

Interviewers

Laura McNair

Bertrand Manzano

Carole Lataste

Myriam Camara

Valeria Bassi

Grazina Jonusaite

Corinna Stockhausen

Migrant Women Project

May 2014



What is the Migrant Women Project? What did we learn about it?

In 2010, the Association created a regional network called “[Rete Migrant Women](#)” composed of public institutions and organisations involved in immigration policies. Migrant Women accomplished many projects funded by European, national, regional and local funds. All the projects promote the empowerment of foreigners, women in particular, and their children (Learn or improve Italian Language, enhance the awareness of governing their own life). The projects involve in particular women of first migrant generation from North and Central Africa, India and East-Europe and their children (second generation) especially inside Schools. The Migrant Women Project uses the language of the Theatre and Arts in general to ease the intercultural relations and to raise awareness of diversity as a wealth for everyone, everywhere.



“The workshop uses theatre with a goal of creating social cohesion and integration”

Bertrand Manzano, Social Worker and participant

Interviewing the Migrant Women Participants

Finding out more about them and the differences this project made to their lives.

During the Italian seminar in April/May 2014, seven participants from across the partnership attended a workshop of Migrant Women.

The workshop was initiated to stimulate the social and cultural awareness, and enhance dialogue with the local community.

INTERVIEW:

The first meeting was informal, at a cafe across from the theatre. As the women started to arrive they introduced themselves immediately, asking us our names and where we are from etc. The presence of two of their children encouraged dialogue between the groups and there was a lot of laughter and questions as we made our way into the theatre to begin the workshop. We gathered on the stage of the small theatre in a circle and Valeria introduced the

"icebreaker" exercise. We partnered off and drew the portrait of the other person, switched papers and then filled in our personal likes, dislikes and future vision. Each person then presented to the group and this opened up a dialogue, everyone felt more at ease, and questions were flying around.

Valeria: You can use this exercise to get to know each other, when we try to teach languages, because its a simple system to represent yourself in the basic information, using the formal construction for Italian language, I am, I like, I don't like, I want to. It's a way to observe another and understand the other. Using pictures, if you draw something you are more likely to remember it. Like creating a sketchbook, not to get everything in words but to have an expression of the other person. You create a storyboard. This helps the process of learning, combining a visual aspect.



Why Participate?

What are the benefits?

This participation was rewarding because it offers concrete tools for animation, how to meet, present to each other, to communicate when there are difficulties with difference in culture and language.

They tried to create a breastfeeding group for mothers to integrate Italian natives and migrate women as they share the same roles in society. It was a tool to show that they share a common ground.

Valeria, the workshop leader puts emphasis on the fact that the workshop is for the women. Their needs come first. Valeria proposes an idea, and the women decide what to do. Everything they do is an agreement. It is important that Valeria does not impose her own creative agenda on them. The first goal of these workshops is to socialise. To empower the women, by teaching them Italian so they can communicate with others and with the outside world, offices and school. Valeria says, "To learn a language is like to enter into a role of theatre, you need to change your way of thinking.

At the end of the workshop we had a chance to ask a few questions. Some of these were lost in translation and not answered however, the conversation that grew from the first few questions was very interesting.

(continued)

“To learn an new language is like to enter into a role of theatre. You need to change your way of thinking”

Valeria Bassi

Who was it that introduced the workshops to you?

The women came to the organisation to learn Italian; they did not know it was a theatre group. They would not have attended if they had known. They went because another woman from the project introduced it to them. Valeria has had an integral role in the success of the program, many of the women said they would not have attended if it were not for her.

Has it all been quite simple to organise?

There have been some difficulties with the program with logistics and funding, it was difficult to find a suitable space and funds were low. Transport was an issue as there is no public transport system for the women to use. Valeria usually drives them. There were issues with childcare. Occasionally one of the women helps out but she is not always available. They all work together to make it possible.

Why are there no men?

We are living in a social space where migrant women don't have a space to meet each other. There are cultures where the presence of a male in a females group is not allowed. So a male presence would limit what they could do and mean that some women would not be able to participate.

Has this workshop helped with your confidence?

The overall confidence of the women has increased incredibly, they feel it in themselves, but feel it most when interacting with other women and people. Zineb, originally from Morocco said " It is better because we are able to ask questions and explain things, our thoughts and feelings"

"It's better because we are able to ask questions, explain things, our thoughts and feelings"

Zineb, From Morocco

The experience was very uplifting, there was so much positivity and laughter from all participants, a few have since made contact on social networking sites and given invitations for dinner. It was so inspiring to witness the use of theatre with a goal of creating social cohesion and integration.

Thanks to the team of [Ilcantinonearte Teatri](#) for allowing us to meet the Migrant Women and discuss this project with them.

Interview document by Laura McNair, Capture Arts

