

Sensing In Between

Co-creating performance within diversity

GEORGINA GOATER



MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMME IN DANCE PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT

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<p>This thesis is the written component of artistic-pedagogical event <i>Patella-floating bone</i> that was created in collaboration with Theatre Pedagogy peer Elina Sarno, and performed over a four-night season in the Spring of 2018 at the Theatre Academy of Helsinki. My research is an enquiry into the relational in-between spaces of a diverse artistic working group with dance and theatre practices as the frame for sensory exploration and making. Disability and difference as diverse embodied perceptions come to interrelate in a co-creative, process-oriented and practice-based mode of making, within a landscape of nonhuman material things as equal agents in opening other relational spaces and embodiments to sense with. The research examines the phenomena in and of the process, how artistic practice and the ecology of interdependence emerge, interweave and inform creative art pedagogy in action. The work studies the performative experience of practice and audience experiences within a cohabited immersive setting. The main question that mobilised this research is: how does interrelational sensing occur between diverse embodied perceptions and mobilise processes of art making and learning?</p> <p>The work suggests that through artistic practice which privileges embodied sensory exploration in the context of diversity and the call of materiality, the in-between spaces become foregrounded as fields of events unfolding, arising phenomena and knowledge-making. The group's diversity of embodied perceptual differences informs and develops artistic enquiry through engaging in practice, co-creation and performance, harnessing pedagogical value in the very seeds of process. The group ecology of the shared in-between spaces becomes the generator for these relational experiences in the making.</p> <p>The research in the thesis engages philosophical and artistic theories with particular reference to Erin Manning's understanding of <i>agencement</i>, and to disability discourse in dance by Ann Cooper Albright, to reflect and critique broader societal frames of dominant structures. Dialogical pedagogy theories and self-reflective research, as pedagogue and facilitator of emerging unknowns within the group ecology, move through a phenomenological landscape of knowledge-making processes. The performance outcome becomes a motor of playful exploration, yet in itself not an outcome but a practice in process within a cohabited shared space, in which audience are invited to participate through sensory perceptual ways to the in-betweenness of the diverse group embodiment, dissolving nonhuman / human dichotomies along with ableist dichotomies. I intend a mode of facilitation that opens to collaboration, that surrenders the pedagogy to a group artistic agent and to an immanent directionality in art, while honouring the role.</p>			
ENTER KEYWORDS HERE Inclusive dance, in-between, immersive performance, diversity, co-creation, disability, co-facilitation, difference, materiality, sensing, agency, agencement, embodied perception, relational field, emerging, practice as research, dance pedagogy, interdependence, nonhuman things, process-oriented.			

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INTRODUCTION

Patella-floating bone

I wish I could separate different body parts together and apart. Some of them are hanging in the air. You can allow them to look at us. Or are they even watching. Humans and objects, what's the space in between us. Laughing bones, can you see the limits on my skin. Dream-like, we sense together. Wordless flying into a belly-flop.

(Performers' words in performance programme, 2018)

This thesis is the written component of artistic-pedagogical event *Patella-floating bone* which was created in the Spring of 2018 and performed over a four-night season at the Theatre Academy of Helsinki. An immersive, cohabited space between audience, performers and nonhuman things, set the accessible environment in which the performance took place.

The concept of the project came from an intuitive collaborative union between myself and my peer Elina Sarno from the theatre pedagogy programme. We met in a common landscape of curious inquiry, playful research and magnetism toward a new way of learning, myself arriving through my background in dance, and for Elina, object theatre as a prominent part of her artistic background. There was a lively pull between our common interests: the vibrancy of objects and materials in relation with bodily sensing, somatic collective practice and audience immersion in performance, as well as learning through experience within a diversity of embodied perceptions. My existing knowledge and passion for inclusive dance had led me to want to deepen my practice and learning through experiencing the field here in Finland, where I connected with DanceAbility Finland and integrated dance company Kaaos, cofounded by Gunilla Sjovall and Sally Davison in 2008. In addition, a rather profound shared learning experience with Elina unfolded during our shared teaching practice of the previous spring, in the liminal land that is Palestine, where an existence vibrates in the thresholds of the in-between due to the subversive power structures it is controlled by. Organically and yet volitionally, our shared thesis production came into being. It was meaningful for me to be able to unite and deepen the research of these seeds

in close relation with Elina, the main aim of this research being exactly that: how creation happens in the in-between fields of relation within diversity, and as Erin Manning said the “more-than human” (2017) environment.

Together we facilitated the co-creation process with three professional dance and performance artists, diverse in embodiments and perceptions, who are members of Kaaos Company. Ethically, as the participants of the research they have all given permission to be named and honoured in this research of the work process. The artistic director of DanceAbility Finland and Kaaos, Sally Davison contributed valuable mentorship during the practice and creation process, where her rapport with each artist and experience with disability contributed to the knowledge-making in the space. Scenography designer and MA student of Alto University Ia Ensterä, and lighting designer from the VAS MA programme Sofia Palillo also contributed their artistic disciplines to the vision and fruition of the final piece. And of course, my supervisor Gesa Piper contributes invaluable insight during the process to move discussions and surface meanings. As the facilitating artists, pedagogues and researchers, myself and Elina were also participants and performers in the process; the final work being a diversely abled quintet of humans, sensing into a shared paradigm of relation with the nonhuman elements and audience.

Background and motivation

The research enquiry that led me to artistic pedagogic creation and research: *Patella-floating bone* arose out of significant experiences and interests I previously had in New Zealand, before moving to Finland to study at the Theatre Academy. About seven years ago some time into my dance career, I started working with *Touch Compass* dance company; New Zealand’s first inclusive dance company founded in 1997 by Catherine Chappell, comparable to other international inclusive or mixed ability dance companies such as *Condo Co.* (UK) and *Axis Dance Company* (US). I joined the company members of 2012; Alisha McLennan Marler, Jesse Johnstone-Steele, Daniel King, Adrian B. Smith, Suzanne Cowan and Emilia Rubio, led by company artistic director Catherine Chappell, who are almost all still active today. Through working and dancing in their fifteen-year anniversary production “*Run, Slip, Spring!*”, I dived into the world of professional

integrated/inclusive dance through intensive creative rehearsal processes. My practice evolved over time with the people.

It was my embodied experiences of working with *differently bodied dancers* as Tone Pernille Østern (2004) says, as well as different neurologically perceiving people, and experiencing what could happen between us, that opened me to a way of transformative learning with deep curiosity. I myself as a nondisabled dancer, had not considered the notion of disability to any depth previously because it was not part of my lived experience. Through dancing with Touch Compass, not only was this concept quite suddenly in my daily environment but in my bodily learning experiences in relation to others. Just as quickly, this very concept of disability in the binary notions of disabled and nondisabled, dissolved and was replaced by embodied realisations that I was moving in relation with uniquely different abilities and perceptions, learning and creating new knowledge together. I was experiencing my own body in a whole new way, listening, sensing and moving in ways I had not before. This cast light on my previous misunderstanding of disability, or rather, lack of understanding around it. I began to see the notion as a social construct, relative to the dominant societal structures we all live in that privileges some and inhibits many, as opposed to it being an inhibition inherent in the differences themselves. One only needed to witness and experience what we could do together, to see that working together brought phenomena abundant with all kinds of ability, void of any *dis-*ability where the unique differences of each person was valued and honoured meaningfully.

My embodied background and learning in dancing with disability has been a powerful impetus to want to deepen my practice and learning in the field of inclusive or integrated dance, while sharing it with others both from an artistic perspective and as a pedagogical practice. In this way my curiosity has led me to enter research with these processes. For instance, my encounters in dancing closely with Alisha who has a unique physicality with cerebral palsy, have been riveting. We would find our own language of virtuosity together in what happened between us in dance with contact, improvisation and choreography. Through sharing weight and listening, I experienced movement sensations and ways of perceiving that were new and not possible with another body similar to my own. While experiencing different new ways of

being in bodily dialogue and communication, I experienced my own perceiving body in new ways also. I became aware of my own habits in listening during verbal conversation, where my attention was drawn to slowing down to truly listen to Alisha while she took the time to articulate her words, highlighting my instincts to pre-empt the conversation. It was a new way for me to tune in and listen to the shared space (of the company), as different lived perceptions of varying disabilities were in dialogue, bringing value and insight to the landscape of shared knowledge. It pointed to my own unconscious habits of an assumed rhythm or direction in social situations that had been cultivated through being conditioned in contexts of little diversity. The invitation to engage required openness, readiness and a softness. It was through the artistic creation processes with the company where the richest learning and growth occurred for me, when shared knowledge was made. When I reflect back on my early experiences of dancing with difference:

I want to meet Alisha's movement. How can I receive it in my body? I feel her weight, her strength, and I feel movement that has a life of its own. I can give my weight to her and to the momentum. There are impulses as if they come from the space around us and between us. How can I open my pores and surrender to honour this movement affecting my body, affecting the space, while keeping us safe? Am I responsible for her safety? How much? Is the movement responsible? I am opening and listening with my senses but as if to the sound of the orchestra - the moment I try to hear just one instrument, something closes. The dynamics, the patterns, fragility agility and strength, the very quality, texture and history of this body is so different from mine and our movement meeting is how I experience my body - new and interesting. There is care, I take care because I know her left knee can be unpredictable, and this knowledge moves like a wave through my eyes and into my moving body. I am not care-full; the knowledge is in the space like a buoy in the ocean guiding the traveling stream. I can surrender to my physicality wholly without compromise - the fuller it is the more I can listen to the movement, Alisha's body and the space. There is no room for thought but the dance just happens, and I can feel all of it. There is no holding back, we just give, inhabiting space, the space inhabiting us. I can trust it. Equality doesn't feel like a negotiation. It's possible to just be and it already is.

Here, I find great enjoyment and meaningfulness. The unpredictability and possibility to see from different angles, and to challenge my own typical perceptive lens is to allow new ways of understanding from my bodily experience. I am also deeply interested in the experience of others; how they

feel their bodies, perceive and follow creative instincts, and how new expressions are formed for them when in practice with others. Given the opportunity to engage in a creative process, this is why I chose an artistic pedagogic research within the context of diversity.

This inspiring turn to inclusive dance opened me to a world of learning but also a world of questions around the aesthetic practices of the art form, that are connected with broader politics of disability in society. There is a drive in me that wants to challenge and dismantle the polarizing perceptions that still exist around disability, which I would press that some practices of this art form may even only perpetuate, in the way the aesthetics “merely open the playing field” of a virtuosic elitist aesthetic to different bodies and perceptions (Cooper Albright, 2017), rather than evolve a new one that begins in relation. It perpetuates the idea that an artist is amazing on stage *because* their disability becomes *invisible* as they meet the virtuosity of the ablest aesthetic. It can be art reflecting society; in the way that its dominant structures privilege the typical embodiment or perception and collects the marginalised people at its fringes as a mere afterthought of inclusion. (Manning, 2016).

Being in dialogical relation with diverse embodiments at the seed of process, can pave the paths to creating a more meaningful and fulfilling society for all for the needs and ways of being to be met from the very heart of the ecology of our shared existence. Not to say this is not already happening gradually through the work of many disability-activists, artists and thinkers. The purpose of this research with *Patella-floating bone* is to practice processes of creating together equally, through an artistic lens that holds a frame for learning what can occur within us, between us, within the space, and with audience, in relationality with diversity. I hope the work can contribute to a dialogue in the interconnectivity of diverse relationality and sensory artistic learning.

DIVERSITY AND ARTISTIC PRACTICE

Dis/ability, Dance, Difference, Diversity

With respect to disability in dance, Anne Copper Albright has coined an alternative spelling for the word, as “*dis/ability*.” (1997, p. 58). As she points out I too, agree that when I look at the word written in this way, the ‘dis’ appears to slide down the precipice of the slash and emphasize the ‘ability’, foregrounding it as an alternative kind of ability. While celebrating all kinds of difference in their unique abilities, and keeping up with the continually evolving political language of how to name people with difference is an important way not to fall trap to polarizing beliefs of who *is* and *isn’t* disabled, because society nonetheless privileges the able-bodied and the neurotypical persons, it is important not to dismiss disability by eradicating it from language all together. *Dis/ability* can also allude to the notion of experiential disability where comparatively, someone who has been using a wheelchair and been interdependent with others all their lives may feel perfectly comfortable in their lived experience with their bodies, while a person who appears to be nondisabled may have crippling self-image issues or traumatic histories that make them feel disabled in life. (Cooper Albright, 1997). I will adopt *dis/ability* into my writing vocabulary for the dynamic semantic suggestions it holds.

Difference and equality mean that the differences themselves and the needs of those differences vary in nature, but yet we are all equal in that we each differ from the other. If in this context we call the difference *dis/ability*, then my disability would be that I cannot speak or understand Finnish, for example. Or even, that I cannot perceive the world through the neuro-lens of down syndrome; sense the world through fragile bones or feel a wheelchair as the extension of my own body, and that is my disability. Society is dominated by those the neurotypical, as is my positionality, and everything generally revolves to privilege this life. This is where the power lies, from which other populations are marginalised. How can other perceptions and embodiments in the world have their own coming into being to affect structures meaningfully? Erin Manning sheds light on this very question:

My proposal is that an approach that begins in the field of relation is precisely political because it does not begin with the agency of a preconceived group or solitary identity. Rather than beginning with subject-based identity, this approach begins in the ecology of practices where there is still room for new modes of existence to be invented. New modes of existence call forth an articulation of the political that is not reducible to pre-existing constituencies, and thus is open to creating and celebrating modes of life-living as yet uncharted. (Manning, 2016, p. 123).

In this way, inclusive dance is not a means to an end to simply include people with disabilities or difference - it is an inclusive *field* of difference in relation, where neurotypical and normative bodied dominance is dispersed by spreading and receding, through practices not about compromising abilities, but by being curious toward the unknown, new ways of seeing and being.

In 2016 I independently choreographed *Subject Matter Object Pink*, a duet dance work in collaboration with Alisha McLennan Marler, in which the depth of our professional shared practice and relationship allowed a safe exploration of new ideas, movement concepts. Most importantly it allowed an open dialogue around the questions of disability and difference, visibility and representation on stage in the field of inclusive dance. There was a sensed freedom in being able to explore making work outside the umbrella brand of inclusive dance, where the trust in our shared background held the space for taking risks and exploring new unknowns. Somehow, we had permission to consciously re-enter a naive space where the memory of taboos and upholding certain aesthetics did not exist, and the possibility to fail was not one to fear or avoid. We had a safe space in which to follow creative curiosity which was evidently present in the piece, and between us. In the work, was also a large piece of morphing shape-shifting fabric which behaved as a third partner in the process and piece. The presence of this nonhuman material in movement, in relation with our bodies was something that came about from an intuitive interest, at the intersection of material matter, substance, body as material, transmutable presence, and the agency of *movement* itself. The duet was diverse with human and nonhuman entities, equalizing a landscape of diversity inherent in lively shapeshifting form. This led to an interest of wanting to explore further, the art and the pedagogy of working with material things in a context of dance, diversity, and difference.

The diverse lived perceptions

The participating professional artists of *Patella - floating bone*, and the people whom I have had the privilege to work, create and learn with, as well as who's experiences this research is gathered from are: Jonna Lehto, Noora Västinen and Siiri Tiilikka. They all have strong dance and performance backgrounds and present practices, as well as previous experience in working together through Kaaos Company. The diversity of the working group is due in nature to the presence of neurodiversity “differently bodied” dancers. (Østern, 2004).

Jonna Lehto is a professional artist of dance and physical theatre performance, with extensive experience in a range of practices and modes of making. Originally from Tampere, she is now based in Helsinki, having also lived in Italy and Iceland, as well as Denmark, UK and Vancouver where she lived and worked on artistic projects. Jonna is a nondisabled artist and pursues her belief in social equality and inclusion through the arts, particularly through inclusive and mixed ability dance practices. She is a DanceAbility teacher and a member of Kaaos company. She brings a lightness and depth to her work, with a profound grounding in the ability to surface humour from the moment, while honouring the self and the space. I am very lucky to have the pleasure of Jonna's presence in our artistic research project.

Noora Västinen, originally from Jämsä and now based in Helsinki, is a Finnish dancer, laughter yoga teacher, DanceAbility teacher, Steiner pedagogue and a performer, to name just her core background for the purpose of this research. I first met and danced with Noora in a contact improvisation class in Helsinki, followed by performing together in artistic performance work *Pond*, choreographed by Maija Mustonen in collaboration with Kaaos Company in January 2017. Noora has osteogenesis imperfecta; a “fragile bones” condition which she was born with and uses a manual wheelchair in her daily life. She dances in her chair and out of her chair on the dance studio floor and chooses to move between the two levels with assistance. Noora is passionate about connecting through the body in movement. I am very grateful that Noora wanted to be a part of this thesis research project, and for her unique, valuable presence in the work.

Siiri Tiilikka is a professional dancer and performer from Helsinki who engages in many artistic practices such as flamenco dance, and mixed ability performance group Dance Hearts. She has danced in many artists' choreographic works during her young and rich professional career. Siiri is a person with Down Syndrome and the youngest member of the working group of *Patella-floating bone*. I had the pleasure of working with Siiri on an improvisational dance quartet *Know Body*, performed both in X Dance festival and in Pori during 2017. Through this, I came to know Siiri, through her commitment to herself as a dancer, her professional identity within the community, and her passion for performance practices. Her unique perspectives and presence to the work of *Patella-floating bone* is something I am truly grateful for, in being who she is and for all the knowledge in the making she has been a part of creating.

Elina Sarno is a professional object theatre artist, director and performer, with vast puppetry and theatre making experience, as well as an interest in sensory learning. She is my good friend and classmate whom I co-facilitated this work with. In the beginning of the process of *Patella-floating bone* she was new to the practices of inclusive dance and performance but was intrinsically drawn to the possibility of working in this way, not only for her own beliefs in inclusivity but as an experience to learn and grow from herself. I could sense from the beginning that this, in being an unknown for Elina was really a space not to project ideas, expectations or meaning into, but a clear space, fertile to cultivate and nurture the new emerging learning opportunities. I was blessed to meet such a collaborator in this way, to be able to share such a rich journey with.

I am a professional dance practitioner and moved to Helsinki in the Autumn of 2016 from my home of New Zealand (my mother's origin). I lived my formative years growing up in Nagoya, Japan until twelve years of age and have also spent time living in the UK. Dance as a way to connect both inwardly and outwardly as an ecology of embodied being and being within community, has been for me an evolving practice of over twenty years. The geographical and cultural pathway I have traversed has informed a dynamic texture of in-betweenness that has been a felt phenomenon and lived experience for as long as can I recall. It is something I now lean into as a shared and collective

phenomenon and one to creatively explore within practice, not limited to the project of *Patella-floating bone*.

Each of these people's perceptions are 'lived' through being and experiencing through their bodies in relation with the environment and all other. In this way all perception is therefore bodily. Maurice Merleau-Ponty said "the body is our general medium for having a world" (1945, p. 146), and "the theory of the body schema is, implicitly, a theory of perception." (1945, p. 216). Furthermore, Alfred North Whitehead spoke of a processual ecology of perception, having said: "the predominant basis of perception is perception of the various bodily organs, as passing on their experiences by channels of transmission and of enhancement." (1929, p. 181). In various ways these statements point to our bodily existence in the world informing the way we experience, perceive and understand.

In the working group, the diversity is inherent in the relation of the very *differences*. In the thesis discourse I include the linguistic terms *differently bodied* (to take up Østern's vocabulary) and *neurodiverse*, as well as Cooper Albright's *dis/ability*. I acknowledge a dynamic relationship between linguistic understandings and perceptions in-forming. If *difference* were a spectrum that every human being is on, the difference itself can be seen through the lens of process philosophy in the way that every being is in a process; a constant state of becoming, as the doctrine says. (As opposed to a concretized state as the label of being 'disabled' suggests). By perceiving through a lens of process, the perceived 'static state' of being disabled and the 'rigid' dominant societal structures, instead of banging against their fictive hard edges, can yield and flow together with the currents of process.

I do not intend to represent or speak for the voices of the marginalized, or to say exactly who is, and how people choose to identify themselves. My positionality as a nondisabled dancer and person of society, privileged throughout my life by these very dominant structures, I am interested in how the typical perception can move through artistic and societal landscapes to create space for relationality, and what artistic pedagogical learning can occur in a diverse field of difference. I am interested in turning the question into being curious toward differing perceptions and how we can learn from being

with each other through our senses in a meaningful way. How can we learn by entering processes that foreground each lived perception in a commonality of shared sensing, each valued in the fabric of learning and creation where knowledge is made together?

Patella practices, play and exploration

What has been present since the inception of this artistic project as pedagogical research, are the intentions of equality, inclusivity and agency within a non-hierarchical, co-facilitated process. From this came the intention to hold a creative space of openness, for themes to emerge naturally from the participating artists in relationality as a group. A phenomenological approach to bodily artistic practices became the 'bones' of a process-oriented co-creation, for the voice of the piece to be generated from the experiences of the working group collaboratively. As John Dewey said, "democracy is a belief in the ability of human experience to generate the aims and methods by which further experience shall grow in ordered richness." (1916, p. 3). In this way, a collaborative approach between Elina and I supported a democratic field, while the simplicity of the practices continually self-generated experience and method.

The practices are improvisational, playful, subjective and flexible to interpretation. They invite imaginative engagement particularly in relation with the material *things*. Inner-world landscapes can be met with the outer, in explorative and playful ways. A lightness is accessible, while the capacity to dive deep within oneself is also present. Having these clear and simple practices to enter, also allowed for easy and fluid transitioning between my roles as participant and facilitator both within myself and for the group space which supported the creation and research.

Choosing such practices was a process of intuitive planning prior to meeting with the group. Some intentional wondering about what this process and research/art was all for, helped to guide the planning. Here I have included some personal intentions and questioning for the process that had been noted in my journal, written from a state of wondering in the times prior to the working group's process beginning.

Trust in the process.

Cultivate the space. Hold it. But don't control it. It's not about me.

The work that we do.

'What you think needs to happen' → Trust in not getting pulled along with 'that stuff'.

That which exists in the world exists in us. And vice versa. So that which exists inside us exists in the world. The patella pulls us forward either in motion or by facing that direction. And yet it floats, suspended and unattached. Non-attachment steering and propelling forward.

How to facilitate collaboration in an artistic process with a diverse inclusive/integrated dance group?

What is the question of agency in relation to expressive artistic agency, objects, individuals, the group?

Do I/we need to think about roles?

How to harness imagination, accessibility, creativity and allowance, holding space, equality as unity, not sameness - there is an inevitable hierarchy in the structure, not to be ignored or taken for granted but move in the intention and question of equality. Creative collaboration.

Intuition, coincidence, imagination. (Georgina's journal, December 2017).

The following artistic practice tasks formed the framework of our sessions form my bodily place of interest in inclusive dance and material matter. They developed over the evolution of the practice process into the creation of the piece.

- *Witness and mover:* In pairs, one person improvises movement from a still place of listening with their eyes closed. The partner witnesses and observes with a supportive and nonjudgmental gaze. The task is also done with a nonhuman partner; one of the things, and to take turns “moving” and “witnessing” as a practice witnessing and being witnessed by nonhuman entities.
- *Body work:* In pairs, giving touch to the partner while they are passive, and offering supporting while they are in improvisational movement, at times giving or supporting weight. This is also done in the same way with different nonhuman things as the partner, each changing role.

- *Material improvisation*: Somatic embodiment of the materiality of objects/things into the textures of the body, movement states, listening states, and ways of being in group improvisation within varying scores.
- *Colonisation*: Inspired also from Elina's sharing of Lepecki's article 9 *Variations on Things*, came a whole group improvisation, tuning into impulse and spontaneity, inhabiting the whole space. Embodying a sense of abandonment with things while exploring a full spectrum of energetic possibilities of using and being used by the objects/materials.

From Elina came practice tasks from her somatic interests and object theatre background.

- *Free play with an object/material*: In pairs, take turns freely playing with an object in all the possible ways, following creative imaginative impulses. The other witnesses while writing down any images or ideas that are evoked. Free play could also happen altogether in a large circle, passing objects around after a certain amount of time with them.
- *Puppetry techniques with object*: Practice improvising with an object, with the intentions: first only yourself being seen, then only the object being seen, then both of you being seen.
- *Improvising with object and with a partner*: An improvisational movement duet and quartet including the nonhuman things.
- *Social dreaming*: A practice with the whole group, lying down in the space with eyes closed, gradually building a collective dream together by feeding short sentences or single words into the shared space. This could be done in stillness, and in soft movement in the state of listening. This was inspired by previously working with other artists who have shared the same method.

These practices naturally evolved over time in the creation process but remained as grounding practices in themselves to always land and connect within; a true purpose of what practice means. The experience inside of the

same tasks were never the same, always opening and deepening. This is as experienced from the inside, but I can also relate it to a choreographic phenomenon according to Meg Stuart in an interview by Jonathan Burrows for *'Conversations with Choreographers'* at South Bank Centre in 1998:

What's characteristic of my work is a kind of suspension or extension of time. To see and image and then to re-see it, to experience it more than once, to go beyond the first impression so that it becomes something completely else to you than it was when it first flashed by. (Burrows, 2010, p. 8).

This “extension of time” could well be the shared phenomenon between the outside and inside; the witness and the mover, and what constitutes the practice of practices as the bones of process and creation simultaneously.



Studio rehearsal featuring Elina Sarno and Noora Västinén
Photo: Georgina Goater

SENSING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

To understand is to experience the harmony between what we aim and what is given, between the intention and the performance - and the body is our anchorage in a world. When I put my hand to my knee (*Patella*), I experience at every stage of the movement the fulfilment of an intention which was not directed at my knee as an idea or even as an object, but as a present and real part of my living body, that is, finally, as a stage in my perpetual movement towards a world. (Merleau-Ponty, 1938, pp. 144- 145).

The nonhuman things

The mutual intention between Elina and I to have the presence of nonhuman elements; the various objects and materials as part of our performance work, was almost like another ‘being’, a third co-facilitator so to speak, from the very beginning of our collaboration process. We were curious to cultivate an equality between the human and nonhuman presence in the landscape of the work, and to enquire what happens in this equal space. There was a call of interest in the work for me, at the juncture of the lively presence of material matter, the body as material, agency of movement, sensory immersion, *dis/ability* perceptions, and the dance pedagogy within diversity. At this very juncture, is the question of what happens in between the relational spaces. Elina’s call to explore the ‘somatic puppet’; liminal space; and multisensory participation was the equal pull, to gather the nonhuman materials that served to mobilize these questions in practice and in experience.

To have objects and materials; a “proliferation of stuff and things” in dance and performance making, is something that has been thoroughly explored since the postmodern dance era and has been particularly current in the past ten or so years. (Lepecki, 2011). There are many fascinations and reasons for this trend, a comparable common thread with my research being that objects have an appeal and a power beyond what they are intended for. For utilitarian objects aligned with an economy of disposable excess, as Lepecki says, perhaps the “counter-force of objects lies precisely in merely being a thing” (2011).

Let’s propose that objects, when freed from utility, from use-value, from exchange-value, and from signification reveal their utter opaqueness, their total capacity to be

fugitives from any apparatus of capture. When free, objects should gain another proper name: no longer object, no longer apparatus, no longer commodity, but simply thing. (Lepecki, 2011).

This puts the objects and materials; the things, into a political sphere which is somewhat a divergence from my particular research but by no means separate, especially when considering the things through a process ontology lens, and how the body relates with them. It is the lively presence of an object that gives it the power as a thing.

Elina and I together underwent the process of choosing the objects and materials - the *things* - to bring to the studio for our practice. We visited the *puvusto* and *tarpeisto* (the props and wardrobe departments of Theatre Academy) which are both like an organised hoarder's dream - all kinds of things cluttered and packed and stored lovingly in narrow ceiling-high shelves across many rows. An archive of colour, texture, history exists here, all things inhabiting a space of their own with a story to tell. We just wanted a few things from this dense treasure trove. We first collected some plastic limbs from a box in the basement; the first image that the title *floating bone* evoked. We then wandered through the aisles and sensed "the call of things" as they came into our field of awareness. Jane Bennett named this "thing-power", which can be sensed through what she says is an "extreme perception", which is tuned with an "exquisite sensitivity to the somatic effectivity of objects." (2011).

The *things* all had their own gravity and call to be picked up into the project. It is difficult to describe and explain in a way that does justice to the "pull of things" as Jane Bennett named it (2010), but I have given an experiential wording for the encounter with each of the things upon choosing them, which in a way was a dialogue with the senses in action.

The pink hand mop: *An innocent colour, standing out from the crowd. Pale and pastel, not quite new but fresh. It has a peachy tone and a texture which almost appeals as "cute". Cute in terms of a cuddly formless texture that is soft to the touch, and friendly. And since it slipped right onto the hand, it is*

almost like a hand puppet, just asking to be played with and have its characters come to life.

The golden sieve: Retro, shiny, geometric structures with a movable body like a tensegrity form. It can flatten, elongate, and morph its shape. The call to play with it is immediate, despite its beautiful elegance.

Opaque blue plastic glove: The colour of the opaque turquoise material is beautiful. It appears as a single glove on its own, as if an eternal nomad searching for its other half lost. Despite the pretty material, the colour is also associated with hospitals and sterility, uncomfortable operations. There is a human presence in the inflatable hand. But it's a long glove also, like a fancy party glove from the 1930's, that doesn't match the other associations at all. A single glove of contradictions.

Black and pink tutu: You were shoved in the corner at the back, your spiky tulle spread like an angry lizard. Amongst these clothes that hang and wait for a human, you inhabit already another world looking you're waiting to pounce. The leg holes are huge eyes, a dragon lizard.

White cloth: We found you, folded up and put away in this box of things as if nobody knew what to do with you. Papery and thick, it is lighter than it appears. Out of sight and stored, just waiting until a purpose is invented for it. What purpose will you invent for us? It is not quite a thing, but can move and take any shape, become any-thing.

Long red curly red wig: You came with Jonna as an extension of a memory; a thing to play with. Plastic humanness, nonhuman animalness. A lot of life resides in the air space underneath, and the ringlets appear menacing.

Half-deflated blue Pilates ball: The colour speaks to the colour of the glove. Blue. The air or lack of air makes you a morphing sad offspring of oil. You are for bodily wellbeing, and yet an environmental tragedy. Your shape might even personify the shape of the earth.

Large cardboard roll: This holds the shape of a rolled dance mat and it was almost rubbish. In between thing and trash. You're the closest thing to a tree in our solar system of things, a natural material with some sonic sounds.

The bones: We brought you in last, to replace the plastic limbs. The bones are the same family as the patella. Are you human or nonhuman? In between. The thing normally hidden and unseen under the fleshy materials of our bodies, out naked in the world. How will they 'speak' to the outer skin of our bodies in space? How will they speak through and into us?

Finally, we also had baking paper both small and large sheets, and a large sheet of thin plastic, both as materials that myself and Elina respectively had played with previously in our creative explorations. If things can have ‘thing-power’ then these materials have a *quality-power* that hooked our curiosities, which we wanted to share and deepen with the working group and the audience. “Vital materiality captures an alien quality of our own flesh, and in so doing reminds humans of the very radical character of the (fractious) kinship between the human and nonhuman.” (Bennett, 2010, p. 112).

In deed all these things shared a commonality by having a thing/quality-power that pulled themselves into the solar system of nonhuman / human relating, where the call to enter somatic bodily practices in relation with them was already inherent in and of that call. “. . . our gaze, prompted by the experience of our own body, will discover in all other ‘objects’ the miracle of expression.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1938, p. 197).



The things: Retro golden sieve and human jaw bone cast

Photo: Georgina Goater

Process philosophy

In process philosophy, the doctrine states in actuality there are no static substances but only events, occasions and processes, where matter, form and substance are in constant change at every event scale: everything is being in a constant state of becoming or unbecoming. Hence everything is temporal. According to A. N. Whitehead (1929), within the temporal is also the eternal: the timelessness of what is potential, and the actual temporality arises by its own participation in the eternal. On a metaphysical level, a tiny event called an actual entity is a process by which a subjective unity of operations terminates in a 'satisfaction', which is "the contentment of the creative urge by the fulfillment of its categorical demands." (1929, p. 335). Furthermore, "the 'satisfaction' embodies what the actual entity is beyond itself" (1929, p. 335), meaning while everything is in a constant state of change the potentiality presented by the 'satisfaction' is inherent in each moment of the process. If all *things* are in process, as mentioned earlier, I propose also that *difference* and all lived perceptions are in processual flux. Additionally, if the 'satisfaction' of a creative urge embodies the potentiality of what it is beyond itself, this also lies within the processual relationality of any event, movement, between different entities of human and nonhuman, as the more-than-human. If the liveliness of thingness is the vibrating movement of its own metaphysical process, the pull of things is then the pull of processes to interact, relate, slip-slide into the movement textures of each other's being.

There is no surprise in the gravitation toward process philosophy as a dance artist. All process is constant movement, and the immanent bodily and artistic expression for movement being dance. I have experienced movement, dance and processes not limited to these through my lived perception. "To perceive is not merely to have sensory stimulation. It is to have sensory stimulation one understands." (Noe, 2004, p. 181). It is fair to say therefore that my understanding, learning and knowledge-making are constantly evolving from this processual place. To connect with my proposition of difference as process, I believe this is why finding my body in movement and connectivity with differently bodied and perceiving artists is an opening learning event. To be in relation, is to create fields of events to satisfy new creative urges in process.

Erin Manning on autistic perception and agencement

AUTISTIC PERCEPTION

As described earlier in the chapter on the diverse lived perceptions of the group members, we all perceive differently due to our varying life experiences, our bodies, and neurological differences in the context of a shared world structure that is dominated by the neurotypical. In her book *The Minor Gesture* (2016), from which I will refer all of Manning's material, she talks about neurodiversity with respect to the minor key, allied with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of the minor: "the gestural force that opens experience to its potential variation." (p. 1). Specifically, what is very interesting to me is her comprehensive dialogue with the autistic perception as both a perceptual mode that is from a person who has autism, and a mode of artfulness that belongs to a minor gesture; an opening to make felt the uncategorizable toward a practice in the making - and belonging to anyone. In this chapter I would like to summarise some key points about this and why I think it is important and relevant to *Patella-floating bone*.

Autistic perception is how many autistics experience the world, as their perception opens in a way that is difficult to parse the field of experience in its initial phase. In the initial process of perceiving, the individual parts cannot be abstracted apart from the whole, and what is felt is the pulsing of living ecologies, before a consolidation of form. Meaning, in the open channels that perceive the world, the experience "has no hierarchical differentiation, for instance, between colour, sound, light, between human and nonhuman, between what connects to the body and what connects to the world." (2016, p. 14). And here, Manning also recognizes that as [art] practitioners we often seek this kind of engagement, which I strongly relate to, and denotes that it "... is available to us all: autistic perception does not exclusively belong to autistics." (2016, p. 14). I at once agree, and argue that for the neurotypical like myself, it is a choice, that I could for instance choose to harness it in practice, and choose not to when I am driving a car in traffic, where an autistic person cannot choose to simply switch it off even when their safety is at stake. This makes living in a world that favours the neurotypical, challenging at times to say the least I am sure. Manning continues however, that "the difference [with neurotypical perception] is that, [...] most of us parse

experience before having a direct experience of the field in its complexity. The autistic, on the other hand, directly perceives the complexity before (and between) the parsings.” (2016, p. 14).

By this I gather that Manning is suggesting the possibility for anyone to enter the complexities of an experience parsing, and for the experience to open into a perceptual reception where the normative hierarchy of experience in the making is dismantled, and the notion of perceiving “living ecologies” is entertained and embodied. How much I gravitate toward this proposal - the invitation to experience through autistic perception as a mode in which to work from - is an immeasurable force in itself. Without doubt, I have already in practice brushed up against such perceptual experiences, particularly through events in the context of inclusive dance where my own perceptions have been altered, in the surrendered listening state of dancing with differently-bodied dancers and different neurological perceptions. Manning’s articulations connect and urge to deepen from this place. But in taking up her proposal to hone autistic perception, I need to enter a tuning process. This looks somewhat like the following: entering my imagination and empathy to first comprehend the mechanics of such perceptual modes (parsing a complex field of living ecologies non-hierarchically) followed by a release into opening my senses (exhale, listen, feel), turning up a dial on my attention field, yet softening and broadening my peripheral sensory receptors, to at once magnify the information being received and yet dismantle the hierarchical linearity in which it is received and processed, to enter a practice with it. Here, I enter a practice with it:

The light tapping sound of my fleshy fingers on the keyboard becomes so loud it is as if it’s happening on my eardrum. The sound of the dishwasher in the next room comes closer and is in time with the swaying branches outside. The spider plant leaves moving in the subtle heat waves omitted from the radiator are dancing, as is all the light reflections coming off the ceramic pots and lamp. The more softly my fingers move, the louder the sound. I am in dialogue with the sound that wants to be made, not when I am typing but just when my fingers rest there. My eyes go to the dancing plants again, my body rocks minimally echoing the movement that wants to be moved. The silence is charged loud with an electrical hum, time makes it louder, the vibration felt.

Manning also calls this register of autistic perception the *artful*, in that the openness to sympathetically perceive the complexities in the “welling ecologies” is a direct participation in and with the time of the art of the event. (2016, p. 59).

When this happens, a shift is felt towards a sense of immanent movement - and the way at the heart of art is felt. It is not the object that stands out here . . . It is the force of immanent movement the event calls forth that is experienced, a mobility in the making that displaces any discrete notion of subjectivity or objecthood . . . what emerges at the heart of the artful in the rhythmic time of autistic perception is always singular - *this* process, *this* ecology, *this* feeling.. (2016, p. 59).

I understand in hindsight, that this speaks to an intuition of the kind of facilitation of artful practice in the working group of *Patella* I yearned to cultivate. Honing autistic perception itself could also be a practice in opening to all kinds of possible perceptual complexities in a neurodiverse spectrum of embodiment if we were to say we are all on a spectrum of diverse difference in this respect. This is by no means a way to truly *know* the other or assume the perceptive experience of another, in the way Levinas defines the Other as unknowable singularity an always new. (Achtenberg, 2014). It is a way to see that from my positionality of a dominant neurotypical one, my perceptive ecology can yet open to different idiosyncrasies in relation and be in a process of holistic listening to different possible ways of felt emergent knowledge. For in the felt artfulness, “it is how the constellation of emergent factors co-compose [in the single event] . . . [that wil] in retrospect, carry a history, a commitment to a cause, mobilizing a politics in the making.” (Manning, 2016, p. 59). The welling ecologies of diverse perception are supported in the practices and play of *Patella* with the materials, bodies, matter, things, and the very *life* of the space that pulses as potentiality in every interstice, in every singular event.

AGENCEMENT

To fully unpack this sense of *life* in the space, “as if the act did not belong to us”, that is, the wilful movement of the event’s own unfolding, I would like to align with the term *agencement* which Manning has adopted in her discourse from Felix Guattari:

Agencement, Guattari writes, is a junction that “secretes [its own] coordinates, [that] can certainly impose connections, but [does] not impose fixed constraint” (2013, p. 24). Mobilizing the cleave of the event, its internal schism, *agencement* foregrounds not the agency of an individual acting on the event, but those very operations that “secrete their own coordinates” in the event, affecting how it comes to expression. (2016, p. 6).

Here, Manning likens *agencement* to agency in what it is *not*, which aids my understanding of it as a power or will in the event itself. That is, the relational space in which the event unfolds, and the kind of power that is usually akin to human power or agency. As for Guattari’s explanation, since the direct translation of *agencement* from French is *layout*, or *arrangement*, I wonder whether he is talking about an arrangement of coordinates in a space-time event. Where an intersection splits to perform a “secretion of its own coordinates”, the agency of that very act and not any person involved in the act is *agencement*. Manning clarified that Brian Massumi translated the untranslatable to “assemblage” in Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*, and argued that the semantics of this word “has too often been read as an object or existent configuration, rather than in its potentializing directionality” (p. 123). ‘Assemblage’ does sound like a fixed form, rather than a potential of movement.

Manning points out that agency is a term often used in academia in order to give people of underrepresented groups, such as women of colour, or disabled people a voice. This was not the motivation in the project but rather what can happen in the relational fields, which is exactly the point she makes next:

My approach is that an approach that begins in the field of relation is precisely political because it does not begin with the agency of a preconceived group or solitary identity. Rather than beginning with subject-based identity, this approach begins in the ecology of practices where there is still room for new modes of existence to be invented. (2016, p. 123).

This aligns with my research topic in a compelling manner. The research certainly does not disregard anybody’s agency, or perceptual experiences, however the focus shifts to the “ecology of practices” where the relational

phenomena and events are made. The subject-based identity is certainly part of the ecology of practices, just not foregrounded since this foregrounding is habitually rooted from the view of the neurotypically dominant identity.

In process philosophy, Whitehead described an event arriving at its full expression as the ‘satisfaction’ in a processual event. This is something I can sense in my apperception of the will of *agencement*. The ‘feeling’ of the event which is the quality of an event not necessarily activated by human subjectivity, is what moves the unfolding event to its satisfaction. He stated “the ‘satisfaction’ is the contentment of the creative urge by the fulfilment of its categorical demands ... The ‘satisfaction’ embodies what the actual entity is beyond itself” (1929, p. 335). ‘Actual entity’ refers to the process from which the ‘feeling’ cannot be abstracted, and the subject of the processual feeling is the actual entity. The actual entity is the organic process “that repeats in microcosm what the universe is in macrocosm.” (Whitehead, 1929, p. 327) while timeless potentiality is mediated with actual temporality. The complete unity of operations in the process is the satisfaction, and the ‘feeling’ is the agency that moves it: the *agencement*.

I conceive of this not only in a metaphysical sense but through events in which I participate and can choose to hone a perceiving of the ecology of complexities. For instance, cracking an egg and allowing gravity to pour the whole of its contents into the pan, or the fine plastic in a *Patella* practice billowing down and settling into a still form on the floor after being hurled through the air. Or, a movement, as if the full intention of it was predetermined by an external will outside the body, which courses through and out of my body in its completion. Manning determined that this is the event’s agency, where I see it also as the agency of the movement itself germinating from the relational space.

“*Agencement* directs how the event comes to subjective form... it is emergent and co-compositional.” (Manning, 2016, p.134). This invites an opening to co-creation with the space as well as all that inhabits it. “It [*agencement*] is not an action directed by an existing subject, but a force of disturbed directionality in an event” (p. 137). This is a trust in not imposing the directionality but rather to open to it, be moved by it - from the engagement in one practice

task, to the journey of the whole session, to the shaping of the performance work.

Again, why I find this discourse compelling yet still questionable in its capacity to overlook the complexities of the human inner-world landscape is how it also opens toward the relinquishment of exactly that: the anxiety around always imposing with the social conditioning of “taking care of the disabled person(s).” It can hold a process-led ecology of artistic practice in the studio, alive with trust in the not-knowing and events unfolding. It can allow the openings into uncharted knowledge free from the habitual will, that leads the work into known territories over and over and inhibiting new knowledge from actualizing. *Agencement* trusts the will of the movement, arising from the adventures in the relational fields of space-time events. “The notion of agency to *agencement* - is the sense of directionality occasioned by movement rather than a subject-based intentionality” (p. 190). This is a celebration of difference, pulsing with its own life in the making.

The intuitive curiosities Elina and I shared in nonhuman things in relation with bodies, came from our backgrounds; object theatre and bodily dance practice respectively, with a distinctive new urge: to engage the senses, imagination and play within a diverse group of difference, inquiring of the relational fields in practice. I understand now with respect to the discourse on *agencement*, that this urge came with the desire to cultivate practice conditions which privileged the occurrence of precisely this: *agencements* between things and bodies. I recall now where Elina uttered a curiosity toward the notion of a “somatic puppet”, where the gravity of interest was in my body being moved by the “life of things”. Thus, if the sensorial perceptions lead to experiences of *agencement* in the relational spaces, this notion could be infused in the process. What if then, instead of the agency of each person being foregrounded, the difference of our physiological or neurological makeup itself is likened to its own *agencement*? Embodied practices and experiences with these *agencements* can then lead to new understandings of not only how the form of current societal structures are inherently wrong in their neurotypical dominance but how the very processes in conceiving the forms are lacking. Before the arriving to form, the process itself must be decolonized by the neurotypical, making way for new processes.

To experience the world in its shape-shifting alerts us to the realness of relation and connects to a more-than-human horizon, I think. It allows us to think ecologically, from the middle. And from there, there is an opening to the felt expression of thought-in-the-moving, to language's prelinguistic expressions - what I have elsewhere called prearticulation - to the complex rhythms of what lies between the conscious and the nonconscious at the interstices of the human and the nonhuman, the more-than-human. (Manning, 2016, p. 192).

A process-oriented creation of *Patella-floating bone* offered a space in which to really practice processes, such as these which opened to an alertness in “more-than-human horizons”, in tuning to *agencement*, while the aim toward a final work held the frame. Despite the inevitability of presenting a form driven by ‘finished aesthetics’ in the performance, the aesthetics were born of an ecology of the living practices, each time with a new *agencement* in relation with each audience.



Social dreaming in *Patella-floating bone* featuring performer: Siiri Tiilikka

Photographer: Aapo Juusti

METHODOLOGICAL FIELD

My role within, and the lens on the co-creation process of *Patella-floating bone* with the working group, and performances with the presence of the audience, has been an equilibrium in constant flux between the frames of artistic practice, pedagogy, and research - never mutually exclusive - continuously yet illogically yielding between one another and often simultaneously occurring. How does learning occur in a non-hierarchical cooperative structure? How does a process-led outcome mobilise co-creation? How can the process be tuned to allow *agencement* to inform the artistic work? How are the differences in *dis/ability* and diverse embodied perceptions informing relational fields and the work that is becoming? How do I create space as the facilitator for each voice to come through, and dive deep into uncompromised artistic practice with the group? How can I disperse my dominant perception, while acknowledging the power and responsibility that I inevitably have? This wondering has framed the practical methods in data collection and refining methodological lenses.

Methods and methodology

The key methods of data-collection I have undertaken are in-session, post-practice audio recordings of group reflections which I later transcribed, and my own reflective journal writing. A hermeneutic, phenomenological methodology of research has been the lens through to examine the collected material from the research, where participants' experiences become knowledge of new understandings. A process philosophy lens supports artistic understandings, by way of reflecting on the nonhuman agents within the work as lively agents in the directionality of art, as well on *agencements* of the in-between fields as more-than-human activators of events unfolding, both as pedagogy to open to. My approach has been to analyse and understand in depth, the sensing processes within artistic practice in relation with each other and the nonhuman things in the space. Writings from the working group members were also collected in the very beginning of the process in the way of "*Patella wishes*", which will be introduced in the following chapter.

Within these two main forms of data, is a clear distinction between me as a participant/artist, and as a self-reflective, reflexive facilitator, pedagogue. The self as a performer and later in the process as a choreographic director also surface within the research, the presence of these roles evident in both forms of the data. The participants' reflective dialogue is indeed an invaluable crux of phenomenological research of *Patella-floating bone*, as is the audience feedback for the same reason. In addition, my personal reflections also serve to observe the different 'parts' of myself in movement - researcher, participant, facilitator, pedagogue, performer, artistic director, collaborator - and to make connections and meaning with the different parts.

This also applies with that of Elina's presence both as a facilitator and participant of the process, where my own journaled writings allowed for me to observe, reflect and learn from ways in which she led exercises and facilitated the group space through the sessions. I could also reflect on our co-facilitation and how we moved between the roles of leading, as we worked in an organisational planned way, where we alternated in turns between receding and taking charge of the leadership, so as not to be both leading all of the time. The one receding could fall more into the role of participant, while also supporting the space. The studio recordings gave voice to Elina's participating experiencing self within the group practices of the artistic creation as they did mine also. These roles, like the equilibrium of moving frames (practice, pedagogy and research) were in constant flux, occurring and experienced simultaneously.

Qualitative data was also collected from the audience members who came to experience, witness and participate in the performances of *Patella-floating bone* at Theatre Academy in March 2018, across four performances. This was in the form of writing their thoughts and responses in a freeway, on scrap paper we provided. The material that the audience wrote on was that of leftover recycled paper from the performance materials, which felt particularly tactile and resonant with the world of the performance. Audience were also welcome to linger, interact and pay in the space; a post-show wandering through the performance space, which supported their inner landscape to reflect on their experience as an extension of the work before re-entering the world outside. I have my own personal reflections as a performer in the work

to phenomenologically research the performative process with audience and the space.

The main intention to this research, has been to understand the data in order to see what happens in the moving in-between spaces within the group and with the audience, what emerges in the relational fields, and how these could be sensed. Knowledge is drawn from a hermeneutic interpretation of the qualitative data through a phenomenological lens. A lens of process philosophy also aids an interpretation into the relational fields with the nonhuman matter and ephemerality of the creation and performance processes. Analysis through these methodologies has drawn phenomena from the sense experiences and reflective experiences throughout the whole process, as well as further understandings of what happens in the fields of relation – the sensed spaces in-between.

Dialogical Pedagogical Approach

For a dynamic process of practice, learning and making during *Patella-floating bone*, a dialogical pedagogical approach has been an inspirational motor. A culture of listening and engaging with every individual together as a group, became the vital heartbeat to a collaborative ecology with the people in the process. Martin Buber said, “In the beginning is relation” (1958, p. 18), and this speaks to the intention as facilitator in a space where participants are learning from each other. As a pedagogue, Buber’s philosophy in the distinction between an *I-It* and *I-Thou* relationship informed my understanding from where to relate to one another. If I related to each person on the basis only of how I depended upon them, this would be one of objectification constituting of the *I-It* relationship. (1958). By contrast, an *I-Though* relationship comes from an understanding that the relationality comes from being in dialogue with the whole person at any given moment, from a place where I could never fully know what it is to experience or know from their perspective. Rahner similarly approaches this way of relating in the context of the Other, where his “ownmost aim [is] disclosing the human subject as a relationship with absolute mystery” (Purcell, 1998, p. 337). This very relation between difference, is what motivates the dialogical pedagogy from a place of curiosity and care for one another and in learning from each other.

A non-hierarchical approach to dialogue was important in fostering equality within the inherent difference within the group; our diverse lived perceptions and relationships to dance, art and education, while being aware of my responsibility and power position that I was structurally held my role. This meant acknowledging our different roles as well as honouring our whole selves.

The theories of Emmanuel Levinas on relating with the other, inspire the pedagogical and dialogical approach within the context of diversity in this research. For Levinas the other is always singular – not the translation of a concept - and utterly new, unparalleled to me, yet essentially always in relation, as human beings in essence are vulnerable. The relation does not come from need however but desire, since according to Levinas, need fulfils a retrospective lack whereas desire is seated in openness, hospitality and directness. In everyday being we are peacefully ruptured; broken open by the singular other into a new dimension. (Achtenberg, 2014). This speaks to a readiness to crack through to relational perceptual modes of learning, sidelining the neurotypical dominance in pedagogical action. It also speaks to a relationality that is not afraid of interdependence as a sign of weakness but inherent desire toward the singular other that can manifest in a myriad of forms within artistic contexts.

A dialogical approach has facilitated understandings of how the participating artists came to experience themselves, the space and the work in relation with one another. It has been the approach that led to building cultures of practice and listening in the sessions, to build on collective knowledge, grow as a group together, and to foster an *agencement* in the movement of the work itself to guide the process on its course.

Recognizing the *agencements* of the unfolding events in the process from the micro to the macro, and the experiences that followed and informed these unfolding events, also supported the pedagogical approach. It aids to imagine or perceive *difference* as *agencements* in themselves, holding the disruptive powers that create new relational fields, new events, new experiences as knowledge. It aids to decentralize the neurotypical perspective to allow this to happen in the art of the process; the art as pedagogy.

Art is on its way... aligned with Bergson's definition of intuition as the art - the manner - in which the very conditions of experience are felt. Intuition both gets a process on its way and acts as the decisive turn within experience that activates a productive opening within time's durational folds. (Manning, 2016, p. 47).

There has been a lot of listening to each other and the space to allow for what would emerge, instead of what I expected to arise from practices and discussions. I had to be aware of an inner dialogue that was wanting to stick to a plan or keep the facilitation going, when what really needed to happen was to continue engaging by listening. Often, we would spend just a short time on a task such as authentic movement with an object for ten minutes for example, or a moving social dreaming practice for fifteen minutes, and follow with sharing and a discussion for forty-five minutes. This could be perceived seemingly out of balance, especially on a short timeline of toward sharing an end work in the theatre space. However, the discussions clearly opened and held space for the movements of thought, reflective dialogue on experiencing, both individual and share, unveiling invaluable knowledge from the process, and uncovering other questions around being in the world, that grew out of our studio practices.

In this way the dialogical discussions in a circle were as an invaluable a practice as the practical artistic tasks themselves. They ebbed and flowed into one another, informing the stream of pedagogic research and artistic creation. In the same way I appreciate Ralph Buck and Barbara Snook's emphasis on the integral role of the circle to practice equity, dialogue and democracy within diversity (Burrige & Nielsen, 2018) to express pedagogical and artistic care.

An example of this dialogical approach is a question which arose toward the end of one of these occasions of prolonged reflective post-practice discussions, on 15.02.2018. I can now illustrate the dialogical unfolding that occurred on the day, as well as further engage in the discourse which this inquiry this provokes and demands. We had just done a brief social dreaming practice and had been discussing more than half an hour as a group with my supervisor present. The discussion was going in depth around how we wanted to begin to

structure the work, with respect to honouring improvisational emergings, an organic ecology not dominated by form, while considering our different modes of learning and perceiving. Noora raised an important question with respect to the practiced ‘principles’ of inclusive dance that she had learned in becoming a certified teacher of it. She was inquiring whether this principle should be consciously and actively practiced within our *Patella* sessions; that which was regarding the tangible equal distribution of dancers between “nondisabled” and “disabled”. In Noora’s question specifically, meaning that if she had a visible “disability”, should she be consciously always partnering with a visibly “nondisabled” dancer rather than someone with a visible disability in order to maintain this aesthetic balance? During this reflection Noora said:

“It’s [what I have learned] important to mix it up. So, you would not be paired together as people with disabilities... That has been one of my questions. I have thought is it good or not good if I am Siiri’s partner in some practices. How does it seem? ... How is it communicated to the audience?” (*Transcribing, 15.02.2018*).

I was glad that this question had come from Noora, as I could share this question from my background experience with the art form in professional contexts and encountered similar practiced ideologies in the context of creating inclusive dance performances. The others listened and contributed to Noora’s question, and I responded with an understanding this way of working yet questioned whether a rigidity around it also perpetuated binary perceptions of disability and how much we could “mix it up in our utopian bubble.” (*Transcribing, 15.02.2018*). The discussion came to a place of the matter being something important to be aware of, while still being free to follow explorations.

Noora’s question opens and invites a deeper look into how inclusivity and diversity are practiced and made visible within dance art practice. Cooper Albright points out, “...the politics of visibility paradoxically reinforces the exclusionary practices that it was meant to disassemble” (2017, p. 68). There is no solution to the politics of aesthetic visibility but to engage in ongoing dialogue, and to be honest in a curiosity that privileges experience, with a trust that this is not separate from the continuing evolution of aesthetic representation.

For the artistic content in creation, also, the dialogical approach was important in practicing collaboration between Elina and I and between each and all of us as well, as a living ecology instead of a rigid system. In this living ecology was firstly the intention to listen, to suspend preconceptions and impositions about the nature of work or dialogue itself, and to be open and engaged. Martin Buber articulated that “The relation to the *Thou* is direct. No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between *I* and *Thou*. The memory itself is transformed, as it plunges out of the isolation into the unity of the whole. No aim, no lust and no anticipation intervene between *I* and *Thou*” (1958, p. 11). It wasn’t always easy, since ultimately there was a sense of responsibility in aiming toward creating an end work, and for facilitating that. However, that responsibility itself was supported by leaning into this dialogical approach and invited a deep listening to oneself to be aware of my own internal ecology as part of the ‘whole’. My personal research was in learning how to facilitate such a space for an ecology; a space between learning and creating artistic work, and how the work itself might be informed by such an opening to process-oriented making. I can relate to experiences such as Sue Cheeseman’s as facilitator in *Digital Stories* with initial tensions between product and process (Burrige & Nielsen, 2018), with respect to aesthetic responsibility in inclusive dance art. So often in my experiences of artistic creations in varying contexts, despite beginning with themes that open questioning and learning, the process becomes infatuated with aesthetic and turns to a product-oriented drive. What may come from not only fully trusting a process, but allowing the process to make the decisions? The process of emergent knowledge; phenomenological understandings; an opening to processual “thing-power” to activate spaces in between, can be ways to tune in and trust the process.

A mode of accessing this engagement with the creative process, both in the practices themselves as well as the journey as a whole, I believe is in that of an intuitive one. According to Henri Bergson, intuition is an intelligence of other forms of consciousness that are somatic and instinctual. Intuition is a way to access new emergent knowledge of organismal processes that cannot be charted intellectually, such as the subjective, internal and relational processes often pregnant with meaningfulness. Intuitive knowledge according to Bergson, is that of “genuine novelty which could not have been foreseen” by

intellect because the experience of this knowledge in the making is something driven by “the whole of the person” (Manning, 2016, p. 39). The experiential nature and phenomenological research of embodied knowledge, through bodily and relational practices in this research of *Patella-floating bone*, already invites a privileging of this mode of learning through intuitive means. I would like to underline however, that foregrounding an access of intuition in a co-creation within a neurodiverse group is yet vital to the new knowledge emerging. Manning says that “intuition is the relational movement through which the present begins to coexist with its futurity, with the quality or manner of the not-yet that lurks at the edges of experience.” (2016, p. 47). This is art she says: to enter the present with its unknown potential future, rather than remapping a memory of the old. This demands a listening through the whole body, to the differences in relation, and to what emerges.

Artistic practice as pedagogy

Another significant aspect to the pedagogical approach has been the focus on the creation of an artistic dance and performance work as the central integrity of the working frame, and subject of research. This becomes inclusive of not only the phenomenological findings from the human subjects particularly with respect to disability and diversity, but the ecology of the group in action with the space(s) between, the *agencement* of the process, and of the process-focused piece with nonhuman subjects. It includes also the research of art as experience from the perspective of audience, and the ecology of the art itself. I wholeheartedly share Tone Pernille Østern’s declaration: “Difference is defined as the most generative force in the project.” (2009, p. 263). In the project of *Patella-floating bone*, it is this very difference as the material of the performance work in the making also, as well as the phenomena arising through practice. How can we learn from each other’s differences and create together? How can dance and object theatre practices mobilize a frame in which to practice a collaborative ecology of difference? How can we practice in relation beyond inclusion? What are the benefits and hindrances of established inclusive dance aesthetics and practices? Ann Cooper-Albright articulates a critical point:

[...] while we may make allowances for a range of body types in the guise of community outreach, this does not mean that we have sufficiently deconstructed the paradigm of

the virtuosic dancer. Rather, we have simply opened up the qualifying field of the contenders. (2017, p. 65).

Having come from a similar working background myself in the field of virtuosic inclusive dance, this notion felt familiar and I had an aversion toward repeating this kind of aesthetic-driven practice in the context of performance making, with rather a pull toward deconstructing it. Yet, I had some apprehension around questions of representation and making naive “blunders” that came with the intention to relinquish dominant aesthetics and principles of inclusive dance. However, being fundamentally rooted in the knowing of the transformative power of practicing with disabilities in diverse contexts and wanting to branch into the uncharted without being stagnated by this fear, a moment of clarity came. A journal entry proceeding a meeting with my mentor revealed:

I had a meeting with Gesa yesterday which was so helpful in clarifying some things: that in this process it is a skill to remain naive about the politics around disability: that in our utopian bubble our differences are equal. We are all equal in the: how what and why's of our differences which also change daily and moment to moment. In the way that only consistency being change itself, so is the difference itself. I choose to remain naive and curious, diving deep...

(Georgina's reflection journal, 13.02.2018)

This places a trust in the *life* of the work itself in the relational fields between human and nonhuman, the volition of the work and where it wants to go, freeing the process from being directed and shaped by a neurotypical human-centred lens, including the way in which disabilities are perceived and accommodated for in overbearing ways. However, it is important to stipulate that this is a fictive view of disability that could be adopted within the “utopian bubble” of the research, as a way to release tension and to open into imaginative practices, but not one that is true in the everyday paradigm of society. To say that “everybody is different equally” passes over the very important signifiers of difference and could be interpreted as saying that the differences need not be paid much attention. (Cooper Albright, 1997). Disabilities both visible and invisible need to remain politically meaningful, for active learning and active growth. In a paradigm of equality, it is still vital

to acknowledge all the difference in a way that does not “strip it of its disruptive power” (Cooper Albright, 1997, p. 59).

This awareness has certainly been inherent within the working group of *Patella-floating bone* also, as well as the adopted notion of a “skilful naivety”. The knowledge in the collective space from the diverse lived perceptions has been ever present. The creative space could well be somewhere in-between the paradigm of social political reality and a fictive utopia. Trusting in the *life* of the work, and the human experiences, in fact it is harnessing it in a way to sense beyond what is already known, sensing into what does not necessarily come from us. The sensing includes that of caring deeply for the complexities of the inner human landscape that can move within an artistic pedagogic research-creation, and hence taking care with that, but also, framing the human experience itself as just one aspect in an equal landscape of events unfolding and in the making, which both frees and respects it. Here, there is an artistic frame that can unleash and hold human experience, to be in the peripheries, the backgrounds, the fringes within a larger frame of other experiences and events, while fully allow what is and is (un)becoming, among all other that is and is (un)becoming. With respect to this, Erin Manning proposes in *The Minor Gesture* that our habit is to place the human subject as the generator of experience, which stations conditions that inhibit expression beyond what we view as our own well-being. This in a political gear this situates the human subject in the central point of agency, endorsing the act as the result of our own meaning-making.

Even when we give voice to those silenced . . . even when we talk about the “agency” of the artistic process, even when we try to give agency to an oppressed people, we assume a mediation between an act and its unfolding, most often attributing the push to action to ourselves . . . retaining a strong sense that the world is ultimately led and enhanced by the neurotypical few. This is the problem with agency: it makes the subject the subject of the action. What if the act did not fully belong to us? (2016, pp.15-16).

This question Manning poses encapsulates the notion I want to drive forward again, of trusting in the artistic work itself as the guide of the process, as if that which occurs in the process did not “fully belong to us”, and in this way surrender to an artistic process as a pedagogy. An artistic process that

privileges the process over aesthetic ‘results’ and resists to solidify into known forms so as to suspend in the practice of expressing what emerges. So how then, to practice being in this trust? I return to Manning’s proposition that autistic perception accesses a felt force of art that speaks to this question as “...an immanent directionality, felt when a work runs itself.” The intuition inside a pinnacle time in process can be sensed as a beyond human volition, most freely perceived by the neurodiverse. The limits on the skin of subject-object hood are swept in a momentum of collaboration between entities “more-than-human.” (2016, p. 59).

Artistic practice as pedagogical approach is to surrender myself in-between teacher, artist, and researcher into the emerging ecologies of experience and artful arisings. As outlined in the second chapter, these practices offer the frame in which to surrender the whole self in relation with others, playfully, through the senses, imaginatively and deeply, embracing interdependence in being together. With openness and intuition as the drivers of entering the art, by making it, is in itself pedagogical. A more in-depth scope of the emerging knowledge will be addressed in the following chapters.



Performers: Jonna Lehto and Noora Västinen in performance of *Patella-floating bone*

Photographer: Aapo Juusti

SENSING INTO PROCESS

In this chapter, I will go into detailed with practice reflection both from the group members as well as my own, from the perspective of participant and facilitator. Turning away from theoretical references for the purpose of a closer journey into the experiential process of *Patella-floating bone*.

It is through our senses that we receive information from our internal environment (ourselves) and the external environment (others and the world). How we filter, modify, distort, accept, reject, and use that information is part of the act of perceiving. (Bainbridge Cohen, 2008, p. 5).

Hopes and wishes for Patella - floating bone

On the very first session together as a working group, we landed into the space and into a sense of self within the process ahead, by tuning into our own hopes and wishes for the project that is *Patella-floating bone*. It was something Elina and I came up with, as a means not only to hear and understand how each participating artist wanted to engage with the work, but to invite them to engage with their own core intentions as a beginning point. Here are the writings we collected: -

Siiri: Body is the tool or object which I move. I wish that I could separate the body parts together and separate. Body is moving with the small parts of the body at the same time. Body is the one who I dance with.

Noora: Deep dive into the dynamics of the body. The weirdness of your own being. Are the limits of the body travelling on my skin? Touch. Voices or sounds of the body. How the face is telling the story without words. The vertebrae of the neck where they meet (because I have had some pain in my neck.) In what level are we moving today? (I can ask it every day, by myself). Different interpretations of the same reality. If I think that my bones are floating inside my skin, would I feel myself lighter? Bone, the strongest of them all, but the weakest inside of me (because of my osteogenesis). How did I become stronger than all the structures that I had? If the bones would laugh what kind of sounds would they make? The surface of the floor underneath me. Being the students of my own being. The witnessing of other person's stories. The beauty within us all.

Jonna: My dream is to get the courage to explore the spaces which are unknown, apart, lost, waiting to be found. I want to find others by being myself. What is the artistically? I wish for clarity and surprises. I wish for the wordless kind of lifting, flying, then kind of when you end up on the water with your stomach first like “sdoughhh” (bellyflop). Touching mistakes. Finding the nature of the human body in this environment which is built. My dream is to be inside of a safe process where everyone can step in as their own self. I wish the kind of when you “boof” when you shoot something, and the harmony of textures, stories, moments and physicality. Tenderness. I wish for tenderness to the performing and then trusting the receiving. I wish for powerful expression, the freedom of being a woman, self-irony, laughter, kind of control emotions and then letting go of the unnecessary thinking. I wish for clarity, what kind of fusion am I, as a dancer, physical theatre maker?

Elina: I dream about the moment that is shared together with the audience, maybe even something dream-like. We are all as part together, part of the space that we have created together, and we breathe and sense together and everybody in his or her unique way. I don't know how to invite the audience with us, and that's something I would like to research or investigate. The inviting to encounter and experience together, and even to touch. I see objects and materials in the space that we have together chosen. Some of them are hanging in the air. Some of them are allowed to touch and you can play with them. You can dance with them. You can allow them to look at us. We can also just look at each other. Humans and humans, humans and objects, objects and objects. Or are they even looking or watching. What is the space between us? I wish to be part of the group as one of its equal members, without the need for hierarchy. I wish that everybody has the opportunity to express themselves and to get stronger within their own way of expressing themselves. I wish lightness, love and readiness to laugh to oneself. I wish for a great adventure together.

Georgie: I wish for shared discovery and a kind of being in my body. Falling into something, in to the self, into the group, into the piece. I wish for light play; I wish for deep play. I wish for body states. Transformation. I wish to get to know one another through creating together. I wish for creating a piece that has a world of its own. I wish for collaboration and self-empowerment for all.

Tuning, sensing and practice

Each practice session would begin with arriving in the space to the working group in an opening circle. After checking in, we would come into an embodied place, connecting first with the breath and the self before entering the say's plan and shared practices. On our first practice session with the five

of us, following writing down each person's *Patella Wishes*, we proceeded with a practice of witness and mover in pairs and with objects as witnesses and 'movers' also. The dancers contributed in dialogue their personal knowledge of similar practices, where Siiri said that the witness should never give verbal responses that impose value judgement or interpretation onto the mover, where Jonna added that one can verbalise how it moved *them* to witness certain movements. In this exchange of information, the space already felt alive with a sense of collaboration.

To contextualise an example of an entire practice session from the work process, I will exemplify with my journal entry of the third session on 6.2.2018 in which particularly notable events and learning experiences are revealed.

Elina and I meet in the cafe at 3pm and plan rehearsal. I have some ideas from reading *Body Stories*, *Imaginative Bodies* and inspired by BMC's theory around the transformative power of the endocrine system, I want a warm up with touch. In pairs, going through the skin, muscle and bone layers of the body. Using the hands as microphones, to listen to the body when touching. Listening. Listen. Space. Introduce free-play to Siiri since she did not do this activity (Wednesdays she cannot come to the workshops and is absent) first in a circle, to spend 4 minutes with each object, and then get into pairs to write observations before constructing a duet with a pair and their object from the findings. We would chat about this process, then do social dreaming. I suggest a body tuning with breath and gravity before beginning the social dreaming either sitting or lying down. Elina is very open to the suggestion as it is still a new practice for her also. Elina suggests social dreaming first with words, eyes closed, then with movement eyes open and perhaps even with both/either. Reflection with time to write, perhaps share. Finish.

I am paired with Siiri for the warm up task, Jonna with Noora and Elina, Gesa and Noora's assistant are in a trio. I explain the task first to the group, so they can lead their own timing. As I go through the task with Siiri, I sink into listening as much as I can, but still with an awareness of holding the space. How much can I let go of the facilitation? I trust the space, but how much guidance is a responsible way to be? I give prompts when to move toward the different layers, to gently guide the time. I am aware of the trio who need to work in a slightly different sense of time, but they are independently working on that so it's ok. When we swap roles, I no longer give prompts as I am being touched and I sink even more into the participant role. It is equal. Is it enough? Is it ok? Is it too slow? Too sleepy? Too deep? I had said about 15 mins each person. After we all finish naturally (and I guide the end) I give space for people to say something. I experience myself

slightly shy and tentative. Does this also make the space shy and tentative? It takes some time and I try not to get anxious that this is 'eating' into precious creative time. This is important. Noora says that she feels more present in the room now "I have arrived now". Noora's assistant says she spends a lot of time touching people in her work, but it is rare that she ever is in the role of receiving the touch and said that it was very nice and too short a time. Gesa said that it was nice to get to know new people through the touch. She had not met Noora's assistant yet, nor Siiri. Siiri said that it was nice to move with the touch also, to receive it as impulses to the body for movement. The physical act of listening with touch was for me good to bring the intention here in the group, mostly for me to tune into listening to the group rather than my own anxiety but also listening to myself in relation to the group, remembering that we all want to be able to meet each other from our authentic selves and for others to feel they can be their most authentic selves. Jonna said this clearly in her "wishes and dreams" and Siiri has a beautiful way of embodying this always.

We choose new objects in the room from our possessions, instead of going to my locker to retrieve the old ones for this new session of free-play. Gesa observes this part of the practice and is time-keeper for us. The objects are spontaneous but rich in this quality, and I find I am able to approach them with an authentic sense of curiosity and freshness in the play. This may not have been possible with the familiar objects, or it would have just been a different approach of finding new ways or going deeper into old ways. The newness today was good, as it was quite new to Siiri. I remove my leather and fur hood from my jacket to use. Jonna finds a green ribbon, Siiri her black and white stripy tube scarf, Noora a roll of toilet paper from the room, and Elina has the plastic to offer again. I enjoy this free-play a lot. I find a sense of time unfolding between me, the object and sometimes even the others. Siiri offers a lot to the space. She runs and circles the room (it is a habit I have noticed from previous processes, but there is always a time and a reason for this choice. It reveals her inner landscape in relation to what she is exploring in relationship with the space) and I feel compelled to join at one point, while still in play with my object which at this point, I believe is the plastic. I am engaged and I am open to the space. The scarf is very satisfying, and I am drawn into the play. I repeat an action where my body is repeating rhythmically basically the same physical action, while the fabric dances and morphs into different shapes like a lava lamp speed up. The stripes also contribute to a particularly augmented illusion of the blobby mass. I can gradually allow the experience of the this repetition, to go from me, repeating the action as though I impose the movement on to the matter which is the scarf, to then allowing the rhythm of the matter to impose and inform my physicality and movement, and for an equilibrium to emerge where there is just the energy or synergy between the matter and I both as an experience but hopefully also from a third party's perception. This I cannot

claim for there was no third party who I may speak for, only an inner objective voice that I subjectively claim to be objective.

I realize this is a strong interest, that intersects between agency of matter, physicality and corporeality of the body in relation to matter, and the aesthetic perception of the relationality of these entities to each other in time and space for agency to truly speak as the strongest subject and not merely exist as a concept while the human in actuality dominates. This could also be an impossible task in itself, and become a critical conversation around skill, which then becomes an objectification of the human form. Is intention enough? Awareness through the whole being.

I move the scarf. The scarf moves me. There is a movement between us that is now the thing.

After a break, it is time to make the duets. We decide that instead of constructing duets from the written findings, that it should be another 'free-play' situation with the objects and the partner. Since there are now 5 of us, I choose the role of the observer. Noora and Elina: wig and?

Jonna and Siiri: silver arm and Noora's instrument. 10 minutes. Again, Noora and Elina, plastic and paper bag. Jonna and Siiri: silver arm and role of baking paper. This was again 10 minutes and truly fantastic. Some observations and visual interpretations as I recall in no particular order: -

- Silver arm around her body, around her foot. Part of another body concealed.
- One barefoot animated exploring the dead arm. Or is it? Cautious foot suggests there is life in this body-less arm.
- Instrument sitting there quiet. Her legs make sound against the floor. Rhythm of the body makes tension with the silent object made for sound.
- Red wig is puppeteer by the person. Wheels run over the hair.
- Flat paper bag cautiously approached. Already there is life in it, the potentiality of it.
- Paper bag becomes three-dimensional. It sits like a box containing air and possibly something else, even though I know there isn't anything else. It is a mystery.
- The white roll loosely falls. She pulls out the individual sheets and drops them, lays them out. She gradually burries the woman, exposing parts of her, and part of the silver arm. Now there could be any number of bodies. Which parts belong to who? Is it whole? What life is concealed and possible?
- Paper gets scrunched up. All of it.
- Siiri's top gets stuffed full of the paper, she is in child's pose on the floor and begins to look like a turtle. Jonna is hunched over her performing the task quite determinedly. Her hair is out and animated and could take over the moment. Her hands go on the turtle back, a moment. Pressing lightly to shake the creature, and an amazing rustling sound

comes out. I laugh out loud. The creature escapes to standing, led by her hunchback with long dangling arms.

- The paper bag is damaged, destroyed, turned inside out. The woman puts it on her head. The bag covers the head of the woman. Scrunchy brown mask. Baghead goes to the floor, heavy paper like iron. Body moves around, paper weight as pivot. Sound in the space, created between floor and paper and head.
- Plastic is billowing.
- Plastic comes out of paper bag. People are coy, playful, anticipation. Very clearly 4 performers.
- The objects are all performers in space.
- Time watching the object performer, space in time, space in space.

We have some discussion after. Jonna mentions the importance of allowing the object to perform, not to get too performative or crazy with the object as tempting as it may be.

Elina says she has one exercise for this way of exploring.

(Georgina's Journal entry, 06.02.2018)

The reflection that took place following the artistic practices, was an open discussion in a circle. In a way, this way of reflecting also became a consistent practice within the studio sessions for the artistic development, pedagogical learning, and the scaffolding of co-creation within the space. Since Siiri does not speak English and I do not speak Finnish, a consistent practice of translation often by Elina also took place, supporting a space of listening within a less-normative rhythm of dialogue. My awareness opened to listen not only to the language in discussions but a whole-body sensing to the information being exchanged. The dialogical reflection that took place on this same day went as following:

Jonna: "The sound went through them [scrunched baking paper] after I threw them on the floor. It's a nice material because it's a bit hard so it's interesting."

Georgie: "There were such interesting choices coming up. How did it feel having another body, doing the duet?"

Siiri: *(translated from Finnish)* "I liked working together all between the two of us. Doing what I was able or can do. And play. Jonna gave me the papers and they were clear.

Something tickled her, the papers maybe. And then I took the woollen socks with me. I looked at them. And then I put them on my feet. And it was part also with the papers [performance].

At one point there was an argument, and I was saying "no me, no me"

Jonna: "I didn't really have anything in mind I get an impulse and do it so it was nice to have someone else to do it with, like a mirror and you can reflect on the other person, what she's doing. There is this option that we can do these very separate things, but we were doing things together quite a lot, so it was nice to experience that."

Noora: "Even though we had different materials; Elina had the plastic bag material I started to copy the same kind of interpretation with my paper bag."

Elina: "I'm not sure what I was thinking. Just taking the impulses, empty mind."

Jonna: "Which is good because then you don't get stuck. It's nice to sometimes just 'la la la' ..."

Noora: "When I threw this away [from my chair] I was like oh! A good trouble moment."

Elina: "Good moments to realize, should I help her? Or let her take the time to figure out how to move it still with her wheels, and It was good. Learning experience also."

"We have developed as a group together."

Georgie: "It felt like the duets coexisted in space. The duets were focused on what they were exploring which supported the space and the feeling of being of the same world."

"I wonder how it would differ if the intention had been a group improv, as opposed to 2 duets sharing the space anyway?"

Jonna: "Sometimes what I feel from doing a lot of group improvisations is that energy can suddenly 'sag' but this felt good that there was this fixed point strong enough; that I am here with Siiri moving but at the same time aware that something else is happening."

"These Sunday Dance Ability classes end this way a lot, that the class concludes with a group impro..."

Noora: "Also in Contact Improvisation there comes so many impulses all around, so it is hard to focus on anything." *<laughter>*

Jonna: "Of course this is different than we are... sometimes when it is performative you have to be really strong with what you follow in a way, so that it doesn't become this 'choo choo choo' *<indicating multiple changing impulses>*".

Elina: "Maybe a bit also, when you have had your own moment with the object and really listening, trying to listen to the object, and then opening up your listening to your partner, it takes a little bit of rearranging in your mind and body, and trying to be aware of BOTH, so that both have time. At least I noticed this challenge there of how to be open with both, so that the object doesn't just become something that I... it also has time and space."

Jonna: "And also that the objects stay as the performers and it's not just people going 'blahlolo' and just doing." "They don't become props." "That's not only decoration, ooh this glimmery paper". *<laughter>*." Because you can get crazy with things."

Elina: "I have some exercises for that. This separation. Where to focus, is it you, only the object, is it both? We can do that later."

Elina: "It has been a very important day!"

(Transcribing, 06.02. 2018).

The tuning and sensing in the practices can be identified in several moments from this dialogue. For example, Siiri is describing her decision-making process inside of the improvisation with Jonna, in which the object was the baking paper, but she included the socks. I can interpret that having the baking paper in the improvisation activated choices in other objects and materials in the sphere of the improvisation. Her engagement in relationship with Jonna and the objects activated this awareness around choice. The choice although made by Siiri, was made by the space in between her, the paper and Jonna, to include the socks in that field. Jonna's notion of 'impulse' is interesting. She says that there is nothing really in her mind, but that she could experience doing separate things together with Siiri; this sense of "doing" coming not directly from a volitional place but rather a place of shared doing, like a mirror. Elina also spoke of an empty mind and following impulses, where her partner Noora, despite having a different object said she was mirroring the movements of the plastic sheet with the paper bag in her hand. Eeva Anttila notes that "in mimicry reality and imagery are intertwined" (2003, p. 248), suggesting that an imaginative approach was opened by the things, while what I observed as a playful approach in the task invited this mirroring of movement.

When a problem was encountered, where Noora dropped the paper bag which she could not reach from her chair, Elina was faced with a choice in the improvisation. The question to help or not crossed her mind, but an allowing for the event to unfold without intervention was present. Elina "let her take the time to figure out how to move it [paper bag] still with her wheels..." and learned from this experience of listening. I see this learning aided by the play, bodily listening and object theatre practices, where sensing took place in the event of how the materials 'wanted to move' as much as the human improvisational choices. Elina said, "we have developed as a group together", meaning the shared knowledge that is created through the space together.

What is also notable in this verbal exchange, is Elina's comment on remaining open to 'both', as in both the human partner in the improvisation as well as the objects. She describes it as an experience of "rearranging the body and mind" to attune to this state of listening awareness, while giving the time and space for it. Despite the object or material clearly being physically connected

to and moved by the body, there is something other, that needs listening to, in the object and in the movement of the space between. Jonna refers to the objects and materials as ‘performers’, which aids a shared understanding for how to be with them, in giving space and time without imposing human will over them in practice.

About half way into the co-creation process with artistic practices, a natural evolution was for a practice to evolve from a combination of *embodied movement* with *social dreaming* in a group improvisation. This particular way of sensing movement into the practice of verbalising into space, was like a collective somatic imagining; group embodiment of imagination in liminal space. An example of how a social dream with movement comes into being has been recorded and transcribed from a practice session on 13.02.2018.

Red flower... The newspaper is blowing sideways ... the egg bounced up and down in the teacup ... Red flower is bending towards the teacup ... there is soil everywhere and it smells like metal ... apple tree... something reminds me from my childhood happiness... the newspaper is laughing... The sound is like Sting would be laughing, the singer... and then he jumps into the sky and doesn't land. Child... the red of the flower was suddenly everywhere ... Yawn... Today ... little yellow crabs clap their hands... sound of clapping... the egg falls down from the table ... the crabs run to catch the egg ... the knees hurt a bit, because I'm trying to fix the egg ... the heart of the egg is yellow, like a sun... the newspaper flies on your face... I can't read the newspaper from so near... the letters leave the page and crawl all over my body ... the mouth feels strangely big... tastes like metal... and smells like soil... you remember the colour red, well that's the colour of the little yellow crab's eyes ... They look up to the teacup and the red pours out... ha ha ha ha ha, says the teacup ... do you trust the red? Says the teacup... red freezes... it becomes light purple ... hah... there's a few hairs on your head... I'm getting older... my skin has many, many folds... and I have some big whiskers on my child... (banging like a heartbeat in the background) ... I spit all my teeth out... and suddenly I'm a reeeeeally old apple treeee ... getting roots through the middle ...

This social dream was done directly after practicing one in a static manner, in a way more with a passive physicality that of sleeping without any movement. As Noora said in the second version with the bodily and sensory movements in the practice, that it “makes it more alive”. Jonna said that there was “the

delicacy of not doing too much”, and that she “dropped out” of the sensing practice if she moved too much. “It was kind of interesting to go into what is the listening movement. How are you kind of responding. I was in a quality of being, it was interesting to follow that, how the story went physically. Certain kind of texture” Jonna articulated. I can interpret that the movement was an opening through the body, to connect with the space and listen in a more sensory attuned way. Elina talked about an acceleration that was experienced, and how it was fun and interesting to travel faster on the trip of the dream. A reflective journal entry of mine describes the inner mechanisms and experiences of how such a practice unfolds for me, and feeds into a shared space.

It is beautiful to connect to the inner landscape of bodily impulses and images ... an inner rhythm of dynamic textures and movement that move, shift, morph and transmute... a verbal act to try and encapsulate would feel less than what is actually happening. An offering of a fragment, a hint, a hue of the multi coloured tapestry, or a segment of a re-representation of ephemeral experience; the words need not be a translation but an inspired gesture to build something outside of ourselves with other bodies, space and time. But the movement of the body and the quality of listening attuned with it, allows for words to come from a more holistic place than when not moving. This is my experience, and on reflection the group agreed on this. There was a rhythm in the outer world’s collaboration in the space.

(Georgina’s reflection journal, 20.02.2018).

In between practice and facilitation

Moving between a participating practitioner and facilitator was an interesting development. The gradual ease that came with the transitions was welcomed, where falling into the practices enabled a connection with the inner processes, which made it easier to guide the work from the inside out. This however would lead to a question of how much to stay with a plan as the facilitator, and how much to deviate from it in order to allow what was arising in the space from the participants to guide the session. The latter was also about the diverse perceptions and in allowing different understandings and perceptions of the tasks carried out, with respect to timing and execution for instance. A question of balance between allowing open interpretation or intervening with the clarification of specifics, for the sake of the accuracy of the task or rigid

application of the timer, was something Elina and I became aware of. After several occasions of not wanting to stop the flow of someone's improvisation when their tendency was to continue beyond the ring of the timer; the time which others stuck to, I became aware of a sense of endlessness or limitless openness which created an imbalance in the space, and a question whether this was an inequality and whether it was a helpful habit to cultivate in the process of creating a performance. An example where I was in a way conflicted between intervening in a practice with the planned guidelines or to surrender to what was arising in the space off schedule, was in session on 20.02 during a simultaneous but solo 'free-play' of an object that was wrapped in paper and suspended from fishing wire attached to the ceiling rig. The free-play exploration was timed for ten minutes. As the bell went off, mine and the others' gaze softly turned to one participant who still continued the improvisation beyond the bell. She was not ready to end and was indeed captivating to watch. I remained open in my body awareness as I noticed I was caught in the inner question of what to do. But when I opened to the information in the space - the attention of all others, this artist's relationship with the objects, the objects' presence and her presence - I could surrender that this would find its own timing. What preceded were beautiful revelatory moments, as expressed here:

... her performance is captivating in the way she sends intense energy toward the object with her gaze, intent focus, oscillating facial expressions, strong body movements that shift from rhythmical offerings to intuitive sensing, stillness ... there is a sincere exploration of self, with material and a listening that is in dialogue, being responded to without inhibition. It is precious because it is so rare to witness this, and this is coming from a well-practiced artist and a person who is sensitively attuned to their inner and outer worlds.

(Georgina's reflection journal, 20.02.2018).

This participant during her improvisation, offered by handing one observer the plastic blue glove, and then the paper bag to me, inviting a tactile participation with the performance. She then proceeded to speak, and her emotions broke tears at the surface while she continued to express in words her inner world movements.

She is vulnerable but so strong in her honesty and openness. We all hold the space without rushing to her aid - there is a collective knowing that this is something she is choosing to express, that she is ok in spite of the tears and that this is very precious. Crying does not have to mean something is wrong, that something needs to be shifted ... I wanted her to know that this moment was very touching to me, that she was able to share her words and emotions, but that I also knew she was ok. I could feel in my bones that she was ok and that her vulnerability was strong, and she just needed to take her time to say what was coming from her. She smiled and nodded. It felt important to communicate this.

(Georgina's reflection journal, 20.02. 2018).

After the performer had found her ending, we did nonetheless come to check in with her and offer support while still giving space. It was good to have Sally present, who had known her the longest and was valuable emotional support. It was an important moment for the group, in experiencing a gentle holding of space to allow the vulnerability in the person to just be, and particularly important for her, who so generously gave her whole self.



Rehearsal image featuring artists: Siiri Tiilikka and Jonna Lehto
Photo: Georgina Goater

Co-facilitating the group ecology

The ability to co-facilitate with Elina, as already mentioned came from rooting in our previously shared strong encounters, common curiosities and openness. Through this, a mutual trust between us was very tangible in the ground from which we sprung to journey further into the practice process. The ecology that kept the co-facilitation thriving was largely in this dialogical approach, and in listening: to each other, the space, and the work, and in a shared trust. According to Martin Buber:

The relation to the *Thou* is direct. No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between *I* and *Thou*. The memory itself is transformed, as it plunges out of the isolation into the unity of the whole. No aim, no lust and no anticipation intervene between *I* and *Thou*. Desire itself is transformed, as it plunges out of its dream, into the appearance. Every means is an obstacle, only when every means has collapsed does the meeting come about. (1958, pp. 11-12).

This speaks to true listening, without imposing or projecting preconceived ideas onto the other or the space. Meeting the other only comes about when the natural “preconceptions collapse”. I recognize also, the importance of listening to my own inner landscape, to observe and be aware of my inner impulses, ideas and dialogue so as not to lose myself in them, or the other’s. I can sense in the dialogical process a certain distance (but not disconnection) which allows for a clear space in which relation can occur. Buber also said, “in the beginning is relation.” (1958, p. 18). I reflect on my facilitator’s experience:

I am holding the space for the pairs as there is an odd number of us, but even just taking part in the practice with the object as witness and mover, I fall into the role of participant, and feel supported in an equal space of all practicing at the same time. I can fall deep very fast, which is surprising. It shifts me away from the nervous facilitator role, to a place of feeling connected with my body, my expression, and connected to the group and shared discovery I so wish for.

(Georgina’s reflection journal, 23.01. 2018).

When I was fully in the role of participant while Elina took charge of facilitation, I was able to observe and learn a lot from her way of being, as I observed also my experiencing self. As I reflect on the second session:

I learnt a lot from watching her lead comfortably taking the time needed to explain, receive questions and be in leadership without being hierarchical. The sense of time and easiness with an open listening seems to be the key. There is space to trust and allow things to emerge.

(*Georgina's reflection journal, 24.01.2018*).

I recall integrating with this learning by trusting that a sense of the 'right time' comes from listening to the group, and the embodied knowledge from the participating experiencing self will also be present in the role of the facilitating self.

As I browse through my reflective journal in relation to the facilitation, I realise that the first few sessions are particularly important in introducing and guiding the group through the particular practices. As the facilitating pedagogues, we too are participants for the first time inside of them, which brings another layer of tentative listening. Clear warm ups were also important in tuning the group to an open presence with the senses with which to meet the practice. In my journal there is a simple clarity described in how Elina and I meet prior, to plan the sessions together around who is leading what, with an agreement that the plan was not solid but rather a frame from which to yield with the movements of the group, the art and the space. There is a shift on 18.02.2018 when my journal entry begins by saying "we can go straight into a practice as warm up. Yes, here is the answer also to diving deep fast, where tuning and 'rehearsing' are in the same timely place - *practice*." (reflection journal, 18.02.2018). It is as if the shared knowledge that has been created thus far, is now its own motor for future potentialities of knowledge-making in practice, and where mine and Elina's roles as facilitators of the group had been foregrounded, can recede into this net of knowledge. The practices themselves could hold and carry the space forward through the will of the work itself.

I willingly took on the role of composing the sound for the work, which ultimately was another channel of expression for me and a way in to connect to an artistic vision from a process led place. This may have fed a moment during the process when inevitable the multiple roles became a question for me.

I have been busying my mind ... Sound is also a wonderful opportunity. It just takes me out of listening to the life of the work, listening to *myself* in the work. I end up wanting to give space for things to emerge and yet it is my activity that has a certain hold of the key to unleashing everyone's potentiality. Not directly, but through the *space*. Could this be the problem with being in the work? Doing too much? I am there anyway. Space activator. Listener. Director. Observer. Facilitator. Commit to my body when I commit to the space. Listening to self and space (other) becomes synonymous. (*Georgina's reflection journal, 27.02.2018*).

It was important to reach this moment of challenge, to come back to the body. Here was a realization in being confronted by the incongruity amidst choosing a state of 'in-between' that becomes a perpetual research, and the reality of managing responsibilities, decision-making and practicalities. What emerges is a renewed realization that the body, practices, and sinking into the life of the work is exactly what expands the space between the multiple roles and supports it all. A reflective intention was born from the experiences of this day and recorded in my journal on 28.02:

The bones of the body, the bones of material, the bones of the space. How do they speak to each other in this place? The place is a space, both an expansion and intricate migration into dream-like memories in past – present – future [memories] building towards collective imagination. Time is the essence in the unfolding. Words and movement happen to us. We have our own timing, that comes with the wait of the weight. (Georgina's reflection journal, 28.02.2018).



Skeleton puppet during performance of *Patella-floating bone*
Featuring: Noora Västinén and performers
Photo: Aapo Juusti.

THE PERFORMANCE

Shaping a body of work, the work shaping us

With a process-focused intention in this pedagogical research of artistic creation, the matter of shaping a work for an audience to experience, was an inevitable endeavour in the process. This meant some solidification in deciding structure and form, which I experienced some aversion toward in the anticipation of it. This was because I partly believed that in this action was residing the imposition of hierarchical structures, in privileging my aesthetical choices I knew would creep in, which I wanted to turn away from. The reality was much different, and one of learning that came from trusting in the original intentions.

From the day described earlier, (20.02.2018) on which Siiri authentically performed a beautiful and honest improvisation with her whole self, Elina and I reflected the following day and realised that although it was a stunning expression, it was not about recreating that scene like a product. Rather, we turned to the question of how to cultivate such a space: “how to create the conditions from which this emerged and grew, rather than harvest those exact fruits for the purpose of filling the piece?” (21.02). I can say at this point, that the space in which this improvisation from Siiri occurred was one of in-between. In between a task ending and yet continuing (the timer rang, yet I did not explicitly say to finish, and our attention turned to the continuing mover); and for me, being between participant and facilitator. Siiri was being witnessed and supported. Part of cultivating the space, was the distinction that despite gathering for the purpose of making a performance, we did not meet to repeat material as in a *rehearsal*, but rather simply to continue with *practice*.

The shift in language and attitude from ‘rehearsal’ to ‘practice’ regarding our studio time was one tectonic shift, and this one now was around *what* we were actually creating. It is not the choreographic material in the work, the events, or other elements that actually make up the physical or tangible content of the work. What we are making, with just as much attention to the craft that one would apply to the details of the subtlety in movement crafting or the melody of a monologue - is the framework, the conditions, the fertile grounds from which the content can emerge in the space and take

on their own life in time, for the essence to be present; felt. What are these conditions and how do we create the framework? The first experiment is simply to create a basic score from the practices and free plays we have done for the next studio time we have together. We will have the costumes and again objects wrapped in paper looking like hearts - clouds - organs - skin. (*Georgina's reflection journal 21.02.2018*).

For our practice session on 27.02 we started precisely with this: a score.

The score was: 1) Begin with social dreaming with movement. 2) Discovering a wrapped hanging object and unwrapping. 3) Giving the object life (being unseen). 4) Duets. 5) Siiri solo, then 6) group with white material.

We have 40 minutes and unanimously decide an easy 5 minutes per section with the timer initiating the changeover. I felt stagnant, lost, too precious with the objects as if the potentiality had been frozen, imposing and pedestrian in my body, and overall resistant to the whole experience especially as Siiri played the sleeping/dead character on the white material and we had to do the group improvisation of sacrifice. Our obedience to the score and lack of assertion (for which I felt responsible) was the restriction. (*Georgina's reflection journal, 27.02.2018*).

This was the result of the first attempt at shaping a body of work. Inside of the experience, felt constrained, as if the life had been somewhat drained from the practices, the sense of *agencement* now absent. The feeling was shared by Jonna and by the mentors in the room, and although the artists were beautiful, I felt responsible that the score did not support their freedom. "So, this is the lesson in the score. Freedom or prism." (27.02). What had come from a radical shift in our open-ended practices, was a felt failure. However, what also emerged from this failure was a renewed importance of the simple practice of social dreaming itself. Following the disappointing score, we entered another social dream practice amongst the remanence of paper, material and things scattered across the floor, which brought us back in connection with ourselves and the space. I needed this in the moment, to come back to connection from a sense of defeat. "Being lain strewn across the floor like the scatter of material also felt very "right." (27.02). What emerged was a honest beginning to *Patella-floating bone*, something that was ultimately decided for us by the work.

Some more reflections on what did not work in the score, in the sense that it felt restricting and lifeless to us, led me to a wondering about the idea of an improvisation on with a radically different physicality in the space. This manifested in an idea of a colonisation between bodies things and space. There was a spooky timely connection with Elina's intuition on our meeting on 28.02, as she had also just come across Andre Lepecki's article; 9 *Variations on Things* which talks about the decolonisation of things. This is in relation to understanding objects as utilities or apparatus, and hence as things that command a body to inhabit the use of them. He poses the question, "how do we decolonize the violent suturing of objects and subjects under the rabid violence of colonialism, capitalism, and racism (understood as forces intrinsic to commodity-apparatuses)?" (Lepecki, 2011). Elina and I contemplated on how the energy of a colonising or decolonising in the space as an improvisation could incite this suggestion across the human and nonhuman? On this same day, another significant shift was Elina's idea of introducing the real and synthetic bones as objects, replacing the plastic limbs.

I was reflecting on the idea of colonising/ being colonised by the objects, as a contrast to the precious explorative handling that we often would find ourselves in with the objects. It felt like the space needed contrast, and a different physicality from the body, and also in this, find the potentiality of how the objects would demand for us to act, behave, move and shape the space. Then who (or what) is colonising who? This would be a way to experiment and to understand and feel the spectrum of our potentiality, at least a version of it.

Elina articulates this to the group well, and I remember Sally responding quite quickly that she thought it was the male energy. Good point. But we are women. Can we maybe understand the male energy through this? History has seen the for the male energy oppress the female for so long. (without re-representing violence somehow).

Jonna, Elina, Noora and I go for this colonisation free improvisation experiment in the whole space, with the idea that we could just follow any impulse that came to us in relationship with the materials. It was a playful energy, impulsive, nonsensical but still with care in the space especially, given Noora was out of her chair on the floor. We ended up interacting with each other also, where images of kings, jokers and fools emerged, primitive animalistic clownery behaviour dipping into the well of our backgrounds. Sally's response was "wow, what you did was actually embody Siiri's energy". This was a revelation, in being able to enter her world of imaginative improvisation with objects, herself and the space. There is an honesty here.

Something interesting we found from the colonising task, thanks to Sally's suggestion was, to place the white material in a heap form to cover Noora's body completely. She could then think about moving her own body under it, rather than thinking of moving the material. This gave an eerie life to the moving mass of white and was captivating to experience the presence inside an 'inanimate' object. (*Georgina's reflection journal*, 28.02.2018).

Here was a fresh and dynamic spirit in improvisation: a needed shift from the social dreaming and intricacies of being with the things we had already fostered thoroughly. Østern says that "improvisation is moving, sensing, feeling, communicating and relating actively." (2004, p. 135). The improvisation task moved us dynamically from a listening state to an active one.

In working to continue to shape the work and have the work shape us, we held a showing with a couple of invited guests on 03.03.2018.

Siiri has joined us today, and she finds the introduction of the bones to the piece a bit gruesome. She is clear about the fact that she does not want to touch the real bones and would rather handle only the plastic ones. As part of our warm up and tuning in with tasks, Jonna demonstrates the jaw bone giving body work, which Siiri watches with intent focus. Elina suggests for her to try this task in a similar way, with the objective that the material is giving her body work. She chooses the tutu and off she goes. Siiri gets it straight away and performs beautifully with the tutu giving her body work. Her own body remains still, passive and receptive, while the tutu takes on a life with curiosity and profound timing. She sustains the task with utter engagement (from within and for us spectators) and a beautiful sense of development. We also try the colonisation task for Siiri to become integrated and aware of this new found energy in the work. We perform some 35 minutes and when Jonna calls 'I'm lost' we end it quite abruptly... the feeling of not knowing wins, to want to end the performance... I remember feeling lost myself, as I was watching Siiri in a somewhat frozen state ... she had ripped off her red hoodie to reveal the world in bold, "Love" written across her fluorescent orange t-shirt. It is a great moment, and she had also left the 'nucleus' that was the circle formation we had created that day, tighter than other times in the past we had experimented in this way. Her bold move beyond was important and strong. In some ways, the structure we had tried with exploring objects individually, the colonisation of the objects, Siiri's solo and Jonna's jawbone moment - were all achieved and it was only when we were in open waters that we were unable to grasp a sense of

cohesion or collective understanding as to “what” was happening in the space. We had become accustomed to relying on a structure within which to operate. Perhaps this is what we need to keep developing. Also, without the structure, Siiri is quite the opposite - she does not feel lost but rather claims the space and is unwaveringly captivating and interesting - which is great but does not honour the work itself or uphold an ethos of equality. Siiri listens extraordinarily well to herself, and when she hears an empty space, she claims it, but the space needs to be created for others also.

The “open waters” were yet the experiences of the practices that informed the shaping of the work and allowed for us to be shaped by the work. While my reluctance as a co-facilitator to become a director, who imposed my own neurotypical ideas on the group in some ways did allow for this listening and sensing into the forming of the work in collaboration, there was an important moment when Siiri asked of me directly, when and where (in time and space) she would like me for her to finish her solo. Her direct command required of me to give her the clear direction out of a dialogical moment: it was what was needed from Siiri, from the space for the group ecology and the artistic work. (*Georgina’s journal reflection 06.03.2018*).

In the process of fulfilling our intentions of the performance work, we still had a significant component to address:

The question still hovers, of how to invite the audience to participate, the intention being to participate in a playful manner with the materials. Gesa points out that it need not be forced with confrontation or uncomfortable, and that participation happens anyway. I think that already by entering an immersive space that suggests clearly the freedom to make a choice of where to stand or sit, perhaps even lie down and how to orient oneself to the space is a way of participation that is non-confrontational.

(*Georgina’s reflection journal, 27.02.2018*).

A cohabited performance space with audience

Having an immersive space with the audience was one of the first intentions for the work Elina and I shared. One reason behind this was for the space to be accessible to diversity, and to be welcoming for different people to come as they are. More traditional theatre settings can tend to be exclusive in the way they promote uniform neurotypical behaviour, as well as being less accessible

with limited choice to those using wheelchairs or devices. Another motivator was for the sensory aspect of the performance, with the tactility and audibility of the 'things' to invite participation with the audience's sense experiences. We wanted to experiment with something neither of us had tried before in a theatre setting, where equality permeated into the design and structure of the performance experience for audience. Close proximity with performing bodies, possible moments of intimate sensing, contact with the materials as well as the opportunity for audience to move and choose freely where to be, were also ideas that were put to action in the work. John Dewey said, "the work of art is complete only as it works in the experience of others than the one who created it" (1945, p. 110). How could Siiri and Jonna's interaction with the baking paper travel to the audience? How could Noora's diet with her choice of material; the plastic sheet, be sensed by the audience? We wanted an experience for audience members not only to be no less rich than for us performers, but to be woven into the very fabric of the performance as events unfolding. In so doing, we limited the capacity to approximately thirty audience members each performance so the space would feel balanced.

Scenography designer and collaborator Ia Ensterä has been an integral part in bringing this vision into being. From witnessing some practice sessions, she recognised the materials that were present and how much time us performers spent with gravity on the floor lying down, sitting, moving, and playing with the things in contact with the floor. A vision for a clear dance mat lined atop of scrunched paper, came into being. She designed for two of the four black walls to have white paper screens constructed over them, with warm backlighting designed by Sofia, which summoned a soft and sensitive space, alive with materiality, movement and texture. The dance floor texture was an unexpected sensory treat, as the subtle crunch of the paper underneath was heard and felt by the shoeless feet or rolling wheels traversing across it. This was the audience participation, along with the verbal invitation from the host, for them to move freely through the space and touch things, as they took their time to find a place to settle. A constellation of black cushions and painted wooden boxes, as well as two ground-level three-seater benches scattered throughout the space for people to choose where to rest. The invitation was for them to move around freely during the performance also. I can compare now, with the likes of Omaha Magic Theatre's *Sea of Forms* as Roth (2007) writes:

. . . the program note's open environmental framing ("move as you wish") heightened what I want to identify as a kinaesthetic sense for audiences. This kinaesthetic sensitivity was made more concrete when any audience member(s) moved, for one person's movement accented all their changed relationships; even small bodily movements registered to others because packing bits shifted, gently rustling. (p. 159).

Sofia's craft of the living lighting design brought a sensitivity and felt presence experienced in the shared space, highlighting the dynamic interconnectivity with audience. The lighting also behaved relationally with the scenography design, the materials of paper, bone, plastic and things, creating a world that both permeated and contained a spatial essence of *Patella-floating bone*. With respect to the perception of space, Merleau-Ponty said:

The perception of space and the perception of the thing, the spatiality of the thing and its being as a thing are not two distinct problems. The Cartesian and Kantian tradition already teaches us this; it makes the object's spatial limits its essence; it shows us existence *partes extra partes*, and in spatial distribution, the only possible significance of existence in itself. But it elucidates the perception of the object through the perception of space whereas the experience of our own body teaches us to embed space in existence. (1938, p. 148).

In this way, the design and immersive setting of the performance highlighted an experiential space. If the experiencing body "teaches us to embed space in existence", the things being perceived also have their own embedded space, where their perceived spatial limits become dynamic, and their essence, fluid. I remember clearly the first day the working group entered the performance space, and Siiri's impulse was to go and run around, behind the paper screen through the narrow space between it and the wall. Seconds after reappearing out the other end, a gush of wind followed, and the screen danced and sounded from this wind. It was an honest response to the call of the space and its enchanting materiality, for the bodily senses and physicality to interact with it.

In the performances that took place, indeed, the design of the performance space supported a sense immersion for the audience members, in the presence

of the things. A cohabited space also opened their awareness to the subtle shifts of interrelations between one another, as they were woven into the visual fields within the performance. In the collected written reflections from the audience performance experiences, one individual said, “I enjoyed that the audience movement was either audible or visually central” (*Audience reflection, March 2018*), noting that this dynamic was a central part of the performance paradigm. This also suggests that the performance in fact created the space to sense and perceive each other as audience, and the living space between.



Performance space during rehearsal featuring performers: Siiri Tiilikka, Jonna Lehto & Elina Sarno
Photo: Georgina Goater

Performance as research

The final and vital aspect of this research is to look at the relational field between the performance unfolding and the audience experiences within the event. Firstly, the audience’s reflective responses that immediately proceeded the performance can reveal the experienced phenomena of the work. It has been an extremely gratifying aspect of the research and process, to have the generosity of such honest audience reflections written on the recycled remanence of the paper materials of the work. The immersive nature of *Patella- floating bone* came through in such responses as the following:

- *“You had another unity. Of being, doing, being. Your exploration was contagious.”*
- *“This was so beautiful - in all senses, I felt myself at home”.*
- *“Floating bone felt like an exploration I’d like to join as well.”*
- *“Very thoughtful and loving. I felt human. Beautiful scenery. Funny also.”*
- *“Thank you for a breathing performance. Humanness happens in subtle moves and transitions from one moment to another”.*
- *“Thanks for a very pleasant experience. I enjoyed the emotions in the scenes and in some way, it brought me back to childhood and my old friends. I liked that it was long. And I must say that the moment with rolling the paper-roll out and driving over it was so beautiful and very film-like. Thanks again for touching some childhood memories and emotions.”*

These responses all suggest in some way, an element of participation or wanting to participate with the performance. Even if they did not integrate themselves physically to the explorations as the performers themselves, their inner worlds were joining into our processes, immersed in the “being, doing, being”. Playfulness, childhood memories and a sense of being “at home” were transmuted into the audience’s feelings within the performance experience. The last quote in particular is comparable to that of the description of OMT’s *Sea of Forms*:

Making the theatre environment a playland, reminiscent in ways of childhood sandbox games or sensory bubbles, evoked physical memories, sensory presencing, I want to suggest, and also kinaesthetic fantasies. (Roth, 2007, p. 158).

The experience of humanness and feeling human, the audience member describes here, I think is not as opposition to the nonhuman, but rather in all the subtle curiosities, textures and wonderments of what it is to be human and alive - the aspects that can be backgrounded in day-to-day life - was brought to presence during the immersive performance experience.

A sensorial engagement with the work in the appreciation for the life of ‘things’ was also very evident in these responses:

- *“The objects were creatures on you as a landscape”.*

- *“The spirit and the body - the spirit is going into THINGS - people - things - bones - skins - the group of performers summoning ... a ... spirit of something never contained, always about to, always about to into, just trying, playing, light, ok that was interesting, this is also interesting, the aliveness of everything, no pretending, always playing, going into possibility, endless.”*
- *“Tender in the encounters. Listening, even the floor is telling its part. I was touched by the permeability of bodies and other bodies / and other objects.”*

The audience’s imaginations were certainly activated, but yet suspended in a place where their senses informed their perceptions. Perceiving the “spirit going into things” and the “permeability of bodies and objects” describes a movement through the space that is not only seen or heard but sensed with the whole body.

- *“... listening, sensitivity, I sensed the in-between state.”*
- *“The interconnectedness of things people bodies space - electrified. Finding possible intensities in the least likely, still possible, the light and sound creating a gentle frame for the happening to happen.”*

This “in-between state” one audience member describes is a phenomenon I can identify with myself, during the different performances of *Patella*, not as a practiced state but an arising phenomenon, different on each occasion. For instance, in the beginning of the performance as we lay on the floor during our social dreaming practice, after the audience had come into the space and settled quietly, with my eyes closed in the practice, I could still feel a distinct difference between an audience who was ‘waiting for something to happen’, and an audience who was simply present with us, listening in to the practice. This is how I experienced a sensing of the space. It is nothing new, that the energy of any show can depend a lot on who the audience is, and how they are responding to the performance can be sensed. Particularly within the ‘black box’ theatre culture this phenomenon can have a huge impact on whether a performer has had a “good one”, or not. But every audiences of *Patella-floating bone* were roughly the same size, and completely silent in this moment of the performance, where I could sense a palpability in the space between.

Another significant aspect of the audience perceptions was their experience in the context of diversity, and response to that. One audience member contemplated politically through her experience:

I thought of how “disabilities / abilities” become passing concepts. Disability is the lack of certain ability(ies) but what if there is an overflowing presence of ability(ies)? Don’t such phenomena create mega- / over- / ultra- abilities? What does this imply, then? (Audience reflection).

A visibility around such a question of disability is certainly inherent in *Patella - floating bone*, and as this person describes it, it is visible as an abundance of abilities and different kinds of extraordinary abilities rather than the dichotomy of ableism. They ask, “what does this imply, then?”, contemplating on the possibilities of new ways of perceiving. By contrast, another audience member challenges this very notion through their experience:

After the dancer with the small body had been lifted up a couple of times, which always sends some problematic messages (does it?), it was wonderful to have her operate the wheelchair with such finesse, velocity and expression. Made it feel like a BMW motorbike! (Audience reflection).

I can understand where their question comes from, one I am certain is shared, which I myself also have in different contexts. That by demonstrating this physical assistance on stage may appear disempowering for the one receiving the assistance, perhaps. However, does this then speak to an expectation of how someone with a disability should be presented on ‘stage’? That their honest daily interdependence in the world must be hidden from the audience gaze, to cater a consumption hungry for surprising virtuosity or independent grace? The question lies precisely in the notion of interdependence and of visibility. Interdependence, I argue as an integral strand of the interconnectivity of life, and as opposed to independence, where “contemporary feminist thought has finally begun to deconstruct this narrow-minded view that true selfhood is synonymous with independence from others.” (Cooper Albright, 1997, p.61). Interdependence is synonymous with selfhood and inherent in the working group of *Patella-floating bone*, woven into the fabric of the work ecology through time and practice. Invisible

interdependence such as my need for language translation, on each other's varying roles within the art of the work recede, due to the visibility of this particular interdependence described by this audience member who is foregrounding it in their experience. Is there a perceived hierarchy within the varying interdependence? Should they be hidden from performative art? If it is the perceiving gaze, then what is the ecology of this perception? This kind of interdependence can be seen as the creation of a relational field of experience in the making, quite common in the everyday (Manning, 2016), and further explored within creative artistic contexts.

Another audience member contemplated her own lived experience, acknowledging the flux of her own journey and process with the body, prompted by a moment in the performance that created this space:

An important moment for me was the wheelchair dance on the moonlight bridge of the baking paper. It brought a way to see my own bodily history in a wheelchair (where I have myself been) in a beautiful and empowering light. (Audience reflection).

In a similar way, another audience member could take the performance space of *Patella-floating bone* to reflect on a bigger question of being in life, concerning wellbeing, which was incredibly moving to have had shared:

I came into the room, and we had just talked about mental health and how difficult it can be to learn a 'new way of living' after having lived a life where the way of coping with difficulties was to be 'in control'... it was lovely to arrive in a place that was so soft, and where it was possible to rest, change position... I like it slow. Many things, companions... I did not think about when it would end. I did not feel lonely.

The last aspect of performance as research is that of my experience inside the performance, as performer, witness, and researcher. The sensing of audience, liveliness of things, the space, and my body in relation with the movement of acts, came to be in a somewhat heightened sensitivity or intensity in the cohabited practice space. Audience presence indeed was a large field of relation, as a morphing landscape, with a particular charge to the energy of the soft gaze. I can recall the phenomenon of the felt difference between a sense of waiting in the space, and a sense of 'being with' the audience in the

beginning, with my eyes closed. Similarly, when performing my 'body work' duet with the hand mop, the audience's embodied gaze supported a feeling of autonomous life in the mop on my hand. I was being moved by the pink hand mop. The presence in the space was a movement in itself, which my movement was not separate from. The things charged the space as the space charged the things, with the force of process felt in the in-between. Essence of entities transferred with gravity, with space, with audience movement. The close proximity with the audience sitting right next to my body, heightened sensitivity to these energies and even compromised a sense of gravity in my body; a grounding. In these moments I would return to the breath, the senses of listening to the sounds, the sensation of my skin against the floor, and sensing over to Elina, Noora, Siiri and Jonna and the particular field of relation between *us*. The feeling of being weighted and carried would return to me. It was an interesting unexpected feeling to be witnessed witnessing within the work. I could rest with the audience, in watching Jonna and Siiri's duet with the baking paper; the memory of the first time seeing it yet also new, layered into the experience of sharing it with those seeing it for the first time. I could feel in my body, the shared gravity between Noora and Elina's bodies, the playfulness new, in their exploration of the deflated ball.

As I recount my relational performance process experience: -

I feel the gravity and my body supported by the floor. As audience come in, I look at some of them in the eye as if to greet them, nonverbally. I look at the other performers too, and feel calm as people shuffle in, move through the space and gradually settle into their places on cushions, boxes, benches, in corners and against walls. Doors close and something settles and suspends in the space. I close my eyes and let the images come, the dream enters from the others; from the space and moves me. I like the silence in between our voices. I can hear the audience in these moments, as if their thoughts feed the space. The sound of plastic in motion with Noora; a conversation of movement and texture. My eyes are still closed but I can see and feel this dance and the dance of the audience gaze. Plastic settles, a shift in the music, my eyes open and my world opens to a golden lit space, as if my body turns inside out. I see the landscape of faces and bodies again. Now, I feel like I am performing. Echoing the shapes and forms of my co-performers, echoing an architecture design of space. I can enter a body work practice now, with pink hand mop. Take me into, and out of... Where do you want to go now, mop? I drop my weight to myself; life is transmuted from space to mop; it is moving independently. I see you, feel you, moving me. My body is like a thing. So,

where am I? When the mop leaves, comes to stillness, life disperses again. Siiri's attention sucks it up, the first vertical rise in her stand, like a volcano out of the ground, she charges to the hanging paper to rip it open - more baking paper. This duet with Jonna has the memory of the first time I saw it, at the same time new in this space. I can really watch now. I am audience, we are we. Blue lit space, bright white moving sounding paper piles. A feast. Captivated audience as Siiri continues her solo around, discharging the paper out of her hoodie and into their hands. . . LOVE bursts out of her hoodie, discarded. Time-space suspended. . . and a shift into colonisation, playing, this impulse, that impulse... stand on a box, contact with Jonna, listen to her weight, touch, and the cardboard roll in between. Hold the roll to Noora's mouth she makes a funny sound! Direct it to the audience can they hear it too? It happens one night spontaneously, funny, the next night we keep and repeat, and it falls flat, pre-empted. A tornado of things, saturated chaos, my body is a fool overwhelmed by the commands, can I dance from here? The blue glove comes off the hanging peg, inflates and I hand it directly to a boy who looks me in the eye and takes it. Settle, settle, rest. A field of relation opens between the Jawbone and Jonna, as a liveliness transfers from body to thing for an anthropomorphic body work by a living death thing. Attention zooms in, suspends the action, I am part of the suspension, my body a witness, a frame, sensing into all things in-between. Jonna is still, as the jawbone moves. Like a departing breath the life passes from bone into white-material-thing, a pile of morphic mass gliding nodding, bone-knocking. This act belongs to no-one and everything, my bones are swept by the act and my flesh follows the event's force of pathways of a criss-crossing map. I slip-slide between body, thing and space, in relation with the landscape I(t) traverse(s). A skeleton puppet is the master of our movements, our group mind, and shaking flesh beneath a colourful fabric cluster. Noora's belly laughter travels to the bones and to the audience, moves the audience into a shifting sounding space-scape. Bones drop, and the summoned life disperses, my body melts with gravity to find the weight of Noora in a connectivity, a lively movement path at the threshold where our textures meet and processes blend. I listen and I'm carried by the act to lift Noora into her chair. Yellow jumper monster approaching, rattling bones. My body in its container gradually leaks in the direction of an up-suck force to join a hive-mind creature. The heat is another energy we are in relation with. Travelling bodies in a sack of bones. Noora wheels her chair over the unravelled paper roll, in a sounding, sculpting, movement duet with the paper. The movement is somewhere between Noora's body, paper, and the wheels. It enters my hands, the others' hands, a magnet draws us together into a sculpting, sounding relation process with the paper. A glacier; the alps, a snowball. In the pile of scrunch that is the manifested form; what is left behind by the aftermath, the paper crackles like fire, the condensed spaces in the folds of the form, cracking open, expanding,

popping, like wood into embers. Just the volition of the nonhuman in perceptible action, resonating in stillness with the remanence of relationality, yet the event that has been is in the folds of the now-time. An intense attention of contemplative presence is shared by all, my body in echo of events been, shared between Elina, Noora, Jonna, Siiri and audience.



Georgina Goater with pink hand mop in *Patella-floating bone*
Photo: Aapo Juusti

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to study the ecology of a diverse working group, in how sensing and the in-between occur and inform an artistic process of learning. Disability and difference as embodied lived perceptions come to interrelate with the pull of lively materiality and sensory play, during the creation and performance process of *Patella-floating bone*. In alignment with Erin Manning's discourse of neurodiversity's meaningful potential to shift dominant structures that privilege the neurotypical, this work seeks for a practice space for such seeds of process to emerge. The integral question that activated this research was: how does interrelational sensing occur between diverse embodied perceptions and mobilise processes of art making and learning?

Sharing the artistic work equally with collaborator Elina Sarno was the first activator in creating an in-between space, of a life unknown, a movement of immanent direction that was not entirely of us but somewhere between us, and one example containing the concept in action that is *agencement*. Through sensing this, the somatic sensing into artistic practice and the ecology of co-creation could already be accessed in a multi-dimensional way. The vision of the work became inherent in the shared space between the whole group; Siiri, Jonna and Noora each contributing their whole selves to dialogue and knowledge-making with us, and within the container of creating performance.

Privileging listening and in-between states led to authentic expressions, dialogue, deep diving into artistic sensory play, and the cultivation of practice, but also led to confused states of feeling lost, for some. Feeling lost in the unknown of improvisation, relative to the particular known of a score-based structure in the compositional phase of process that passes through some inevitable concretisation when moving toward presenting performance. This became valuable knowledge-making, to learn that known structures have the capacity to constrict the sensing antennae and limit experience in the making. A value in the in-between resurfaced to highlight that a moving balance between known practices and unknown spaces within them enables a surrender into non-binary, as-yet-known processual experiencing rife with

connectivity and interrelating. One audience member described a phenomenon from the performance, which was of a precise moment between a body and nonhuman thing at a very particular proximity in the nearly imperceptible liminal space between touch and no touch, where an embodied response was most potently felt. In this way, sensing was also shared with audience. Sensing, which opened shared experiential knowledge-making. Foregrounding sensory engagement within the performance invited an affability in perception, inclusive of perceptions of the gaze toward dis/ability in and of the world.

Questions that would proceed from this research would be, what further artistic modes of practice will emerge between our disciplines together in the ecology of a diverse working group? And, how is co-facilitation of artistic practice as pedagogy shared equally between people with different embodied perceptions?

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ATTACHMENTS

Performance video of *Patella-floating bone* at TeaK, March 2018

<https://vimeo.com/283779076>