APPLIED THEATRE AND DRUGS: COMMUNITY, CREATIVITY AND HOPE

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

2011

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SCHOOL OF ARTS, HISTORIES AND CULTURES / Drama
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<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Alcoholic Anonymous</td>
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<td>ADS</td>
<td>Addiction Dependency Solutions</td>
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<td>APC</td>
<td>Anne Peaker Centre for Arts in Criminal Justice System</td>
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<td>BI</td>
<td>Breaking Image Theatre Company</td>
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<td>DASH</td>
<td>Drug and Sexual Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAEPT</td>
<td>Drug and Alcohol Education and Prevention Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMCDDA</td>
<td>European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPIPSY</td>
<td>University Mental Health Research Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDADA</td>
<td>International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking</td>
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<td>KETHEA</td>
<td>Therapy Centre for Dependent Individuals</td>
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<td>NTA</td>
<td>National Treatment Agency</td>
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<td>PaR</td>
<td>Practice as Research</td>
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<td>TC</td>
<td>Therapeutic Community</td>
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<td>TO</td>
<td>Theatre of the Oppressed</td>
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<td>TiE</td>
<td>Theatre in Education</td>
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<td>TiPP</td>
<td>Theatre in Prison and Probation</td>
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The University of Manchester  
Zoi Zontou  
PhD in Drama  
APPLIED THEATRE AND DRUGS: COMMUNITY, CREATIVITY AND HOPE  
April 2011

Abstract

This thesis presents a spectrum of different practices, with many different ways of thinking about the application of theatre with problem drug users. It starts from the question of how applied theatre might assist problem drug users to socially reintegrate, and moves on to ask further questions with regard to its potential to promote personal change and contribute to the participants’ social acceptance. The two research questions that have driven my enquiry are: to what degree can participation in applied theatre assist problem drug users towards their social reintegration? And: how does the implementation of applied theatre with this specific client group inform us about its potential to promote personal change?

By using evidence from theatre projects carried out in England and Greece, this thesis attempts to illustrate how different forms of theatre can be implemented with the aim of supporting the individual’s journey to recovery and reintegration. This thesis is divided in three thematic units: community; creativity; and hope. Each unit explores the potentially powerful relationship between the dramatisation of stories of recovery and their presentation to a public audience. By positioning the outcomes of the research in relation to the debates around current drug policies and applied theatre's potential to act as a transformative agent, this thesis sets out to explore factors by which participation in applied theatre has the potential to have an impact on problem drug users by operating as an ‘alternative substance’.

In particular, it seeks to examine the possibility of applied theatre operating as an alternative form of ‘escapism’ from the participants' current community (community of exclusion), thus functioning as a motivational force towards their social reintegration. It will suggest that applied theatre has the power to promote personal change by regenerating the individuals’ social and creative components and by awakening their desire for affiliation and belonging.
Declaration

I declare that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to all the men and women who took part in the theatre-based projects and contributed with their enthusiasm, creativity and positivity. This thesis would not have been possible without their commitment. I am grateful to the directors of the organisations ADS in Oldham, DASH in Hulme, En Drasi KETHEA and 18 ANO for their permission to undertake my research. In particular, thank you to Nikki Papadopoulou for her assistance with the project and the great friendship which followed it, Steve and Wayne (as I promised!), Becki Whitney, Nikoletta Spyropoulou and Paraskeva Savva. A big thank you to Panagioti Zaganiari, Sofia Petropoulou and Evi Karageorgou for permitting me to attend the 18 ANO’s rehearsals. A final thanks to Richard Taylor from Breaking Image and the members of 18 Beaufort.

Sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor James Thompson for his advice, encouragement and for being a role model and source of inspiration. I am thankful also to Toby Seddon and Anthony Jackson for providing me with all the information and references required during the entire PhD process. Additionally, I am grateful to Kate McCoy and Janine Waters for their advice and to Maria Adamantidi and Georgia Kafantari for translating material from Greek to English. In the Martin Harris Centre, a special thank you goes to Katharine Low, Esperanza Rodriguez and Pete Deakin for giving hope and supporting me throughout the different stages of writing up. Finally, I owe my deepest gratitude to my parents Timotheos and Nina, my brother Apostolis and my grandparents for their love, patience and support. Thank you to Ioannis Leftakis and Dionisis Pomonis for encouraging me to carry out this research in the first place. A final thank you goes to my friends in Athens, Zakynthos and Manchester: Ioanna, Antonis, Suzy, Dionisis, Athina, Denia, Magdalini, Anestis, Grigoris, Fiona, Elisavet, Stavros, Luca, Rocio, Pablo, Neil, Natasha and Roop: you have been brilliant!
Rainbow

I found the edge of the labyrinth,
I turn my silent breath into voice,
The tear comes out of my breasts,
The joy overflows from the funnel of my heart.

Mirrors of my soul are your glances,
Your lives pieces of my life,
I felt in your hearts the big embrace,
My parked wagons were turned into horses.

They told me I had to be strong,
I had to protect, care and love.
But I didn’t know it should be me
Who determines my loneliness.

Loneliness was my choice,
I felt it as I sank into the hours,
As I looked for forgotten homelands in other countries
And my family in an unknown cuddle.

And when I got tired of searching and the magic was gone,
Doubt embraced me and wanted to teach me
That all I believed and embraced until then
Had only brought me loneliness, pain, escape.

I always thought I could walk on my own.
I was running barefoot on the thorns,
Which made my soul bleed and fill with dregs
I was plunging my feet in the marsh,
I was moving against the stream.

My dreams were rusty wagons,
The moments passed and turned into years.
I tied my feelings with knots,
Within my thoughts I stayed immovable.
I surrendered my childhood innocence
To oblivion with its definitiveness

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1 This poem was written by Maria (not her real name), a Greek recovering user who participated in one of this thesis’s theatre projects. The project was conducted in May and June 2008 in the therapeutic community En Drasi in the Koridallos Female Prison in Athens, Greece. Maria wrote the poem as a response to a request for written comments on her overall experience participating in the project.
Now I look people in the eyes
I haven’t told them but I loved them,
I think I was hiding in times and places
Invisible, colourless and odourless I was watching them.

Again I find the meaning in words,
Forgotten values shine in the light,
The magnetism of habits fades away
I find answers in whys and hows
I look up high and I walk
To find the rainbow with you
I want to determine my life
For I know where I have hidden the treasure.

(Maria 2008, translated in English by Georgia Kafantari)
INTRODUCTION

This thesis proposes that applied theatre has the potential to act as an ‘alternative substance’ as well as a vehicle to generate an individual’s hope for change. In other words, as Maria characteristically describes in her poem (see page 11), to encourage the individual to “look up high and walk to find the rainbow” (Maria 2008). The idea of theatre as an alternative substance has grown out of the implementation of applied theatre with people dealing with problematic drug and alcohol issues in England and Greece. The two research questions that have driven my enquiry are: to what degree can participation in applied theatre assist problem drug users towards their social reintegration? And: how does the implementation of applied theatre with this specific client group inform us about its potential to promote personal change?

In 2005-2006 I undertook a Master’s degree in Applied Theatre at the University of Manchester, where I was first introduced to theatre in prison and became engaged with the Theatre in Prison and Probation (TiPP) Centre’s activities and training courses. The TiPP Centre has a history of developing and delivering participatory arts projects within the criminal justice system and with a range of groups in the wider community. Over the years, it has delivered a series of projects in partnership with prisons and probation centres and has developed Blagg! and Pump!: two drama workshops for anger management and offending behaviour (see Thompson 1995, 1999; Hughes 2003). As part of my Master’s degree I conducted a series of drama workshops in prisons (HM Risley and HM Hindley) as well as with homeless people (Big Issue in the North), where drugs, addiction and smuggling were recurrent themes that emerged during the workshops. It was during this period that I first realised how frequently drug-related issues
were associated with the participants’ current living circumstances, issues such as criminal offences, poverty and deprivation, among others. During the improvisation of scenes in particular, the participants articulated concepts and situations which clearly illustrated how drugs had a dominant effect on their lives and had led to their imprisonment or homelessness. Moreover, the chapter *Dealing with Drugs* by McCoy and Blood (2004), as well as the interviews I conducted with Kate McCoy (a TiPP staff member at the time), inspired the further investigation of the use of applied theatre in drug services. Additionally, McCoy’s experiences and viewpoints influenced my research questions concerning the role of applied theatre, and how it might have an impact on how problem drug users should be socially reintegrated.

A small-scale research project which I completed for my MA dissertation (Zontou 2006) showed that not enough attention had been paid to the implementation of theatre with problem drug users, especially those on drug treatment programmes and who had not committed any type of offence. Even though McCoy and Blood (2004: 123) highlighted that “drug users are a unique community”, and asserted that drama and theatre work with this client group can “create new challenging interventions”, there has nonetheless been little discussion about the use of applied theatre with problem drug users exclusively. Instead, the research to date has tended to focus on the use of applied theatre with offenders and/or people at risk of offending, and appears to have framed a whole trend regarding arts in the criminal justice system. In recent years, literature has emerged that proposes methods by which the major behavioral theories such as cognitive behaviour and social learning theory can be adapted and transformed to fit in with applied theatre practice. These studies have subscribed to the belief that participation in applied theatre has the potential to effect a transformation of
both the behaviour and attitude of offenders and people at risk of offending. Therefore, theatre techniques such as character-building, role-play, image theatre and others have been implemented in order to assist the participants to develop their social skills, discover new behavioural approaches and promote personal change (Baim et. al. 2002, Balfour 2004; Hughes 2005; Thompson 1998, 1999; Williams 2003).

Additionally, web-based research on the Anne Peaker Centre for Arts in Criminal Justice System’s (APC) directory has indicated that more than thirty British theatre companies and organisations have registered as applying drama and theatre within the criminal justice system. A survey of these theatre companies’ and organisations’ mission statements has shown that a great number of them include drug and alcohol use as part of their agendas. However, these references to drugs and alcohol are, perhaps, due to the legitimate connection between problem drug consumption and the criminal justice system, and have therefore been added to the list alongside bullying, anger management, offending behaviour, sexual health and other issues. In this way, according to the above directory, problem drug users do not appear to constitute a distinct area of practice in applied theatre (with the exception of the Breaking Image theatre company, which is one of the case-studies in this thesis, and will be discussed in Chapter 4).

Although a critical analysis of the above trend is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is vital at this point to question and problematise the reasons behind this increasing interest, and the factors explaining why this area has monopolised the field of applied theatre for more than a decade. Are the reasons related to funding and thus sociopolitical factors? Are they based on the recognition, from both artists and government bodies, that theatre has the potential to benefit offenders and people at risk? Or as Thompson (1998: 11)
suggests, is it that: “the practice of theatre and drama in the criminal justice system ... has perhaps become ‘fashionable’? A better understanding of the variables influencing this increasing interest might contribute to the development of applied theatre in other fields. So far, however, many areas of practice have either been diminished or classified as subcategories, with problem drug users clearly illustrating this categorisation tendency. In addition, the use of behavioural theories as the cornerstone of the theoretical framework has dominated the field for many years, and rests on the assumption that personal change is likely to occur if we manage to challenge the participants’ behaviour. Although it seems possible that these assumptions emerged due to the fact that most studies were carried out within the criminal justice system, this study aims to underline the necessity to move on in both theoretical and practical terms, and establish new ways of approaching the individual’s potential for development and change.

To this end, this thesis addresses the absence of a substantial and unified body of research and practice on the area of applied theatre in the community of problem drug users. It aims to shed new light on these debates through a broader examination of this field, and by providing evidence of practice from the UK and Greece. It attempts to test out the hypothesis that the application of applied theatre in different communities requires a different degree of engagement and different methodologies. It intends to promote the need for applied theatre to broaden its horizons to other areas of practice, interest and knowledge. For this purpose, it became necessary to expand this research project beyond the United Kingdom. Greece was chosen on the basis of my personal cultural and educational background, and, in addition, due to the lack of research on applied theatre in Greece. The inclusion of Greece in the research was an attempt to create trajectories between the implementation of theatre in communities of drug users from
different cultural backgrounds, in order to investigate on a cross-cultural basis. Therefore, by examining the cultural background of each project and its emerging themes, the thesis aims to bring the two practices together and provide evidence of the potential of applied theatre to promote the social reintegration of problem drug users in a broader international context.

**Keywords**

*Applied Theatre*

The term applied theatre was introduced in the 1990s (Nicholson 2005a; Taylor 2003; Thompson 2003) in order to embrace a number of practices which had previously had diverse names, such as political theatre, grassroots theatre, radical theatre, social theatre, community theatre and so forth. According to Baim et al. (2002: xiv), applied theatre can be defined as: “theatre and drama applied to specific audiences and settings with particular outcomes in mind”. Additionally, the University of Manchester’s Centre for Applied Theatre Research (CATR) defines it as:

...the practice of theatre and drama in non-traditional settings. It refers to theatre practice that engages with areas of social and cultural policy such as public health, education, criminal justice, heritage site interpretation and development (CATR 2010).

In this thesis, I will use a combination of the definitions provided above (Baim et. al. Ibid.; CATR Ibid.) to approach applied theatre as the use of participatory forms of theatre, in non-traditional social and cultural contexts, with the purpose of exploring social and cultural policy issues related to a specific group of people. Hence, in my view, ‘applied’ refers to the implementation of theatre in a specific community with the intention of provoking change, which in turn might be interpreted as raising the hope
and/or desire for change. Nevertheless, it should be noted that recently the term ‘applied and social theatre’ has been used as the full term for what is widely known as ‘applied theatre’, for example in the case of the Applied and Social Theatre Working Group at the Theatre and Performance Research Association (TaPRA 2010). The word ‘social’ adds particular emphasis to theatre’s involvement in ‘social’ issues (such as discrimination and exclusion) which concern a ‘social’ group (such as a community) and with the intention of having a ‘social’ impact (such as transformation, development or resistance). As Schinina asserts:

In social theatre, the objective is to question society, with the living presence of its differences, rather than to be purified and brought back to a ‘normal’ value system or social code (Schinina 2004: 24).

In this perspective, applied and social theatre can be described as a form of theatre that involves participation and solidarity and aims to encourage the individual to discover their own potential. The ‘social’, then, further supports the scope of this thesis in using theatre to address the ‘social’ concerns of the ‘social’ group of problem drug users and promote ‘social’ inclusion. However, due to the practical constraints of this thesis I use the shorthand term ‘applied theatre’ which will refer to participatory theatre workshops that aim to promote the individual’s potential for change and development.

Moreover, it should be noted that the term applied theatre (or other relevant terms such as social theatre, community theatre, community performance and so on) as it is known in UK do not appear in the Greek drama and theatre literature with the exception of the book by Filippakis (1992) Social Theatre: Theoretical Approaches and a Practical Guide for Theatre Facilitators, which mainly addresses the history and evolution of applied theatre in UK.

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2 Applied theatre is the preferred term in UK, USA and Australia while social theatre tends to be used in Italy: see Thompson and Schecher (2004).
However, an in depth investigation has shown that theatre tendencies and approaches similar to the ideology and implementation of applied theatre, have historically existed in the 20th century Greece (Bacopoulou-Halls 1982; Grammatas 1990, 1992, 2002 2006; Mavromoustakos 2005; Myrsiades 1999; Puchner 1984, 1989, 2007). These forms of theatre practice were derived either from the traditional and customary popular theatre or were developed as a type of resistance theatre and/or political theatre which I am going to describe in the next chapter. Hence, I am going to use the term ‘applied theatre’ to refer to these practices as well as my research projects in Greece.

**Social Inclusion**

Social inclusion is a shorthand term which is used as an opposition, and perhaps an affirmative way, of referring to the phenomenon of social exclusion. Hence, while the Social Exclusion Unit, defines social exclusion as “what can happen when people or areas, suffer from a combination of linked problems as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown” (Social Exclusion Unit 2004: n.p); social inclusion comes as a positive approach in tackling those issues. Nevertheless, it is a deeply problematic term which causes much ambivalence in terms of who is been included, and how inclusivity can be measured. Yet, it supports the division between those who need to be included as opposed to the rest of the society who never had to face this division. As Levitas argues:

> [social exclusion] represents the primary significant division in society as one between an included majority and an excluded minority. This has implications for how both included and excluded groups are understood, and for the implicit model of society itself (Levitas 2005: 7).
Silver (1994: 535-536) suggests that the difficulty of defining exclusion lies in the fact that it can be interpreted differently according to each context and period, likewise it can been seen as an opportunity to serve political bias. Hence, he argues the complexity of the term can be linked with a variety of political ideologies, theoretical perspectives, and national policies (Silver Ibid.: 539). Historically, the term has been associated with political discourses and governmental attempts to formulate policies with the scope of reducing social elimination. It seems that the two dominant models which have influenced the political and social conceptualisation of the exclusion and inclusion, derive from two main traditions: the French and the Anglo-Saxon. Hence, the idea of social inclusion was first originated in France during the 1970s and was associated with the promotion of social cohesion and solidarity (Atkinson and Davoudi 2000; Levitas 2005; Silver 1999). According to this tradition, exclusion has been understood as “the breakdown of structural, cultural, and social ties which bind the individual to society” (Levitas Ibid.: 21). The French model considered the broader spectrum of factors which can lead to social marginalisation such as cultural, economic, and social variables (Athinson and Davoudi 2000; Levitas Ibid: 22).

In addition, the Anglo-Saxon model which emerged after the elections of New Labour in 1997, approached social exclusion in terms of economic inequalities and poverty. As a consequence, the concepts of inclusion and exclusion were placed under a new basis with “the development of a new political language” (Levitas 2005: 2). The discourse on social exclusion gained a prominent position in the government’s social policy agenda. The New Labour’s social policy created a silt in the way marginalised individuals and groups were perceived by putting emphasis in providing opportunities for employment, education and other economic benefits. The launch of the
Social Exclusion Unit in 1997, clearly demonstrated this shift. Despite, the Anglo- Saxon model’s emphasis on the issues of income distribution and improving the labour market it is important to acknowledge the fact that it has also provided opportunities to improve access to arts and sports. As the PAT 10 (1999: 8-9) report clearly demonstrates sport, arts and leisure were perceived as important contributors in improving social engagement and neighbourhood regeneration. Likewise in enhancing the life of deprived communities, support the inclusion of excluded individuals and preventing crime, and anti-social behaviour. If the PAT 10 report’s recommendations are taken into consideration it would suggest that the division between the French and Anglo-Saxon is not clearly defined. Amid all these actions, economic performance was prioritised over the other social and cultural dimensions of exclusion, which were still overlooked (see also the UK social inclusion policy for problem drug users in pp 65-69).

Likewise, since the early 1990s social inclusion has taken a prominent place in the EU’s social policy agenda (Atkinson et. al 2002). In the endeavour to develop common strategies for all the member states, the EU set up an investigation of the social, political and economic indicators which affect the successful integration of the marginalised groups (Athinson et. al 2002). Interestingly, the EU’s model constitutes a synthesis of the French and Anglo-Saxon interpretations of social exclusion. Therefore, social exclusion was conceived “in terms of the denial - or non realisation- of citizenship rights” (European Commission 1992: 20 - 21). Its conceptualisation expanded beyond the economic factors in order to include the rights to civic participation, health, education and improve service accessibility. Social inclusion, in that respect, is understood as a process which ensures that those at risk of social exclusion “gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life ... [as well as] in
decision-making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights” (European Commission 2004: 10).

However, Chorianopoulos claims that the EU’s social policy often “plays the role of deus ex machina” (Chorianopoulos 2009: 541), as it does not pay adequate attention to each member state’s specific social, political, cultural and economic indicators. On the contrary, it often falls on false assumptions and generalisations which are not representative of each state’s condition. In his view, Greece constitutes such an example as it has followed the EU guidance and strategies in combating social exclusion. On a number of National Reports (European Commission 2009: 281-292; Karantinos et. al. 1992; Karantinos et. al. 1990) the Greek government proposed how the EU’s strategy will be implemented to meet the needs of the Greek marginalised populations. However, recent reports have shown that Greece together with Portugal, are coming last in performing social inclusion prospects among the rest EU states (Bossert et. al. 2007: 780). Particularly, in the area of the welfare state “the extreme fragmentation of the social policy system, selective distribution of benefits, large gaps in social protection, and dualistic income maintenance schemes” (Chorianopoulos 2009: 542), constitute the main characteristics of the current social inclusion policies. In chapter 1, I am going to discuss how similar issues arose in the implementation of the EU’s drug policy.

Although, the political discourse over combating social exclusion raises a number of questions which need to be considered; what is important to highlight is the fact that it plays an important role in placing the issues of deprivation, inequalities and marginalisation into the centre of the European and National political agenda. It encapsulates a different set of political priorities and a different underpinning model of society by providing a
different political and social language in which the vision of an ‘inclusive society’ can be realised.

This study, attempts to approach the concept of social inclusion regardless of its political associations. By acknowledging the debates over social inclusion on both National and European levels; I attempt to move these discourses a step forward in order to cast new light on the autonomous and activist approach of promoting social inclusion. My approach aims to give considerable emphasis on the excluded individuals and the actions which *themselves* can be undertaken in order to break the barriers of their exclusion and to fully reintegrate into society. I will therefore use the example of problem drug users as the case study and applied theatre as the tool to examine the possibilities of using the arts as a potentially useful approach in campaigning for the human right of inclusion and participation in civic life. For the purpose of this thesis, the term social inclusion will refer to the attempts being made by problem drug users to regain their social role and to positively participate in the life of their communities and society more broadly. To sum up, my interpretation of social inclusion is associated with the notion of active participation in civic life, solidarity and social cohesion as have been understood and performed by the excluded individuals. In chapter 1, 2 and 4, I will provide a comprehensive review of social policies for problem drug users in the UK and Greece as well as my proposal on how applied theatre can contribute to the individuals’ endeavours to socially reintegrate.

*Problem drug user*

According to Newcombe (2007: 23), the term ‘problem drug user’ refers to an illicit drug user whose drug-related problems have led them to become known to generic or specialist drug services. In addition, the EMCDDA
coined the term problem drug user to refer to specific combinations of particular drugs and modes of use. EMCDDA (2010) defines problem drug use as: “injecting drug use or long duration/regular use of opiates, cocaine and/or amphetamines” (EMCDDA 2003a); however, the term tends to be used more broadly to refer to drug use linked to crime, public nuisance and social problems (Trace et. al 2004: 4). For the specific purposes of this thesis I use the term ‘problem drug user’ to refer to people who are dealing with problematic drug and alcohol use and are currently participating in a drug treatment programme. Occasionally, I use the term ‘recovering drug user’ to refer to people who have discontinued drug-taking and have moved on to the reintegration phase of treatment (for example in Chapter 4).

*Applied theatre as an ‘alternative substance’*

I first coined this phrase in response to my reflections on theatre workshops in the early stages of my research, and in an attempt to frame my outcomes. Hence, the phrase is a combination of both my own belief in theatre’s potential, and participants’ responses and phraseology with regard to ‘getting off drugs’. According to *The New Oxford American Dictionary* (*NOAD*), ‘alternative’ refers to:

- (of one or more things) available as another possibility
- (of two things) mutually exclusive
  of or relating to behavior that is considered unconventional and is often seen as a challenge to traditional norms

(NOAD 2005: no page number)

Additionally, according to the same dictionary, ‘substance’ has the following definitions:

1 a particular kind of matter with uniform properties
- an intoxicating, stimulating, or narcotic chemical or drug, esp. an illegal one.
Considering the above definitions, I should highlight that I am not using the phrase ‘alternative substance’ with its literal meaning, an alternative substance as opposed to drug use per se, but rather as a metaphor to propose that applied theatre can be an alternative to dependency on drugs. *Alternative* refers to being “available as another possibility”, different from the usual, the established, the traditional way, or the way the individuals have already tried (in the case of this study, alcohol and illegal drugs) with the purpose of reaching the ‘hype’, ‘buzz’ or ‘light up’ level. Furthermore, this is an *alternative* mode because applied theatre is ‘alternative’ as it manifests itself as a theatre outside the traditional theatre buildings. It is a theatre for marginalised, disadvantaged and troubled communities, and it takes place where “it is least expected (...) by people who would not usually make theatre (...) It is at its best, a theatre that translates and adapts to the unfamiliar” (Thompson 2003: 15-16). Therefore, I would say that it is an ‘unconventional’ form of practice which has often been seen as a challenge to traditional forms, and propose that the application of theatre in different contexts ought to be “available as an another possibility” (NOAD Ibid.) in the sphere of performance practice.

Additionally, *substance* refers to “the real or essential meaning”(NOAD Ibid.), which in turn can be described as the meaning of life and the quality of being important. Substance, therefore, is related to the process of applied and social theatre: the process of making, creating or additionally discovering and
imagining meaning, and how life could be. It describes the process of individuals’ reconnection with themselves and their surrounding world, but also the realisation that they constitute part of a whole, and have ‘a solid basis’. Participation in theatre involves the aforementioned elements because it is an activity that constitutes the ‘inclusive’ elements of collaboration, communication and sharing, which are useful experiences in encouraging the individual to feel part of a whole, and that they have a “tangible [and] solid presence” (NOAD Ibid.).

However, I should acknowledge that despite its ‘metaphorical’ purpose, the phrase ‘alternative substance’ implies a degree of controversy. I would say, this phrase is problematic because it could be seen as suggesting that applied theatre provides individuals with a means of evading their current realities by operating as a substitute for them, rather than assisting the individual to face and change their realities. But ought the purpose of applied theatre be to facilitate personal change? Or should its purpose rather be to engage individuals in situations and activities that might inspire them to move on and change themselves? Another critique might be that one addiction has been replaced with another – can someone become addicted to theatre? – and what happens when the participants ‘need’ another fix but the project has ended? These are the questions that I am going to return to and discuss over the course of this thesis.

**Synopsis of relevant literature and practice**

In the following section, I will briefly examine publications and examples of practice which are concerned with the implementation of theatre and drama with problem drug users either in the criminal justice system, in a therapeutic context, or in the wider community. This is in an attempt to map
the relevant literature and practice and to position this thesis within the broader context of the implementation of theatre in the community of drug users. It should be noted that owing to the scope of this study, my focus will be on identifying initiatives in the UK and Greece. Hence, to review the related literature and practice, I have drawn information from four basic areas: 1) applied theatre with recovering users; 2) applied theatre with offenders or people at the risk of offence; 3) drama therapy in the treatment of addiction; and 4) applied theatre in drug education.

**Applied theatre with problem drug users: Literature**

As it has already been noted, there has been little discussion in the literature so far about the implementation of applied theatre with problem drug users. The articles by Muirini (2000) and Walling (2008) constitute to date the only publications which refer exclusively to the implementation of applied theatre with problem drug users. Additionally, in the Greek literature Paulidis (2006) reflects upon a project with the members of the Therapeutic Community (TC) En Drasi, based in the female prison of Koridallos in Athens, and Tsaleri (2006) provides an overview of her experiences in facilitating a series of theatre-based projects with youth problem drug users. The themes covered in these articles are relevant to the issues of devising and presenting to the public a theatre piece about the social issues around addiction, drawing on the personal experiences of problem drug users and their peers. Nevertheless, while the above studies give accounts of the facilitator’s/author’s experience in working with this client group, they lack a critical analysis of the work undertaken in each case.

Other publications which deal with the use of theatre with problem drug users derive either from the practice undertaken in the criminal justice
system (McCoy and Blood 2004, mentioned above) or from anti-drug educational projects (see Gesser-Edelsburg et. al. 2006; Harding et. al 1996; Tsalera 2006; Wilston 2001), and two reports on the application of theatre in drug prevention programmes (DAEPT 2004; UN 2002). The themes explored in these publications are relevant to the use of theatre as a medium in raising awareness about drug misuse mainly in children and adolescents. Although the above references are not directed linked to the theme of this thesis, they nonetheless constitute important contributions to understanding and critically analysing theatre’s potential in opening a dialogue about drug-related issues. This discourse, in turn, provides useful references for conceptualising applied theatre’s potential in working with people affected by drug misuse and how applied theatre might contribute to promoting their social inclusion.

At the other end of the spectrum, dramatherapy uses theatre as a medium to actively engage people in recovery from drugs in the therapeutic process and to encourage clients to enact their personal stories through narration, role-play, metaphors and other dramatic techniques (Cox 1992; Cox and Theilgaard 1994; Jennings 1987, 1990, 1992, 1995, 2009; Jennings and Minde 1993; Jennings et. al. 1994). Therefore, dramatherapy operates alongside the psychotherapeutic process and intends to assist individuals to reflect on their personal issues of concern and conflict. In the area of drug dependency, dramatherapy has frequently been used to facilitate the treatment process. In particular, the book edited by Waller and Mahony (1999), Treatment of Addiction: Current Issues for Art Therapies, offers a comprehensive review of the implementation of arts in drug treatment, and examines the broader spectrum of art therapies and therapeutic models. Additionally, Pitruzzella (2004) devotes a chapter to the work of dramatherapy with problem drug users in the book Introduction to Dramatherapy: Person and Threshold. His
analysis provides a means by which dramatherapy techniques can be utilised in the treatment of addiction, with the purpose of facilitating the individual’s metaphorical rebirth (constructing a new identity and implementing changes in their lives).

Additionally, the Arts in Psychotherapy Journal (1990) published a special issue entitled *Creative Arts Therapies in the Treatment of Substance Abuse*, in which various contributors demonstrated the role of drama therapy in the treatment of addiction. At this point it is important to note that the literature on drama therapy (and on art therapies more generally) appears to offer important contributions in the analysis of this research process, especially in terms of the terminology and rationale used by art therapists to discuss their work and the use of arts in the treatment of addiction (see Johnson 1990; Pitruzella 2004; Waller and Mahony 1999). In particular, dramatherapy’s understanding of the role of theatre in shame management (see Johnson 1990; Snow et. al 2003; Mulkey 2004) and in validation of personal narratives (Somers 2009; Jones 1996; Jennings 1994) has been utilised in analysing and supporting my argument in Chapters 3 and 4. Finally, in the relevant Greek literature authors such as Matsa (2008a), Krassanakis (2006), Zaganiaris (2008) and the edited edition entitled *The Art Groups at 18 ANO* (Matsa 2008b) provide evidence regarding the implementation of drama therapy in the 18 ANO rehabilitation centre, which is one of the case-studies in this research and therefore will be discussed in Chapter 4.

*Applied theatre with problem drug users: Practice*

The British theatre companies Breaking Image, Vita Nova and Outside Edge constitute three examples of theatre companies which have been formulated out of the need to use theatre for addressing drug-related issues. Interestingly, all of them have emerged out of personal initiatives to use their
members’ personal experiences of drug recovery as a vehicle to inform, educate and prevent others from becoming problem drug users. Their work is based exclusively with people affected by drug abuse and its associated problems. Whilst in Chapter 4 I discuss the case of the Breaking Image and propose a critique of its approach, here I am going to give a brief review of the profile of the other two companies in order to provide the reader with an understanding of their rationale. Vita Nova focuses on the development of drug education and prevention programmes. It delivers workshops and performances in schools, colleges and youth centres, as well as outreach programmes in drug services (Muiruri 2000). As the company states, their purpose is to produce and bring into schools original and ‘honest’ drugs education which has been derived from their own experiences of addiction and recovery (Williams 2006). Additionally, the Outside Edge was established by recovering drug user Phil Fox, and is regarded to be the first professional theatre company that provides theatre and drama work involving people affected by addiction. Every year they organise public performances as a tool to challenge the audience’s perceptions of addiction and drug-related issues. In addition, they tour drug treatment centres across the UK with the purpose of motivating and encouraging service users to complete their treatment.

With regard to applied theatre in the criminal justice system, as I have already mentioned, applied theatre in the custodial setting has integrated the community of problem drug users into its curriculum. Although it should be acknowledged that not all practices which focus on theatre in prisons share the same methodologies and politics; for the purpose of this thesis, I am going to review some representative examples of projects conducted with problem drug users within the criminal justice system. As above, the focus will be on the UK and Greece. The first example derives from TiPP, which has
conducted two major projects that specifically address issues of problematic drug and alcohol use: *Dealing with Drugs* and *The Grey Area*. The project *Dealing with Drugs* was commissioned from 1997 to 2000 in HMP Buckley Hall in Rochdale, Greater Manchester, in partnership with Turning Point and Group 4, and implemented as part of a supporting programme for problem drug users. The aim of the project was to encourage the inmates to explore drug issues through participatory drama techniques, and it led to a series of performance projects (McCoy and Blood 2004: 123-124). In addition, in 2003 TiPP commissioned a creative drama project with Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO) clients at Moss Side Probation Centre in Manchester. This project resulted in the presentation of the devised performance piece ‘The Grey Area’, which was performed at the John Thaw Studio Theatre at the University of Manchester in July 2004. Rideout (Creative Arts for Rehabilitation) have worked in liaison with Prison Services to accredit the PASRO course (an offending behaviour programme linked to problem drug use), and have developed a series of participatory art techniques utilising drama, films, sculpture and drawings to allow their participants to explore their personal issues associated with their problematic drug use. Furthermore, Geese Theatre Company developed a one-day theatre workshop called *Used*. The workshop was designed to involve offenders and problem drug users in exploring issues connected with their problematic drug use. It incorporates role-play, theatrical performances, and mask-based exercises.

In Greece, the 18 Beaufort Theatre Company was formed in 2007 by a group of people who had completed the rehabilitation programme at the 18 ANO Drug Dependency Unit of the Psychiatric Hospital of Attica (see Chapter 4). The group was formulated out of the impulse to create high-quality theatre by people who had recovered from drug addiction, and their performances
attempt to break down the stereotypes associated with drug abuse. Working in collaboration with the director Olia Lazaridou, 18 Beaufort’s productions have been performed at various national festivals such as the Athens and Epidaurus Festival and the Antiracism festival. Additionally, in recent years, Greece has established 16 - 26 June as the week against drug abuse, celebrating in this way the 26 June, International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking (IDADA). ³ This is in the endeavour to contribute to the international efforts to raise awareness and advocate a drug-free international community. As a result, many organisations and agents organise public events such as theatre performances by people in recovery and/or their families and peers alongside concerts, art exhibitions, cycling races, street dancing and other interactive activities for children and adults (Rizospastis 2010). In 2005 the theatre director Stelios Paulidis was commissioned to devise a performance piece working with the members of the Therapeutic Community En Drasi, based in the female prison of Koridallos in Athens. The performance was presented outside the Ministry of Justice building. This was the first time in the history of the Greek prison system that inmates had been granted permission to leave prison to participate in a performance (Paulidis 2006).

In summary, it appears that the main methodology that has been used in the UK is based on a combination of theories from the fields of education, criminology, social learning, cognitive behaviour and performance. This differs from Greece, where the emphasis has been on the organisation of performance events as a way of advocating change and addressing drug-

³ In 1987, the United Nations General Assembly established 26 June as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (IDADA) in an attempt to strengthen action and co-operation towards an international substance-free society. Every year countries all over the world organise events with the purpose of increasing public awareness and societal responsibility about drug-related issues. For additional information see http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/26-June.html (accessed 10.08.2010).
related issues. It could be stated that all of the above-mentioned tendencies provide a narrow, specific approach to the use of theatre and drama with problem drug users, and focus on either behavioural or therapeutic aspects of practice. That is to say, all cases appear to dismiss a more holistic, sociocultural approach. This thesis aims to offer a comprehensive discussion and critique of the above approaches, as well as of the current tendencies in the field, with the purpose of proposing a sociocultural approach which would give emphasis to the individuals and their experiences of recovering from problematic drug use. This thesis will attempt to illustrate the different processes relating to applied theory and recovery; however it should be noted that I am not going to use chronological order. Instead, the chapter-sequence was chosen in accordance with the themes and the elaboration of the argument.

The overall structure of this thesis is composed in four themed chapters: Chapter 1 is concerned with the context of this research study and is divided into two parts. The first part addresses the objectives and methodological approach of this study, and the second part reviews the literature concerning drug policy, as well as the relevant literature on applied theatre in the UK and Greece. Chapter 2 focuses on the notion of community and the feeling of belonging. In particular, it sets out to investigate factors by which applied theatre praxis can facilitate the process of enhancing the desires for a community through dramatic means. Chapter 3 discusses the main argument of this thesis with regard to applied theatre as an ‘alternative substance’ and intends to address applied theatre’s recent shift from challenging and changing the participants’ lives (as a transformative agent) to the more holistic approach of applying theatre in the community. Chapter 4 examines and questions the possibilities of promoting social inclusion through the production of a performance by recovering drug users. In particular, it aims
to explore how the performers’ personal experiences of recovering from dependency might operate as a vehicle to raise hopes for change and inclusion, moving from being carriers of stigma to being carriers of hope. Finally, the conclusion returns to considering which should be the role of applied theatre with problem drug users by summarises the different suggestions proposed in this study and identifies areas for further research. Next, this thesis starts with introducing the methodology and theoretical framework which constituted the basis of this research.
CHAPTER 1: CREATING A CONTEXT

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to demonstrate how literature from applied theatre and drug policy has been combined with other research methods to create a critical framework within which to conceptualise the application of theatre with problem drug users. This chapter has been divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the research design and methodology of this thesis. It begins by laying out the theoretical dimensions of the research, and looks at how these have been adapted to facilitate the research process. It also gives a brief overview of the research narrative by outlining each case study alongside the themes that were generated over the course of the research projects. Hence, it utilises factors by which different methodological tools have been combined and adapted to investigate potential relationships between recovering drug users, drug policy, applied theatre and performance. For the scope of this section I am going to draw from the fields of Ethnography and Practice as Research to articulate my research methodology. Additionally, the literature on reflexivity (Davies 2002), analysis formation (LeCompte and Schensul 1999) and dealing with ethical concerns in applied theatre (Hughes 2005; McDonnell 2005; Thompson 2003) will be reviewed. These were combined with the research narrative to provide the research methodology for this study.

Additionally, the second part of this chapter focuses on reviewing the relevant literature on social policy and applied theatre in the UK and Greece. It is beyond the scope of this study to provide a comprehensive review of drug policy in the two countries; rather, it will focus on a brief description of the shifts in policy from the 1990s onwards. It starts by offering an overview of the milestones in British and Greek drug policy with regards to their current state, including issues of treatment provision and social reintegration, and
ends by comparing the policies of the two countries. It then goes on to discuss
the relevant literature on applied theatre and highlights the relevant themes
that emerged during the research, to which I will return in each chapter to
illuminate the arguments of this thesis. Concerning the fact that no previous
research has been conducted in Greece with regard to theatre with
disadvantaged communities, this literature review will take into account a
range of traditional forms such as popular theatre and theatre for resistance.
The final purpose of this literature review is to connect the two cultures and to
create a critical framework within which to position the subject of this thesis.
The literature derives from the broad area of theatre and performance studies
and applied theatre supplemented by reading from the fields of drug
treatment, community psychology, sociology, creativity, cultural theory and
social inclusion theory to provide the theoretical framework for this study.

PART I: Methodology

Problem drug use is a global social phenomenon which involves not only
individuals who are personally affected by drug taking but also their
relatives and peers, social policy makers and governments (see Cherry et. al.
2002; Edwards et. Al. 1983; EMCDDA 2003; Davies 1983; Rawlings 2001;
Singleton 2006; Sussman 2001; Sutton 1992). For the purposes of this study,
it became important to expand the focus of this research beyond UK borders.
This was an attempt to broaden our understanding of the drug situation and
how drug social policy is implemented outside the UK, but also a means of
conducting research regarding the use of the participatory form of theatre in
a non-UK context. Greece was selected as an appropriate and potential field
of inquiry for the following reasons:

· My Greek nationality, as well as the fact that I completed my
  undergraduate studies in Theatre Studies at a local university,
appeared to be important variables in the endeavour to raise my knowledge and conduct the research on the area of applied theatre in Greek drug treatment programmes.

- The initial scope of this study aimed to investigate, compare, and contrast various approaches in the use of theatre with problem drug users and to examine whether different cultural backgrounds might have an impact on the way we implement and understand the use of applied theatre in this setting. Hence an initial purpose of this research study was to test out the implications of adapting and implementing a series of selected theatre-based exercises, derived from UK theatre-based projects, and deliver them in Greece. This is was in attempt to understand how my native language and the familiar socio-cultural context might affect the way I delivered, interpreted and reflected on the project and to assist in proposing a model of practice in the work with recovering users.

- No previous research has been reported with regard to with the use of applied theatre with Greek marginalised and disadvantaged communities.

- The connections between the Greek and British theatre traditions and their influences on contemporary theatrical movements were examined so as to supplement my understanding in the field of this research.

- Finally, the European Union (EU) membership held by UK and Greece, alongside the research and monitoring that has been carried out by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), would inform this study via annual reports, analyses and reliable and comparable information regarding both countries’ drug situations.
Research Design

The focus of this study is to examine the use of applied theatre within the arena of drug treatment programmes through the lens of a socio-cultural perspective. Hence, it aims to contribute to the field by approaching the implementation of theatre within a therapeutic context from a socio-cultural rather than a psychological and/or a therapeutic point of view. By using a constellation of methods (which I am going to discuss in detail below), this research project was designed in the form of a case study for each selected theatre-based project. Each case study discussed in this thesis was constructed around facilitating and observing a series of theatre workshops and live performances interpreted alongside information from interviews and questionnaires with participants, staff members at the partnership organisations and art facilitators, as well as anecdotal stories and relevant literature in both English and Greek. Thus the case studies operate as exclusive descriptive cases, as well as serving as multidimensional exploratory cases in which each is drawn from and informed by the others.

In addition, on account of the fact that this research involves people in the recovery process in two different countries, it requires a diversity of theoretical positions because it assesses a group that is different from the mainstream and which pursues and acts out its own idiosyncrasies and cultural characteristics. Hence, in order to critically interrogate ideas of community, creativity and hope and relate them to the applied theatre praxis, this work draws on critical discussions from the fields of sociology and community psychology, theories of creativity and performance studies, and narrative psychology. Moreover, it utilises evidence from a series of projects conducted as part of this study and positioned vis-à-vis British and Greek theatre to make a case for the place of applied theatre in assisting the social reintegration of problem drug users. The next section will provide a
summary of the narrative, scope and methodology of each case. It should, therefore, be acknowledged that representative examples of practice, as resulted from this research, have been chosen in an attempt to illustrate and support the overall thesis argument. The criteria followed for this selection are related to my observations and reflections, but also to my position in each case (e.g. facilitator, observer, researcher). Hence, Chapters 2 and 3 aim to give an account of the applied theatre projects carried out as part of this study, where my role was to design, facilitate, evaluate and reflect on each project. Chapter 4 discusses the theatre projects that I observed, thus I was an observer, researcher and spectator.

The case studies

The seven theatre projects selected as the focus of this thesis are representative examples of the implementation of theatre within the arena of drug treatment programmes and have been chosen on the basis of certain characteristics in common. All the theatre projects that will be discussed share the following characteristics:

- The projects’ primary aim was to use theatre as a means to promote social inclusion of people who are dealing with problematic drug and alcohol issues.
- In all the projects a performance or other artistic event (including visits to the theatre) were organised as an outcome of the project’s completion.
- Participation in the projects operated on a voluntary basis.
- All but one of the projects were carried out in conjunction with local drug services, with the Breaking Image (BI) theatre company being a personal initiative.
The participants who took part in the projects had personal experience of problematic drug and alcohol use and shared the mutual desire to discontinue their drug consumption and remain substance free.

All the partnership drug treatment programmes offer counselling support and advice for individuals who are dealing with problematic drug use.

Finally, each of the drug services operates as a registered charity with a board of trustees, except for the 18 ANO Dependence Treatment Unit, which is a part of the Attica State Psychiatric Hospital.

The case studies have been divided in two main categories:

1. Applied theatre projects that have been conducted as part of this research. Therefore, the organisation, design and delivery of the projects was arranged so as to meet and inform the scope of this study. In all cases the projects were organised in partnership with local drug services and their purpose was to engage the participants with theatre-based techniques which were then implemented to explore issues of concern. Hence, selected theatre-based exercises were adapted and implemented with regard to each group’s needs and interests. Finally, theatre performances or other events (e.g. visits to the theatre) were organised in collaboration with each organisation. The applied theatre projects took place in Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS) in Oldham (Manchester, UK), Drug Advice and Sexual Health (DASH) in Zion Community Resource Centre (Manchester, UK) and En Drasi Therapy Centre for Dependent Individuals (KETHEA) (Athens, Greece).

2. Theatre groups that are working with people who have personal experience of dealing with problematic drug and alcohol issues; in all these cases performance events took place in the local communities. In these cases, my intervention was limited to attending the group’s
meetings and observing the rehearsals, with the exception of one case study (18 Beaufort theatre group) for which I only attended the performance event. The selected theatre groups are: the 18 ANO rehabilitation theatre group, part of the 18 ANO Dependence Treatment Unit (Athens, Greece); the 18 Beaufort theatre group (Athens, Greece); Royal Exchange Theatre and ADS in Oldham (Manchester, UK) and Breaking Image theatre company (Somerset, UK).

Field Research

Between 2007 and 2009, a series of field visits were undertaken in both Greece and the UK in order to identify and investigate drug organisations which implement theatre-based projects as a medium to promote the social reintegration of problem drug users. It was also an aim to create partnerships with drug organisations in order to conduct theatre-based projects and, in this way, to gain a firsthand experience of the use of applied theatre in this context. This section aims to offer an outline of the research undertaken over the two years and to demonstrate how the themes and questions of the thesis emerged and were investigated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field visits</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Research undertaken</th>
<th>Questions/Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athens: Drug organisation s 18 ANO and KETHEA.</td>
<td>5-30 January 2007</td>
<td>First contact and interviews with artists who have worked in drug recovery and with service providers. Created partnerships with 18 ANO and KETHEA</td>
<td>The use of play-scripts as a way to reflect upon the participants’ personal stories. The organisation of a performance event as a way to promote social inclusion and advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manchester: ADS in Oldham</td>
<td>February - May 2007</td>
<td>Theatre-based project with service users. Follow-up interviews with staff and members</td>
<td>What is the place for creativity and personal narrative in applying theatre with problem drug users? Should participation in applied theatre be considered as a form of ‘escapism’ from the participants’ current realities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset: Breaking Image</td>
<td>15-30 March 2007</td>
<td>Interview with Breaking Image’s director and members. Watched a performance of <em>An Ordinary Day</em>. Focus group with audience members and BI members</td>
<td>Staging stigma Can a performance by recovering users promote social acceptance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens: Drug organisations 18 ANO and KETHEA.</td>
<td>June - July 2007</td>
<td>IDADA Attending rehearsals and performance events of <em>Evmenides</em> Attending a variety of organised events by KETHEA across Athens and Piraeus Celebrations Focus groups and interviews with 18 ANO members, KETHEA staff and members</td>
<td>Can performances by recovering users promote public advocacy and de-stigmatisation? What is the role of hope and social imagination in this context?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester: DASH and Zion Resource Centre</td>
<td>November 2007 - March 2008</td>
<td>Theatre-based project with service users.</td>
<td>Community and the sense of belonging What is the role of community narratives in applied theatre?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Question</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manchester: ADS in Oldham</td>
<td>January - February 2008</td>
<td>Theatre-based project with service users. Fusebox project Producing the report of the project</td>
<td>When should applied theatre concentrate on issues and stories and when should they be avoided?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens: 18 ANO and 18 Beaufort</td>
<td>May - July 2008</td>
<td>Interview with 18 director and members. Attended the performances by 18 ANO and 18 Beaufort</td>
<td>What is the role of empathy and identification in the organisation of performances by recovery users?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens: En Drasi KETHEA</td>
<td>May-July 2008</td>
<td>Theatre-based project with service users.</td>
<td>Community and the sense of belonging in community narratives Applied theatre and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens: Drug organisation s 18 ANO and KETHEA.</td>
<td>January 2009 and January 2010</td>
<td>Follow-up visits and interviews with 18 ANO members and directors</td>
<td>What should be the role of personal narratives in drug education?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I. Summary of Field Research

January 2007: Field research in Athens, Greece

The purpose of my visit to Athens was to get a broad overview of the theatre groups that existed and what types of projects were being carried out in the partnership drug treatment services. My first visit resulted in a partnership with 18 ANO rehabilitation theatre group and KETHEA. In addition, I
conducted interviews with a number of freelance theatre facilitators and professionals who work in the area of drug dependency. This fieldwork trip raised important questions with regard to the social perceptions of drugs and drug abuse as well as the lack of efficient social policy measures for recovering drug users. As far as the theatre projects were concerned, it was noticeable that in almost all the cases the use of repertoire theatre together with the organisation of a performance event was identified as the most appropriate method in empowering the participants as well as in promoting social inclusion. Moreover, my visit encouraged further investigation into the Greek historical trends of participatory theatre, political theatre, community-based theatre and dramatherapy.

February - May 2007: Applied theatre project in ADS

This was the first applied theatre project which conducted as part of this research study and formulated the argument in Chapter 3. Approximately 12 people aged between 25 and 55 years, both male and female, took part in the drama project. For the duration of the project, the participants were introduced to a range of different theatre techniques as derived from relevant literature (Baim et. al. 2002; Boal 1995, 2002; Johnston 2005; McCarthy 2004; Polsky 1998) or which had emerged from my previous experience in the field. On the final day of the project an open theatre workshop was organised in which service users and staff members were invited to participate in selected interactive activities.

Additionally, a record of attendance was kept, and closing questions plus specifically designed reflective theatre exercises were implemented at the end of each session which were then utilised as a means of data collection (see Baim 2002; McCarthy 2004; Moore 1997). Further data were collected via
questionnaires and interviews with participants and staff members at the final session. Besides this, the participants’ opinions as well as my reflection notes were recorded in a fieldwork diary alongside the discussions and the feedback that was given by staff members. The fieldwork diary was selected as an additional method of recording my observations and initial reflections on the project. It also allowed me to follow a sequence of the participants’ responses during the project as well as to report emerging themes and questions. Moreover, following the completion of the project, the diary was used as an important medium of interpretation and as a guide to the next steps of the research. The ADS project raised important questions relating to the role of creativity and spontaneity as a medium to facilitate personal development and promote personal change. The idea of theatre as a way of ‘escaping’ from the participants’ current realities and current communities together with the feeling of belonging were some of the issues raised during the project.

March 2007: Field research in Bridgwater and Glastonbury, Somerset, UK

The Breaking Image theatre company was selected following research using the online database of the APC in January 2007. The BI theatre company was, at the time, the only company addressing the particular area of drug-related issues, and was working exclusively with people affected by problem drug use. My first meeting with the company took place on 21 March 2007, when I conducted interviews with the company’s theatre director, Richard Taylor, and the group members. At that time the company was performing its new production, _An Ordinary Day_, in Somerset. On my second visit I followed up with the group and observed their rehearsals, interviewed the participants and attended the 29 March performance in Glastonbury, Somerset. The questions that emerged from my interaction with BI included: how should we deal with and negotiate the theatrical representations of personal stories
of addiction and stigma? To what degree can community-based performances promote social awareness and inclusion? Can participation in the theatre projects facilitate the process of identity reconstruction and de-stigmatisation? These questions formed the core material for Chapter 4.

June – July 2007: Field research in Athens

During the IDADA celebrations 16 – 26 June 2007, I attended and monitored many of these events in different neighbourhoods of Athens and Piraeus. In addition, I revisited the 18 ANO rehabilitation theatre group, participated in a series of their rehearsals and attended two of their performances in the local community. I also interviewed a sample of the participants and monitored my observations in a fieldwork diary. Here, the logbook was used for recording my reflections in both Greek and English, which were later utilised as important resources. The events also inspired further examination of how the cultural background (and the different language) might have an impact on the way the study’s keywords, for example community, creativity and hope, are used and interpreted. This research trip threw up important questions with regard to how a performance by recovering drug users might challenge local community members’ views and perceptions of problem drug use. Furthermore, the question was raised of how the use of locally inspired cultural practices might influence audience perception and discourage the phenomena of discrimination and exclusion. I am going to focus on addressing these questions in Chapters 2 and 4.

November 2007–March 2008: theatre project in DASH

This was a 15 week applied theatre project, the scope of which was to create a supportive and safe space for participants to express themselves, increase
their self confidence, develop social skills and encourage positive change in their lives. The initial agreement for the project was made possible by DASH, and it was later able to access the other services at Zion Community Resource Centre in Hulme. The project was an attempt to recruit individuals who had experienced problem drug use in addition to witnessing it in their social environment, such as among family members and/or peers. Approximately six people took part in the project aged between 30 and 60. At the end of the project the group arranged a theatre visit in which they watched a youth community-based performance. This project followed the same methods of data gathering as the previous project in ADS. The notion of community and the feeling of belonging as well as the positive dynamics of participating in creative and spontaneous activities were the recurring themes in this project.

January – February 2008: Royal Exchange Theatre and ADS in Oldham

The Fusebox project developed in partnership between the Royal Exchange Community Partnership Scheme and Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS) in Oldham. The project’s aim was to encourage the development of a 15-minute theatre piece which was due to be performed at the Studio in the Royal Exchange Theatre. The project was designed and facilitated by Janine Waters from Waters Edge Arts. The Fusebox project was designed around two weeks of daily drop-in workshops in which participants were encouraged to develop a series of improvisations, using the theme of light as a starting point. In addition, participants were introduced to theatre techniques and strategies as a means through which they could increase their social skills and develop new ways of communication and co-operation. Due to insufficient numbers of participants as well as the lack of a cohesive performance structure the performance was cancelled. Instead, the
participants went to the theatre and watched a community-based performance. It should be noted that the partnership between Royal Exchange and ADS was conducted following the competition of the project I delivered in ADS the year before and as a result of the previous participants’ request for its repetition. Hence the narratives of this project supported the already established themes such as community, belonging, creativity, theatre as escapism and so on. Likewise my observations and reflections were developed through a form of follow-up research, and attempted to further question and challenge the role and methodology of applied theatre.

*May – July 2008: Field research in Athens*

The 18 BEAUFORT theatre company was formed by a group of people who had completed the rehabilitation programme at the 18 ANO Drug Dependency Unit of the Psychiatric Hospital of Attica. The group performed the play *He Who Says Yes – He Who Says No* by Bertolt Brecht at the Athens Epidaurus Festival in June 2008. I watched the performance and completed interviews with the company’s members. In addition I conducted a follow-up visit to the 18 ANO theatre group.

*May – July 2008: theatre project in En Drasi KETHEA*

This project took place in the therapeutic community En Drasi (In Action), part of the NGO KETHEA, which operates in the Central Female Prison of Koridallos in Athens. The primary aim of the theatre project was to create a piece of theatre based on women’s experiences in the therapeutic programme, and for this play to be performed by the women on IDADA. Approximately 15 women between 17 and 55 participated in the project. Following the completion of the project, a devised performance piece was presented to an audience drawn from the organisation’s staff members,
prison inmates, and women who were in the induction phase of treatment. This was the final part of the research project and therefore I sought to further explore the issues that had arisen throughout the other projects, while also aiming to revisit the other project locations and identify further issues for consideration and exploration. Theatre as a form of escapism as well as the idea of community and the feeling of belonging were again the dominant themes, and formulated the arguments that will be analysed in Chapter 2.

**Research Approaches**

Researching theatre practice and using theatre practice as a research methodology were the main challenges of this research. Additionally, the fact that this study focused on investigating a particular community of individuals in two different countries required a systematic and overarching examination of each culture’s specific characteristics, social meanings and social policies. Consequently, the approaches to research combined for this study were drawn from two main styles of research: ethnography (Davies 2002; Atkinson et. al 2001; Brewer 2000; Geertz 1975) and practice as research (PaR) (Allegue et. al. 2009; Barrett and Bolt 2007; PARIP 2010; Piccini 2003; Sullivan 2005). As I demonstrated in the above section, each case study followed one methodology more than the others, and this was due to the complexity and variety of the context at each stage. Therefore, a combination of selected methods of data collection and data analysis as derived from the above styles of research formulated the core methodology of this research and will be reviewed below.

Although it should be acknowledged that the scope of this research was neither to measure the impact of using theatre within drug services nor to investigate the use of theatre as intervention, it appeared that the adaptation and implementation of the above methods could provide us with adequate
and representative research data. The research, therefore, utilised ethnographic data collection and analysis tools such as the researcher’s visits to the field, participants’ observations, and reflexivity. Likewise, it implemented the PaR method of gaining a firsthand experience of the implementation of theatre in this context and then moved on to theorise the outputs of this experience. The research also borrowed the ideas and techniques of PaR regarding the use of theatre as both a research method and a subject of inquiry for identifying and representing the specific communities’ issues of concern, all in an attempt to illuminate and approach the research questions from different points of view. In the following section I am going to discuss the characteristics and limitations of the above methods and demonstrate how I overcome these limitations by developing an open-ended and flexible approach.

**Ethnography**

Brewer defines ethnography as:

(...) The study of people in naturally occurring settings or ‘fields’ by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without being imposed on them externally (Brewer, ibid: 10).

Ethnography works on the premise that the aim of the research should be to conceptualise individuals’ actions and experiences of their surrounding world by using interaction and reflexivity as its research mediums. Hence, the researcher’s presence and participation in the particular social and cultural setting of the field under inquiry are regarded as the basic elements of ethnography. To this end, ethnography was chosen as an appropriate mode of inquiry as it allowed me to gain a better understanding of the subject of this research through the means of field visits, observations and
interaction with the informants. Although participant observation is the fundamental ethnographic method of data collection, other techniques such as in-depth interviews and questionnaires are often adapted and combined for the purpose of data gathering (Atkinson, et. al 2001; Brewer 2000 Davies 2002; Mienczakowski 1994, 2001; Mienczakowski and Morgan 2000).

However, one of the main limitations of ethnography which needs to be mentioned is related to my status as an ‘outsider’, which might operate as a boundary for the relationships needing to be built between myself and the informants. In this respect, my collection and analysis of the data might be influenced not only by my status as researcher and representative of an academic institution (and, in the case of the fieldwork in Greece, as a representative of a British university) but also by my own perceptions and subjectivity with regard to the subject area. For example, during the interviews I conducted, the questions I asked were related to the research questions I initially set out to explore, and thereby might have failed to consider any other themes or issues relevant to and important for the informants. The same applies to my observations and reflective notes, which were collected to inform a specific inquiry about each case I examined, and which perhaps dismissed other issues. Hence, my status and subjectivity can be regarded as one of the main challenges in using ethnography as a research methodology. In the light of this, it was essential to utilise a method that would allow the participants to drive the research and to operate as the basis of the research process.

Practice as Research

Practice as Research (PaR) (also known as practice-based research, or PBR) was an important method of data collection and analysis in this study. Since the 2000s, PaR has been a growing area of interest as a research method within
British universities (Allegue et al 2009; Barrett and Bolt 2007; McCammon 2007; Sullivan 2005). As far as creative arts are concerned, PaR emerged as a response to the need to situate creative practice at the heart of researching the arts and their implications (Smith and Dean 2009). For instance, the project Practice as Research in Performance (PARIP 2010), sought to consolidate the place for PaR in the higher education sector. To this end, PaR is an organic process of acquiring knowledge through the means of ‘doing’ and ‘reflecting’. Hence, the research questions emerge through the process, rather than from a prearranged agenda. In other words, PaR embraces the creative work in the research process, which is then treated as a means of investigation. As Barrett argues:

> The innovative and critical potential of practice-based research lies in its capacity to generate personally generated knowledge and new ways of modelling and externalising such knowledge while at the same time, revealing philosophical, social and cultural contexts for the critical intervention and application of knowledge outcomes (Barrett 2007: 2).

For the purposes of this study I have borrowed Barrett’s (ibid.) understanding of PaR as an innovative way of generating knowledge and theorising the research outcomes. Although this thesis has not been designed in the form of a practice-based piece of doctoral research as has been classified by Nelson and Andrews’ (2003) guidelines, nevertheless, as I have demonstrated in the fieldwork plan, practice was embedded at the core of this study and has influenced the analysis of this thesis. This applied in the case of the three participatory theatre projects that I conducted, two in Manchester (ADS and DASH) and one in Athens (En Drasi KETHEA), to acquire knowledge of the issues involved in researching the use of theatre with problem drug users. Hence, the theatre-based projects were developed and were both projects and methodologies, and thus had two purposes: as
practice, to use the theatre space as an opportunity for the individuals to express themselves and reflect upon concerns in their communities; and as research, to examine the use of applied theatre with problem drug users. To this end, participatory theatre techniques as derived from the literature (see Baim et. al. 2002 Boal, 1995 2002 and McCarthy 2004) were combined with Thompson’s (2003: 147 - 172) ideas about the use of theatre as a mode of inquiry (Theatre Action Research, or TaR), and reflexivity formulated the research design of this study. Therefore, each workshop was designed and delivered in accordance with the participants’ needs and interests. Moreover, each workshop’s outline was informed by the participants’ reflections which also influenced the overall themes and planning. The PaR method provided this research project with the flexibility to lead the process in the directions that the participants wished, and gave them the space for the exploration of issues and themes that they felt were important to them and their community.

While the general complexities and the theoretical and practical limitations of PaR as an approach have been discussed elsewhere (see Piccini 2003; Rye 2003; Thompson 2003), one of the crucial questions that needs clarification is what is meant by ‘practice’. To this end, and in reference to this research study, ‘practice’ refers to the organisation, development, implementation and evaluation of a series of theatre-based workshops with the purpose of enabling our understanding of the subject matter. It also refers to attending and actively participating in the sessions of the case study organisations and companies, for example 18 ANO and the Fusebox project, in which my role was not limited to observing as I was engaged in the process (giving feedback, encouraging, and participating and operating as a member of the group). However, the major problem with this approach is related to the relationship between the researcher and the informants, but also to the
research setting. Although PaR provides a space for experimentation and flexibility in the research process, its combination with a more systematic approach was needed to create a framework for the research to take place. To this end, PaR was used in parallel with ethnography. Below, I am going to analyse the measures which were taken to overcome the limitations of this approach.

**Methods of data collection and data analysis: possibilities and pitfalls**

For the purpose of this study, the research data were drawn from the following sources: participants’ observations, questionnaires, my fieldwork diary, in-depth interviews, focus groups, participants’ written accounts, specifically designed and adapted reflective participatory theatre exercises, monitoring of performances and/or other artistic events, and records of attendance. The pitfalls that occurred during the data collection were relevant to my position at the time (as a practitioner-researcher and/or observer-researcher) but also to my nationality (with particular reference to the interpretation and translation of informants’ native language) as well as my status as a postgraduate student and representative of a university (specifically a UK university, regarding my research in Greece). For instance, in the analysis of questionnaires as well as in transcribing the interviews with participants, practitioners and professionals, it appears that my position as interviewer and researcher might have affected the informants’ responses and thus the accuracy of the data. This was due to the fact that in most of the cases I held the position of facilitator and/or project worker as well as interviewer. The emotional bonding as well as the fear of ‘saying something wrong’ and causing upset and/or offence might have led to the informants’ reluctance to give honest and direct accounts of their experiences. Therefore, the data collected via questionnaires and interviews created to a degree a space apart from the momentum of the workshops and the informants’
overall views and experiences of participating. As a consequence, additional methods of data gathering and analysis were combined, adapted and implemented as mediums of examining the research questions as well as representing the multiple viewpoints on the use of theatre within the subject area.

**Reflexivity**

To avoid the pitfalls mentioned above, a form of reflexivity was developed as an adequate mode to challenge and problematise the narratives of the projects. Reflexivity is the process of immediate and critical reflection upon the researcher’s observations during the research. It is the process of reflecting, “turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference” (Davies, 2002: 4) on the research situations. Hence, the immediacy of the reflection-in-action process can be a useful way of conceptualising the field of enquiry and encouraging further investigation and critical analysis of the emerging issues. Researchers who implement reflexivity as a mode for collecting information usually feel the need to constantly negotiate their role as an outsider-insider with regard to the fieldwork. As a result, the researcher’s perspectives and interests in the field, or in other words his or her subjectivity, appear to be the main challenge for the gathering and analysis of the data. Aside from this, the complexity of reflecting upon his or her own practice, as well the emotional bonds created between the informants and the researcher, can be considered potential pitfalls and limitations in using reflexivity as a research method. However, as Okey points out, “the specificity and individuality of the observer are ever present and must therefore be acknowledged, explored and put to creative use” (Okey 1996b cited in Davies 2002: 8).
As far as this research project is concerned, reflexivity was used in the theatre-based workshops I facilitated as well as in the observations I conducted for the scope of this study. Therefore, my observations and reflections were recorded in a fieldwork diary at the end of each workshop I facilitated or visited, respectively. However, for supplementation of the material and accuracy I recorded informal conversations with staff members, participants and general observations with regard to each drug service’s operation and daily activities. Following the completion of each case study, I periodically revised the reflection notes so as to add thoughts and additional information as well as to write primary analyses. In the endeavour to cover all the viewpoints in the area of research, I approached my reflections from being an outsider to being a member of the group, but constantly shifted position from facilitator to observer and vice versa at all the stages of the research. At certain points, I attempted to distance my reflections from the personal conflicts, dilemmas and choices I had to make during the research process and to focus mainly on the participants’ reactions. For this reason, during the research process I experimented with and exchanged various positions such as facilitator, observer, visitor, spectator and even participant (e.g. in the Fusebox project I participated as a member of the group), and investigated the research questions from different angles.

To sum up, reflexivity here has been used without dismissing the fact that both my status and presence might have had an influence on the workshops’ dynamics and thus the participants’ responses. In addition, the emotional relationships, bonds and trust formulated between me and the participants might have affected the data gathering and therefore should be acknowledged (Nicholson 2005b: 122-124; Thompson 2003: 164-165). Therefore, additional strategies were developed and implemented in order to overcome any pitfalls occurring, such as examining the field from different
points of view as well as considering any additional information as important resources for enquiry.

**Analysis formation**

One of the main challenges in analysing ethnographic data and reflective notes is the issue of establishing a level of distance between the researcher and the subject matter. This is to say that a constant negotiation needs to take place between the original data and the data analysis in terms of the different ways of handling, connecting and finally presenting them in a theoretical format. Therefore, a number of strategies need to be implemented to ensure that the data are represented with accuracy, as well as to ensure that the choice of material for further exploration results in appropriate and representative samples from the field (Davies 2002: 193-212). For this reason, I used a method of categorisation and coding the material into thematic units and patterns to summarise and identify key questions that emerged at each stage (see for example fieldwork plan table, p. 35-36). My analysis followed a “top down” (LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 45) approach as it was initiated by writing descriptions of key moments (highlights) of each project or field trip and then incorporating the theory into my analysis. In this way, the description or observation of the project and the initial hypothesis were guiding the analysis and argument formation. Likewise, this approach allowed me to remain tied to the data as well as to revisit aspects of my experiences and observations. The use of a narrative form in discussing my reflections on a particular moment, for example a session (see Chapters 2 and 3) or a performance (see Chapter 4), was an important element in presenting the original data as well as placing the reader into the context in which the research project was carried out. Geertz (1973: 3-30) refers to this method as “thick description”, to emphasise the need for researchers/writers to give
overviews of the informants’ behaviours as well as the broad socio-cultural context in which the research process took place. However, the description is only one aspect of the analysis which needs to move further to a broader interpretation and to create the appropriate links with the initial research questions and framework. As Wolcott asserts:

Field data themselves, contradictory, subjective, unruly, partial as they invariably are, provide little basis for knowing with certainty. Subjecting them to rigorous analysis offers a way to achieve credibility (Wolcott 1994: 26).

Therefore in my research each description was followed by critical commentary and was linked to the appropriate theoretical framework to make a case for each chosen example. In this way I offered an inside/outside angle of the research process and combined my interpretations with the theory. Moreover, throughout my research I used quotations from interviews and/or written accounts, for example evaluation sheets, as a way to give a representative voice to the informants and retain the accuracy of the presented data (Davies 2002).

Language

The issues and challenges of language should be addressed as another key point for researching in two countries. The fact that the data collection was completed and/or translated into a second language raises a number of questions regarding the way I interpreted and analysed the data. The practical considerations involved in this process are relevant, given the distinctive specialised vocabulary used by the participants, which is related either to the habit of drug consumption itself (drug users’ slang), or the type of language used in the specific locality (e.g. in Manchester, UK). Even in the
cases where I shared the same first language with the participants, as in the projects I conducted in Athens, difficulties arose in the process of reporting the participants’ views in English. To overcome these pitfalls, I carefully transcribed the interviews and questionnaires with the assistance of native English speakers and professional translators (from Greek to English). With regard to the reflections on the theatre workshops, for design and delivery particular emphasis was given to the adaptation and application of theatre techniques involving some sort of psychical expression as derived from psychical theatre (Baim et al. 2002; LeCoq 2000; Polsky 1998) and the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) (Boal 2002, 1995). Finally, the implementation of creative exercises in which participants were asked to reflect on their experiences by writing a word or a phrase and/or drawing was another strategy used to facilitate the data gathering and avoid the language limitations (Baim et al. 2002; McCarthy, 2004; Moore 1997).

**Dealing with ethical issues**

One of the most significant current debates in applied theatre is concerned with the question of how we should deal with and negotiate the ethical issues involved in researching the application of theatre to community settings. Additionally, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the fact that ethical issues might arise in researching and reflecting upon our own practice. The issues of assurances of confidentiality, anonymity, gaining informed consent, taking safety measures to protect participants’ and facilitators’ safety as well as dealing with the intricacy related to the representation of personal narrative are among the ethical concerns in researching applied theatre.
One of the main difficulties in dealing with ethical concerns is related to the nature of making theatre in different settings, as well as the fact that, at times, the risk factors for both researchers and participants may be difficult to anticipate. Although the facilitator-researcher’s responsibilities and the dilemmas involved in the implementation of participatory theatre in the community context have already been discussed and problematised elsewhere (see Hughes 2005; McDonnell 2005; Murphy 2001; Nicholson 2005; Taylor, 2003; Thompson 2003), it should be noted that the lack of ethical guidance in researching performance and theatre might imply an extra degree of risk for the facilitator-researcher and the participants. In order to avoid these pitfalls Hughes suggests that

We need to work towards a reflexive ethics for applied theatre research and support the development of a critical subjectivity in researchers and practitioners to equip them to respond to ethical issues in practical contexts (Hughes, ibid. : 232).

Owing to the fact that this thesis research project was undertaken with marginalised and vulnerable groups, it became important to develop additional methods of dealing with any ethical issues. The ethical considerations involved here are related to gaining informed consent, assurances of confidentiality, anonymity, and taking safety measures in case of participants’ distress and/or to ensure my personal safety during the fieldwork. Hence, the measures taken to ensure the informants’ protection and safety were the use of signed consent forms guaranteeing confidentiality, and changing the participants’ names to protect their identity and ensure anonymity. Moreover, the ethical and professional protocols followed by each partnership organisation were discussed and agreed prior to each project. Therefore, the agencies’ ethical practices operated here as a shield and guide for the research process. However, it should be noted that a series
of negotiations needed to take place so as to approve the ‘appropriateness’ of the theatre projects and my interventions or observations. In some cases the workshops and performances touched upon sensitive topics, but these arose from fictional information and not from personal information from participants. Despite these measures, on occasion the nature of the topics discussed in workshops and performances, such as drug addiction and recovery, was relevant to the participants’ personal experiences. Therefore, they needed to be handled with caution and from a certain distance by the facilitator. Consequently, additional support was made available by the collaborating organisations, and thus for the duration of each workshop staff members were present and participated in the activities. Moreover, this research study gained ethical approval from the University of Manchester’s Senate Committee on the Ethics of Research on Human Beings prior the projects being carried out. Finally, it should be noted that throughout this study, the names of the informants have been changed to protect their identity and ensure confidentiality.

To sum up, by using a range of research methods it has been possible to create a methodology that combines theoretical ideas about the social reintegration of problem drug users with more practical modes of enquiry. Informed by the informants’ ‘real’ life stories as they explored and discussed them through creative and participatory modes of enquiry, this research was able to acquire knowledge about this specific group of individuals and combine it with theories of creativity, community and social reintegration to create an empirical framework within which to position my work on applied theatre with problem drug users. By using a synthesis of methodologies and constantly shifting the status of the researcher, the research managed to overcome its limitations and pitfalls, and to ensure the accuracy of the data collection and interpretation. This section emphasised the practical elements
of the research; next, I will move on to discuss the theoretical framework in which I based my interpretations.

PART II: Literature Review

Broadly this thesis is located in the fields of drug policy (in the UK and Greece), applied theatre and Greek performance, and I will draw on these three areas to articulate the development of my research methodology. In addition, as the research themes emerged through the practice, further literature searches on these areas were required; however this literature will be highlighted in the relevant chapters. The following section will review the recent focus of British and Greek drug policy by outlining the milestones in the policy change that occurred in the late 1990s to 2000s. Emphasis will be given to the drug treatment and social reintegration policy for problem drug users. This will be in an attempt to identify the barriers that these individuals face in their attempts to reintegrate, and make the case for positioning applied theatre within the broader spectrum of drug policy.

United Kingdom

In the mid 1990s UK drug policy shifted its emphasis away from its previous focus on harm reduction, which was based on prescribing heroin and substitute drugs to problem heroin users and needle exchange, and moved towards the implementation of initiatives with the aim of reducing drug-related crime. This shift was addressed in the Government’s ten-year strategy Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain (Home Office 1998), and continued in the second ten-year drug strategy 2008–18, Drugs: Protecting Families and Communities (Home Office 2008). Both strategies were predominantly based on developing and improving the pathways between drug treatment provision and the criminal justice system (Seddon et. al. 2008: 818). Therefore, the new policy objectives were largely based on compulsory
substitution treatment in the criminal justice system. The main focus of the
drug strategy has been a series of interventions which aimed to target and
manage problem drug-using offenders. These interventions include the Drug
Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO), which in 2005 was renamed the Drug
Rehabilitation Requirement (DRR) and involves drug testing and required
assessments on arrest (Reuter and Stevens 2007: 54-55). Moreover,
substitution treatment remains the main treatment in the UK with
methadone prescription as the predominant intervention. Hence, the system
is closely aligned to the criminal justice system to meet the strategy’s priority
of “protecting communities through robust enforcement to tackle drug
supply, drug-related crime and anti-social behaviour” (Home Office 2008: 3).

However, as a number of authors (Buchanan 2004; Buchanan and Young
2000; Duke 2006; Foster 2000; Seddon et. al. 2008) have argued, these
measures have led to the ‘criminalisation’ of drug policy, as police
enforcement and compulsory participation in treatment came into play to
tackle the drug problem. This emphasis on the drug-crime nexus led to
further marginalisation and isolation of problem drug users, who not only
have been forced into compulsory and institutionalised treatment, but have
also been portrayed as criminals. Consequently, the demonisation of problem
drug users has increased their social exclusion and operates as a barrier to
accessing public drug treatment services, due to the fear of discrimination,
preference and stigmatisation (Buchanan: 2004a: 4; Duke 2006). As Drucker
asserts:

In an environment frightened with powerful moral and legal
reactions to the use of drugs, the stigma attached to drugs
may come to be a more important factor than the biology of
addiction. The demonization of drugs and the
criminalization of the drug user (i.e. the war on drugs) could
be more damaging to the individual and society than drug use of addiction (Drucker, 2000: 31).

Drucker echoes Buchanan and Young (200: 419) who argue that a great number of problem drug users were socially excluded prior to initiating their drug habit. In fact, drug use has been seen in these cases as a coping mechanism that these individuals implement in order to manage in a hostile environment. The lack of provisions and limited chances for education and employment have been considered among the reasons which lead these individuals to involvement with the drug sub-culture and thereby their social isolation. While it is recognised that this is not the case with all people who are dealing with problematic drug use, a 2009 survey which was conducted by the UK Focal Point indicates:

There is a large volume of evidence from the UK showing the association between problem drug use and social exclusion. A high proportion of problem drug users have been socially excluded as children and young people; many are poorly educated; a high proportion live in inappropriate housing; and research in 2008 suggested that just over 80% (266,798) of problem drug users in England were in receipt of state benefit, representing seven per cent of all those receiving such benefits (UK Focal Point 2009: 135).

It seems therefore that aside from drug related crime there are a number of other social problems and variables which are highly associated with problem drug use. It appears that for many of these individuals, drug misuse is not the actual problem but rather the only ‘easy-access’ solution made available to them in order to cope with their life circumstances, a situation which is exacerbated by the current policies which are increasing the social isolation of numerous problem drug users. To sum up, the UK’s drug policy
direction since the 1990s has been to invest heavily in treatment, seeking to expand access significantly. However, there has been a strong emphasis on delivering treatment through the criminal justice system as a means of crime reduction. Methadone prescribing has been a key intervention alongside an additional concentration on psychological aspects rather than social reintegration. Arguably, by focusing so much on the crime which problem drug users commit, this policy may have further exacerbated problems of discrimination and stigmatisation.

Problem drug users

The UK Focal Point annual report (2009: 65) estimated that in 2006/2007 there were 404,884 problem drug users in the UK, a rate of 10.10 per thousand population. Of these, 147,855 were injecting drug users, a rate of 3.7 per thousand population. The highest prevalence of problem drug use continues to be amongst those in the 25 to 34 age group, and 83% of the registered problem drug users are males (UK Focal Point Ibid.: 71).

Drug treatment provision

The National Treatment Agency (NTA 2002, 2006) classifies drug treatment provision into a four tier system: Tier 1 refers to generic interventions such as information and advice, and consists of services offered by a wide range of professionals such as primary care or general medical services, social workers, teachers, probation officers and so on. The purpose of Tier 1 is to help problem drug users to access social care and treatment provision at Tiers 2, 3 and 4 through a system of direct referral to specialist treatment services. Tier 2 is open access drug treatment services which aim to engage problem drug users in harm reduction services. These services include needle exchange, advice and information and support to reduce the harm associated
with drug misuse such as sharing of injecting equipment. Tier 3 services are structured community-based drug treatment services, and include psychotherapeutic interventions and structured counselling, motivational interventions, methadone maintenance programmes, community detoxification, and day care provided either as a drug- and alcohol-free programme or as an adjunct to methadone treatment. Finally Tier 4 consists of services which are highly specialised, for example specialist liver units, mental health services, criminal justice interventions, DRR and others (NTA 2002: 16 -17). Part of this study was situated in Tier 3 as it took place in two structured day programmes, ADS and DASH, both located in deprived areas of Manchester. For this reason, and due to the specifics of this study, I am going to offer an overview of these day programmes, their rationale and structure. This will be in an attempt to link back to my research and give background information on the context in which my research project was conducted. I will then return to this in Chapter 3 to address how the applied theatre projects fit in and contributed in the overall system and structure of the programmes.

According to the NTA (2006: 43), structured day programmes (SDPs) are based in community centres and provide a range of interventions for a fixed period of time. SDPs are abstinence programmes, and implement various cognitive-behavioural theories, including social learning theory (Bandura 1977), cognitive therapy (Beck 1979), motivational interviewing (Miller and Rollnick 1991) and the cycle of change (Prochaska et al 1992). This type of treatment is based on compulsory client attendance; clients need to follow a set timetable of activities for three to five days per week. The timetable is based on the individuals’ specific needs and may include group work as well as educational, life skills and creative activities. For example, the theatre project that I conducted in ADS was part of the service’s programme to offer
opportunities for involvement in creative activities as part of their daily structured programme (see also Chapter 3). This type of treatment has been largely based upon two main parameters: behavioural change and abstinence.

Evidence from National Treatment Outcomes Research Study (Davies et. al 2009: iii) showed that a significant proportion of those entering treatment had successful exits from treatment and long-term sustained abstinence. However, it can be argued that a limitation of the structured day programme is related to its focus on the psychological rather than social variables of addiction. Buchanan (2004b) argues that UK treatment policy and subsequently SDPs have largely been shaped by three key theoretical frameworks: motivational interviewing, relapse prevention, and the cycle of change. These approaches emphasise on the physiological and psychological nature and consequences of dependence but fail to take into account the social components of addiction, for example the discrimination faced by problem drug users. As she moves on to assert:

The social dimension has been largely overlooked by ‘treatment’ agencies which have concentrated upon tackling the physiological and psychological aspects of dependency, along with a growing emphasis (promoted by the involvement of correctional agencies) to protect society. (Buchanan Ibid: 3-4).

It appears that the majority of services provide guidance and support on how to achieve self control and eventually become drug-free. However, due to the nature and structure of the treatment programmes they are not eligible to provide the sustainable support needed to fully support the individuals on their journey to recovery. This is due to the fact, as I will discuss below, that all the reintegration interventions operate outside the drug provision
umbrella and are the same for all disadvantaged and excluded individuals rather than being specifically designed for recovering users. Recovery journeys are varied and complex, and require different forms of support and engagement at different points of what can be a long process. Problem drug users need a range of evidence-based services that can provide the right kind of help in the right way at the right time.

Social reintegration

The 2009 UK Focal Point annual report suggests that social reintegration is a key element within recent drug strategies, and recognises the need to provide support with housing, employment and social reintegration. The report lists the following programmes:

1) The Supporting People Programme, which provides housing-related support to vulnerable groups generally, including people with drug problems;
2) Progress2Work (p2w), which provides employment support; and
3) Social inclusion programmes such as Positive Futures, which can bridge the gap between universal and targeted services.

Attention is also focussed on the impact of parental drug use on children (UK Focal Point: 2009: 139-145).

Additionally, a survey was conducted by EMCDDA in 2003 with the purpose of reporting on the state of social reintegration policy and services among the members of EU. The survey results showed that in the UK there are not many interventions specifically aimed at reintegrating recovering drug users into society, but there are instead large-scale initiatives accessible to all groups that deal with exclusion. These initiatives are related to improving education, health and housing, and providing assistance in finding employment (EMCDDA 2003: 76-77). However, as the findings of EMCDDA
report indicate, “Drug users often find it difficult to access mainstream services, due to fear, prejudice and discrimination” (EMCDDA Ibid.:81), a factor that I addressed above in my discussion on the limitations of the UK drug policy. It therefore appears that a number of problem drug users struggle to effectively engage with social reintegration services even after completion of treatment due to fear of further stigmatisation and exclusion. This is due to the fact that the majority of interventions are not specifically designed to meet the needs of recovering users and are designed instead for a more general population. In summary, it seems that although there are many social interventions, most of them are general and thus accessible to anyone. It is important to become aware of the fact that many recovering users may feel insecure and with low self confidence about participating in daily activities, such as attending training, as they feel subject to critical attitudes from the rest of the population. For this reason, much of the time drug users alienate themselves and find it difficult to actively engage with the services.

Greece

In Greece, the modern social problem of drugs as an epidemic emerged in the late 1970s. Hitherto, the drug situation in Greece was presented as ‘idyllic’ with only a small number of reported drug users, mainly users of hashish; most of these were seafarers or followers of a tradition which was initiated by refugees from Asia Minor, the musicians of rebetiko,4 also known as hashiklides.5 However, in the 1980s, approximately ten years after the rest of Europe, the first signs of the drug epidemic appeared in the country (Kokkevi et. al 2007). This delay in the increase of the number of problem drug users caused a late response in realising the nature of the problem and

4 Rebetiko is a type of urban Greek folk music which was flourished between 1920s to 1960s
5 In the Greek slang “hashiklides” refers to the regular users of the drug hashish.
developing the necessary provisions to accommodate the growing number of problem drug users (mainly heroin users) who were seeking treatment. The demand for a more holistic form of treatment increased alongside the necessity to improve the procedures and entry requirements to treatment programmes. Hitherto, acceptance into public treatment programmes was made only through referral procedures, which at times operated as an obstacle and even discouraged the process of seeking treatment. Moreover, the first public centre for the prevention and treatment of drug dependency, 18 ANO, was based in the Attica State Psychiatric Hospital. Hence it is believed that its status as part of a mental health institution operated as a barrier in attracting people due to the dominant social perception connected with mental health asylums (Matsa 2001, 2008a).

Since the mid-1990s Greek drug policy has given priority to meeting the objectives that have been set up by the European Union’s strategy, and involves limiting drug use in general, decreasing the availability of illicit drugs, decreasing drug-related deaths and negative health consequences for the user, increasing the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions, and reducing crime (Rigas and Papadaki 2008 :118). Moreover, one of the major priorities set by the current drug policy is to ensure the ‘right to treatment’ by investing heavily in treatment provision (National Action Plan on Drugs 2008–2012 2008). Hence, in 1993 Greece established the Organisation Against Drugs (OKANA), which to date is the biggest public provider of substitution treatment programmes. Since 1993 it has distributed methadone, while in 2002 buprenorphine was introduced (EMCDDA 2010). Moreover, the same priorities have been revised and included in the National Action Plan on Drugs 2008–2012 (2008). The current Greek drug strategy’s main priority is to ensure the right to treatment and the gradual elimination of waiting lists. This is intended to be achieved through the development of a network of
agencies and the systematic expansion and decentralisation of drug
treatment services, as up until 2002, the majority of treatment units were
based only in the big cities such as Athens, Thessaloniki, Patra and Irakleio.

The National Strategy appears comprehensive and its priority agenda seems
to recognise areas that need improvement and development. Moreover, the
latest research findings suggest that some of these objectives have been
already met (EPIPSY 2006). However, in practice its success remains
questionable. In 2006, Greece was fifth among European countries in the
number of individuals under the age of 25 who died from drug misuse
(Kathimerini 2006). Moreover, the waiting lists of OKANA, also known as
‘black’ lists, for the prescription of methadone remain up to five years (To
Vima 2006). This is due to the fact that the existing treatment programmes are
inadequate in number to cover the entire problem drug population. Hence,
the waiting lists are becoming death lists for a number of problem drug users
who lack support and have limited opportunities to access the appropriate
treatment programmes. At the same time, a number of claims have been
made (Kathimerini 2006; To Vima 2006) that methadone is being distributed
on the Greek drug market at a higher price than heroin. It therefore seems
that the drug policy’s attempts to enhance the ‘right to treatment’ is far from
the current reality of problem drug users, who are dying while waiting to
obtain access to public treatment programmes.

Furthermore, another of the limitations of the Greek drug policy is that it
fails to consider the problems with the Anti-Drug Law (1987) which,
including its amendments, is the main law regulating drug control in Greece
(Kourakis 2006, EMCDDA 2010). Under this law, drug-related offenders are
divided between dependent and non-dependent, and therefore the
prosecution is influenced as to whether the drug in possession was obtained
for personal or commercial use. This is to say that the length of punishment depends on the amount of drugs obtained and/or possessed; however, the law does not specify the exact amount of drugs under which the possession would be classified as for personal or for commercial use. Likewise, the law does not make any distinction between hard and soft drugs. Therefore, the law’s limitations lead to serious contradictions, and as Kourakis (2006: 22) claims, in practice the penalties imposed on drug-related offenders vary from court to court, which means they are not always consistent. Kourakis refers to two typical examples of conflicting court decisions in which the first case gave a five-year sentence for the purchase and possession of 58kg of hashish, while in the second case the court gave a penalty of 12 years plus a fine of €5000 for the possession of 15g of hashish. It can be therefore be argued that the ambiguity of such court decisions has a negative impact on the control of drugs in Greece; it leads to further criminalisation of drug users and increases their marginalisation and social isolation. In addition, for dependent drug offenders who end up in prison, the lack of alternatives to imprisonment, as well as the limited opportunities for public treatment within prison makes these individuals unable to break the cycle of addiction, which has now been increased due to their imprisonment (Kremmidas 2006). In summary, the issues of social injustice and lack of provision are the main obstacles that problem drug users in Greece need to overcome in order to access drug treatment programmes, let alone reintegrate into society.

Problem drug users

Recent surveys conducted by EMCDDA estimate that in 2007 the number of problem drug users was between 18,224 and 23,181 (out of the total Greek population which in 2008 was estimated as 11,213,785). The majority of these live in Athens. As far as treatment demand is concerned, in 2007 a total of
4,786 individuals entered treatment, out of whom 2,246 were first time treatment clients.

Drug Treatment Provision

EMCDDA estimates that in Greece there are 54 officially-recognised treatment programmes which are run by both governmental and non-governmental organisations (Greek Reitox Focal Point 2005). The majority of these programmes are substance-free, and the main theoretical models used are therapeutic communities and systematic approaches as well as psychodynamics theory. In general, the main objectives of drug-free treatment units include total abstinence from illegal drugs, improvement of personal and social skills, improvement of health and family and social relations, decrease of deviant behaviour, and vocational integration.

As for substitution treatment units, their general objectives include minimisation of drug-related risks, not only for drug users themselves but also for the community, and gradual detoxification from all drugs (EMCDDA 2003; Greek Reitox Focal Point 2005). According to Rigas and Papadaki (2008), the main types of therapeutic programmes that have been widely used in Greece are drug-free adult residential communities, drug-free outpatient communities, drug-free adult units, drug-free youth units, and substitution (detoxification) units. The problem drug user may access the programmes via self-referral or be referred from one unit to another.

This thesis’s research projects in Greece were carried out in drug-free residential communities and therefore I would like to focus on this type of treatment. The methodological approach that has been implemented in these services is a combination of elements from motivational psychology,
existential-humanistic psychology, cognitive-behavioural approaches, and family systemic therapy (Rigas and Papadaki 2008). While the limitations of these approaches coincide with my discussion of UK policy, here I would like to draw attention to the fact that the majority of implemented programmes are residential. Pouloupoulos and Tsiboukli (1998: n.p.) argue that the limitations of the residential programmes are related to their structures as protected and closed environments, which contain the danger that the individual who stays for a prolonged period of time is likely to develop institutional behaviour. Hence when members return to society they might face a difficult adjustment to society’s norms.

**Social Reintegration**

As far as social reintegration policy is concerned, it appears that there is a wide range of social reintegration services appealing exclusively to recovering drug users. According to EMCDDA’s (2003: 23-24) report, in Greece a distinction has to be made between social reintegration interventions, with regard to whether they are carried out in a specific physical ‘social rehabilitation centre’, or through a ‘programme’, which operates independently from a centre. At the moment there are 16 social rehabilitation units in operation in Greece offering services to drug users who complete treatment. Greek professionals in the drug field approach after-care and reintegration interventions as an essential part of drug addiction treatment and therefore a wide range of social reintegration facilities are available and specially designed to provide for recovering drug users at all stages of their treatment (EMCDDA Ibid: 25).

**Comparison**

This section has given an account of the social perception of drug use, the current policies, and the available treatment methods concerning problem
drug use in the UK and Greece. The evidence that emerged from the literature review supports the fact that, albeit for different reasons, problem drug users in both countries need to overcome a number of obstacles before they get access and support from public drug services. While in the UK the drug policy gives priority to the provision of better access to effective treatment, particularly for vulnerable and excluded groups, and has developed appropriate mechanisms through multi-agency referrals or compulsory treatment orders, in reality it has dismissed the social status of people dealing with problematic drug use, and has thereby failed to consider how their life circumstances might operate as obstacles in their decision to seek treatment. The lack of specially designed interventions to meet the needs of recovering users has increased the barriers to social reintegration. Additionally, in Greece the inadequacy of public drug services to support recovering drug users, the strict yet ambivalent legislation and the social perception of problem drug users do not contribute to ensuring the ‘right to treatment’, as many problem drug users either end up on long waiting lists or in prison. Meanwhile, the ‘overprotection’ of the substance-free treatment programmes further isolates the individual. As a consequence they might experience a difficulty in adjusting to societal norms after the competition of their treatment. Nevertheless, the specially designed reintegration centres operate as support mechanisms in assisting individuals to transit from inpatient programmes to the outside world. In summary, it seems that both UK and Greek drug policies have failed to consider the social dimensions of drug dependency and as a result have led to further dismissing rather than meeting the needs of this population. The demonisation of people suffering from problem drug use operates as another negative influence, and, as I attempt to address in my analysis, sadly prejudice, stigmatisation and discrimination remain the common issues that problem drug users need to overcome in order to reintegrate into society.
The title of this section has been borrowed from Theatre Applications: Performance with a Purpose 6

In the introduction to this thesis, I attempted to position my research with problem drug users within the field of applied theatre by examining the relevant literature and practice. In my review of the literature, I identified a lack of references concerned with the implementation of applied theatre with this group of people. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis it became necessary to draw information from the broader literature of applied theatre and its related strands, such as community theatre, theatre in prison, Theatre in Education (TiE) and Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). Additionally, considering the fact that this research took place in two countries, the relevant Greek literature was examined in an attempt to draw comparisons between the research undertaken in Greece and in the UK. As I pointed out in the introduction, the term ‘applied theatre’ and its related terms are not used in the Greek literature, and therefore, due to the lack of consistent documentation and references to any form of theatre that could be directly linked with applied theatre, it was essential for my analysis to consider forms derived from Greek popular and political theatre which allow me to interpret the practice and its emerging themes (see fieldwork plan p. 36-38), and will be discussed below. Finally, in this thesis the application of theatre either in the form of projects or as organised performance events had a clear purpose: to identify factors by which theatre has the potential to help problem drug users towards their social reintegration. Hence, a comprehensive review of the literature on political forms of theatre such as propaganda theatre, didactic theatre and activist theatre (Boal 1998; Cohen-Cruz 1994, 1998; Jackson 2007) was important for the development of my argument. My thesis

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6 The title of this section has been borrowed from Theatre Applications: Performance with a Purpose, international conference which was held on 21-23 April 2010 at Central School of Speech and Drama in London. For additional information see http://theatreapplications.org.uk/home/ (accessed 14 August 2010)
is broadly divided into two main categories: theatre-based projects that I conducted or observed (theatre applications), and performance events that I organised or observed (performances with a purpose).

There is an expanding body of literature on applied theatre which deals with the application of theatre (Ackroyd 2000; Aitken 2007; Blatner 2007; Jackson 2007; Nicholson 2005a; Prendergast 2009; Prentki and Preston 2008; Taylor 2003; Thompson 2003a, 2005) and/or with role of performance (Boon and Plastow 1998, 2004; Cohen-Cruz 1998, 2005; Govan 2007; Kuppers 2007; Kuppers and Robertson 2007; Thompson 2009; Thompson et.al.), and in this section I will analyse how the literature in each area has added additional features to the overall argument of this thesis. In this endeavour, and considering the themes which emerged during the research study (see fieldwork plan p. 36-38), I have pinned down the following thematic units: the idea of community; creativity and active participation; and performance with a purpose. The theoretical framework is situated between the literature on community theatre (predominantly in the UK as my research context), the role of creativity and active participation in applied theatre, and finally performance with a purpose. At this point, I must explain that in discussing the first two themes, my approach will follow a broad overview, as opposed to the final theme which will focus only on examining examples from the Greek performance with a purpose. This is due to three main reasons: a) the themes that will be explored emerged from my research in Greece and, therefore, the examination of the relevant Greek literature was significant in interpreting the research outcomes; b) the same literature has been used later on in Chapters 2 and 4 to support my argument and make the case for the use of theatre with problem drug users; and c) to inform the reader about the types of traditions that root and influence both the practice and analysis.
What follows is an outline of the relevant literature on these subjects in an attempt to understand how they are related to this study. The purpose is to identify how my research with problem drug users makes a contribution to applied theatre as well as to construct a theoretical framework within which to position the argument of this thesis. However, one of the problems involved with this task lies in discussing each theme separately when, in practice, they have many overlaps. A second challenge is to avoid posing a critique of the themes as they have been understood and used generally in applied theatre; but rather to remain close to my research questions and explain how the literature is related to this study. To this end, this section is structured in such a way as to begin with a brief account of the theories and ideas from the areas that have been of most importance to this study, and also to offer an introduction to the questions which led to my research and which will be later discussed separately in each chapter.

**The idea of community**

The concept of community is a recurring area of concern in applied theatre. Additionally the term ‘community’ has been used to define and promote practices such as community theatre, community performance and community-based theatre. In chapter 2, I am going to offer a comprehensive and detailed review on the literature of community and its multiple meanings. Moreover, I am going to discuss extensively the issue of community and how it has been used in applied theatre, alongside the basic terminological concerns which are related to the use (and non-use) of terms such as community theatre. Here I would like to present the origins of the idea of community in applied theatre and link it to my research subject. The reason for my focus on the relationship between applied theatre and community is related to its emergence as a repetitive theme in my research, where a quest for community and belonging was addressed by a number of
the projects which I either conducted or observed (see fieldwork plan). The history and evolution of community theatre (or other relevant terms such as community-based performance) have been documented elsewhere (Bradby and McCormick 1978; Craig 1980; DiCenzo 1996; Gard 1975; Itzin 1980; Kershaw 1992, 2004; Van Even 1988), and in this section I will highlight the themes and rationales which have influenced the development of community theatre in Britain, as the focus of my research, and how applied theatre relates to these ideas today.

Historically, applied theatre has long been regarded for its potential to foster communities, an assumption that was based on the fact that theatre is an activity which involves the qualities of collaboration, solidarity and affiliation (Arvanitakis 2008; Cohen-Cruz 1998; Erven 2001; Kershaw, 1992; Kuppers 2007; Nellhaus and Haediche 2001; Nicholson 2005a). In Britain, the late 1960s saw the development of community theatre, which refers to a form of theatre in which community members actively participate in the process of creating a piece of performance meaningful for them. The resulting community plays were based and performed in designated areas in which they provided entertainment, as well as opportunities for residents to participate in the production and shaping of a script (Khan 1980: 64). Between the 1960s and 1970s community theatre became firmly established with the emergence of theatre companies such as Theatre Workshop, The People Show, CAST, Welfare State and 7:48, among others (McGrath 1991). Since its early days, there has been an increasing interest in addressing factors by which the application of theatre in a specific community of locality, interest or identity can have an impact on community building and community empowerment (Coult and Kershaw 1983; Kershaw 1992, 1999). Hence, the emergence of community theatre can be described as a cultural intervention which operated under the principles of “egalitarianism,
collectivism and participatory democracy” (Kershaw 1992: 145). It seems that community theatre’s intention was to enhance the community’s participation and cohesion. It also aimed to facilitate the community’s identity reconstruction by promoting solidarity and collective enterprise and by establishing strong relationships and collaborations between the participants and the artists. Therefore the concepts of giving voice, enhancing solidarity and supporting the community to reconstruct a new identity were particularly relevant to the rationale of community theatre (Kershaw 1992: 141-145). Even with the decline of the term community theatre (the reasons for which I am going to explain in Chapter 2), other participatory forms of theatre have been used as powerful tools in promoting the rediscovery or reconnection of individuals with their communities (Taylor 2003; Fisher 2004).

Community theatre’s idea of engaging the members of a specific community in the development of a theatrical piece and then presenting it to the wider community was a particularly useful point of reference both during the process of conducting the projects referred to in this thesis and in analysing the projects’ outcomes. In the cases of the projects in En Drasi in Athens and ADS in Oldham, the issue of using theatre to foster community while addressing the community’s narrative was significant. As far as problem drug users in these projects were concerned, the concepts of community and belonging were important issues of consideration for these individuals, and to a certain degree, participation in theatre was felt to be a promising medium to generate their idea of community. It was also approached as an appropriate means to understand the different stages of recovery and the individuals’ shifts from the community of drug culture to the community of the treatment programme and, finally, to the community of recovered users. Community is a complex and ambiguous concept, regarding both the
problem drug users, and the role of applied theatre, and prompts a set of questions which framed the analysis in Chapter 2, such as: How realistic are the assumptions that applied theatre can build community? And what is the type of community to which problem drug users truly belong, or would like to belong?

**Creativity and active participation**

Applied theatre can be described as a constellation of practices which share the belief that theatre has the potential to connect people as well as to encourage positive change in their lives. The origins of this tradition can be found in social, educational and political settings. As a consequence, political theatre or theatre of the left, theatre in education, community theatre, theatre for development and theatre of the oppressed are regarded as its basis. Traditionally, applied theatre shares the idea that theatre has the ‘potential’ to activate individuals’ creative components, to unite thoughts, feelings and actions as well as to encourage positive change in people’s lives. In chapter 3, I will provide a comprehensive review on the theories of creativity in the arts and discuss its role in the implementation of theatre with different communities. Primarily since the late 1990s, there has been a growing body of literature which examines the social impact of participation in applied theatre (Govan 2007; Hughes and Wilson 2004; Jackson 2007; Nicholson 2005a; Taylor 2003; Thompson 2003). For example, authors such as Taylor (2003: 3) have claimed applied theatre to be a “transformative agent”, and Etherton and Prentkis (2006: 149) pointed out its contribution to finding “effective strategies for making the voices of those who are economically or socially excluded heard, and also listened to”.

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This interest coincides with governmental policies and the Arts Council’s funding strategies which both appear to support the use of arts in tackling social exclusion (DCMS 1999). In light of this, a number of publications (Belfiore 2002; Belfiore and Bennett 2008; Haudicke 2003; Matarasso 1997) critically assessed the assumption of what arts can actually ‘do’. For example, Belfiore problematises the rationale behind the policy agenda by asserting that art projects with the aim of alleviating social exclusion might lead to what she refers to as “an instrumental cultural policy” (Belfiore 2002: 92). Additionally, Haudicke (2003: 72) questions whether participation in the arts should always regarded as an empowering experience. A useful response to the above concerns is given by Matarasso, who asserts:

What matters so much about participation in the arts is not just that it gives people the personal and practical skills to help themselves and become involved in society – though it does – but that it opens routes into the wider democratic process and encourages people to want to take part (Matarasso 1997: 88)

Matarasso’s concept of participation as a means of encouraging positive change and active citizenship was an important starting point in working with problem drug users. As Waller and Mahony (1999) claim, the characteristics that can be found in people dealing with addiction are relevant to difficulties in expression and communication of emotion, loss of control, low self confidence and isolation. Also, Winship (1999: 46-47) highlights that people in recovery from addiction are often complicated owing to the fact that they tend to be introverted and have difficulties in interacting with others. As a consequence, they do not want to be with others and therefore they distance themselves from the rest of society. These characteristics have been enlarged due to stigmatisaton and discrimination which has resulted in their further social isolation. Nevertheless, in my discussion about the social policy of drug users I stressed how drug policies’
and treatment provisions lack an emphasis on activating the individuals’ social components, which builds more barriers to participation and involvement in social life and citizenship. In Chapter 3, I will articulate how the same characteristics existed in the individuals who participated in the projects of this study. However, their initial uneasiness in getting involved in the creative process and participating were reversed and became an overwhelming impulse for creativity, reflection and collaboration with each other. Similarly, the participants’ responses formed a useful context and opened new pathways by which socialisation and the re-establishment of the idea of belonging appeared to be of great significance for problem alcohol and drug users, together with the concept of being active citizens and making active changes in their lives. This operated as a starting point in examining how theatre might have the potential to assist the individual towards their social reintegration as it is linked with humanisation and re-socialisation. Participation in a theatre project has been therefore approached as a first step for the engagement of the participants into a creative activity, thereby encouraging them to engage with their lives more broadly and introducing them to alternative ways of expression and communication. Hence, the concept of active participation in the creative process was an important variable in this study as it allowed me to understand the problem drug users’ attempts to re-establish their senses of community and identity as well as their social roles as active citizens. In Chapter 3 I will illustrate my argument more clearly by using selected examples from the ADS project.

Performance with a Purpose

Schechner (2002: 37) proposes that the seven functions of performance are:

1. to entertain
2. to make something that is beautiful
3. to mark or change identity
4. to make or foster community
5. to heal
6. to teach, persuade or convince
7. to deal with the sacred and/or the demonic.

Schechner’s categorisation of the functionalities of performance is a useful way of conceptualising the performance case studies that I examine in Chapters 2 and 4. Primarily the categories “to mark or change identity”, “to heal” and “to teach, persuade or convince” are directly related to my discussion of how performances by recovering users can promote social acceptance. Without dismissing the fact that there are many crossovers between each of the above categories, something which in fact Schechner (2002: 37) himself acknowledges, I would like to emphasise only the three categories mentioned above as they are most closely related to my argument. That to say, the functionality of this thesis’s performance case studies lay between the participants’/performers’ imperative to ‘tell’ their stories and by doing so to present their new identities and send a message to the audience. Thus, the functions of marking or changing identity, healing, and teaching, persuading or convincing all co-exist and interact with each other in the performances with the purpose of raising issues related to drug recovery. This echoes Jackson and his definition of propaganda theatre or “campaigning theatre” as:

The theatre that sets out, sometimes evangelically, to persuade its audience of the rightness of its views; it will usually involve a degree of active campaigning for that view, and there is rarely any question of other views being taken into account unless it is to undermine or reject them or demonstrate how little credence should be paid to them (Jackson 2007: 15-16).
In Chapters 2 and 4 I aim to discuss in depth three different types of performances which operated as propaganda theatre by analysing their approaches as well as their ‘success’ in terms of persuading their audiences. However, what I would like to do here is to present three types of propaganda theatre as derived from the history of Greek theatre. As I explained in the introduction to this section, I am going to focus on discussing examples of Greek theatre as the second context of this research, and in an attempt to both inform the reader about these traditions and also bring together the two countries. I must, however, note that I am aware of the crossovers and similarities between the British form of performance with a purpose as derived from the traditions of agitprop (Pal 2008), alternative theatre (Craig 1980; DiCenzo 1996; Itzin 1980) and community theatre (Gard 1975; Kershaw 1992, 2004). Moreover, while there is a diverse history of political and socially orientated theatre in Greece (Bacopoulou-Halls 1982; Constantinidis 1996, 2007; Grammatas 2002 2005; Mavromoustakos 2005; Puchner 1989; Sideris 1999; Stamatopoulou-Vasilakou 2007) for the purpose of this thesis I want to draw out three themes that are relevant: performances that are organised at the centre of the community in neighbourhood squares or town halls; performance as a form of campaigning to address a social issue; and the use of Greek myth or classical scripts.

Performances at the centre of the community

In the 17th century the form of popular theatre also known as *Omilies* emerged on the island of Zakynthos while it was under Venetian rule. This theatrical form is believed to have some influence from the Italian comedic form, *Commedia dell’ Arte*, as well as from the popular theatre of Crete, and was initially developed to express the struggle between the rich and poor and issues of social injustice (Adamidou 2000; Arvanitakis 2008; Grammatas
2003; Puchner 1984, 1989, 2003, 2005, 2007). Every year during the Carnival celebrations (February/March) the islanders (strictly men only) formulate small amateur theatre groups in which they either create their own scripts or draw from the *Omilies*’ traditional repertoire. Traditionally the themes of the scenarios have been satirical and critical of politics or other issues of concern in the community. Each group has to prepare, direct, rehearse and finally perform, predominantly on outdoor stages on streets or in squares. The tradition continues today, and the modern *Omilies* have retained their traditional structure, but their themes are now concerned with current social problems such as environmental issues (Giatras 2004). As I will discuss extensively in Chapters 2 and 4, the tradition of organising performances and presenting them at the centre of the community is evident in the projects with drug users in Greece. For instance, in the project with En Drasi TC in the prison of Koridallos, the women’s performance took place in the living room of the TC (the meeting point for the TC members), in front of an audience drawn from the organisation’s staff members, other inmates and women who were in the induction phase of treatment. Additionally, every year 18 ANO organises performances in the local community, predominantly located in neighborhood squares in various districts of Athens. These two examples of performances link with the tradition of *Omilies* on the basis of their common interest in organising and presenting a theatre piece with the purpose of calling for the community’s involvement and action to protest against social injustice.

*Performance as a form of campaigning*

The ‘Resistance Theatre of the Mountains’ was a form of agitprop theatre which flourished during the Nazi occupation as a way to express resistance and thus it was used by guerilla soldiers in the mountains in Greece. Kotzioulas (1976: 9-11) explains that the troupes performed in villages as a
means of promoting resistance and unity among the Greeks, but also to provide entertainment in the difficult times of the Nazi occupation. He also points out that the performances operated as a medium to enhance creativity and solidarity between the troupes’ members and the audience (Mauromoustakos 2005: 47; Kaftatzis 1990; Kathimerini 2003; Kotzioulas 1976; Mahairas 1999; Myrsiades 1977). The idea of organising performances as a way to call for community unity and action and likewise to campaign for the community’s rights was similarly noticeable in the projects that I carried out in Greece (En Drasi and 18 ANO). In both cases the performances were designed as a form of campaigning and as I am going to illustrate in each of the cases, the performances symbolise an attempt to connect to the community and persuade them to take action towards social justice in the community.

The use of Greek myth or classical script

The declaration of the Civil War (resulting in the intense struggle between the Left and Right) led many leftists to the Prison Islands of Makronisos, Trikeri, and Aí Stratis (Grammatas 2002: 187-189; Bacopoulou-Halls 1997; Myrsiades and Myrsiades 1999; Van Steen 2005). The exiles staged performances of classical Greek tragedies and foreign classics such as Sophocles’s Antigone and Eugene O’Neill’s Days without End, but also created their own scripts. Despite the issues of censorship and strict surveillance, the exiles eventually managed to overcome these difficulties and find means and methods to communicate their messages and keep the resistance spirit alive. However, it should be highlighted that the use of theatre in this context did not operate only as an act of resistance but also as a form of escapism and even survival (Myrsiades and Myrsiades 1999). As Van Steem argues, “It [theatre] restored dignity, individuality, and self-assertion, no matter what
the conditions or outcomes were (...) It offered ideals and reasons to *survive*, and it forged a *collective identity* of pride and resilience among the political detainees” (Van Steem, ibid.: 347, my italics). As I am going to address in Chapter 4, this rationale became evident in the case of the performances I observed, in particular in the work of the 18 ANO theatre group which mainly adapts plays and organises performances as a way of promoting its members’ identity formation and acceptance.

To sum up, in this section, I have attempted to demonstrate how the literature on applied theatre has informed the knowledge and development of this thesis. In many respects, it has been driven by the multiplicity of practices which are related to performance for a purpose. By taking as a starting point the themes that emerged during the research process and by combining them with the concepts and theories of community theatre, theatre and drama in education, and the Greek performance with a purpose, I attempt to position my research in the broader spectrum of applied theatre. It seems, therefore, that the concepts of community, creativity, active participation and performance with a purpose are the themes that are particularly important in increasing our understanding of the implementation of applied theatre with problem drug users.

**Conclusion**

By implementing a constellation of research methods, it has become possible to construct an appropriate methodology that allowed the investigation into the use of theatre with problem drug users. The combination of theoretical ideas about theatre with more practical modes of inquiry has created a framework in which different forms of practice and different approaches have produced important material for further elaboration and the construction of this thesis’s argument. In order to support the argument it
was important to consider the current drug policies in both countries. Moreover, the examination of supplementary literature on applied theatre, community, creativity, active participation and performance studies was significant in raising my understanding of applied theatre and, likewise, in helping me to conceptualise how my research contributes to the current debates. Hence, this chapter has illustrated the key thematic areas of interest and has elaborated on how a multi-method approach has helped to respond to the practice and to formulate the three research themes which form the basis of this thesis. It has also attempted to highlight how the review of the literature was combined with my experiences of organising and observing examples of practice. Likewise, it has illustrated how the cultural characteristics and histories of drug policy and performance with a purpose in the two counties inspired and influenced the outcomes of this research. As I have demonstrated, the concepts of community, creativity and hope became particularly important for understanding the implementation of theatre in drug services and especially in arguing how theatre can encourage social inclusion. I will therefore attempt to discuss these concepts further in order to question and criticise as well as justify my research outcomes. The next chapter will deal with the theme of community by describing the project in the therapeutic community En Drasi in Athens.
CHAPTER 2: APPLIED THEATRE AND THE “DESIRE FOR COMMUNITY”

‘Community’ is nowadays another name for paradise lost - but one to which we dearly hope to return, and so we feverishly seek the roads that may bring us there. (Bauman 2001: 3)

One of the most significant current discussions in applied theatre is concerned with the question of how researchers and practitioners should respond to the concept of community (Van Erven 2001; Haedicke and Nellhaus 2001; Nicholson 2005a: 3-98; Kuppers and Robertson 2007). The focus of this chapter will be the notion of community and the feeling of belonging. In particular emphasis will be given to the concept of getting together and the potential dynamics of experiencing profound moments of togetherness and solidarity as a motivational force to foster the participants’ desire for a better future. It will therefore look at the idea of formulating a “temporary community” (Westlake 2001) through participation in an applied theatre project. The main questions addressed in the chapter are: How does applied theatre praxis understand and interrelate with the notion of community? Can applied theatre operate as a means of escapism from the current community of belonging (or community of exclusion) by encouraging its participants to create images of their desired communities? To what degree can it facilitate the journey towards the desire for a better community?

The ideas and thoughts of this chapter grew out of a practical research project which I organised and facilitated in May and June 2008. The project took place in the therapeutic community En Drasi (In Action), part of the NGO KETHEA. This therapeutic community is located in the Central Female
Prison of Koridallos in Athens, Greece, and offers counselling support and advice to female inmates who wish to reduce their drug-taking and live a substance-free life. The primary aim of the theatre project was to create a piece of theatre based on women’s experiences in the therapeutic programme, and for this play to be performed by the women on 26 June, International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, before an audience drawn from the organisation’s staff members, inmates and women who were in the induction phase of treatment. For reasons that I shall explain in this chapter, the project raised important questions regarding the idea of community, the sense of belonging and its dynamics, but also about the role of applied theatre within this context. As I have already raised in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the concept of community appeared to be a common theme in all the projects that I conducted as part of this study. For this reason it was believed that it was important to initiate this thesis by broadly examining the idea of community as a way to set up the framework for the discussion that will follow in Chapters 3 and 4. Although the project that I am going to discuss was conducted in 2008 and constitutes the last project that I organised as part of my research, it however prompted a set of important questions with regard to the idea of community and, in this way, upgraded and challenged all the previous projects. To this end, it became important to address the associated meanings of community, as will be signposted at various times during the course of this thesis.

The overall structure of this chapter takes its form in two parts. The first part gives an account of the theoretical framework of this project. It starts by reviewing the literature on community and its various meanings offered by sociologists, anthropologists, community psychologists, radical psychologists, (Bauman 2001, 2007; Cohen 1985; McConachie 2001; Williams 1976) and attempts to connect them with the literature on drug subculture
(Blackman 2004; Shaw 2002; Sussman and Ames 2001; White 1996). I do this in order to produce an understanding of the concept of community (the idea of belonging) and the reasons for promoting its importance for individual wellbeing. Hence this section questions what it is about a sense of community that is so vital for individual wellbeing, with particular reference to people with drug-dependency problems.

To further articulate my argument, I approach the idea of community through the lens of Bauman’s writings in *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (2007), and examine these writings in conjunction with his concept of community “as a paradise lost (...) but one dearly hope to return” (Bauman 2001: 3). Finally, this section will attempt to compare and contrast the different theoretical approaches on community and then link them with the ideology and praxis of applied theatre. Hence, the literature on applied theatre and community (Cohen-Cruz 2005; Kershaw 1992; 1999; Kupper and Robertson 2007) will be reviewed in an attempt to question the relationship between applied theatre and the concept of community. Finally I attempt to link Bauman’s ideas with Brent’s (2004) understanding of the desire for community and the literature on applied theatre and community (Cohen-Cruz 2005; Kershaw 1992; 1999; Kupper and Robertson 2007).

The second part gives an account of the project’s development and its implications. Firstly it situates the project within the Greek socio-cultural context and then moves on to critically analyse representative examples of practice. In order to support my argument, I will make use of the literature on Greek women problem drug users (Kokkevi et. al. 2007; Matsa 2008; Sfikaki and Efstathiou 2006; Stratiki 2006) alongside the literature on applied theatre (Nicholson 2005; Thompson 2003), the role of chorus in ancient Greek theatre (Goldhill 1996; Gould 1996; Foley 2003; Taplin 2002) and the theories
of Boal (1979, 1998) in order to make the case for the possibilities of making theatre in a therapeutic context. Hence, this part seeks to address the following questions: how does this project inform us about applied theatre in this context? Do we need to rethink the concept of community and its implications in applied theatre? Can the notion of community in applied theatre be expressed as a desire for community?

PART I: Community and Applied Theatre

Understanding Community

Before discussing the project’s development it is important to reflect on the concept of ‘community’ and its associated meanings. In this section I will attempt to examine the concept of community and its complexity in the endeavour to situate it within my own research and practice. Hence, I will firstly look at definitions of community more broadly, and then attempt to relate them to the theories of community as it has been understood in sociology and community psychology. At a second level this section will attempt to question these ideas by relating them to the drug culture (subculture) and examine how the notion of community has been perceived within this context. The work of the sociologists Bauman (2001; 2007) and Brent (2004) will be utilised as the starting point of this discussion, as well as a platform for comparing and contrasting their ideas with the literature on the drug subculture (Blackman 2004; Shaw 2002; Sussman and Ames 2001; White 1996).

To begin with, it is important to acknowledge that ‘community’ is a paradoxical phenomenon, as it implies a degree of controversy and raises a set of important issues for further consideration. For example, should it be distinguished by its homogeneous and face-to-face interactions, or by the
way people think and feel about their communities? Should it be regarded as an exclusive term (separating ‘us’ from ‘them’) or as a conductive term that relates otherwise unrelated individuals? Does community exist in pragmatic terms or only as an imaginative entity? It should be stated that throughout its history and according to political circumstances the word community has been used with both its concrete and abstract meanings, and as a medium to distinguish but also to unite. To these ends, any attempt to understand community generates the same questions in terms of its ambivalence: community simultaneously separates and unites. However, what I am interested in doing here is to review the relevant literature in order to underline some of the key issues with regard to the definitional and sociological meanings associated with community and then relate them to my own research.

‘Community’ has generally been regarded a ‘feel-good’ word and has been linked with a number of positive terms such as affiliation, belonging, togetherness, connectivity and co-operation, among others. In this respect, the essence of community rests on the experience of unity, solidarity and kinship, but also the feeling of security and stability versus the insecurity and isolation of a rapidly changing society. Hence, the term community has been understood as a system of relationships, ideologies, experiences and symbols which characterise any group of people who are in direct or indirect communication with each other (Cohen 1985; Kershaw, 1992, 1999, 2007). It also describes the feeling of unity amongst people who share the same experiences, activities, characteristics (e.g. race), beliefs (political, religious) and/or locality, among others. Moreover, while authors such as Williams refer to community as a “warmly persuasive word” (William 1976: 95), and Bauman describes it as “a roof under which we shelter in heavy rain” (Bauman 2001: 1), Bruhn (2005: 16) claims that “a call for community is
often heard in difficult times and situations because it is a positive word which implies togetherness”. Taking into account the above views, one question that needs to be asked is whether community can only be associated with positive meanings. If community specifically articulates the notion of affiliation and togetherness then does all community belonging feel good? And what is the case for the community of the excluded and disadvantaged, or for those who are themselves included in this community?

Therefore, the major problem in understanding community and its lack of ideological integrity lies in the fact that it is connected to a great range of contradictory historical and political meanings and emotions (Cohen 1985; McConachie 2001; Williams 1976). Although, as I noted above, community is commonly associated with the positive feeling of unity among people who share the same experiences, activities, characteristics (e.g. race), beliefs (political, religious) and/or locality, among others, at the same time it implies a degree of segregation, distinguishing ‘us’ from ‘others’. For instance, as Williams (1976) claims in his book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, the word community was established in the English language around the 14th century and is associated with the following:

(i) The commons or common people, as distinguished from those of rank [14th century to 17th century]; (ii) a state or organised society, in its later uses relatively small [14th century – onwards]; (iii) the people of a distinct [14th century – onwards]; (iv) the quality of holding something in common, as in community of interests, community of goods [16th century – onwards]; (v) a sense of common identity and characteristics. (Williams Ibid.: 64)

It is clear therefore that the term combines a whole range of concrete but also abstract meanings: (ii) and (iii) describe a network of relationships between groups of people who live in a designated area, such as a village. This
definition then refers to the geographical boundaries of a location. Additionally, (i), (iv) and (v) indicate the relationships between groups of people who share the same social position, such as class, race and so on, the same identity, characteristics and interests. In this case, community is understood as a notion, the sense of having something in common. On one hand ‘community’ has been used to distinguish one group from another (such as one village from another), but on the other hand it has been used to combine and connect different groups of people who have something in common (Amit 2002; Cohen 1985; Haedicke and Nellhaus 2001). In many respects, ‘community’ appears to simultaneously encourage distinction between, but also unity among groups of people.

Additionally a linguistic analysis of the word community allows us to clearly demonstrate the diversity of its meanings. According to Williams (1976: 61, 65 - 66) the word community derives from the Latin word communis, which alternatively has its roots in com- – ‘together’ – and unus – ‘one’ – as well as com- and munis, which in Latin means ‘under obligation’. Therefore, the term community appears to refer to a unity whereby the ‘I’ becomes ‘we’, and thus it describes a network of relationships between individuals and places. It also describes a network of relationships which are formulated out of obligation, which is also significant. This is to say, the term community seems to include in its meaning the idea of coercion and obligation under which the individual gains their membership of the community. As Young (1990) argues, communities can operate as powerful means of distinguishing ‘us’ from ‘them’ and promote an inside/outside distinction. If the above perspectives are taken together, the notion of ‘we’ (togetherness) appears to be problematic for two basic reasons: firstly, in the case of communities that have been formed through an act of exclusion, such as ghettoisation, or conversely as an act of excluding others, as in gated communities or certain
subcultures; and secondly, in the case that an individual experiences ‘multiple community belongings’, whereby the individual’s sense of belonging has been divided between his or her different communities of belonging.

In the first case, excluded communities (also known as ghettos) are formulated out of segregation, discrimination and prejudice. Goffman famously claimed that “society establishes the means of categorising persons” (Goffman 1968: 11), and therefore excluded communities can be regarded as an outcome of the ‘wider community’s’ dividing mechanisms. To quote Bauman: “when it comes to designing the forms of human togetherness the waste is human beings. Some human beings do not fit into the designed form nor can be fitted into it” (Bauman 2004: 30). What makes the difference in excluded communities is the fact that their members came together as a reaction to stigmatisation. Thus, this type of community might not necessarily be characterised by solidarity, unity and allegiance. Owing to its members’ similar experiences of rejection, discrimination and marginalisation, plus the fact that they are in a sense ‘obliged’ to accept membership to this type of community, it would be difficult to feel mutual support and affiliation with the rest of its members. In many respects, the individuals are likely to feel that by accepting membership to this community they automatically ‘accept’ their stigma and exclusion, or alternatively remain without any community: what Bauman refers to as “waste” individuals (Bauman Ibid.)

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7 The gated communities refer to residential communities which are characterised by designated perimeters as a means to restrict public access. They are popular among middle- or upper-class citizens in the major world metropolis (see E. Blakely, J. And Snyder, M., G., Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1997; S. M. Low, The Edge and the Center: Gated Communities and the Discourse of Urban Fear,’ American Anthropologist, 103/45-58 (2001); S. Low, M. , Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress (New York; London: Routledge, 2003).
However, membership of an excluded community might provoke the creation of another type of community in which members have now come together as a form of resistance and rebellion, and/or as an act of overcoming previous stigma, oppression and rejection. This type of community is also known as a subculture. The individuals who gain membership to this type of community are usually associated with a kind of “collective denial of the social order” (Goffman 1968: 171). Hence, the community as a form of resistance might provide its members with ideological justification and rationalisation. Yet it can also operate as a defensive mechanism of their social identity and fulfil their impulse for ‘normality’, belonging and affiliation. Furthermore, it can be argued that the formation of this type of community derives from the individual’s response to the ‘deviant label’ that has been attached to them, and their fundamental need to re-establish their sense of belonging and reconstruct their social identity (Becker 1963).

In addition, this form of community is connected with its members’ lifestyle and mutual symbolism. Hence, it can be linked to its members’ refusal to adapt to social norms and demands. Therefore such communities might attract people who do not necessarily originate from excluded communities but who view this ‘deviant behaviour’ and lifestyle as a form of resistance to ‘fitting in’ into social norms. This phenomenon of community as ‘resistance’ is common among youth or cultural movements, for example the hippie movement of the 1970s (Blackman 2004, 2007; Hall and Jefferson 1993). Therefore this community functions as a means of uniting excluded ‘others’ who do not approve of or conform to the dominant lifestyle and ideological integrity. The community of people who consume drugs is a well-known example of a community which has been regarded as a form of ‘refusal’ to compromise with dominant social beliefs. As Shaw asserts:
Substance abuse, as an act or practice embodying specific beliefs and values, can obviously bring people together to form distinctive groupings and subcultures, different from other subculture collectives or the mainstream social system (Shaw 2002:224).

Initially, people who consume drugs formulate communities out of the need to find mutual support and share common experiences with regard to their common habit. They also have a strong need to become part of a group as a means of obtaining recognition, and for collective justification. Another characteristic of this community is the sharing of drug-using equipment, techniques, rituals and their experiences prompted by the effects of drugs. As a result, this type of community provides the user with useful networks and resources, coping strategies for any problems arising from drug use, and protection against outside pressure (e.g. the police). As far as the community ideology is concerned, communities of users come together as a response to social reaction, strict legislation, and the drug policy strategies which are implemented in most countries (see for example Chapter 1 on drug policy in Greece and the UK). Hence, people who consume drugs have the tendency to classify themselves as different, ‘deviant’ and as the witnesses, voices and representatives of societal dysfunction. The drugs, therefore, are recognised as the community’s symbol and drug use as an act of resistance and protest against society’s norms (Hall and Jefferson 1993; Matsa 2001; Shaw 2002).

At the beginning of an individual’s involvement with drug consumption they have the ‘freedom’ to choose whether they will become a member of this type of community or not. However, as their relationship with the substance changes and escalates, so does their ‘freedom of choice’ and ‘freedom of belonging’ to their desired community. When the person develops a dependency on the substance(s) their ‘free will’ is replaced by
society’s ‘free will’. Society makes the choice on behalf of the person and thus, re-categorises and labels them as a member of the community of users. The outcome of this distinction is the formulation of a kind of community which is most popularly known as a subgroup. What makes the difference in this type of community is the fact that its members come together as a reaction to exclusion and marginalisation, or as a result of the ‘community’s’ divided features. This type of community is not necessarily characterised by solidarity, unity and allegiance. Owing to the fact that its members share similar experiences of rejection, discrimination and stigmatisation, plus the fact that they were in a way labelled by their membership of this group, to feel mutual support and affiliation might be difficult. Hence, the sense of community does not feel ‘good’ any more, and belonging to it has turned into a sameness (Bauman, 2001, Matsa 2001). The individuals have been captured within the boundaries of the community where ‘escapism’ is very hard and or even impossible. Most of the time membership has been attached as a label to the individuals who feel more isolated than ever before, insecure, and that they have failed. As Blackman states:

Drug consumption has been accounted for as an ordinary feature of social life, a dysfunction for the individual and society, an example of mental deficiency, personality failure and social stigma, an expression of symbolic refusal and a sign of informed consumer choice and identity formation (Blackman 2007: 126).

Although this argument jumps very quickly to over-generalisations or stereotyping of the drug-taking culture, it is extremely important to understand how people who consume drugs associate with their community. It is essential, therefore, to comprehend this type of community as two oppositional edges of the same continuum. On the one side, the community symbolises “refusal and a sign of informed consumer choice and identity
formation”, but on the other “a dysfunction of the individual and society” (Blackman Ibid.). Hence, it demonstrates in a clear and direct way my contention at the beginning of this section about the oxymoron of community. It also raises another significant issue for consideration: the concept of ‘multiple belonging’.

The paradox of multiple community belonging can be easily understood if we consider that each of us simultaneously belongs to different types of communities, some of which we have not necessarily chosen. We connect ourselves according to the communities that we most feel the sense of belonging to, but we are also connected to the communities others perceive us as belonging to. Our personal identity formation is influenced by the collectivity of the various community belongings that we experience throughout our lives (Bruhn 2005). According to Bauman (2008: 84-86), the main limitation of experiencing multiple community belongings lies in the lack of engagement with the person’s ‘whole self’. As a consequence, the individual who holds membership to various communities, either as a personal choice or under some sort of obligation (such as in excluded communities, see above), might feel fragmented. Fragmentation and disloyalty to the multiple community belongings might cause bewilderment and ambivalence with regard to the question of ‘to which community do I truly belong?’. Community is now regarded as a constant negotiation between segregation and unity, coercion and consent and at the other end of the spectrum, ‘escapism’. The individual, then, might again seek out another community as an act of both escapism and refusal, and perhaps the need to experience an alternative sense of community in which they could engage with it entirely. I address this point later on in this chapter in my analysis of the theatre project and how the generation of the impulse to move away from the participants’ current multiple communities might be achieved.
Thus, it is not surprising that a number of writers (see Anderson 1991; Bauman 2001; Cohen 1985; Young 1990) have attempted to conceptualise community as a ‘symbolic’ or ‘imagined’ entity, or even as a ‘paradise lost’. For example Cohen (1985: 118) points out that individuals create communities ‘symbolically’, which in turn operate as a resource and repository for both the creation of meaning and identity construction. Anderson (1991: 6), on the other hand, takes Cohen’s views a step further to suggest that communities are ‘imagined’ human constructions within which unknown individuals link up with each other so that “in [the] minds of each lives the image of their communion”. He claims that communities are to be “distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness but by the style in which they are imagined” (Anderson 1991: 6). Both Cohen and Anderson seem to challenge the traditional belief that community should be distinguished by face-to-face interactions and mutual identification, and rather suggest that community exists as a symbol or fantasy in the mind of each individual. Cohen and Anderson’s arguments can be further explored if we consider Pahl’s (2005) proposal of communities-in-mind. In a recent study carried out by Pahl (2005) and his colleagues, informants were asked to create maps as a response to their intimate and active bonds and relationships with peers, relatives, colleagues and others. This study has shown that individuals formulate their personal communities or communities-in-mind as a means of justification, identity and belonging.

However, if we are to accept that the ideal community exists only in the mind of each individual, it means that community is a personal and individualistic process which, instead of implying, rather suppresses the
whole notion of ‘we’ and togetherness. Hence, the individual has now become trapped within the boundaries of their ‘personally-imagined community’ which lacks the basic elements of interaction and solidarity. In addition, these models seem to dismiss how community is socially constructed and socially organised. Moreover, another limitation of this approach is that it fails to take into account that the people who constitute our ‘personal communities’ might be unaware of, and therefore undesiring of ‘acceptance’ and membership in our communities. Our ‘personally imagined’ communities can therefore be regarded as illusory phenomena. Although we might believe that we have strong ties to others around us this might not exist in ‘realistic’ terms. However, our desire to be in a community remains strong, or, as Brent points out, even within the illusionary idea of community “there is often a hint of the possibility of ‘real’ communities” (Brent 2004: 215). Furthermore, Bauman (2001), in his major study on community, questions community’s existence and claims that community is a word that always refers to the future. He goes on to suggest that community is a ‘paradise lost’ or better, a paradise that we still hope to discover: a point which echoes Brent when he asserts, that despite the individual’s constant longing for community, it “never seems to arrive” (Brent 2004: 1).

However, if community is to be understood as a fantasy and symbol or as an unpredictable dream, then what is it about this idea that insists on engaging our attention so much as to cause us to “feverishly search for the roads that may lead us there” (Bauman Ibid: 3)? A possible explanation is given by Young:

The ideal of community privileges unity over differences, immediacy over mediation, sympathy over recognition of one’s understanding of others from their point of view.
Community is an understandable dream, expressing a desire for selves that are transparent to one another relationships of mutual identification, social closeness and comfort (Young 1990: 300).

Additionally, Bauman (2001, 2008) asserts that we live in a liquid, modern, individualised society of consumers in which globalisation, individualisation and a boneless way of living has led us to experience astonishing feelings of loneliness, insecurity and uncertainty. Yet economic progress and the development of new scientific discoveries and technological inventions have caused rapid changes in our way of living and thus social disorganisation. Mobilisation, urbanisation and industrialisation turn into the usual forces of our ‘liquid modern life’ and are thus the enemies of community (Shaw 2002). As a consequence, ‘community’ has become the place we all seek to find, ‘our paradise lost’, where we hope to fill our emotional gaps and gain the much-needed sense of solidarity, alliance, belonging and status. Community has therefore become our shield against the insecurity and uncertainty of our modern way of living.

Bauman’s view appears to connect to the work of community psychologists such as Sarason (1974), Rapoport (1960) and McMillan and Chavis (1986). These writers have made various attempts to propose the importance of a sense of community for individual wellbeing and social functionality. For example, Sarason (1974) argues that the importance of community lies in the feeling of belonging to it. He goes on to define the sense of community as:

A sense that one was part of a readily available, mutually supportive network of relationships upon which one could depend and as a result of which one did not experience sustained feelings of loneliness (Sarason Ibid.:1).
In addition, writers such as Bishop et. al (1997), McMillan and Chavis (1986) and Wiesenfeld (1996) have pointed out that human beings share a fundamental desire to feel affiliation and togetherness. In other words, they have the need to be connected to their surrounding world. According to McMillan and Chavis (1986), the four elements that can contribute to the establishment of a sense of community are membership (the feeling of belonging and being part of a group), influence (the feeling of contribution and having a voice in the group), integration and fulfilment of needs (which refers to the reinforcement and maintenance of the notion of togetherness), as well as shared emotional connection (which implies the commitment and belief that all community members share the same experiences and beliefs). McMillan and Chavis (1986) argue that a sense of belonging to a community is of vital significance for the individual's wellbeing, and thus its enhancement and maintenance ought to be the primary focus in educational and therapeutic settings. This view has been utilised in many health and educational settings, for example in the evolution of Therapeutic Communities (TC).

The movement of TCs arose from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and in particular their belief that the concept of feeling community is an important component in assisting and supporting individuals on their journey to recovery. Historically, the idea of TCs developed in the USA during the 1950s, while in Europe they were established in the late 1960s and mostly inspired by movements such as People not Psychiatry in the UK and

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8 Affiliation and togetherness refers to the human need to feel a sense of involvement and belongingness to a community. McClelland (1985) argues the need for affiliation is a crucial drive for human motivation and the notion of achievement, as it responds to the fundamental need to be part of a group and interact with others (see McClelland, C., 1985 Human Motivation London Scott: Foresman; O'Connor, S., and Rosenblood, L. 1996 Affiliation motivation in everyday experience: A theoretical comparison. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 70, 513-522).
Democratica Psychiatrica in Italy. They developed strong links with the social movements of that period such as the feminist and antiwar movements and established strong ideas regarding human rights, inclusion and equal opportunities. Currently, TCs are recognised as the most influential methodological model and have thus been adapted and implemented in various treatment models, such as self-help groups in the UK, among others (Pouloupolos 2006; Rawlings and Yates 2001).

One of the key factors for consideration is TCs’ emphasis on the implementation of the the ‘community as method’ approach to the treatment of problem drug and alcohol users. ‘Community as method’ means that the treatment process is facilitated by the residents and not by the staff. This approach assists the individuals in taking responsibility for themselves and for others, feeling themselves to be active members within their community, and thus improving their notion of belonging (Rawlings and Yates 2001). TCs can be described as drug-free community-based democratic models which operate in a non-hierarchical structure. Traditionally, TCs have subscribed to the belief that humans have the potential to change and develop through interaction and the communication of their thoughts and emotions. However authors such as Pouloupolos and Tsibouki (1998) pose a critique of the establishment and key issues of TCs and their relationship to the idea of community. Their views have arisen from their personal experience working in the Greek TC KETHEA, the partnership organisation in which the theatre project I am about to discuss took place. In their view, the notion of ‘community’ that the TCs promote seems to be deeply problematic for two basic reasons: the first is related to what they refer to as “cultural shock” and is mainly concerned with the TCs’ promotion of a form of community life which is “often ‘utopic’ and creates a sense of ‘false’ reality” (Pouloupolos and Tsibouki Ibid.: n.p.), which becomes deeply problematic when the
members attempt to reintegrate into society. It seems therefore that this approach to drug treatment fails to consider that people might develop a sense of community which is not necessarily related to our modern individualised society. TCs might promote the formation of a utopian context with a problematic notion of ‘we’. In addition, Poulopoulos and Tsibouki raise a number of questions with regard to what happens to these people after they have completed their treatment, and to what extent they succeed in maintaining their ‘newly framed’ sense of community.

To sum up, in this section, I have attempted to tease out the different variables in community in order to trouble both of its associated meanings. By starting my analysis from a broad sense of community I attempted to pin it down and relate it to drug culture. I argued that the approaches to community propose a rather abstract and vague perception which makes any attempt to conceptualise community impossible. This is because, sometimes, community is perceived as a nostalgic and at other times as a discriminatory device, but in both cases as a necessity for individual wellbeing. That is to say, the meanings of community frequently lead to the following set of ambiguities: a) community exists, but only in the mind of each individual, and is also an illusionary idea; b) community does not exist, it is only a human expectation or a quest for utopia or resistance to the social order; c) community is connected with location and is grounded in space and designated areas; d) community is not chosen but rather given as one finds oneself to belong simultaneously to many communities; and e) community can function as a therapeutic method which offers support and affiliation while in treatment. As I am going to illustrate with the example of the En Drasi project, all the above-mentioned approaches to community were incorporated within the same group of people and raised important questions, not only among the participants but also with regards to myself as
the researcher/facilitator. In this way, it brings about the question of which notions of community problem drug users understand, relate to and desire, and where applied theatre can make an actual contribution.

Bruhn (2005: 16) argues that “community can usually only be described, not defined, and experienced, not generalised”, and in my view the importance of community lies in the ‘desire’ for community rather in the experience of community per se. Hence, I agree with Brent when he invites to us to see that “community as desire continually replenishes itself as people seek the ever receding goals of voice, meaning and connectedness in all their imperfections” (Brent 2004: 222). I am going to propose that the desire for community should be approached as our motivational force for a better way of living. To quote Bauman again:

> It looks as if we will never stop dreaming of a community, but neither will we ever find in any self-proclaimed community the pleasures we savoured in our dreams [...] Being human, we can neither fulfil the hope nor cease hoping. (Bauman 2001: 5).

Considering the words of both Brent and Bauman, community implies our dream for a better future, which is simultaneously our point of departure and our final destination. For the purpose of this study I approach ‘community’ as a constant quest or a journey towards belonging, affiliation and solidarity. By approaching community with the metaphor of a destination I would like to test out how participation in an applied theatre project has the potential to encourage problem drug-users to create images of their desired community. Hence, what I am interested to examine here is the journey (the shift) from and to the different communities as well as the dream of the final destination. Before that, it is necessary to clarify the connections between community and applied theatre.
Applied Theatre and the Notion of Community

Several attempts have been made to investigate the relationship between theories of community and theories of applied theatre. In particular, these studies (see Cohen-Cruz 2005; Kershaw 1992; Kuppers 2007; Kuppers and Robertson 2007; Nellhaus and Haediche 2001) examine how participation in the process of theatre making and/or the performance event itself might have the potential to enhance the members’ sense of solidarity and improve their relationships with their community (either symbolic or not). However it has become important to question and problematise how practitioners and scholars in the field understand and use the term. In Chapter 1 of this thesis I discussed how applied theatre has historically approached the idea of community and I addressed how it has been linked with the concept of fostering community. In this section, I am going to look at how the term ‘community theatre’ has been used internationally and where it is positioned today. Then I am going to attempt to link it back to the theories of community discussed above.

Historically, the term ‘community’ in applied theatre was associated with its meaning in regard to the locality and homogeneity of a group of people who are in direct interaction with the locality. In other words, community has been understood as a “cohesive social group engaged in sustaining its members’ identity through face-to-face interactions” (McConachie 2001: 37). Therefore ‘community theatre’ and ‘community performance’ are the names given to describe the application of theatre within an already-established community of place, identity or interest with the purpose of developing and/or empowering it. Similarly, in Britain, theatre practices that came together under the umbrella term ‘community performance’ or ‘community
theatre’ initially referred to communities of place or class. The community artists then were working in liaison with the local authorities and the community population, with the purpose of putting together a performance or other events such as parades, festivals and other forms of celebrations, as in the example of Welfare State International (Coult and Kershaw 1983; Kershaw 1992) or Cartwheel Community Arts (Jeffers 2010). However, community theatre is not only considered with already-established communities. Authors such as Van Erven (2001), Kuppers and Robertson (2007) and Prendergast and Saxton (2009), among others, provide evidence of practice which has been carried out internationally with different types of community. For instance, Brian (2005) discusses a community project with war veterans, Van Erven (2001) offers an international cartography of community theatre practices around the world, and McAvinchey (2008) reflects upon a project with youth in a pupil referral unit. This is to say that the practice of community theatre has been expanded so as to include in its nexus different groups of people, some of whom would not necessarily consider themselves as members of the particular community in which the theatre project is carried out.

Furthermore, it is becoming extremely difficult to ignore the fact that a number of practitioners and writers (Arvanitakis 2008; Boon and Plastow 2004; Bowles 2005; Cohen-Cruz 2005; Van Erven 2001; Fisher 2004; Kershaw 1992; Kuppers 2007; Haediche and Nellhaus 2001) consider applied theatre a powerful tool for community building and empowerment, although these assumptions raise many complex questions, for instance: in which community? What is it meant by community ‘building’? And do all communities have an ideological integrity? As Nicholson highlights, “it is interesting that there has been a renewed emphasis on the ideal of community at a time when an actual sense of belonging has become
increasingly problematic” (Nicholson 2005a: 84). However, as I have already discussed above, the idea of community and the sense of belonging (the notion of ‘we’) indicate a degree of controversy and to some extent perhaps illusion. The majority of the dilemmas that theatre practitioners have to deal with are relevant to the inclusiveness and exclusiveness that the term community implies and which I have already raised in the section above. Hence, one of the major problems in understanding how applied theatre approaches community lies in its lack of positioning itself in a specific theoretical framework. On the contrary, it appears that even among the circles of community artists there is continuous debate with regard to definitions and theories of community. For example, while Kupper (2007: 3-14) conceives the usage of ‘community’ in community performance as a call for inclusiveness and warmth, Cohen-Cruz (2005) describes that in the USA practitioners have shifted to terms such as grassroots theatre in an attempt to avoid misinterpretations and connect their practice with a particular type of community. Accordingly, Giesekam (2006: 91) claims that the term ‘community theatre’ declined in the late 1980s following an increase in the use of the term ‘community’ for institutional purposes such as by governmental agencies.

It seems, therefore, that there is a constant need to negotiate the issues of community and to replace the term with one that is more explicit. This issue leads us back to the terminological concerns that I raised in the introductory chapter, and the emergence of applied theatre as a response to the problems that occurred in defining and categorising the implementation of participatory theatre in a variety of settings. As Thompson notes (2003: 14), applied theatre “was welcomed by many who do not like the strict line that is often drawn between ‘third world’ ‘theatre for development’ and ‘first world’ ‘community theatre’”. Yet, since its application expanded in places
“where it is least expected” and became “a practice by, with and for the excluded and marginalised” (Thompson 2003: 15), the term community came to contradict the purpose of the work being undertaken in these settings. As I have noted at various points so far, for groups of excluded and marginalised individuals the word community is not necessarily connected with positive ideas. On the contrary, it is often connected with the notion of coercion and consent, which draws a distinction between the included and excluded (Kershaw 1992). To this end, the term ‘community theatre’ appears to contravene its own ideas towards a theatre that could bring people together, and in a way to contribute to the distinction between ‘us’ (the excluded) and ‘them’ (the included) in the theatre practice/project.

Aside from the issues of terminology, questions arise when we consider what should be the role of applied theatre within the communities in which it is being implemented. In my view, theatre is an activity based on collaboration, solidarity and affiliation, and thereby contains the notion of community at its centre. In this sense, applied and social theatre ought to be concerned with empowering the community by constantly regenerating its feeling of belonging (see Cohen-Cruz, 1998; Kershaw, 1992; Kuppers 2007; Nicholson 2005a). Although I agree with Kuftinec (1996) and Westlake (2001) when they explain that theatre can only contribute to the creation of ‘temporary communities’, I argue that the energy and connectedness that these temporary communities elicit can operate as powerful forces for the generation of a desire and hope for a better future and, perhaps, the desire for a coherent permanent community. Turner (1982: 47) coined the phrase “spontaneous communitas” in an attempt to describe strong moments of people’s interaction, as might happen for example in ritual ceremonies or during a football match (Schechner 2002: 70-71; Thompson 2003: 97; Turner 1974, 1982). He proposed:
Communitas (..) representing the desire for a total, unmediated relationship between person and person, a relationship which nevertheless does not submerge one in the other but safeguards their uniqueness in the very act of realizing their commonness (Turner 1974: 274).

For Turner, communitas manifests in profound moments where participants in a ritualistic process connect to an ultimate energy (Turner 1974: 94-130; 1982, 45-60). Turner’s communitas appears to be a useful context for conceptualising the moment of “embodying unity” among the participants. Additionally, Boal (2002: 5) proposed that the Theatre of the Oppressed has the potential to create aesthetic places or “spaces of liberty” where people can free and express themselves as well as invent their future instead of waiting for it. These aesthetic places make possible the creation of “imagined geographies” in which the individual has the opportunity to liberate and rediscover himself (Poper 2006). Hence, the imagined geographies can be viewed as ideal communities in which individuals would see themselves from different perspectives and in roles and situations different to the ones they are used to performing. In that space, they might regenerate a sense of community, but this time from a different perspective. The process of creating those imagined geographies can promote a feeling of community among a group’s members. Therefore, though externalisation and embodiment of dreams and wishes, I shall propose that a quest for their desired community might take place.

Hence, I shall argue that applied theatre’s strength lies to its ability to provide an ‘immediate’ experience of community, or as Kershaw proposes:

The intention of the community theatre is to strengthen the self-determination of the community, to contribute to the
empowerment of community and through that to augment the ideological survival of the community within – or against the dominant socio-political order (Kershaw Ibid.: 66).

However, one of the limitations of this explanation is that it does not clarify which community, as well as what is meant by a community’s self-determination and empowerment. As I have already raised in the introductory chapter, a great deal of applied theatre practice has been carried out within the criminal justice system. If we were to say that applied theatre has the power to encourage the community’s self-determination and empowerment and “through that to augment the ideological survival of the community within – or against the dominant socio-political order”, in the case of a group of prisoners, assumptions like these might appear to be extremely problematic and even place applied theatre in a difficult position regarding the ideological integrity of the criminal justice system itself. Hence, a critical question that needs to be asked is: do we intend to ‘empower’ the community of prisoners and, through that, to maintain their ideology so as to “go within or against” the dominant socio-political order? Or, on the contrary, do we intend to inspire and reactivate their desire to transit from their current community (community of prisoners) to a newly-established community? This diversity between the meanings of community (between the current and newly-established) has been recognised by Thompson (2003) in his discussion of the role of applied theatre in prisons when he asserts:

By participating in a diverse set of theatre-based activities (...) we can perhaps reconnect, attach or weave ourselves into a range of groups or communities. We can perhaps strengthen our ability to display actions that build new webs that can provide some of the foundation for change. And we want to use these inspiring resources to see as much of the view as possible (Thompson Ibid: 75).
To this end, I am proposing the idea of applied theatre as a medium to bring into play the participants’ differences and different community belongings (Schinina 2004). Applied theatre, perhaps, should not be regarded for its potential to build the community, but rather for its potential to generate the individuals’ desire and hope for community. In particular, I am going to argue that it has the power to increase the participants’ desire for community by encouraging them to find their “voice, meaning [substance of their life] and connectedness” (Brent 2004: 222). In my view, applied theatre might be able to assist the individual not only to experience moments of community but also to rediscover their voice, meaning and connectedness (Brent 2004: 222) by allowing the participants to be simultaneously creators and participants in a moments of instant community. Even if Bauman (2001) claims that community is a paradise lost, maybe then it is less important to find a community than to desire it. Perhaps then Zizek is right to remind us:

We mistake for postponement of the “thing itself” what is already the “thing itself”, we mistake for the searching and indecision proper to desire what is, in fact, the realization of desire. That is to say, the realization of desire does not consist in its being “fulfilled”, “fully satisfied”, it coincides rather with the reproduction of desire as such, with its circular movement (Zizek 1991: 7).

Zizek in the above quote highlights that the desire of “itself” is more important than the accomplishment of “itself”, and it could be said that applied theatre can operate as an intervention in assisting the “realization” of the desire “itself”. Zikek’s viewpoints echoes Boal (1995) and his techniques, known as “the rainbow of desire”. In Boal’s opinion, by guiding the participant (protagonist) through different stages (e.g. image theatre, dynamisation of the image and so forth, see Boal ibid: 150-167) of
representation of their desire, he appears to propose that we can only overcome our oppressions via clarification of our desires. As he describes:

The protagonist’s passions [desires] appear here in all their colors – invisible to the naked eye – in the same motion as when the white light of the sun, passing through rain, mutates into a rainbow in which we see all the colours the white light concealed (Boal Ibid: 150).

To this end, I am suggesting that applied theatre should be regarded as a powerful tool in assisting the individual to realise their desire to search for community and through that maybe to seek for their personal rainbow (or ideal community). This is to say, I propose that applied theatre should be better regarded for its potential to promote the realisation of the desire of community and encourage the individuals to create images of the communities to which they desire to belong. Haedicke (1998) proposes that the implementation of theatre in the community ought to be regarded as:

[A]n activist form of dramaturgy which aims to influence and alter the actual world, not just reflect it. It provides an avenue to individual empowerment and community development as it moves the audience [and the participants] into a new role: an artist, a maker of culture who can create a community (Haedicke Ibid: 132).

To this end, I am interested to further unravel to what extent participation in applied theatre might operate as an ‘activist’ form of practice in allowing individuals to protest for their ideal community. By using the example of people in recovery and their attempts to shift from the community of the drug subculture to the community of recovering users I am going to approach applied theatre as vehicle to facilitate their journey and hence, the realisation of their desire for community. I believe applied theatre is a promising medium and can make a real contribution in encouraging these
individuals. Nevertheless, applied theatre’s contribution is not always an easy and straightforward intervention and in order to be successful it needs to capture and find a way to fit into the already established community (or communities) in which the individual interacts, consciously or unconsciously, by choice or obligation. In the next section I attempt to incorporate my views into practice by describing and analysing moments of the project in the women’s prison of Koridallos in Athens, Greece.

PART II. En Drasi Project

The aim of this part of the research was to explore the experience of working with female drug users in an applied theatre project. In May and June 2008, I conducted the final theatre-based project of this study in partnership with the Greek drug organisation KETHEA. I deliberately chose to initiate my analysis by examining moments from the last project that I conducted as part of this research study. As I have already noted in Chapter 1, the majority of the issues raised in this study were repeated themes in almost all of the projects that I either conducted or observed. To this end, the initial purpose and design of my final project was to further explore the issues that had already arisen in the previous projects, and to identify whether my familiar socio-cultural context could have affected the way I facilitated and reflected on the project. As I am going to illustrate, the concept of community was an emergent theme in the project and reinforced the project’s development in multiple and complex ways. Before I move on to analyse selected moments from the project, I am going to offer an overview of the partnership organisation, as well as discussing how the sudden decision by the Ministry of Justice to close down the therapeutic community, affected the project in many and unexpected ways.
Mapping the Context

Therapy Centre for Dependent Individuals (KETHEA)

The Therapy Centre for Dependent Individuals is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation that has been operating since 1983. Its first service, *Ithaki*, which was the first therapeutic community for problem drug users in Greece established by KETHEA, has a nationwide network with more than 80 services around Greece.\(^9\) KETHEA is based on the therapeutic community (TC) concept which is a drug-free residential service. Briefly, TCs have three main treatment stages: a) information, motivation and preparation for admission to the therapeutic community (eight to ten months); b) recovery (one year); and c) reintegration (ten to 12 months). TCs also use a hierarchical model in order to increase levels of personal and social responsibility. In addition, a variety of group processes are implemented to help individuals to increase their self-confidence, develop more effective social skills, and manage their relationships, including peer influence (see European Federation of Therapeutic Communities; Rawlings 2001; Pouloupolos 1998; 2006). KETHEA also offers a variety of activities including arts, sports and education. The core philosophy of KETHEA was framed around the slogan: “You can, but not alone”, and it attempts to propose a collective enterprise in the treatment of problem drug and alcohol users as well as promoting the re-establishment of the individuals’ sense of community and belonging.

Therapeutic Community En Drasi: Female Prison of Koridallos

En Drasi (In Action) is part of the NGO KETHEA. This therapeutic community operates in the Central Female Prison of Koridallos in Athens,\(^9\)

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\(^9\) *Ithaki* is a residential programme which is addressed to adult drug users and their families. It is based in Thessalonica and was named after Kavafi’s poem ‘Ithaka’ (See also [http://www.kethea-ithaki.gr](http://www.kethea-ithaki.gr))
and offers counselling support and advice to women inmates who wish to reduce their drug-taking and live a substance-free life. Participation in the programme is voluntary. The programme runs on a five-day basis from 8am to 7pm, and thus in the evening the women return to their wings in the prison. The therapeutic community En Drasi was initiated in 2000 as a pilot programme of therapeutic intervention for female problem drug users in Koridallos. It was subsequently established as a therapeutic community within the prison. En Drasi’s primary aim is to assist the female inmates to discontinue problem drug consumption, and to support them towards their process of social reintegration (Kremmidas 2006). As I pointed out in Chapter 1 there is a lack of provision in prisons; to date En Drasi is the only substance-free treatment programme that is available to inmates in the Greek custodial system.

The Threat to the Community

In May 2008 the Greek Ministry of Justice, in consultation with the prison management of Koridallos, considered closing down the treatment programme and transferring the women to the new women’s prison in Thebes outside Athens, a decision which would have meant that the women would have to discontinue their treatment. The threat of closing down the therapeutic community stimulated further discussion and resulted in a public debate supported by the media (Gianiri 2008; Karagiorgos 2008). The main concerns were framed around the issues of human rights and governmental attitudes towards prisoners who are dealing with problematic drug use, and in particular their right to treatment and social reintegration. In their letter of protest, the En Drasi TC members asserted:
We urge the continuous function of the [therapeutic] community in prisons with the scope of giving to every drug user prisoner the right to choose a decent life as a drug-free and active citizen. We demand a society with fewer drug users, and not a bigger and more organised prison.

After two weeks of negotiations, and following the publicity of this issue in the Greek media, the Ministry finally permitted the women to remain in the prison in order to continue their treatment. What follows next is a discussion of how the women therapeutic community members perceived and dealt with the threat, and how the theatre project contributed to their campaign to ensure the continued operation of the TC.

**Project Description**

The applied theatre project was conducted as part of this research study. The initial agreement was made possible following an invitation from Nikoletta Spyropoulou, En Drasi’s educational department co-ordinator, and it was due to take place from May to June 2008. Owing to the threat of closure, the project had to be postponed for three weeks, which caused its reduction from sixty to thirty days. Approximately 15 women participated in the project, aged between 16 and 55, both Greek and from other ethnic backgrounds such as Eastern European, African and Caribbean. The primary aim of the theatre project was to create a piece of theatre based on the women’s experiences in the therapeutic programme and for this play to be performed at the celebrations on 26 June, IDADA, before an audience drawn from the organisation’s staff members, inmates and women who were in the induction phase of their treatment.

As a response to the threat of closure, the TC’s staff members regarded the theatre project as a good opportunity to increase the women’s connectivity
and the final performance as a way of promoting the organisation’s successful intervention in the overall prison and in wider Greek society. Considering that this project was carried out in the TC after the period of the closure threat, it should be noted from the beginning of this analysis that this incident influenced the project’s delivery in many and complex ways. The women felt uncertain and insecure regarding the future of their recovery, and the closure threat led to the reduction of their solidarity, trust and sense of belonging. Thus it posed a set of questions regarding the concept of community and belonging, both in terms of the TC’s context, as discussed above, and in conjunction with applied theatre’s potential to enhance the feeling of community. In the following section, I describe particular moments of the project which illustrate the points and questions I have raised in the introduction, in order to stimulate the discussion which will follow later on in this chapter. The resources from the narration are drawn from my personal diary, the participants’ evaluation and responses, and staff members’ feedback at the end of each session and following the competition of the project, a review of the relevant literature, anecdotal stories, and grey literature regarding the function of En Drasi in Greek society.10 In an attempt to transfer the reader into the context of the project, in the following section I will shift my style of writing to adopt a narrative style.

The beginning

The TC En Drasi is based in the Female Prison in the district of Athens known as Koridallos. It is an old building painted in yellow and surrounded by rusty rails. Right opposite is the Male Prison. In the walls are written a number of slogans of solidarity and requests for social justice. From the open windows you can see figures moving and the guard with his weapon...
patiently observing every single action or movement. The place looks abandoned and quiet. It was a warm spring day, when I first arrived in Koridallos to meet the group. It was a general strike that day so I had to take a taxi. The taxi driver assumed that I was a lawyer but when I explained what was the purpose of my visit he was surprised. When we arrived he commented “these poor souls are sick. There is nothing you can do, but good luck with it anyway”. I approached the main entrance and rang a bell to request attention. An old man opened the gate and asked for my ID. The reception desk was packed with ashtrays and empty glasses of frappé. He asked me to leave my personal belongings in the safe and pointed me towards the security control. Two women guards met me half way, opened another gate and walk with me towards the wing which accommodates the TC. We walk through a long corridor, the place was ruin and empty and the only sign of human existence was the sound of babies crying at the end of the corridor. They explained we were at the wing for the mothers and their new borns.

Finally we arrived at the wing which the TC is based. As the door released, I suddenly entered a whole different place. I was surrounded by colours, flowers, smells and art work. On my arrival the mixed smells of food, coffee and cigarettes, combined with lively conversations and laughter, gave a tone of family celebration. The women seemed to be very busy with cooking, tidying and cleaning. Some of the women had finished their task early and were sitting in the living room drinking coffee, smoking and chatting with each other. Vasilis, the TC manager, welcomed me and showed me around the premises and the room which I was going to use for the workshops. As he explained the prison governors donated the wing to the TC which has been refurbished and transformed over the years. He went on to explain that in the first years of its operation, the women worked a lot to make the place
‘feel like home’. Decorated with colourful curtains, flowers, art work and graffiti on the walls all collide to give a positive and welcoming tone to the place.

Finally we arrived at the sitting room where the women and staff members were waiting for us. They welcomed me and treated me like a special guest. They offered me coffee and fresh cake which they had made for the guests. The women was a mixed group from seventeen to sixty years old, the majority were Greek but there were also four women from Eastern Europe, Africa and the Caribbean. They seemed happy and relaxed, were sitting comfortably in the sofa, teasing and laughing with each other. I introduced myself and the conversation started around the Easter celebrations and my life in Manchester. Their questions were focused on the weather, the English culture and men. One of the women, Katia, told me that she used to live in Bristol. She came to England to get a job in the 1990s and shortly after her arrival she fell in love with an English man, John. They got married a few months after they met. The wedding took place on a Sunday morning and they held the reception in the local pub. She comments “Instead of having breakfast we drank champagne and lots of booze. English people drink a lot, I am sure you know!” she smiled and lit another cigarette. The rest of the women, laughed at her story and nodded their heads. We played a number of warm-up games and then focused on identifying themes that they would like to explore in the project. Games such as the fruit salad (see McCarthy 2004: 33) and the earthquake (McCarthy Ibid.:22) were used as away to build the group and encourage collaboration. We also played the game kites and balloons (McCarthy Ibid.: 8.), endeavours to initiate a dialogue between the women as well as increasing the playfulness and relaxed atmosphere. The women were given paper sheets which were cut into balloon and kite shapes
and were asked to list their fears on the balloons (so they can be exploded) and their expectations on the kites (so that they can rise).

Their future after imprisonment and their dreams of a substance-free life were the basic themes that we agreed to work on. They reported the need to engage with something positive that could spiritually transfer them beyond their current realities and the prison’s boundaries. The women seemed to be very close to each other, to share mutual support and a strong sense of belonging to the therapeutic community. This in turn appeared to ‘promise’ a better future for these women, as long as they managed to overcome their drug dependency problems.

At that point it appeared that a sense of community already existed, so my role was to use theatre as a tool to increase that sense, and to assist the women in identifying factors by which they could use it as a medium to move them one step further along. At this stage, I focussed on and implemented various theatre techniques that had arisen from my experience in Manchester, and identified contextual factors such as the fact that my familial socio-cultural background and native language could have an impact on the way I delivered and interpreted the use of theatre within this context. Moreover, emphasis was given to allowing the group to identify and suggest their issues of concern and for the project to be a participant-led process. For this reason, I did not use pre-selected themes or scenarios as a basis, and therefore the focus was developed purely by the participants’ ideas and interests.

During the early stages of the project the women seemed to enjoy the creative process, particularly the group games. However, when we were working on the improvisations and devising the scenes that could eventually
be used for the performance, the women faced a difficulty (which was perhaps a denial) in referring to their drug issues. They seemed more comfortable referring to issues relating to the prison environment and imprisonment. This issue became particularly noticeable while we were working on a fictional character’s storyline. In the first instance, we created a fictional female character Eleutheria (a popular Greek female name which means freedom) and looked at various aspects of her life, starting from her prosecution for drug-smuggling, her decision to seek treatment, the recovery phase, and most importantly the period following the completion of the treatment program and her release from prison (reintegration phase).

During this process, the women were extensively referring to issues involving imprisonment and the difficulties that they may face on their release, but rarely to problems of drug use and their current situation. Throughout the improvisations and the stories that they created there was no sign or reference to the concept of change and/or drug discontinuation. On the contrary, their stories represented issues relating to unemployment, their relationships with family and peers, the multiple stigmatisations associated with imprisonment, drug habits and/or ethnic background (for the non-Greek women), as well as the difficulties that may arise in the endeavour to contend with dominant societal beliefs about the traditional role of women. The issues of acceptance, fear of neglect and exclusion, not only from society, but also from their family and peers, were common themes in many of the scenes that they devised. During an improvisation, I commented on the fact that there was no clear reference in the story regarding the character’s drug reduction and that perhaps we should indicate it in some way. One of the women responded that “we can simply mention it somewhere at the beginning of the last scene”, and the rest of the members agreed that this was the best option. Therefore, it quickly became apparent to me that they did not
wish to refer to anything related to drug use per se, but were interested in ‘testing out’ coping strategies to deal with the ‘outside’ world upon their release from prison.

For this reason I decided to carry on working with this scenario, because at that point it was important to allow them to concentrate on their issues of concern. I also felt that I should retain the original project design and identify ways of giving the participants the voice and space to reflect on issues that mattered to them. As a result, my attention was shifted from the community of female recovering users to the community of women prisoners, and perhaps I lost the focus of the project and the purpose of my intervention. In other words, I was confused between the two different types of community: on the one hand the therapeutic community, and on the other the prison community. As the project continued, there were fewer and fewer references to drugs, but instead a general need to reflect on the possible obstacles that they might have to overcome after imprisonment. At certain points, when we were working on relationships with family and peers or job-hunting, there was an air of depression and disbelief in a positive future. It seemed that there was a desire to express their fears surrounding stigma, vulnerability and confusion that they perceived as their future after imprisonment. In an attempt to reflect on the process of the project so far, it is essential to step back from its description in order to throw light on the Greek socio-cultural context with regard to female problem drug users.

In a recent themed issue entitled Women’s Voices – Experiences and Perceptions of Women Facing Drug Problems (2009), the EMCDD attempted to capture the problems women drug users frequently encounter with regard to their habit, treatment request and stigmatisation. This study estimated that approximately one in four people who enter a therapeutic program in
Europe are female (EMCDDA 2009: 3). Hence it appears that the proportion of women drug users who seek treatment constitute only the 20% of the client population in Europe. In order to understand why only a small number of women seek treatment in comparison to men, it is essential to look at a number of social variables that operate as obstacles (EMCDDA 2005; Sfikaki 2006; Woodhouse 1992). It appears that aside from the issues of stigmatisation and lack of sufficient services to support female problem drug users (especially mothers), the issue of violence and abusive backgrounds appear to be common characteristics among female problem drug users. Aside from the references to abuse (sexual, physical and psychological), another common characteristic frequently reported by these women is the fear of neglect, especially from their family members (EMCDDA 2009: 6-8). Finally, this study identified that a major barrier that these women face is to successfully fulfil their social roles, for example motherhood (‘be good mothers’) while attempting to discontinue their dependency, as “many of these women are reluctant to seek care for fear of negative judgement or hostile reactions from the service” (EMCDDA 2009: 9).

In comparison with other European countries, Greece has been regarded as the country with the largest gender differences (EMCDDA 2005, 2006; Kokkevi et. al. 2007). A survey which was conducted of a sample of Greek women who initiated the state’s specialised women’s programme for drug dependency (18 ANO Dependence Treatment Unit) highlights a number of different characteristics between female and male clients. This study indicates that 39.13% (n=54) of the women seeking treatment had a reported a history of emotional, sexual and/or psychological abuse prior the initiation of the drug abuse problem. Most often these women had been victims of abuse from family members or peers. Hence, neglect and childhood abuse is a common characteristic in the personal stories of a great proportion of Greek
female drug users. In these cases, it has been reported that drug consumption constituted a way of contending with difficulties relating to their negative emotional feelings about themselves and low self-efficacy. Drugs were also consumed to self-medicate the emotional distress associated with such traumatic experiences (Matsa 2001, 2008a; Stratiki 2006). According to the same study, women with a violent background have difficulties fully engaging in situations and relationships which require a degree of trust, sharing and commitment, an issue which might also be exacerbated if the women interact within the criminal justice system. As Sfikaki and Efstathiou (2006: 256) report, “it is common for the drug-dependent woman, due to the violence she has suffered, to be suspicious towards the establishment of social relationships of trust”.

Moreover, as Constantinides (1992) observes, female Greek drug users are more likely than males to experience neglectful attitudes from their parents (especially from fathers). Constantinides moves on to state that female drug users are more likely to have recourse to drug use following a family crisis or broken bonds with their families (Constantinides 1992: 240). Matsa (2008a: 152) asserts that behind these women’s personal background is hidden a social pathology that requires the woman to ‘fit in’ with social demands. Hence, for the majority of female problem drug users, it can be argued that they constitute the ‘scapegoat’ of their families. Matsa (2008a: 152) makes the observation that Greek women initially consume drugs as an ‘act of protest’ against society’s stereotypes concerning the traditional model of women’s role in society. Hence, familial and societal pressure to contend with the traditional role of women in Greek society has been perceived by authors such as Matsa (2001; 2008a), Sfikaki and Efstathiou (2006) and Stratiki (2006) as an oppressed mechanism that influences the female drug users’ involvement with drugs in the first place.
I neither attempt to make any generalisations, nor draw quick conclusions with regard to the issues that female problem drug users deal with either broadly or more precisely in the traditional social context of Greek culture. However, as these studies indicate, and if they are taken together with the participants’ responses, my personal observations, the staff members’ reports and the description of the project itself, it appears that to a certain degree the concept of violence, mistrust and multiple stigmatisation were underlying themes in the project, and therefore I will repeatedly return and re-examine them over the course of this chapter. However, what I am interested in exploring here is the medium by which the women’s fears and dilemmas found a way to be expressed in the project. As I am going to demonstrate, the concept of collective voice as well as psychical forms of expression like the image theatre encouraged the participants to find a communicative strategy and a way to name the unnameable. Below, I will describe the different stages that both the participants and I underwent in order to discover the appropriate means of communicating their fears and dilemmas, but also their dreams and expectations.

The turning point

In one of the sessions we invited the staff members to observe the rehearsal. The outcome was unsatisfactory; the women did not concentrate, could not remember the sequence of the scenes or the dialogues, and as a result they started arguing in the middle of the rehearsal. The situation was rather chaotic and the participants seemed to have lost any solidarity and connectivity. Consequently, I had to stop the rehearsal and invite everyone to reflect on this incident. The staff members commented on the theme of the story. They felt that the play depicted the story of a woman who lacked the
desire to change, and thus after her release from prison, she would be exactly
the same as before. They felt that this story could represent a female prisoner,
but not a woman who was participating in a drug treatment programme. The
staff members claimed that the women had released the prisoner’s voice but
completely dismissed the recovering drug user’s voice. In particular, the
assistant manager pointed out: “For me this woman is very close to relapse.
When she gets out there ... she will go back on drugs. Is that your message?
Is that what you are trying to say?”\textsuperscript{11}

In the discussion that followed the rehearsal, the women pointed out their
struggle to visualise a positive future, because they could not predict what
the future might bring. As Eleni pointed out, “imprisonment has blocked our
ability to dream”.\textsuperscript{12} On the contrary, they reported that they were more
interested in working on themes regarding their current reality of treatment,
their fears, struggles, motivations and desires, but also the importance that
the therapeutic community had for them. They reported an urge to focus on
their current situation, and their attempts to discontinue drug taking while
being in prison. In other words, they were interested in working on a play
which would reflect upon their daily life in the TC and their attempts to
change or, as one of the participants mentioned, “to show our daily battle”.
Therefore, it was agreed that we needed to reconsider some of the themes
represented in the play’s storyline in order to give emphasis to the present of
their lives.

Throughout our discussion, it was noticeable that the women had lost their
motivation to change and their sense of belonging. Aside from the
characteristics of female problem drug users that I addressed above, and the

\textsuperscript{11} From the writer’s own archive, En Drasi May 2008

\textsuperscript{12} From the writer’s own archive, En Drasi May 2008
issues of multiple stigmatisation and discrimination, as a result of the threat of closure the women felt emotional concern, insecurity and instability which in turn led to passivity, isolation and a loss of solidarity and trust. They felt the need to seek out an alternative “paradise lost” (Bauman 2001: 3) and thus, they returned to the prison community. At that point, the prison community appeared to provide them with security and protection. The prison community was untouchable; nobody could ever threaten this community or take it away from them. This transition in their sense of belonging was noticeable throughout the sessions and especially during the improvisations, in which as well as the loss of solidarity and connectivity, the women also faced a difficulty – or rather a denial – in imagining a positive future for themselves. The threat of closure had exposed them to a system that gives them limited opportunities to change and fails to consider them:

They [the prison authorities and the Ministry of Justice] treat us like a sack of potatoes, they don’t care about us, they don’t care what will happen to us. If they move on with their plans to close down the TC, I am telling you most of the girls will relapse, will go back on drugs ... in the best case scenario, because in the worst, I don’t know, don’t want to think about it! All our efforts so far will be wasted (Amalia 2008).13

I believe that the TC staff members’ responses made the participants realise their shift of attitude from people in recovery from drug use to inmates, and made them think how they were dismissing the efforts made so far to become drug free, by instead reproducing stereotypical images of a drug offender after imprisonment. That to say, they were portraying the image of a character who failed to change and therefore after her imprisonment was likely to return to the drug subculture due to her inability to find additional

13 Ibid.
ways to cope with the ‘outside’ world. Hence, on my return to the TC the following day, the women had completely changed their attitudes towards the project. They appeared to have great willingness to create a piece of performance which would indicate how important the TC was for them and how they would maintain their efforts in recovery regardless of the Ministry’s decision. They reported that the previous night they had gathered in their wing to brainstorm ideas about the play, its structure and the themes that they would like to explore. Hence, it was believed that the final performance could operate as a way of protesting against the threat of closure of the TC by making the voices of each of the women heard. To this end, it was felt that a piece of theatre, in which experiences of the past were juxtaposed with the present, could generate discussion about the future of women on their journey to recovery.

My role was then to act as an interventionist between the women’s inner desires and motives for change, and the improvement of their relationships with each other and their community. As I claimed earlier in this chapter in reference to the paradox of community belonging, it seems that the female problem drug users were in conflict between their multiple communities of belonging, but that none of these communities could provide them with a feeling of security and belonging. This was due to the fact that from one side the TC was under threat, and on the other side the prison community not only could not provide them with security, but also diminished their ability to dream of a better life. Nicholson suggests:

Applied drama/theatre is most helpfully regarded not as a new academic discipline nor as a specific set of dramatic actions but as a discursive practice – as a way of conceptualising and interpreting theatrical and cultural practices that are motivated by the desire to make a difference to lives of others (Nicholson 2005a: 16).
Perhaps, then, I was considered to be the outsider being asked to “make a difference in the lives” of the participants by encouraging them to re-establish their desire for community, reactivate their ability to dream and imagine, but mostly to find ways to regenerate their hope for a better future. Applied theatre was there to act as an intervention and allow them visualise their dreams (or realise their desires, in Zizek’s words) and to connect the bridges between individuals. I was there to raise their desire for community and encourage them to find their “voice, meaning and connectedness” (Brent 2004).

*The play Our Story*

In the second phase of the project, we carried on working around Eleutheria, the same fictional character, and her life. Each of the women represented different aspects of the character’s personality: her fears, her doubts, her desires and so on. In other words, we created a collective character and positioned her ‘in the here and now’ of treatment, looking at three main points: her motivation to change; the change in her behavioural components; and her dreams. Our focus was not to portray the process of change but rather the importance of ‘we’: how togetherness and affinity might have the potential to help us revise our motives and support the process of change. The play attempted to convey the notion that ‘we are all in this together’, we have the same enemy (drugs), the same friend (the therapeutic community), the same goal (to be substance-free), and together we can fight against our enemy and make our dreams come true. In the following section I will demonstrate how the implementation of a series of selected theatre games and physical theatre, alongside the example of the ancient Greek chorus assisted in overcoming the participants’ difficulties and resistance to
referencing drug issues, as well as re-establishing the notion of community and togetherness.

Collectivity

The idea of collective character came into place as an additional way of reflecting on the character’s inner voices. Taking inspiration from the chorus of ancient Greek tragedies, the participants were divided into two teams and placed on the right and left of the stage. These two teams acted as a unique body, and thus jointly commented on the main action or advised the main character accordingly. This was an attempt to visualise the significance of the idea of community, with particular reference to the sharing of mutual support and affiliation, not only for the duration of the recovery process but also throughout the participants’ lives. In other words, as I already noted above, we tried to convey the notion that ‘we are all in this together’ on this journey.

In the first scene, Eleutheria, who was played by an older member of the project and represented the character in her forties, stands in the middle of the stage. One by one the rest of the members get on stage and formulate a frozen image, which symbolises unity but also the collective aspects of the character. In the next scene the character, now performed by a younger member of the project (the character in her twenties) gives a monologue about her story so far, and how she ended up in prison. In her last line, she concludes with the decision to seek treatment: “But how am I going to make it? Can I?” (extracts from the play Our Story 2008). The chorus, then, responds in unison with the organisation’s slogan, “you can but not alone”. They get on stage, embrace the character and all together sing and dance to the popular Greek song The Street children by Tsaligopoulou (2003). The song
which was chosen for its relevance in addressing the idea of affiliation and the notion of ‘we’ as means of enhancing the hope for a better future.

In the first part of the scene the chorus, as in the structure of ancient Greek tragedy, sympathises, from a distance, with the protagonist’s fears and doubts. In a way, the chorus embodies the collective voice of the community of people in drug recovery programmes or, as in the case of these women, the members of the En Drasi TC. However, unlike the ancient Greek model, this chorus is not distinct from the action. Its function is not limited to observing the action and remaining passive. On the contrary, its involvement is crucial, not only for the character’s wellbeing but for the action itself. In the final part, the chorus gains control of the action and gets on stage to intervene directly. Hence, in an act of acceptance and inclusion, it embraces and welcomes the character into the therapeutic community.

In contrast to the above scene, the role of the chorus was not limited to collective action. For instance, in one scene the main character is considering withdrawing from the treatment programme. In her monologue she explains the reasons that have led her to this decision. Initially, the chorus comments in unison on aspects of her monologue, but in the second part of the scene, each actor takes part, goes on stage and attempts to persuade her to reconsider her decision:

Are you going to make a fool of yourself again? Until now you have been hurting yourself with great insistence, obstinacy and strength. You kept risking your life. Believe, trust and open up your heart. Only truth will liberate you. Look at how many things you deserve and fight to gain them so that you can live differently and avoid going back to your previous life. This is your chance. It is hard but it is worth trying (extract from the play Our story 2008).
Following each actor’s speech and encouragement, the main character eventually decides to continue her treatment and thereby to remain in the TC.

Eleutheria: I feel like giving up ... but all of you in the community [TC] encouraged me to try. You held me back (...) I will stay to fight for me. I deserve a better future (extract from the play ‘Our story’ Ibid.).

In Chapter 18 of his Poetics (trans. Butcher 1961, cited Weiner 1980: 250), Aristotle stressed that “the chorus too should be regarded as one of the actors; it should be an integrated part of the whole and share in the action”. Aristotle, here, appears to suggest that the chorus ought to operate as a “collective character”, to borrow Weiner’s term (ibid.: 250) and to operate as “an integrated part of the whole”. To this end, the function of the chorus has widely been understood as the voice of the community polis (Gould 1996: 220; Foley 2003; Callame 1999). However, in ancient Greek tragedy the chorus was never regarded as ‘equal’ to the characters or as one of the actors. Although there are significant variations in the way the Greek tragedians such as Sophocles, Euripides and Aeschylus utilised the chorus to support the theatrical action (see Burton 1980; Dale 1969; Easterling 1997; Kitto 1961; Taplin 2002), in the majority of the plays, the chorus appears to be restricted. Therefore, it never seems able to get involved in the action or gain control of the situation, unlike the tradition of the Dythrambic song, according to which the chorus interacts with the dramatic action by means of choral lyrics and dance (Taplin 2002). Therefore, in the usage of the chorus in ancient drama, interventions were limited in verbal and emotional terms, and thus the chorus was unable to influence the action at any level (Dale 1969; Foley 2003).
Additionally, another interesting point that I would like to highlight here is the identity, status and origin of the chorus. In ancient Greek tragedy, the chorus frequently originated from a lower social class and status when compared to the characters, such as slaves, women, foreigners or old men, and rarely included men of military age (Goldhill 1996; Gould 1996; Foley 2003; Castellani 1989). This ‘marginal’ identity of the chorus can be easily related to its restricted actions, especially if we consider the ancient Greek politico-religious context. Gould (1996: 224) asserts that the chorus’s collective voice embodies “the experience of the excluded, the oppressed, and the vulnerable”. He (ibid.: 233) goes on to suggest that the chorus’s interaction with the action is “a particular collective experience, the sense of a social group, with roots in the wider community, which draws on the inherited stories and inherited, gnomic wisdom of social memory and of oral tradition (...”). Despite the fact that the chorus has limited actions, it is interesting that in a context such as ancient Greek society, the marginal and oppressed communities were represented on stage. In other words, the oppressed and excluded communities had the space, the voice and the freedom to reflect upon the theatrical action in the same manner as perhaps in the theory and praxis of the ‘Ideal Democracy’. However, the issue of its mobility and inability to influence the characters’ decision-making per se is of paramount importance, and in a sense supports the theory of a democracy in which only a few (the main characters) can make the actual decisions. This is an observation which links us back to the theories of community formation discussed at the beginning of this chapter, as well as with the problematic idea of theatre as a medium of voicing and fostering community. Whilst the concept of ‘giving voice’ appears promising, questions arise when the setting, as well the status and social role of the individuals taking part in this “voicing” exercise are closely considered. In order to directly create a link with the subject of this chapter, I ask the question: does the fact of being a
woman and simultaneously a problem drug user, a prisoner and, in some cases, an immigrant, reinforce the participants’ mobility and passivity in influencing the decisions made on their behalf?

Boal’s (1979; 2000) work appears to be particularly useful in pushing my argument a step forward. Boal (1979), in his arsenal of exercises known as the Theatre of the Oppressed, advocates the development of the ancient Greek chorus’s functionality by attempting to “destroy” the barrier between the protagonist and the chorus in such a way that the chorus and protagonist become one, and are “equal”. As he argues:

First the barrier between actors and spectators is destroyed: all must act, all must be protagonists in the necessary transformation of society (…) Then the barrier between protagonists and choruses is destroyed: all must be simultaneously chorus and protagonist (…) (Boal 1979: x).

In the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), the chorus is represented by each individual who symbolises their community’s voice but also their inner voices. Hence, the TO’s core ideology is based upon the idea of theatre as an ‘aesthetic space’ where the individual can reflect on their community’s oppressions (Boal 1979; 1998) and/or their internalised oppressions: “the cops in the head” (Boal 1995). This time the individual is capable of transforming the dramatic action, making plans and opening a dialogue. The individual is not a passive member of the chorus who observes the action. but rather an active citizen who rebels and is separated from the rest of the group (community). They are therefore able to liberate themselves and think and act for themselves.
Boal, however, appears to oversimplify the function of the chorus and to draw conclusions regarding its ‘passivity’ very quickly without examining its characteristics such as its identity and status (see above), as well as the socio-political context of ancient Greece. In the preface to the new edition of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal 2000), entitled “The Unruly Protagonist”, Boal narrates the story of the protagonist’s separation from the chorus and presents Thespis as a ‘rebel’ of his era. However, in his narration Boal fails to take account of any studies relating to the introduction of the protagonist in the structure of ancient Greek tragedy (Callame 1999; Easterling 1997; Kitto 1954; Taplin 2002), and appears to misinterpret the basic historical context that led to the introduction of the protagonist. Moreover, his positive claims about a theatre in which the actor take power for themselves, takes action and thinks and act themselves (1979; 2000) seem to promote the individual’s disconnection from their community in order to propose a more individualistic approach to change and societal transformation. In this way Boal dismisses and even goes against the ideas of community, solidarity and trust and the notion of a collective voice of the oppressed.

Taking into account the two approaches to the use of a chorus, I must note that in the En Drasi project I utilised a combination of the classical chorus functionality together with Boal’s views of an active individual, capable of promoting change. My approach attempted to visualise the notion of collectiveness alongside the concept of the ‘active citizen’. In a sense, the project drew on the classical chorus structure as has been understood by writers such as Callane (1999), Foley (2003) and Weiner (1980), and created the chorus of the representatives of a contemporary Greek ‘marginal’ community. Hence, the female chorus in the performance of *Our Story* can be viewed as the collective voice of people affected by substance abuse, or the ‘marginal’. This example of practice promotes the idea of collective
enterprise as a means of social change in which the individualist point of view is equally valued and considered as the ideal community. In my view, the usage of the chorus structure combines both the ancient notion of the chorus as the voice of the community and Boal’s view of ‘taking action’, and proposes an alternative mode of the community’s potential to fight and facilitate individualistic and societal change. To return to my previous argument vis-à-vis applied theatre and voicing, I propose the idea of applied theatre as a platform through which individualistic potential can be realised and then reinforced through collectivity and solidarity. Hence, the individual voice becomes a collective voice and, perhaps, a stronger voice. In the Chapter 4, I am going to return to the theme of the chorus and examine it from another point of view, in my discussion of the performance ‘Evmenides’ by Aeschylus from the theatre group 18 ANO. The next section will continue with the description of the project description by focussing on the idea of escapism and its relevance to the project.

**Use**

In the next stage we decided that it was important to address the character’s background, and how it related to drug use. Although this time the participants were more willing to take up the challenge and seemed to trust me more, it was essential to be cautious in the way I was going to facilitate this process. I felt that it was important to avoid any image, symbol or ritual that was commonly associated with drug users, such as a person injecting using a needle. I encouraged the participants to demonstrate a symbolic dimension of their common experience of drug consumption through metaphor and by using a combination of psychical images and words. To facilitate this process, we played the word association game (also known as the word-at-a-time story, see Johnston 2005: 193) with the word *drugs*
operating as the starting point. Selected words derived from the game were chosen and placed into sequence so as to ‘narrate the story’ of the drug use. The words were: substances, curiosity, use, hallucination, lost, search, fear, hide, darkness, illusion, danger and handcuffs. In the second part of the scene’s development, the participants were encouraged to spontaneously reflect on the above words by creating frozen images, and then to select the images that could better depict the meaning of the words.

For the purposes of this section I am going to focus on the description of the frozen image which was associated with the word use. At the beginning, the participants struggled to find an effective way of physically expressing the meaning of this word. I asked them to think about it and suggested various implications of the word in daily situations in which it is used and misused. Some of the participants commented that food consumption could be regarded as such. They therefore created an image in which they covered their mouths and faces with their open palms and repeatedly mimed the act of greedily eating (consuming). As their palms repeatedly approached their faces, their fingers formed an image of prison railings, but when their palms were moving away, their faces were revealed in an act of ‘liberation’. This image was a very powerful and vivid way of expressing not only the act of using but also the consequences prompted by use. In the discussion which followed the exercise, the women claimed that this image could be regarded as a symbol of modern society in which, while the majority of individuals constantly consume food, products, technologies and so on, it is only those who consume drugs who are considered societal ‘sinners’, a response that echoes Brodsky’s views:

The lot of the acknowledged losers, of the poor eliminated from the consumerist game, is a life of sporadic rebellion but more commonly of drug addiction: “In general, a man shooting heroin into his veins does so largely for the same reason you buy a video” (Brodsky 1989 cited in Bauman 2007: 105).

A careful reading of the women’s imagery and Brodsky’s views (ibid.) suggests that individuals generally consume ‘substances’ as a means of evading their current realities, and in a quest for ephemeral moments of satisfaction, a point which is commonly referred to in the literature as among the reasons why people consume drugs (see McMurrnan 1994, Bonner 1996; AND Waterhouse Davies 1997; Sussman 2001). In particular, drug use is often regarded as an individual’s medium for reaching an altered state of mind, to relax or become more energetic, to improve their social network, to feel included in a social system (the community of users), but also to deal with any negative feelings, anxieties, psychological disorders and/or post-traumatic stresses (Petersen and McBride 2002). As Derrida (2003: 25) claims:

He [the drug addict] cuts himself off from the world, in exile from reality, far from objective reality and the real life of the city and the community; and he escapes into a world of simulacrum and fiction (Derrida 2003: 25).

Interestingly, Derrida’s notion of drug use as an “exile from reality” relates drug abuse with the concepts of ‘exile’ on the one hand and ‘escapism’ on the other. In both of these ideas the point of contact, I believe, is the notion of ‘evasion’. That is to say, I approach the women’s image of covered mouths and faces from two different angles, the personal and societal. At the personal level, the women’s image directly embodies drug users’ act of “cutting themselves off from the world, in exile from reality” (Derrida Ibid.) by covering their faces and thereby removing themselves from the ‘eyes’ of
society. In this way they exclude themselves from the harsh reality of addiction but are also excluded by others. As the individuals have been hidden and disconnected from every community, even the community of users, this might result in alienation and deprivation, or what Matsa (2001: 81) refers to as ‘human-shadows’ (anthropoi-skies). This image graphically portrays my argument relating to community’s ambivalence in simultaneously segregating and uniting individuals. Therefore, the symbolic image of ‘uncovering their faces’ might be viewed as their attempt to reveal themselves and reintegrate into society (requesting membership to the community of recovering users). However, as Deleuze and Guattari (1988) highlight:

Drug addicts continually fall back into what they wanted to escape: a segmentarity all the more rigid for being marginal, a territorialization all the more artificial for being based on chemical substances, hallucinatory forms, and fantasy subjectifications. Drug addicts may be considered as precursors or experimenters who tirelessly blaze new paths of life, but their cautiousness lacks the foundation for caution (Deleuze and Guattari Ibid: 285).

Hence, from a societal point of view, the image symbolises society’s attempts to ‘de-voice’ the individuals (by covering their months) and perhaps ‘hide’ behind prison railings those who seek to escape into what Baudelaire 1928 (sited in Hayter 1988) famously described as “artificial paradise”. Their participation in a therapeutic programme and their dreams for a substance-free life can therefore be considered as an act of liberation or freedom (Seldom 2007). Yet the act of ‘uncovering’ their faces might be related to this opportunity of voicing ‘I am here, I am clean, I want to live a substance-free life’, a view which returns us again to the discussion relating to the threat of closure of the TC and its effects, as well as to the issues of connecting the participants’ voices as a means of realising their commonalities.
In many respects, it can be claimed that the creation of this image might depict the journey through dependency, stigmatisation, recovery and reintegration. In my view, this moment of practice is of paramount importance in the endeavour to conceptualise how theatre should operate within this context. The fact that the participants’ previous difficulties with or denial of reflections on drug-related issues appeared to be defeated through the use of metaphor and image theatre might suggest that the implementation of psychical expressions has the potential to allow the individuals to express their experiences and maybe discover another way of ‘voicing’ their experiences and needs. In addition, it might permit them to express an alternative form of resistance embodied in their uncovered faces. It also gave the opportunity to provoke and manifest their ‘right to treatment’; although this has been addressed in the National Strategy (2008) (see Chapter 1), as we have seen in practice, the threat of closing down the only therapeutic community operating within the criminal justice system not only does not ensure this right, but completely overlooks it. Therefore, it generates a set of important questions for consideration: do we need to rethink the concept of community in applied theatre and its implications? How does this project inform us about applied theater in this context?

De Certeau (1984: 35-37) makes a distinction between strategy and tactic in describing how different types of power relationships co-exist within the same environments. He relates strategy with the power which is usually calculated from a subject of will and power, such as an institutions, business, army or even city (De Certeau Ibid.). Tactics, however, are linked to individualistic coping mechanisms developed to deal with the strategy being imposed on the individual. De Certeau claims that strategy “postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as a base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats (...) can be
managed” (De Certeau Ibid.: 36). In contrast, tactics are autonomous, and while they do require a space, “the space of the tactic is the space of the other” (De Certeau Ibid.: 37). Thompson (2009: 34-39) discusses De Certeau’s strategy/tactic vis-à-vis applied theatre and its potential. As he asserts:

Many participatory theatre projects, when they work with marginalised, isolated or oppressed groups, hope they can generate strategic actions with that community when in fact they can only operate at the levels of tactics. Applied theatre projects might instil in participants rich and complex means of coping and subtly resisting the worst of a context, but rarely are they able to equip people to transcend it (Thompson 2009: 35-36).

While Thompson is right here to highlight the dangers behind the claims being made for applied theatre’s potential to transcend the communities in which it intervenes, nevertheless, as I argue, introducing the participants to tactics as a way to cope with the negative circumstances of their lives is a very important contribution which should not be dismissed. Hence, in relation to the En Drasi project it can be argued that strategy is linked to the government’s plans to close down the therapeutic community, and in this way to expose the women to an unfair battle of power, thereby devoicing them. As I argue, the tactic that the women initially developed was to shift into the prison community; however, this is linked with another strategy, that of punishment and enforcement. Likewise, as I mentioned at various points in the course of this chapter, people in recovery from drug use frequently regard drug use as the only tactic which is available to them, not only as a coping mechanism and a form of escapism but also as a way of resistance and protest against the strategies of the dominant system. Therefore, it can been argued that the tactic which was developed here is the realisation of the participants’ desire for community and the realisation of ways to fight for it. As one of the women mentioned:
Stella: It was a very interesting process. Although I struggled many times and was considering quitting, I finally realised how many things I can achieve if I really want to. It helped me to express myself, my feelings about others and my situation, in front of an audience. 15

At various points throughout this chapter, I have argued that perhaps applied theatre can be better regarded for its potential to generate the desire for community through the realisation of common issues, dreams and expectations; in other words, to introduce the participants to ‘tactics’. I would therefore like to develop my argument by suggesting that applied theatre might also be able to make a contribution by providing opportunities to express and share these issues, dreams and expectations with others through a performance event. Jackson’s (2007: 15) idea of theatre as propaganda or campaigning theatre appears to be a useful context to conceptualise theatre’s importance. As Jackson claims, this type of theatre aims to “persuade its audience of the rightness of its views” (Jackson Ibid.). Hence, it could be said that the performance by the En Drasi project attempted to underline the importance of the TC. To a certain level the performance was a campaign piece to support the continuous operation of the TC by demonstrating the importance of programme for each individual. By using theatre as a form of campaigning and demonstrating for their right to treatment, I have shown that En Drasi’s performance was embedded in the history of Greek performance with a purpose and situations of calls for unity and action, such the way that theatre was used during the Second World War. In Chapter 1 I described similar examples derived from the history of Greek theatre for a purpose in which performances were organised in order to manifest and protest against different types of strategy. In one case – the Theatre of the

15 All quotes from project participants are from the writer’s own archive. En Drasi Athens June 2008.
Mountains – the guerilla soldiers attempted to give the message of unity and resistance against the Nazis. Additionally, in the prison islands during the Greek civil war, the inmates staged ancient Greek tragedies to pass on the message of resistance. Both examples constitute a useful example of tactic performances which were put together to convince, persuade and finally protest against strategies imposed on individuals. Theatre as propaganda, then, was a useful medium in the context of En Drasi, as it allowed the women to assert their right to treatment and social reintegration, but mostly to encourage the realisation of their desire for community.

Conclusion

In his poem ‘Ithaki’, the Greek poet Cavafy (Keeley 1992) famously utilised the myth of the Homeric hero Ulysses and his adventures on the journey back to his homeland, the island of Ithaka. The poem is associated in Greek literature with the notion of ‘return’. It has also been associated with the name of the first therapeutic community in Greece, the founder of which was inspired by Cavafy’s poem and attempted to symbolically connect the Cavafian representation of the ‘traveller’ Ulysses with the modern Greek problem drug user (Poulopoulos and Tsibouki 1998). In my view, Cavafy’s poem brings the issues I have attempted to illustrate over the course of this chapter into context. Cavafy urges us to seek for the journey and the experience ‘in itself’ and retain the joyfulness until we arrive at our destination. It therefore brings together the views of Bauman and Zizek in the same way that I argued that applied theatre has the power to create images of the participants’ desired community: in particular, my approach in using applied theatre to generate the desire for community and thereby the planning of the ‘journey’ in the first instance. It also relates and manifests the notions of quest and wonder (escapism) and the search for other
communities, which I have also discussed in connection to the multifaceted perceptions of community that people who consume drugs frequently encounter together with the problematic sense of belonging.

At various points throughout this chapter, I have argued that perhaps applied theatre can be valued for its potential to generate the desire for community through the realisation of common issues, dreams and expectations. I therefore regard applied theatre as a way of provoking the collection of different individualistic ‘voices’ (verbal and psychical) into one voice – a collective voice. As Prentiki and Selman mention:

If we are now separate islands of private people making our own individual meanings out of images and statements set before us, we fit only to the post-modern fragments, occupying segregated cells in front of television screens that offer myths about virtual communities throughout the genre of soap opera, that we are robbed of other evidence, increasingly mistaken for the thing itself. Popular theatre plays a role in resisting this anti-social impulse (Prentiki and Selman Ibid: 12-13)

Can applied theatre also play a role in building bridges between these ‘separate islands’ and encouraging individuals to enhance their desire for community? In the light of this, I would like to return to two key points. As I already mentioned in the first part of this chapter, I find points of contact between applied theatre and the idea of community in the ability of applied theatre to connect individuals so that they desire a sense of community. I have noted that perhaps applied theatre should not be regarded for its potential to build a community, but rather to inspire the individuals to desire it. From this perspective, the performance event that I described above supports those assumptions in a powerful way. Despite the participants’
mixed feelings regarding the idea of community (as an outcome of their stigma, imprisonment and the threat of closing down the TC), I believe that the theatre project succeeded in enriching the individuals with positive images of their desired community. Furthermore, considering the participants’ responses during the evaluation process, there are noticeable references to hope, colours, dreams and freedom:

It [the project] gave me all the colours I could ever see in my whole life (...)

Throughout this process I felt hope for a dreaming and beautiful life together with my loved ones (...) Thank you for all the moments of happiness you make me feel.

Many positive things! Creativity, sharing, feeling, teamwork, attempt, recognition, motivation, development, goal achievement, dream accomplishment! Freedom!!!  

In many respects, while the notion of community remained problematic and uneasy for the majority of the participants, it is important to highlight the women’s shift from the beginning of the project to the performance event. Their previous fears, insecurities and uncertainties were now replaced with hope, colours and dreams for a better future. It is in those moments of sharing, connection and unity that I regard applied theatre’s efficacy to make a difference in the lives of these women. Whether community is escapism, utopia, dream or paradise lost, it is a truth that we will always seek for ‘it’ in the same way we are looking for the Cavafian notion of ‘Ithaka’. Thus applied theatre can facilitate our journey through images, narration and the momentum of communitas, but also through creative adventurousness and discovery.

16 Participants were asked to create anonymous postcards as a medium to reflect on the project, see McCarthy 2005.
Moreover, I have made the case to suggest that applied theatre can make a contribution by introducing the participants to De Certeau’s (1984) concept of tactic. By mainly drawing from Thompson’s (2009) understanding of the way strategy and tactics need to be considered in the claims about applied theatre, I addressed the fact that for the members of the En Drasi community, there was a realisation of ways to cope with the strategy demands imposed on them, for example the threat of closing down the TC. In other words, I asserted that the introduction to alternative tactics for these women perhaps allowed them to find a way to raise their voices and protest for their rights to treatment and social reintegration. Even if the performance was showcased for a small and select audience within the community, I strongly believe that its importance lies in the fact that it ‘showed the way’ to these women. Hence, it can be argued that applied theatre was perhaps useful in introducing an alternative system of tactic and therefore a “rich and complex means of coping subtly and resisting the worst of a context” (Thompson 2009:35-36). Aside from this, by creating a piece of performance about their daily lives in the community and by using the form of collective characters and a chorus to symbolise this, the performance gave the participants the space to allow heteroglossia to occur between the women and their audience. This form of heteroglossia not only expressed the importance that the TC had for the women, but also clearly communicated their desire for community, and thus their desire to break free from drugs.

To conclude, as I have argued, applied theatre cannot operate either as a community constructor or a guarantor of the community. However, it is powerful enough to facilitate the journey towards the quest for ‘Ithaka’, and likewise to operate as an activist in protesting for these individuals’ rights to treatment and social justice. I have also asserted the need to use applied
theatre as a way to introduce participants to alternative tactics. In the next chapter I will discuss the relationship between the community of problem drug users and applied theatre more broadly, by placing more emphasis on the community’s narratives and the style in which they were told. I will continue the discussion from this chapter by putting additional emphasis on the concept of ‘alternative’ as well as looking at different examples of De Certeau’s (1984) tactic. I am going to propose a tactic that is put into use in order to validate the participants’ personal narratives. In the next chapter, I will go backwards in time to discuss the first project which was conducted as part of this research study; in addition, I will change location to Oldham in Manchester.
CHAPTER 3: APPLIED THEATRE AS AN “ALTERNATIVE SUBSTANCE”

Drama offers a more participatory process that generates fun from within, a more wholesome way to get “high” (...) Improvising opens the mind to the continuing flow of imagery and inspirations from the creative subconscious. Discovering that one has this ability to tap into rich resources of inspiration deepens identity and increases creative potential (Blatner 2007: n.p.)

The purpose of this chapter is to explore my argument that applied theatre can operate as an alternative substance in supporting problem drug users on their journey to recovery. Hence, this chapter attempts to explain how I came up with this term and its associated meanings by reflecting upon three particular moments from the project. To briefly revisit my definition of alternative substance (see introduction p. 18), it should be noted that I am using this phrase as a metaphor to discuss the different implications of implementing applied theatre with problem drug users. By using Blatner’s idea of drama as “a more wholesome way to get ‘high” as a point of departure (Blatner Ibid.), I attempt to illustrate that applied theatre has the power to transfer the individual “into rich resources of inspiration” and into the sphere of imagination, which can provide them with a means of observing their lives from a different point of view. Moreover, in the introduction to this thesis I explained that I am approaching the implementation of applied theatre in drug services with the metaphor of a journey. This chapter will address the second stage: the departure, or, in other words, the process of participating in applied theatre. In particular,
emphasis will be put on which stories problem drug users ‘tell’ in expressing their constant quest for creativity, happiness and ‘normality’.

This chapter is divided into two main parts: the first part will put emphasis on examining the idea of alternative, while the second part will explore the idea of substance in order to construct my overall argument of applied theatre as an alternative substance. Therefore, the first part begins by addressing my personal journey and shift from behavioural and motivation-to-change theories to a more holistic and creative approach of using theatre with people in the treatment of addiction. As I discuss, this change of direction coincides with a shift in the area of applied theatre and the quest for alternative ways of delivering and interpreting the application of theatre, as well as comprehending how participation in theatre might or might not affect the individual. Here, I have selected two examples to reflect on: the first example examines the themes and structure of an improvised scene, while the second describes the cases of two participants and how their contradictory responses to the project were underlying a common desire for creativity and happiness in their lives. Hence, this chapter starts by reviewing the literature on theatre in prisons (Balfour 2004; Baim et. al 2002; Hughes 2005; Taylor 2003; Thompson 1996, 1999, 2002) and goes on to challenge the implications of using a combined model of behavioural theories and applied theatre in promoting personal change. It moves on to suggest the necessity to move on from the behavioural model and promotes the idea that when the theories of Positive psychology (Seligman and Csiksemilayi 2000) are combined with Thompson’s (2006) concept of “performances of beauty” it provides a potentially powerful framework to understand the use of applied theatre in different contexts. Moreover, Schechner’s (1985) concept of transformation and transportation in
performance will be reviewed in order to make a stronger case for the application of theatre with problem drug users.

Additionally, in the second part of this chapter, I will examine another moment in the project where, during the character-building process, the participants re-told their stories so as to reveal an optimism, showing a positive outcome to their experiences. Hence, I aim to determine how applied theatre operates as an alternative substance by putting additional emphasis on discussing the meaning of substance. To achieve this, I am going to describe my own personal journey and my understanding of this particular moment of practice as derived from my reflective notes and observations. The literature on theatre and personal narratives in the criminal justice system will be reviewed and examined in parallel with drug-recovery literature, with particular reference to the field of ‘recovery narratives’ and ‘identity reconstruction’. I will approach these examples by looking at the literature on narratives of recovery (Etherington 2007; Maruna 2001; 2004; Maruna and Ramsden 2004, McIntosh and McKeeganey 2000a, 2000b, 2001; White 1996, 2001), and trying to link it with applied theatre praxis (Dennis 2007; Nicholson 2005a; Rowe 2007; Salas 1999; Thompson 2005; 2009). The focus here will be to call into question the extent to which applied theatre can facilitate the process of re-telling and thereby validating the participants’ personal stories. Additionally it will attempt to address the possibilities and pitfalls (practical, ethical and socio-cultural) of such an approach and why developing an understanding of how the mechanisms of narrative validation would enable us to conceptualise applied theatre’s potential in this context. Finally, this chapter puts emphasis on the accidental, unexpected and even surprising responses from the participants and attempts to comprehend how these responses can provide us with new insights regarding applied theatre’s potential. It will therefore attempt to
identify factors that have led to the recent shift from “challenging and changing” the participants’ lives (transformative agent) to a more holistic approach to applying theatre in the community.

Creativity, drugs and applied theatre: points of contact?

In the introduction of this thesis I offer a definition of what I mean by applied theatre as an alternative substance and here I would like to draw from this idea in order to highlight were I find the points of contact between creativity, the experience of taking drugs and applied theatre.

Creativity has been characterised as a human’s mental capacity to generate new and original ideas and products (Barron 1963; Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Dervin 1990; Dewey 1980; Freelance 2005; Hughes 1999). It is a complicated and paradoxical mental process of which its components can be characterised as both extraordinary and everyday. Although it has many domains such as creativity in mathematics, in science, in business and so on, the most popular conceptions of creativity are predominantly connected with the arts. Traditionally, many writers have subscribed to the belief that creativity is the artist’s medium to communicate and express their emotions, thoughts and ideas to an audience (Barron 1963; Dervin 1990; Dewey 1980; Freelance 2005; Hughes 1999). A review of the literature has indicated that creativity is generally understood as a person’s capacity to bring something new into being (Barron 1969; Boden 1994; Bohm 2003). In other words it is the action of making, doing and discovering something that previously was ‘unknown’. Creativity includes the use of imagination as a vehicle to transmute ideas, images, experiences and desires into external reality. Thereby, it is connected with the making of ideas and products which are
derived from our inner world and characterized by novelty and/or originality (Barron 1969; Boden 1994; Runco and Albert 1990). As a consequence, creativity involves not only the making of products but also their acceptance and validation by others.

Hence, creativity is widely associated with the implementation of imagination as a tool to access the ideas, emotions and images as derived from the individual’s personal experiences. Apart from this, engagement in creative activities can create notions of wonder and excitement. Those notions can be associated with a feeling of achievement for putting into use past experiences but also with liberating the individuals’ creative energy. Csiksentmihalyi (1996) points out that the act of creation is a fascinating experience since it provides us with feelings of fulfilment and excitement which are essential for our well being. He mentions:

Perhaps only sex, sports, music and religious ecstasy even when these experiences remain fleeting and leave no trace- provide as profound a sense of being part of an entity greater than ourselves. But creativity also leaves an outcome that adds to the richness and complexity of the future (Csiksentmihalyi 1996: 2).

At the other end of the spectrum, numerous studies have attempted to explain the reasons involved in the individuals’ use and misuse of psychoactive drugs. These studies have argued that one of the most important motivations to use drugs is to alter the individuals’ emotional states. As an outcome, drug-induced hallucinogenics have been viewed as a way to move the individuals away for their ‘ordinary’ reality and allow them to experience feelings of excitement and fulfilment, also known as a ‘buzz’ (Gossop 1989; Petersen 2002). The above points raise the question: is there a close relationship or at least a connection between the creative process and altered states of mind? Apparently, involvement in both the process of creativity
and drug use is strongly associated with the desire to access ‘high’ emotional states and experience feelings of excitement and achievement. Therefore, I am interested to tease out further the extend to which participation in applied theatre can operate as an ‘alternative’ way to reach the level of ‘high’. I will attempt to investigate this further, by approaching it through the prism of applied theatre with problem drug uses. I am doing this, in order to support my argument that applied theatre can operate as an alternative substance. In particular, I seek to address the questions to what extent the experience of drug use and lifestyle can be used so as to generate creative ideas in applied theatre? Also can creativity be utilised so that their harsh stories of addiction can be retold and therefore validated? Finally, what are the implications of engaging problem drug users in creativity and what effect can it hold for their well being? These are the questions that I will attempt to address by examining my experience of facilitating theatre workshops with a group of problem drug users in Manchester.

**PART I: The Quest for Creative and Happy Moments**

The applied theatre project that I am going to discuss was carried out in Addiction Dependency Solutions (ADS) in area of Oldham, Greater Manchester. ADS was founded in 1973 as an independent registered charity and company whose aims were to provide help and advice to individuals and families with problems relevant to alcohol abuse. Over the years the organisation has expanded its curriculum to include help and advice for problem drug users. Today ADS runs thirty centres and two residential homes in Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Lancashire and Leeds. Additionally, ADS in Oldham works with people over 18 who live in the area and are
dealing with problematic alcohol or drug use. It offers a range of therapeutic and complementary therapies, educational training and social activities.

**Setting up the framework**

The arrangement of the project was made possible by the invitation of Oldham ADS in an attempt to give continuation to the previous applied theatre project (April – June 2006). Following this agreement was a meeting with the manager of Oldham ADS, Angela Rainkin, on 10th December 2006. At that point, we clarified the aims, objectives, length and duration of the project. Due to the fact that the service’s programme was full of activities during the week, the project was initially planned for Saturday morning. We also agreed on the themes and theatre techniques that were going to be implemented during the workshop, which was intended to focus on themes around positive change, self-confidence, relapse prevention and ways of being creative. Moreover, it aimed to motivate service users to get involved in art activities and to encourage alternative ways of expression and communication.

However, before the initiation of the project, a number of obstacles needed to be overcome which were relevant regarding recruitment of participants. Initially, promotion of the project failed to bring people to the workshop. As ADS members reported, this was due to reluctance to participate in a theatre project and lack of knowledge of what participation in the project would involve, as well as fear of exposure or of being asked to disclose personal information. Moreover, the members’ difficulty in committing to a group was another issue that was reported as a difficulty. Hence, various methods needed to be implemented with the intention of attracting the service users.

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17 The applied theatre project was commissioned from April to June 2006 in ADS Oldham and was part of my MA dissertation research (see Zontou, 2006).
to the project, such as constant support and encouragement from the ADS staff. To this end, Niki Papadopoulou, an ADS counsellor, took on the role of the project assistant. As I will discuss below in my analysis, her interventions were vital not only for the organisation and completion of the project, but overall in supporting the participants to engage with the project. Moreover, it was felt that more frequent interaction between me and the service users would result in increasing their understanding of the project and developing a sense of trust and commitment. For this purpose, a series of activities were organised in the service’s drop-in room starting with discussions over tea, board games, and introduction to low focus warm-up exercises.

The drop-in room had a specific significance for the service users. In many respects, it was their community’s space. It was the room that the service users could use to meet and interact with each other. It was also the room into which they would go before and after their personal counselling, group therapy sessions and acupuncture. It was a big room on the ground floor, right next to the main entrance and the reception area. It was operating as a first point for everyone who was accessing the building. It was painted in purple and had a kitchen attached to it. The room has a sense of ‘neutrality’ and simplicity in its layout, decoration and furniture and could easily be associated with waiting rooms in hospitals or other health services. The walls were covered with posters and information about events, messages from anti-drug campaigns and occasionally art work or pictures. The radio was always tuned to the local rock radio station and the songs of Oasis, The Smiths, James, Stone Roses and Joy Division among others, will be frequently played as a reminder of the strong Manchunian identity of the people and the location. Steve and Bill the two ex-service users were in charge of the room, welcoming, comforting, chatting with people. Their presence was a constant reminder of the individuals’ potential to transform their lives and
break away, drug free. The room was usually full of people. Rushing in and out, having brief conversations, laughing, rolling cigarettes, greedily eating biscuits, reading newspapers, and waiting. The variety of individuals’ energies and emotions were blurred with the smell of instant coffee, tea and toasted bread and all collide to give a glimpse of the complexity of those individuals’ lives. The previous year I had conducted a theatre project in ADS for my Master’s dissertation and for this reason I had already met the two volunteers Bill and Steve. When I returned for the second time, they welcomed me. Bill made me a coffee and introduced me to the rest of the people in the room. He announced that I was about to start a new drama project and encouraged everyone to take part. I also gave a short introduction on my project and informed them that I was going to run the first workshop next week. Some people looked at me with suspicion, others smiled, others pretended not to listen and a young man stood up, grabbed a piece of toast and commented “sorry luv, drama is not my cup of tea”. He then left the room. Somebody else shifted the conversation away from my drama project by asking me if I am Spanish and wanted to find out why I decided to move in England where it always rains and there is barely any sun.

Following my first attempt to promote the project, it was apparent that a sense of trust, comfort and security needed to be established first with the service users in order to encourage their participation in the project. It was felt that there was a need to encourage groupwork, collaboration and the establishment of a sense of community among the service users. Despite the fact that they knew each other they were only interacting briefly in the drop in room or in the group therapy session and therefore, I was interested to explore whether the experience of participating in a creative and collaborative activity as the drama workshop could have a positive impact
on these individuals. First, however I had to find an effective way to motivate them to participate in the project and establish a group.

For more than a month I spent many hours in the drop-in room attempting to build up relationships with the members. I also encouraged them to suggest games which we could “play and have fun”. One day a volunteer suggested the game Charades, a word guessing game. I was told that this was a popular family game, which is often played at family occasions such as Christmas. Therefore, almost everyone knew its rules and felt confident to participate. Steve, a volunteer, and I facilitated the game every Saturday with great success. The ‘Charades Saturdays’ became very successful, and almost everyone contributed to the game either by giving ideas or guessing. A few people reported that Charades was the reason to come to the service on a Saturday morning. Moreover, by using Charades as a starting point (warm-up) we also played other similar games such as the *image of the word* (McCarthy 2004), and formulated a core group of six to ten people. As a result, participants gained a better understanding of and interest in the project, and reported the desire to participate in similar activities to the Charades game on a more frequent basis. Aside from this, I asked ADS to change the day of the project. Following my request, we rearranged it for Wednesdays: Wednesday became the official day of the project, while Saturday was established as Charades day. Finally, after almost two months of promotion, the core group was formulated. Approximately twelve people aged between 25 and 55, both male and female, took part in the project, including one volunteer and ex-service user, one staff member and ten service users. The fifteen drama sessions were carried out from 21st February until 16th May 2007. In the following section, I will analyse three main exemplars of the project in order to discuss what I believe should be the role of applied theatre in drug services. Over the course of my analysis I would
like to highlight how the participants’ initial difficulties in participating were transformed into an overwhelming desire for creativity and personal storytelling. Following this, I have chosen to discuss three different moments or responses that illustrate that shift, but also how the ADS members made use of the project to express their desire for creativity and happiness as well as normality in their lives. First, I am going to discuss the second session.

**The police station scene versus the wedding scene**

In the second session, I implemented the ‘two-person exercise’ taken from the *Geese theatre handbook: Drama with offenders and people at the risk* (Baim et al. 2002: 134-135) also known as ‘What’s the story’. Briefly, in the first part of the exercise I asked two participants to stand neutrally and face the rest of the group. I placed one standing at a significant distance behind the other. Then, I encouraged the rest of the group to suggest possible scenarios (Where are these people? What are they doing? And so forth) and to decide on one scenario which they would like to bring to life:

- Who are these people?
- They are two guys, they are mates.
- Where are they?
- In the police station.
- Why?
- They got arrested for robbery.
- How do they feel?
- Shit.
- What do they think?
- Not again...
Although they had suggested and decided on the police station scenario themselves, I noticed that during the scene-building process most of them felt uncomfortable and disliked the whole discussion about police, prosecution and crime. Very quickly it became clear that they did not wish to go further with this and thereby the whole group’s energy decreased. I had to move them on to the second part very quickly.

In the second part of the exercise, we repeated the same process as above. However, this time the two participants were standing next to each other with a significant distance between them. The dominant suggested scenario was describing the scene of a wedding. Again, the group built up the characters and the scenario. I then asked them to develop it into a scene in which all the group members could have a part. They had ten minutes to prepare the scene and I left the room. While I was waiting outside I could hear their laughter and enjoyment, but also their engagement and agony in finishing the scene. In the scene that they had created, an unexpected revelation about a secret love affair between the bridegroom and the bride’s sister resulted in a comic situation.

During the improvisation of the wedding scene the atmosphere changed rapidly. Everyone was very happy to contribute to the process and take part. The role of the bride’s sister, Sheila, was given to one of the female participants. As a result, Sheila became her nickname from that day forward. To my surprise, that moment of the workshop soon became a repeated theme of discussion, not only between the participants, but also between the other clients, volunteers and staff members. Weeks after the workshop, people were still calling Jane Sheila, and would ‘challenge’ her for dating her sister’s fiancé. I recall one day when we were in the drop-in room and somebody asked Jane about it. She looked at me and explained to him what had
happened. Then Jane encouraged him to come to the project by saying “you will feel alive again”. This particular moment of practice raises important questions regarding applied theatre: How does this example of practice inform us about the role of applied theatre within this context? Why do some groups focus on their own lives while others move away from them? Why did the participants in this project not want to focus on the police station scene but were happy to build the wedding scene?

As I have already mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, in recent years there has been a growing tendency to implement behavioural theories such as cognitive behaviour, social learning and role theory, incorporating theatre techniques, as a means to promote personal change. This tendency has mainly emerged from and been used in the implementation of theatre within the criminal justice system, where it is believed that change in behaviour can prevent the individual from re-offending. It has already been mentioned at various points during the course of this study that the area of practice in the criminal justice system is an important category of practice within the field of applied theatre, and has therefore driven the practice in many and complex ways. One of the basic domains that it has influenced is related to the need to evaluate the practice being undertaken in the area, accompanied by a constant demand to present statistics and facts on how the practice might have an impact on the participants. Although it is understandable that this emphasis on measuring serves primary funding purposes, we should not dismiss the fact that it has influenced the way that theatre has been promoted, delivered and interpreted.

Hughes (2005), in Doing the arts justice: A review of research literature, practice and theory, gives a useful overview of the recent approaches being utilised in the criminal justice system at both a practical and theoretical level. She
outlines the range of ‘models of change’ as derived from psychological and sociological theories which have been used, with the purpose of addressing issues of behavioural change as well as measuring the impact of arts in changing the individuals’ attitudes to offending (see Hughes 2005: 56-69). Although these theories have drawn on different disciplines and ideologies, there is a common element to focus on: how the individuals’ past experiences can lead to a potential change in their futures, when juxtaposed with the present. This tendency to draw possible solutions from behavioural theories seems to have originated in the endeavour to justify how arts can be beneficial for the individual, and has led to the over-generalisation of its outcomes. Although it is not directly admitted, it seems from the reports and research being undertaken in this area that emphasis has been given to addressing factors through which participation in theatre could support the individual to proceed with behavioural and attitudinal changes in their lives. This view can be supported if we consider the language/terminology that has been used to report these outcomes. A useful example to illustrate this point is Hughes’ conclusion to the review. She reports:

What are the specific outcomes of participating in the arts? The evidence base suggests that there are four main areas of impact:

- changing individuals’ personal, internal responses to drivers or triggers that lead to offending
- changing the social circumstances of individuals’ lives by equipping them with personal and social skills that can help them build different relationships and access opportunities in work and education
- changing and enriching the institutional culture and working practices
- changing wider communities’ views of offenders and the criminal justice system (Hughes 2005: 71)
“Changing” here is presented with a certainty which does not seem to allow space for problematisation of, or perhaps inquiries into further justification of what arts can actually do. On the contrary, the assumptions that have been made simplify the idea that theatre can operate as a transformative agent, and lead to a problematic notion of theatre as a tool for promoting personal and social change. It can been claimed that the above assumptions have dominated the field for many years and led practitioners and writers to believe that theatre can act as an ‘agent of behavioural change’ (Balfour 2004; Baim et. al. 2002; Taylor 2003; Thompson 1998, 1999,2002). As in most cases, the focus has been on whether the challenging of participants’ ideas on issues of offending would lead to behavioural change. These assumptions derive from the cognitive behavioural model, which appears to have monopolised the area, and has been widely implemented within the criminal justice system. As Hughes with Ruding have explained more recently, “the cognitive behavioural model was initially adopted (...) because there was an evidence base to support its impact on reducing offending” (Hughes with Ruding 2009: 221). Alongside this perspective, a number of writers and practitioners (Baim et. al.; Balfour 2004; Bergman and Hewish 2003; Hughes 2003, 2005; Thompson 1998, 1999, 2003; Williams 2003) have subscribed to the belief that if we manage to challenge the participants’ behavioural attitudes via dramatic narration and improvisation, it is likely that a quest for change will occur as natural process.

Obviously, follow-up research to examine the impact that these projects have had or still have for individuals could provide us with substantial evidence of how theatre might achieve or promote behavioural or attitudinal change. It could also indicate whether ‘change’ occurred in the form that Hughes (2005: 71) summarises above, or in a more complex and multidimensional way. Without wishing to diminish the practice that has been undertaken for
many years within the criminal justice system, and which has had a great
and substantial impact (see for example organisations such as Clean Break,
People’s Palace Projects (PPP) and Theatre in Prisons and Probation
(TiPP) among many others), I would like to emphasise that the intentions
should not be explicitly to polarize behavioural change, but rather as a way
of enriching the participants’ life experiences and improving their
wellbeing.18

The key point I would like to make here is that both theatre practitioners
and scholars have utilised a rather narrow and subject-specific approach to
working with offenders or people ‘at risk’ of offense. Nevertheless, there is a
failure to consider any division between behavioural attitudes and offending
as a valuable response with potential significance for the individual’s
wellbeing (which in turn could affect their offending behavioural attitude).
The creative process and creative outcome of these projects appears to be less
valid and easily dismissed, not classified as a potential way to enhance their
ability to change. In my view, applied theatre has been trapped within the
labyrinth of promoting change by challenging and/or revisiting the
participants’ realities and thus has often overlooked the impact which is
hidden behind the improvised stories, symbols or metaphors. It is my
purpose to try to unpack other ways of ‘impacting’ on these individuals’
lives. At this point, I should clarify that I am not aiming to suggest a better
model of practice, but on the contrary, to underline the weaknesses of the
behavioural approach and to examine whether there are any other pathways
for implementing applied theatre in vulnerable communities.

18 For additional information about these organizations see: Clean Break
www.cleanbreak.org.uk, People’s Palace Project (PPP) http://www.peoplespalace.org.uk/
and Theatre and Prison and Probation (TiPP): www.tipp.org.uk
To these ends, it should be acknowledged that in recent years there has been a growing demand to change direction in the way we deliver and interpret the work being undertaken. That is to say, the necessity of enriching our practices and seeking alternative ways of applying theatre within different contexts, inspiring and identifying with the alternative means and terminology to comprehend and conceptualise our practices. As has been suggested, this (re)turn to approaches and theories came as a response to doubts with regard to the benefits of arts within this context (see Hughes with Ruding 2009, McAvinchey 2009; Thompson 2003). As Thompson emphasises:

Applied theatre cannot just be about increasing your ‘role repertoire’ or creating ‘good characters’ (...) Applied theatre cannot be just about changing ‘behaviour’ (...) Applied theatre cannot just be about revealing though processes or personal scripts (...) Applied theatre cannot just be about practicing for the future (Thompson 2003: 47).

It seems, therefore, that the need to focus on the individual’s potential and creative ability has emerged, rather than an emphasis on ‘correcting’ their ‘troubled’ past. Thompson’s notion of what “applied theatre cannot just be about” inspired a new wave of discourse around the themes of what else can we do and what is in fact important. Therefore, the significance of the aesthetics and creativity were re-orientated to the centre of the practice and the participants’ own social agenda, and issues were adjusted to encompass the ideologies relating to applied theatre. As Balfour states:

Applied practice might more readily encounter the accidental, and acknowledge that what applied theatre does is not always linear, rational and conclusive in its outcomes, but is more often messy, incomplete, complex and tentative (Balfour 2009: 357).
Balfour (Ibid.) together with Thompson (Ibid., 2009) manifest a shift in both the application and interpretation of the practices relating to applied theatre. Interestingly, this shift in applied theatre coincided with the shift in the field of psychology with the emergence of what is known as positive psychology. According to Seligman (2002; Seligman and Csíkszentmihályi 2000), positive psychology came about as a response to the dominant practices in psychology and their exclusive focus on the individual’s pathology and suffering. He points out that for many decades the field of psychology has made many attempts to identify factors to repair the individual’s troubles by constantly revisiting them. However, far too little attention has been paid to the individual’s possessions, intuition and virtues. To these ends, the field of positive psychology is about valued subjective experiences and positive emotion: “well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present)” (Seligman and Csíkszentmihályi 2000: 5). Positive psychology, then, is about increasing the individual’s positive emotions, engagement and meaning. As Seligman explains:

Relieving the states that make life miserable, it seems, has made building the states that make life worth living less of a priority. But people want more than just to correct their weaknesses. They want lives imbued with meaning, and not just to fidget until they die (Seligman 2002: xi).

Seligman here appears to critique the idea of ‘correctiveness’ and the emphasis that is given to an individual’s wound of grief by constantly revisiting it. He suggests that instead of addressing ways to relieve their suffering, focus should be given to revealing their potential. It is of paramount importance, instead of trying to correct the problem, to enchasing the individual’s ability to dream, desire and hope for a better future. As Seligman goes on to assert:
People who are impoverished, depressed or suicidal care about much more than just the relief of their suffering. These persons care – sometimes desperately – about virtue, about purpose, about integrity, and about meaning (Seligman Ibid: xiii-xiv).

Although this approach can be easily accused of being naive and, instead of ‘challenging’ behaviours, promoting theatre as an agent of happiness, it leads to a series of questions as to what we mean by happiness, how can we measure happiness and so forth. I would like to emphasise that the suggestion here is on the intention and the expectations, not necessarily on the actual outcome of these projects. The concept of change should not be the main driver in applying theatre within this context; it is more important to ensure that the experience will be enjoyable and creative to its full potential. And in my view, this project manifests and determines a turnaround in the way we approach and interpret the practice of applied theatre. In both Seligman’s and Thompson’s views, a possible explanation is given in regard to this project, which proposes that applied theatre cannot be just about ‘correcting’ individuals’ weaknesses but must also introduce them to their creative potential.

Due to my personal involvement and training with the TiPP Centre and my reading of the literature of arts in the criminal justice system (for example Baim et. al. 2002; Balfour 2004; Bergman and Hewish 2003; Hughes 2003, 2005; Thompson 1998, 1999, 2003; Williams 2003), at the beginning of this research project I strongly believed that the implementation of behavioural models of change could challenge the participants’ attitudes to drug-taking and subsequently enhance their motivation for change. To this end, the assumption that ‘if we manage to challenge the participants’ behaviour it is likely that personal change might occur’ had centralised the way I had
initially designed the delivery of this project, together with my aspirations regarding theatre’s potential in this context. To this end, I implemented the ‘two persons exercise’, as discussed above. According to Baim et. al.:

The Two Person Exercise is perhaps the simplest and most effective way to link together concepts such as the mask we present to the outside world, how we interpret other people and situations, inner voice concepts as self-talk and thinking skills, and personal space, among others. It is also useful in highlighting the distinction between thoughts and feelings and how both influence our behaviour (Baim et. al. 2002: 134).

To these ends, I had been convinced that this exercise would allow me to open a dialogue with regard to drug-related issues - which it did, but not in the way I was prepared for or had perhaps anticipated. While in the first part of the exercise everything seemed to work and the image did awaken a familiar situation related to the participants’ experiences, the fact that they felt uncomfortable or unmotivated to focus on this story, as opposed to the second part, when a change of focus moved them from the familiar to the imaginative, came to contradict my ideas and aspirations about the use of theatre within this context. While on first reflection I approached this incident as being based on the participants’ denial or fear of disclosing personal information, and that my attempt to open a dialogue about issues concerning them had failed, a careful re-examination of this particular moment of practice recommends that a shift in the way we examine and interpret moments of practice like the above needs to be undertaken. To these ends, I propose that the creation of the wedding scene should not simply be regarded as a denial or an attempt to minimise their current realities, but rather as a quest to move away from them and be introduced to ‘alternative’ situations.
In the endeavour to understand the reason for the participants’ responses to the first part of the exercise and what might have influenced the radical change in energy and attention in the second part, a basic parameter should be considered. This is related to the context of the drug service itself, and its connections with therapy and changes of attitude towards drug use as a central role in the treatment of addiction. The process of adjusting to a new life without drugs has been described as a challenging and difficult stage in the life of problem drug users (Etherington 2007; Koski-Jannes 2002). During the treatment for drug dependency, the boundaries between drug users’ pasts and their current situation are frequently challenged as the individual is invited to reconsider his or her life and establish a new identity. The process of recovery, then, has been understood as the period in which a non-addict identity needs to be constructed (Etherington 2007; Maruna 2001; Maruna and Ramsden 2004, McIntosh and McKeeganey 2000a, 2000b, 2001, White 1996, 2001). As Koski-Jannes asserts, “catching a glimpse of this personal change and growth potential can serve as an inspiration for people who are still sweating on the difficult road to recovery” (Koski-Jannes 2002: 184). Therefore, overcoming drug dependency involves profound changes with regard to self-conception, values, orientation, social status and relationships (Koski-Jannes 2002: 184). Taking this into consideration, Koski-Jannes points out that if the theme of the scene is unravelled, it reveals the need to seek for ‘normality’ and collectivity, as depicted through the symbolism of an imaginative wedding celebration. At this point perhaps it should be remembered that weddings are frequently regarded as a happy moment in the life of two individuals. The symbolism behind a wedding can be translated as a quest for unity, love, community and celebration. Hence, by participating in an imaginative wedding celebration maybe a desire was expressed for participation in situations that are frequently associated with happiness, affiliation and a notion of family. It might also serve as a
‘reminder’ of how it is to be ‘normal’ again. McCoy and Blood (2004) provide a useful reference on the significance of creativity when they reflect on a project which was carried out with problem drug users in a male prison (see introduction). The cycle of creativity is discussed in parallel with the circle of change. As they assert, as people became more engaged in the creativity process, “art became more important than drugs” (McCoy and Blood Ibid.: 128). They go on to say:

Drug users often use drugs as a way of escaping from the pressures of reality – they want to ‘get out of it’ – this is a strategy that is used as a way of dealing with situations that become too much in the real world (...) [In the theatre project] there was a desire to move away from the notion of reality and look at issues in a different framework (McCoy and Blood Ibid.: 129, 130).

In general terms, the idea of escapism is a complex issue which has been regarded in both positive and negative lights; hence the notion of evading their realities in order to transcend to an imaginative, happy and inspiring

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19 In the 1970s Pochaska and DiClemente developed the Transtheoretical model of change or cycle of change (see C. DiClemente, Addiction and Change: How Addictions Develop and Addicted People Recover (New York ; London: Guilford Press, 2003), C. Diclemente, Schlundt, D, Gemmell, L., 'Readiness and Stages of Change in Addiction Treatment', The American Journal of Addictions, 13 (2004), 103-19, J. O. Prochaska, Diclemente, C. C., and Norcross, J. C., 'In Search of How People Change: Applications to Addictive Behaviors', American Psychologist, 47 (1992). This model was first developed in order to describe the process of change in addictive behaviour, in particular nicotine addiction. It suggests that the process of change can be divided in 5+1 stages and operates in a cyclic format: 1. Precontemplation: not thinking about change, 2. Contemplation: thinking about changing, 3. Preparation: making the decision, 4. Action: Trying to change, 5. Maintenance: made some changes, and sometimes 6. Relapse: Slip up. Although the model has been subject to criticism concerning its strengths but also its limitations, to date it is recognised as a useful model to understand the process of change.
moment was understood as a medium of finding distraction from their reality. Huxley claims:

Most men and women lead lives at the worst so painful, at the best so monotonous, poor and limited that the urge to escape, the longing to transcend themselves if only for a few moments, is and always has been one of the principal appetites of the soul (Huxley cited in Gossop 1996: 199).

Whether Huxley is right in giving this generalised and rather pessimistic view of the lives of ‘most’ individuals is questionable; however the importance of his statement lies in its emphasis on the longing for escapism and the need to transcend ourselves even if this lasts for only a few moments. Huxley suggests that escapism is our mechanism for dealing with a disparaging and disempowering reality: it is the vehicle used to assist us to take different diversions and energise our souls. As Gossop highlights, people have always needed “doors in the wall of reality” and thereby drugs have been regarded as the most “conspicuous” way of achieving such diversions (Gossop 1996: 199) and transcending our realities. Taking into consideration the above view, I will attempt to ‘transcend’ Huxley’s views to produce something more positive and optimistic by taking together the theories of the positive psychologist Csíkszentmihályi, and Thompson’s concept of “performances of beauty” (2006, 2009), to argue that escapism should not be approached as a distraction from pain, monotony, poverty or other unpleasant realities but rather as a longing for flow, happiness and creativity. As the description of this workshop’s moments indicates, participants might be better motivated to participate in activities with the potential to move them away from their realities and engage them with the creative and collaborative practices that will eventually inspire them to look for the meaning of their life. This is to say that applied theatre perhaps should not be regarded for its potential to challenge the participants’
behaviour and introduce them to alternative behavioural attitudes, but instead to operate as a means of escapism from their realities by supporting the creation of ‘happy and creative’ moments through dramatic narration and improvisation. Applied theatre, then, might facilitate the quest for an alternative substance and thereby participation in a project might lie in its possibility to act as a means of liberation of the self and as a medium to experience ‘flow’.

**Flow theory and the ‘alternative’**

Csíkszentmihályi makes use of the concept of flow to describe the impulse of positive emotions and buzz as can emerge during total engagement in an activity which involves joy and creativity (Csíkszentmihályi 1991: xi; 1996). Hence, flow or the ‘optimal experience’ is understood as a state in which a holistic sensation is apparent, while we process an activity with full involvement; yet the completing the activity itself might also prompt us to feel a sense of achievement and gratitude and other positive emotions. In particular, Csíkszentmihályi suggests that individuals are more likely to be happy when they are engaging in situations which require concentration and deep enjoyment. However, as he clarifies, it is only after the completeness of the activity or moment of flow that we might indulge in positive emotions such as happiness. As he proposes, “the more flow we experience in daily life, the more likely we are to feel happy overall” (1996: 123).

In these moments of epiphany, or, in Csíkszentmihályi’s words, ‘optimal experience’, we encounter a “sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished and that becomes a landmark in memory for what life should be like” (Csíkszentmihályi 1991: 3). He goes on to suggest:
The best moments [in our lives] usually occur when a person’s body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something that we make happen (Csíkszentmihályi Ibid., italics in original).

In the endeavour to bridge applied theatre with Csíkszentmihályi’s flow theory, it is worth highlighting that in the process of applied theatre bodies and minds of the whole group are stretched in order to achieve something “difficult and worthwhile”. As the example from the workshop suggests, there is an interesting mixture of individualistic and collective moments of flow, and it is applied theatre’s responsibility to build the channels between the individual and the collective in order to encourage a platform of discovery and to enrich them with “alternative” experiences that will eventually become “a landmark in memory”.

My argument for applied theatre as an alternative substance is relevant here. However, at this point I should clarify that by alternative substance I refer to the experience of full engagement and excitement that people experience when they actively and collectively focus on the accomplishment of an activity or task, an experience which eventually might encourage them to review the meaning for their lives. But again, what is meant by ‘meaning for life’? A possible explanation is given by Campbell:

People say that what we’re all seeking is a meaning for life. I don’t think that’s what we’re really seeking. I think that what we’re seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive (...) (Campbell 1988: 5).
In an attempt to position Campbell’s view within the praxis of applied theatre, I propose that, if we give the participants the choice to get involved in the creation of ‘happy and creative’ moments, such as in the wedding scene, we might be able to encourage them to view their lives from a different, perhaps more positive, perspective. This point can be further illustrated if we consider Jane’s words in promoting the project: “you will feel alive again”. For both Campbell and Jane the notion of *liveliness* appears to be a central point in their arguments. They both seem to indicate the human necessity to feel alive “on the purely physical plane”, and in this idea of experiencing “the rapture of being alive” (Campbell, Ibid.) I base my argument of applied theatre as an alternative substance. Furthermore, Jackson proposes that:

> Art is at root a meaning-making activity in which symbolic forms are deployed to take us on some kind of journey – psychological, emotional – the kind of journey we might not have taken otherwise. It may involve us in a retreat from the everyday or it may be a retour, offering us vantage points from which to see the everyday in a new light or from a new angle (Jackson 2007: 35-36)

In Jackson’s idea of art as a vehicle of “retreat” from the everyday in order to “take us on some kind of journey”, I draw a line between applied theatre and its potential to impact on individuals’ lives. I shall argue that applied theatre has the means to take the participants on a journey and “show” them how life might be, and maybe inspire them to seek for their inner meaning. To these ends, I agree with Jackson when he proposes that art can provide us with the vantage points to which we can escape in order to view our lives in “a new light or from a new angle”, and open up the possibilities for something better. By using Jackson’s idea of ‘journey’ as a platform, I will propose that engagement in the creation of ‘happy and creative moments’
might be able to inspire individuals to move forward and re-discover a utopic dimension of the future and, therefore, the possibility of a positive future change.

Additionally, Thompson (2006) discusses a similar moment of ‘collective flow’ when he reflects on the use of theatre games with children in refugee camps in Sri Lanka. He mentions:

(...) The sheer physical enjoyment and energy that these projects can elicit, make them potential examples of the enactment of beauty – a performance of beauty – moments that make the heart beat faster, and people start a search for ‘something of the same scale’ (Thompson 2006: 56).

Thompson here emphasises the importance of the moment and suggests that the “physical enjoyment and energy” that these projects generate could possibly “remain” in the memory of those individuals (in this case the children), which in turn might operate as a force to seek for “something at the same level”. He makes a distinction between “performances of beauty” and “performances of pain” to propose that applied theatre is not only about expressing our pain in order to cure it; on the contrary, if we engage in activities that involve us in the creation of moments both meaningful and enjoyable for ourselves, this experience might open up the possibility of something better. Additionally, in his recent book Performance affects: Applied theatre and the end of effect (Thompson 2009), he explores the idea of beauty in applied theatre to suggest that asking the participants to create something they understand to be beautiful engages them in a powerful quest with potentially positive results. For Thompson, the notion of beauty in theatre refers and manifests the need to centralise on the individual’s potential to create and enact moments and stories that they regard as beautiful. With this argument he attempts to change the direction of the debate regarding
theatre’s efficacy to support behavioural or social change (effect), advocating the need to put emphasis on the importance of engaging participants and communities in the creation of joyful and creative moments that might generate positive feelings (affect). As he says, the idea of beauty constitutes a degree of “goodness”, as it is a response to a call of what seems to be absent (Thompson 2009: 153), but in my view is always present in the form of dreams, desires and aspirations.

Thompson also provides a useful platform to support and conceptualise this idea. Interestingly for my argument, he uses the concept of “alternative” to discuss the impact of applied theatre, and makes the case to propose it as another possibility. In particular he mentions: “the sense of making something greater than themselves [the participants] might inspire them to move in unpredictable directions, but the sensation will be a positive alternative in the first place” (Thompson 2009: 158, my italics). Again, here, he puts emphasis on the momentum of the project and the momentum of creating “something greater than themselves”. As he proposes, the “sensation” here is of paramount importance and should not be dismissed from the analysis of applied theatre practices. He moves on to say:

Applied theatre is less about beholders and more about participants co-creating work, from their own desires, delights and inspiration. In certain circumstances this might be from a sense of pain or anger, but here an alternative has been suggested that starts from an invitation to create something that is understood by the makers to be beautiful(...) (Thompson ibid.: 159, my italics).

Hence, in my view, the incident described above in the ADS project is a good example to illustrate Thompson’s view, but also to upgrade it. For the participants in the ADS project, what was missing was a ‘trigger’ to unblock
their imaginations and inspire them to create something that was currently absent from their lives, let alone still present in their dreams. The possible ‘absence’ of creative and happy moments from their current lives might generate a quest for them; hence applied theatre offered a platform to stimulate this quest for happy and creative moments. In this case, the laughter, the joy and the playfulness that this moment induced might achieve the activation of their “rapture of being alive” (Campbell 1988: 5) and introduce them to an alternative substance. In an attempt to bring together Thompson’s views with the example of practice among the ADS clients, I would say that the painful and/or traumatic experience of prosecution that the participants might have experienced made them retreat from carrying on with the first scenario, while the experience of developing a comic scene of wedding awakened a positivity and ‘buzz’ which should not be dismissed. This emphasis on creative and happy moments, I would argue, appeared to be an important contribution in increasing the individual’s self-confidence and desire for a better life while also giving them insights into the possibility of a better future.

To sum up, in this first part, I have attempted to illustrate my argument regarding applied theatre as an alternative substance. In particular, I have put additional emphasis on examining the concept of alternative and have asserted that applied theatre has the potential to operate as another possible mode in stimulating the participants to observe their lives from another point of view. I have suggested that the intention of applied theatre should not be to concentrate on the individuals’ personal stories of weakness or suffering, but rather to focus on the participants’ current realities and hopes for a positive future. In these ephemeral moments or flow, the creation of happy moments, such as the wedding scene, I believe manifested a turn to positivity as an alternative to pain and anger. Moreover, I have proposed the
idea of theatre as a platform to inspire alternative forms of escapism and expression by taking the participants “on some kind of journey – psychological, emotional – the kind of journey [they] might not have taken otherwise” (Jackson 2007: 35-36). That is to say, I have argued that applied theatre’s importance lies in the possibilities that it provides for creative expression and creative escapism. In the next part, I am going to develop my argument by examining another moment from the project.

Transportation or transformation?

To complete my analysis on theatre’s potential to provide participants with vantage points to view their lives from another angle, I will look at two anecdotes from the ADS project. In particular, I will analyse the case of two participants and how their ambivalent relationships with the project were based on a need for ‘light hearted’ experiences and stimulus to move away from their current realities. These are the cases of Patrick and Vicky respectively. Patrick was reluctant about the idea of the project from the very beginning. He would refer to the fact he had too much drama in his life. Besides this, during the period of the project he was dealing with many personal issues, including a number of relapses and self-harm intentions. I also noticed that, at times, he was uncomfortable with the female members of the group. In one of the sessions, while I was explaining the exercises ‘sculptors and status’ (Boal 2002: 136-138), he had a panic attack. He accused me of implementing exercises which involved touching and stated that he did not want to come into physical contact with any of the other members. With Niki’s (ADS counsellor) intervention we managed to calm him down and he left the room. After two weeks he returned to the project. He asked my permission to participate and apologised for his behaviour. I welcomed him back to the project and explained that if he was not feeling comfortable with any of the exercises he could just inform me and I would ensure he
would not be placed in any uncomfortable position. However, it appeared that he had totally changed his attitude towards me and the rest of the group. Until the end of the project, he had no hesitation in wearing wigs and acting out women’s roles, touching, hugging, sharing and expressing his gratitude to the rest of the members. He also invited one of the women for dinner and then shared with the group that for the first time in his life he had found a female friend. Furthermore, the staff members reported that previously Patrick had had many difficulties in getting involved in the service’s activities, and that the applied theatre project was the first time he had committed to a group. When I interviewed him at the end of the project he mentioned:

Question: Is anything that you feel that you have learned about yourself, during your participation in the project?

Patrick: I’m starting coming off drugs, I’m on no stuff really ... so I am not bothered about it. I have lots of problems still going on with me ... but feel happy.  

Vicky, on the other hand, was from the beginning highly motivated to participate in the project. She was one of the most committed and engaged participants and she would not miss any of our sessions. However, over the course of the project, she relapsed a number of times. The interesting point about her case is that she still came to the project even when she was feeling unwell. I recall one occasion that she had relapsed. Despite her physical and psychological condition, she came to the session. She walked in, took a wig from the bag with prompts and joined the circle. Following some seconds of silence she disclosed that she was not feeling well but she could not miss the

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20 Personal interview, 13 July 2007
session. At the end of the project she reported that the project was very important for her.

How can these two different cases inform us about the impact of applied theatre in drug services? What contributed to Patrick’s shift in behaviour? Why did Vicky keep coming to the sessions even on days when she had just relapsed? Any attempts to answer the above questions lead to serious obstacles. As we can identify from their responses during the evaluation session, the impetus of applied theatre in Patrick and Vicky’s lives is connected with ‘light-hearted’ experience, which not only supports but also manifests that applied theatre has the potential to bring moments of happiness, laughter and joy to the individuals and contexts in which it is being implemented. The fact that Patrick “learned” to “feel happy” despite the fact he encountered personal problems should be regarded as an important contribution to these individuals’ lives. Likewise, Vicky’s motivation to come to the sessions after her relapses is another parameter we have to consider. However, as we will never gain access to the knowledge of how our work can actually impact on each individual, I can only make a number of assumptions for both Patrick and Vicky’s cases.

In the endeavour to examine their cases, I am going to make use of Schechner’s (1985: 117-51) distinction between “transformation” in performance, in which participants experience some form of “change”, as opposed to “transportation” in performance, in which participants are “taken somewhere”. As he mentions:

I call performances where performers were changed “transformations” and those that performers are returned to their starting places “transportations” – “transportation,” because during the performance the performers are “taken
somentwhere” but at the end, often assisted by others, they are “cooled down” and re-enter ordinary life just about where they went in (Schechner 1985: 125-126).

For Schechner, “transformation” is a permanent and unpredictable change in the life of the individual as might occur during a ritual like a wedding ceremony, as opposed to “transportation”, which can only last for the duration of a performance wherein performers are temporarily “transformed” into someone or something so as to facilitate their departure to somewhere and to finally return to the same position as before they started. Perhaps, then, in the case of the ADS clients, it was the desire to experience these moments of transportation in theatre that operated as a force to help them retreat from their current experiences and encourage them to ‘depart’ into the sphere of fantasy. It was this moment of ‘disconnection’ from their current realities (realities of exclusion, prosecution and drug abuse) that might allow them to reach a point so as to observe their lives from another perspective.

Additionally, as Schechner (ibid.) explains, repeatable experiences of transportation can potentially lead to a transformation. During a transportation performance, participants are in a flow situation and are taken on a journey to ‘somewhere’ which, however, will “end about where it began”, until the next time that they are invited to participate in a new transportation and thus in a new ‘adventure’. To these ends, the different experiences of the individuals’ spiritual and psychological transportations might result in some kind of transformation alongside involvement in a creative activity. Nicholson (2005a:12-13), discusses this vis à vis applied theatre to criticise the assumptions made with regard to its ability to act as a transformative agent. She appears to be rather sceptical about applied theatre’s potential to promote personal change, and in an attempt to move
Schnecher’s point (1985: 125-126) a bit further and connect it with applied theatre’s practice she argues: “it is about travelling into another world, often fictional, which offers both new ways of seeing and different ways of looking at the familiar” (Nicholson Ibid. 13).

Likewise, in the cases of Patrick and Vicky, it was the quest to experience these moments of transportation performances that operated as a motivational force to engage them so much so that they repeatedly returned to the project despite the difficulties and personal conflicts that they were dealing with. It was these moments, as I have claimed over the course of this chapter, which might assist them to ‘disconnect’ from their current realities and escape in fantasy and imagination. The end of the sessions returned them back to their ordinary lives but might have left them with ‘something’; perhaps a sense of gratitude, happiness, or redemption. In the following part of this chapter I will demonstrate how creativity, spontaneity and the experiences of transportation were utilised for the purpose of ‘re-telling’ the participants’ personal stories and stimulating a redemption script.

**PART II: Applied Theatre and Personal Narration**

In this section, I will attempt to further elaborate my argument for applied theatre as an alternative substance by looking at the relationship between applied theatre and personal narration. In particular, I am going to approach this issue through the lens of personal narratives (autobiographies), and their relationship with applied theatre. While in the first part of this chapter I explored the notion of alternative and connected it with the participants’ quest for creative and happy moments, now I would like to put additional focus on exploring what I mean by substance. Therefore, my intent is to carry on the discussion I initiated in the previous part regarding applied theatre’s role in the context of drug recovery, by posing a series of questions regarding
its potential to have a beneficial impact on the participants’ lives. This second part will attempt to address whether applied theatre has a role in facilitating the validation the participants’ personal stories and in this way encouraging them to find the substance of their lives. Somer (2009: 193) mentions that in applied theatre there is an expectation of "doing good", and it is my intention to investigate what this ‘good’ might mean. To deepen on my analysis, I will attempt to link Somer’s idea of “doing good” in applied theatre with Maruna’s (2001; Maruna and Ramsen 2004) research on ex-offenders and how they reconstruct their stories so as to “make good”. Hence, I propose an interesting tautology is taking place between reconstructing one’s personal narrative in order to “make good”, and the use of drama and creativity to meet this aim.

In order to illustrate my argument and examine the links between personal narration and applied theatre, I am going to reflect on another moment from the ADS project. The chosen example describes an incident in which, while working on an improvisation of a fictional character, the participants reflected and connected with the enacted story through moments of personal storytelling. I have deliberately chosen to continue the argument I set out to explore in the first section by examining a paradoxical example from the ADS project. Initially this example might appear to contradict and reverse my argument that the intention of applied theatre should not be to challenge the participants’ behaviours by constantly revisiting them. However, as I will describe, in this case the participants spontaneously and voluntarily reflected on their personal stories, which led to the contradiction with the example discussed above. During these moments of personal narration and sharing, something interesting happened as, instead of simply narrating and reflecting on their personal stories, the participants attempted to reverse them so as to reveal positive and comic aspects from them. What had
changed? How had the previous denial to reflect on a familiar situation of discomfort now been transformed into an imperative for personal reflection? Finally, I set out to explore which stories members of the community of problem drug users choose to tell, and why are they significant for them. The following sections will focus on discussing the above series of questions.

**Working from personal narration in applied theatre**

Personal narration and autobiographical experience can be regarded as ubiquitous subjects in applied theatre (Dennis 2007; Nicholson 2005a; Rowe 2007; Salas 1999; Thompson 2005; 2009). While is not directly admitted, let alone intended, personal narration does constitute a crucial part in the process of applying theatre in different contexts. Bringing theatre to the people and encouraging them to reflect on issues of their concern is embedded in applied theatre’s practice (Cohen-Cruz 2005; Van Even 2001; McKean 2006; Thompson and Schechner 2004; O’Toole 1992; Kuppers and Robertson 2007). To these ends, participation in the process of making theatre automatically requires a personal ‘deposition’ drawn for the individual’s personal experiences. As Cohen-Cruz emphasises, “personal storytelling expressing what people in different walks of life know from the authority of experience is appropriately the signature methodology of community-based performance” (Cohen-Cruz 2005: 129). Likewise, Nicholson (2005: 63 - 70) and Thompson (2004; 2005: 24-27) both seem to recognise this strong link between personal narration and applied theatre. They assert that the essence of these stories lies in the way they are constructed, reconstructed and presented. In particular, in the process of re-forming these stories the boundaries between fiction and personal narration are frequently blurred. Hence, for both Nicholson (Ibid.) and Thompson (Ibid.) the way these stories are handled alongside the ethical implications that may arise during this
process are key factors in understanding theatre’s relationship with life stories, and what possibilities might arise from this interaction. By reflecting on their experience of implementing and researching theatre in troubled situations (war zones), Nicholson and Thompson stress the need for caution in the way personal information is drawn and utilised to construct theatrical material. More precisely, Thompson points out:

The forms by which stories are retrieved and told reveal complex value systems that need to be considered closely in any analysis of this work. When creating theatre with vulnerable or marginal communities, the ethics of our practice must be a paramount concern and I believe some of the most difficult issues arise within the structures by which groups tell stories or are invited to participate in that telling (...)(Thompson 2004: 150, 163).

Thompson, here, draws attention not only to the forms in which stories are “retrieved and told”, but also to the complexity that this telling might imply. He appears to be rather concerned about the “structure” in which the stories are told, as well as in the way the “invitation” to tell is given. Although Thompson refers to his own experiences of dealing with personal storytelling in war zones, especially from the point of view of trauma survivors, I believe his opinion is relevant here as it echoes important concerns about the interrelationships between personal narratives and theatre making. Recently, in a volume devoted to performances in places of war, Thompson, together with Hughes and Balfour (2009), poses a series of questions on applied theatre and narrative: “who asks for stories, who owns them, who speaks, who tells the truth, and who is implicated in the telling?” (Thompson et. al. Ibid: 86). And it is the same series of questions that I am interested in investigating in the context of applied theatre with problem drug users. Moreover, my intention is to throw more light on the style and perspective by
which these stories are composed. Hence, it is important to display the different parameters by which applied theatre regains and collects personal narratives.

However, before I move my analysis on with regard to applied theatre and narratives of recovery, it is significant to highlight that within the field of applied theatre the way personal narratives are being used differs according to the context and the form of practice. In order to understand this phenomenon it is essential to deconstruct the various modes of practice under the umbrella of applied theatre and pin down their relationships to personal stories. In the following table, I attempted to illustrate examples of how personal narration is being consolidated within applied theatre’s practice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of practice</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Personal narration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Playback Theatre</td>
<td>Improvised interpretations of personal accounts</td>
<td>Direct accounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre of the Oppressed</td>
<td>Image theatre</td>
<td>“Reading“ of personal story and/or direct reflection of a familiar situation e.g. oppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forum theatre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre in the Criminal Justice System</td>
<td>Fictional characters and metaphors e.g. “Blagg!” (see Thompson 2003)</td>
<td>Reflection via identification with the fictional character. Personal narration underlies the fictional character’s story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminiscence theatre</td>
<td>Enactment of memories</td>
<td>Direct reflection on memorable events/ experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbatim theatre</td>
<td>Representation of transcripts or other means of documented personal accounts</td>
<td>Documented, usually written, personal accounts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonial theatre</td>
<td>Performing personal experiences on stage</td>
<td>Testimonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre in Places of War</td>
<td>Cultural practices e.g. ceremonies or rituals as a form of personal (and collective) storytelling</td>
<td>Personal and collective stories are consolidated with the ceremonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre in Education</td>
<td>Metaphors and other imaginative means such as fairy tales, stories and symbols, among others</td>
<td>Identification and reflection with personal stories through imaginative situations and characters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. Applied theatre and personal narration

As the Table I. demonstrates, there is a wide range of modes implemented in approaching the participants’ life stories. As I shall argue, within the tradition of applied theatre there is a synthesis of the way personal stories are handled. Whilst it seems that the most dominant forms are the indirect and fictive modes in which personal references are hidden behind metaphors, fictional characters or other imaginative mediums, there are also traditions which invite a direct response through reflection and projection. Hence, at times, personal narration is tackled in a vaguer and less direct way, and at other times more directly by actually asking the participants to share a personal account or experience. For example, forms such as the Theatre of the Oppressed and Playback Theatre overtly invite the participants to share a situation of discomfort and/or oppression that they have encountered in the past. I quote a section from Boal’s (1995) Rainbow of Desire, which illustrates
more clearly in which ways Theatre of the Oppressed asks for personal stories:

The director explains the technique and asks which of the participants would like to tell a story of an oppression they have endured and would like to see worked on by the group. The idea, at this first stage, is that half the participants offer themselves as storytellers (Boal Ibid.: 88).

Additionally, Rowe describes Playback Theatre as “a form of improvised drama in which members of an audience are invited to tell personal stories to a ‘conductor’ and see them improvised by a company of actors and musicians” (Rowe 2007: 12, my italics). Additionally, verbatim and testimonial theatre base their sources on written accounts, transcripts or oral histories of the participants respectively (Balfour 2009: 356-357). Finally, reminiscence Theatre deals with past experiences by revisiting and enacting selected memories from the participants’ lives (Schweitzer 2007). On the other hand, in the case of theatre in the criminal justice system (Baim et. al. 2002; Balfour 2004; Thompson 1999) and theatre in education (Jackson 1993; 2007) the invitation to reflect on a personal narration is made through fiction and metaphors. To these ends, participants are not directly invited to reveal aspects of themselves but rather to identify with the imaginative character or situation. The personal story, here, is concealed under the fictional character or metaphor.

However, an analysis of the above table indicates that, with the exception of Reminiscence Theatre, the majority of forms of theatre dealing with personal stories appear to focus on situations of discomfort and/or distress. This observation poses a series of important questions for consideration, especially bearing in mind that a great deal of the literature on personal narratives and applied theatre refers to stories being told in war zones (see Thompson 2004, 2005; Thompson et. al. 2009) or by refugees and asylum
seekers (Dennis 2007; Jeffers 2007, 2008; Salverson 1996, 1999, 2001). A possible explanation is linked to the history of applied theatre and its strong tradition of radicalism and activism which deriving from the imperative to use the arts for the benefit of the society (Cohen-Cruz 1998; Kershaw 1999; Matarasso 1997). To this end, the initial drive of these forms was to change a situation by encouraging its exploration through dramatic means. Hence, it was believed that visualisation through projection of a difficult situation would lead to some sort of realisation or even resolution (see for example Boal’s Forum Theatre). But how beneficial can applied theatre’s contribution be in promoting change in participants’ lives by asking them to reflect (metaphorically, fictionally or literally) on their stories? I have already posed a critique of the use of theatre in the criminal justice system and the implementation of behavioural theories as a means of challenging the participants’ lives and provoking change; here I would like to broaden my argument in order to problematise the issue of the participants’ driving the practice so as to reflect on their personal situations. As my experience of facilitating theatre with people recovering from drug addiction has shown, even if the intention is to direct the practice away from their lives by not asking them to disclose any personal information, issues arise when the participants lead themselves towards that direction. In these cases, the issue becomes complicated, not only due to ethical concerns inherent in incidents like this, but also due to the fundamental question: why did this happen? And why did the participants decide to raise this particular issue?

To give a definite answer to the above questions is a complex issue. Stamp (1998) echoes my concerns when she gives an overview of how she has incorporated autobiographical stories in her work with offenders. She makes the case that the participants in her workshops improvised stories which, whilst not directly related to their personal situations, appear to have many
crossovers. However, it seems that in Stamp’s case, the participants’ imperative to tell their stories was driven by a need to approach them from a different perspective. As she reflects:

The group of prisoners who had been working on their autobiographies were disappointed at the end of the project because they had expected to act out their problems and find solutions. They had wanted to use their stories but in a very focused way that looked at problematic but manageable pieces. I had expected them to give too much of themselves to scrutiny; it was what I wanted, not what they wanted (...) But what had happened was too painful to tell: drug and alcohol abuse, abandonment, psychical abuse. They wanted to make light of it, to think of the future.(...) I think that my experience has shown that it has been more valuable when the work has been led by the offenders themselves, rather than to an agenda set by me (Stamp 1998: 101-102,108, my italics).

According to Stamp’s (Ibid.) viewpoint, it appears that an additional emphasis needed to given to the narrations that emerged through the process and therefore the participants desired to explore, rather that those that were reinforced by the facilitator’s own social agendas and expectations that had been set for the particular project. Likewise, in her article The Playwright in Residence: A Community’s Storyteller, Fisher (2004) acknowledges that theatre practitioners who enter a community carry their own agendas of issues which ideally they would like to explore with the community members. She urges that theatre and drama practitioners who enter a community should be “required to step out of [their] own subjective sphere” and to use their skills to “transform the community’s lived experience into a story that is meaningful and owned by those who created it” (Fisher Ibid.: 137). Fisher echoes Stamp, as both their experiences indicated practitioners’ frequent attachment to their own set of ideas and perceptions with regard to the communities which they enter. At this point, I should clarify that I am not
attempting to suggest that having our own agendas and preconceptions about the communities we are invited to work with is necessarily a negative element and should not happen; however I do believe that is of paramount importance to distance ourselves from the pre-selected set of agendas and, rather, to allow the community’s members to reflect upon their own ‘repertoire’ of stories. In this endeavour, I assert that applied theatre practitioners seek to realise that the stories that these people would choose to tell are “something that they care about, something important for them” (Mankowski and Rappaport 2000: 481), and for this reason, they need to be placed at the heart of applied theatre’s practice.

To sum up, Stamp (Ibid.), above, highlights the participants’ quest to make light out of their stories and think of the future, and this is going to be the framework for my analysis of the ADS example. Therefore, in my view, it is important to examine the origins of participants’ ‘desire to tell’, and its relations with applied theatre. In particular, it is interesting to explore applied theatre’s potential to facilitate the transcendence of the participants’ stories to something important and significant for themselves. Salas asserts: “we are, all of us, storytellers. Story is built into our way of thought. We need stories for our emotional health and our sense of place in the world” (Salas 1996: 22, my italics). Therefore, the idea of personal narration as a medium to enhance “our sense of place in the world” will be questioned for its relevance in understanding both the recovery process and how applied theatre might have a role to play in setting the platforms for discovering the substance of participants’ lives.

**Character building and hot seating**
In the fifth session, the participants were introduced to the character building technique (Baim et al. 2002: 132-133). According to this technique, the group is invited to formulate the profile of a fictional character and place him or her in a particular situation. Following this, the group invents the character’s storyline and reflects upon any relevant given themes. In the example that I discuss, the instructions given to the group were to create an imagined member of the group and, thereby, the focus was to stimulate a dialogue around issues of recovery. In many respects, it was felt that if participants were given the freedom to choose and formulate the profile of a character of their choice, without any restrictions or particular guidance; it was likely that this would create the space for discussing circumstances that otherwise might be too sensitive, difficult and/or shameful. Yet it was believed that by gaining ‘ownership’ of the fictional character would lead to identification with the character and thereby stimulate further exploration of any relevant themes. The character building process was therefore utilised, here, as an organic approach to generating dialogue and collective storytelling via the means of imagination, creativity and spontaneity.

The ADS group established Ches, a thirty year old alcohol and drug user at the beginning of his counselling in ADS. Ches was working at the local McDonald’s restaurant as a cashier and in parallel was trying to discontinue his cannabis and alcohol use. We built and acted out various scenes of his life. In most of the scenes, it appeared that Ches was struggling a lot with his life. The combination of a boring job and an unbalanced surrounding environment appeared to operate as obstacles to his recovery. In one of the scenes, Ches was at risk of relapse. He went to a park, sat on a bench and tried to overcome his craving. Suddenly his bad self, or ‘devil’, and his good self, or ‘angel, appeared on stage. Niki (ADS counsellor) played the role of Ches, while the rest of the participants were divided between his good and
bad selves. The two selves formulated two oppositional groups and attempted to convince Ches accordingly. On one hand, the ‘good self’ adopted a moralistic and didactic attitude by highlighting that Ches should stay out of drugs so he would not destroy his life again and disappoint others. On the other hand, the ‘bad self’ portrayed the ‘cool guy’ attitude and was supporting the fact that he should not restrict himself and that there was nothing wrong with having a drink as it would relax him. The character was depicted as co-existing between two oppositional worlds, good self and bad self, and the improvised dialogue reflected upon Ches’s attempts to find a balance between these two worlds.

To this end, the scene was structured as a competition between two oppositional parties, with each attempting to attract Ches to their side. While the bad self was reflecting upon the positive effects of drugs, such as hedonism and euphoria, the good self was defeating the bad self using the means of creativity and humour. On both sides, it was noticeable that the participants were drawing their suggestions to Ches from personal experience and autobiographical resources. Therefore, the dialogues that they created were given the tone of each individual’s inner voice which elicited in the room a blended air of cheerfulness but also melancholy. Moreover, it enlarged the competitive aspect between the two groups, and as a consequence the good self group shifted their approach from the moralistic attitude to an imaginative and grotesque mode. Hence, by implementing exaggerated gestures, funny voices and sounds as well as theatrical props, they created a playful and cheerful atmosphere which gave rise to laughter and playfulness but also sarcasm and reflection. The use of comedy and surrealism in the way these experiences were expressed I believe lightened the themes of the story and revealed its humorous aspect. Hence, the
resultant scene was improvised in the style of a *parody* of the withdrawal syndrome, and to a certain degree as a ‘parody of their life story’.

This moment of practice echoes McCoy and Blood’s, when they propose that “perhaps surrealism and irrationality are the places we need to go with drug users to look outside the accepted frame of reality” (McCoy and Blood 2004: 130). In my view, the experience of improvising a scene opened for the participants new doorways for projecting their experiences of addiction. By portraying and reflecting on their inner conflicts and dilemmas, they created the space to conceptualise their life while on drugs, and, through the improvised dialogues associated with drug misuse perhaps, I shall propose, an attempt was made to connect their past with their present and future. Hence, it can be stated that the establishment of the good and bad selves can be interpreted as the division between the positive and negative facets of drug misuse. The participants were displaying their lives’ storyline, reflecting in a symbolic way on the three different stages of who they were (bad self), who they are now (Ches), and who they would like to become (good self). At this point, it should be recalled that the ADS members were at the liminal stage of their treatment, or in Turner’s words, in the “between and betwixt” stages (1969: 95) of their past and their future as well as “between and betwixt” (Turner Ibid.) two cultures: the culture of addiction on one hand and the culture of recovery on the other. The recovery period, then, can be described as an attempt to bridge these two stages and to assist the individual in transforming and integrating into their newly established self. Likewise, the individual is often invited to combine elements of the two cultures in order to reconstruct their alternative self narrative. However, what I would like to tease out further in reference to the above improvised scene is the usage of humour and parody in the way the participants reflected upon their experiences. To this end, it becomes necessary to
comprehend whether humour and parody have particular roles to play in how problem drug users reconstruct their narratives.

A possible explanation is given by Humphrey (2000: 504) when examining the example of Alcoholic Anonymous and how its members narrate their stories. He observes that humour is as a common characteristic of how these individuals transcend their past experiences, as it assists them in overcoming their shame by putting themselves in the position of the laugher rather than simply being laughed-at. As Humphrey proposes, “humorous stories allow A.A. members to acknowledge their foibles in a non-threatening way while maintaining the humility which is considered critical to recovery” (Humphrey Ibid.). He goes on to assert that humour in the context of AA narratives should be considered as “ego-puncturing and self-parodying” (Humphreys 2000: 504), because the members consider this appropriate to the needs of recovering from alcoholism. Although Humphreys makes an interesting point when he refers to humour as a way of sustaining their “humility”, I am reluctant to agree that the incorporation of humour in narrative style should always be seen as “ego-puncturing and self-parodying”. Even if, as I have suggested earlier, the ADS members devised their scene in the style of a parody, I strongly believe that humour in this case allowed the individuals to revisit their stories from another point of view in order to validate them. This is to say, the combination of humour and creativity added an additional tone and allowed them to accept their pasts and build a vision for the future. In other words, it allowed them to revisit their negative and painful experiences of having to deal with the withdrawal syndrome and reflect upon them through creativity, sarcasm and humour instead of “puncturing” themselves.
This combination of tragic and comic elements within the same phenomena was named by Greeks “tragicomedy”. According to Berger (1997), tragicomedy balances between humour and pain by stimulating “laughter though tears”. He moves on to suggest that “it is mellow, forgiving. It does not bring about a profound catharsis, but it is moving nonetheless. Above all it consoles” (1997: 117, my italics). However, as Berger suggests, in tragicomedy the tragic “is not banished, not defied, not absorbed” but present and “momentarily suspended” (Berger Ibid.). Similarly, in the case of the ADS members the tragic was still present as a reminder of their past experiences of addiction, as opposed to the comic, which represented the quest for something positive in their lives. Therefore, the laughter prompted through reflecting on their personal experiences, I argue, operated as a validation mechanism and allowed the past to peacefully co-exist with the present and the future by means of providing an alternative way to form their stories. As Salverson suggests:

I am proposing an alternative approach to popular theatre practices (particularly in respect to how such practices employ and represent personal narratives) that speaks of "story" not as a fixed, knowable, finite thing, but as an open one that changes and carries with it the possibility of reformings and retellings. "Risky stories,"(...) need to be constructed in such a way that the subtleties of damage, hope, and the "not nameable" can be performed (Salverson 1996:184).

I therefore place Salverson’s notion of applied theatre as a platform of “reforming and retelling” stories as the basis of my argument to highlight the importance of using the imaginative space of theatre to construct these stories in such a way that hope, optimism and the “non nameable” can be presented and validated. This idea of validation of the past experience, in my view, was a central point in this example of practice. In other words, I believe it allowed the participants to convey new meanings to their experiences
which are seen as important. Hence, I regard this moment as another indication that applied theatre has the potential to operate as an alternative substance by allowing the participants to convey new meanings of their life stories (finding their substance). However, it becomes important to understand what are the roots of this ‘urge to reflect’ on personal narration, and why is it important for this chapter’s argument. That to say, if the ADS group is approached as a community of people in recovery, it is significant here to unpack and analyse the stories which they – as a community – choose to share. Hence, in my view, aside from narration as a medium to re-construe their life-stories, it is important to question whether there are any other implications that might be obtained as a result of this telling. This type of analysis would allow us to capture the factors inspiring the personal storytelling and to further comprehend what the sharing of these experiences might have meant for the ADS members. Furthermore, what did happen when the participants made use of this opportunity not only to tell but actually to rephrase their past experiences? Should these reformed stories be regarded as ‘accurate’ and worthy enough to be heard and validated?

Salzer (1998: 507) distinguishes two types of narratives: the dominant cultural narratives and the community narratives. By dominant cultural narratives, he refers to stories which are widely being associated with specific situations, individuals, places and cultures. These stories are transmitted through mass media, cultural institutions and social networks, and thereby they construct the social perception of a particular group of people. Additionally, community narratives can be described as the synthesis of the members’ personal accounts and experiences which constitute the history of the community’s life. This type of narrative is communicated through written accounts, art performances and rituals (See Rappaport 2000: 4-5). I have already raised an example of community narratives in Chapter 2 regarding
the En Drasi members, and I articulated that the therapeutic community’s narratives were of paramount importance for its members’ senses of self, identity and collective memory. However, so far I have paid little attention to the stories that people choose to tell concerning their past experiences and how, when they were juxtaposed to the present, these could reveal a hopeful message for the future. I noticed before that it becomes a necessity to understand which are the stories, that represent this community of people? In other words, I am interested in examining what “special knowledge”, according to O’Reilly (Ibid.), these individuals have acquired above, and how might it be relevant and useful for our understanding of applied theatre’s potential.

White (1996) has addressed the strong links between the culture of drug addiction and personal storytelling, especially with regard to the experiences of intoxication as prompted by drugs. He refers to chronic drug users as storytellers, and examines them as representatives of a cultural role which people adopt in order to transfer their community’s traditions and histories to the next generation. He goes so far to call them the “oral historians of the culture of addiction”. As he claims:

They are addicts who have a knack for telling and embellishing stories of real and mythical events within the culture. The stories are a medium of socialization for new addicts. Told through folklore and humor, these stories usually convey important cultural values (...) They provide an important pastime that enriches the shared intoxication of cultural members (White 1996: 106).

It appears that the experience and effects of intoxication constitute the basis of the narratives in this phase, and the sharing of this stories operate as of socialisation and gaining acceptance within the community of addicts. In an
attempt to understand how White’s claims of storytelling as a way of sustaining culture and values might be relevant to the ADS example and their quest for a newly established social identity, we can linked it with the ideas suggested and portrayed by the bad self. The sharing of these experiences has been viewed as a means of normalisation and gaining membership to the community of drug users (see Chapter 2).

At the other end of the spectrum, the field of drug recovery, these past experiences have been incorporated into the therapeutic process, as the telling of one’s story is frequently regarded as the first step in recovery (Williams 2002: 140). To these ends, a number of studies have been published on narrations of recovery (Humphreys 2000; O’Reilly 1997; McIntosh and McKeeganey 2001, Maruna and Ramsen 2004; White 1996). These studies provide us with the appropriate framework to comprehend the role of personal narration in the recovery process. A useful example to understand this is the self-help groups and especially Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) in which personal stories constitute the basis of the recovery process. In this context, the narrative telling and reconstruction has been understood as a way to create spaces for acceptance and recognition as well as to inspire a vision for the future. Hence, for authors such as Humphreys (2000), Maruna and Ramsen (2004) and O’Reilly (1997), story-telling of one’s personal past experiences of addiction allows the individual to construct a new identity and realign themselves with society at large. White characteristically describes this as “by telling you who I am, I tell you my fate. To change my fate, I must redefine who I am; I must reconstruct my story”, and in this

21 In the example of the 12 step model which was developed and used by the Alcoholic Anonymous organisation, the first step to recovery is connected with the member’s admission that they are dealing with problematic alcohol use (see the Big Book available online at http://www.aa.org/bigbookonline/en_tableofcnt.cfm).
endeavour “the drug relationship becomes the essential story-shaping agent in the addict’s life” (White 1996: 423). Likewise, O'Reilly claims:

Telling the story (...) enables the speaker to reconstrue a chaotic, absurd, or violent past as a meaningful, indeed a necessary, prelude to the structured, purposeful, and comparatively serene present. Sober alcoholics share the story and rights to each telling with absolute equality; it is a democratization that celebrates a certainty of having attained a special knowledge, a privileged intimacy (...)(O'Reilly 1997: 24)

It is O'Reilly's idea of personal narration as a form “to re-construe a chaotic, absurd, or violent past as a meaningful (...) and comparatively serene present” that I am interested to tease out further in reference to the ADS group. As I will attempt to demonstrate, projecting their experiences through dramatic means allowed them to conceptualise their futures and also to convey new meanings – perhaps more positive ones – out of their past experiences. Therefore, a closer examination of the structure of their improvised scene operates as an indicator that these individuals are in a constant conflict between harmony and dissonance which, as I described, was symbolised as the good and bad self. This self-division, then, might be interpreted as a quest for normalisation and way of finding a balance between these two self-aspects, accompanied by an impulse to turn a shameful past into something meaningful. Drawing from this example, I would like to throw more light on the origins of the individuals’ impulse for a newly established life narration.

To deepen the analysis, I am going look at the field of narrative psychotherapy (Freedman and Combs 1996; McLeod 1997; Monk et. al. 1997; Speedy 2008; Payne 2006), by particularly addressing the importance of telling as a form of externalising inner conflicts and dilemmas. The act of
‘telling’ a personal story has been traditionally linked with identity reconstruction and community formation (Rappaport 1993, 1995; Lieblich et. al. 2004). Hence, in the field of narrative psychology the process of telling one’s story has been regarded for its potential to offer relief from psychological distress and also acceptance and recognition. As McLeod (1997: 4-5) discusses, the telling of personal stories in traditional cultures was part of the community life when people were living in proximity and in close relationships with the rest of the community members. Therefore, this sharing operated on the basis of the community’s functionality in which the members were supporting each other and, through the narration of their experiences, were creating spaces for interaction and affiliation. Likewise, Rappaport (1993: 240) argues that personal stories can be used as a medium to transcribe individuals’ lives within their specific community of interaction. Hence, the individual’s narration can operate as a bridge between the member’s identity construction and the formation of a community of belonging (Rappaport Ibid. 244). By looking at the example of mutual help groups and their connections with narration, he goes on to assert that personal narration can be regarded as empowering device which bonds individuals of the same community and increases their mutual support and solidarity.

Furthermore, Mankowski and Rappaport (2000: 481) point out that the stories told in the setting of mutual support communities are most of the time about something that the storyteller cares about, something that is meaningful in the lives of these individuals, and thereby the telling allows them to find a purpose for past experiences and maintain self-respect. As McLeod argues:

The client telling a story is not only reporting on a set of events, but is at the same time constructing a social identity. Many
therapy clients are socially isolated and lacking social support, and for them the very experience of telling, of being considered worthy enough to be heard is a step in the direction of a new sense of who they are (...) these new stories are then used back in the everyday world to construct different patterns of relationship and feeling (McLeod 1997: 39, my italics)

In both Mankowski and Rappaport (1997) and McLeod’s (1997) references to meaningful stories and past stories which can be “used back in the everyday world to construct different patterns of relationships”, I find the links between applied theatre, the recovery process and the individual’s imperative to tell their stories. I believe that the provision of the appropriate environment for this narration to occur ought to be of primary concern in applied theatre. In other words, applied theatre should be able to recognise its participants’ stories as worthy enough to be heard as well as to encourage the implementation of alternative narrative styles. In this way, as Nicholson suggests, it ought to provide individuals with the “imaginary space” that would allow them to express and display “different narrative perspectives, to fictionalise life as it is experienced and, conversely, to make the imaginary world of fiction tangible and ‘real’ (Nicholson 2005a: 64), or, as I have pointed out over the course of my argument, to find the substance of their lives. The imaginative spaces then provide the platform to conceptualise what life might be like, and create possibilities for a better future. As I noted in the first part of this chapter, these conceptualisations are essential in developing the individual’s sense of self and motivating them to produce changes in their lives.

In the case of the ADS group, at first glance it can be reported that the participants created a character who had a resonance with themselves, and placed him in the difficult situation of undergoing a withdrawal. A careful examination of the dialogues and the style of the improvised scenes that they
created reveals that in fact they were reflecting on the positive aspects of the drug experience. This scene visualised their lives with and without drugs, in ways that contradict the dominant cultural narrative (and my social agenda, perceptions and expectations) and the community’s narrative, to suggest a constant interplay between the narration of drug culture and the narration of recovery. Moreover, the structure of the improvised scene created a paradox, since on one hand they reflected upon a difficult aspect of their common histories, but on the other the story was composed in such as a way as to reveal optimism. This phenomenon leads us back to the quest for positivity and the demand to give participants’ negative memories or experiences a positive dimension or meaning. It seems, therefore, that the participants were seeking their “silver lining” (Maruna and Ramsen 2004: 130) which would provide them with the platform to conceptualise how they would benefit from the situations that they were currently encountering.

Frankl (1984) calls this quest “tragic optimism” to describe humans’ capacity to remain positive (optimistic) despite the negative circumstances in their environment. In his perceptive, tragic optimism has three main domains:

1) turning suffering into a human achievement and accomplishment; 2) deriving from guilt the opportunity to change oneself and 3) deriving from life’s transitoriness an incentive to take responsible actions (Frankl Ibid: 162).

He makes the case here to propose the humans need to ‘make good out of the bad’. This ‘goodness’ for Frankl refers to an outcome either in the form of achievement or change. A useful example to further illustrate Frankl’s ‘tragic optimism is Maruna’s (2001) research on how ex-offenders re-form their narrations as they go through major life changes such as desistance from offending. In particular, Maruna (Ibid.) makes use of the concept of the
“redemption script” to discuss how ex-offenders appear to recast their storyline so that a ‘goodness’ emerges out of their experience of offending. As Maruna observed, while conducting a series of interviews with ex-offenders in the UK, in their personal life narrations there was a common element of turning their past experiences into something positive using a form of tragic optimism. In the case of these individuals, the ‘tragic’ refers to their previous experience of offending, while ‘optimism’ describes a longing to ‘give something back’ to society. As he asserts, “rather than ‘knifing off’ one’s troubled past, this redemption script allows the person to rewrite a shameful past into a necessary prelude to a productive and worthy life” (Maruna 2001: 87). Hence, the redemption script is the bridge between a troubled and shameful past and a positive and hopeful future. Narrators of the redemption script feel validated and capable to operate as active members of society. For this reason, Maruna (2001) refers to the social process of reconstructing one’s self-narrative into a redemption script for the future as a process of making good, as he believes the narrative reconstruction process is an imaginative process that blurs the division between what is considered to be fiction and nonfiction (Maruna and Ramsen 2004: 139).

However, in the case of the ADS members there is a paradox, since there is no clear indication that there was a quest to reverse their past experience into something ‘good’ and/or the notion of ‘redemption’ to society. However, a feeling of creating something which could be regarded by themselves as creative and positive was noticeable. In my view, the creation of the Ches story, together with the direct identification with their own experiences, might not necessarily suggest that the participants were attempting to ‘reveal’ something good out of the bad in the same manner as Maruna proposes. Additionally, the process of turning their personal suffering and shame into a comic scene might allow them to distance themselves and look
at their lives from another perspective. In the improvised scene there was a clear distinction between the past and the present together with a notion that the past is still present in multiple and complex ways (perhaps as a constant fear of relapse?). To this end, this moment of practice can be interpreted as a need for collective sharing, mutual support and acceptance regarding a common issue of concern in their current realities, a point which echoes Thompson when he asserts:

(...) [T]he past can find a place to live problematically in the present rather than be cured: that the struggle of the past’s difficultness can be validated rather than always becoming a problem to overcome (Thompson 2009: 65, my emphasis).

It is my intention to examine how applied theatre can reconcile the past with the present so as to provide a pathway to a better future. I believe that by accepting the participants’ stories as worthwhile and by encouraging them to display these experiences through a creative means might assist them to reconstruct an alternative redemption script, which is the theatre as an alternative substance. At the beginning of this chapter, I proposed the idea of applied theatre as an alternative substance in providing the individual with alternative to drugs, but also in allowing them to find their substance in a more tangible and real presence. I suggest applied theatre as medium to allow individuals to reconstruct their personal experiences so as to obtain positive aspects from them and thereby convey new meanings from these experiences. I support applied theatre as a medium to support the validation of their stories and as a bridge to connect their pasts with the present, in moments of inspiring a vision for the future, and to find the substance of their lives.
To conclude, in the process of recovering from drugs, the individual needs to find ways to detach from their “cellular relationship with the drug” (White 1996: 428). My proposal here is that applied theatre might be able to assist this process in two ways: the first is related to the discussion I set out to explore in the first part of the chapter: in particular, the notion of participation in theatre as a journey that invites individuals to see their lives from a different vantage point and add to them an alternative perspective. As I demonstrated, the creative element that theatre making involves can also assist the individual in feeling more positive and with a sense of achievement. The second aspect that I trace is the process of personal narration and how individuals’ stories can gain validation and be realised as significant. Hence, the transition from a flux past experience to a meaningful, tangible and real present can be used to acquire knowledge for the future and affiliate the past with the present. As these examples of practice have shown, by allowing the participants to re-enact aspects of their lives and approach them from a more positive angle allows them to perceive their stories differently, but also acquired knowledge.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have set out to illustrate my argument that applied theatre has the potential to operate as an alternative substance. In the first part I focused on examining what is the place of alternative in applying theatre with problem drug users. I asserted that theatre’s potential lies in its possibility to provide participants with vantage points to observe their lives from a different point of view, and likewise to provide opportunities for moments of what Schechner calls “transportation” in performance (Schechner 1985: 125-126). Hence, as I attempted to demonstrate, applied theatre has the potential encourage the participants to take an imaginative
journey in order to view their lives from other perspectives. As I argued, this journey has many implications: it can operate as form of escapism in creativity and expression and/or it can support the participants to reconstruct their stories so as to reveal positive aspects of them. However, at the end of the process the participants return to their ordinary lives only to wait until the next opportunity to experience these kinds of dimensions, which will hopefully encourage them to seek for something on the same scale.

Additionally, the second part of the chapter put emphasis on the importance of substance and suggested that by encouraging the participants to reconstruct their self stories so as to reveal a sense of goodness and positivity this experience can allow them to construe a chaotic and abstract past in a more tangible, solid present. Hence taken together, these two ideas constitute my belief that applied theatre can operate as an alternative substance. Moreover, the concepts of aliveness, happiness and light-heartedness were repeated themes of inquiry among the participants and are concepts that should not be dismissed from any discourse of how applied theatre might have an impact. This is to say that applied theatre perhaps should not be regarded only for its potential to challenge the participants’ behaviour and introduce them to alternative behavioural attitudes, but also to operate as a mean of escapism from their realities by supporting the creation of happy and creative moments through dramatic narration and improvisation. That is to say, to introduce them to alternative ways of transforming their past experiences of addiction into something meaningful for the future.

Balfour (2009), in his critical review of applied theatre’s intentions, makes the case to suggest that perhaps a theatre of “little changes” provides the pathways to a way to re-compass what is possible in the practices relating to
applied theatre. He proposes that applied theatre needs to “move away from the need for change rhetoric, impact assessments and the strain for verifiable measurements in defining applied theatre”, to call attention to the need “for a more ‘playful relationship’ between practitioners and participants”, and re-orientate the importance of creativity and aesthetics at the heart of applied theatre’s practices (Balfour Ibid: 356). Finally, I am proposing that by providing participants with the opportunity to experience moments of flow (being transported) and also to reform their stories so as to be validated, then perhaps applied theatre can operate as an theatre of little changes.

To conclude, I suggest that the intention of applied theatre should not be to concentrate on the individuals’ personal stories of weakness or suffering, but rather to focus on the participants’ current realities and hopes for a positive future. Whether we name it journey, transportation, optimal experience or redemption, in my view one thing is certain: during participation in applied theatre the individuals are taken ‘somewhere’ to experience ‘something’. Therefore, applied theatre’s potential lies in its ability to ‘inspire transformation’ by giving opportunities for transportations. I strongly believe that if we manage to make our participants’ laugh, light up and feel positive about their lives then it is likely that applied theatre might make a difference in the lives of these people even if this difference lasts only, for the moment of a workshop, and this is what I regard as a theatre of little changes. 22 In the next chapter I am going to move the argument of this chapter a step further in order to highlight another aspect: that of performing these stories as a way to prevent, educate and promote acceptance.

22 Following the completion of this project in ADS, the participants requested the arrangement of another theatre project. In February 2008, the Royal Exchange Theatre was commissioned to run a series of theatre workshops known as the ‘Fusebox project’. The project was facilitated by Janine Waters from Waters Edge (http://www.watersedgearts.com/) and led to an ongoing partnership between ADS and the Royal Exchange Theatre.
CHAPTER 4: TOWARDS A THEATRE FOR HOPE

In this chapter I intend to unravel the final argument of this thesis in relation to the role of theatre practice in the area of drug treatment. As I have already touched upon at various points during the course of this thesis, a notion of hope was apparent in all the cases that I examined. However, this sense of hope was not obvious from the beginning, but rather revealed the participants’ constant quest for community, escapism and transportation. As I have argued in the previous chapters, this quest or journey can be made possible through participation in a theatre project. Here, I shall tease out how the message of hope can be communicated by/to the overall community through organised performance events. Therefore, this chapter aims to give an account of the dynamics and potential of organising a performance by recovering users, and explores the roles of hope and the social imaginary in this context. Unlike the previous examples, this chapter deals with the possibilities and pitfalls in presenting a performance by recovering users to a public audience. Hence, it aims to address factors through which the issues of stigmatisation and exclusion were interrogated within the performances, both as an immediate response (autobiographical performance) and through the use of symbols and metaphors (adaptation of a Greek drama). In particular, it aims to explore how the performers’ personal experiences of recovering from dependency operated as a vehicle for raising hope about change and inclusion, and in this way helped the participants make the transition from being carriers of stigma to becoming carriers of hope.

Drawing on Dolan’s notion of “utopian performatives” (2005) and Taylor’s “social imaginary” (2004), I propose the idea of theatre as a channel for inspiration: what I refer to as the collective creation of a social imaginary. This argument will be enriched by both the analysis of theatrical performances by
problem drug users, and by approaching these events from the participants’ own standpoint. To illustrate my argument I examine two different projects, one in the UK and one in Greece. This time my approach will come from a different perspective as I will examine the two cases through the prism of the observer, researcher and visitor. I do this in the endeavour of bringing together the different cultural practices and approaches in the use of theatre within the area of drug-treatment services. Additionally, this chapter will focus on an analysis of the final performance events instead of the process (as in the previous chapters). The themes of personal narration, self-reflection and their relationship with applied theatre praxis will be examined through the lens of two oppositional examples. The first example focuses on the UK-based theatre company Breaking Image (BI). This company draws its material from the participants’ personal narratives and thereby its performances are based on the dramatisation of the participants’ ‘real’ stories. I propose that BI’s emphasis on the ‘authenticity’ of their participants’ stories can be interpreted as a call for the audience’s empathy and acceptance. However, as I show, problems can arise if the performer’s own ‘authenticity’ is emphasised to such a degree that it ends up reinforcing certain misconceptions about the reality of people in recovery, and thereby victimises and stereotypes the performers. Their 2007 production An Ordinary Day will be considered in reference to the concept of dramatising personal narration and staging stigma. The second example for consideration is the Greek theatre group 18 ANO, and in particular their 2007 production of Eumenides by Aeschylus. 18 ANO’s approach can be described as an allegory of the recovery process as they use scripts drawn from a worldwide repertoire as their medium to reflect on their participants’ stories (metatheatricality). Finally, I consider both examples in light of the degree to which they promote social inclusion.
As I discuss extensively throughout this chapter, these two approaches appear in a way to contradict each other, as at first glance as they seem to be completely oppositional (one being metaphorical and the other literal). However, careful examination indicates that in fact these two approaches share many similarities in terms of their underlying purposes: the participants’ quest to ‘give something back’ to their community, and the glimpses of hope they reveal at the end of their performances. At this point I should clarify that I do not intend to conduct a practice comparison in order to suggest a better practice, but rather to display and examine the nuances of the different methods and ideas in using theatre with recovering users. However, I believe it is important to question and problematise whether each approach is appropriate to the context in which it is being implemented and to highlight the implications of each of these approaches. Moreover, although both examples raise a wide range of issues for consideration and analysis, for the purposes of this chapter I have condensed these into three main themes: staging stigma, the redemption script (giving back to the community) and hope. This will facilitate the discussion of the role of performance in drugs education and support my overall argument for the cross-cultural role of performance as a tool for promoting social inclusion. Whilst it is possible to read different things into this chapter, my main emphasis is on the trajectories of the two approaches. Thus, this chapter merely seeks to note various points of encounter and overlap between the two examples. To this end, some of the central themes that arose in previous chapters, such as the concept of the redemption script and the notion of community and belonging, are repeated here, and reconsidered in relation to the two theatre companies’ productions.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part examines the theoretical framework and interrelations between performance (Dolan 2005), hope
The concept of ‘hope’ has been associated with a sense of expectation and future betterness (Bloch 1986; Sylver 1994; Umanumo 1954). It is an emotional component which links with positive feelings as well as with an aspiration that something better is possible to occur in someone’s life (Sylver 1994). Hence, hope has been perceived as a positive and necessary drive for the individuals’ functionality and well being. For this reason questions on
hope and its meanings have been associated with different fields such as religion, philosophy, politics, psychology and medicine among others. Nevertheless, the concept of hope is ambiguous and complex and can simultaneously relate to personal and impersonal meanings. The two main ways to understand hope are: one cognitive, which is related to the way individuals experience hope in their daily life. The other is philosophical and is concerned with the way hope functions in the minds of individuals. Likewise in the way they perceive their existence and their surrounding world.

The first approach, the psychological, is related with motives, optimism and goal setting as well as with accomplishments and desires. This type of hope is linked with psychological traits. According to this understanding, hope is perceived as a coping mechanism in dealing with emotional distress, pain, depression, despair and other negative feelings and situations. It is also related with the way individuals interact with others and how they understand and build relationships. As Snyder suggests "Hope is the sum of the mental willpower and waypower that you have for your goals" (Snyder 1994: 4). The positive psychologists Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) whose work I examined in chapter 2, gave hope and optimism a prominent position in addressing how individuals can improve their well being and motivation to change. In this respect, hope is seen as an important component for the individuals’ functionality and development. Nevertheless, the psychological perspective of hope is materialistic, as is related with what individual can achieve as well as their sense of resilience.

Traditionally, however, hope has been linked with philosophical discussions over its various meaning. Authors as Bloch (1986), Latour (1999) and Unamuno (1954) approached hope from a philosophical point of view and
raised fundamental questions with regards to how hope functions in the minds of human beings. It is the philosophical approaches on hope that I am interested to explore further in this chapter in an attempt to identify whether there is place for hope in the performances by excluded communities. In this endeavour the work of Bloch appears to be particularly relevant. In his major study, *Principle of Hope* (Bloch 1986), he lays out the relationship between hope and the utopian imagination in the various levels of individual’s daily existence. As he argues notions of hope give confidence and perceptive in the human’s existence and supports their journey of discovery and evolution. Interestingly, he is using examples from literature, theatre and film to articulate how hope is been depicted in those forms. He suggests that hope in art is articulated from both psychological and philosophical perspectives. Hence, the images of hope probed in art as for example in film or performance provide a form of ‘oasis’ and can contribute in raising the individuals’ feelings of hope. By using the example of Greek Ancient tragedy, he makes the case to discuss how through the heroes-protagonist’s downfall and rise, audiences might experience a sense of hope. Hence, he argues audiences do not experience catharsis through pity and fear but rather through “defiance and hope” (Bloch 1986: 430).

Bloch’s opinion is a very useful notion to conceptualise how theatre and hope can be connected in relation with the subject of this thesis. He approaches hope as the idea of a better future, and the theatrical stage as a medium in which these feelings can be expressed and realised. It is in this context that I wish to utilise hope to support my argument on theatre’s potential to beneficially impact on people’s lives. As I will argue, it is in the momentum of feeling hope but also in enabling others to feel hope, that I believe theatre can have an important contribution. Kershaw argues that “what theatre and drama might best do [is] to produce a growing number of
carriers of hope” (Kershaw 1998: 67). He moves on to suggest “even in the most obscure corners of the post-modern panopticon creative performance can insinuate pathologies of hope” (Kershaw Ibid: 82). By taking Bloch’s and Kershaw’s argument as my point of departure, I am going to make a case for the role of hope in the performance by recovering drug users. First I will like to explore further the relationship of theatre and hope vis-à-vis.

The concept of hope in theatre is an important subject of consideration in any discourse on its potential to have a beneficial impact on people’s lives. In her book *Utopian Performatives: Finding Hope in Theatre* (2005) Dolan provides a useful platform for conceptualising the role of hope in both the making of theatre and in presenting this outcome to the public. For Dolan, finding hope in theatre addresses the moment that audiences are connected in an ultimate energy which in turn inspires images of a better life. As she asserts:

“Utopian performatives” describe small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense. (Dolan 2005: 5)

In her analysis, Dolan approaches these performances from a spectator’s viewpoint and it is my wish here to attempt to bridge the gap between the performers and spectators of applied theatre. For the purpose of my argument I shall regard the audience as ‘representatives of society’, as opposed to the performers, who are constructed as ‘representatives of a marginalised group’. Hence, I would like to paint a bigger picture in order to metaphorically approach the audience members of these performances as the overall society, in order to assess the degree to which the performance by
problem drug users has the potential to impact on the audience’s own perceptions and raise their awareness and compassion. I do this in an endeavour to test out the following hypothesis: might the act of watching a piece of performance created by members of a vulnerable and marginalised community on stage potentially reveal glimpses of hope and stimulate moments of “Utopian performatives” (Dolan 2005: 5)? Likewise, Dolan puts forward the idea of theatre as a space in which affirmation, warmth and love should be experienced and expressed “regularly and effectively” (Dolan 2005: 14). She makes the case that performances have the potential to unite the audience to such a degree that they are “rallied to hope for the possibility of realising improved social relations” (Dolan Ibid.). Even though her ideas may seem over-optimistic and over-idealistic, I believe this extra emphasis on optimism and hopefulness in the making and presenting of a theatrical piece ought to be viewed as a starting point. Moreover, the idea of theatre as a concept of bonding individuals and allowing them to imagine the possibility of a better future is again an interesting point of departure.

Dolan’s idea of “utopian performatives” echoes Taylor (2004) when he proposes the idea of social imaginary. With the term social imaginary Taylor refers to

The way people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations. (Taylor Ibid: 23)

Therefore, Taylor’s philosophy of the social imaginary can be understood as the amalgamation of the ideas that we have about each other, our expectations and the collective actions we have undertaken to meet these
expectations. However I attempt to take Dolan’s and Taylor’s viewpoints one step further to highlight another domain: that of the performer’s own stories.

In my view, by utilising aspects of their own personal histories (for example their experiences of recovering from drug addiction), the performers might be able to promote the social imagination of a society without prejudice, discrimination or exclusion, and to provide hope for a society where we could all learn from each other’s experiences (the redemption script). That is to say, I am approaching the performers’ personal stories from three angles: a) as a ‘message of hope’ which assists in envisioning a society in which we can learn from each other; b) as a medium for promoting the social imaginary of a society without prejudice, discrimination or exclusion; and c) as a tool for ‘educating’ others (the redemption script). In an attempt to put into context my argument, I am interested in exploring how these performances can be utilised in reinstalling the performers’ notion of active citizenship. Likewise, I would like to approach these performances as a social platform, in which the audience’s sense of social responsibility in promoting the problem drug users’ social reintegration has been developed. As I am going to argue these two concepts can result in moments of social imaginary and the concept of raising hope in this case, performs as the moving force. Before, I move on to discuss the interrelations between theatre, active citizenship and the social imaginary, first, I am going to elucidate how this study understands the idea of active citizenship and social responsibility.

Active citizenship has been understood as a social role that implies active participation in the political social life of the community and wider society. To this ends, active citizens are characterized by a common impulse to make a positive contribution to the society (Institute of Citizenship 2011). In order
to better articulate the idea of active citizenship, I make use of Barker’s definition:

(...) direct citizen participation in collective action in the broad tradition of “participatory democracy.” As I understand it, participatory democracy includes citizen engagement in the state itself as well as in the sector of “civil society,” or nonstate collective action (Barker 2009:2).

Therefore, the idea of active citizenship relates to the realisation of the individual’s social role and responsibility to understand, believe and assert for their own and other’s human rights, social justice and engagement in the civil life and “participatory democracy” (Barker Ibid.). This includes disseminating the inclusion of those facing disadvantage or disaffection. Hence, active citizenship embeds the idea of moving beyond individualism and towards a holistic approach of fighting exclusion and to better our society. In the introduction of this thesis, I offered a definition of social inclusion and promoting the idea of an autonomous approach in tackling the social issue, regardless of any social policies and governmental strategies. Here I am going to explore this further to make the case for problem drug users. Therefore, I relate the idea of active citizenship, social responsibility with the context of this study as follows: I have already discussed at various points over the course of this thesis, that recovering users are required to re-establish their identity and social role. Hence, acting as active citizens can be interpreted as a system of regaining their role in society and positively contributing to it. Their responsibility is to educate others and to make transparent their knowledge in relation to recovering form drug addiction as well as bring into public debate the issues of marginalisation and deprivation. From the audience’s point of view, active citizenship is linked with their responsibility in accepting ‘others’, the ‘excluded’ and provide
them with the opportunities to put into use their experience as well as “participate in the collective action” (Barker Ibid.).

However, a crucial question that needs to be asked is how theatre can contribute in this endeavour. The association of theatre as a medium to advocate notions of active citizenship is not something new. From the Ancient Greeks to Boal, theatre practice has been connected with the concept of citizenship. Historically the use of theatre has a central role in educating and raising the audience’s awareness on a social and political issue. For example, the Greek tragedy was strongly situated in cultural and civil life of the Athenians. As Barker asserts:

As a speech-centered art, drama was therefore well suited to contribute to the civic education of citizens. By portraying dramatic and compelling speeches, tragedy helped to cultivate essential qualities of citizenship, such as skills in public speaking and listening to others. Tragedy required its audience to identify with characters in complex ethical situations, follow their words, and expand its sympathetic abilities. These are foundational skills for participation in the political realm (Barker 2009: 3).

Although, Barker’s point of view raises some fundamental questions in regards with the inclusivity of ancient Greek society and the extent to which tragedy could realistically contribute to the civil education of the citizens; what I am interested to tease out is the recognition of theatre as a powerful medium to bring issues of citizenship and public engagement into context.

Furthermore, Boal’s legislative theatre clearly demonstrates theatre’s potential in promoting aspects of active citizenship. According to his approach, theatre can operate as a useful medium not only in raising awareness but also in enhancing solidarity and social cohesion. As he
manifests “each oppressed person should try to gain an understanding of the oppressions experienced by others and show solidarity with them” (Boal 1998: 20). Taking Boal’s views into consideration, I am interested to tease out whether theatre can be used as a medium to build social citizenship. Can the oppressed and their experiences of oppression and exclusion be put into place in order to provoke change?

Cohen-Cruz (2010) suggests a dialectical approach in engaging audiences with performers. In her views, the performance operates and a call for a political discourse and as an invitation for the audiences’ response over the social issue in question. She refers to this dialogue as ‘exchanges’ which can be verbal or not verbal. As she proposes “the call and response foregrounds the many opportunities for interactivity between a theatre artist and the people involved (...) it brings a community together for both political and spiritual reasons” (Cohen-Cruz Ibid.: 1-2). Elsewhere, Cohen-Cruz (2006: 103-113) approaches personal storytelling as political act for what she envisions, personal experience is grounded in the individuals’ imperative to inform, educate and assert for their rights for inclusion. She regards these acts as a way to revitalise a public debate and bring issues social exclusion and injustice to surface. Drawing on Cohen-Cruz’s notion of the “call and response” dynamic and her arguments on personal storytelling as a political act; I regard the performances by a marginalised groups as a call and the audience’s attendance to witness these performance as a potential response. For this purpose, I symbolically regard the audience as the overall society and the act of witnessing the performances and the first step in socially recognising the issues of exclusion. I assert that these performances are political acts, as they reflect on individuals’ personal dramas and dilemmas but also address society’s responsibility to assist these individuals’ ‘comebacks’, and allow for new pathways of social action and hope.
Therefore, both the literature on narratives of recovery and Maruna’s use of the redemption script are again relevant in articulating how the recovering users’ strong imperative to give something back to the community can be put into practice to promote social inclusion. I make the case to suggest that if Dolan’s utopian performatives are taken together with Taylor’s social imaginary then applied theatre can regarded as a means of inspiring the collective creation of a social imaginary.

To support my argument further I make use of Warren’s (1980: 60) idea of “de-stigmatisation ceremonies”. Warren has coined this term to express the individual’s shift from a deviant identity to what she refers to as a “charismatic deviant” identity. She explains as follows:

(..) [T]he charismatic deviant is a special social role: a charismatic individual representative of the deviant collectivity. Charismatic deviants include both achieved and ascribed deviants, and their role is expressed in such social forms as guest speakers, research subjects, or media speech givers. Charismatic deviants may be unproblematically charismatic to their own collectivity, but they vary in the degree to which they are accepted as charismatic in the eyes of the general public, and even in their own eyes. (Warren Ibid.)

Therefore, de-stigmatisation ceremonies can been understood as public organised events which convert the individual from a deviant ‘carrier of stigma’ to a charismatic deviant ‘carrier of hope’. In other words, de-stigmatisation ceremonies provide an opportunity to present in public participants’ newly established selves and to advocate for social acceptance and recognition. Warren’s approach is a useful context in which to understand how the dramatisation of the individual’s transcendence process can perhaps operate as a vehicle to promote social inclusion. Hence, the
performance event can be seen as platform in which the individual’s identify formation is presented through the dramatic exploration of their personal experiences of recovering. Likewise, the performance can also be seen as an opportunity for these individuals to present in public their redemption script as means of raising awareness about problem drug use, but also of challenging the social perceptions of addiction and stigma.

Lamont argues that successful societies are those which are inclusive and “make room for the social recognition of a variety of groups” (Lamont 2009: 151). She goes on to suggest that the two elements that can contribute to a successful, inclusive society are social recognition and active citizenship (Lamont Ibid.). Drawing from Lamont’s and Warren’s ideas, my focus will be on demonstrating how a performance piece by recovering users can open up the possibilities for social recognition and active citizenship, alongside providing pathways for the envisioning of a better society. In summary, my argument lies between the four concepts of utopian performatives, social imaginary, the redemption script and finally de-stigmatisation ceremonies. I will attempt to illuminate the role of performances by recovering users as a potentially useful action in promoting social acceptance. In the following parts of this chapter, I will call attention to two different examples of performances by recovering drug users in order to illustrate my argument.

**PART 1: Breaking Image**

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, I included BI in this study because the company works exclusively with people affected by problem drug use. Furthermore, the company’s additional emphasis on using its members’ personal stories as a platform for the process of devising a performance operated as another domain for investigation. Here, I will continue the discussion initiated in the previous chapter regarding the
relationship between personal narratives and applied theatre. However, 
while I have already analysed the process of using personal narratives with 
ADS as an example, what I would like to do now is to move my discussion 
on from the issue of telling personal stories to examining how these stories 
can be dramatised and then presented to the public. Unlike in the case of the 
ADS project, where I explained how the participants had driven the process 
so as to evade their current situations, instead using it as a means of 
reversing their stories (the redemption script), the members of BI attempted 
to provide a message of hope by dramatising their direct accounts of the 
harsh realities of drug addiction. Hence, I have deliberately opted to 
continue the discussion from Chapter 3, using the example of the Breaking 
Image theatre company, in order to bring into question the possibilities and 
pitfalls of staging personal narratives. As I have explained, the BI model uses 
the performers’ direct and honest accounts of their experiences as the entry 
point from which to reflect on the journey to recovery from drugs, and 
presents these experiences to the public through performance. This approach 
is an important issue for consideration in order to develop the discussion I 
have set out to explore throughout this thesis with regard to the use of 
applied theatre as a tool to promote social inclusion. Finally, I believe that the 
example of BI provides an appropriate framework for conceptualising 
thatre’s potential to promote social inclusion, and brings to light questions 
about whether the participants’ personal narratives can contribute to this 
endeavour.

**Personal narration and the social imaginary: possibilities and pitfalls**

As I have already discussed in the previous chapter, personal narration can 
be placed at the core of applied theatre practice. The dramatisation of 
community narratives in order to reveal ‘authentic’ stories of oppression, 
digression, and social injustice in particular has long concerned practitioners
and scholars in the field (Boal 1995, Cohez-Cruz 2005; Haedicke and Nellhaus 2001; Nicholson 2005a; Kuppers and Robertson 2007; Prentki and Selman 2000; Thompson 2005, 2009). More recently, authors such as Dennis (2007, 2008), Jestrovic (2008), Salverson (1996, 1999) and Thompson (2009) have problematised and challenged the issue of how this telling should occur, and emphasised that the ‘authenticity’ of the participants’ personal accounts needs to be carefully interrogated before they are presented to the public. Whilst the majority of this discourse has been carried out with reference to narratives from asylum seekers and refugees (see Dennis 2007, 2008; Jestrovic 2008; Salverson 1996, 1999) or in war zones (Thompson 2009), here I shall use this debate as a platform from which to discuss the model of BI and, in particular, how the participants dramatised their own accounts of stigma and exclusion.

Applied theatre’s interest in personal narration can be connected to attempts being made to empower and give voice to the communities to which it is applied, attempts that are at times further enriched by the sharing of stories at organised public performances (Van Erven 2001; Haedicke and Nellhaus 2001; Nicholson 2005a; Kuppers and Robertson 2007; Prentki and Preston 2007). I have already discussed the links between applied theatre and the voicing of community narratives in Chapters 2 and 3. In this section, my emphasis will be on the performing of these stories, and the implications of this. As I shall demonstrate, these performances carry out a double function. From the perspective of the participants, the communication of their stories provides them with an appropriate framework for positioning their experiences at the centre of the audience’s attention, and thereby their experiences are validated. By witnessing the enactment of these stories, the audience’s understanding of the issues faced by this specific community might be enhanced, and their compassion and empathy engaged. To this end,
it can be assumed that the theatrical representation of personal narratives could operate as a pathway between the audience and the performers. However, questions arise with regard to how the personal stories should be handled, and whether empathy has a role in the creation of a social imagination. As Salverson argues:

> When popular theater artists and members of a community negotiate how the telling of their stories will occur, both parties are attempting to set up conditions of reception that will urge and allow the participants and the eventual audience to be affected and changed by what they hear. A climate of witnessing thus involves not only listening to someone’s story, but allowing our attitudes and behaviors to be changed by it. (Salverson 1996: 183)

It is precisely the question of how we can allow the behaviours of the audience to be changed by performing the self and stories of the selfhood that will be the focus of my analysis. In particular, I will be scrutinising this through the performers’ points of view, and comparing the performance with my own reflections and observations as an outsider and member of the audience. Moreover, I will attempt to assess the required “conditions of reception” that allow this transition to occur. It is this ‘bridging’ effect between audience and performers and between experiences and narratives that I would like to tease out in relation to the BI model, in order to emphasise the different implications of dramatising personal narrations and awakening the audience’s empathy. I therefore regard empathy as an emotional response (to feel *with* someone, or with the action on stage), and identification as a consequence of a direct relation between the lives of the spectators and the characters (Shepherd and Wallis 2004: 195). My intention here is to demonstrate the potential associations between empathy, identification and social imagination in the performances which set out to
promote the social acceptance of the performers (de-stigmatisation ceremonies).

At this point, I must clarify that the concept of empathy has long occurred in discussions about the audience’s responses to theatre, for example in the cases of Aristotle (Lucas 1968), Brecht (Willet 1949), Boal (1979) in which empathy has been understood as one’s ability to acknowledge and understand the character’s feelings and dramatic actions. However, in this case I am not examining the role of empathy broadly in theatre, but more specifically in performances in which the performers’ act as themselves and perform aspects from their autobiographies. Owing to the fact that the performances that I am examining deal with the performers’ personal narratives and, therefore, the performers are not only exposing themselves but also their life stories, I argue that encouraging empathetic responses from the audience might be deeply problematic. Historically, the problem with empathy has been associated with its potential to lead to a set of polarised responses: on the one hand to sympathy, which means to feel for someone while remaining distressed by the action; and on the other hand to the Brechtian so-called “alienation effect”, in which the audience is defamiliarised from the action (Shepherd and Wallis 2005). Hence, in the cases that I examine, the risk of empathy is not only that it can lead to alienation from the action that might appear ‘outside’ the audience’s experiences, but also to further discrimination against the performers. The danger with empathy, then, is that it involves the possibility of distancing audiences from instead of connecting audiences to the performers, thus failing to create Dolan’s utopian performatives and the social imaginary.

The links between personal narration, empathy and social imagination have been addressed by Nicholson (2005a: 74-82). In particular, she discusses the
various implications and interrelations between three main areas: identification (between the performers and the audience), empathy and social imagination. By drawing a distinction between identification and empathy, Nicholson argues that while empathy can be passive, identification “can be a rather uncomfortable affair” (Nicholson Ibid.: 79). Hence she claims that the audience’s empathetic responses can be problematic and can enlarge the gap between audience and performers rather than contributing to the social imagination. Nicholson’s views echo Rowe (2007) when he discusses the ethical implications of performing personal narratives in Playback Theatre. As he points out, “there is always a risk that we will eradicate the difference of the other in our performances – that well-intentioned empathy becomes oppressive colonization of the other” (Rowe Ibid.: 150).

Hence, taking Nicholson’s and Rowe’s views into consideration, my suggestion here is that when using a performance event with the purpose of creating Taylor’s concept of social imaginary, both the concept of empathy and that of identification are essential. I stress the risks of empathy both in terms of colonisation and Brechtian alienation, and also emphasise the difficulty of empathising with a character who, or with action which appears to be ‘outside’ the audience’s own experience, which can lead to further discrimination against the other. Hence, the situation might end up with a ‘false’ empathy in which the audience does not truly empathise with the dramatic action. However, I believe that the possibility of achieving the creation of a social imaginary exists in the attempt to find points of contact between audience members and the characters by means of identification. I assert that identification can prevent this disconnection by reinforcing the audience’s ability to create direct links with the action. Diamond argues that “the radical power of identification [is] to override the constraints of identity” (Diamond 1993: 90), and identification can thereby provide the
audience with the appropriate framework to identify with the action even if they have not experienced the same situations as the characters. I will return to the discussion of identification when I discuss the example of 18 ANO. Here, the purpose of my analysis will be to illustrate how performances by recovering users ought to operate as interventions between the performers’ experiences and the audience’s perceptions, and, in this way, to create a ‘transformative place’ where possibilities of change and dreams for a better future (utopian performative) can be imagined. Below, I will examine how this intention existed in BI’s production, but was not clearly communicated to the audience.

**Breaking Image Theatre Company**

BI is a community theatre group based in Bridgewater, Somerset in the UK. It can be described as an initiative of a group of recovering users and probation Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO) clients, who created the theatre company as a way of reflecting on their issues of concern. Led by the probation officer, community artist, and former drug user Richard Taylor, the group aims to encourage local recovering users to engage in theatrical practice and to promote social awareness and acceptance through their productions. It is an independent theatre company supported by the Bridgwater Arts Centre and the Somerset Probation Service. BI defines its work as follows:

> We produce original devised theatre based on real life experiences of drug addiction. Facilitated by professional theatre artists, the work is devised and performed by recovering addicts. Our work provides an opportunity for

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23 DTTO is a UK Government policy which aims to reduce the number of offenders with problematic drug use. For a comprehensive review see Drugscope: [http://www.drugscope.org.uk/resources/drugsearch/drugsearchpages/dttos.htm](http://www.drugscope.org.uk/resources/drugsearch/drugsearchpages/dttos.htm) (accessed 10.07.2010)
members of the group to share their experiences through theatre and drama activities with many different areas of the community from those who know very little, to those who may be at risk or those who have travelled a similar path. For group members, involvement in the project develops many personal skills and qualities such as pride, confidence, increased aspirations, communication skills and creativity which in turn have an impact on relapse prevention (APC 2007).

BI’s performance structure is based on the dramatisation of the recovery process. By putting emphasis on the individual’s personal experience of relapse, stigma, death and failure, they invite their audiences to reconsider their perceptions of drug users and the reality hidden behind the recovery process. Therefore, it can be said that their performances illustrate the process of ‘coming off’ drugs, enriched by their members’ personal accounts and autobiographical materials. Hence, the importance of their approach resides in the fact that their accounts are presented in a direct and honest way, supported by the use of physical theatre, video projections, visuals- and music that all contribute towards reflections on the recovery process. Through their performances they attempt to communicate a message of hope and emphasise the individual’s willpower and ability to transform and change their harsh realities into something else: perhaps a better life. Moreover, BI’s intention was constructed around its participants’ desire to express their wish for a future that is potentially different from the present in a way which provides an alternative vision.

In other words, it can be said that BI’s model is framed around its members’ imperative to share their personal experiences as a way of preventing others from going down a similar path. This intention is supported by the fact that their director has previous experience as a former drug user and community artist (British radical street theatre of the 1980s). As Taylor (2007) himself
suggests, his involvement in the project appeared to operate as a catalyst in engaging the participants in the process, as well as supporting the exploration of their issues of concern. In particular, he makes the case that his personal background functions as a bridge between two worlds: the world of theatre on one hand, and the world of drug recovery on the other. In my understanding, it seems that Taylor’s personal background to a certain degree creates a sense of freedom of expression, whereby the participants can connect and feel comfortable enough to disclose their stories. These stories then become upgraded through the fact that they become a *common* story. The commonality of the participants’ stories, along with the need to reflect upon issues of stigma, appear to drive the practice, and as they continue the process of devising performances, more and more stories reveal a sense of stigma, exclusion, personal conflict, relapse and the failure to discontinue drug use (Taylor 2007). Additionally, as Taylor indicates, “they [BI’s members] shared an overwhelming motive, included from myself, to do everything to prevent others from going at a similar path” (Taylor 2007). Their desires and motivations in sharing these stories as a means of preventing others from doing the same as they did, combined with the fact that they choose to present their stories though theatrical means, are important issues for consideration in conceptualising applied theatre’s potential in giving voice to communities. It would appear that the emphasis on reflecting on participants’ stories fulfils two functions. On one hand, there is the individual’s “overwhelming motive” to tell their story as a ‘cautionary tale’ and, in so doing, to *validate* their story, but also to exploit it for public benefit. On the other hand, by utilising the ‘authentic’ elements of their lives to provide a first-hand understanding of the experiences inherent in drug culture, the participants attempt to engage the audience’s empathy on these matters.
In order to further comprehend the nature of this underlying motivation to tell it is worth examining the literature which is concerned with narratives of recovery from drug use (Etherington 2007; Maruna 2001; McIntosh and McKeeganey 2000a, 2000b, 2001). These studies demonstrate that people in recovery often share the impulse to communicate their personal experiences as a way of educating others. Moreover, it is believed that the process of retelling their stories can contribute towards their identity reconstruction. For example Maruna describes this impulse as:

A lifetime that is deemed a “waste” or a shame can be “put to use” by saving one – “even just one” – other life from repeating the same mistakes. This cautionary story is intended in particular as a gift for the next generation (...) by living to tell the tale, he has in fact found a social purpose or meaning for this part of his life: It has produced a “book” that he can pass on to the next generation (Maruna 2001: 104)

This quest for “social purpose or meaning” can be regarded as the essence of the individual’s motive to tell; additionally, the urge to transform “shame” into “a gift for the next generation” operates as a force for this turnaround to occur. Bearing in mind that the BI members similarly reported an “overwhelming motive to tell” (Taylor 2007), it can be assumed that their motive corresponds with Maruna’s point about “putting to use” these stories (the redemption script) to achieve a positive outcome: to “save one other life”. Furthermore, authors as Etherington (2007), McIntosh and McKeeganey (2000a, 2000b, 2001), report that a sense of optimism together with the need to give back to society, are common characteristics of how former drug users narrate their stories. In particular, as Wilson goes on to explain:

Resilient trauma survivors use their own experiences to reach out to help others. By helping others they help themselves maintain a continual sense of self-transformation; they give of

It seems, therefore, that by preventing others from going down similar paths, and by perceiving themselves as ‘protectors’ and or ‘educators’, such individuals are assisted in constructing a vision for the future and activating their social role. Furthermore, this notion of making good (Maruna 2001) takes us back to the discussion in Chapter 3 when I used Maruna’s work and his usage of the redemption script to discuss the importance of reflecting upon participants’ personal stories. However, while in Chapter 3 I attempted to describe the process of telling and reversing their stories, here I am interested in examining the performance of this newly formed story or scenario. To this end, considering Maruna’s concept of the redemption script, it can be easily assumed that through the dramatisation of the participants’ stories both the validation and the display of the story (for the benefit of the public) automatically occur. Consequently, the theatre performance can be regarded as a medium to communicate the story to a wider community and the performance event can be seen as what Maruna metaphorically describes as “a book that he can pass on the next generation” (Maruna 2001:104). Likewise, this idea of a “book” links directly with Warren’s (1980 :60) idea of “de-stigmatisation” ceremonies, and thereby with the whole notion of revealing a newly-established self.

However, if we approach the above viewpoints from the performances’ circumstantial points of view and focus on the ethical implications of performing life stories in particular, does this mean that in a way the participants are being asked to expose their traumatic experiences and thereby their vulnerabilities? What are the implications of such an approach?
An interesting response to the above questions is proposed by Taylor, BI’s director. He asserts that:

This show is asking people to expose vulnerabilities and for me that was a real positioning, strength thing that they did that. But not only did they do that, but then, they did it in public, and that as a starting point was really liberating for some people because it actually touched a lot of people and so they realized, that you know, it’s a different yeah! You’re not always adapted to the hard mask that you stuck with it or there is a different way out of it, yeah! (Taylor 2007). 24

His reference to exposing vulnerability as a liberating experience generates important questions with respect to the ethical and other implications of such an approach which should not be dismissed. As I will argue, the BI model places recovering users in situations where they are asked to perform themselves in acts that often contradict the relationship between the performativity of their ‘authentic’ stories – those that occur in autobiographical performances – and their ‘real’ lives off stage. In particular, I argue that the participants in An Ordinary Day were expected to revisit aspects of themselves from which they had attempted to move away to begin a new life (see Chapter 3). The focus on using the ‘authentic’ elements of their stories as a way of promoting acceptance seems to be deeply problematic, especially if one bears in mind that the BI members are still recovering from drugs, which means that they are not disconnected from drug culture.

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24 Taylor here refers to their 2007 production An Ordinary Day, which I discuss in the next section.
To further develop my argument, I make use of hyper-authentic, a term coined by Jestrovic (2008: 160-161) to demonstrate the possible paradoxes of utilising a performer’s own life stories. As Jestrovic explains:

Like the hyperreal, the hyper-authentic is also produced through representation. It works on the proposition that the performance features “real” people and that there is no distinction between the subjectivity of the performer on and off “stage”. Nevertheless, in performance circumstances, the authenticity of the performing subject becomes reinforced through theatricality. In other words, the hyper-authentic occurs when ‘real’ people are expected to perform their own authenticity (Jestrovic Ibid.:160).

In order to relate Jestrovic’s point to the example of BI and An Ordinary Day, it can be argued that the ‘authenticity’ of the harsh reality of addiction similarly “becomes reinforced through theatricality” and that therefore, the performers were expected to perform not as themselves (recovering users), but rather as drug addicts. In this way, they were expected to perform aspects of their autobiographies from which they were constantly attempting to move away (drug addiction). Hence, it seems that it is not enough to be a ‘real’ problem drug user for the sake of theatricality, but rather to perform accordingly. Taylor’s quote regarding “exposing vulnerabilities as a liberating act” creates much controversy regarding performance’s ability to promote social acceptance. On one hand, the participants’ urge to put their stories to use and to validate them is apparent, but on the other hand, by choosing to cast light on their harsh realities, or in other words the authenticity of drug culture, I argue that a degree of separation between ‘us’ (recovering users) and ‘them’ (the audience) is created. This dichotomy, I believe, emerged from the way these realities were presented. The attempt to remain faithful to the truth and to portray drug culture as convincingly as
possible led to victimisation instead of validation. Hence, the use of the redemption script is ambivalent here because it focuses on truthful representation but fails to reveal optimism. Moreover, the fact that the audience was aware that they were watching the performers’ own stories, I believe, added an additional complexity to their anticipation and reception of the performance. As White asserts:

Many addicts have a carefully constructed life story that portrays them as being victimized by people and forces and conditions over which they have no control. The “‘victim” status and role serve as a righteous justification for continued self-destruction through addiction. It is as if revenge against the world can be achieved through obliteration of oneself. (White 1996: 424)

From White’s suggestions it appears that there is a common ground among people who deal with problematic drug use to characterise themselves ‘victims’ of society, but also to a certain degree as ‘victims’ of themselves and of their own choices. Although I am reluctant to suggest that this is the case with every person who recovers from drug addiction, as I will illustrate, the performance of BI did concur with White’s argument, as I believe BI’s model reproduced images of drug users and their realities in the same manner as is frequently portrayed in the media (see Blackman 2004). In other words, their production depicted drug users as individuals whose lives lie between deviance and disobedience. I am going to further illustrate my argument with regard to BI’s approach by specifically looking at moments from their 2007 production An Ordinary Day.

An Ordinary Day: Staging Stigma

In 2007 BI developed the performance piece An Ordinary Day. This was an attempt to explore the daily lives of people suffering from addiction, and the
difficulties of maintaining a drug-free lifestyle. As I have highlighted above, their urge to prevent others from developing an addiction to drugs or other substances was apparent, and drove the process in multidimensional ways. The scenario involves the stories of five characters whose lives intersect and eventually become part of the same story of addiction, conflict, crime, loss, death and life. The characters are not fictional, but the participants acting out their own selves in a range of situations. *An Ordinary Day* is therefore an autobiographical performance reflecting on the performers’ personal backgrounds. In their words:

“Just another ordinary day. Wake up, pockets empty. Wondering where the next fix is coming from...” Breaking Image present stories of their own chaotic lifestyles, the lengths come to feed addiction, and their struggles to break free from drugs. Every-day stories of crime and disorder, overdose and withdrawal, life or death. (*An Ordinary Day* from performance’s brochure 2007).

In this section, I shall give an account of the performance structure, with particular emphasis on staging stigma and ways of representing the issues of addiction and exclusion on stage. To illustrate this, I shall focus on moments in the performance that attempted to address these issues, and then to tease out their implications. What I am interested in unravelling here, in order to pose some further questions, is the relationship between the ‘authenticity’ of the performers’ accounts and how this has been reinforced through theatricality (Jestrovic 2008). Moreover, I attempt to explore how this reinforcement led to a division between the performers and the audience. To answer these questions I will analyse the performance’s structure, particularly looking at the duality between hero and antihero, staging stigma and challenging perceptions, always with reference to utopian performatives and social imagination.
The hero - antihero duality

An empty stage. At the back, two painted murals operate as settings. They portray human figures who are trying to climb over a wall to reach the other side. Random words are written around them such as ‘junkie’, ‘smack’, ‘scum’ and ‘addiction’, referring to the labels attached to the individual. At the top of the mural, images of hands with the word ‘hope’ written alongside appear to give an optimistic tone to the image. Lights on, and the performance begins with the first verse of the song “No More” by Jamelia:

No more, no more, no more, no more
No more trouble in my life
No more tears over you to cry
No more breaking me inside
No more hurting me, no more lies
I walk away with my dignity
You cannot take that away from me (Jamelia 2007)

By utilising these two elements, one visual and one musical, the audience is given immediate insights into the theme of the performance. It seems therefore that specific signs and symbols were chosen to represent truthfully the narratives of the performers and thereby to contribute to their ‘authentic’ representation. For example, by using the above-mentioned popular song, they communicated the message of “no more” drug taking: “No more trouble in my life” (referring to a reduction in offending behaviour), “no more tears over you to cry” (i.e. causing distress to others), and finally “no more hurting me, no more lies” (referring to stopping harming themselves). Moreover, the images of the two figures at the back of the stage encapsulate the concept of “no more” by symbolically depicting the desire to discontinue drug taking as an escape, by climbing a wall. However, what I am interested in analysing here is the reference to dignity: “I walk away with my dignity;
you can’t take it away from me”. The idea of identity restoration has been already addressed above, with regard to people in recovery. Likewise, Govan et al. (2007: 59) highlight that the issues of identity and selfhood should not be dismissed in any analysis of autobiographical performance. They claim that “autobiographical performance throws up particular questions in that the selfhood of performers is explicitly foregrounded as they seek to represent themselves” (Govan et al. Ibid.). Hence, dignity appears here as a significant topic for consideration in conveying how the performers “seek to represent themselves” in this case. Therefore, I suggest two oppositional ways of interpreting the usage of dignity: a) as a response to stigmatisation (despite being stigmatised the performers retain their dignity); and b) dignity as a value that they need to restore. As has already been pointed out, before recovery, users tell their stories in the endeavour to gain validation. Similarly, here it appears that the reference to dignity could have been included as an additional device to bring about the required validation process. Thus, it can be said that through revealing aspects of their selves that are usually challenged or disbelieved by others, and through portraying themselves as heroic figures – adventurers who can fight any obstacle to overcome addiction – the identity reconstruction process is being initiated.

However, using dignity as a concept generates a certain ambivalence because in this case, it is unclear whether it refers to an affirmation of or a request for dignity. Whilst the heroes’ downfalls are clearly addressed, their ascents, conversely, are presented as temporary ‘on-off’ situations, since they constantly repeat the same mistakes and degenerate again into crime, disorder and withdrawal. Furthermore, the paradoxical situations that the characters encounter generate a dichotomy, as I shall demonstrate, since throughout the majority of the performance they are presented as antiheroes who are struggling with relapses, personal conflicts, nightmares, paranoia
and cravings. In others words, they appear to be embroiled in a close encounter with death (illustrated through, for example, dancing a tango with ‘death’ in one of the videos). Hence, the idea of dignity appears as an antithesis of the lives of these people. In a way, the concept of dignity challenges these stories and suggests that perhaps dignity is a value that is being discharged as people develop addiction problems. For example, in one scene Richard, one of the characters, tries to raise money by returning his girlfriend’s birthday present to the shop. The manager, who is aware of his situation, refuses to refund him and instead supplies him with a shop voucher. Richard then tries to sell the voucher to another customer, an old lady. More characteristically, in another scene Richard, together with another character, Claire, is undergoing withdrawal. Claire takes an overdose and, as consequence, passes out. Richard is faced by the crucial dilemma of whether to call an ambulance and save Claire’s life but risk being arrested, or running away and leaving her helpless. Finally he calls an ambulance but, as he confesses: “And while they were taking her to the hospital ... I stayed behind in the flat to search for any shop receipts” (An Ordinary Day 2007). In both these scenes the characters are depicted as disobedient and disrespectful, without any sense of an ethical or moral code. They are represented as antiheroes trapped within their own labyrinth and unable to act differently, imprisoned and helpless in an unfair battle between themselves and the other (the drug). According to Gossop:

The world that addicts invent for themselves hardens and imprisons them. Instead of freeing them from the demands of reality, the junkie identity has a nasty habit of turning into a cage that traps them, and from which escape seems only the most remote possibility (Gossop 1996: 185).

Considering Gossop’s quote in conjunction with the scenes described above, it can be asserted that the heroes of An Ordinary Day are presented as
scapegoats of society. Moreover, recovery from addiction is approached as a personal issue relating to the individual’s ability to find the strength to overcome addiction; however, it should be noted that there is no reference to any ethical, political, social or other dimensions of addiction. On the contrary, the characters seem to accept and reproduce the stereotypical images of drug addicts portrayed by the media (Cape 2003; Coomber 2000). As a consequence, throughout their actions they are presented as antiheroes, as victims of themselves who often fall prey to their own devastation and inability to change. Additionally, the ‘junkie identity’ appears to have been embodied in the individuals’ lives to such a degree as to replace ‘I am [name]’ with ‘I am addiction’:

Richard: I am addiction and I have several personalities  
Paul: No I am addiction and I am very nasty  
Claire: No I am addiction and I can make you feel great  
Daniel: No I am addiction and I will be with you for ever  
Richard: No I am addiction and none of these are fiction  
Paul: No I am addiction and I can make you collapse  
Claire: No I am addiction and I am always here  
Daniel: No I am addiction and I am looking for my next volunteer (extract from the play An Ordinary Day Ibid.)

By personifying addiction and directly identifying themselves with it (“I am addiction and I am…”), the performers seem to assent to the social perceptions of people dealing with problematic drug use. Yet instead of challenging the audience’s perceptions and contradicting their own stigmatisation, the performers appear to sustain it. The validity of the redemption script is questionable here, as in lieu of ‘acceptance’ it appears to reproduce the dominant ideology of how stereotypical drug addicts would act. In this respect, the distinction between ‘I’ (we: the recovering users) and ‘you’ (the audience) is being enlarged, endorsing the duality between the hero and antihero. To sum up, therefore, the concept of ‘authenticity’ in the
personal stories in BI’s approach appears rather risky, since it underestimates the individual as a single entity and reproduces the dominant ideology (see also Chapter 3), while raising critical questions concerning the role of dramatising personal narratives as a means of addressing the issues of acceptance and advocacy. Hence, I argue that BI’s model is deeply problematic since it fails to create the space for public debate and/or reconsideration of the social complexities of addiction, instead simply verifying existing social perceptions. The subject matter of the performance thus loses its capacity to position its concerns at the centre of the audience’s attention, and leads to alienation of the audience rather than encouragement of their empathy. In other words, it fails to challenge the boundaries between the audience’s perceptions and the actual realities of the individuals performing.

*Staging stigma*

In order to further illustrate my argument about stereotyping and how individuals can potentially contribute to their own victimisation. I shall now describe and analyse a scenario from *An Ordinary Day*. In this scene Paul, another character, undergoes heroin withdrawal. Owing to his ‘cold turkey syndrome’ he has been subject to nightmares and attacks of paranoia, and finally injects himself with heroin. What I am interested in exploring here is the stage reproduction of the ritual of heroin injection, and its implications. Whilst withdrawal syndrome was depicted through surrealism and symbolism, with the use of psychical theatre and exaggerated, grotesque gestures, the injecting ritual was represented as an imitation of the real, in a naturalistic way. The character stood in the middle of the stage and imitated the ritual of injecting heroin, accompanied by all the paraphernalia. This ritualistic process was supplemented by voice-overs of heroin users’
accounts of being at risk of dying from an overdose. Finally, the scene ends with the character lying down in a state of euphoria and oblivion induced by the drug.

The ritual of drug-taking has been discussed analytically by Grund (1993) in his book Drug Use as a Social Ritual: Functionality, Symbolism and Determinants of Self-Regulation. In particular, Grund discusses how the ritualistic process which accompanies the injection of heroin has been embedded in the images and symbols associated with the heroin user. It can be stated that the social perception of heroin users is constructed through stereotypical images evoked by the popular media (Cape 2001; Coomber 2000). Gossop offers an overview of the relevant social perceptions:

The term ‘drug taking’ conjures up an image of syringes, needles, heroin and all the paraphernalia of the junkie dropout. It is surrounded by all manner of sinister implications which reinforce the view that the use of drugs is a strange, deviant, and inexplicable form of behaviour – possibly even a symptom of mental illnesses. We have been encouraged to regard the junkies who are a conspicuous part of the city centres (...) as some sort of alien breed. (Gossop 1996: 1-2)

Whilst it can be assumed that the purpose of the scene described above was to cast light on another part of the harsh reality of addiction, my contention is that it only achieved the reproduction of the stereotypical image of a heroin user. Therefore I would like to tease out and problematise the limitations of reproducing the ritual of heroin injection on stage. I shall focus particularly on the implications of the witnessing of this act, bearing in mind that a performer’s background can have an impact on an audience’s reception. Jestrovic’s argument about hyper-authenticity and how the “subject becomes reinforced through theatricality” in which there “is no
distinction between the subjectivity of the performer on and off ‘stage’” (2008: 160) is relevant here. The performer in this case was neither ‘imitating’ nor ‘acting’ an external reality, but was rather revisiting his own reality in order to reproduce a familiar, and traumatic, experience. Therefore his subjectivity at that moment intersected with his authentic reality and the dramatic reality. At this point Boal’s (1995) idea of “metaxis” is a useful concept for articulating what was happening in the above-mentioned scene. Boal defines metaxis as:

The state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image (...) In order for metaxis to come about, the image must become autonomous. When this is the case, the image of the real is as real as the image (Boal Ibid.: 43-44).

As Boal goes on to explain, the images that the “oppressed-artist” creates are prompted by their real oppressive lives, and therefore they simultaneously belong in two different worlds: the world of the image and the world of their reality. Boal moreover urges the “oppressed-artist” to forget the origins of the real world (which inspire the image) and rather to focus on the world of the image. Likewise he suggests that they should attempt to invert the direction of the image in order to present it in an “aesthetically transsubtantiated” form (Boal Ibid.). At the end of this process, then, metaxis will occur. However, in reference to the scene described above, it is my belief that the autonomy of these two worlds were challenged, since the image of the real (the individual’s past experience of addiction) and the world of the image (the reproduction of the injection) intersected to generate a third, autonomous world: ‘the world of the drug’. This newly-generated world appeared to encroach upon the other two ‘autonomous’ worlds. Their boundaries had become blurred to create a controversy, suggesting that the relationship between the real and the imagined is deeply problematic. The
image of reality and the reality of the image remained unchallenged and unquestioned, since it was unclear whether the image of injecting was the image of the actor’s oppression, or the image of his desire. Does the reproduction of this image suggest that heroin is the only thing that he could visualise as his “image of the real”? Hence, this scene seems to evoke a paradox between what is imagined, what is oppressed, and what is desired. To put the above discussion into place, it is my contention that in this scene, the reality of drug addiction, the individual’s dreams, his desires and hopes for a better future, have been replaced by ‘the drug’. In many respects, it appears that ‘the drug’ is being promoted as the only resolution for the character, as he is portrayed as being trapped in a deadlock between the two other worlds. However, a vital question here would be: is the ‘world of the drugs’ his only escape? Is there any other alternative to the ‘world of the drug’? And, if this is the case, how do the characters visualise this? Does hope have any place in the realities of these individuals? The following section will address these questions.

_A Glimpse of Hope_

In the last scene of the performance the atmosphere changed rapidly. The previous scene of withdrawal was followed by the final and more optimistic scene. This too was supplemented by a popular song: Lou Reed’s (1972) “Perfect Day”: “Just a perfect day, drink sangria in the park, and then later, when it gets dark we go home. Just a perfect day, feed animals in the zoo, then later, a movie, too, and then home. Oh it’s such a perfect day, I’m glad I spent it with you”. “Perfect Day” (Reed Ibid) is the suggested alternative to the contradictions of the ordinary/extraordinary days of the heroes/ antiheroes. Furthermore, the division between ‘we’ (drug users) and ‘you’ (the audience) seems be challenged for the first time through an
invitation to spend the perfect day together. The perfect day can therefore be understood as the performers’ quest for ‘normality’, a concept that is characterised by the simplicity of the events described in the song: “drink[ing] sangria in the park”, “feed[ing] animals in the zoo”, “and then later a movie too” are suggested here as alternatives to the harsh and extraordinary realities described hitherto in the performance. By revealing a notion of hope, and what can be seen as a manifesto, since from the darkness of addiction we pass into the light of a perfect day, an alternative notion of the “utopian performative” emerges through the heroes’ constant downfalls and a final glimpse of hope.

However, it should be noted that the message of hope was not communicated directly by the characters but expressed through the lyrics of a song, as with the inclusion of the “no more” statement at the beginning of the performance. In my opinion, the use of popular songs to communicate these messages added an additional ‘dreaming’ dimension to how the characters perceived their futures. The future was presented as a dream of normality, but also as a utopian situation challenged by the realities of addiction, stigmatisation and discrimination. Likewise at the beginning of the performance, the usage of a popular song operated as a medium for communicating the desire for change. I believe that BI’s style of theatre contradicts the hopelessness of addiction, with the hope for recovery being somewhat paradoxically understood not as a choice, but as a dream. The open-endedness of BI’s performances indicates that the fear of relapse is always apparent. Thus, the performance ends with a glimmer of hope revealed in the wish that extraordinary, harsh personal stories can be reversed to become ordinary stories of ordinary people.
In summary, the complexity of using personal narratives as a way of promoting social inclusion might consolidate some potentially useful strategies that could be further considered in the staging of the process of recovering from drugs. The most significant aspect is the move beyond the narratives of victimisation to the situating of issues of exclusion and stigmatisation at the centre of the public debate. Even if certain aspects of the BI model resulted in the enlargement of the gap between the audience and the performers, the act of reflecting on the actual reality of addiction itself was a powerful moment.

Placing recovering users on stage in order to reflect on their own realities can be regarded as a radical, transgressive and hopeful act on its own terms. It gathered people together for the purpose of watching a performance by users in recovery. They became witnesses of the recovering users’ stories, interacted with them, applauded them, and created an initial sense of ‘acceptance’. Moreover, as Cohen-Cruz asserts, “the political potential of personal story is grounded not in particular subject matter but rather in storytelling’s capacity to position even the least powerful individual in the proactive, subject position” (Cohen-Cruz 2006: 103). To this end, it should be acknowledged that, despite its controversy, the strength of the BI model lies in its members actually going on stage and reflecting upon their most painful experiences, which should not be dismissed. As Salverson proposes:

> In this way performance and pedagogy might act as a doorway, an instrument of encounter, a place of public and private negotiations – where the goal is not just to empathise, but to attend, and perhaps eventually even to witness. (Salverson 1999: 125)

In these terms, the BI model succeeds in passing the first stage and operates as a doorway for calling attention to the issues of addiction and
stigmatisation as framed and narrated by the recovering users’ own standpoint. As I argued earlier, the concepts of both social responsibility and active citizenship are essential for breaking the stereotypes of addiction and advocate the social acceptance of recovering users. I therefore agree with Salverson when she states that the ultimate goal of organising community performance events should be not just to empathise but to attend, and also witness these performances. Witnessing here is understood as a “response” (Cohen-Cruz 2010:1), in the recovering users call to bring the issues of exclusion and injustice into the public arena. However, what I would like to do next is to move Salverson’s views a step further, to suggest the need to generate audience members’ social responsibility. Hence, in the following example I will determine how performance can be used to awaken the audience’s responsibility with regard to the actions needed in accepting people who are recovering from drugs addiction.

PART II: 18 ANO

This part of the chapter examines the performance of the ancient drama Evmenides by Aeschylus, as adapted and performed by a group of Greek recovering drug users. To continue the discussion I set out to explore in the previous section regarding the issue of dramatising personal narratives as a medium for promoting social inclusion, the same themes will be now be examined through the lens of a metaphorical approach to the dramatisation of personal accounts. As I shall demonstrate, 18 ANO’s model differs from BI’s not only in form and context, but also in its overall approach and philosophy with regard to using theatre to promote social inclusion. More specifically, while BI’s practice is driven by an overwhelming approach to prevent others from becoming drug users, 18 ANO puts its emphasis on activating the individual’s social role (active citizenship) and, through this,
challenging social perceptions. Aside from describing a different approach, this section also moves into a different national context, as the example I will be looking at here comes from the Greek dependence treatment unit 18 ANO. A more comprehensive review of the overall context in which the group operates is essential here to foster an understanding of their model.

My analysis will discuss the structure of the performance events in order to demonstrate how the different levels of individualistic, family and societal responsibility are interwoven and consolidated in the event. Furthermore, it will address the dramatic representation of stigma and relate this to Warren’s concept of “de-stigmatization ceremonies” (1980: 60). The links between performance, identity deconstruction and social inclusion are revisited here, in order to be questioned and linked back to the overall argument of this chapter. As I shall argue, 18 ANO’s modes of performance are embedded in the desire to call for societal unity and action towards a drug-free society. Moreover, this section aims to question the ways in which 21st century Greek recovering drug users are returning to ancient themes, in the search for parallels between their issues and the dramatic hero’s issues, and how they depict the passage from deviancy to becoming an active citizen, and from being a carrier of stigma to becoming a carrier of hope. Finally, their performances will be examined in parallel with the history of the Greek performance with a purpose (see Introduction p. 74-78).

Meta-theatricality in Greek theatre with a purpose

The use of theatrical texts as a point of departure for the exploration of issues of concern is a common approach among many Greek theatre directors working with different communities. As I have attempted to explain in the first chapter of this thesis, Greeks have historically used scripts from Greek
drama and/or plays from the classical repertoire (Argiriou 2006; Ellinoudi 2003; Grammatas 1990, 2002; Mavromoustakos 2005) as a platform for expressing resistance and for promoting social reconciliation and unity. I shall briefly revisit my discussion from the introductory chapter here, in order to cast light on the phenomenon of staging play-scripts as a way of expressing resistance and enhancing unity among Greeks in politically complicated historical periods, such as the Nazi occupation (1940-1944), the Civil War (1946-1949) and the dictatorship (1967-1974). There are many references to such activities in the history of Greek performance with a purpose; for example, during World War II the guerrilla soldiers of the resistance theatre in the mountains performed plays such as Erotokritos by Kornaros and Kolokotronis by Rotas, among others (Mavromoustakos 2005; Kotzioulas 1976). Additionally, on the Greek Prison Islands during the Civil War, the exiles staged plays such as Rigas Velestinlis by Rotas, Antigone and Philocreates by Sophocles and Prometheus Bound and Persians by Aeschylus (Grivas 2004; Kotzioulas 1976; Mahairas 1999; Van Esteen 2006). In all these cases, it seems that the play-script enabled a personal story to be enacted, and functioned as a means of ‘protecting’ the performers from issues of censorship and from the control mechanisms of war and imprisonment. The staging of play-scripts appeared to be a ‘safe’ way of battling the complex and dangerous dynamics of promoting resistance, as well as a powerful way of reaching the audience.

Van Esteen (2005) makes use of the meta-theatrical phenomenon in an attempt to comprehend the functionality of these performances. In her analysis of the performances of ancient drama that took place on the Greek Prison Islands during the Civil War (1946-1949), she gives a useful account of how meta-theatricality was employed as a medium for communicating the message of resistance and unity. She claims:
The inmate productions of ancient drama brought out the aspects and parameters not only of actual theatre (stagecraft; acting; audience profiles; textual, philological, and linguistic issues) but also of the metatheatrical or metaphorical nature of theatre (...). The inmate stage framed theatrical illusion and large-scale delusion, unmasked rhetoric and lies, and retained the memory of the real values of the performances, to reapply them in later, receptive, contemplative, or theoretical contexts. (Van Esteen Ibid: 5)

Thus in this context, meta-theatricality was implemented as a messenger that communicated the allegorical message of unity and resistance and, to a certain degree, connected the “theatrical illusion” with the “large scale delusion”. It operated as a trajectory between the symbolic world of the theatrical stage and the real world of the auditorium. It created an imaginative space of hope and transported the audience away from their harsh realities of war and conflict. However, before I move on to my analysis of meta-theatricality and its implications, it is important to examine how the term is used and defined. Meta-theatricality is a term first coined by Abel (1963) to refer to the idea of a theatre within the theatre. However, Abel (Ibid.) failed to offer a comprehensive review of, or even define, the meaning of the term. Hornby (1986) attempted to advance Abel’s discussion and suggested that “metadrama [or metatheatre] can be defined as drama about drama; it occurs whenever the subject of a play turns out to be, in some sense, drama itself” (Hornby 1986:31). He went on to propose that “the meta-dramatic [or meta-theatrical] effect is proportional to the degree to which the audience recognises what is being referred to, and whether it is recent, controversial and unique” (Hornby 1986: 95, my italics). However, in the cases of both Abel and Hornby, meta-theatricality is discussed in reference to the play-script and not with regard to the performances, where the actor-participants’ real-life stories might constitute the meta-theatrical devices. I
would therefore assert that, in my view, the essence of meta-theatricality lies in the play between the performers’ self-referential realities and dramatic illusion, and the extent to which the audience is able to ‘recognise’ the concealed story. In meta-theatricality, the audience is invited to decrypt the actor-participants’ personal stories and to find the parallels between the performers’ real lives, the fictional characters’ lives and their own lives. It is in this context that I would like to use meta-theatricality to interpret 18 ANO’s performance and to find the links between meta-theatricality, personal narration and social inclusion (de-stigmatisation ceremonies).

To return to my discussion of 18 ANO’s performances, it can be said that the use of play-scripts as a point of departure moves beyond the simple symbolic and dramatic scope to reveal an underlying personal narrative. The play’s myth is transformed into an allegory of the actor-participant’s personal narration. Hence, I claim that the essence of 18 ANO’s approach lies in the concept of meta-theatricality that their performances imply. Moreover, the performances are not exclusively attempts to address the actor-participants’ personal stories, but instead are reflections upon the multi-faceted apparatuses of the personal, familial and societal influences which are involved in recovering from drug use. Hence, beneath the myth and the tragic hero’s downfall and ascendance are hidden stories of addiction, stigma and loss. Therefore, it can be said that the performances facilitate the members’ transitions from the one community to the other (as argued in Chapter 2). However, what I am interested in uncovering here are the reasons involved in the choice to reflect upon the hero’s personal narration through metaphor and symbolism, as opposed to through direct and autobiographical accounts, as in the example of BI.
Van Esteen emphasises that meta-theatricality was a commonly-used device in the performances of the Greek exiles on the Prison Islands. The way the play-scripts have been historically used to assert the right to social justice suggests the idea of a cultural phenomenon. At this point, I need to clarify that I am not attempting to claim that meta-theatricality should be regarded as a Greek cultural practice; however, these two examples indicate that there might be a common understanding in the way that play-scripts can be used to reflect on social issues, especially with regard to issues of social justice and inclusion. In both cases, the play-script appears to operate as a ‘shield’ from behind which these issues can be explored, but in both cases, it is interesting that the participants’ personal stories were coded behind the written words of the ancient Greek tragedians. However, questions emerge regarding whether the use of text should be approached only as a cultural phenomenon, or whether there are other practical and ethical implications that need to be taken into consideration. As I have argued, scripts have been historically used as a protection against the controlling systems of censorship; as a way for Greeks to celebrate their culture, as Van Esteen points out; and to promote reconciliation. What is at issue here, however, is the question of how scripts were being used by the group of recovering users in 18 ANO. Were they being used as a platform for expressing resistance and ‘protecting’ the performers?

At this point, it is important to note that a number of Greek theatre facilitators that have worked in the field of drug dependency (Mihos 2007; Orfanos 2007; Tsaleri 2007) have reported a preference for working from theatrical – and only occasionally literary – texts. A possible explanation for this tendency is given by Krassanakis:
(...) I consider that it is preferable for a team working with the story making to select a work that has a connection with the subject that concerns them, that ensures the “aesthetic distance” and allows the participants to cover a distance towards the role, and not just play themselves, easily extracting emotions from the spectators, which strengthens their narcissism. (Krassanakis 2006: 228).

Krassanaki’s statement concerning the use of a role as a shield so that actors do “not just play themselves”, thus preventing them from “easily extracting emotions from the spectators” and also avoiding “strengthen[ing] their narcissism” raises paramount questions regarding the potential and risks of organising performances by recovering drug users. The concern with “not just playing themselves”, in conjunction with the idea of not leaving the audience with the impression of “oh! The ‘poor’ people”, was a repeated theme of discussion during interviews with a number of Greek artists with previous experience of working with problem drug users in various drug organisations (including the 18ANO dramatherapists-directors). They emphasised the need to discourage further discrimination against and victimisation of the performers (who ranged from drug users to clients in state mental hospitals) and to use theatre as a vehicle to steer the audience away from their perceptions of the ‘institutionalised’ environment. They believed that, by utilising the metaphor and myth of a chosen text, it was easier to achieve audience transgression. I must add here that, during the interviews, the notion or fear that the involvement of autobiographical material was a ‘risky’ concept was commonly invoked, as it was believed

25 Stelios Krassanakis is one of the leading figures of dramatherapy in Greece. He is a former dramatherapist in 18 ANO and is the founder of the dramatherapy centre AEON (http://www.dramatherapy.gr/dthathen.htm). Currently he works as a dramatherapist in the drug rehabilitation centre ‘Thisneas’. He edited the Greek translation of Jones’ (1996) book Drama as therapy theatre as a living published by Ellinika Grammata publications.

26 For example Irene Tsalera, a theatre facilitator in the youth service Strofi usually chooses classical plays such as those by Moliere or Machiavelli (Tsalera 2007).
that the audience would perceive the production as a *reproduction* of the therapeutic process. The use of autobiographical references to the performers’ lives might therefore register as a representation of the institution, and not of the individual. Additionally, in my analysis of BI I have already touched upon the risks of empathy in “easily extracting emotions from the spectators” (Krassanakis Ibid.) and also possibly leading to discrimination. Interestingly, in the Greek context, it seems that theatre practitioners who work in the field share common concerns regarding the ‘protection’ of their participants.

As a response to the above-mentioned issues of concern, the 18 ANO directors asserted that, in staging plays with which the audience was perhaps familiar or had seen before in the theatre, and by ensuring the aesthetic and artistic quality of their productions, it was possible to ‘challenge’ the audience’s social perceptions of problem drug users. In his edited book *Shakespeare Comes to Broadmoor: ‘The Actors are Come Hither’*, Cox (1992) discusses a similar mode of practice in giving an account of several Shakespearian tragedies which were presented in a secure psychiatric hospital. He goes on to describe how the plays’ storylines were adapted to correspond the stories of the audience, which, in this case, were patients of the psychiatric hospital. Whilst in Cox’s (ibid.) account the performances were given by professional actors who designed the performances for the specific setting and audience, in the example of 18 ANO the performances were given by members of the rehabilitation centre. Therefore, the play-script was not only adapted to reflect their own stories, but also served as a medium to invite the audience to identify and empathise with the performers.

27 Here the audience is being approached as representatives of society.
As Krassanakis proposes:

> An artistic creation is a vehicle for opening not only to the community of the therapeutic centre, but also for the clients who demand not only their theatrical role, but their social recognition as well. (Krassanakis 2006: 229)

The issue of social recognition has already been addressed in Chapter 2 in my analysis of the use of theatre for re-forming a personal story. Here, I shall look at the role of performance events in order to problematise how the dramatic hero’s story is adapted so as to reveal the story of recovery. Before I move on to my analysis of the performances, I shall examine the 18 ANO model. I will approach the performances as a medium for challenging and perhaps even changing the social stereotypes relating to people recovering from drug abuse as well as assisting the performers to restore their identity and dignity (social recognition).

**18 ANO Theatre Group**

The 18 ANO dependence treatment unit (18 ANO) was founded in 1987 and is part of the Attica State Psychiatric Hospital. It is considered the first public centre for the prevention and treatment of drug dependency in Greece and, to date, is the largest drug dependency unit operating as part of the Greek national health system (Masta 2001, 2008; Krassanakis 2006: 228). The programme is divided into three stages of treatment: a) motivation and preparation for admission (3 months); b) recovery and treatment (6-7 months); and c) social reintegration (10-12 months). For the purpose of this study, I focussed on the social reintegration phase of treatment, particularly on the work being undertaken at 18 ANO’s social rehabilitation centre (EMCDDA 2010). During the late 1980s, the unit created a theatre group in an attempt to encourage recovering users to participate in theatre practice, and
to further support their involvement in cultural and artistic activities. Led by the actors and dramatherapists Panagiotis Zaganiaris and Sofia Petropoulou, the group organises performances for the wider community each year, with the aim of promoting social inclusion.

18 ANO’s approach differs from all the previous examples of practice that I have examined, in that it focuses exclusively on people in the rehabilitation phase of treatment (which means that they have discontinued their drug consumption for a minimum of 10-12 months), and its main purpose is to organise theatre performances, usually adaptations of a classical play-script. Additionally, it should be noted that its members have previous experience of participating in dramatherapy groups while in the treatment phase. Therefore, in their transferral to the social rehabilitation centre and their involvement with the theatre group, emphasis is given to engaging them more systematically with theatrical practices (acting and directing).

The 18 ANO model can be divided into two stages. In the first stage, the participants are introduced to various theatre games, with the purpose of building up the group, increasing self-confidence and enhancing group dynamics. In the second stage, the dramatherapists/directors select a play-script that will operate as the framework of the performance (Zaganiaris 2008). As Petropoulou and Zaganiaris (2007) explain, the choice of play is influenced by the themes the participants have ‘brought in’ to the group during the first stage of preparation. Thus, the play is selected on the premise that it will encourage an exploration of the group’s issues of concern. In other words, they choose plays that have the potential to symbolise and reflect upon the participants’ personal experiences and fears, but also their dreams and expectations. The idea of symbolisation has a central role in 18 ANO’s approach, since it is believed that, by activating the process of symbolisation
the individuals will learn to confer new meanings onto objects and concepts, and that eventually this might allow them to conceptualise and construct their lives on a new basis (Matsa 2008:7). During this phase the group reads the play and analyses it by drawing analogies between the individuals’ personal narratives and the play’s narratives in particular. Hence, the process of identification with the play’s characters and its myth operates as a social act since the individual learns to associate their life stories with the stories of classic myths and heroes. More precisely, by finding the links with diachronic and universal myths, the process appears to generate a notion of acceptance and commonality in the participants. Moreover, the participants find the ‘words’ to express their thoughts and feelings through the script’s written words. As Zaganiaris maintains, “the role [in this case] is like a cloth that everyone can wear in order to reveal themselves” (Zaganiaris 2007). In this respect, it can be stated that the participants’ personal stories acquire new meanings and dimensions and a certain degree of validation, which, as I have pointed out at various points throughout this thesis, is an important variable in the social reintegration phase.

Apart from the process of identification with the play-script, 18 ANO implements another interesting approach: the so-called role claim. According to this model, each participant is required to select the dramatic role that they would like to perform and explain why they should get it. They are asked to choose a role which would allow them to express and reflect upon their personal issues and background. This process has a double function: firstly, it ensures that equal opportunities are given to each participant; and secondly, it gives them the freedom to ask for the dramatic role of their choice, which can be perceived as a metaphorical act of reclaiming their social role in life (Zaganiaris and Petropoulou 2007; Zaganiaris 2008: 69). Thus, the theatre group functions as a microcosm of society, in which every individual is
capable not only of choosing their role, but also of asserting and fighting for it. Furthermore, as I shall illustrate below in my analysis of their adaptation of *Eumenides*, there is not a single ‘protagonist’ but rather, all the performers are ‘protagonists’ on the theatrical stage and thereby in society. Through this symbolic act the individual is transformed from being a “human-shadow” (Matsa 2001:17) to being a ‘protagonist’ on the theatrical stage, and thus a protagonist in their own life. Hence, it appears that in 18 ANO’s model, the concept of active citizenship has been consolidated into an ideology, but also fulfils a legitimising function.

In an attempt to define 18ANO’s model, I shall borrow Kuftinec’s and Alon’s term: “activist therapeutic theatre model” (2007: 276), which they use to describe a theatre-based project involving university students and prisoners in Ma’asiyahu prison in Israel. For Kuftinec and Alon (ibid.) the activist therapeutic theatre model works in two ways since it combines the theatre’s therapeutic elements with the activists’ rhetoric of performance. In order words, it attempts to bring together the connectivity of the participants and the audience, and emphasises the potential of performance as a medium for addressing social issues and fostering the audience’s metamorphosis. The activist therapeutic theatre model appears to be a useful term for understanding 18 ANO’s approach, and for understanding the factors through which it utilises theatre’s therapeutic elements and adds an activist and radical perspective. Whilst at first glance it can be stated that the term activist therapeutic theatre model alludes to the Boalian arsenal of techniques in his *Rainbow of Desire* (Boal 1995), in my view 18 ANO’s model differs from Boal’s in two main ways. According to Boal, “the cops are in our heads, but their headquarters and barracks must be on the outside. The task [in developing the Rainbow of Desire] was to discover how these ‘cops’ got into our heads, and to invent ways of dislodging them” (Boal 1995:8); conversely,
instead of addressing the issue of an individual’s transformation as a fight against the “cops-in-the-head”, 18 ANO puts a particular emphasis on enhancing societal solidarity and promoting social transformation. To this end, the main focus here is the production of a performance event which would operate as a medium for urging the variables of societal responsibility to change, while also bringing about social harmony. 18 ANO’s performances are grounded in the premise that only together can we fight against discrimination and oppression and, in doing so, they introduce an appropriate framework for the imaginative visualisation of a better society (Taylor 2004). To this end, it can be suggested that the 18 ANO model’s efficacy is related to what Kershaw refers to as “creat[ing] various kinds of freedom” (1999: 18). As he goes on to suggest:

(...) The freedom that ‘radical in performance’ invokes is not just freedom from oppression, repression, exploitation – the resistant sense of the radical – but also freedom to reach beyond existing systems of formalising power, freedom to create currently unimaginable forms of association and action – the transgressive or transcendent sense of the radical. (Kershaw Ibid.)

With reference to both Kershaw’s view and 18 ANO’s radicalism more broadly, it can be argued that the performance events invoke the freedom of imagining together (social imaginary) the possibility of a better future (utopian performatives), together with providing the space for ‘association and action’ within the community (active citizenship). Therefore, in my view 18 ANO’s activist therapeutic model articulates the idea of active citizenship together with the notion of community and belonging: the two fundamentally important elements for “reach[ing] beyond existing systems of formalising powers” and sustaining social equality and justice.
In this section, I shall examine the performances of *Evmenides* that I observed in the suburbs of Melissia and Kessariani. These events were framed around raising awareness of issues of drug use in the local population and promoting the social inclusion of recovering users. Therefore, the performances were organised as a liaison between 18 ANO and the municipality. Additionally, the performances were part of events organised at various locations in Attica as a response to IDADA.

18 ANO’s performances of *Evmenides* were situated around the IDADA celebrations and international efforts towards creating a drug-free society. The events were opened by public speeches from local politicians and the 18 ANO unit’s director, but also by personal statements from performers/recovering users. These speeches were organised with the purpose of promoting the unit’s successful interventions. In the first performance that I observed, the audience witnessed the ‘actors’ dressed in the costumes of ancient Greece, using Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) phraseology to introduce themselves: “My name is [name] and I am [number of days] clean”, followed by a short speech on the difficulties of recovery and issues of stigma. While it is understood that these personal statements were presented in an attempt to give voice to these individuals, to increase their sense of pride and achievement and to contribute to public advocacy of the event, it is important for the purpose of this thesis to understand how these acts functioned, and how they fitted into the 18 ANO model overall. If we put aside for a moment the ethics of such an approach, together with the emotional distress of the participants which may inhere in such an activity and exposition, I would like to examine these speeches as an extended part of the performance. I term these speeches/personal accounts an ‘authentic’
performance, and suggest that presenting (exposing) themselves on stage and directly projecting their personal stories created a link between the performers’ authentic real life stories and the metaphorical stories which they were about to present on the theatrical stage in the ‘metaphorical’ performance. Therefore, in both cases a redemption script was formulated through the sharing of personal accounts, which was then further enriched by the theatrical performances. In this way, it was ensured that the audience would be clearly informed about individuals’ actual identities, which then allowed the audience to make its own connections and identify with the dramatic as well as with the real life heroes, but also enabled them to create analogies with their own lives, despite not having had the experience of being drug users. Therefore, the purpose of the immediacy of the ‘authentic’ performances was to inform, challenge, awaken, move and call to action, but also to arouse the audience’s empathy. By way of contrast, the ‘metaphorical’ performances utilised the Greek meaning of metaphor – to confer new meaning on – attempting to reflect upon the performers’ own experiences and inviting the audience to draw their own parallels between the dramatic hero and their own lives and roles in society (identification). At the beginning of this chapter, in my discussion of applied theatre and personal narratives (p.164-165), I discussed the differences between empathy and identification, and their potential roles in the social imaginary. I argued that both responses are important in connecting the performers with the audience and inspiring the creation of a social imaginary. However, while empathy can be regarded as a more passive response, identification is a direct call for action. In the next section I shall analyse how the play-script was adapted to reflect on the participants’ personal stories, and how it invited the audience to identify with them.

_Adaptation of Evmenides_
*Evmenides* is the third part of Aeschylus’s trilogy, the *Oresteia*. Following Apollo’s command that Orestes kill his mother Clytemnestra (in the second part of the trilogy, known as *Libation Bearers* or *Choephore*) in an act of revenge, as she had murdered his father, Agamemnon, for sacrificing their daughter Iphigenia (in the first part of the trilogy, *Agamemnon*), the presence of Clytemnestra’s ghost, along with the chorus of Erinyes (also known as the Furies, or ‘guilts’) has driven Orestes mad. The last play, *Evmenides*, places Orestes in Delphi, where he seeks purification from Apollo. However, the Erinyes have pursued him from Athens in order to subject him to a murder trial in the court of Areopagus. He is being charged with committing matricide. The Erinyes prosecute Orestes and demand his punishment but Apollo defends him. Finally, thanks to Athena’s intervention (who presides over the case), Orestes is found innocent and the Erinyes are persuaded out of their anger. The play ends with a scene of reconciliation between the Erinyes (Furies), the goddess and the citizens (*polis*).

Whilst the play covers a wide range of themes and important human concerns such as social justice, personal conflict, guilt, moral responsibility, revenge and reconciliation (Fagles and Stanford 1884), in 18 ANO’s case the play was adapted to reflect upon each participant’s personal story. The emphasis of the play was placed on the issues of stigma, blame and social isolation inherent in its members’ histories of dependency on drugs. Although the performance itself covered a wider range of issues for consideration and further analysis, here I shall concentrate on three main themes: a) the interaction between individual and societal responsibility concerning drug abuse; b) the theatrical representation of stigma; and c) the concepts of harmonising with the community and promoting social reconciliation. In order to demonstrate how the myth of the play was utilised
to reflect on its members’ personal stories, I shall approach my analysis from three angles: firstly, I will reflect upon the performance by 18 ANO that I observed and, secondly, I shall examine the relevant literature and textual analysis relating to Evmenides (Fagles and Stanford 1984; Kitto 1990). Finally, I shall conclude my analysis by examining the multifaceted representations of Orestes and the chorus respectively.

Orestes as ‘a revolutionary hero’

The first issue that I shall examine is the representation of Orestes and its various implications. In my view, Orestes can be regarded as the symbol of the excluded individual who is being oppressed by mechanisms of social discrimination, but also by the Erinyes (blame/guilt) as an outcome of his choices. Additionally, Orestes can be seen as representative of the community of problem drug users, his purpose being to draw attention to the issues of exclusion and stigmatisation inherent in drug culture. In 18 ANO’s adaptation, the example of Orestes is used to transfer the diachronic myth of Evmenides into contemporary Greek society and, in so doing, to provoke the idea of the ‘modern Orestes’ (the modern Greek drug user), who is suffering from the “guilt of having committed matricide”, a metaphorical reference identifying the guilt and shame felt by drug users as a result of causing harm and stigmatising themselves and their families.28 By utilising the motif of the collective character, since Orestes is performed by three different actors, the

audience becomes involved in the hero’s journey as he makes the transition from being a “deviant” to being a “charismatic deviant” (Warren 1980: 68). According to Warren the term “charismatic deviant” (Warren Ibid.) refers to a representative of the deviant collectivity. As she demonstrates, this is a special social role that stigmatised people usually adopt with the purpose of facilitating the de-stigmatisation process for themselves and others in their community. To this end, Orestes can here be regarded as a “charismatic deviant” who, by acknowledging and accepting his deviant background, attempts to reverse it in such a way as to advocate the reciprocity of societal responsibility, not only for the purposes of education and preventing others from misusing drugs, but also for promoting the acceptance of those who have managed to recover from addiction.

As I have demonstrated above in my analysis of the BI example, recovering users often share the imperative of utilising their stories as a means of preventing others from taking the same path. Interestingly, this urge was also embedded in 18 ANO’s adaptation. However, while in BI’s case this urge was communicated by reflecting on the harsh realities of addiction, 18 ANO approached the same issue from another angle: that of addressing social responsibility. In their endeavour, in order to obtain the audience’s admiration and respect, the hero was depicted as a martyred figure. Since his actions were driven by a strong moral code he had killed his mother in an act of revenge, yet he was not the only one to accept the responsibility for this crime. Hence, in an attempt to understand the allegories between the Aeschylean Orestes and ‘Orestes’ as drug user, it could be argued that the lack of social affirmation or the lack of provision of an appropriate framework (social, political, cultural, economic), alongside limited choices in education and employment, had led him to social isolation and driven him to deviant behaviour. Therefore, addiction was presented as something that
should concern not only the people directly affected by it, but rather ought to be a matter for wider societal consideration.

Moreover, as Fagles and Stanford observe in their analysis of the text of *Evmenides*, “Orestes is a revolutionary hero” (1979: 8) of his time, as he demands justice and asserts his rights at the court of Aeropagus. In my view, a person recovering from drugs could perhaps be perceived as fighting for ‘justice’ in the form of social acceptance in a similar manner. The idea of a “revolutionary hero”, then, can be linked to the idea of active citizenship since, as I argued above, Orestes protests not only for his personal rights, but also for his community’s rights and, more generally, for the rights of every marginalised and disadvantaged community. He is the voice of his community and, through his personal story of downfall and ascension, he provides an example of human potential for change and development. Therefore his personal story is no longer personal, but rather a story common to each recovering user, which turns on the notion that *we are all in this together*. The notion of ‘we’, and the call for community, is repeated again here, as in Chapter 2’s example of the case of the female Greek recovering users, where the theme of the community of drug users/recovering users and their quest for community and belonging were addressed. In particular, emphasis was given to how the process of building the collective character of Eleutheria had reactivated the women’s desire for community. The theme of community is repeated through the example of 18 ANO’s performances, but another perspective is also suggested. Here, the community is one that has already been formed and united, and thus through its collective character, the community attempts to represent a collective voice, in order to assert their rights to inclusion and active citizenship. Unlike in the example of the women’s prison, where the ‘we’ primarily described the community of female participants, here the ‘we’ was initiated by the community of 18 ANO,
and expanded to include the audience, Greek society, and international society. Both as a representative of the community and as a revolutionary hero, Orestes calls for social reconciliation and for people’s affiliation to the fight against drug abuse. In the next section my emphasis will be on examining the meaning of we by looking at the role of the chorus and its multifaceted representations.

*Chorus and its multifaceted representations*

At one end of the spectrum, the chorus of Erinyes (performed by men and women) can be approached from three different angles. First, it can be interpreted as the externalisation of Orestes’ inner conflicts: his guilt, and sense of moral responsibility for having committed the terrible act of matricide. Secondly, the chorus can be understood as Orestes’ (and thus each of the group members’) family and personal environment, victimised and stigmatised as a consequence of his behaviour and actions. These acts have led the family to feel shame and thus, Orestes’ ‘punishment’ will contribute to their social purification. Finally, the chorus can be interpreted as a representation of a society demanding justice (in the form of punishment) for those who have gone against its norms: the ‘deviants’. These three perspectives can be linked together to formulate a triangle of forces that intimidate the individual prior to, during and after their discontinuation of drug taking. In an attempt to extend this approach one step further, I would describe the role of chorus as three concentric circles whereby the recovering user is placed in the middle one, enclosed by the medium circle, which

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29 The Greek family can be regarded as nuclear, at times very restrictive and over-protective, especially towards the children. In relation to the families of Greek drug users, a recent study conducted by Matsa demonstrated that these families have certain characteristics in common. She claims that “they are over involved in the life of their child, making it impossible to break free, while the lack of authority ‘in the eyes of their children’ makes them a source of insecurity, impelling the children to seek this security elsewhere, beyond the field of parental relations” (Matsa 2006: 129). See Matsa (1997; 2006 K. Matsa, 'Dialectics of the Relationship of the Drug Addict with His Family', *10th European Conference on Rehabilitation and Drug Policy* (Crete, Greece, KETHEA, 2006).
represents families and peers, and then by the larger circle, which depicts society at large. I have elaborated on the chorus’s multifaceted symbolism in order to display the individualistic and collective (societal) apparatuses of addiction, and to suggest that the phenomenon of drug dependency ought to concern all members of society, not only those who are directly affected.

In my view, this reading of the chorus, with its different levels of individualistic and collective responsibility (and vice versa), can be interpreted as a call for unity and societal reconciliation, together with a need for community harmonisation. This is a call for society to develop appropriate, inclusive components for those individuals who have gone against the norm and, instead of attaching the label of outcast and/or deviant to them, should view them as those most qualified to educate others and prevent them from going down a similar path. In this respect, the concept of collective and community unity is again apparent, and adds its own dynamic to the overall structure of the performance. Therefore, it can be said that the failures and the breakthrough experiences that accompany drug addiction are being used here in parallel with Orestes’ suffering, in order to indicate the complex internal and external dynamics involved in the process of becoming drug-free.

Fagles and Stanford state that “the Eumenides turns the darkness into life” (Fagles and Stanford 1979: 71) and, in relation to the members of 18 ANO, it could be argued that, through their performances their need to reverse their lives and to emerge from the darkness of drug abuse into the light of a new drug-free life is made manifest and thus, the performances can be interpreted as a celebration of the hope for something better. Therefore, the 18 ANO performances stand for and manifest social justice and a
profound sense of hope for justice, and for inclusion in the wider community. The performance ends with a profound and powerful feeling of hope, as it envisions a community where one will learn from another’s failures, a community without discrimination, exclusion or social alienation, a community with opportunities and solidarity. This idea is augmented in the finale of the performance, where all the actor-participants get onto the stage and sing the verse from the last chorus in unison and call for rejoicing and social transformation: “Rejoice, rejoice in destined wealth, rejoice Athena’s people you too rejoice” (Fagles and Stanford 1979: 275). This emphasis on the notion of “rejoicing” adds an additional dynamic to the social imagination of hope and change and, as I propose, their performances have a deep socio-political meaning. Hence, it is important to highlight that in 18 ANO’s adaptation, the underlying message was not only a message of resistance, but also a message of hope for a better future. By utilising the myth of Evmenides as the medium for projecting the shame, guilt and stigma of people in recovery, and by making manifest the need to move away from the negative associations of drug abuse, the performers managed to reveal an optimistic and hopeful tone. On this note, I believe that 18 ANO’s performances constitute a potential example of how performance events by members of a marginalised group might have an impact on promoting social cohesion.

In summary, 18 ANO’s therapeutic activist theatre model makes the case to suggest a positive alternative to the harsh reality of drug addiction and, by doing so, facilitates the social imagination of hope as well as placing the participants’ urge for redemption in a powerful position. Their additional emphasis on addressing the societal responsibility for drug addiction by placing recovering users and their experiences at the centre of public attention further enriches their call for societal action and unity. As I have
argued, their performances operate in two stages. At the first stage, the performers introduce themselves through the ‘authentic’ performances, and subsequently, by using as a platform a familiar myth, their stories are portrayed as metaphorical references to universal human concerns. In this way, they allow their audience not only to empathise with them, but also to create a single analogy between the audience’s lives and those of the performers/characters. Hence, the performers here are presented as revolutionary heroes and fighters for a better future, in moments which reveal their transition from being carriers of stigma to being carriers of hope. This is to say, throughout their productions, 18 ANO communicates the message of hope as well as the message that we can all learn from each other’s experiences and put them into use for the betterment of our society (social imagination).

Conclusion: Thinking across cultures

The purpose of this final section is to bring together the two examples described above in order to promote the idea of acculturation in performances. As I have attempted to analyse in the previous sections of this chapter, these two examples may differ in methodology (metaphorical as opposed to autobiographical), but have many overlaps which are mainly driven by the performers’ imperative to tell their stories as a way to educate others. In my analysis, I have examined separately the two models and attempted to address their strengths and weaknesses. Likewise, I have highlighted the potential risks of dramatising personal narratives of addiction. I claimed that caution is needed in the way these materials are handled and presented to the public in order to raise the audience’s awareness and promote social acceptance. With particular regard to putting
emphasis on the ‘authenticity’ of the presented stories, I addressed the necessity to understand the complexities of such an approach, and used two different examples of ‘authentic’ performances to illustrate my argument. In the first case, BI’s focus on the ‘authentic’ representation of their experiences resulted, I believe, in disconnecting the audience from the characters and, to a certain degree, led to a ‘false’ empathy as the audience did not feel *with* the characters’ situation but rather ‘outside’ them. This phenomenon was influenced by the fact that the performance mainly reproduced images of a junkie and dropout identities and situations, equivalent to the images frequently conjured in the media. In antithesis, 18 ANO’s usage of their members’ ‘authentic’ stories operated as an introduction to the ‘metaphorical’ story which followed, and in this way set up the conditions for empathy and identification to simultaneously occur. The audience thus connected with both the ‘real’ characters and the ‘stage’ characters in moments which eventually created a sense of utopian performatives and the social imaginary.

Additionally, a more detailed examination of the themes involved and explored in these performances indicates some common ground in the understanding of how performance can be used to raise awareness and promote inclusion. In an attempt to move this analysis beyond cultures and boundaries and to conceptualise how theatre could have an impact on promoting social inclusion, I argue in support of the idea of a cross-cultural approach in these two examples of practice. Similar to the phenomenon of drug use itself, the implementation of theatre as a means of promoting social awareness and inclusion appears to be a cross-cultural phenomenon. Hence, in an attempt to bridge these two examples of practice it is worth considering their points of connection. For the purpose of my argument, I would like to bring together these examples in order to make the case for the potential of
performance to promote social acceptance. I have therefore summarised the two projects in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breaking Image</th>
<th>18ANO</th>
<th>Connections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal initiative</td>
<td>Public Rehabilitation Unit (with influences from radical psychology)</td>
<td>Using theatre to ‘educate’ others and promote social inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their performances are organised in liaison with local community art centres in Somerset</td>
<td>Their performances were part of IDADA events and took place in the suburbs of Athens</td>
<td>Performances as “de-stigmatization ceremonies”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autobiographical performances</td>
<td>Working with a play-script (ancient Greek drama)</td>
<td>To reflect on their personal experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal and authentic approach (personal narratives)</td>
<td>Metaphorical and symbolic approach (meta-theatre)</td>
<td>To ‘tell’ their stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal downfall and ascension. Hero as antihero/scapegoat</td>
<td>Dramatic hero’s downfall and ascension. Hero as a revolutionary figure</td>
<td>Emerging hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aimed to address the personal responsibility of problem drug use</td>
<td>Aimed to address the societal responsibility of problem drug use</td>
<td>Raising awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug users as anti-heroes and scapegoats</td>
<td>Drug users as revolutionary heroes of their times</td>
<td>Promoting acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labels, titles attached to drug users; personalisation of addiction and staging of the stereotypical image of a person injecting heroin</td>
<td>Chorus as a symbol of individual guilt, the blame of the family and societal stigma</td>
<td>Staging stigma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatisation of interpersonal conflicts</td>
<td>From individual to collective responsibility, and vice versa</td>
<td>Displaying the personal and social variables of addiction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“I walked away with my dignity, you can’t take that away from me” – expressed as a dream to change and move on

Harmonising with the community, promoting social reconciliation/resolution

Utopian performative

The ‘power of will’ and the individual’s potential to change

The notion of ‘we are all in this together’

Social imaginary

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table III. BI and 18ANO: Connections</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Despite the differences in context and approach, it is vital to highlight the fact that in both cases, an overwhelming desire to address the issues of drug recovery is apparent. Additionally, the urge to bring the issues of exclusion and discrimination to the centre of public debate and to use the performances as a place for advocacy and social transformation were also among the intentions of both groups. Finally, in both cases the impulse to express their hopes for a better future drove the practice in multiple ways. The issues of stigma and discrimination are at the core of both projects and, despite the differences in the way these issues were portrayed, in both cases the performances can be regarded as a call for society’s understanding and cooperation in changing the stereotypes of addiction, and for recognition of the different variables involved in both developing dependency and in recovering from it. Link and Phelan propose that:</td>
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An approach to change [stigma] must ultimately address the fundamental cause of stigma – it must either change the deeply held attitudes and beliefs of powerful groups that lead to labelling, stereotyping, setting apart, devaluing, and discriminating, or it must change circumstances so as to limit |
the power of such groups to make their cognitions the dominant ones. (Link and Phelan 2001: 381)

In this respect, I believe that inviting members of the “powerful groups” to watch the performances by recovering users might bring about the challenging of their beliefs and perceptions. Additionally, with the idea of the “social imaginary” (2004: 23) Taylor proposes the idea of imagining a better future together, and Dolan coins the term “utopian performatives” in an attempt to define the “small but profound moments in which performance calls attention (..) in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present” (Dolan 2005: 5). In this sense, and with respect to the example of the two theatre groups, it can be stated that the process of giving these individuals the space (stage) and freedom (performance) to reflect directly or metaphorically on their personal realities can be regarded as a political act – of making the performers’ “cognitions the dominant ones” (Link and Phelan Ibid.). The purpose of these performances was not necessarily to educate, or to preach, or to pass on anti-drug messages, but most importantly to celebrate humanity and its ability to change and develop. Hence, I have attempted to demonstrate that a notion of hope was elucidated as an outcome of these performances on either a smaller scale (BI) or a larger scale (18ANO). This in turn indicates the potential of such approaches. As Schechner maintains:

(...) “the people” have stories to enact and these stories are embedded within living traditions that are worthy of preservation, dissemination, and further development. It is not that aesthetic performance is dying so much as it is a question of recognizing the great variety of possibilities offered by the performing arts, from individual and group therapy to political action, from enhancing group solidarity to uncovering, enjoying,
Schechner’s words address a conceptualisation of how performances might achieve efficacy. I have already made the case in the previous chapter that people in recovery from alcohol and drug use constitute a community of people with their own stories and traditions. I also examined the context of these stories and addressed these individuals’ strong imperative to tell (the redemption script). In this chapter, I have attempted to highlight the importance of this telling not only for the individual per se but for society at large. I therefore characterised these performances acts of political activism in eradicating the stigmatisation and exclusion of problem drug users. Moreover, in both the cases examined it appears that the stories that people in recovery have to tell are not only embedded in their traditions but are also upgraded to suggest a universal and cross-cultural view of the similarities of experiences inherent in drug recovery, and how a request for recognition (BI) and for social action (18 ANO) but also for solidarity and unity was expressed. Both BI and 18 ANO can be regarded as the enactment of such a possibility, which has been expressed in the form of “de-stigmatisation ceremonies” (Warren 1980: 60), and as I argue, these performances constitute powerful moments in which members of a marginalised community got on stage to assert their rights for acceptance and social justice.

To conclude, the argument of this chapter has drawn on the four concepts of utopian performatives, social imaginary, the redemption script and finally de-stigmatisation ceremonies to suggest that applied theatre has the potential to operate as a platform from which individuals’ experiences (the redemption script) are presented (in a de-stigmatisation ceremony) in order
to inspire moments of utopian performatives and social imaginary. With reference to both BI and 18 ANOs, this chapter has illustrated that applied theatre’s ability to inspire moments of social imaginary lies in placing on stage ‘real people’ in order to politicise their issues and propose a global action in challenging the mechanisms of stigmatisation. This chapter, therefore, has attempted to understand the cross-cultural dynamics in order to discover the common associations and underscore reality in dramatising and performing the transcendence process of recovering from drugs. This was an attempt to further support my belief that theatre should be regarded as a bridge to connect otherwise unconnected individuals. Moreover, applied theatre’s ability to connect people with the same issues shows that it is important to examine these performances as a vehicle to allow people to express, provoke, reflect, share, and finally challenge social perceptions, but mostly to allow a rise in hope to occur. Finally, it is important to highlight that whether the message of hope has been communicated through the myth of ancient Greek tragedy or through an autobiographical performance, what is important here is that theatre operates as a means of inspiring the collective creation of a social imaginary.
CONCLUSION

I believe that when somebody doesn’t fit in the world, there comes theatre where everything fits in. Sometimes some of us come to a dead end (I’m referring to all the social groups that suffer from social elimination) and theatre is what makes us not use other ways of escape, especially the users who often come to a dead end and might turn to the old, familiar way of escape through substances. Then comes theatre, which fits into all kinds of pursuits (…) It’s a nice escape…a nice escape to expression (Christos 18 ANO member, June 2008).

Theatre has the power to defeat the status quo and promote social change (...) Most of us [problem drug users] have experienced the dark side of ourselves. We are not interested in standing out in life, but into making life…And there is applause for everyone (Vasilis, 18 ANO member, June 2008). 30

This thesis has presented a spectrum of different practices, with many different ways of thinking about the application of theatre with problem drug users. It started from the question of how applied theatre might assist problem drug users to socially reintegrate, and moved on to ask further questions with regard to its potential to promote personal change and contribute to the participants’ social acceptance. This thesis has attempted to position the outcomes of the research in relation to the debates around current drug policies and how these might potentially lead to the further stigmatisation rather than de-stigmatisation of problem drugs uses (Buchanan and Young 2000; Buchanan 2004; Seddon 2006; Seddon et.al. 2008). Likewise it has set out to critically assess the claims that applied theatre can operate as a “transformative agent” (Taylor 2003: 1) in promoting the personal change for its participants.

30 Quotes from a follow up interview with the author, translated into English by Maria Adamantidi.
This thesis has been written at a time when the economic crisis has prompted concerns about the rise in alcoholism and drug addiction as a result of poverty, unemployment and insecurity (Carvel 2008; Daily Mail 2009; Wardrop 2008). Nevertheless, because of the economic crisis, new national drug strategies in both the UK and Greece are considering withdrawing funding from drug treatment programmes, which in turn threatens to undermine the provision of treatment and social reintegration. For example, at the time that this conclusion is being written, the UK Home Office (2010: 14) has announced that the government is considering financial benefit sanctions for those problem drug users who have failed to accept treatment, despite warnings from experts from organisations such as Addactions and DrugScope that withdrawing benefits might lead many individuals to crime or prostitution (BBC 2010). Additionally, as Greece is facing the worst debt crisis in the country’s modern history, the threat of closing down public treatment programmes or reducing their funding, leading to staff redundancies, has caused an outbreak of concern (Venizelos 2010). As a result of the lack of adequate treatment programmes and sufficient number of staff members to support the needs of individuals, further barriers to participation in recovery programmes may be created (Artinopoulou 2010; Fintanidou 2010). Furthermore, according to the annual report of KETHEA (Poulopoulos 2010), which was published in June 2010, the economic crisis appears to be impairing the mental and physical health of problem drug users and deepening poverty, as well as increasing crime and social exclusion. The report goes on to assert that in 2009-2010, the first effects of the economic crisis have already become visible among those who are in the social reintegration phase of recovery, especially in terms of employment which is becoming increasingly difficult to find, even for those with higher educational qualifications and previous work experience (Poulopoulos Ibid.). At the other end of the spectrum, the UK Drug Policy Commission (UKDPC)
has recently published a report entitled *Sinning and sinned against: the stigmatisation of problem drug users* (Lloyd 2010). The report provides a summary of research-based evidence for the stigmatisation of problem drug users, and assesses its impact on individuals and wider society. According to this report, levels of stigmatisation and prejudice at all levels of society have increased, as the evidence shows that public attitudes to people who dealing with problem drug use are related to images of individuals who are perceived as “dangerous, deceitful, unreliable, unpredictable, hard to talk with and to blame for their predicament” (Lloyd Ibid.: 8). As far as recovering users are concerned, it has been reported that recovery from drugs can be characterised as a “stigma life sentence” (Lloyd Ibid.), which is a crucial barrier to recovery and rejoining society. Notaras highlights

The economic crisis has profoundly affected all aspects of our social life. Most affected, however, are the disadvantaged. In the midst of the anxiety and uncertainty that pervades each of us it is easy to forget those who are already marginalised (Notaras 2010: n.p.)

If the above evidence is examined in conjunction with the implemented drug policies (see Chapter 1) it indicates that from the beginning of this research study to date, the changes in policy and the additional measures which have been taken for the support of problem drug users have in fact appeared to increase their stigmatisation, and have created more barriers rather than breaking down the old ones. It seems therefore that since the 1990s there have been fewer attempts to support the social reintegration of recovering drug users. Instead, the existing drug policies and national action plans have failed to take into account the social variables of addiction, a drawback which has led to their lack of success. Hence, considering the review of the policies in Chapter 1, along with the discussion in each chapter, it appears that the difficulties that people in recovery face are related to the social
stigma imposed on them and the lack of a supportive system to assist their inclusion to society. In an attempt to question what can be done, Lloyd (2010: 10) proposes that “service user and advocacy groups [should] becom[e] more active in challenging media reporting of drug addiction [to take a] more compassionate approach to this deeply stigmatised [group]”, adding that what is needed is “[m]ore imaginative ways of increasing contact between problem drug users and the general public” (Lloyd 2010: 10). Matsa (sited in Margariti 2010: n.p.) also highlights the need to awaken society with regard to the reality of addiction and the different variables and difficulties related to recovery (psychological, moral and social). She urges for solidarity and compassion in assisting problem drug users to overcome their addictions and rejoin society.

Turning to the discussion of applied theatre in drug services, the question that framed the main argument of this thesis was: how can applied theatre make a contribution to the social reintegration of problem drug users? This enquiry coincides with the ongoing debate as to what applied theatre can actually ‘do’ (Etherton and Prentki 2006). This debate is producing a body of literature (Thompson 2003, 2009; Balfour 2009; Nicholson 2005a) that discusses philosophical and practical questions around what applied theatre is and what appropriate methodologies can be employed to balance what Balfour refers to as the “tension between the donor agenda and the politics of intention” (Balfour 2009: 347). Likewise, its evolution to an international level, which has been demonstrated by recent publications such as Prentki and Preston (2009) and Prendergast and Saxton (2009), clearly illustrates how the field’s expansion into a whole new spectrum of practices and traditions has brought into its context new social agendas for further consideration, while also posing a set of questions with regards to the purpose of applied theatre and its potential to have a positive impact on participants’ lives. As a
response to the above concerns, Balfour recently proposed applied theatre as the theatre of “little changes” and its interventions as a medium to “provide a way to re-orientate what is possible about the work” (Balfour 2009: 347). He moves on to suggest that applied theatre’s “practice might more readily encounter the accidental, and acknowledge that what applied does is not always linear, rational and conclusive in its outcomes, but is more often messy, incomplete, complex and tentative” (Balfour Ibid.).

Additionally, Thompson (2009) by exploring the idea of beauty in applied theatre introduced a new discourse regarding its potential to encourage positive change in people’s lives. By challenging applied theatre’s focus on investigating and assessing whether it can have an impact on changing the participants’ lives, he calls for the “end of effect” (2009: 6). Instead he proposes the beginning of emphasising different forms of “affect” as inherent during participation in applied theatre projects. As he proposes, a shift in the orientation of applied theatre so as to embrace the sensation and aesthetics of making something that the beholders regard as beautiful ought to be the focus when implementing theatre. Thompson moves on to argue that joy, beauty and celebration ought to be positioned at the heart of applied theatre, and proposes the adoption of a holistic approach – both theoretical and practical – in the interpretation of applied theatre in different contexts.

The same set of enquiries were echoed over the course of this thesis, which has attempted to provide its response to the above question firstly by opening a dialogue on applied theatre with problem drug users, and secondly by including Greece in applied theatre’s international ‘map’ of practice as a potential field for further investigation and practice. Regarding the first point, this thesis has demonstrated that theatre can be a potentially useful medium not only in understanding and communicating the realities of people living with addiction but also, and primarily, in providing them with
opportunities for positive alternatives in viewing their lives and conveying new meaning of their experiences. Applied theatre can offer ideas of “imaginative [and creative] ways of increasing contact between problem drug users and the general public” (Lloyd Ibid.: 10). Likewise, by taking inspiration from Dolan’s concept of “performative utopias” (Dolan 2005: 5) and Taylor’s “social imaginary” (Taylor 2004), this thesis has made the case to suggest that theatre has the potential to advocate for social cohesion and unity. In other words, it has attempted to create a place within which the possibilities of a better future can be expressed and realised, and it has demonstrated that this can be made possible by placing on stage the ‘real’ people and their ‘authentic’ stories in order to suggest that “there is applause for everyone” (Vasilis 2008).

Hence, this thesis has examined the above research questions through the thematic units of community, creativity and hope. First, it attempted to problematise the concept of community in reference to both drug use and applied theatre. It argued that applied theatre ought to be regarded as an experience with the potential to generate the participants’ desire for community and in this way assist on their journey to recovery and quest for normalisation. By describing how a threat of closure to a TC influenced the participants’ sense of community and belonging, the thesis analysed ways in which participation in applied theatre encouraged the reestablishment of a sense of community. The second theme of creativity focused on identifying ways in which theatre can operate as what I termed an alternative substance. With this phrase I referred to methods of encouraging the participants to explore alternative vantage points from which to view their lives, and likewise to provide them with the means to reverse their stories so as to reveal a positivity. By making use of Maruna’s (2004) idea of a redemption script, it has been suggested that theatre can be regarded as a useful platform
in conceptualising how the individuals’ personal stories of addiction and recovery might provide them with useful patterns with which to build their identity. To this end, it has been proposed that the credibility of the participants’ stories makes an interesting starting point and source of information; however, as I have argued, the biggest challenge that applied theatre might encounter is how to ‘handle’ these stories. I have proposed a participant-driven approach in which the practice would eventually lead in the directions that the participants find most interesting. Drawing on the theories of positive psychology (Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Seligman 2003), I attempted to position creativity at the centre of applied theatre’s practice, and used the example of the police station scene versus the wedding scene to illustrate my point.

Finally, the third part of the thesis took the form of a performance analysis by examining two examples of performances with the purpose of increasing awareness of drug abuse and promoting social acceptance. Part of my argument was to interrogate whether there is a place for hope and social imaginary in using performances by recovering users as a medium to promote inclusion. Additionally, I demonstrated that the participants-performers’ personal stories of recovery when put into use either directly or metaphorically can provide us with important insights with regard to the efficacy of dramatising personal experience as a medium to advocate acceptance. By looking at two different types of performance, one autobiographical and one metaphorical, I illustrated factors by which the participants’ personal experiences of recovering from drug addiction can be put into place and operate as a call for societal unity and action. I demonstrated that these stories when put into place can be articulated to raise hope for the possibility of change, and can inspire profound moments of social imaginary. I suggested that when these stories are put into use they
might have the following functions: 1) as a ‘message of hope’; 2) as a medium to promote the social imaginary of a society without prejudice, discrimination and exclusion; and 3) as a tool to ‘educate’ others and to assist in envisioning a society in which we can learn from each other. In contrast, I urged for caution in terms of the perspective from which the stories are approached to ensure avoidance of reproducing stereotypical images of addiction, and, likewise, to avoid further victimisation through representations of stereotypical images of problem drug users.

Returning to the hypothesis or question posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that applied theatre has the potential to assist problem drug users in their social reintegration. However, whilst the initial scope of this study set out to explore how the implementation of a combined model as derived from behavioural and cognitive theories and participatory theatre practice would encourage positive change in the participants’ lives, the findings of this research indicate that theatre should be better regarded as means of assisting the participants to ‘evade’ their current realities of drug addiction. Hence, I argued that theatre cannot achieve this outcome simply by challenging the participants’ behavioural attitudes vis-à-vis drug use, but, on the contrary, by enriching their possessions, virtues and creativity. In general, this thesis has asserted that applied theatre should not be approached for its potential either to relieve people from their suffering or to challenge their behavioural attitudes to drug use, but rather as a way to transport them away from their realities into an imaginative world. Or as Christos, an 18 ANO member states in the quote above, to provide opportunities for a “nice escape ... a nice escape to expression” (Christos 2008). Accordingly, McCoy and Blood write:
While drama is a useful tool for dissecting and rehearsing everyday reality, it has also the potential to go beyond the rational realms of reality. We believe that this can be particularly significant for drug users. Through metaphor, surrealism, comedy and the use of psychical language such as rituals, drama can explore the places that drug users go, both individually and as groups, and can offer new perspectives and ways of expressing complex motivations (McCoy and Blood: 2004: 136).

McCoy and Blood’s views echo the examples of practice that I have explored throughout this thesis, during which I have connected applied theatre with Schechner’s (1985: 125-126) idea of “transportation” in performance to discuss not only the places that drug users go but also the drug users desire to go. In an attempt to illustrate my argument clearly, I have used the metaphor of the journey to discuss the individuals’ constant quest for community, transportation and escapism. If these concepts are put together they formulate a triangle (see Figure I.), or, in other words, the quest.

Community = Destination (Hope)

Transportation = the journey (applied theatre’s process)

Escapism = the departure (participation in applied theatre)

Figure. I. The Quest
As the figure demonstrates, participation in an applied theatre project can symbolise the individual’s impulse to escape from their realities and quest for a better future. Hence, participation in applied theatre can be connected to a departure. Similarly, the process of participating in an applied theatre project has been understood as the journey itself. Finally, community has been approached as the final destination of the journey, but also as the hoped arrival or even return to their desired ‘place’. However, as I have argued over the course of this thesis, applied theatre is not a guarantee that participants will eventually arrive at the final destination. In addition, setting out on the journey can possibly generate the hope of arrival. That is to say, applied theatre cannot help the individual reintegrate into society, but can instead encourage the transition from being carriers of stigma to carriers of hope. This suggests that optimism and hope ought to be considered important variables in both implementing and interpreting the practice, and therefore should be placed at the heart of applied theatre. Finally, this thesis has attempted to turn a cross-cultural gaze onto the way theatre can approached with regard to problem drug use. The two approaches have methodological differences, with the Greek model being community-orientated and with an emphasis on using metaphors as a way to project upon the participants’ realities, while the UK model appears individually driven in that each participant has an input into the process through their personal stories and direct accounts. However, by acknowledging these differences, which are also related to either the socio-cultural background and social policy of each country and the history of the theatre respectively, the evidence that has emerged from this research indicates that there is a common ground in the way the power of theatre has been understood and implemented to meet the purposes. Whether a radical, activist, political, didactic and/or propagandistic piece of work, what is important is that applied theatre has
taken a central role in enhancing the individuals’ potential and encouraging them to fight against prejudice and exclusion. Taken together, these findings suggest a role for applied theatre in promoting social inclusion not only for people recovering from drug addiction but for other marginalised and deprived communities. I propose a shift to an activist form of theatre which would not only present people’s realities but would also place them at the centre of the public debate. In many respects, the immediacy of these performances as I asserted has a double function. From the participants’ perspective the performance can operate as a platform to validate their stories, increase their sense of self worth, and contribute to the shift from the deviant identity to that of “charismatic deviant” (Warren 1980: 60). On the other side, such performances can also be a way to showcase participants’ ‘authentic’ stories as a medium to inform, educate, challenge and even move the general public. To this end, the analysis has demonstrated that applied theatre interventions might act as a catalyst to break the stereotypes related to addiction and to open up dialogue between the general public and problem drug users to fight against social injustice and exclusion. De Certeau’s (1984) theories about tactics and strategies have been examined to formulate my argument on applied theatre’s potential to operate as a powerful medium of protest and to campaign for problem drug users’ rights to treatment and inclusion. By using the example of the performance *Our Story* by the women in En Drasi TC, I proposed that applied theatre can be useful in introducing participants to different forms of tactics, and I regarded performances such as this as an example of tactic in protesting for the participants’ rights to treatment and reintegration. In the current social and economic climate, where drugs policies and national strategies are being imposed upon problem drug users, a turn to community, creativity and hope appears to be an appropriate coping mechanism and an opposition to the harsh realities of addiction and stigmatisation. This thesis has attempted to
demonstrate how participation in applied theatre has the possibility to fulfill individuals’ need for acceptance by introducing them to tactics, as a way to creatively escape from their current realities but also as a potentially effective tool to raise their voices and campaign for the betterment of their current circumstances. Applied theatre is proposed here as an alternative tactic in the lives of these individuals by opening the gateway to an different and substance-free life.

Before I move on to suggest future implications of this research, a number of important limitations need to be considered. First, a systematic follow up of each case study to investigate the long-term benefits of participating in theatre projects is needed to identify any future implications. Secondly, my position as research-practitioner in the examples of En Drasi and ADS shifted to that of researcher, observer and visitor in the cases of Breaking Image and 18 ANO, which prompts a set of questions in connection to my perceptions and the ways in which I documented and theorised the practice each time. In particular, my emotional bonds with the participants and the intensity of the work came into opposition with testifying about what I understood as the possibilities of theatre in this context. Another issue which should be acknowledged is the limitations of conducting research and analysing its outcomes in a second language. Although, as I explained at the methodology chapter, different methods were adopted to overcome this obstacle, it is important to state the limitations of being a cultural outsider in terms of the cultural and linguistic competence associated with drug culture. Finally, due to the original purpose of this research, which was designed to predominantly assess and collect data on the participants’ responses and/or viewpoints with regard to participating in an applied theatre project and performance, this study did not evaluate the use of performance as a tool to promote social inclusion by examining it from the audience’s point of view.
Audience research would allow us to further explore whether performances by recovering users can contribute towards promoting social inclusion. In particular, by gathering data from an audience sample it could be investigated whether they had changed their attitudes towards problem drug users after watching the performance. This additional information would benefit the argument of this thesis with regard to organising performances to promote inclusion.

This research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation to increase our understanding of how theatre might operate in the context of drug recovery. More research on this topic needs to be undertaken before the association between applied theatre and the social reintegration of the problem drug user can be clearly established. Therefore, it is recommended that further research should be undertaken in the following areas: firstly, the implementation of applied theatre in an international context would allow us to broaden our understanding of this field. Therefore, a comprehensive ‘mapping’ of practices that take place in other countries in terms of geography, demographics, local culture and their relationship with the social problem of drugs is essential to position the research in a broader international context. Secondly, research should also be directed towards investigating how applied theatre techniques can be implemented with problem drug users who are at different levels of dependence and participating in different types of treatment programmes, such as harm reduction. The possibility of establishing a system in which opportunities to participate in art activities should be made widely available to problem drug users as a means of engaging them with new alternatives and other forms of expression. Overall, further investigation is needed to determine whether there is a place for applied theatre in assisting problem drug users to socially reintegrate. What is needed now is an understanding of the position of
applied theatre within a broader international framework in order to explore how the interrogation of cultural practices and cultural histories would tackle the drug problem. A cultural partnership to address issues of problematic drug use and methods of using theatre practice to fight exclusion is therefore suggested.

To conclude, this thesis has shown that there potential in using applied theatre with problem drug users when it can be combined with effective psychological support; the next challenge is to create opportunities for participation in theatre projects. The findings of this research have articulated that there is a potentially powerful relationship between the dramatisation of stories of recovery and presenting them to a public audience. By using evidence of theatre projects carried out with problem drug users this thesis has attempted to illustrate how different forms of theatre can be implemented with the aim of supporting the individual’s journey to recovery and reintegration. In many respects, this thesis urges the need for a cross-national study involving numerous projects and follow-up research. A further study could assess international efforts such as projects and performances by drug users and how these can be used in drug education. The notion of ‘redemption’ and giving something back to society would be an important platform to initiate dialogue about drug dependency to prevent others from going down a similar path. Finally, more opportunities to participate in art activities should be made available to service users as a means of engaging them with new alternatives and other forms of expression. To sum up, from my point of view, applied theatre practice can play an important role in encouraging problem drug users to awaken their desire for affiliation and community, and in supporting their journey to recovery as well as “find[ing] the rainbow” (Maria 2008).


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