Frames of research in progress for the work of the “Open Ensemble” during Drama Boreale 2018

This text is possible first draft by Kerstin Bragby (in press) to fill two purposes: one is to create an orientation for the practical research-based work during the conference. The other one is to create an introduction chapter for a possible anthology that can grow from the work and processed data of the conference (please respect this as such a source, if you want to refer to the text).

Overall intentions and a bit further elaboration on the content of the program

*Day one* is a day for landing and establishing report and relations co-initiating the conference together in experienced-based ways as an Open Ensemble. *Day two* is a day for co-operating as an Open Ensemble, in the big and in smaller groups around a “Process-research-drama laboratory” about our own praxis. We see it as a combination for us to work practically on the floor, in order to make transparent and visible to ourselves, our own understandings of where we are in our relation to drama as a living and breathing practice, in different contexts in face of greater challenges in the world. Inquiring and exploring ourselves in the form of an art-based participatory action research frame is the meta-perspective of that process. Through different exercises and drama processes we will create a multi-perspective mind- and landscape of drama over time, exploring in the now, the past through which we entered the field and how we can imagine ourselves as an emerging future. We will have a leading question: “What was, and can drama be an answer to?” And we will explore this from a point of view of our *individual* experience, the *collective/structural contexts* we are and have been embedded in, and the *societal challenges* that drama as an answer might be related to. The future will be enacted in “explorative as if’s”, with the help of a spectrum of collective social improvisation techniques. They will be inspired from our own drama conventions in dialogue with perspectives, methods and conventions from other fields of practices - as systemic social-change making, future studies, participatory design - related to drama. This in order to mirror and see the substantial practical values in our own praxis’ in these times, in association and contrast to a greater context of closely related aspirations.

Trough an experimental research designed frame in progress, we will explore how the researching methods and methodology can be embedded in the applied theatre and drama practice and have a doubled function.
How can the spectrum of researcher positions and faculties from observing to participating, be engaged? How can generating, collecting and processing data in embodied, aesthetic to verbal and written forms be used? How can informative and transformative results be made explicit? Our overall meta-focus of inquiry will be: What can the art of applied theatre and drama be an answer to, in relation to a practice-led art of researching through art?

**Day three** is for processing and reflecting back on that process, but also letting a multitude of individual, prepared, verbal, text-based pecha-kucha form of presentations, and non-prepared, or in progress expression take space. **Day four** is for deepening the process. There will be room for traditional papers as well as first drafts, and first thoughts to be shared in smaller group settings in “emergent streams” (that means that the traditional prepared thematic stream for a conference, will emerge as a result here, but as a result from a variety of ingredients involved). **Day five** is for opening up towards the future, communicate internationally and form the next steps and frames for after the conference.

To explore as research and research exploratively
We imagine that most of us are in the field of applied theatre and drama, and we have used Drama Boreale as a Nordic conference where we can both meet socially, professionally and be in processes of knowledge creation. Our need is to have opportunities to share and explore with others in action, reflection, dialogue and conversations, but also to be able relate to research and its dimensions of method and methodology in reading, writing and multimodal literacy. Some of us have for long, and others recently discovered the challenges in designing explorations in practice in a systematic way as research. When we took on the relay baton for this conference, it was written into our mutual agreed assignment to try to design the explorative and researching dimensions of the conference “differently”, with inspiration in our own collectively and practically aesthetic action-oriented approach.

Drama pedagogy and applied theatre in different forms, have always eluded us with its own complexity and its depth, its ability to “work in practice”, but not as easily lend itself to be explained, mediated and set in dialogue in its entirety, in relation to the surrounding world and the “uninitiated”. We, as the initiated we, wrestle with developing and understanding more of what we do. As a form of art and method of pedagogy, as a process of social change.
applied in a variety of different contexts, it offers us simultaneously a social, collective and personal aesthetic engagement in the world. We also struggle with the exploration of our practice in collaboration with frames, forms, traditions, ways of seeing and working that is defined as research by the rest of the world. At the same time as we in the spirit of applied theatre and drama, want our research to make and come alive in a learning relationship with the premises for the uniqueness of our multimodal practice. Drama an applied theatre constantly creates new horizons and fusions, in the terms of Gadamer and Hussler (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 145), in the meeting with ourselves and others, in our conscious awareness about social, societal and existential challenges. All of this is what we imagine this conference will offer us through a practical and collective exploration of research in itself, through and about our own art-based practice, as well as through our text-based forms of writing and conversing.

An ecological view of knowledge
As Björn Rasmussen (2014) has formulated it in his article “The art of researching with art-towards an epistemological ecology, there is not only our practice as such that is embedded in a manifold of knowledge forms. There is both a potential and challenge to navigate in the ecology and flora of methods and methodological approaches that we can use to get a grip of our own practice, from different focus of interests and contexts. But the extended epistemology that Rasmussen is addressing, “extended beyond the ways of knowing of positivist oriented academia”, is developed by John Heron (1996) and in collaboration with Peter Reason in tandem with co-operative inquiry as researching approach (Heron & Reason, 2008). This extended epistemology we think can be mutual frame of reference for the conference and the investigative work of an Open Ensemble, especially day two when we will step into different roles in a collective process of practice-led research. We agree with Rasmussen (2014) that the inter-dynamic of different forms of knowledge, knowing and know-how that are included in Heron’s model, it is significant for our field, and “embedded in or protected by many theatre practices” (Rasmussen, 2014, p. 21), and it gives a more compounded map to mirror our own practice of holistically learning and research through.

Heron’ Modell
Extended epistemology (after Heron, 1996)

For those of you that are not familiar with the model of Heron, he discerns at the bottom of a pyramid the *experientially present* quality of knowing, that is played out through a relational presence and attention. It is a tacit, not outspoken and implicit dimension of knowing and being, that is there as a containing awareness, through which the embodied and expressive forms and verbal formulations emerge. We can recognize it from our way of attending in drama in embodied, aesthetically awake and interactive engagement. through the experiential presence emerges a receptive creativity that take active form in the knowing and knowledge of *presentational* gestalts, in the gesture, the physical gestalt, image, movement, sound, melodies and poetic expressions. In this epistemology the aesthetical presentational performativity is acknowledged as a form of knowledge and knowing in itself. The next interface emerges when we seek to dress and make precise that understanding and insight in verbal communication and writing from a *propositional* logic and coherence. It is a reflective, reflexive form of knowledge that creates fact, terminology, theoretical abstractions and generalizations that determines a certain way of seeing. All of these forms of knowing are contained in a practice as *practical* knowledge and know-how, represented at the top of the pyramid. In an extended epistemology there is a need for a continuous inter-dynamic between all the forms. A curiosity we want to invite with the help of this ecology of knowledge dynamic as a frame of reference, is to shed light on new fusions of horizons that this can create in the ecology of methodological research approaches. Especially in approaches that possibly inherent and use a practice-led research where the artistic presentational and the experientially present dimensions are explicitly used in cooperation with propositional and practical.
An emerging methodological ecology

As John O’Tool (2006) lay it out in his overview in *Doing drama research-stepping into enquiry in drama, theatre and education*, many of us have had the reflective practitioner’s insight, as from Bolton, as the entrance for starting to observe ourselves as participants and practitioner of drama and applied theatre. With the clarifying help of a manifold of theoretical lenses we have gained more of a view of depth into the social interactive and pedagogically relational co-play of learning together in the fictive aesthetically doubled space. We have held hands with the interpretative and qualitative methodologies and stretched the methodical rules of engagement of ethnographic filed. We have observed from outside and inside as participant and in performing action we have tried to penetrate the coherence and many uniting logics of the aesthetic formula itself, it has been many case studies. In our learning practice in action and enactment, interventionist methodologies have been a natural angel of approach in some parts of the world, as drama always in collaboration with others also have been actively open to the process of social change. When the field of applied theatre and drama have drawn these experiences together we have moved into what O’Tool call *the methodologies of the third space*, that are simultaneously descriptive, interpretative and are in a performative process of change with the help of an extended and inter-dynamic ecology of knowledge and knowing. Art-based research have become a fact and have an active and expansive field of research with many angels of arrival and co-travellers from different fields of research.

The compilation by Judith Ackroyd (2006), of critically inspired regards toward the past and future spectrum of researching approached applied on one and the same process drama during an IDIERI conference, have been another landmark to relate to in our field. It was about getting new visions of the qualitative lens of research. The third person outside perspective was enriched by a feminist- post structural de-constructive views and the beam of observation was turned in, onto possible blind spots of our own filed. The limitations of the reflective practitioner where scrutinized, as well as the second persons perspective where interactive structural divides and relational power-balances are played out. There is also a representation of a first-person intra-subjective deep dive into the interior dimensions of the participant and researcher’s role, through an ethnographic ethno-drama approach. It
puts the light right on to the interface between the embodied presentational intelligence, through which the verbalised insights emerge and not the other way around. But it also articulates the difficulties in translating that form of knowing into non-multimodal language and text, at the same time as the imagination within the researcher role comes to help out. (Bacon, 2006, p. 141-142). With the help of Gendlin’s (2003) felt sense and focusing technique, the inner stage of perception creation is made explicit and can be envisioned as part of the competence in the researcher role. It establishes a report to the awareness of the reflexive insightful depth of the aesthetic space, that can make the implicit in the experienced, if not possible to observe, possible to sense and be in touch with and therefore possible to use in a more explicit function in the researcher role.

The depth of the reflexive in combination with the width of critical manifold and the artistic performative process leads us into new uncharted trans-contextual territories. A similar shift of focus is happening within other fields as design and media (Hazeman, 2006), organization and leadership (Scharmer, 2009), and all the creative arts (Dean & Smith, Hazel, 2009) that works with the same embodied group processes with people in different social positions and, or art-based multi-modal complexity. The need for a shift in focus is from research that is to be applied into future contexts, to a practice-led researching process that generates both transformative, embodied/enacted, materialized results in and by itself, just as well as informative and applicable. In this genre of research, the insights from Elliot Eisner’s (1997) and Liora Bresler’s (2006), spelling out that the aesthetic is at the heart of the matter in both artistic and experienced-based creating processes, as well as in the practice of qualitative research, becomes important. It makes clear, that our theatrical embodied faculties and professional socialisation and competences can inspire and inform the researching skills and ways of working in and by themselves.

What form of set-up and purpose with a co-researching open ensemble and process shall we have at this conference?

The set up IDIERI have been an inspiration for us to design a co-researching part of the conference. We want to created flexible but clear enough frames to experiment small scale in this spirit. The overall curiosity is where we are in our practice and research in relation to
today’s disruptive and post-normal (Sardar, 2010) dynamic of changes that is played out in a complexity of ecological, social and individual divides. Can we use an extended epistemology and research methodology to understand something about the possible role of applied theatre and drama in meeting these challenges? Is there inspiration and a sense of practical belonging (Hughes & Nicholson (2016), with other fields of research practices that can be of interest for us to meet, in order to discover more about ourselves. And are there new horizontal fusions to be discovered?

**A practice-led drama-researching lab**

One first direction we thought about was to make a set up similar to the IDIERI-workshop, but it developed into a different design. What we will do, will be inspired by the fact that we will share sessions and we want to investigate them through a lens of drama research. But rather than having different qualitative researching frames, we will experiment with a common third space methodology frame that focus on researching the art of applied theatre and drama with and through the art of applied theater and drama. We will be triangulating with theoretical perspectives as well as social techniques from other fields of knowledge, in order to contrast and make visible our own ways of working. Practically we will create an inter-dynamic between working in a big and in small groups, that allows for a creative flow of inputs on the same thematic and practical starting points. This is how we formulated it in the program above:

**Day two** is a day for co-operating as an Open Ensemble, in the big and in smaller groups, led by a team of prepared guides in practice, around a “Process-research-drama laboratory” about our own praxis. We see it as a combination for us to work practically on the floor, in order to make transparent and visible to ourselves, our own understandings of where we are in our relation to drama as a living and breathing practice, in different contexts in face of greater challenges in the world. Inquiring and exploring ourselves in the form of an art-based participatory action research frame is the meta-perspective of that process. Through different exercises and drama processes we will create a multi-perspective mind- and landscape of drama over time, exploring in the now, the past through which we entered the field and how we can imagine ourselves as an emerging future. We will have a leading question: “What was, and can drama be an answer to?” And we will explore this from a
point of view of our *individual experience*, the *collective/structural contexts* we are and have been embedded in, and the *societal challenges* that drama as an answer might be related to. The future will be enacted in “explorative as if’s”, with the help of a spectrum of collective social improvisation techniques. They will be inspired from our own drama conventions in dialogue with perspectives, methods and conventions from other fields of practices - as systemic social-change making, future studies, participatory design - related to drama. This in order to mirror and see the substantial practical values in our own praxis’ in these times, in association and contrast to a greater context of closely related aspirations. We will also evaluate what this event teaches us in terms of developing our own researcher role and methodological lenses.

Through an experimental research designed frame in progress, we will explore how the researching methods and methodology can be embedded in the applied theatre and drama practice and have a doubled function.

How can the spectrum of researcher positions and faculties from observing to participating aesthetically and embodied, be engaged? How can generating, collecting and processing data in embodied, aesthetic, analytical, theoretical to verbal and written forms be used? How can informative and transformative results be made explicit? Our overall meta-focus of inquiry will be: What can the art of applied theatre and drama be an answer to, in relation to a practice-led art of researching through art?

At this point there are three direct sources of inspiration, besides the extended epistemology that we would like to draw from to create our theoretical/practical frame for our researching dimensions with the conference. Some have a systemic/aesthetic and consciousness-based perspective. Some uses rhizomatic and other approaches to future studies of changemaking.

**Theoretical and methodological inspirations**
The systemically inspired ways to generate and process data that we want to relate to refers to what Scharmer (2009, ) calls *deep data* and to what Nora Bateson (2017) calls *warm data.* The notion of deep data presented by Scharmer, aspire to involve research form a living
systemic perspective that can include the totality of our “structural field of attention” that is embedded in the nature of our consciousness. It involves shifting our awareness to include both our first, second and third person position for experiencing and observing. It corresponds closely to the entirety of an extended epistemology. It also resonates and coincide with many of the premises that carries Nora Bateson’ understanding of warm data that draw from layers of individual and mutually interdependent and collective contexts, in order to emerge. Warm data presents another order of exploration in the process of discerning vital contextual interrelationships, and another species of information” (Bateson, 2107 a, s. 79). She means that warm data can be defined as: Transcontextual information about the interrelationships that integrate a complex system” (N. Bateson, 2017, b). To subjectively and collectively immerse oneself into and shift between different positions in a dramatically “in-tensioned” social field, as we do in applied theatre and drama, I interpret as one example of how warm and deep data can emerge.

Deep data, in Scharmer’s perspective, hold a similar differentiating relationship to Big Data, as Nora’s warm data to cold data. He means Big Data has its place, but it is superficial data that gives us information about “the other”. While deep data function as a deepening x-ray and mirror where you will make transparent your own implicit and explicit dimensions as part of a contextual whole. One coincides with one self, as Boal would put it about the aesthetically doubled social filed where one can hold out alternative individual and collective prospects of one self with the help of a fictional mirror. Sculpturing the plastic aesthetic/social reality. In the work of a theory U lab, it means that when we who participate are representatives of different positions in a social filed that changes and learn together, that transforms the social field in and of itself.

The researcher role and methodological framework and approach
The framework of theory U has been described as a theoretical and analytical framework, a method and a way of being, all in one. It aspires to establish a tri-directional ‘advanced social science methodology’ that integrates science (third person view), social transformation (second-person view) and the evolution of self (first-person view) into a coherent framework of consciousness-based action research” (Scharmer, 2009, p. 16). It describes a researching work in this spirit as a field walk that incorporates the three methods of ; 1) phenomenology
that focuses the first-person view involving both the observation and active co-creative involvement through the individual consciousness, and 2) dialogue that catches the second person view, qualities of inter-activities that are described as fields of conversation that can be embodied as well as with or without words and involves the whole social field of consciousness in which the collective is embodied, 3) action research that connect to the third person view through embodying and representing the actual enactment of institutional patterns and structures (ibid, p 19). All three are said to “address the same key issue: the intertwined constitution of knowledge, reality and self” following the argumentation of Kurt Lewin - that is related to learning for change - that “You cannot understand a system unless you change it” (ibid, p.19).

Social Presencing theater
One social technique for deep social change-making is developed within the framework of theory U by Arawana Hayashi, and is called Social Presencing Theatre. It has a definite affinity with the laboratory theatre root in applied theatre and drama and resonates with methods of Boal and process drama. It emphasises an awareness-based mindful dimension, in the training of the social/fictional actor. Another source of inspiration is the constellation work of group improvising representations of an individual or collective field of players and forces, in order to create transformative changes. This is a short description.

Drawing on the arts and contemplative traditions, SPT brings body-based, experiential learning into individual, organizational and social change efforts. It quickly generates information about patterns and relationships that are “stuck” in a system and offers methods for prototyping emerging futures that promote the wellbeing of all stakeholders in a system. This is not “theatre” in the conventional sense but uses simple body postures and movements to dissolve limiting concepts, to communicate directly, to access intuition, and to make visible both current reality, and the deeper – often invisible – leverage points for creating profound change (Presencing Institute, 2016).

What is a warm data lab and criteria for working with warm data?
Nora Bateson, the daughter of Gregory Batesons, have within the frames of the Bateson Institute developed a method for processing trans-contextual individually anchored data where all participants step into the “mantle of the expert”, leaning into a systemically aware framework, to allow for the emergence of a collective learning and seeing about a theme of investigation, that is greater than the sum of the parts. With her deep and long experience and development of the Batesonian ways of thinking and interacting, she will help us mirror
and grasp the complexity of our own work and theories from an “ecology of an aesthetic mind”. In her universe the opposition to complexity is not simplicity but reductionism and the aesthetic coherence is the natural way of containing and allowing complexity to engage in sense-making. This way of curiously inquiring, allows exploration to be rooted - not in one silo of practice, ways and field of knowing or discipline, but in a multitude of contexts boiling insights into action from a different way of seeing, that makes a difference. Nora is invited and will attend to our process during the conference.

Theoretical notions, criteria and processes – Short introduction of the work of Nora Bateson
For more information go to:

https://norabateson.wordpress.com/2017/05/28/warm-data/ och
http://internationalbatesoninstitute.org

Nora Bateson develops social methods to work with “how systems get unstuck”. She has developed a notion for a systemic way of understanding what systems constitute and how they learn, which make explicit the implicit underlying interdependency of all relations that make up the fabric of all forms of life. It gives an inclusive sense of what collective and collaborative learning can be. As a verb and a noun for defining systemic learning she suggest the notion of symmathezise and symmathesy. She makes a combination of the Greek word syn/sym together and mathesi (to learn), and with that she creates symmathesy (learning together).

Symmathesy (noun): (Pronounced: sym-math-a-see)
1. an entity forming over time by contextual mutual learning through interaction. For example an eco-system an any scale, like a body, family, or forest is a symmathesy.
2. the process of contextual mutual learning through interaction.
Symmathesize (verb, intrans.): to generate contextual mutual learning through the process of interaction between multiple variables in a living entity. (Bateson, 2017 a, p. 169)

She is also developing interesting criteria for transcontextual research and the new nature of information that she means it can contribute with. This is a direct section form the world press site above:

**Characteristics of Warm Data:** To more effectively meet the challenges of this new sort of rigor, we require studies that generate understanding of contextual systemic data. The information generated makes a difference not
only in scientific research, but also in the contextual influences considered in decision-making. Here are six characteristics of Warm Data.

1. **Multiple description**: This is a way to illustrate processes and contexts of interdependency. Multiple description both blurs the distinctions between contexts, and describes them through difference, comparison and relational perception. While it might appear that this process would lead to an untenable and infinite collection of perspectives, the Batesonian notion of information as “difference that makes a difference” is way to study the relation between perspectives, through contrasting qualitative characteristics. The information is not located but diffused into the contextual contacts and boundaries.

2. **Looking for pattern**: We compare findings from one context with findings of similar patterns in other contexts, to generate hybrid information. This is very much in keeping with Pierce’s Abduction. The findings from pattern comparison across contexts are conceptual, and indirect. For example, the patterns of ecological relationships in a tide pool can be compared to the patterns of relationship in a family, but the needs of survival for the tide pool are clearly different in detail than those of the family. Understanding the patterns comparing ecological systems is useful for studies of other systems, even though the systems may be not be alike in their details.
3. **Paradox, inconsistency and time:** Scientific research premised upon the complexity of a system in relation to its environment will produce paradox and inconsistency, by necessity. In order to keep the complexity intact, results should feature these dilemmas without resolving them. In fact these instabilities are sources of information about the relationships that are highly generative. Relationships over time change, and aggregated relationship such as a forest or society must produce responses to responses that are disruptive. The disruptions are rich with Warm Data.

4. **Holism and reductionism:** Information derived by zooming out to study context is as important as the information derived by zooming in on detail. These two forms of information are not alike. One is relational and overlapping, the other is isolated and (sometimes) linear. Both are needed in relation even when they produce contradictions. Smaller and larger contexts are tangled up mutually calibrating interactions. They are not concentric nor are they separable; rather they are steeped in interdependency.

5. **Cultural epistemological responsibility:** Science and culture are deeply entwined. Development of inquiry that is simultaneously inclusive of multiple generations, cultures, and sectors is useful to keep observers’ frames relevant. Information is only as perceivable as the sensorial limits of the observer. A variety of perceptions lessens blind spots.

6. **Aesthetic/mood/rhythm:** In any inquiry of life, the aesthetic matters — perhaps above all else. This vital condition of any interrelational context is often ignored in favor of misplaced rationality. Given that complex systems are interrelational, the nature of the relationships needs to be noticed. The aesthetic is the conduit through which relation occurs. While the aesthetic need not be valuated, it must be noticed to better assess relational information. Keeping in mind that the opposite of aesthetic is anesthetic, it is clear that increasing sensitivity is preferable to numbness as it increases receivable information.

Just as the methodology for generating Warm Data is characterized by transcontextual research, the end-product and delivery of this information will be characterized by multiple description (though all aspects of Warm Data involves both transcontextual research and multiple description). I need look no further than my own hand for an illustration of how multiple description can increase the scope of understanding within a system and between systems of understanding. To illustrate this, let us ask, “What is a hand for?” Different contexts provide contrasting contexts for understanding. A violinist’s hands hold the muscle memory and learning of a lifetime of practice. But a sculptor’s hands know weight and texture and pressure in another way. People who use sign language express not only words but also emotion through their hands. In this sense, the contexts that the hand exists within, (anatomy, music, memory, language, cognition)
each provide a realm of relational data to be explored. This is just one simple example of the possibility of transcontextual research. At present the International Bateson Institute is currently researching the Warm Data of: Addiction, Health Care Systems, Education, Climate Change, Emergency Population Relocation, Double Binds within Political Discourse and more.

A third perspective
A third perspective will be developed here. It is inspired by the work of Marcus Bussey’s on rhizomatic thinking and Future studies, using Casual Layered Analyzes (CLA) and collectively improvising scenario work. Marcus is part of the Advisory Board for the conference and has help develop our preparational work and will attend over the internet on the conference. If you are curious you can read more about Marcus’ work here: https://usc-au.academia.edu/MarcusBussey

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