: Routledge, 2008. 9-15. Print.

Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene S. Rubin. *Community Organizing and Community Development.* 2nd ed. New York, NY: MacMillan, 1992. Print.

Shragge, Eric. *Activism and Social Change: Lessons for Community and Local Organizing.* Toronto: Broadview Press, 2003. Print.

Staples, Lee. *Roots to Power: A Manual for Grassroots Organizing*. Santa Barbara, Ca: Praeger, 2004. *Print.*

Stuart-Fisher, Amanda. "The Playwright in Residence: A Community's Storyteller." *The Drama Review* 48.3 (Fall 2004): 135-148. Print.

Théâtre Parminou. "About us." *Théâtre Parminou.* Théâtre Parminou, 2007. Web. 27 February 2011 http://www.parminou.com/en/history.php

Walkerdine, Valerie, Helen Lucey and June Melody. "Subjectivity and Qualitative Method." *Qualitative Research in Action*. Ed. Tim May. London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2003. 179-196. Print.

Yin, Robert K. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. 2009. Print.

Appendices

Institutional Consent Form

Department of Applied Human Sciences - Student Research or Field Projects with Human Subjects Institutional Representative Consent

I, Luc Gaudet, as a representative of Mise au jeu, agree to participate in the project being conducted by Joliane Allaire from Concordia University supervised by Eric Shragge (514 848-2424 ext. 2576, ericsh@alcor.concordia.ca). I understand that the purpose of the project is to do a case study of Mise au jeu. I understand that Joliane Allaire is collecting information for a Master thesis in the Special Individualized Program at Concordia University on popular theatre and community development.

The benefits of this research include the opportunity to pause and reflect on the work of Mise au jeu. There is also the possibility of furthering the recognition of Mise au jeu through the potential publication of the thesis. I understand that participating in this research will involve the collection and analysis of documents available publicly as well as relevant documents which will be provided to the researcher by me.

I understand that the project involves interviews with members of the company and community organizers who have participated in previous projects carried out by Mise au jeu. All interviewees will be required to sign a personal consent form confirming their will to participate in the case study. These interviews will span for the duration of approximately one hour and a follow up interview may take place.

For the purpose of analysis, I understand that the interviews will be audio recorded. These audio tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet at Joliane Allaire's house. The audio recording will be kept until February 1st, 2011 at which point they will be destroyed.

This project will entail that the researcher be involved as an observer of Mise au jeu logistical and artistic process during the initial stages of the project Mobilijeune. The following themes will be explored during this research:

What are Mise au jeu's strategies to create social change; what were the artistic and aesthetic choices made during the process and how was the community involved throughout the course of the project?

Any personal notes on the various projects that the researcher may choose to create will be kept in a locked cabinet and will be shredded on the 1st of February 2011. This information will be only discussed with researcher's Master thesis committee members.

I understand that there are no further purposes of the project about which I have not been informed.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, so is the participation of members of Mise au jeu or of community organizers.

I understand that I will be given the opportunity to review the final draft and I will have the right to decide whether I want Mise au jeu to be named in the report. I understand that I may withdraw from this research at any time without negative consequences or explanation.

If at any time I have questions about my organization's rights as a research project participant, I will contact Diane Demers, Acting Chair of the AHSC Ethics Committee demers@elyslumd.com (514 848-2424 ext 2268).

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
ON BEHALF OF _____, I APPROVE THE PROJECT
UNDER THE CONDITIONS DESCRIBED ABOVE.
NAME: (please print) _____
SIGNATURE: _____

WITNESS NAME (please print) _____
WITNESS SIGNATURE: _____DATE: _____

Individual Consent Form

Department of Applied Human Sciences Student Research or Field Projects with Human Subjects
(for Individual Participant Consent)

I, _____ *[participant],* agree to participate in the research project being conducted by Joliane Allaire, Master student from Concordia University supervised by Eric Shragge (514 848-2424 ext. 2576, ericsh@alcor.concordia.ca).

I understand that the purpose of the project is to study my experience in working along with Mise au jeu, enabling the researcher to compile a case study of the organization. I understand that Joliane Allaire is collecting information for her Master thesis in the Special Individualized Program at Concordia University on popular theatre and community development.

The benefits include the recognition of my involvement with Mise au jeu and provide an opportunity to pause and reflect on my work with the company. I understand that my involvement entails that I will undergo an interview process that will span for the duration of approximately one hour and that a follow up interview may take place.

For the purpose of analysis, I understand that the interviews will be audio recorded. During the course of the interview, I am free to stop the recording at any time or refuse to answer any questions. These audio tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet at Joliane Allaire's house. The audio recording will be kept until February 1st, 2011 at which point they will be destroyed.

I understand that there are no further purposes of the project about which I have not been informed.

I understand that participation is voluntary and I have been informed that I may withdraw at any time without explanation or negative consequences. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any question that I feel invades my privacy. I understand the information will be only discussed with researcher's Master thesis committee members.

I understand that I will be provided with the transcript of my interview thereafter I will have the opportunity to review the data and I will have the right to decide what should not be used in the thesis or what I would like to clarify or change. I understand that only the researcher will know my name, a pseudonym will be used to protect my identity.

I understand that my name will not be revealed in any reports or presentations unless I approve of it.

If at any time I have questions about my rights as a research or intervention project participant, I will contact Diane Demers, interim chair of the AHSC Ethics Committee, demers@elysiumD.com (514-848-2424 ex. 2268).

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I, _____, AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROJECT UNDER THE CONDITIONS DESCRIBED ABOVE.

NAME: (please print) _____
SIGNATURE: _____
WITNESS' NAME: (please print) _____
WITNESS' SIGNATURE: _____
DATE: _____

Interview Guides

Interview questions to members of Mise au jeu who participated in the relevant projects:

General Questions
1. How did Mise au jeu get involved with the project?
2. What are the positive and negative aspects of your experience?
3. What stands out the most for you from this experience?

Community Participation
1. What was your relationship with the community participants?
2. What would you expect community members to take from this experience?
3. How could the community participants express his or her opinion, in support or critiquing Mise au jeu's choice or way of functioning?
4. What was your assessment of the project's goals and were they achieved?

Aesthetic
1. What creative processes did Mise au jeu facilitate with the community participants?
2. What inspired your artistic direction throughout the project?
3. Who could influence the artistic and aesthetic choices during the process?

Interview questions to community members (community organizers):

1. How did you get involved with the project [name of the project] and with Mise au jeu?
2. How would you describe your experience of participating in this project?
3. What were the positive and negative aspects of your experience?
4. How would you describe your relationship with the members of Mise au jeu?
5. What stands out the most for you from this experience?