

Title : Theatre, communists and migrants : a socio-historical approach to *La Commune* theatre's "hospitality" towards migrants

This paper draws from a socio-anthropological tradition of thought on hospitality inspired by Julian Pitt-Rivers who defines it as a relationship based on a "social necessity", a gift calling for a counter-gift¹. Yet 'hospitality', as a consistently valued term, is also used as a political motto². As such, actions carried out in the name of hospitality are often intended to a broader audience than the people who are to be welcomed.

The *École des Actes* is an association created by *La Commune* theatre which organises multilingual political assemblies as well as various social activities and stands for one of the materialisation of the theatre's claimed "hospitality" towards migrants. This initiative can be understood in the light of the mobilisation of the European artistic and theatre scene in the face of the 2015 so-called refugee — or precisely hospitality — crisis. Beyond a single thematic shift in artistic programming, many theatres have taken a stand in favour of welcoming migrants in Europe and in their respective countries but also within theatrical institutions. However, the European scale alone and the focus on migratory flows since 2015, do not allow us to grasp the social and political roots underlying (at least in part) this current enterprise.

This paper will explore the association's ties with 'immigrant workers' and 'sans-papiers' movements and with a fringe of the Maoist faction of French communism, since the 1970s. How is the historical relationship between these social movements reflected in the *École des Actes* participants and in their practices? How does the use of theatre performances by these social movements and the reaction of theatrical institutions, inform us about this current project? How does the specific communist anchoring of the *École des Actes* affect the reception of *La Commune*'s current project in the local context of the city of Aubervilliers (and its theatre), the history of which is deeply marked by the Communist Party? How do migrants, including newcomers, relate to this historical and political background?

Based on an ongoing ethnographic work, this paper draws from socio-historical studies on these social movements and on the communist outskirts of Paris. It aims to analyse the concrete individual and collective practices of the *École des Actes* participants and the meaning they give to these practices through adopting socio-historical lens on the collected materials (field notes, interviews and documentation). It intends to demonstrate the interest of a this approach to grasp the complexity of the theatre's "hospitality" towards migrants.

¹ Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem or The Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1977.

² The notion of 'unconditional hospitality' developed by Derrida is itself embedded in his political commitment to welcoming foreigners. See Jacques Derrida, *Cosmopolites de tous les pays, encore un effort !*, Paris : Galilée, 1997, and *De l'hospitalité* (with Anne Dufourmantelle), Paris : Calmann-Lévy, 1997.