



Choreographed by situation

Self-organizing choreography and
the dancer's agencement

MIKKO ORPANA





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Back: Anni Rissanen making notes in *United States of Mind*. Photo Mikko Orpana.

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Table of Contents

Tiivistelmä	9
Abstract	11
Acknowledgements	15
My personal background in dance - early connections to dance and choreography and my years in the field	17
1. Introduction	21
2. The key concepts for the research	25
2.1. Choreography and Choreographer	25
2.1.1. From modern to postmodern dance	30
2.1.2. Co-creation	35
2.2. Composition, Assemblage and Agencement	37
2.2.1. Agencement and incipient tendencies	41
2.3. Systems theory	42
2.4. Emergence	46
2.5. Situation	47
2.6. Embodied mind	49
2.6.1. Alfred North Whitehead	50
2.7. Improvisation	51
2.8. Choreographic knowledge	54
2.8.1. Writing choreography	56
2.8.2. Recording choreography	57

3. Artistic works for the research	59
3.1. “Private&Common”	59
3.2. “Acts of Mind - Manifestations of a moving mind”	62
3.2.1 Research questions	64
3.2.2. Observing and perceiving my mind-body-status - Sleepwalking	65
3.2.3. My routine of sleepwalking	67
3.2.4. The relation to the inner and outer spaces of the body	68
3.2.5. Patterns	69
3.2.6. About renewing	70
3.2.7. Perceptions of the use of the space	70
3.2.8. Embodied mind and dancing mind	71
3.2.9. Mind and body-awareness	72
4. “United States of Mind”	75
4.1. Self-organization and improvisation by the awareness of the situation	79
4.2. Compositional development	81
4.3. Schedule	82
4.4. Rehearsing working on the situation	82
4.5. Structure of the performance	91
4.6. Feedback and criticism	102
5. “Dance & Philosophy” (workshop) - A philosophical inquiry for the dancer’s agency in my research	105
6. Conclusions	111
6.1. Thoughts about making choreographies	113
6.2. Manifesto for dancing	114
7. Bibliography	115

Tiivistelmä

Tarkastelen tässä väitöstyössäni kolmea esitystä ja yhtä työpajaa, jotka olivat osa taiteellista tutkimustani vuosien 2011-2017 aikana. Taiteellisessa tutkimuksessani lähestyin koreografiaa itseorganisoituvana systeeminä ja tutkin niitä vaatimuksia, joita tämän kaltainen lähestymistapa asettaa koreografiselle ajattelulle ja käytännölle ja tanssijan työlle. Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että toteutuakseen itseorganisoituvana ja emergoituvana, koreografia tarvitsee jonkinlaisia lähtökohtia, materiaa ja rajauksia ja myöskin vapautta ennalta määritettyjen olosuhteiden sisällä.

Emergenssin idea koreografiassa hyödyntää itseorganisoituvien systeemien ideota Ilya Prigoginen¹ tutkimuksessa termodynamiikan ja systeemiteorian saralla². Ilya Prigoginen systeemiteoriassa järjestys syntyy kaaoksesta ja systeemi itsessään on jatkuvassa epävakauden tilassa mikä mahdollistaa nopeat muutokset systeemissä ja innovaatiot, jotka emergoituvat epäpsykologisella tavalla tiedon ja tapahtumien kaotillisesta virrasta.

Emergoituvan koreografian ominaisuudet tässä tutkimuksessa pohjautuvat tanssijoiden improvisaatioon ja improvisoituun koreografiaan, jossa on tietyt lähtökohdat ja vaatimukset tanssijoille. Tanssijoiden vaatimuksena on olla taiteilijoita, jotka ovat valmiita luomaan merkityksiä koreografiaan oman *situaationsa* pohjalta. Tanssijan havainnot omasta situaatiostaan perustuvat suomalaisen suomalaisen filosofin Lauri Rauhalan³ käsitteeseen *situationaalinen säätöpiiri*⁴. Situationaalinen säätöpiiri koostuu ihmisen tajunnan ja fyysisen olemuksen yhteistoiminnasta.

Omasta *situaatiosta* kumpuava tanssi ja toiminnot voivat johtaa tanssijoiden monenlaisiin kanssakäymisiin ja kontakteihin. Näistä kanssakäymisistä ja kontakteista koreografia emergoituu ja määrittelee itsensä jatkuvasti uudestaan. Tämän johdosta koreografiasta tulee itseorganisoituvaa systeemiä.

Selvyyden vuoksi on mainittava, että tässä tekstissä käsitellyt termit *situaatio*, *situationaalisuus* ja *situationaalinen säätöpiiri* tulevat Lauri Rauhalan ajattelusta ja

1 Prigogine&Stengers 1984.

2 Prigogine&Stengers 1984.

3 Rauhala 1995.

4 Rauhala 1995, 96.

niillä ei ole mitään tekemistä *The Situationist International* -liikkeen kanssa, joka oli Euroopassa vuosina 1957-1972 toiminut avant-garde-taiteilijoista, intellektuelleista ja politiikan teoreetikoista koostunut järjestö⁵.

Väittäessäni että tämä on *koreografiaa* määrittelen samalla miksi oman tilanteen kautta tekeminen on oleellista tämän kaltaisessa koreografisessa lähestymistavassa. Tämä emergoituva koreografia on saman kaltainen kuin esimerkiksi *open form composition*⁶ ja *assemblagen ja agencementin*⁷ ideat filosofi Erin Manningin mukaan.

Tanssijoiden tilanteen käsittely koreografisena materiaalina vaatii koreografian ja tanssijan roolien uudelleen määrittämistä. Kun tanssijalla on *agencement* itseorganisoidussa koreografiassa hänestä käytännössä tulee koreografi ja koreografista tulee mahdollistaja tai ”architect of fluid environment”⁸. Taiteelliset tarpeet ja koreografiset käytännöt määrittävät näitä rooleja tarpeen mukaan.

Tämän tiivistelmän jälkeen esittelen oman taustani ja vaikuttimeni tanssijana ja koreografina. Esittelyn jälkeen käyn läpi oleelliset käsitteet ja terminologian, joita käytän tässä tekstissä.

Käsitteiden jälkeen esittelen taiteelliseen tutkimukseeni liittyvät työt. Nämä koostuvat kolmesta koreografiasta. Ensimmäinen on improvisoitu koreografia *Private&Common*, joka toimii materiaalin lähteenä. Toinen *Acts of Mind* ja kolmas *United States of Mind* ovat esitarkastettuja taiteellisia osia. Neljäs on työpaja *Dance&Philosophy*, joka toimii myös materiaalin lähteenä. Näiden töiden esittelyn ohessa käsittelen myös muuta nykytanssiin liittyvää tutkimusta.

Yhteenvedossa kerään havaintoni ja löytöni yhteen ja ehdotan suuntia, joihin taiteellinen tutkimukseni voisi viedä ja rohkaista nykytanssin kentällä.

Tässä väitöstyössä on eklektisesti koottu yhteen eri taiteilijoiden ja tutkijoiden ajatuksia. Tämä kirjallinen kommentaari esittelee omaa kehittymistäni itseorganisoidun koreografian ja tanssijan *agencementin* tutkimisessa ja se etenee melko kronologisesti.

Prosessi alkaa systeemien ja mieli-keho-dualismin teoreettisella ja taiteellisella käsittelyllä ja jatkuu *situationaalisen säätöpiirin* kanssa. Lopulta painopiste on tilanteessa ja Alfred North Whiteheadin⁹ ja Michel Serresin¹⁰ filosofioissa tulkittuna kohti tanssijan *agencementia*. Ajatuslinjat eivät seuraa jotain tiettyä filosofista näkemystä mutta jokaisessa taiteellisessa työssä on pohjavireenä mieli-keho-dualismin problematiikka.

5 Jappe 1993, 6.

6 Da Silva 2015, 156.

7 Manning 2016, 154.

8 Kliën 2008, 40.

9 Shaviro 2014.

10 Serres 1999.

Abstract

In this doctoral dissertation I will examine three performances and one workshop that were part of my artistic research during the years 2011-2017. In my artistic research I approached choreography as a self-organizing system and investigated the requirements that this kind of approach demands from the choreographic thinking and practice and the dancer's work to make the self-organization happen. The outcome of the research shows that the self-organization needs some kind of substance, matter and framing to be able to emerge and that there also has to be freedom within pre-determined conditions so that the emerging choreography can truly be autopoietic and unforeseen.

The idea of emergence in the choreography benefits from the ideas of self-organizing systems according to Ilya Prigogine's¹¹ thinking in the field of thermodynamics and systems theory¹². In Ilya Prigogine's systems theory the order comes out of chaos and the system is in constant imbalance and enables sudden changes within the system and innovations that seem to emerge in non-psychological way from the chaotic flow of information.

The features of the emerging choreography in this dissertation are based on the dancer's improvisation and improvised choreography with certain starting points and principles which set quite determined requirements for the dancer. The dancers have to be confident artists who are ready to create the meaning and significance for the choreography on the basis of their own *situation* at every moment. The perception and awareness of the dancer's own *situation* is based on the Finnish philosopher Lauri Rauhala's¹³ concept of *the situational circuit*¹⁴.

11 Prigogine&Stengers 1984.

12 Prigogine and Stengers 1984.

13 Rauhala 1995.

14 Rauhala 1995, 96.

The situational circuit consists of the human's consciousness and physical constitution and describes their functioning together.

The dancing and actions which stem from everyone's own *situation* can lead to several kinds of encounters and contacts and from the dancers. From these encounters and actions the choreography emerges and configures itself over and over again during its course of action. In this way the choreography is a self-organizing system.

For further clarity the terms *situation*, *situationally* and *situational circuit* in this dissertation derive from Lauri Rauhala's thinking and have nothing to do with *The Situationist International*, which was an international organization consisting of avant-garde artists, intellectuals and political theorists in Europe during the years 1957-1972.¹⁵

By claiming that this is *choreography* I am defining why the focus and use of one's own *situation* is fundamental for this kind of work in dance and in making a choreography. This emerging choreography has parallel features with systems like *open form composition*¹⁶ and the thoughts of mode as in *assemblage* and in *agencement*¹⁷ as the philosopher Erin Manning describes these concepts.

The idea of using the dancer's situation as material for the choreography requires us to reconsider the preconceived roles of choreographer and dancer. When the dancer has the *agencement* in self-organizing choreography he or she actually becomes the choreographer and the choreographer becomes a facilitator or an "architect of fluid environment"¹⁸. These roles are to be negotiated according to the artistic needs and demands regarding different choreographic processes.

Right after this abstract I will introduce my own background and my urge to be a dancer and a choreographer. In the Introduction I will also position myself as a choreographer in the field of contemporary dance and its paradigms. After the Introduction there will be an explanation of the key concepts and terminology used in this dissertation.

After the key concepts I will present all the artistic works for my research. These artistic works consist of the first improvised choreography, *Private & Common* which stands as a material source for the research, two pre-examined

15 Jappe 1993, 6.

16 Da Silva 2015, 156.

17 Manning 2016, 154.

18 Kliën 2008, 40.

choreographies, *Acts of Mind* and *United States of Mind*, and one workshop, *Dance & Philosophy*, which also stands as a material source for the research. In this section I will also have a dialogue with some of the recent studies in contemporary dance.

In the Conclusion I will sum up my research and make propositions about the actions my research might suggest and encourage in the future of the field of contemporary dance.

This dissertation is an eclectic combination of the thinking of many artists and philosophers and proceeds quite chronologically. It shows the development and accumulation of different points of view in my thinking regarding choreography and a dancer's *agencement*. The progress begins with theoretical thinking about systems, autopoiesis and the problematics of mind-body-dualism in the two first works. In the third work the focus is more on the *situational circuit*, and in the fourth work the focus is on *situation* and Alfred North Whitehead's¹⁹ and Michel Serres'²⁰ philosophy interpolated into a dancer's *agencement*. There is no consistent and uninterrupted line of thinking according to some singular philosophy in this dissertation; however, the problematics of mind-body-dualism and how to avoid it form an underlying theme for the works.

19 Shaviro 2014.

20 Serres 1999.

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It has been a long and eventful journey doing this artistic research and I have been lucky to meet so many lovely and talented people during the process.

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My personal background in dance - early connections to dance and choreography and my years in the field

In 1993 I dreamt of becoming a dancer and a choreographer but my experience and knowledge of dance was quite limited. I had been dancing in two contemporary choreographies without any training in dance techniques. However, I had experience in sports: running, judo and taekwondo and also some experience in being on stage as an amateur actor.

With the experience of these two dance projects I was determined to become a dancer and went to a folk high school for an intensive five months' dance programme. The programme consisted of workshops - of one to two weeks by different teachers in the field of contemporary dance. I got a good perspective of what a dancer's work is about and what it demanded of a dancer. It was physically very exhausting for me since I had no earlier training in dance and suddenly I was learning short choreographies and established dance techniques such as ballet, Graham-technique, release-technique and jazz dance. I was 20 years old, a bit too old to be a classical ballet dancer but my inspiration came more from the early butoh and contemporary dance.

After the five months' intensive training I was accepted to study in the Theatre Academy's four-year MA programme in dance, which was a dream come true for me. At that time (1994) the MA program was a comprehensive one that included the BA course. This gave me the opportunity to focus on dance and on choreography intensively. After three years of studying I switched the dance to the choreography program by participating in the entrance examination again.

What did I know of choreography at that time? The two choreographies in which I had been a dancer were a mixture of theatre, installation, perfor-

mance art and dance. Otherwise my experiences were from short movement/dance-compositions in different styles: jazz dance, ballet, contemporary dance, modern dance and contact improvisation. My journey to becoming a dancer had just begun and I indeed enjoyed it because it was both mentally and physically demanding and the teaching was good.

For me the Finnish contemporary dance in the 1990s was exemplified in works by choreographers such as Sanna Kekäläinen²¹, Kirsi Monni²², Ari Tenhula²³, Alpo Aaltokoski²⁴ and the central venue which I visited was Zodiak Presents²⁵ in Helsinki (later Zodiak - Centre for New Dance). Alongside these there were many more active dance artists in Finland. One important artist for me was Reijo Kela²⁶. All these artists and many others not mentioned here have their own styles and techniques and it would be unjustified to them to sum up that era in some certain conclusion. Perhaps the most characteristic feature of that time was the diversity of the practices in the dance field.

In my studies during 1994-99, I perceived a certain concept of choreography and making compositions. These choreographies and compositions were mostly about patterns of movement that could be repeated over and over again. The variable elements were usually the tempo and some adjustments in the rehearsed movements and sometimes there was also room for improvisation and theatrical expressiveness of feelings. This kind of composition and choreographic thinking was the first model of choreography I learned in dancing. I was fascinated about the idea to be able to do something that is precise, fixed, complicated and expressive at the same time.

At the time when I was studying choreography, I noticed that movement is not the primary starting point for me when I plan and create choreography. I think this was due to my feeling that I lacked proper dancing technique and compensating for it by theatrical elements that were combined with patterns of movement.

After my MA studies I worked as a choreographer and dancer between the years 1999 and 2010 before beginning my doctoral studies. During those years

21 Kekäläinen 2021.

22 Monni 2004.

23 Ojala&Takala 2007, 23.

24 Aaltokoski 2021.

25 Ojala&Takala 2007.

26 Jyrkkä 2008.

my practice as a choreographer was quite unchanging. I always had a short plan, usually based on a text or a story which was then processed into a more abstract setting on the stage. The setting was usually dance movement mixed with live or recorded voice and music. After the ten years of making choreographies in a similar way I began to realize that I needed to learn new ways of thinking and doing in my choreographic practice. However, I could not find a suitable method to examine and try out the above-mentioned new ways; my knowledge of alternative ways of creating choreography was too narrow. Working as a freelancer also meant quite short rehearsing periods with the dancers. These feelings of personal limitations and actual practical limitations gradually led me to apply to join the doctoral program in the Theatre Academy. The initial reason for studying was thus to deepen my own knowledge in making collaborative choreography and to learn how to make it possible for the dancers to contribute to the choreography as co-choreographers.

1. Introduction

There are numerous approaches to choreography in artistic practice and research which hover around improvised dance and self-organizing and collaborative choreography. Many times these approaches can be seen as attempts to redefine the concept of choreography. What are the previous conventions then?

One basic and common level definition of the concept of choreography is by artist-researcher Ivar Hagendoorn²⁷. He has a clear and functional description of choreography in his paper *Emergent Patterns in Dance Improvisation and Choreography*:

In a traditional choreography a choreographer determines the motions of a dancer or a group of dancers.

...

A choreography is a set of instructions for the organization and reconfiguration of one or several bodies in space and time. ²⁸

The above - mentioned concept of choreography is about making dance patterns in space by the movement of dancers. In his paper Hagendoorn considers the choreographer as 'a master mind' or 'a central governing agent'. But as complexity theory shows, according to Hagendoorn, the complexity of movements is limited in any given amount of time when working in this way. He also claims that the complexity of patterns in this case equals values such as 'beautiful' and 'great' referring to a research paper submitted by the psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi²⁹, who has argued that the human brain actively searches for difference and more complex events or scenes, once it gets used to whatever it

27 Hagendoorn 2002.

28 Hagendoorn 2002, 1.

29 Csikszentmihalyi 1992, 24.

is currently doing or perceiving. If no such perceptual or cognitive challenges are at hand, the brain will become bored. Hagendoorn describes how complex patterns may emerge in choreographies:

*Complexity theory offers a different paradigm towards the generation of complex structures. Flocks of birds and schools of fish, for instance, exhibit intricate patterns that emerge from the interaction of individual agents, in the absence of a master mind or a central governing agent.*³⁰

The other distinctive feature of the conventional concept of choreography is the preconceived roles of the choreographer and the dancers and the choreography itself as an object of art, many times representing feelings or aspects of beauty. In relation to these preconceived attributes the improvisation and the emergence are indeed limited to patterns of movement or some kind of interpretation of the movements within certain movemental boundaries which are usually defined by the choreographer.

Going beyond the aforementioned limitations, the SenseLab introduced by the philosopher, artist - researcher and author Erin Manning³¹ and her co-researchers has a totally different approach to emergent choreography, improvisation and the dancers' and choreographers' agency. Erin Manning describes *agencement*, which is the term she uses instead of *agency*, in her book *A Minor Gesture*:

*Of course what a body does always has a place and a time. People often ask how such an account of the body has agency. I prefer the notion of 'agencement' to agency – the sense of directionality occasioned by movement rather than a subject-based intentionality – but however you define this moment of “making a difference,” there is no question that how it individuates in this time and place, in co-composition – or how it matters, here and now – belongs to what a body can do. A body makes a difference in terms of how this or that vector, this or that inflection, alters the conditions of this or that event. So, that a body is black or white or female or transgender does make a difference. Of course it does! But these are less “states” of an existing body than vectors of a becoming-body that themselves change over time. Identity, like individuation, is emergent. What a body can do is change.*³²

30 Hagerdoorn 2002, 1.

31 Manning 2016.

32 Manning 2016, 238.

I take these two examples from Hagendoorn and Manning to make more understandable how I position myself when working as a choreographer and an artist - researcher. I am roughly placed somewhere there in the middle. I come from a conventional practice of contemporary dance and I am aiming at an *agencement* in both the dancer's and the choreographer's work. For me this *agencement* also means situatedness as a human being in this world. *Situation* is a central concept for me in this thesis and it covers both the subject and the object, the mind and the body, which are entangled and inseparable. And rather than trying to analyze the entanglement by dualistic definitions this thesis is an attempt to understand the art of the dance and the choreography on an ontological level.

I do realize when I think of renewing my own understanding about choreography that I also categorize my 'old' understanding of it. The idea of new or renewed understanding and practice is merely based on the reflection of these old categories which I already claim to know. Therefore this artistic research is first of all based on my own practice and understanding. From that point I am taking it into a wider perspective in the concept of choreography.

2. The key concepts for the research

In this chapter I will present those key concepts from art, scientific thinking and philosophy which helped me to carry out my artistic research within the self-organizing choreography and related dancer's work. Through these concepts I also frame the research questions in the artistic works.

I will go through the following concepts:

- *choreography and choreographer*
- *composition, assemblage and agencement*
- *emergence*
- *systems theory*
- *situation*
- *embodied mind*
- *improvisation*
- *choreographic knowledge*

2.1. Choreography and Choreographer

Choreography in its traditional setting in Western dance art has been defined as an aesthetically designed movement composition or an illustration of established movement ideas in material form. The concept of traditionally set choreography followed the ontology of western art as a representation of ideas until the beginning of the twentieth century. When the concept of art as a representation of ideas expanded and broke free from the traditional understanding of forms, choreography also began to gain new and alternative ways of setting. According to dance researcher Susan Leigh Foster³³ new approaches since the 1960s have been designating the process of creating a dance, including making, directing

33 Foster 2020.

and arranging. Choreography as a structured movement has been expanded from the human to the non-human movement:

*...choreography constitutes a plan or score according to which movement unfolds. Thus buildings can choreograph space and people's movement through them; cameras choreograph cinematic action; birds perform intricate choreographies; and combat in war is choreographed.*³⁴

Going even further with the problematics of choreography, dance researcher André Lepecki³⁵ defines choreography as an *apparatus of capture*. This *apparatus* can be seen as a mechanism that simultaneously distributes and organizes dance's relationship to perception and signification. Lepecki states:

*...to see it (choreography) as an apparatus that captures dance only to distribute its significations and mobilizations, its gestures and affects, within fields of light and fields of words that are strictly codified-is to delimit those hegemonic modes of aesthetically perceiving and theoretically accounting for dance's evolutions in time.*³⁶

These two definitions of choreography from Susan Leigh Foster and André Lepecki lead the way further from the choreographic thinking in which I was educated in Finland in the 1990s. The common practice then was the quite pragmatic one where the choreographer makes the decisions and creates the movements and the choreography. In this way the choreographer makes most of the decisions regarding the performance, for example the theme, the style of the dancing, the movement patterns and negotiates with the other designers the visualization and the sound and music. Using this practice can be very effective within limited rehearsing times and may lead to a very precisely and well-organized performance. Traditionally speaking, as Ivar Hagendoorn³⁷ here explains, choreography and the choreographic process point to a dance choreography in which the choreography is more or less choreographed patterns of dance movements and steps.

34 Foster 2020.

35 Lepecki 2007.

36 Lepecki 2007, 120.

37 Hagendoorn 2002.

*A choreography is a set of instructions for the organization and reconfiguration of one or several bodies in space and time.*³⁸

In this case the dance is also many times accompanied by music and the music's tempo and characteristics are usually in tight relation with the movement or vice versa.

In traditionally set choreographies or pre-choreographed practices there is usually very little room for improvisation or alternation from the rehearsed patterns during the performance. This kind of pre-choreographed practice is also considered as a craftsmanship where one person, the choreographer, is the one responsible for crafting the dance into a choreography. In his or her work the choreographer is relatively free to choose the way the choreography is going to be. However, there might be fairly many demands or even restrictions arising from the tradition, music, styles, taste and the dancers' backgrounds in training as well. Examples of these traditions might be found, for example, in the ballet classics such as "Swan Lake" and "Nutcracker" or Broadway musicals such as "All That Jazz" and "West Side Story". This kind of approach to choreography is still very much alive and appreciated. The kind of craftsmanship and deep knowledge it demands takes years to accomplish and is very demanding for both the choreographer and the dancers. To hone the skills to be able to dance usually takes hours of practice every day. The choreographer should personally also be able to create such movements and patterns that will be satisfying and on the same skill level as the dancers are on and maybe even more challenging for the dancers. So there are a lot of demands for mastering the crafting and the executing of traditionally set choreography on a professional level.

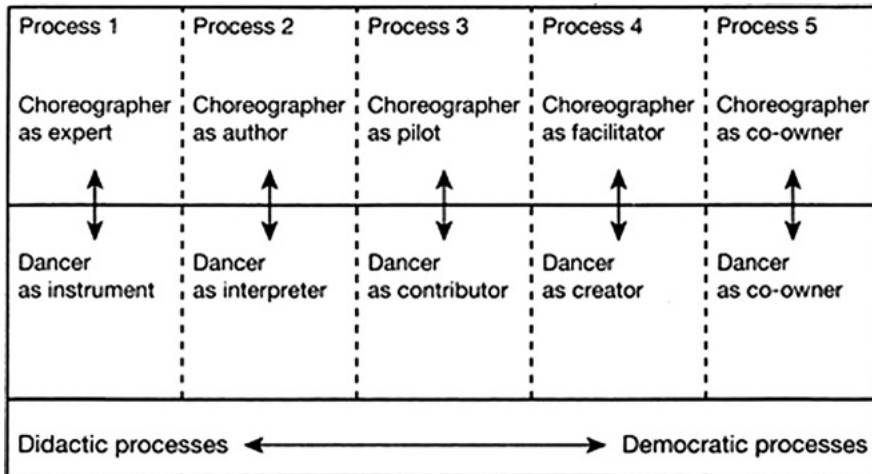
The shift from the traditional choreographic thinking and practices towards contemporary thinking and practices requires us to redefine the role of the choreographer too. The role of the choreographer is a multifaceted one and introduces new responsibilities for the profession and the art of dance itself.

In contemporary dance there are many ways to create choreographies as dance researcher Jo Butterworth³⁹ introduces in her Didactic-Democratic-chart⁴⁰:

38 Hagendoorn 2002, 1.

39 Butterworth 2009.

40 Butterworth 2009, 178.



Usually the choreographer has the power to decide how the choreography is assembled. I am deliberately using the word *assemble* here to have a single, quite basic definition of choreography. It can be an assembly of premeditated and/or improvised dance movements. Improvisation is often used as a source for dance movements for choreography. These movements can be processed during the rehearsing period and the choreographer then assembles the choreography from this movement material. However, improvisation can also be a crucial part of the performance itself or even the choreography itself. The idea of improvisation as choreography sets new requirements for the concept of choreography and the roles of the choreographer and the dancer.

The dancer João da Silva⁴¹ has an excellent case study of a large-group dance improvisation in his doctoral thesis “Risk-Taking and Large-Group Dance Improvisation” from 2016 at the University of Utrecht. Silva’s notion of the opposition between improvisation and choreography in traditional thinking and the evolvement of choreography requires us to rephrase the definition of choreography. In da Silva’s words:

*...choreography, understood as planned, dis-sensual, and non-policed disposition of motion becomes the condition for improvisation and as such for the possibility for change (freedom) as well. In other words: without choreography, as a form of planning, there will be no dance (improvisation), no change nor freedom.*⁴²

41 da Silva 2016.

42 da Silva 2016, 76.

The quotation above gives us new perspectives in thinking of choreography and the choreographic process. We can regard choreography as a process and, according to Silva, we can also claim that improvisation is choreography with a certain framing.

Choreographer and artistic researcher Michael Kliën⁴³ in his doctoral thesis “Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change” from 2008 at the Edinburgh College of Art has a very similar definition for choreography to Silva’s. He defines choreography as an *idea*:

*Choreography is no longer ‘about’ dance, no longer connected to simple ‘step-making’, nor is it necessarily in need of a stage – it is, as Forsythe outlines, an idea strong enough to organize movement; the idea itself is the creative act of arranging movement in time and space.*⁴⁴

In connection with this kind of definition, Kliën also connects the use of systems theory as a choreographic tool or a governing idea for arranging the energy in time and space both in an organized way and in a non-deterministic and open way. And in this way Kliën also redefines the role of the choreographer:

*The act of choreography is no longer bound into the historical context of dance but, as outlined in this and the next chapter, emerges as the creative act of setting the conditions for something to happen, proposing the role of the choreographer as the navigator, provider, negotiator and architect of a fluid environment he/she himself/herself is part of.*⁴⁵

These quotations from João da Silva and Michael Kliën clearly describe how versatile the concept of choreography has become and along with it the role of the choreographer. When examining choreography from traditional practice to postmodern thinking we can see how the concept of choreography evolves and how the choreographer becomes the “architect of fluid environment”.

43 Kliën 2008.

44 Kliën 2008, 38.

45 Kliën 2008, 40.

2.1.1. *From modern to postmodern dance*

In the traditional setting of the choreography the performance may have strong conventions in dancing techniques and storytelling. The dancing techniques are usually quite strict in their vocabulary and the movements tend to be categorized. The vocabulary and categorizing are very useful, though, in coordinating movement patterns for groups which require precision in timing and executing certain movements. The legacy of classical ballet is a good example of a strict technique. But there are other styles that have strong techniques too. Similar to the classical ballet in the history of American modern dance the examples from choreographer Martha Graham's⁴⁶ work alongside choreographer Merce Cunningham's⁴⁷ practice are essential. They both possess their own characteristics both in technique and storytelling. In Martha Graham's work one significant feature is the use of a special breathing technique in *contraction* and *release*. The other distinctive quality in Graham's work is her focus on American themes, for example *Appalachian Spring* (1944) and Ancient Greek mythology in *Cave of Heart* (1946) or *Night Journey* (1947), from a woman's point of view.⁴⁸

The tendencies for trying to break out of the hermetic world of strictly set composition choreography are seen in the works of Merce Cunningham and later on in the Fluxus movement and the Judson Dance Theatre.

Merce Cunningham's choreographic practice is groundbreaking in many ways. In the 1950s he began experimenting with the famous chance-based operations. In these operations the movement material was constructed beforehand but the actual sequence was determined by chance. Cunningham's first chance based choreography is from 1951 – "Sixteen Dances for Soloist and Company of Three"⁴⁹ in which the final quartet "Tranquility" was choreographed by a chance procedure with a different gamut of movements for each dancer. Merce Cunningham created this choreography in collaboration with the composer John Cage⁵⁰ as well as many other choreographies which were based on chance thinking.

The avant-garde art movement Fluxus was founded in 1960 in New York. In 1959 there arose the so-called Proto-Fluxus which was a group of artists who had

46 Graham 2019.

47 Cunningham 2019.

48 Graham 2019.

49 Cunningham 2019.

50 Cage 2021.

met in John Cage's class in The New School in New York. Lithuanian-American artist, George Maciunas⁵¹, was also greatly influenced by Cage's works and came up with the name "Fluxus", which means "flow". He was the gathering force for this international network of composers and artists.

Fluxus was a democratic form of creativity open to anyone. The usual practice for Fluxus artists was to make event scores:

*Events tend to be scored in brief verbal notations. These notes are known as event scores. In a general sense, they are proposals, propositions, and instructions.*⁵²

Collaborations were encouraged between artists and across artforms, and also with the audience or spectator. It valued simplicity and anti-commercialism, with chance and accident playing a big part in the creation of works, and humour also being an important element. Fluxus really launched a new collaborative way of thinking and working on ideas around art, composition and choreography. Amongst the very first Fluxus artists were Alison Knowles⁵³ and George Brecht⁵⁴, whose scores give a good sample of two different ways to make a score:

Alison Knowles:

Shuffle (1961)

*The performer or performers shuffle into the performance area and away from it, above, behind, around and through the audience. They perform as a group or solo: but quietly.*⁵⁵

Street Piece (1962)

*Make something in the street and give it away.*⁵⁶

George Brecht:

Drip Music (1959)

*For single or multiple performance. A source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel.*⁵⁷

51 Maciunas 2021.

52 Friedman et al. 2002, 1.

53 Friedman et al. 2002.

54 Friedman et al. 2002.

55 Friedman et al. 2002, 69.

56 Friedman et al. 2002, 69.

57 Friedman et al. 2002, 22.

*Three Yellow Events (1961)**1 yellow yellow yellow**2 yellow loud**3 red⁵⁸*

At the same time as the Fluxus artists were creating the event scores the Judson Dance Theater artists began exploring the collaborative and improvisational possibilities in dance choreography and other individual artists contributed to the breakthrough of the postmodern thinking. Simone Forti's⁵⁹ piece "Five Dance Constructions & Some Other Things" from 1961 was "a watershed moment when the relationship between bodies and objects, movement and sculpture, was being fundamentally rethought."⁶⁰ As Stuart Comer, the Chief Curator of Media and Performance Art at MOMA, New York, has said.

The improvisation seems to have happened in a well framed situation and as the explanation above claims the dancers had to be aware of their own situation when they negotiated the possibilities of action. This kind of choreographic thinking was unforeseen at that time, and the impact that Simone Forti and, later, other artists from the Judson Dance Theater had released changed the paradigm from modernist to postmodernist in dance.

Choreographer Yvonne Rainer⁶¹ from the collective of the Judson Dance Theater, wrote an essay called "No Manifesto" in 1965. In this essay she goes further in deconstructing the traditional and modern ways of creating choreographies and setting them on stage. In a way "No Manifesto" clears the path for collaborative and non-hierarchical thinking and declares Rainer's opposition to the dominant forms of dance of that period, which were typified, for example by Martha Graham's work:

No to spectacle.

No to virtuosity.

No to transformations and magic and make-believe.

No to the glamour and transcendency of the star image.

No to the heroic.

No to the anti-heroic.

58 Friedman et al. 2002, 24.

59 Comer 2019.

60 Comer 2019.

61 Rainer 1965.

No to trash imagery.

No to involvement of performer or spectator.

No to style.

No to camp.

No to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer.

No to eccentricity.

No to moving or being moved.⁶²

Rainer's artistic work contributed to Merce Cunningham's and John Cage's thinking in chance-based artistic operations but ultimately she disagreed with John Cage's approach:

We can't have it both ways: no desire and no God. To have no desire – for 'improvements on creation' – is necessarily coequal to having no quarrel with – God-given – manifestations of reality. Any such dispassionate stance in turn obviates the necessity of 're-telling' the way things have been given.⁶³

In other words Yvonne Rainer was detaching her choreographic thinking and work from traditional story-telling and representation of life as such. Rainer configured choreography with new attributes such as repetition, tasks and indeterminacy. These attributes have since then become standard features of contemporary dance and choreography.

The influence of American modern and postmodern dance from the 1940s to the 1960s has been enormous. The breakthrough of postmodern thinking is still echoing and many contemporary choreographers are researching and redefining the concepts of choreography and the roles of the dancer and the choreographer and the dance movement.

One example of bodily thinking and movement research is choreographer Thomas Hauert's⁶⁴ work with the ZOO – Company. This Brussels-based company has been working since 1998 and it investigates how dancers are able to put their bodies back to 'zero' and start building something new and use human anatomy as the base for this building.

62 Rainer 1965.

63 Rainer 2007, 19.

64 Hauert 2019.

After the dancers have been temporarily extracted from their usual movement patterns, they try to apply the new parameters to their bodies. ⁶⁵

Hauert and the Zoo-group are basically trying to disassociate the dancers' bodies from their usual movement forms and disconnect the body's potential from the mind's limitations. Although that might sound slightly mechanical or dualistic in thinking about the mind - body relationship, the idea is very clearly expressed. It can also be a quite playful approach in obtaining a new kind of movement material, especially as a dancer.

One approach to rethinking the choreography, score and dancer's agency is seen in choreographer Deborah Hay's⁶⁶ work. Her lifelong artistic career goes through the years of dancing with Merce Cunningham and founding, amongst others, the Judson Dance Theater until the present day. Her insight goes deep into the questions of what choreography and the dancer's agency are. Choreographer and dance researcher Kirsi Monni has a brilliant article, "*I am the impermanence I see*" (2019), about Hay's practice and its paradigm shifting impact on contemporary from the 1980s to this day. Monni claims that:

Hay took a radical phenomenological and representational turn by incorporating the perceptual awareness and the perception of time and space into the core of the constitution of dance. In Hay's dance ontology the principles of idealistic aesthetics have been abandoned totally, and the constitution of both the dancing and choreography emerges from the fundamentals of our existence: from time and being-in-the-historical-world. ⁶⁷

The Deborah Hay Dance Company states as their mission:

...mission is to foster a discerning appreciation for the human body within the cultural construct of contemporary society, through dance as experienced by audience, student, and/or performer. Central to this mission is the role of humor in recognizing the wildly cogent dancer we are capable of exercising into action. ⁶⁸

In Hay's practice, the dancer's cellular body has the central role and how she or he perceives it. This kind of focusing also affects how we define choreography.

65 Hauert 2019.

66 Monni 2019.

67 Monni 2019, 53-54.

68 Hay 2019.

The shift from the traditionally set representation to contemporary thinking is huge and widens the whole field of what we think of choreography. For Hay the dancer is a site for inquiry, i.e. a bodily presence trained in the performance of parallel experiences of perception.

Choreography in contemporary dance does not necessarily need the dancer's body. The concept of dance movement may comprise almost anything that is moving in our minds and bodies and beyond. Finnish sound designer and visual artist Mikko Hynninen⁶⁹ created 'Theatre#_ ' – performance (2004 Kiasma Theatre), which he defines as 'a minimalist electro-mechanical ballet'⁷⁰ without human performers, only the stage and the equipment for creating the performance. This kind of performance can be described as a choreography or a composition and it contains dancing without human dancers or performers. Alongside the widening of the concept of dance movement and choreography, the role of the choreographer has been changing and widening too, from one person's agenda to collaborative thinking and shared situations as we can clearly see in Jo Butterworths Didactic-Democratic-chart. And this kind of collaborative working puts some demands both for the choreographer's and the dancer's skillset.

2.1.2. *Co-creation*

Dancers who are skilled and able to artistically direct themselves when performing the choreography are essential for many choreographers in the making of the choreography. For example, the British choreographer Siobhan Davies⁷¹ considers the dancers are a crucial part of the artistic group when they are planning the choreography together. Davies calls her dancers as *co-creators*⁷². Without the contribution of this kind of dancers the choreographer's job would be difficult or even impossible. The choreographer cannot be responsible for everything, even though she or he tries to be. The phenomenon of contemporary dance has an invaluable opportunity to weave together knowledge from many different professions and fields of thinking and thus invoke artistic visions that have not seen before.

The Jo Butterworths Didactic-Democratic – chart presented above, in which she gives us a clear vision of various levels of the choreographer-dancer hierarchy

69 Hynninen 2019.

70 Hynninen 2019.

71 Whatley 2013.

72 Whatley 2013, 83-98.

there are five different stages of the artistic process between choreographer and dancer. The processes begin with number one, where the hierarchy is clear and the choreographer is the expert directing the dancer. Going further to number five the hierarchy is diluted as both choreographer and dancer are co-owners for the process.

Choreographer and dance researcher Soile Lahdenperä⁷³ has used this Didactic-Democratic-chart as a tool for examining how the interaction and dialogue actualise in her artistic research and thesis⁷⁴ and what kind of hierarchy prevails on each occasion. Lahdenperä uses this Didactic-Democratic-chart especially in her work “*Terraario*”, in which she researches the choreographers and the dancers work as a co-owned process.

The attempt to do co-owned artistic work leads to a need to create a situation where we can share each one’s vision. This does not mean that everything is accepted as such by everyone but everybody is allowed to lead, contribute and criticize the things we are doing. There have to be commonly agreed directives in the group and boundaries for the process so that co-owners are able to create material and to process the findings of the work.

Dance researcher Maaïke Bleeker⁷⁵ writes about the collaborative process on her own behalf in the book *Dance Dramaturgy – Modes of Agency, Awareness and Engagement* (2015) edited by Pil Hansen and Darcey Callison:

She (Bleeker) reminds us that in a collaborative process of making dance, all agents involved engage with the creation “in different ways, coming from different practices, and with different aims.” The dramaturgical mode of looking is, according to Bleeker, aware of “the directions in which a creation can potentially proceed” and “the implications and complications of the material being created”⁷⁶

Bleeker also goes into the field of emergent choreography when she argues about embodied thought and the act of creation:

Bleeker draws upon both philosopher Gilles Deleuze and philosopher Alva Nöe’s concept of enactment to understand dance as a form of embodied thought and the act of creation as a kind of embodied thinking. Although embodied, this thinking does

73 Lahdenperä 2013.

74 Lahdenperä 2013, 3.4.1.

75 Hansen&Callison 2015.

76 Hansen&Callison 2015, 15.

*not belong to any one person because it emerges in the dialogue between the different artists' contributions.*⁷⁷

According to the philosopher Alva Noë⁷⁸, our perception is based on enactment:

*The basis of perception, on our enactive, sensorimotor approach, is implicit practical knowledge of the ways movement gives rise to changes in stimulation.*⁷⁹

The Finnish philosopher Dr Jaana Parviainen⁸⁰ takes the embodied thought into a wider perspective in social choreography, not just that what happens between artists or in the art context but in the whole of society. She defines Edith Stein's kinesthesia in a new manner in her article:

*...the kinesthetic field involves the characteristic motion and rhythms embedded in a geographically, culturally, historically, politically and technologically complex environment. I suggest that material, social, political and technological infrastructures always pre-choreograph our bodily movements.*⁸¹

In this sense as Parviainen suggests, by the concept of the kinesthetic field co-creation is always already conditioned kinesthetically and by enactment, as Alva Noë suggests. We as dancers already share the conditions and knowledge involved in our current circumstances.

In other words, the above-mentioned collaborative process by Maaïke Bleeker is thus based on embodied thought and the basis of this embodied thought is in our bodily capabilities of perceiving our environment. We share the infrastructures in which we are situated and that already gives us a common ground for improvising dance and understanding on what basis the choreography is being built.

2.2. Composition, Assemblage and Agencement

Composition is an important concept when I am trying in my research to define what choreography is. In the arts in general the concept of composition has often been used within the fine arts but more commonly in music. Choreography and

77 Hansen&Callison 2015, 16.

78 Noë 2004.

79 Noë 2004, 8.

80 Parviainen 2011.

81 Parviainen 2011, 113.

musical composition have been in close contact since the early historical dances of the Renaissance and since then the term composition has been integral in creating choreographies. The dance educator Jacqueline M. Smith-Autard⁸² summarizes the use of composition as a tool in the Western modern and contemporary dance mainly in the 20th century. Her book 'Dance – Composition'⁸³ is a handbook for choreography students and dance students alike. The book gives detailed instructions on how to divide composition into smaller units and analyze these smaller parts and in that way build a composed choreography.

The definition of composition in contemporary dance can also be expanded to a more complex net of interaction and a field of emergent phenomena. To move from a relatively simple definition of a set of rules, placements and directions to intentionalities, interdependencies and agencies as composition requires new terminology. The concepts of *assemblage* and *agencement* are less often used in everyday language when speaking of choreography but in my opinion these concepts contain essential attributes especially in the context of open-form choreography, improvisatory choreography, self-organizing choreography and emergent choreography. When we leave the choreographic form partially or fully open we create opportunities for different compositional progresses. These progresses can be regarded as *assemblages*, depending on the desired developmental directions. If the choreographic form is open, then there will be most likely a demand for certain a kind of *agencement* for the participants also.

The author and researcher Ric Allsop⁸⁴ from The Falmouth University suggests using the Deleuzean idea of *assemblage*:

*I want to suggest here that a shifted attention towards composition, which understands composition not as an instrumentalising material practice, or as a foreclosure, but as a distributive, open and generative agency, involves bringing into play the Deleuzean idea of “assemblage” as considered by Jane Bennett in her search for an agency for vital materiality.*⁸⁵

Assemblage and agencement are both ways to define composition and yet are at the same time something slightly different from each other and the composition.

82 Smith-Autard 2010.

83 Smith-Autard 2010.

84 Allsop 2015.

85 Allsop 2015, 140.

Both of these concepts also include an active agent or agency. In a choreographic context, assemblage could be defined as having a multitude of materials, and the relations between these materials can be shady, non-causal and left to the viewers' responsibility, whereas agencement can also contain multiple possibilities but there might also be a premeditated intentionality or some trajectories at least. These concepts are overlapping. Assemblage is also analogized with *collage*, which:

...has come to imply the sort of 'couplings and uncouplings' we now routinely associate with many different aspects of the work of Cunningham and Cage. Unlike the Gesamtkunstwerk, which exemplifies a hunger for wholeness, collage appeals to an age that has come to distrust claims of closure, 'unity', and fixed boundaries.⁸⁶

The visual artist and arts researcher Marian Tubbs⁸⁷ explains that assemblages are heterogenous multiplicities that are systems by relationships generated between difference, and she also points to Deleuze's thinking:

A garden pond has an agency, as an assemblage, it has the agency to contain an ecosystem. The agent is the intervener or catalyst that is a part of any adaptive system producing events and affects.⁸⁸

Marian Tubbs' definition and use of assemblage is related to the terms' etymology. The first recorded notion of assemblage is from 1704, when this French term was understood to signify a collection and nowadays its definition is generally seen as a collection of 'common' everyday objects in artistic compositions, and this definition directly points mainly to visual arts. However, the connection to dance art is found, for example, in the painter and sculptor Robert Rauschenberg's exhibition *Minutiae* (1954), which was a freestanding combination of oil, paper, fabric, newspaper, wood, metal, plastic, mirror and wood, exhibited with the dance piece of the same title by Merce Cunningham and music composed by John Cage.

According to Tubbs, this kind of art invites the viewer to engage objects and materials of low status with their gaze:

86 Copeland 2004, 167.

87 Tubbs 2015.

88 Calcagno et al. 2014, 130.

*In an assemblage, contingencies make up the whole, they are its strengths and weaknesses. It is not one thing but a multiplicity, each part with a different story, made by different conditions, the result of both human and nonhuman processes.*⁸⁹

Assemblage is one way to define composition and choreography. The first performance presented in this doctoral dissertation is 'Private & Common' (2011), which was an improvised choreography in which the key thought was some kind of self-organizing choreography. In the performance there were multiple elements that were freely and willingly used to produce something: action, noise, beauty, effects, visions, distraction, movement, dance, interaction. All these elements and their use in an improvised performance come under the definition of assemblage that was mentioned by Tubbs. The outcome of the performance was left open and practically all the emergent actions just stopped either by fading away or all of a sudden.

My definition of assemblage according to this particular performance is the following: Assemblage is an assembly of things and processes that happen simultaneously and might interact. This happening might evolve into something that reveals to us new relations of the things and processes, but this assembly can also be seen as a collection which does not represent causality. Outside an assemblage the things and processes can be perceived as separate elements, but when they are collected into an assemblage then the random contacts and entanglements of these elements make the happening interesting, meaningful and significant according to the perceptions, feelings and experiences of each member of the audience. The performance gains its significance by this assemblage.

Alongside the term *assemblage* Marian Tubbs takes the term *mess* to complete the manner of approach when artists formally assert themselves within the 'twenty-first-century' mess:

*...the installation and the sculptural matter analyzed exemplify how the physicality of art manifests itself from the locus of the material worlds that artists dwell in today, which are built on and informed by history, and which are equally subject to being.*⁹⁰

These material worlds are not only built on history but also on the present. These material conditions still do not make the choreography to emerge or they

89 Tubbs 2015, 103.

90 Calcagno et al. 2014, 127.

cannot be called a choreography very easily without any organization, whether the organization is in the material itself or in the way we see the material. The governing ideas of the *assemblage* are the things that put the mess into order, giving it an organization and significance, and in that way I can also claim to offer the opportunity for a choreography to emerge from the mess. The governing ideas in this case are the basic rules which frame and guide the emerging choreography and they follow a certain logic:

For enabling the choreography to emerge from the mess the entire artistic crew should share the insights of what can be called a choreography, what it demands from the dancers, how we conceive the material worlds and the situation we are in and what kind of governance we need to be able to work together and in that situation.

2.2.1. Agencement and incipient tendencies

The philosopher and dance researcher Erin Manning speaks about *agencement* almost as a synonym for *assemblage* but at the same time opposite to *agency*:

Focusing on agencement instead of agency, I want to argue, allows us not only to value modes of experience backgrounded in the account of agency.⁹¹

And further:

Where agency returns to the identity of a category pre-composed, agencement speaks to the interstitial arena of experience of the interval, an interval not of the category but in the pre-categorization where the field is still in formation.⁹²

The choreography that emerges from each participant's own situation could also be described in Manning's words:

Choreographic agencement is a complex of experience that in itself cannot be mapped. What emerges choreographically is less an organization of bodies than a cartography of incipient tendencies, of force of form. In this sense, choreography is less about a body than about an ecology.⁹³

91 Manning 2016, 154.

92 Manning 2016, 155.

93 Manning 2016, 159.

One reason for separating the two terms *assemblage* and *agencement* is that, according to Manning, *assemblage* is often read as an object or existent configuration, rather than in its potentializing directionality as is the case with *agencement*.

This kind of *agencement* can also be seen and investigated as an *ecosystem*. Although the spectator or the performer cannot always see or feel the intensities of tendencies that are emerging or the directions of actions stay blurry or the intentions do not get fully manifested, it does not mean that the *ecosystem* is failing or does not work. Such failing is a part of this kind of *ecosystem* and I claim that this kind of ecosystemic characteristics in a choreography leads us to a notion of art.

The definition and significance of art lies upon the incipient tendencies. The significance of art is not necessarily in the organizing principle nor in the result of that organization but in the processes which are triggered by the incipient tendencies, and these processes are most often embodied situations where the ecologies take different forms and directions. The art lies in between; you can sense it in many ways and it constantly avoids being paused, objectified or seen as an artefact.

In brief the terms composition, *assemblage* and *agencement* can complete each other and thus give a new meaning and value to the ontology of choreography in dance art. The idea of a choreographer who creates choreographies by composing them according to the term's traditional meaning is too limited to contain all the choreographic practices, and therefore it is important to make new definitions for composition and choreography and bring in the concepts of self-organizing and emergence which will provide meaningfulness and boundaries within the various practices of improvisatory choreography.

2.3. Systems theory

Systems theoretical thinking in this work is more like a supporting model for defining the choreographic form than a real method for analyzing the outcome. When we are thinking of choreography as a system, as a closed system, as an open system or as a dynamic system, the systems' theoretical thinking can help us to see how things in choreography interact and how new things emerge within those interactions. The use of different paradigms of systems theory depends upon the style of the choreography. If I were to choreograph a more or less fixed choreography where there is no room for 'chance' or improvisation I maybe would not use systems theory as a reference at all. But when I am trying to create a

choreography where the interactions and the form itself are a result of improvisation I may find benefits from playfully helping the choreography to emerge with the ideas from systems theory and analyzing those outcomes with the aid of systems theory too. The systems theoretical thinking to which I am leaning in my second artistic part is *a dynamic system* according to Ilya Prigogine⁹⁴. In this 'Prigoginian' system the system is in constant *off-balance* or *far-from-equilibrium* and, in addition, the system is *autopoietic* and *self-organizing*. This kind of system is also prone to radical changes which are not reversible. In other words, *there is no going back to what was* and the causality may be unlinear when these changes happen, which means that the *feedback-processes* can be rather chaotic and not clearly determinable.

To clarify the differences between closed systems, open systems and dynamic systems I will use a graph from Pirjo Stähle's dissertation⁹⁵:

Paradigm	Originator	Type of system	Research interest	Operative interest
I Closed systems	NEWTON	Static Deterministic Mechanistic	PRINCIPLES, LAWS	Predicting Controlling
II Open systems	von BERT- ALANFFY	Near Equilibrium Equifinal Living	FEEDBACK PROCESSES	Steering Sustaining
III Dynamic systems	LORENZ PRIGOGINE MATURANA VARELA	Far-from-equilibrium Uncontrollable Emerging	SPONTANEOUS ORGANIZATION	Understanding and cooperating with natural evolvement

Pirjo Stähle 1997

Figure 1.5. Paradigms of systemic thought.⁶⁹

As we can see, the dynamic systems differ radically from closed and open systems. And it is no wonder, actually, if we consider the closed and open systems

94 Prigogine&Stengers 1984.

95 Stähle 1997, 63.

as classic computer models and the dynamic systems as modelling (human) life. Serres describes the body and life itself with the concept of equilibrium:

But if it (body) can construct this new state off-equilibrium from the previous equilibrium, it is conceivable then that life itself from the start became established by means of an initial deviation comparable to this one in every respect. This position, exposed several times over- this secret enveloped within singular existences and life in general – causes the body to leave behind the domain of the real to enter into potential. Yes, the body exists in potency, in every sense imaginable. Without this new self-evidence, how can we understand the progress made in training, the second wind, being in the zone, the explosion of life, adaptation, the contended well-being beyond pain, virtue itself?⁹⁶

Body and life as *far-from-equilibrium* set the conditions for the choreography to emerge in this research. The progress in the choreographic system is aligned with the dancer's progress. Hence it is important to observe each one's own situation and make notes during the progress.

The next graph will clarify the key attributes defining Ilya Prigogine's dynamic system. Again the graph is adopted from Pirjo Ståhle⁹⁷:

	STATE OF THE SYSTEM	KNOWLEDGE CREATION	INTER-ACTION	DECISION MAKING
MAIN CONCEPT	Far-from-equilibrium	Entropy	Iteration	Bifurcation
CHARACTERISTIC	Continuous or periodical	Cannot be utilized	Recurrent and multiplying	Between necessity and freedom
DEMONSTRATION	Fluctuations Contradictions	Redundant exchange of information bearing uncertainty and confusion	Extremely sensitive response (resonance) Positive and negative feedback	Cooperation with time
CONTRIBUTION TO SELF-RENEWAL	Pre-condition for change	Creation of new structures	Cumulative power	Possibility for innovation and new solutions

Pirjo Ståhle 1997

Figure 2.3. Characterization of the self-organizing systems.

96 Serres 1999, 46.

97 Ståhle 1997, 93.

In the graph above we can see that *far-from-equilibrium* is the state of the system and is the pre-condition for change, which means that if the system is stable, as in a closed system, there will be no chance for a change. Improvised choreography in this sense cannot be a stable system because improvisation itself requires change and the possibility to get things clashed, modified, erased and born.

How can I then take advantage of this kind of thinking and apply it to choreography? The body, the dancer, is the prime actor in this synthesis. The three stages of dynamic systems theory by Prigogine (in the above graph: entropy, iteration, bifurcation) offer a model to compare the processing of information which is at hand at the beginning of the improvisation and that information which develops during the improvisation. These stages of the system are in a continuous process both in the individual dancer and in the whole of the performance. However, the three stages are more like guiding propositions for the dancer in order to give him or her some kind of context in which to handle the emergent information and the impact of that information into each of the participants' own situation.

From the systems theoretical standpoint, according to Ilya Prigogine's theory, the parts of the system are always in a process towards change; sometimes the whole system fails and stops being a system unless it has the abilities to organize itself again:

*Prigogine maintains that self-organizing systems are not rare phenomena. He declares that most of the world's systems are prone to proceed to the state of far-from-equilibrium and are inherently capable of reorganizing and transforming themselves again and again.*⁹⁸

These kinds of self-organizing systems can be biological or social in their nature. However, this kind of systemic thinking can also be applied to artistic systems and in this case to choreography. In my artistic research the choreography has failures which cannot always be seen or felt as failures as I mentioned earlier: for example, the change of plans in the dancer's mind or the processes of emerging patterns between the dancers. Yet the failures are as important as the successes. They keep the system working and in a state that is *far-from-equilibrium*. Maybe the extreme example of a social system that is *far-from-equilibrium* would be war. This kind of system is in constant change, which could be chaotic and messy in

98 Stähle 1998, 51.

its nature and also in its outcome. The *mess* indeed is the nature of the thing. Within the studio conditions the mess is, however, quite clean and can almost be seen as a *closed system*, in which the ‘contamination’ from the outside world is almost impossible. But still the work in the studio is organizing the mess and the ‘outside’ can be anything that affects my perception and/or thoughts.

According to Prigogine the system can be driven to a state of non-equilibrium by allowing and strengthening fluctuations and allowing access to external energy and matter to enter the system. The far from equilibrium – state is the most distinctive difference between Prigogine’s system and the open system according to von Bertalanffy. An open system tries to maintain the equilibrium, and chaos would mean destruction for an open system.

2.4. Emergence

The concept of *emergence* in this artistic research is largely based on the systems theory as explained in the previous chapter. However, *emergence* can also be defined, as the researchers Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman do in their book *Rules of Play – Game Design Fundamentals*:

*Emergence is a crucial aspect of games, linking their intrinsically systemic nature to the space of possibility and meaningful play.*⁹⁹

According to Salen and Zimmerman, *emergence* is a product of context-dependent interactions, and these interactions and the resulting system are nonlinear¹⁰⁰. They explain that the objects in the system act together in ways that single objects cannot act. The context-dependency means that the actions and changes that occur in this system are not the same every time. These kinds of different and emergent outcomes are a product of complex interactions within certain rules and framing. Since the objects are linked to each other, the changes that occur have an effect on the whole of the system and this creates patterns in this wholeness. This may mean that the interactions and emergent patterns are somewhat different from the prigoginian ideas of systemic behaviour. In this sense we can approach the emergent choreography as a game as Salen and Zimmerman define it. Both these views in systemic thinking and behaviour are important for my artistic research.

99 Salen and Zimmerman 2004, 81.

100 Salen and Zimmerman 2004, 81.

2.5. Situation

In aiming to offer a holistic view of the human being on phenomenological grounds, the Finnish philosopher and psychologist Lauri Rauhala (1914-2016) understood human existence to be constituted of three interlinking elements; *the body, awareness and situationality*. While being irreducible to each other, these three cannot exist without each other. *Situationality* is the part that is the existence in whole, it is the part where the body and the consciousness are entangled and inseparable. I will use the concept of *situation* as a pragmatic approach to the wholeness of the dancer's situation in the partly improvised choreography "United States of Mind" and later in the "Philosophy and Dance"-workshop. Through this approach it is easier to analyze the emerging meanings of the dance and art and create an improvisation which is self-organized, focused and personal.

Rauhala talks about *the situational circuit*¹⁰¹. The situational circuit consists of the human's conscious and -physical constitution and describes their functioning together. On this co-operation Rauhala bases his concept of *situation* and that is how I also use it in this text and in my artistic research. Rauhala's definition of *situation*:

*Situationality as a form of being a human is a concept that is used in describing the human's entanglement around reality through his or her own situation in life.*¹⁰²

Rauhala divides *situation* into components. A part of the *situational* components is defined by faith, which means that a human being cannot affect those components. Examples of these are: parents, genes, colour of skin, race, nationality, the society and culture in which one is born. Also, as an individual a human is usually not responsible for natural disasters and accidents which can affect one's own *situation*. Then there are many components that are made by choice, for example spouse, friends, profession, place for living and food.

Rauhala continues dividing the *situation* in to *concrete* and *ideal* components. Examples of the *concrete* components are: food, pollution, bacteria, viruses, environmental and climate conditions, external frames and conditions at working places and homes, human interactions, physical dimensions of nature, structures in society and culture. The *ideal* components are, for example, values, norms,

101 Rauhala 1995, 88.

102 Rauhala 1995, 41.

religions, experiences from human interactions, art in general, and nature as it is experienced.

Although the division in to components and categories strictly defines Rauhala's thinking of *situation*, the whole concept appears to be complex, layered and interconnected. Even the minor changes in the *components* may have major impacts in an individual's life because the *components* are not isolated, but utterly intertwined and connected.

For Rauhala the *situation* is always unique. The importance of the *situation* plays a significant role in the constitution of a person's identity and relations to others and the world. Through the *situation* things and relations become significant in one's life.

The concept of *situation* is an important part in the process of reaching a *shared situation*. This is my own term and I use it in describing the collaboration of the dancers in the process of the emerging choreography. When everybody is aware of her or his own situation it might be possible to get to a point where we can be also aware of the shared situation and then we can perhaps have a sensitive choreographic process that results in a choreography that changes and evolves in real time.

Another Finnish thinker, the writer Jussi Hirvi¹⁰³ talks about man's ability to be influential in relation to the world:

*The world view is a signifying network which coordinates the human cultural actions. The coordination of the actions means that the world view comes before the action and before the gathering of knowledge...world view is important: it regulates the action and the knowledge.*¹⁰⁴

Hirvi mentions climate change and its tremendous speed that has significant effects on our actions only if our world view is open enough and we are ready to regulate this view.

In general, both the situation and the world view are embedded in our existence so that we really do not have to think of them in our daily lives, and when we use them in the way mentioned above as starting and reference points in an open choreographic process, the improvisation is structured and based on life, and the art gains its significance that way. The act of improvised dance is, at

103 Hirvi 2006.

104 Hirvi 2006, 109.

the same time, spontaneous and meaningful and gives room for the audience to understand or not, to interpret, to monitor and to be bored or excited.

2.6. Embodied mind

As the focus of the first pre-examined artistic part of my research *Acts of Mind* strongly deals with the problematics of mind-body-dualism, it is essential to clarify the benefits and the drawbacks of using the dualistic terms ‘mind and body’ and thus use the concept of *embodied mind* which is a commonly used concept in cognitive sciences and also somatic practices. With *embodied mind* there is no danger in prioritizing the mind over the body as the custom has largely been in our culture.

In their book George Lakoff & Mark Johnson go rigorously through the traditions regarding mind-body-dualism in Western philosophy and show us how the emphasis has been keenly on the mind and the body is secondary. They explain very clearly how the body shapes the mind and consciousness on a scientific level by cognitive research.

The Irish-American philosopher and researcher on embodied cognition Shaun Gallagher agrees with Lakoff & Johnson in his book *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (2005) about the difference between the embodied mind and dualistic thinking and adds the role of movement in his claim:

*Across the Cartesian divide, movement prefigures the lines of intentionality, gesture formulates the contours of social cognition, and, in both the most general and most specific ways, embodiment shapes the mind.*¹⁰⁵

On parallel lines of thought with Lakoff & Johnson and Gallagher the French philosopher Michel Serres has described mind-body dualism as a software-hardware relationship as the thing is considered with computers but he also clarifies this relation as more as a n appearance than a real distinction:

*Thus the mind-body dualism, ... is resolved by the human body's capacity to enter into modality. In the same way, there is indeed, in computers, a software-hardware distinction, which appears, from a distance, to reproduce the mind-body duality; but, to be quite precise, software is as material as hardware...*¹⁰⁶

105 Gallagher 2005, 1.

106 Serres 1999, 148-149.

As expressed thus, modality is a very good attribute when one is defining the embodied mind. The dancers are usually very skillful in perceiving different kinds of modalities. For example the modalities emerging from each one's own *situation* can be made visible through a certain kind of improvisation. In the next section I will define what improvisation is in this research and how it is framed.

2.6.1. Alfred North Whitehead

My first research question in "Acts of Mind" was this: How can I consider the separation of mind and body in a fruitful way in my own dance and achieve a state in dancing where the separation disappears and becomes unity? This problem is somehow solved by Whitehead's view of rejecting the *bifurcation of nature*.

Also, Whitehead's strong criticism of continuation, man's questionable capabilities of awareness and authorship even concerning his own experiences, set new perspectives for making art.

When I am thinking of different kinds of themes and substances in my work as a choreographer and especially when I am doing a research in the field of self-organization, Whitehead gives some profound philosophical insights into the concepts *experience* and *passage of nature*:

You think you are free to explore your experience, like one explores a given landscape, to vary points of view and meanings, to render implicit images explicit. But you are not the author of this variation. The Passage is neutral, and the standpoint does not belong to you unless it is your quality as occupant, but it is what occupies you, much more than you occupy it. The variation of standpoints is not what you decide but what happens, and you interpret it in the one way or another, and, for instance, in the way that puts you in charge. The event that provides you with a point of view belongs to the great impersonal web of events.¹⁰⁷

This thought of experience and interpretation is both utterly freeing and frightening. This thought also demands a rethinking of the concept of contemporary choreography and the various practices of improvisation not only in dance but in other arts as well.

Whitehead's concepts can be seen in any kind of self-organization and the emergence of choreography is not dependent on me nor on anybody else's individual perceptions, as Whitehead proves.

107 Stengers 2011, 65.

The reason for having Whitehead alongside Rauhala is to try to see the dancer's work and situation and the concept of emergent choreography at the same time on a very personal level and on a larger, more common scale. The concept of situationality that I have adopted from Lauri Rauhala benefits from Whitehead's philosophy when he proposes a metaphysics that accords the same ontological status to:

*...throbs of pulsation, molecules, stones, lives of plants, lives of animals, lives of men*¹⁰⁸

The other significant difference between Rauhala and Whitehead is the aforementioned relatedness. Whitehead rejects dividing the world into actual, material things which are inaccessible to us and the impressions or ideas of these things that subsist in the mind.:

*...an actual entity is present in other actual entities" and "Things are never just passive or inert; they have powers, by virtue of which they are able to affect things other than themselves.*¹⁰⁹

Steven Shaviro explains this notion of Whitehead's:

Things move us, or force us to feel them, and by this very fact they elude the correlational schemas in which we would wish to contain them.¹¹⁰

2.7. Improvisation

The common nominator in practice for dancing and choreographing in this thesis is improvisation. Improvisation as a concept, however, covers a rather wide area of practice in dance and choreography and therefore it is good to emphasize that the improvisation in this thesis is dancing through *situation* and *embodied mind* when the dancers' improvisation is concerned. The improvised choreography is considered as an autopoietic and dynamic system.

When the dancers are improvising within the works of this artistic research, they are first concentrating on their own feelings both in mind and body standing still. When standing still the dancers are also observing what kind of physical impulses the perceptions are suggesting in their bodies. This entanglement could

108 Whitehead 1938, 86.

109 Whitehead 1938, 50, 57-59.

110 Shaviro 2014, 8.

also be called a kinaesthetic field as philosopher the Edith Stein conceptualizes. Dr Jaana Parviainen focuses on Stein's concept using Edmund Husserl's thoughts:

As a phenomenologist Husserl claims that kinesthesia is the boundary surface which connects the inner and the outer of the body. He ends up with the understanding that kinesthesia and movement are more than a sensing modality alongside visual and hearing senses. Kinesthesia transmits and enables the functioning of the senses. That is why kinesthesia is something more than just a sense.¹¹¹

Gradually the dancers let the impulses affect their stance and begin moving their limbs and torso and also moving in the space according to each one's own impulses. The movements are still echoes of the perceptions and not any learned material, but basically there are no restrictions for the movement and dance. There are no pre-given orders of any style of dancing; the only clear rule is to be aware of your own situation and your surroundings and not to hurt anyone or yourself. Physical contact is allowed but not mandatory. The starting point for all the improvisation is the dancer's own *situation* and every time it is every time a little different. That means that the dancers have to be able to become aware of the situation over and over again. The important things to be aware are: How do I *feel*? How is my body in relation to gravity? What kind of intentions do I have right now towards the others and towards moving?

These questions imply that the mind and body are on the same level. The improvisation in this case is at the same time questioning and unravelling meanings and creating them by dancing the constant renewal of the situation.

The awareness in this improvisation also contains decisions. If I choose to go towards somebody, I will go there. This is already one trajectory which is generated by the situation. I can also choose to go to somebody and grab him and pull him closer to my body, but he might choose otherwise, for example running around hand in hand. In this situation we have to choose together where our actions are going instead of trying to stick to some idea which is clearly rejected. In this case, improvisation is making decisions and adapting to changes. When all the dancers are improvising according to their situation and being aware of the common situation the actions create a field of attractors. This is explained by dancer the John Marinelli in his essay in *Contact Quarterly*, 1993. He is referring to Ilya Prigogine's research in *Order Out of Chaos*:

111 Parviainen 2011, 113.

An innate tendency in nature, embodied in improvisation, creates structure from random behaviour. This tendency to create structure takes place within fields made up of various attractors. "An attractor is a region of phase space which exerts a 'magnetic' appeal for a system, seemingly pulling the system toward it."¹¹²

When entering the field of attractors in improvised dance, the dancers are already having their agency in the self-organizing choreography. The improvisation develops into a complex set of relations and actions which appear to be meaningful and necessary for the choreography, and thus the improvisation becomes the choreography.

Improvisation can also be used as part of a premeditated choreography in several ways. The choreography can be constructed so that there are parts which are free for improvisation under a specified theme or the whole choreographic composition is a score consisting of simultaneous or consecutive tasks. Or some parts of the choreography are originally improvised and fixed for the choreography. Or the whole choreography can be an improvisation with just a few guiding principles.

To create an improvised choreography that could lead to some measurable results needs tasking and rehearsing although the final outcome is based on improvisation. The idea of researching improvised and emerging choreography becomes complicated because of the results needed for the research and the idea of freedom, where the subject of the action is emergent and the action, the situation itself, is the subject and cannot be preconceived when it is ideally thought out. But the situation is also preconceived since we are humans. We share many things that we have learned and are constituting our lives. We are all affected by gravity and our senses work quite similarly independently where we are from. But we also have our own personal experiences that define our situations and we might react differently to impulses and attractors which emerge within the improvisation. In that sense the improvisation is also a series of statements of who we are and how we act.

In his thesis João da Silva acknowledges that choreography has in these last twenty years appeared in so many denominations that improvisation can now be seen as one of its possible forms. There are various practices that use improvisation in choreographing. João da Silva especially mentions Mary O'Donnell's *Open -Form Composition* which refers to the historical use of the term by the

112 Marinelli 1993, 33.

composers Earl Brown and John Cage and their colleagues in the 1950s and the use of pre-given forms and sets of choices and freedoms for the performers.¹¹³ Alongside Mary O'Donnell's practice da Silva mentions other practitioners during and after the 1990s who have understood improvisation itself as a form of composition: João Fiadeiro's *Real Time Composition*, Susan Sgorbati's *Emergent Improvisation*, Nina Martin's *Ensemble Thinking*, Richard Bull's *Choreographic Improvisation*, and Ivar Hagendoorn's *Cognitive Improvisation*.¹¹⁴

One interesting use of improvisation is also found in Thomas Hauert's work. Hauert uses the term *assisted improvisation* which means that all the rules, tasks and forces guiding the improvisation are imposed to break the dancer's conditioning and allow complex movements to be created that involve too many factors to be written down or to be repeated afterwards. In this view the improvisation is used to break the habits and give an opportunity for the unexpected and unseen.¹¹⁵

2.8. Choreographic knowledge

What is choreographic knowledge? The German dance researcher Gabriele Brandstetter¹¹⁶ defines dance and choreographic knowledge as follows:

*A different kind of knowledge what we generally accept as rational, technical or discursive knowledge. The scene for this different kind of knowledge is set in the moving body. The knowledge that becomes apparent and is transferred in dances and choreographies is dynamic: physical, sensuous and implicit knowledge. It is conveyed in a kinetic and kinaesthetic manner.*¹¹⁷

The research in this doctoral dissertation investigates dancing and choreography primarily through the mind-body-relationship. Therefore, here the main focus of defining choreographic knowledge is in the embodied mind. This means that the mind, consciousness and perception are based on bodily conditions, as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson¹¹⁸ claim. George Lakoff is Professor of Linguistics at the University of California and Mark Johnson is Professor in the Philosophy

113 da Silva 2016, 20.

114 da Silva 2016, 74.

115 Hauert 2019.

116 Brandstetter 2007.

117 Brandstetter 2007, 40.

118 Lakoff&Johnson 1999.

Department at the University of Oregon. They claim in their book *Philosophy in the Flesh* the following:

*For example, there is no Cartesian dualistic person, with a mind separate and independent of the body, sharing exactly the same disembodied transcendent reason with everyone else, and capable of knowing everything about his or her mind simply by self-reflection. Rather, the mind is inherently embodied, reason is shaped by the body, and since most thought is unconscious, the mind cannot be known simply by self-reflection.*¹¹⁹

When defining choreographic knowledge on the basis of the embodied mind, we have chosen the body as the primary medium for this kind of knowledge. That does not mean that there always has to be a body dancing, dance can happen without the body as was proposed earlier in the introduction to Mikko Hynninen's piece. The understanding of dance and choreography discussed here is based on our embodied experiences, implicit knowledge and the sense of history. It is through them that choreographic knowledge is formed. French philosopher Michel Serres¹²⁰ longs for the memory of the body and the body as a medium as he claims:

*Prior to any technology for the storage and transport of signs, the body remains the primary recording medium for memory and transmission: archaic screen or parchment, we no longer know how to read the body the way our friends without writing can, our friends who make use of it the way our ancestors did wax or ourselves paper. Should I master this reading, I'd be able to decipher upon your wrinkles, like an open book, your history and its tribulations, upon your dance, your desire and upon the masks and statues of your culture, the encyclopedia of its discoveries. We have lost the medium-body.*¹²¹

I would like to add that we have agreed to lose the medium-body for other mediums and technologies of possessing and sharing knowledge. However the understanding is still embodied.

While Michel Serres' concern of losing the medium-body might seemingly arise from mere subjective experiences, Gabriele Brandstetter sees this subjec-

119 Lakoff & Johnson 1999, 5.

120 Serres 1999.

121 Serres 1999, 82.

tivity as a force worth supporting. Choreography explores problems of alignment in and through the moving body, with or without the body, which is an important issue also in control engineering, complexity theory and neurophysiology. In this sense, choreographic knowledge is deeply connected to other areas of research. Brandstetter states:

*It is a venture into areas that can no longer only be comprehended in terms of controllable and operationalized knowledge – the field of the unforeseeable, the unknowable, the uncontrollable as a challenge for a different experience and a different political commitment.*¹²²

This statement by Brandstetter leads us to the following question: How can we then control this field of the unforeseeable and the unknowable in order to organize it as a choreography?

2.8.1. Writing choreography

One quite pragmatic and accessible approach in making notes and recording dance and choreography or at least some parameters of it is writing.

In the process of my second work for this dissertation “*United States of Mind*” we were recording what we were doing by writing it down on a paper or up on the wall with a piece of chalk. The writing could be actual words or drawing and drawing-action that included movement and sound. The origin of the writing was in each one’s own perception of his or her own mind-body-state, what it was to be here and now and what thoughts were present in mind or what memories were arising. From perceiving a person’s own state of being, each one would expand the perceiving by observing the others, the space, the on-going rhythms, sounds and movements. When we were writing on the wall, the others were able to see what you were writing. This is one way of sharing the situation in real time. It, of course, requires visual observation most of all. At the same time there are also other ways to observe what happens. The kinesthetic field affects us, as Dr Jaana Parviainen¹²³ suggests, and we are also affected by touch and auditory impulses as well as the above mentioned reflections of each one’s own situation. This kind of writing is mainly an interpretation of the situation but it is also a simultaneous recording of the dance and makes reveals some of the choreographic parameters.

¹²² Brandstetter 2007, 47.

¹²³ Parviainen 2011.

By writing we can only grasp part of the information that goes on when we are dancing. We can draw lines and maps and try to explain the patterns, feelings and the whole choreography but of course it will not be a complete recording. Writing and drawing benefits from the audiovisually recorded data, and vice versa, and still it is unsure how the recordings of the choreography communicate with a person who is a total stranger to the work. In this sense the recordings of choreographic knowledge are somewhat unreliable and unstable; they can be interpreted in various ways. But again Gabriele Brandstetter claims that the implications of knowledge in dance can act as interruptions or disturbances in the presumably self-evident fields of knowledge.

The Finnish dance researcher Kirsi Heimonen¹²⁴ describes the act of dancing and writing in her own research:

*Dancing and writing are alive alongside each other; they keep their own territory and at the same time they can support each other; they can show their differences. Dancing reminds the other reality that escapes the strict concepts; dancing as a bodily experience does not belong to the enclosed circles of reality. In turn I have immersed myself in these realities; the listening body is alive in both actions.*¹²⁵

Kirsi Heimonen's description suggests on its own behalf the fact that the knowledge in dance and choreography derives from the body and these quite subjective and indescribable feelings are as important as strict concepts.

2.8.2. Recording choreography

There are also efforts to store dancing and choreography other than through writing and bodily memory, with the aid of special technology, to enhance the duration of the dancing's momentary essence.

In 2013 a theme issue of *the International Journal of Performing Arts and Digital Media* (vol. 9, nr. 1, 2013) was published. The issue was about choreography and multiple questions around it: How can one record a choreography? What is choreographic knowledge? What is choreography? Can a choreography be restored later? The issue's editors were Scott deLahunta and Sarah Whatley¹²⁶. The issue gathered together good texts from the research that had been done lately in

124 Heimonen 2007.

125 Heimonen 2007, 100.

126 Motion Bank 2019.

Europe relating to contemporary dance and digital media and especially the questions mentioned above. One of the projects focused especially on gathering choreographic knowledge on-line; it was the Motion Bank, which was a four-year project of The Forsythe Company providing a broad context for research into choreographic practice. The Motion Bank, for example, holds scores for choreographies from Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion's "Seven Duets", Bebe Miller and Thomas Hauert's "Two", Deborah Hay's "Using the Sky" and William Forsythe's "Synchronous Objects".¹²⁷

For clarification about how the choreographies were recorded in the Motion Bank here is one short description from Deborah Hay's work "Using the Sky", which was based on her own solo "No Time to Fly":

Deborah Hay's written score 'No Time to Fly' was given to Jeanine Durning, Juliette Mapp and Ros Warby to create their own solo adaptations. Each adaptation was recorded seven times.

Using the Sky

*contains material developed by approaching Deborah Hay's work from three main directions. One direction was analytic, based on data collected from as many performance recordings as possible. Another was intuitive, an artistic response to what was learned about Deborah's process. The third direction was based on interviews focused on concepts and insights.*¹²⁸

The website www.motionbank.org contains all the video recordings as well as the artists' responses and conversations. There is also a video overlay in which all the recordings are played at the same time in order to see the differences between the variations. Simultaneously with the video the written score is also visible so that the score and all the interpretations of the score are seen at once. This combination itself stands as a beautiful example of the practice of score-based choreography.

127 Motion Bank 2019.

128 Hay 2019.

3. Artistic works for the research

3.1. “Private&Common”

Artistic group: Reijo Kela, Sampo Malin, Anni Rissanen, Niko Kurola, Janne Aspvik, Pessi Parviainen, Mikko Orpana

Place: Universum Theatre, Helsinki, January 2011

This was the first project in my artistic research. The project was put together after a Systems theory course held by PhD Janne Tapper in 2011 at the Theatre Academy. *Private & Common* was not a pre-examined work for the dissertation but it still contains valuable information regarding my starting points in applying systems theoretical thinking in a choreography within this artistic research.

The project itself was a five-day workshop with a public performance on the evening of the fifth day. The idea for the performance was to make a system that was almost entirely based on improvisation. The systemic idea was based on Ilya Prigogine’s Systems theory and specifically on the concepts *far-from-equilibrium*, *entropy*, *iteration* and *bifurcation*.¹²⁹

The idea was to consider the choreography as a system that was renewing and self-referential and therefore self-organizing too. The rehearsals were long improvisations where we got to know each other and all the instruments and gadgets we had gathered as tools to excite the venue. Our crew consisted of four dancers: Anni Rissanen, Reijo Kela, Janne Aspvik and me, the light-and video designer Niko Kurola, visual artist Sampo Malin and the musician/performer Pessi Parviainen. The performance venue was an old church hall where we staged a band with drum set, electric guitar, electric bass, percussion and synthesizer. A video was projected as a living backdrop on the back wall and the set and

129 Stähle 1997, 72.

props were: a swing hanging from the ceiling, aluminium wrapping canvases, 200 ping-pong balls, ladders and various small items.

There was no premeditated score and all the actions were more or less improvised. This project has been a reference point for me in my artistic doctoral research especially when I think of the dancer's *agency* and *agencement*. Everyone in this project was on his or her own. I did not direct people to do certain things in certain ways or give tasks whatsoever. Everyone acted according to their own personal interests and techniques.

This kind of working comes quite naturally for a dancer who is used to improvisation but it leaves so many things open that the excessive freedom may turn out to be a negative. For some dancers the personal interests can be clear but for some dancers they may cause problems and the seemingly equal possibilities may become unequal and the meaningfulness can be lost if the opportunities to improvisation are too vast. This means that a dancer has to be able to choose how to act and proceed and have confidence in his or her own choices. If the dancer feels that nothing really matters then there usually is something wrong with the task. This is the first reference point, after which I found it important to be able to articulate for the dancer or designer what the improvisation was based on.

The other reference point deals with the choreography as a self-organizing system. *Private&Common* was more like a performance consisting of the elements of dance, music, performing and visual arts. And those elements were allowed to mix quite freely with each other. The combination may have been called a choreography but it may have been called an experimental performance too. However, the self-organizing nature of this performance was happening as the improvisation went on. In the end, the dancers had created a living organization, a system that in some point was a blossoming, energized and continuously happening with sudden turns and mood changes. The chaos had been organized for a moment into a shape-shifting form of actions and short continuations until it crumbled and faded away.



Private&Common rehearsals. From left: Reijo Kela, Sampo Malin, Pessi Parviainen, Janne Aspvik.(Photo: Mikko Orpana, 2011)

3.2. “Acts of Mind - Manifestations of a moving mind”



Acts of Mind
-Liikkuvan mielen ilmentymiä tanssissa

Koreografia, tanssi, teksti ja musiikki: Mikko Orpana
Valosuunnittelu: Juho Rahijärvi
Ääniassistentti: Eero Pulkkinen

Esitykset:
pe 23.3. klo 19 ensi-ilta
ti 27.3. klo 19
ke 28.3. klo 13
to 29.3. klo 19.15

Esitysten jälkeen keskustelutilaisuus.

Teatterikorkeakoulu, Studio 2, Haapaniemenkatu 6
Liput: 12 €/ 6 €, www.piletti.fi



Artistic group: Juho Rahijärvi, Eero Pulkkinen, Mikko Orpana

Place: Theatre Academy, Helsinki, March 2012

(Poster Juho Rahijärvi)

Acts of Mind was the first pre-examined artistic part for my doctoral thesis. In this work I investigated embodied mind through my own dance. As a theoretical basis for the concept of embodied mind I used George Lakoff's and Mark Johnson's book *Philosophy in The Flesh-The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. The book gives a quite clear vision of the fact about how the mind and the body are considered as separate things in a traditional scientific approach. This separation gives pragmatic tools to handle such problems or questions as what consciousness is or how mind-body-relation functions. However, this separation has given a significant dominance to mind over body since Descartes. Although the dominance of the mind has been widely recognized and criticized, there are still many beliefs and presumptions that the separation is true. The presumptions are sometimes also quite blurry and sometimes surprisingly straightforward. I think that the person's own perception of his or her own body is the most significant basis for any presumption, emotion, feeling or thought about what the relation of the mind and the body is personally. Some people may consider the separation more clearly and some people do not acknowledge the separation at all. I claim that the more a person gets to know his or her own body by moving, dancing, meditating, jumping, falling, embracing or whatever involves the body in the action makes it clearer that the mind and the body cannot be separated. I cannot detach my mind from my body wherever I go.

In my research, however, I stay more or less in the field of dancing mind and body, the embodied mind and the emotion of the body. There are many ways to describe the unity of mind and body but also interesting points of view about how to express this enjoyably problematic field. In this first artistic work I am playing with the thought that my 'inner space' is the source of my dancing and perception. This 'inner space' is for me basically my bodily feelings that I feel when I close my eyes and try to focus on my body's 'inner space'. These feelings can be caused by muscular tensions and the proprioceptive perceptions which are caused, for example by the task of staying balanced on two legs while standing with my eyes closed. My thoughts are intertwined with these feelings.

In the poster of 'Acts of Mind' below you can see two circles partly overlapping each other. This simple illustration symbolizes mind and body and their connection. When thinking of the amount of the overlapping of the circles I can position my mind and body in them and play with the idea that the separation is true. I know that this partial overlapping is not possible; my mind only emphasizes the illusion of the separation. But these two circles also represent the idea of two spaces; the inner space and the outer space and the field where these spaces

overlap is the unity, I myself dancing my emotion, my thoughts, my situation and my world. The separation into two spaces is of course a rough-edged division. When I focus on my inner space I soon realize that it extends its limits to the outer space. In other words, my inner space is not just inside me; it is overall in my body and in my movements. I cannot locate the 'inside' of me. And at the same as the inside becomes blurred, the outside blurs too. Can I tell you that my outside is my skin? When I think and do this work on focusing on the idea of inside and outside, I suddenly become very aware that they are together. They are within each other, my inside and outside is my body.

3.2.1 *Research questions*

In the performance I researched my abilities of perception and my dance in relation to my inner space, habitual patterns and renewal, and also the movement patterns in the actual performance space. This is also where the realization of the two worlds unite. The inside becomes the outside.

The first question concerns mind-body-unity. How can I consider the separation into mind and body in a fruitful way in my own dance and achieve a state in dancing where the separation disappears and becomes a unity?

The second question is about preconceived models of my dancing. How do I become aware of my habitual ways of moving and what are the motifs and mechanisms in me that define those habits? I deliberately use the word in because one of Lakoff&Johnson's concepts is a *container schema*:

A container schema, like any other image schema is conceptual. Such a container schema can, however, be physically instantiated, either as a concrete object, like a room or a cup, or as bounded region in space.

....

*It is important to distinguish a purely conceptual schema from a physically instantiated one; they have different properties.*¹³⁰

Here lies one simple and clear example of the use of mind and body separation as a tool for understanding. It would be very easy and maybe tempting to consider the body, specifically brain, as a container for the mind. But this kind of thinking easily emphasizes the dominance of the mind again. Therefore the use of the word in does not indicate the inside of me but my whole being. My whole

130 Lakoff&Johnson 1999, 32.

being is the unity of my mind and body and in this case embodied mind would be more appropriate term.

So the second question about my habits contains the question: What are my perceptions of my habits in dancing and how can I change them in order to renew my habitual paths and learn new ways of mind-body-integration in my dance?

3.2.2. Observing and perceiving my mind-body-status - Sleepwalking

In autumn 2011 I began to seek ways of observing my perceptions. At that time I did a rehearsal that combined movement, meditation and performing and I started calling this rehearsal *sleepwalking*. The idea of sleepwalking is to begin the rehearsal by slowing down the movements and pretend that I am sleeping. From that dreamy state I start to observe my bodily state and thoughts. Gradually I start to move according to the impulses I receive by my observation. By means of this rehearsal I am aiming to wake up and warm up mentally and physically and to reach a state where I am open to observe and perceive my own impulses and the kinesthetic field and let those perceptions affect my dancing.

The rehearsal is slightly similar to the Authentic Movement rehearsals that were developed by Mary Starks-Whitehouse¹³¹ in the 1950s. The Authentic Movement is a method for deepening one's body awareness. Kirsi Monni summarizes the point of the method:

*The point is always in personal, cultural and historical contact with the world which is observed by embodied experience of movement.*¹³²

Mary Starks-Whitehouse became estranged from modern dance in the United States of America in the 1950s. Modern dance revealed itself to her as follows:

*As getting more and more stereotypical in its subject and form, skill-oriented form, which could be taught but had less to do with the dancer's ability to express something humane and meaningful.*¹³³

My practice is a kind of the Authentic Movement rehearsal but without having a witness who observes the rehearsal. I can carry out the rehearsal alone and my

131 Starks-Whitehouse 2000.

132 Monni 2004, 44.

133 Starks-Whitehouse 2000, 58.

goal with this rehearsal is slightly different. I am aiming at moving on the stage as a dancer. I am trying to become aware of my situation. I am aiming at an *extra-daily*¹³⁴ state of being, as Eugenio Barba describes the performer's awareness. Instead of making the rehearsal purely like a personal therapeutic process, I make it to become more alert and self-aware as a performer. As a choreographer I am also interested in where my impulses come from. What affects my state of mind in general? How do I get affected by that on my personal artistic level?

There are also features from Zen Meditation. By this I mean being silent, focusing on breathing, letting all the thoughts come and go and emptying the mind. I use this kind of meditation as a rehearsal with Authentic movement. Where Authentic movement is active listening to your state, in Zen Meditation I try to empty my mind. For me it is an attempt to forget, to not to think, to get ready for perceiving the impulses.

The main goal of this rehearsal is to wake up in the ongoing moment, the perception of the space around and the impulses from my mind and body. The key concept in this practice is awareness and the developing of it.

The partial use of different practices may seem to be confusing. For me these practices as well as all the dancing techniques, acting, being on the stage, are part of my personal history and what I am now. They are part of a technique of understanding myself and being able to perform dance. That is why it is important to mention these other practices. My own sleepwalking practice derives from them but of course my practice contains things that are not my own inventions. For example Deborah Hay's practice has had an impact on me and I totally support her method. Hay's 'performance practice' means that the dancer is concentrating on the same thing whether it was in a rehearsal studio or performing on stage. Hay's method suggests a practice where the time/place of here-being is expressed in bodily perception and articulation and in this point:

*...her work stops the pattern of letting dance be directed by a preconceived ideal form. Instead it queries the disclosing of corporeal being at each moment as a potentiality, as eventuality, and as a mode of knowing that is non-thematic but interpretative in receptive and dialogical way.*¹³⁵

134 Barba, 1982, 27.

135 Monni 2006, 51.

What I am trying to say is that *sleepwalking* is my own synthesis of all the practices that I have experienced and blended into my own practice.

3.2.3. My routine of sleepwalking

Usually I start with eyes closed and listen to my body and mind. I look into my inner space and feel the impulses going through my body. In this manner I can work for a long time but the aim is to get my eyes open and be aware of the visual perceptions also. The use of the space of the stage is quite conventional. There is the audience on one side and I am doing my things on the other side in a traditional black box. My perceptions of the space are on a simple basis: the distance to the audience, the distance to the walls, the distance to the floor and also the direction of my movement: diagonal, circular, on one spot, in parallel direction with the wall.

The other aim of the rehearsal is to speed up my activity little by little and to get into motion listening to the impulses from my mind and body. This could lead to very active dancing and also to the use of my voice, speaking, shouting, sometimes also to falling asleep. In a way this rehearsal is about listening to the impulses and acting honestly accordingly and usually this means getting into a paradoxical state where my mind and body tell me different things, or my own ideals and the state of my mind contradict each other and the task is to balance these things and focus on a single task at the moment.

One of the most important commands to myself is to avoid symmetry and repetition, which means repeating the same things over and over again, as a tool of producing movement for its own sake. That is because I am trying to avoid my own conventions and explore new ways of moving and to be able to perceive at the same time. That was sometimes impossible.

Examples of my perceptions:

1. When I direct my movement in the space I use my right arm.
2. When I think of heaviness I go down to a low position, for example the horseback-riding position or otherwise near the floor.
3. I easily start tiptoeing when I think of lightness.
4. The flow of my movement starts from my arms and gets stuck in my back and I have to struggle to get a feeling of flow which involves the whole body.

There are also many more things to think about when I am moving: The position of my neck, shoulders, hips, knees, arms, chest, back, fingers etc. and also the tension of my muscles, breathing and perceptions of how to feel the presence

of the audience. The sleepwalking rehearsal is a combination of many things and methods which I have been learning as a dancer. In that way that is also an exploration of my history and this moment. Sleepwalking is a tool in updating my vocabulary in a broad way that involves myself and the space I am in.

3.2.4. The relation to the inner and outer spaces of the body

In the relation to the space the first thought of my inner space is in my own body. With my eyes closed I focused on the feeling of my awareness. The awareness of my balance, my posture, my limbs, my alignment, my breathing and what kind of tension there is in my muscles and how this tension produces an urge towards movement. Timo Klemola speaks about the inner experience:

*Contemplative body is aware of its posture, the relation to gravity and all the movements. One can open the awareness of the body by getting to know the inner space, its structure and the proprioceptive perception of this space.*¹³⁶

For me, the contemplative body is also an experienced dancer's body which is trained especially for this kind of awareness. These observations were connected to the flow of my thoughts: how should I stand, what movement should I be doing and into what direction in the actual space?

Within this flow of thoughts I also had the premeditated objectives that I tried to achieve. The objectives were these:

1. Being constantly conscious of the bodily and mental impulses inside me and trying to achieve that kind of state where I maintain this kind of awareness in front of the audience and am able to carry out my performance.
2. Thinking of the actual space I was in. That means the stage area, which was limited by the walls, the ceiling and the floor. Inside that area was the empty space for dancing and, on the one side, seats for the audience and, on the other side, my set and props.

The purpose of these objectives was attached to the idea of renewal. This description also contains the idea of making the inner impulses visible in movement without repeating any movement in particular rather than letting the movement grow and develop almost like an independent organism.

¹³⁶ Klemola 2004, 90-91.

However, the image of an organism is a little misleading because that organism is in me; I am the organism. Here is one problematic topic related to the mind-body - dualism when I am trying to describe what my movement is and how I guide all the impulses which generate this movement. The problem arises from the notion that as a dancer I am used to considering dancing as a way of thinking and a kind of intellectualism that incorporates both the body and mind and that dance in itself is a language. Now, when I approach moving by rationalising the movement first and moving then and in the end try to do this simultaneously, I can see the movement as an element that is separated from the body and thus is a proof of dualism for me. But it does not mean that I see this dualism as Cartesian dualism, where the mind is separated from the body. The thought of movement as a separate element is strongly based on the experience where reason, sensorimotoric intelligence and bodily execution are not studied as separate parameters but can be seen as such. Lakoff & Johnson speak of reason:

*Reason is not disembodied, as the tradition largely held, but arises from the nature of our brains, bodies, and bodily experience...The same neural and cognitive mechanisms that allow us to perceive and move around also create our conceptual systems and modes of reason.*¹³⁷

There is a kind of anticipation from the research to make these separations. It is easier to argue when speaking of a body and of a mind that work together than to try to explain 'body-mind' and its dynamics without separating these things. As Lakoff and Johnson tell us, the reason is not disembodied but is merely a quality of the body. That means the body is also the place of thinking, not just the brains.

3.2.5. Patterns

When speaking of "patterns" I mean some of the concepts and tools that are found in basic choreographic thinking and that are in relation to my performance.

The patterns in this case are:

1. chains of movements/actions
2. these chains repeated in different locations and/or contexts
3. repeated movements/action.

By patterns I also mean a certain way of thinking in dance. There is a movement and by repeating that and variations of it I make a pattern, which varies with

137 Lakoff & Johnson 1999, 4.

the ongoing perceptions of the music and space and the situation and the upcoming thoughts. So the pattern in this case changes and could also be defined as a development, which is caused by the pattern which constantly renews. For me this was hard to perceive at the same time as I executed the movement and therefore I made some restrictions to limit the task I was doing:

- a. I always started at the same spot
- b. The music was not the same but the variations were similar
- c. The task was always the same
- d. The time to do the task was limited

Here are a few perceptions from the restrictions above:

When I used the space I started with my hand and went diagonally through the space and I made circular movements and when I thought that “now I am doing a pattern” I changed it by changing the direction, intensity or the circular tendency towards something else, for example something more diagonal or straightforward than a circular movement. Actually, all the changing was a gradual development from one pattern to another. The other way to change the pattern was to stop moving and in that way to create a new opening. In this way the different patterns were separated by concrete breaks.

3.2.6. About renewing

Renewing is linked to the idea of avoiding symmetry and repetition. This idea is based on the movement element, which is constantly changing. In my performance the idea of renewing was inside the tasks of dancing, but the structure of the performance was always the same. The music was always different because of the features of the synthesizer I had. It was not programmable and, being an analog device, the accuracy of the knobs was quite poor and the output sounded different each time.

Renewing is very important in my research and it involves both a dancer's personal level and the emergence of the choreography. I hope I shall be able to reach the point where renewing is in the structure of the compositional thinking and choreography.

3.2.7. Perceptions of the use of the space

My performance was not really a spatial exploration. The relation between the audience and me was very basic. I was on the stage with my gear on the one side and the audience sat on chairs on the other side of the black box. I had fixed

starting positions for my dances and the dancing went on freely in the space but did not touch the audience; it then always returned to certain places. Lakoff & Johnson mention:

*Spatial-relations concepts are at the heart of our conceptual system. They are what make sense of space for us. They characterize what spatial form is and define spatial inference. But they do not exist as entities in the external world...We use spatial-relations concepts unconsciously, and we impose them via our perceptual and conceptual systems.*¹³⁸

Instead of analyzing my external routes on the stage, I tried to observe my inner space to the relation to the outer space (stage).

My perceptions of my use of space are quite simple:

1. When I mention that I use the whole space, I go near the walls and through the floor diagonally and around the empty space between the audience and my gear so that I get the feeling of filling the space by trying to be everywhere within the time limit I have.
2. When I mention that I will make my dancing space smaller step by step I just go in circles which become smaller and in the end I stay in one spot in the centre.
3. When I face the audience I am very aware of my facial expression and posture but when I face the back wall I am more relaxed.

3.2.8. Embodied mind and dancing mind

In this artistic doctoral research I tried to find the qualities of my dancing from my state of being and feeling. These qualities are also embedded in my pre-conceived insights into what dance is and what the practice of choreographing dance is.

I tried to be honest with the feeling - honest in the way that the feelings or moods on stage were not premeditated and also not exaggerated. I had many limitations and restrictions within my solo that helped to keep it as a performance as research and that partly forced me to guide my thoughts to these limitations. I think that I found a good tool to begin with to perceive my state and actions when rehearsing and performing dance. The next step with this rehearsal is to try that out with other dancers and focus more on the choreography from that basis.

138 Lakoff & Johnson 1999, 30-31.



I am dancing in the space. Acts of Mind (2012). (Photo Juho Rahijärvi)

3.2.9. Mind and body-awareness

In this first examined artistic work in my doctoral research I was alone. The practice of planning and rehearsing my work held me constantly in a somewhat heightened level of self-awareness of what my situation was and how I related to what I was doing. For me it meant re-examining my own mind – body –relationship and trying to adopt a new concept of thinking and being. There was a lot of repetition of movements, and by means of the repetition I could slowly perceive the typical things that I tended to do.

I think that the mind-body – dualism is not so often consciously practised in peoples' everyday lives or in the dancer's work and thinking. For me as a dancer I tend to claim that thinking is bound to the flesh. But in the practice of perceiving my own habits I was also trying to imagine a clearer separation between the mind and the body. This imaginary separation gave me a new perspective of the body as a thinker. In this perspective my every action seemed to have the initial starting point in the body. The bodily conditions and sensations seemed to determine the direction of my movements and the way of thinking too. In the practice of repeating movement patterns I was conscious of my habits and how they direct my movements according to the space where I was rehearsing. The shape of the room, the lines on the ceiling and the curves in the furniture created a map-like, three-dimensional and invisible network of guiding lines.

In this network I could situate myself and following the network I could let my body dance with varying velocities and movements. In this point when the focus in dancing was not anymore in executing patterns or expressing premeditated feelings and subjects I could follow the moods of my body and let the body do the thinking and dancing. Although the spatial lines are arithmetic and static and in my description the body relates to those and the task is to imagine the mind-body-dualism the outcome is more than that. The mind is not separated from the body. There is the exaggerated awareness and the difficult task of perceiving the notions of my own habitual ways.

Erin Manning writes in her book *Always More Than One* about body and how it relates to the world:

*A body is not separate from its milieu. Milieu, or the associated milieu, as Simondon calls it, is a relational field activated by the event in-forming. No event occurs in a vacuum - event and milieu are always cogenerative. This means that the milieu cannot be understood in spatial terms. It is an affective attunement more than a space, a field more than a form.*¹³⁹

Besides the heightened awareness of my mind-body-relation and the effect of the spatial dimensions, I always carry with me the feeling that the world causes in me. It is the reality of news, other people, my thoughts, my memories, my reactions to the weather, temperature, humidity, the impulses that emerge in me when I see movement and hear sounds and voices. The world is also the feelings towards other people who are in the same space and feelings towards the people who are in my mind.

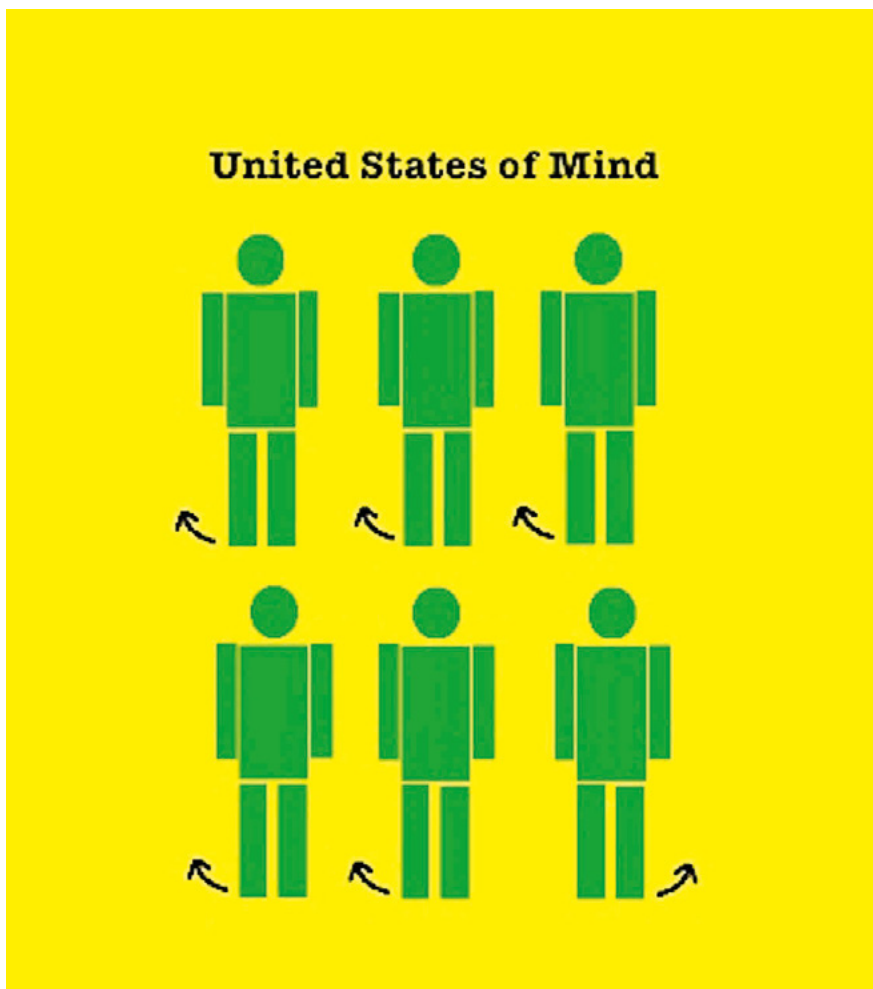
I relate myself to the world all the time. I relate myself as a human and as a dancer to the events echoing around me. These echoes are also from the news which I collect from the different types of media. When I dance alone I relate myself to the feelings triggered by the world more freely than when I dance with other people. When I dance with other people I am more willing to grasp the feeling from the people around me. Also, the physical appearance also has a great effect on me. I cannot neglect the presence of others who are having the same kind of agency as I am. I easily adapt to the feelings of the similar minded, the non-hostile people I like to work with.

139 Manning 2013, 26.

With other people I think it is quite natural to take them into account. It is also easier to reach out from your own thoughts towards the world and the shared situation at hand. By the shared situation I mean the situation where both the audience and the performers are together and the situation that exists between the performers. In that situation there is a predetermined opportunity to share your own situation with the others and to be heard in a focused way.

The situation is constantly changing depending on the choices we make. Basically, there is the opportunity to choose whether to be alone or in contact. It is also about rehearsing yourself to be aware of your own situation and also rehearsing how to act according to your perceptions of that situation.

4. "United States of Mind"



United States of Mind

Artistic group:

Janne Aspvik, Veli-Pekka Majava, Mikko Orpana, Katri Puranen, Anni Rissanen, Sini Siipola

Premiere and performances at Theater Academy November 2014.

(Poster Mikko Orpana)

The afterthoughts from the *Acts of Mind* provoked me to try to arrange a choreography where the whole artistic group would generate a *shared situation* on the basis of each one's own situation:

To create a choreography is to be in a continuous process. I do not claim that I can become whole and unfractured, I do not make perfect sentences, I am not right. In the flow of the process I become fuller and the density of knowledge thickens but eventually I have to give up and let things happen and make an order of their own and somewhere new things and ways that we can follow emerge, together or alone. Maybe we can get a glimpse of our shared situation that affects all of us and we can see that as the emerging choreography. My own feelings guide my actions and if I try to let go of the feelings I might be able to forget myself at least for a moment and enable ways for new thoughts and opportunities to see other people and their situations.¹⁴⁰

In brief, the research question was:

How do we improvise and communicate together from the basis of our own situations and how does the choreography emerge from that communication?

So, the research question in this work was to research the self-organization in a choreography for six performers. My intention was not to give any premeditated steps or even themes for improvisation. And in this case by the theme I mean topics like 'relationship', 'love', 'contact', 'embodiment' etc. I more or less tried to give a starting point for a method that we could develop further together and towards a performance.

Of course it would be very useful to have something to be developed so I thought that the performer's own situation could be a fruitful starting point, fruitful in the sense that I am not the author of the performer's work and yet the performer has a wide range of possibilities to work on. And that work can be anything: feelings, movements, opinions, style of clothing, way of behaving, reactions to the events in your own life, relations to other performers, taste (in both of its meanings) and other senses and everything that you can imagine to be involved in your own situation.

This kind of starting point, of course, is also a huge challenge. You have to make decisions and be aware of everything that happens. For this we developed some methods to handle the awareness with the help of different restrictions, for example: Be aware of your weight but don't lie down on the ground or: Guide your emotions to your movement but don't try to make a representation. More

140 Orpana 2012, diary note.

of these kinds of restrictions and their functionality will be explained later in more detail.

The essential academic research question is developed from the following questions: How can I call this kind of self-organized awareness-based group-improvisation a choreography? What is the impact for the art when I let the performers choose what to do and how does that change my role as a choreographer? Why is it important to create a field of choreography that lets you interact freely within the choreography as a dancer? How do Lauri Rauhala's concept of *situationality* and Ilya Prigogine's concept of *systems theory* fit together? And further questions that have arisen since this research are the following: How has the world changed so that we are facing these questions so strongly in education and in practice? What is the meaning of choreography and dance art and why do I see them as constantly changing practices?

One's own situation does not only reflect the the impulses from the world or from the other people. It is also empathetic action that in my opinion enables us to share our common situation and to communicate. Communication through visual input by drawing or painting already includes a lot of interpretation from the drawer and from the viewer. A complicated process happens when one perceives someone else's drawings and decides how to act accordingly. Openness to sensing and kinaesthesia plays a significant role in communication in a situation, which is based on everyone's own situation and improvisation. And this kind of communication is more direct than drawing.

Research in cognitive science and neuroscience has shown us the role of the mirror neurons in communication and how this information is embodied and how it is more than a representation of ideas towards the notion of what is maybe the most profound way in which we communicate. Susan Leigh Foster¹⁴¹ argues how kinaesthetic empathy functions by means of mirror neurons according to the neuroscientist Vittorio Gallese¹⁴² in his book *Choreographing Empathy – Kinesthesia in performance*:

Gallese began to develop a neural basis for the human propensity to feel what another is feeling in the late 1990s. His conception of empathy emphasizes not only emotional but also physical sensation, thereby reaffirming empathy's connection to kinesthesia. Gallese argues that mirror neuron networking provides a functional mechanism,

141 Foster 2011.

142 Gallese 2008.

what he calls embodied simulation, that sponsors our capacity to share “actions, intentions, feelings, and emotions with others.”¹⁴³

Because the same neurons fire both when an action is performed and when it is witnessed, we are constantly enacting at a neural level the actions we see round us.¹⁴⁴

And Foster continues:

[...]these neural networks activate a profound and immediate connection between one’s own body and what one sees in the world.¹⁴⁵

In this research performance I did not focus on mirror cells as such but more or less on kinaesthesia as a way of communication. And in this communication visual perception, awareness and emotion play the key roles. As visual perception is often quite dominant, dancing is also touching, and in touch the perception of others and the space is quite different from seeing. In touching the physical contact proposes different things than seeing. In physical contact the relation to the other makes a leap from thought to action and the leap does not necessarily mean continuation from thought to action, but rather to action despite the thought. Touching rearranges my personal world and my mind’s priorities and makes the boundaries of my body slightly mixed with the other person’s body. Although I cannot entirely mix with the other, the impact of touch on thinking can be tremendous for my mind and it can also alter me physically. The body is the place where the world materializes, and it is different matter than ideas or consciousness. The French philosopher Michel Serres distinguishes the body from the overemphasized consciousness and ego:

I’ve never known how to express the ego, nor describe consciousness. The more I think, the less I am; the more I am I, the less I think and the less I act. I don’t seek myself as a subject, stupid project; only things and others are found. Among these, a little less thing and much less other, is my body.¹⁴⁶

To put it simply: the research question circulates around our dancing bodies and how we make constructions of the relations of our bodies.

143 Gallese 2008, 773.

144 Foster 2011, 165.

145 Foster 2011, 166.

146 Serres 1999, 7-8.

4.1. Self-organization and improvisation by the awareness of the situation

In this second examined part for my artistic doctoral research I approached choreography as a shared venture where the subject of the work gets its significance from each participant's own *situation* at that specific moment, which can lead to several kinds of encounters, contacts and separations between the performers. From this interaction or non-action the choreography emerges and configures itself over and over again, as does the dancer too in his or her own situation. *Self-renewal* is happening on every level of the improvisation. In this situation the dancer's agency gains its special significance and is relevant only in these particular surroundings. So the dancer's agency is a very special and sophisticated one. This calls for the choreography as an *agencement* which stems from the dancer's *situation* and which is fundamentally more personal than a role or a character in the performance or a status in the group and in society. In brief: the choreography as an *agencement* can be seen and defined from the point of the dancer's situation and agency.

The performance was thus improvisation based on the working group's member's own *situation*. Therefore the context of the performance was within the context of improvised dance but *situation* contextualises the improvisation in a very original way. Improvisation can be understood in so many ways and I have to explain what exactly that was in our case with the *situation*. As João da Silva mentions in his discussion with Ric Allsop, the notion of free improvisation is not very appealing as such:

*This is also unappealing for me because I have a bit of an issue with the notion of free-improvisation, or rather the promise of freedom it seems to offer (very often a negative freedom, a freedom "from").*¹⁴⁷

The concept of free improvisation is also not very defining in my artistic research. Free improvisation as a concept is wide and narrow at the same time. In a way it means that 'you can do whatever you like' but it is not even possible because you cannot be free from everything; that is a fact and not just a negative thing. There are always the conditions that guide your work and your improvisation. Your (free) improvisation always relates to something and you can do whatever you like in that relation, depending on your own situation. When we take into ac-

147 da Silva 2015, 160.



Sini improvising in her *situation*. (Photo: Mikko Orpana 2014)

count the possibility for different and changing relations and emerging situations we can decide to do improvisation so that we are free to change, deny, start and stop, be alone, sing etc. In this second artistic work we used improvisation with quite delicate frames where everyone's own situation was the starting point and reference point and guiding frame. As da Silva also depicts in his own research, the dancers benefit from being prepared to face the unknown:

It is rather a capacity to recognize and a readiness to be open to it when it happens. So for me working towards an encounter with the unknown has a lot to do with knowing (not necessarily consciously), with an ability to engage with what is there, taking place. One could say that you get to know what you do not know when you are surprised or forced to think.¹⁴⁸

This is also the reason in our case why the rehearsing of improvisation and knowing each other was so important. When we got used to what improvising with each one's own situation meant, we could relax with the improvisation and then we could also feel the freedom in improvising.

4.2. Compositional development

In *United States of Mind* I had to rethink the way I create composition and choreography. This is actually the reason why I began my doctoral studies in the first place. For me, composition and choreography used to be synonyms or I just did not pay too much attention to those concepts because they were so bound together in my practice. The compositional tools I got from my studies in choreography were quite basic and mainly involved organizing the dance movement into patterns in relation to the dancers and with the materiality of the stage. Of course that kind of organizing requires thinking processes with motifs and ideas. Those processes then require a world view, ideology, ethics, morality or some kind of basis that gives one reference points and perspectives for making choices and valuing certain things more than others. These basic compositional tools are still good in my opinion and for me these tools have been an actual help in categorizing material and having a grasp of the vastness of the overflowing information from the world, the artistic crew and my capabilities for perceiving things. However, in this second artistic work I tried to get rid of the categorizing and composing and tried to lead the work in the direction of self-organizing instead of dictating. And to some degree we succeeded in creating a method

148 da Silva 2015, 155.

where the dancers are independent of the choreographer and the choreography is a result of this self-organization.

This does not necessarily lead to absolutely unique choreography or something that is never seen on dance stages and it does not have a shock value or some 'must see' aspects. It may have those things but so can any other way have too. The self-organizing method in my research was primarily to give dancers new freedom and opportunities to determine the starting points for the dancing and to examine how the choreography can be improvised.

How can we through improvisation find, for example, the moral basis and accept the situation if it is not shared? How can we share the situation if we do not agree on things? How does the disagreement affect improvisation? If the action on stage goes on, then at which point can we call it a choreography rather than an improvised compositional exercise?

4.3. Schedule

The rehearsals were held between November 2013 and November 2014. Basically, we held them only once a month except June and July 2014. There were also two intensive periods, first in September 2014 for one week and second in November 2014. In total this was fairly a long period with few rehearsals. The advantage of having a long time for the whole period was not to be stressed too much about the outcome nor having to be efficient in producing material for the performance in a single rehearsal. The quite relaxed way of working was more suitable for making research and trying out and developing new concepts for the dancer's work. Every rehearsal also included a lot of discussion. I will go through the process of rehearsing from the beginning to the performances themselves in more detail now.

4.4. Rehearsing working on the situation

One's own *situation*. This was the main theme during the whole period from the first rehearsal. It was the both the meaning of the whole thing and the source of improvisation in the dancer's work. There was a lot of discussion about the concept of situation. We read Lauri Rauhala's definition about it and examined how that could be applied to our own lives by talking, drawing and dancing.

Everyone's own situation was the key thing when we thought about the reasons that make us dancing. The first rehearsals were mainly trying out together what kind of concentration was needed to get to the point where you could be aware of your own situation and share it with the others and at the same time be

affected by the others' situations. The rehearsal that became the dominant one was derived from the *sleepwalking* rehearsal that I used in my solo *Acts of Mind* in 2012 as described in Chapter 3.2.3. My Routine of Sleepwalking.

Throughout the whole period we always started the rehearsals with *sleepwalking* and varied it slightly every time. The variations mainly considered the means of focus: having the eyes closed all the time, opening the eyes little by little, having an acceleration towards the end of the rehearsal or purely following one's own impulses whatever they were.

Usually this *sleepwalking* was made as a solo and everybody did it together but without much interaction. In some rehearsals we aimed at interaction and *shared situation* within *sleepwalking*. When rehearsing the *shared situation* we improvised with special focuses on the interaction: copying, *mirroring*, *following*, *leading*, *rejecting*, *varying the distance*, *getting the other's feelings or moods*, *emotional sensing*, *conversation* etc.

From the previous list the *getting the other's mood* and *emotional sensing* felt quite significant in our work. The focus on these is like consciously enhanced empathetic perceiving which is like mirroring the other but in a subtle way which feels almost unconscious because the connection between bodies is non-verbal and direct. There is no rational articulation in this kind of communication. Rationality comes afterwards and too late for the communication of the bodies. We are nearing the long-lost understanding and capacity to read the body; as Michel Serres states, we have lost the medium-body.

This point of view might be one reason why dance is sometimes considered not incomprehensible or hard to approach. At least it makes me believe more in the body's capacity as the storage of life, memory and the ultimate communicator. We are trying to learn something that has been forgotten, we are coming back to the body. And the unity of minds is, although this sounds somewhat dualistic, the unity of the bodies.

Towards the end of the rehearsing period we concentrated more and more on the interaction between the dancers and *the shared situation*. Alongside the dancing and moving we had a sound designer with us who provided us with different ways to produce sound. In some rehearsals we used radios as a random source of sound and music. Also we made experiments with microphones and the sound and text which was born in *the situation*. All in all, the act of rehearsing was not just movement and physical contact but also sounds with the contribution of the sound designers' live mixing and processing of those sounds as you can see in the photo:



Katri Puranen processing the sound, Veli-Pekka Majava speaking on the microphone.
(Photo: Mikko Orpana, 2014)

There was also recycling of the sound, so the dancers did not have to produce it all the time:



Katri Puranen processing the sound and Anni Rissanen, Janne Aspvik and Veli-Pekka Majava drawing. United States of Mind, rehearsal (Photo: Mikko Orpana, 2014).

The recycling was made by recording, looping and processing the sound-matter produced by the dancers. Also the space itself acted as a source for sound. The microphones and loudspeakers around the space were used to create audio feedback just by adjusting the volume too high and processing that feedback all over again so that the PA-system was in a way self-sufficient in sound production.



Janne Aspvik, Anni Rissanen and Veli-Pekka Majava dancing, United States of Mind, rehearsal (Photo: Mikko Orpana, 2014).

Katri, who was the sound designer, and I, who was the researcher/choreographer, were both on the stage too. Katri and me also participated in the perceiving of the *own situation* in the performance and some dancing and drawing too. Otherwise Katri was with the sound mixing console and I was with the lights mixing console. Both consoles were on the stage and visible. The idea of placing the consoles on the stage came at a very late point in the rehearsals. For one year we had been rehearsing in varying conditions depending on what kind of studio I managed to book for us. The size of the studio varied from small to large but illumination was always with fluorescent lamps, which meant that everything was very visible all the time. The sound systems in the rehearsals were randomly built on the floor of the stage so there were cables and microphone stands and radios lying around. Sometimes we did not have any sound system and then we focused on breathing and the sounds that emerged from the studio itself when we were moving and dancing there.

Next, I will show a score for perceiving the *own situation* and working from that towards the *shared situation*. The score was built on the initial questions we posed and rehearsals we did during the process. Everyone was involved in making the score by discussing and making propositions for tasks. My position as a researcher and choreographer was to make propositions according to the research question and write down the actual score. The result is a combination of questions and tasks:

SCORE FOR SHARED SITUATION

1. Focus on being
 - What feelings do you have in your mind and physically?
 - What is your posture? In what directions does your body move if you allow yourself to follow the impulses in your body? What is your natural posture? What is the opposite of your natural posture? What is your natural speed? How fast do you move in the space if you now try to guide your body to it? Do you prefer to stay on one spot or move around?
2. Focus on thinking
 - What are you thinking now? Say it aloud, say aloud everything that comes into your mind.
 - If you find yourself hesitating when saying something, guide that thought into movement. You can also change your speech to gibberish, or whisper.

- Choose one thought that you want to work with.
 - Make a presentation of that thought with your voice.
 - Make a presentation of that thought with movement.
 - Make a presentation of that thought by drawing.
3. Focus on thinking about the society you live in.
 - What things in society are troubling you or make you feel happy?
 - Work on that thought and make a presentation of it in the same way as in Chapter 2.
 4. Working with others
 - Focus on observing the others in the space.
 - How are you with them?
 - Try different contacts with the others, collaborate, react to the others' contacts.
 5. Shared situation
 - Make a presentation/choreography of the things that you have been thinking about and working with, together and without planning, just do it!
 6. Discussion

The score above is not free improvisation as such. It is quite a framed set of instructions and it was the first score we had in our rehearsals. The demand for a score came from the need to frame the improvisation and the dancer's contribution in such a way that could be researched and where we could see differences between this and that improvisation. The score is also more like a guideline for the dancers in how to work independently and together, aiming for something shared. For a comparison to the score above I will present two more scores which were done just before the premiere. The scores were made as the previous score was. They were built on top of the previous version and discussed by the whole team. The first was done two weeks before the premiere and is structurally quite loose:

SCORE FOR THE PERFORMANCE (2 weeks before)

Here are our tools:

- Sleepwalking → the use of time, getting to a focused state of being and staying there
- One's own situation

- Showing the perceptions
 - ⇒ by dancing
 - ⇒ by speaking
 - ⇒ by writing and drawing
 - ⇒ by doing through your own expertise
 - ⇒ by drifting away from your own comfort-zone towards finding something new

Compositional tools for us:

- ⇒ distance to others
- ⇒ going into the other's mode, contamination
- ⇒ becoming denser
- ⇒ overlapping, similarity—differences

This score does not seem much for a performance. It shows that we had been rehearsing the things which are mentioned in the score and because of that they did not have to be explained so clearly. The very next day after this score I was thinking whether I should be the host for the evening and explain to the audience what we were doing. It felt impossible that the audience could grasp the nuances of what we were trying to focus on. Then I decided to make a clearer frame without explanations. And the almost final score looks like this:

ALMOST FINAL SCORE

1. Warm up (without audience)
 - Everybody's own warm up
 - *Sleepwalking* alone and together 30 min.

2. Audience arrives at the space
 - *Sleepwalking* continues in the space → perceptions of self, the others and the audience, no direct contact, being in our own bubble, being on fragile ground in an uncertain situation
 - Lights, door is closed
 - Applying one's own techniques and skills with the *situation*
 - Following the others' *situations*, being open to influences
 - Drawing on the blackboard whenever one feels like doing so. (drawing one's own *situation*)
 - Aiming towards a *shared situation*

Some kind of intermission with (my) speech about the research?

3. Focusing on the use of the sound system and voice:

- own situations
- towards a shared situation
- maintaining the sounds (recording and looping?)

4. Summary

- Combining the movements and sounds
- playing with the old routes, patterns and sequences (which were found during the first three chapters)
- What kind of choreography is emerging?

In addition to the score above there are the following instructions for the dancers:

- Always try to maintain the concentration, do not slip away into the everyday-life-mood and don't quit the task just like that.
- The starting point is your own situation, there is no need to show off everything you can do, you don't have to do tricks. The idea of reclaiming your status and place is not needed in this research.
- When you are in contact with the others, be clear and straightforward.
- If something is beginning to affect you, let it happen.
- Try to surprise yourself.

Behind these instructions I can find a concern which is quite familiar for all of us who try out something new. The concern is about the new ideas and practices being accepted and understood. I am always doubting myself and find myself thinking whether my art is not sufficient enough to be called art. Or am I clever and intelligent enough to do this research? By means of the additional instructions above I tried to strengthen the faith that the *situation* is enough for the starting point and content of the performance.

The final score was a modified and supplemented version of the previously introduced scores. This score is composed in a chronological manner, so that is a logical continuum from the first scene to the last scene in the same manner as the rehearsals were done. I will present a short description of it below and in the next chapter I will explain more in detail the framing and structure of the performance.

FINAL SCORE

1. First chapter

- 15 minutes before starting the performance, the dancers are in the main hall perceiving their own situation and the overall atmosphere. When the doors open for the audience, the dancers go inside with them, take a place on the stage and begin the performance by concentrating on their own *situation*.
- Theatrical lights illuminate the stage and the first blackboard.
- Dancers move according to their own situation, for approximately 10 minutes.
- Dancers draw on the blackboard.
- End of first chapter, lights change.

2. Second chapter

- Dancers examine the distances, for 10-15 minutes.
- Dancers draw on the second blackboard.
- End of chapter, lights change.
-

3. Third chapter

- The microphones and loudspeakers are illuminated; dancers go to their own microphones.
- Dancers produce sound according to their own *situation*; the sound is processed by the sound designer, 10-15 minutes.
- Dancers draw on the third blackboard.
- End of chapter, lights change.

4. Fourth chapter

- Dancers use the elements which are found during the three first chapters, including drawing, light and sound.
- The *shared situation*, 10-15 minutes.
- End of performance, black out.

5. Discussion with the audience

The timings in the final chapter were approximately 10-15 minutes. This timing also strongly define the structure and the behavior within each chapter. There is ideally enough time to launch some improvised activity but the end is reached

quite soon and when the dancers are aware of it the development of the improvisation stops and is almost brutally forced to end. In the rehearsals the longest improvisations were around 50 minutes. In that time the dancers usually have time to get through the usual trivialities and relax into a state of just being there, which gives them an opportunity to act and react more freely and spontaneously.

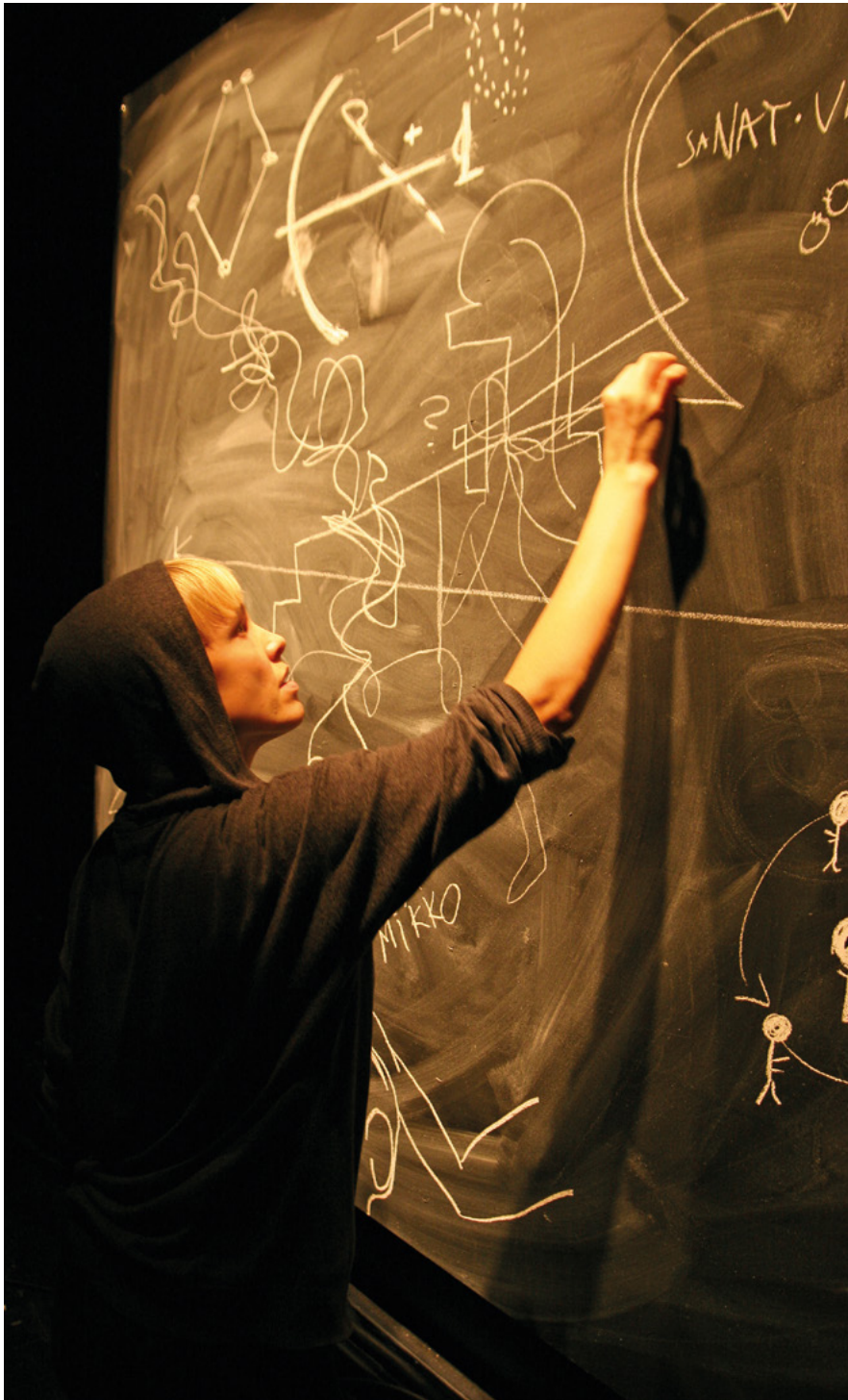
4.5. Structure of the performance

The performance had a structure of four chapters and within each chapter there was a frame for the action. The framing was very clear in a certain way. Within the framing the dance and actions were quite free to emerge. However, when the framing was done it caused quite soon a certain type of behavior, structuring and moods within each chapter. These things appeared by themselves; they were not premeditated.

I will explain the structure and framing of each chapter with notions and photos:

1. The first chapter

In the first chapter each one of the dancers including the sound designer and I did the sleepwalking exercise. At the core of this exercise was each one's own situation and the perception of it. Their own situation consisted of everything you could conceive at that moment. The aim was also to get yourself active and dancing within the sensation of your own situation. The dancing could be anything from lying on the ground to running and leaping in the space. The actions were, however, framed so that everyone was concentrating on his or her own feelings and sensations, not nobody else's. Little by little there was a chance to open your field to the others, and wider when you felt ready for it. During the first chapter everyone was free to draw on the first blackboard whatever came to mind during the action:



Anni Rissanen drawing the first blackboard. United States of Mind, rehearsal (Photo: Mikko Orpana, 2014).

Below, you can see the first try out with the blackboards six months earlier:



Veli-Pekka Majava, Mikko Orpana, Sini Siipola, Janne Aspvik and Anni Rissanen, rehearsal (Photo capture from video, Mikko Orpana, 2014)

In this photo you can see simultaneous copying (Anni and I have our hands up), getting into the others' mood (Sini and Janne) and writing the emotion (Veli-Pekka). In the performance there were four blackboards instead of one. This was mainly for making the analytical research clearer and easier, but it also resulted into somewhat traditionally aesthetic framing, which was a little confusing according to some audience feedback, which claimed that the framing made the improvisation look as if it had been planned too much before-hand, which it had not.

2. The second chapter

The second chapter was framed as follows: Examine the distance and act (dance, move, speak, look, approach etc.) accordingly to that. The distance could be the distance between people dancing or in the audience or the distance between dancers and the details in the space or an abstract sense of distance within your imagination.

Now everybody had some kind of sensation of the situation individually, and this new command was more like a guideline to frame the action from a different point of view and give support to the emerging patterns and happenings in the space. Basically, now the dancers were quite free to improvise according to their own situation.

In this second chapter the *shared situation* was becoming more visible too. Dancers were not concentrating on the self anymore so much but were aware of the others and opened themselves to contact. As every action was improvisation, the dancers were aware (at least in some degree because we had been rehearsing it) of the preconceived habits and ways they had learned of being in contact with others.

One task was to question yourself if you are making contact as you used to do in contact-improvisation in some other situation. The other task was to be aware of the composition of people in the space, for example. Am I arranging myself according to the others in some ways that I have been taught or learned to be the 'right' or 'interesting' ways?

These tasks were only for enhancing the awareness of habits and the present situation, not for judging whether something was good or bad. Of course there is an underlying notion that the habits have both good and bad features. And this notion was coming directly from me. I noticed that I had some kind of fear or distrust, that the choreography would not organize itself, at least such as I wanted. This was a weak point in my research and a failure as a choreographer. This fear was also the reason why I framed the performance just before the premiere and arranged lights to emphasize that framing.



Second blackboard, United States of Mind, premiere (Photo: Mikko Orpana, 2014).

3. The third chapter

In the third chapter the focus was more on the sound and emotion through voice. There were four microphones hanging from the ceiling and there were four loudspeakers hanging near those microphones. As the dancers were moving around the space they could accidentally or intentionally put the microphones and loudspeakers swinging. Katri, the sound designer, processed the actual live voices from the performance. There were no external sound sources or readymade sounds: all the sounds were produced on stage by the dancers and the equipment and space itself.



Anni Rissanen lying on the floor under the microphone and loudspeaker. Rehearsal (Photo: Mikko Orpana, 2014)



Veli-Pekka Majava singing. Rehearsal (Photo: Mikko Orpana, 2014).

The sound and voice chapter usually had a structure of its own. We were aware of the quite natural proceeding of how there is some kind of innate need to formulate this chapter in an ascending dynamics, which then calms down towards the end of the chapter as a wave. This dynamics was strengthened in every performance by itself. The same thing happened in every chapter, as I mentioned earlier, but in this chapter it was very clear. During the performances there was no need for me as a researcher to guide the dynamics anymore. The performance had taken a form of its own although it was meant to be an improvised occasion, but because of the framing it settled itself within the given 'external' parameters; lights and timeframe, although the time-frame was flexible according the situation itself.

After we had played with the sound and some movement too there was an agreement that everyone who felt so could draw something of the soundscape on the third blackboard. The 'usual' contribution seemed like this:



Third blackboard. Premiere (Photo: Mikko Orpana, 2014).

There are words which define the happening like the following: hengitys (breathing), suu (mouth), seesteinen (calm), särkylääke (painkiller), tundra, tvångsmässigt (forced-like), max-i-pad. Some of these words and drawings, especially, tell us more about something abstract that was felt. For comparison the blackboard from the last performance looks like this:



Third blackboard. Last (third) performance (Photo: Mikko Orpana 2014).

This blackboard seems to be more filled and versatile than the first one. The words are; paksu saundi (thick sound), hengityskone (breathing machine), avaruustiikeri (space tiger), singularitet (singularity), gengeld, delvis sant (partially true), system theory, buss bukowski, yhteinen tilallisuus (common spatiality). The drawings there seem to be more intensive too. The soundscape has clearly affected the dancers overall experience and emotion. The reason for more expression on this blackboard can be the fact that at the premiere the improvisation with the sound was a little careful but this carefulness wore off after a while and there was no longer any reason to hold back with the emotion and the sound. Here we can also sense the need to be approved by the audience in order to free your mind from controlling thoughts and self-doubts when improvising.

At the premiere we still did not know how the audience was going to respond to this kind of improvisation. After every performance there was a discussion with the audience and we got instant feedback, usually from the people who were interested in the work, and the feedback was constructive in a positive way. The negative feedback came in more like a 'hearsay' form

than usual because the people who did not like the performance or research in it, never stayed to join in the discussion.

Although there were only three performances and two dress rehearsals the performance took big leaps in the dynamics. We performers developed a trust among ourselves that doing nothing was all right if it felt so and running around and bumping into each other was all right too. Actually, everything was all right!

4. The fourth chapter

The fourth chapter was some kind of conclusion following the previous three chapters and also a new beginning towards something that could be emerging from that conclusion at that explicit moment. The act of drawing on the blackboard was possible all the time during the chapter. Also the sound devices were available all the time. I usually improvised with the lights in the fourth chapter and took part very briefly in the action on the stage. All the four blackboards were lit in this chapter, which gave the dancers and the audience the opportunity to recall the drawings from the earlier chapters.

The drawings represented some kind of data storage of what had happened and otherwise it was up to the dancers how to use the movements, contacts, sequences, patterns and sound they had discovered in making the conclusion and aiming towards something new. To be honest, it was not very clear for me nor the dancers how to logically and systemically process the information and proceed with that data. Instead of logic we agreed that the emotion and experience in the body at that moment were the guiding attributes. The performance's internal feedback loops and communication are not being approached very analytically but rather in an intuitive and emotional way. The systems theory attributes: iteration, entropy and bifurcation points are quite hazy in the research. However, the ideas of fluctuations, excess information, cumulative powers and opportunity for new inventions are considered to be helpful models for creating a choreography by improvisation throughout the whole rehearsing period and in the actual performances too.

For my research the idea that dancers can imagine themselves fluctuating, exchanging information and cumulating these actions towards an unknown, new invention, is the reason to use these systems' theoretical concepts. The question of choreographic emergence is as important as the dancer's role as the creator. The dancer is no more a tool or interpreter of somebody else's ideas than her own. And at the end of this research per-

formance the dancer's *agency* becomes more visible, at least for me and the dancers, and the line may be fine between *the agent* and *the agency* but there it is. The dancers have their own *agencies*.



Fourth blackboard. Premiere (Photo: Mikko Orpana, 2014).

On the fourth blackboard the words are these: *rytmitys* (rhythm-making), *quartett*, *kosketus* (touch), *duot* (duos), *leikki* (play), *hengitys* (breathing), *kehon paino* (weight of the body), *ylös* (up), *alas* (down), *peilailu* (mirroring). The drawings could indicate that there are both clear and unclear positions and directions at the same time.

When we compare this blackboard to the earlier ones from the premiere, we can also see growth in the information and some relaxation in the expression too. The difficult task for the dancers is to be aware of the one's own *situation* and to change the ways of being from dancing to drawing and back. In this switching, however mechanistic it may sound, lies an interesting borderline between 'the inside' and 'the outside'. According to my own experience of this switching, the focus from the bodily perception suddenly disappears from the conscious mind, and the rationality of guiding my own emotions into the drawing hand and the feel of the chalk take over the consciousness. Going back to the bodily awareness is easy, which proves that it is my limited capacity to perceive the wholeness of the situation and to

draw at the same time that makes me feel some kind of separation which, of course, is not true.

5. Discussion

After every performance we had an open discussion with the audience. In the programme everyone could read a brief introduction about the research, *situation*, improvisation, systems theory and the emerging choreography. I moderated the discussions and the questions were mostly concerned with both. 1. the improvisation based on *situation*, and 2. what was new and special in this kind of improvised choreography.

First, I have to say that having a critical conversation right after the performance may be quite exhausting, especially if you have yourself been on the stage. You maybe cannot have the proper objective distance as a moderator between the proposed questions and the actual practice that has taken place just before. But as a researcher I had to do it, and also according to Varela, one has to be a part of the system in order to be able to affect it and perceive it.

Next, I will go through the critical issues which came up in the discussion with the audiences and also from the discussion with the working group one year after the project was done.

One of the dancers whom I worked with in 'United States of Mind' told me later that understanding and conceiving your own history and learned ways of improvising has taken some time and working on the practice of improvising with different groups. By that statement I understood that you may see your habits in contrast to the others' and your 'survival' strategies become clearer to yourself when those strategies are in use in different environments.

If a human is quick to adapt to different conditions then I could say that a dancer is extremely quick and versatile in adapting to the requirements from the choreographer, the changing working hours, very low salaries, cold studios, hot studios, no studios, judgments expressed at the auditions, changing cities and working groups. The bodies do it; the bodies are so quick and flexible. And my dancer friend clearly proved to be self-organizing; her body is learning all the time; the learning never stops. To be a dancer is to be an ongoing process. The dancer's body is on the edge; it is on the verge of falling to the future all the time. To dance is to be futuristic, not in the sense of the art history term of futuristic, but in the sense of renewing and leaping towards the unconscious and unknown.

4.6. Feedback and criticism

Feedback from the audience mainly concerned the dance movements, situation, theatrical framing and improvisation. The concern with the dance movements is a curious one. During the rehearsing process I also paid attention to the virtuosity of a dancer and encouraged the dancers to use their dancing vocabulary rather than diminish or hide it. The research was in no point a criticism of any technique *per se*. The focus was on the organisatory ways of moving and how the contents were made and brought up in the action. Everyone was free to use their own background as much as they felt was needed in their own *situation*. There were also no attempts to deprive anyone of special skills special in order to achieve a 'neutral' or 'equal' ground for dancing. It would have been absurd and impossible. The equality was in the possibility to affect and to be affected. Some members of the audience were irritated by seeing dance movements from special techniques such as folk dance or contemporary techniques or classical techniques. The irritation was all right and we were able to discuss those things right away after the performance. I could not include every possible thought and aspect from the rehearsing process in the program. The discussion with the audience also served a real need to talk about questions that had arisen and also my research with the direct feedback. The questions about the *situation* were closely connected with the questions about dance movements. The *situation* was, of course, always new and also in constant change during the performance and that was the main thing we had been rehearsing. In the rehearsals we were getting ready to being aware of everyone's own situation all the time. The constant awareness can, of course, easily lead for being too cautious and the practice of *sleepwalking* was certainly developed for these purposes: to be aware of the *situation* and to be able to move, to communicate with the others and be aware of the *shared situation* too.

One year later, in conversation with the working group we went through the rehearsing process and the making of the performance.¹⁴⁹ The shared over all experience was that by rehearsing the *situation* we could go through everything that was in our minds from our own lives or the daily news and experiences, emotions and moods. And that felt good since there was no pressure in producing movement material in a conventional way or representing the one's own *situation* in any form that felt alien or external to oneself.

From the practice of being aware of the *situation* there were felt similarities with the practice of Authentic Movement and in general the experience of improvisation as a model of life. The experiences of the performance differed a bit more. One dancer felt that the framing was maybe a little too conventional and limited to allow a real improvised choreography to emerge while another dancer felt that the structure gave the improvisation confidence and helped the perceiving of the whole thus helping the concentration through the whole performance. Nevertheless the shared feeling was that we were almost there, we were on the edge of something really new and emerging. Maybe we should have done it one hour more to get rid of the structure and allow more time to have effect on maybe slowing down, get bored, get the feeling of emptiness and get space for hearing the silence and what goes on in the body after the really intensive focusing on awareness and *situation*. The circumstance in the actual performance affected also strongly for the awareness and the feeling of the others. The sudden presence of the audience had a pulse-raising effect, which made it hard in the first chapter to calm down to work in the one's own *situation*. At least that was the occasion at the premiere, the other performances were more relaxed and worked dynamically on a broader scale.

The other curious thing was with the preconceived and altered practices of improvisation depending on the performers' personal habits, learned practices and even taste and opinions. These are all things that I did not want to try to change or override in the project. I pointed out many times that we did not have to agree on everything, we did not have to find a way to consensus nor conflict. We tried to agree to disagree. Naturally the atmosphere of disagreeing on a stage cannot last long without consciously prolonging it and that was unnecessary. The disagreeing was more subtle and occasional than big clashes of opinions or attitudes. And the same thing can be said of agreeing too; the moments of agreeing were embedded in the *shared situation* so that pointing them out would be artificial and impossible. All the intentions, forces and directions were entangled and inseparable. And we felt about the dance movements that were related to specific techniques in the same way. The techniques do not own us and we do not own the techniques; it is the occasion that owns us and the techniques, as we can imagine according to Whitehead:

*The event that provides you with a point of view belongs to the great impersonal web of events.*¹⁵⁰

Our bodies are trained in different ways and when we gathered together we did not want to get rid of that learned knowledge, and, yes, some movements were more recognizable than others, and for us they were no longer glimpses of the other worlds but part of our improvisation and communication at that very moment.

This kind of thinking is, no doubt, hard to grasp in a performance where it is not said aloud, and here we bump into the other preconceptions that emerged during the performance: the theatrical lighting and the framing of the structure. There was the fairly conventional division between the audience and the stage, and the lights enhanced that division even more, since the stage was lit and the audience remained in the shadows.

On the stage there were the concrete elements that were also specially lit (not by chance or in a general way), the four blackboards, the microphones and loudspeakers hanging from the ceiling, the table with the sound-mixing console, the table with the lights desk and the stage itself. All these very theatrical elements can easily direct the receiver's expectations concerning the action and content on the stage towards a traditionally constructed dramaturgy.

From those expectations it is easy to miss the actual fine-tuned bodies and their special standing-points and how the interactions are based on that kind of fine-tuning. I admit that the theatrical framing can be seen as a little misleading and it would have been better to have come up with some other solutions. This was the reason for many criticisms from the audience.

In a conversation one year after the performance the common opinion was that we were on the edge of something really new and we should make an revised version of the performance, perhaps with a short introduction with a framing and then a totally open and unframed continuation and end. That was the beginning for the Dance & Philosophy- workshop which began in May 2016 and gives material as the fourth project of my research.

5. "Dance & Philosophy" (workshop) - A philosophical inquiry for the dancer's agency in my research

Dance&Philosophy - workshop

Participants: Janne Aspvik, Jenni-Elina von Bagh, Karolina Ginman, Sara Gurevitsch, Mikko Orpana, Anni Rissanen, Sini Siipola, Pauliina Sjöberg, Anna Stenberg

Place: Theatre Academy 2016-2017

The Dance&Philosophy - workshop was the fourth project in my artistic doctoral research. The major difference with the earlier three projects was that the participants of the workshop were not chosen by me. I only chose the target groups to whom I advertised the workshop. These groups were students of dance and choreography or already graduated dancers and choreographers. Participation in the workshops was voluntary; I simply announced the time and place by email and then all the interested participants gathered there. The number of participants varied from one to nine. This project began in May 2016 and ended in March 2017 and it we met ten times altogether.

In the workshop we worked on improvised choreography with the help of thoughts from the philosophers Alfred North Whitehead and Michel Serres and from Lauri Rauhala's concept of *situationality*.

Because of the profundity in rejecting the *bifurcation of nature* in Whitehead's thinking I had to direct my research through that also.

Bifurcation is in the division of the subject and the object or the knower and the known. Whitehead rejects this division:



Dance&Philosophy – workshop. From left: Mikko, Karolina, Anna, Sini, Pauliina, Sara, Jenni-Elina and Janne. The first rehearsals, May 2016.

...the nature apprehended in awareness and the nature which is cause of awareness¹⁵¹

Whitehead suggests overcoming the whole idea of bifurcation altogether:

We may not pick and choose...we must develop an account of the world in which “the red glow of the sunset” and “the molecules and electric waves” of sunlight refracting into the earth’s atmosphere have the same ontological status.¹⁵²

In the workshops we investigated the following concepts: *Situation* as Lauri Rauhala describes it in the quotation above and *passage of nature* as Whitehead describes it. From Whitehead there are also two other concepts: *self-enjoyment* and *concern*.

151 Whitehead 1920/2004, 30-31.

152 Whitehead 1920/2004, 29.

Self-enjoyment is immediate in that it happens prereflexively. Concern is an involuntary experience of being affected by others. Self-enjoyment and concern are both movements, or pulsations, of emotion.¹⁵³

There were also the concepts of *medium-body* and *imitation* as an origin of knowledge as Michel Serres describes it.

*...there is nothing in knowledge which has not been first in the entire body, whose gestural metamorphoses, mobile postures, very evolution imitate all that surrounds it.*¹⁵⁴

Each one of these concepts was processed by conversation and dance improvisation in separate workshops. The improvisations were set up by means of conversation about the topic concerned. Usually the conversation took 90 minutes. After the conversation the improvised dances were practised for an hour, then there was a short brake and again there were dance improvisations for an hour. Every workshop was finished with a concluding conversation which lasted from 30 to 60 minutes.

Here are all the workshops listed chronologically:

1. Lauri Rauhala. *Situationality*, perception, mind-body-dualism. Practical work:
 - *Sleepwalking* rehearsal
 - Phenomenological perception of things and dancing in relation to these perceptions and contact with the others.

2. Alfred North Whitehead. Concept of *Passage of nature* as the idea of time. In practice:
 - *Sleepwalking* focusing entirely on the oneself.
 - *Passage of nature* as one's own improvisation with the awareness of the others' presence.
 - The same as the previous but considerably slowing down the reactions and impulses, thus giving time for perception.

3. Whitehead. "The very movement of the inner life of things". The practice is the same as in the previous workshop, but more focused and slowed down.

153 Shaviro 2014, 16.

154 Serres 1999, 70.

4. Whitehead. Concepts of *self-enjoyment* and *concern*. In practice two long improvisations where the task was to become aware of the impulses which are created by those concepts.
5. Whitehead. The same concepts as in the previous workshop.
6. Forgetting about any particular topic but still having the previous workshops in mind as a background. Two improvisations with speed variations and distances to another.
7. Preparing for the upcoming symposium Matter&Process.
8. Whitehead Symposium, Matter&Process¹⁵⁵ at the Theatre Academy. PowerPoint presentation of the concepts of self-enjoyment and concern. After the PowerPoint the dancers made a physical presentation with the audience, blending in. The audience was allowed to participate.
9. Michel Serres. Concepts of imitation and medium-body. Two improvisations.
10. Michel Serres. The same theme as in the previous workshop. Two improvisations added with more speed and contact.

The use of these philosophical thoughts from Lauri Rauhala, Alfred North Whitehead and Michel Serres are selective and interpreted by my own insights and proposals for examining the self-organizing choreography and the dancer's agency.

The workshop did not offer any schemas to contain the experiences produced by the improvisation. The improvisational dances were test fields for the possibilities to perceive your own *situation* alongside specific tasks when dancing. The tasks were difficult and produced a lot of confusion but also inexplicable joy. The confusion was partly due to the straightforward attempt to embody the philosophical concepts by dancing. Choreographer Jenni-Elina von Bagh explains this translation:

*When using a philosophical concept as a resource for artistic translation, it should be freed up for the use of creativity.... The artist gives her-or himself away- for the activity of translation. In this way the art in process is freed from only representing the original and gives an opening for something intuitively essential and true in a poetic manner.*¹⁵⁶

155 Theatre Academy 2017.

156 von Bagh 2018, 16.

Most of the time the feeling in improvising was like being lost in the woods without a map. Although this feeling of random navigating generated confusion it was also enjoyable since there was no need to achieve a clear goal and the rehearsals triggered feelings of wholeness after a while.

For me the feeling of wholeness emerged due to the complexity of the tasks. At some point, when improvising the dance, I bypassed the confusion of being aware and I could tell my body how to move without questioning whether my dance or my relation to others was right or wrong.

Lauri Rauhala's *situation* was a basis for all the workshops and was quite easily adopted by the dancers.

Whitehead's concept *Passage of Nature* was the topic or sub-topic in the workshops 2-8. This topic was difficult to grasp as a starting-point for improvised dancing. However, the idea of *Passage of Nature* began to create a special atmosphere for the improvisation. It forced us to question our standpoints and at the same time made us free of our old habits.

The final two workshops 9-10 were more dedicated to Michel Serres' concepts of *imitation* and *medium-body*. These concepts were quite adaptable again for improvised dancing. However, only two occasions were not enough for deep investigation.

The Dance&Philosophy- workshop an alternative approach for the dancer's agency despite only ten meetings. The self-organizing choreography may also emerge in very controlled circumstances. The dancers' awareness of their *situation* with added awareness of the specific tasks gives them strict guidelines about how to act with others and how to initiate movements. The possibilities of improvising are numerous, but the randomness of choosing whatever comes to mind is reduced by tasking. Many aspects of improvising dance and movements are still open. For example, speed, touch, strength, use of voice and repetition are solely dependent on how the dancer perceives the task. Each dancer's enactment is individual and they still share the same kinaesthetic field. The tasking clarifies the improvisation and enables contacts, patterns and emerging choreography.

6. Conclusions

The choreographic practice I am modeling in this dissertation is a proposition towards an expanded choreography where the choreographer-dancer relationship becomes altered towards an interactive, immersive and delicate understanding of the *shared situation* and *co-creation*. The academic approaches and the philosophical contexts in this artistic research are not tight or too limiting but actually become blurred, mixed, used and misused during the research process between the years 2010-2017. There are four projects. The first and the last work exist as a source of material and the second and third are pre-examined works for the dissertation. A development in the use of contexts and ways of thinking can be seen when one examines this research chronologically. The context has actually been developing all the time and the quest for the answers has been the quest for the academically and artistically right questions.

The first project *Private&Common* was carried out in January 2011 and it was inspired by the Systems theory- lectures organized by the theatre director and researcher Janne Tapper at the Theatre Academy. The project was more based on intuition than defined and articulated by academic questions. But using it as a starting point, I found some clues to Systems Theory in dance practice and a vision of choreography as a self-organizing system and improvisation as an activating force in that system.

The systemic approach to this kind of research can be Ilya Prigogine's model, where the order comes out of chaos and the system is in constant imbalance. To be able to allow enough interaction, the whole process of rehearsing, creating and performing the choreography can be done in a very collaborative way. The choreographic process can be connected to Prigogine's model that enables sudden changes within the system and innovations that seem to emerge in a non-psychological way from the chaotic flow of information. Innovations in this case can be the moments when we notice that something is more interesting than other

things and perhaps feels worth remembering and sharing. After this notion the task is to try to track it down and ask why and what things led to this happening.

In the first pre-examined performance *Acts of Mind* (2012) which was a solo performance I researched the dancer's work through my own practice as a dancer and a choreographer. In that practice I concentrated on investigating my own mind-body relation and on how that separation was actually one kind of a mode of thought. The separation is not physically real but we are still taught to think of it as a real separation. We are trained to think that the mind, and especially human consciousness, is superior to our bodies and the other entities in the world. This claim is not exactly what I was trying to achieve in the process of doing *Acts of Mind* but the claim is rather an outcome from that process and that process stands as evidence in the development of my thinking as an artistic researcher.

In the third artistic work for this research "United States of Mind" (2014) I regard a dancer's *agencement* as the crucial factor into allowing the choreography to emerge. Actually, the dancers' agency lies in the embodied situations and processes triggered by incipient tendencies. The patterns of the choreography emerge from these processes and are woven together simultaneously as the dancing happens. The emergence of choreography is aided by a structure in which the improvised dancing alone and together is framed under certain themes.

The idea of beginning the rehearsals in the "*United States of Mind*" with the one's own *situation* and channelling the impulses from that to dance is at the same time both therapeutic and artistic. Doing the exercises and working with dancers triggers the new insights into my feelings and occasionally also happiness. Getting rid of the mind-twisting problems and the sense of the mental weight that they cause makes the dancing feel therapeutic.

This feeling of therapy is closely connected with the aesthetic appearance which is at the same time my own situation and the situation shared with the others. Dancing together and sharing the situation is a special kind of communication in which there is a freedom to share and receive. Somewhere in this entanglement of the artistic and the therapeutic hides my proposition for a revised way for the dancer's work and the self-organizing choreography.

The fourth work "*Dance&Philosophy*"- workshop raised the question of "man as the measure of things" as the theme of the workshop. The dangers of an anthropocentric world view was already announced by Whitehead and thus interpreted by Shaviro:

Whitehead and the speculative realists alike question the anthropocentrism that has so long been a key assumption of modern Western rationality. Such a questioning is urgently needed at a time when we face the prospect of ecological catastrophe and when we are forced to recognize that the fate of humanity is deeply intertwined with the fates of all sorts of other entities.

...

*And we cannot isolate our own interests, and our own economies, from processes taking place on a cosmic scale in a universe whose boundaries we are unable to grasp.*¹⁵⁷

The worries of human –centered ways of valuing things stem from the long-prevailing mind-body-dualistic thinking. And I claim that the same also applies in a smaller scale in the art world. In the history of contemporary dance the appreciation of technical skills and certain forms of choreography has prevailed but from the beginning of the 20th century the modern and contemporary dance paradigms have been fighting for the rights of valuing other attributes in dance too. This valuation includes the role of the body. It can no more be considered as a tool for artistic purposes, no more a tool for the expression of ideas or raw material to be sculpted into meanings. The bifurcation of nature does not actually exist in a dancer, or any entity, so why should we let the old dualistic ideologies and practices of making art define us as such? We have to configure new ways of valuing existence and art. We are defining the mind’s capabilities by the body, not the mechanical, not the container of life but the active, emotional and intelligent body. In the “*Dance&Philosophy*”- workshop this non-bifurcation was being closely examined by the attempt to embody, for example, Whitehead’s idea of *passage of nature*.

6.1. Thoughts about making choreographies

In his article *What score?*¹⁵⁸ Choreographer Johannes Birringer suggests widening the term ‘choreography’ so that it could be everything that happens to you when you are dancing, moving or looking at the dance. Or that it could be an accumulation of conscious and unconscious choices.

This leads to the situation where we might need to redefine the concept of choreography as assemblage or agencement. Choreographic knowledge might also need some formulation or categorization depending on the quality of the knowledge, whether it is interrupting or disturbing as Gabriele Brandstetter notes. It might also be strengthening or constructive.

157 Shaviro 2014, 1.

158 Birringer 2013, p.7-13.

Birringer's notion means an increase in the spectrum of choreographic knowledge and encourages multiple aesthetics at the same time, which also requires redefining the authorship and collaboration.

The meaning of the choreography in this respect is to create the field for the emerging dance. Here the choreography is almost a graspable structure through which you can see patterns, thoughts and actions getting their shape and being visualized. And at the same time the choreography is fluid and flexible and changes as the dancing changes. In this sense the choreography cannot be described as an object of art but as an *ecology* as Erin Manning defines it. Choreography as an *ecology* gives new insights into how the dance can emerge and how the choreography is a result of an interaction.

Since a group of dancers is not a molecule but a combination of mind – bodies, abstract thinkers and physicalities, the choreography as an *ecology* is also an abstract model which is defined again and again when the dancing begins. It is a unifying thing, a field of possibilities, a space for emergence. In that sense the choreography and the dancer's agencement rather invent than preserve, rather suggest than reject. When the dancers improvise according to their *situations* and take into account the interactions, and the chosen choreographic concept allows the sudden changes in relations and the emergent actions reveal the incipient tendencies, then the dancer's agencement actualizes in a way that is emerging choreography and art.

6.2. Manifesto for dancing

*The body is a clear place*¹⁵⁹

With improvised dance and choreography we can experiment with things that go beyond our daily experiences and we can learn from that. Together we can make impossible thoughts possible and lure the hidden tendencies to emerge. Our bodies can be touched, leaned on, raised up and entangled with each other.

Approach the dancer's agencement as a technique of awareness, seek new angles, new synapses, new contacts, feel the invention which gives you the promise of a future, the light feeling of being.

Be a futuristic dancer.

The body is a versatile and multifaceted universe.

Let your body tell the way.

159 Hawkins 1992.

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There are many ways to approach self-organizing or improvised choreography.

In this artistic research the choreography is approached as a self-organizing system and investigated for the requirements that this kind of approach demands from the choreographic thinking and practice and the dancer's work to make the self-organization happen.

This commentary will go through the following key concepts from art, scientific thinking and philosophy:

- *choreography and choreographer*
- *composition, assemblage and agencement*
- *emergence*
- *systems theory*
- *situation*
- *embodied mind*
- *improvisation*
- *choreographic knowledge*

This commentary also contains thorough analysis of three performances and one workshop that were done during the years 2011-2017.



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