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DENMARK

“A new space of possibilities”

the Origins of Dacapo Theatre

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Published in:
Organizational Aesthetics

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Publication date:
2020

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link to publication from Aalborg University

Citation for published version (APA):
Chemi, T., & Kawamura, T. (2020). “A new space of possibilities”: the Origins of Dacapo Theatre. *Organizational Aesthetics*, *9*(3), 9-28. https://oa.journals.publicknowledgeproject.org/index.php/oa/article/view/160/160

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Organizational Aesthetics 9(3): 9-28
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www.organizationalaesthetics.org

"A New Space of Possibilities": The Origins of Dacapo Theatre

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Abstract

In the present paper we tell the story of Dacapo Theatre, a Danish organisational theatre ensemble that pioneered the domain of theatre in organisations. We will focus on the early years of this journey. The objective of this article is to analyse the stories of three founding members and one early member of Dacapo Theatre in terms of "embodied cognition" (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 2016; Varela, 1992), of Theory U (Scharmer, 2016; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski & Flowers, 2004), of "theatre as research" (Chemi et al., 2015), and "gatekeeper" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Even though this paper does not overall set out to generalise its conclusions because of its case study character, it aims to contribute creatively to contemporary workplaces. After briefly summarising the stories we heard in the interviews with Dacapo Theatre's former members, we discuss their theoretical and practical implication in the sections that follow.

Keywords: embodied cognition, Theory U, empathy, organisational theatre, performance, drama, organisational health

"A New Space of Possibilities": The Origins of Dacapo Theatre

This article is based on the introductory presentation by the authors on 31 August 2018 at the *Arts of Management and Organization* conference in the stream "Performing performance, embodying bodies, and bridging bridges: how do workplace and theatre innovate together for sustainability?". The presentation and this article are mainly based on interviews with three founding members and one early member of Dacapo Theatre (in Danish: Dacapo Teatret), a theatrical company based in Odense, Denmark, specialised in supporting organisational development in various industrial and social bodies. The authors would like to address special thanks to Lone Thellesen, Lena Bjørn, Preben Friis and Henry Larsen for accepting our interviews and sharing their precious archives with us.

There is a broad literature on the unique and innovative activities of Dacapo Theatre including Darsø (2004), Meisiek and Barry (2007), and Darsø, Meisiek, and Boje (2006). One of the earlier accounts describes it as follows:

> The Dacapo Theatre has existed as a professional organization since 1995, but the idea of using theatre for creating focus and dialogue was already conceived by director Lone Thellesen much earlier. At the time she was in charge of internal health in a can factory with the responsibility for ensuring work security and health. She started to experiment with new approached, such as inviting a trained art therapists into the organization, who worked with drawing and painting and she also tried out theatre. She found that theatre had the strongest impact, as it encouraged a different kind of dialogue with more active participation. Around this time she met Lena Bjørn, actor and playwright, and together they decided to develop performances of forum theatre. They managed to set up two plays, which were performed by the employees for the employees of the can factory. These plays were so successful that they were shown not only at the can factory, but as the word spread, also in other factories. In 1995 the demand was so great that they decided to start professionally and so the Dacapo Theatre was established starting with four people full time. (Darsø, 2004, p. 87)

Based on these existing studies about the ensemble, we decided to focus on its "pre-history", i.e. the immediately preceding activities of three founding members that directly led to its foundation as an independent theatrical company in 1995. Not only were these activities frankly understudied, but we also found that the stories of preceding activities would provide various stimulating and inspiring narratives to initiate a thematic stream inquiry into how performing bodies of theatrical performance can meet and dance together with performing human bodies in contemporary workplaces.

As we stated in the introduction to this special issue, we can find, in Dacapo Theatre stories, the conception and experimentation of forum theatre performances (Boal, 2008). The Boalian legacy is strong and made explicit in the name chosen for the company: *da capo* is an Italian expression used especially in music, which means "from the beginning". It indicates the repetition of musical scores ("start from the beginning"), or in Boalian forum theatre the repetition of actions or scenes in order to be reflected upon. In the case of Dacapo Theatre, theatre applied on the shop floor of a can factory facilitated embodied learning by workers, and generated participatory innovations to improve the sustainability of their workplace, their own company, and other workplaces and organisations.

The objective of this article is to analyse the stories of three founding and one early members of Dacapo Theatre in terms of "embodied cognition" (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 2016;

Varela, 1992), of Theory U (Scharmer, 2016; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski & Flowers, 2004), of "theatre as research" (Chemi et al., 2015), and "gatekeeper" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). It aims at extracting some research and practical implications on how performativities, embodiments and performance can contribute creatively to contemporary workplaces. After briefly summarising in the next section the stories we heard in the interviews with three founding members and one early member, we will discuss their theoretical and practical implication in the succeeding sections.

Theatre in organisations

According to Schreyögg (2002), the practice of theatre in organisations is not new at all and is more extensive than believed. Organisations are likely to encounter theatrical practices as a customary routine, but how these encounters are designed and how they occur is very different. The ideas behind the application of theatre and drama to organisational life can be traced in the pedagogy of bodies and performances, which emerged in Britain in the Sixties. Even though the history of drama education shows historical roots that go back to Plato's conceptualisations and to the ancient Greek theatrical tradition (Bolton, 2007), we must look at European contemporary educational practices in order to understand theatre in organisations.

Jackson (2013) recounts the story of theatre in education emphasising highlights, downturns and the "bumpy road" in between. According to him, the origins of this educational practice are in the purpose of involving youngsters in engaging learning experiences. As Bolton (2013) frames it, it was about shaping "engagement with meaning" (p. 45).

However, in a second stage, theatre in education started having a more explicit social purpose "to promote debate, the sharing of ideas and experiences" (Jackson, 2013, p. 23). Theatre was seen as an educational tool for socio-political purposes and was aimed at the community at large, not only at schoolchildren and youth. At the same time, ideas and values about organisations as learning organisms (Senge et al., 2004) were changing the ways in which organisational development could be achieved.

In Denmark, theatre in organisations and communities started to be practised in the late Sixties, and was conceptualised by a group of international scholars brought together within the Learning Lab hub (Darsø, Meisiek & Boje, 2006). Dacapo Theatre has been central to both contexts, the organisational and the community-based.

Narrative investigation

Our methodology here focuses on narratives inspired by Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Appreciative Inquiry is "the cooperative, coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives life to an organization or a community when it is most effective and most capable in economic, ecological, and human terms" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005)[1].

In line with the spirit of Appreciative Inquiry, the authors conducted several joint and individual semi-structured and informal interviews with Lone Thellesen, Lena Bjørn, and Preben Friis, who were founding members of Dacapo Theatre, as well as with Henry Larsen, who joined Dacapo Theatre early in 1998. The authors also made a field visit to the Dacapo Theatre's former office in Odense (now home of the consulting agency Dacapo). The present

[1] Cooperrider & Whitney (2005). Chapter 2 What is Appreciative Inquiry?

article mostly analyses two in-depth, semi-structured interviews in English. A joint interview with Lone Thellesen and Lena Bjørn was carried out one bright afternoon on 29 October 2017 at an author's house in Aarhus, Denmark. One of the authors conducted another semi-structured interview with Preben Friis and Henry Larsen one rainy afternoon on 24 October 2017 at their office at Southern Denmark University in Kolding, Denmark.[2]

The two interviews aimed at collecting narratives were designed as being semi-structured and occurring in cosy, informal settings. We documented these conversations in audio-files and on video (stationary frontal camera). Analysis was done on a verbatim transcription of the audio-files and was inspired by data-driven coding. Our direct quotes from the interviews slightly deviate from the verbatim version only when necessary for linguistic reasons.

Ethical measures were taken by acquiring the interviewees' consent to participation where the frames and purpose of the study were explained. Anonymity was not possible, as Dacapo Theatre was a well-known ensemble in the public eye. The interviewees were informed about it and consented to this approach. Moreover, the informants were offered to review the final version of the paper and were asked to explicitely give their final approval. In this process, the Dacapo Theatre's members have been very generous and collaborative, providing the authors with factual corrections, insightful comments and much more information that the present paper can accommodate properly. Our appreciation is equal to the regret for not being able to include all the precious details, due to the specific focus of the present contribution: the early stages of Dacapo Theatre and the retrospective narratives related to this organisational experience. This supplementary feedback and approval was given by means of personal communication to the authors by e-mail (Lone, July 6, 12 and 14, 2020; Henry, July 7, 2020; Preben, July 15, 2020) or telephone and digital messaging (Lena, July 8, 2020).

Prior to these interviews, we collected and analysed empirical data and archival materials to facilitate interviews and to develop interview questions that would help to elicit deeper human stories, values and core factors behind the founding of Dacapo Theatre. The archival materials were from Lone's personal collection, which is at the moment being transformed in digital records and systematically organised by one of the authors.

This collection, which was informally presented to the authors by Lone Thellesen herself in June 2017, contains journal articles, photos, videos, leaflets from performances, press materials, letters, typescripts for the performances, and administrative documents. These documents, which are a treasure that deserves greater consideration, have been integrated into the present study as examples of the interviewees' storytelling. In other words, we have not approached this body of documents systematically, but only when the interviewees brought them into the conversation. These documentary artefacts were part of the conversations, like a third witness called in when pointed at or questioned. They helped the interviewees to explain and remember.

Interview with Lone Thellesen and Lena Bjørn

Norum (2008) describes four primary types of interview questions used for Appreciative Inquiry: 1) deep story, 2) value, 3) core factors, and 4) future or miracle (Norum 2008, p.22).

[2] To these recorded semi-structured interviews must be added the following informal interviews: with Lone Thellesen (June 12, 2017) at her studio in Odense, Denmark; with a group of Dacapo (consultant agency) employees (June 12, 2017) at Dacapo Theatre's former office in Odense; with Preben Friis and Henry Larsen at their office at Southern Denmark University in Kolding, Denmark (June 13, 2017); with Preben Friis in his home in Copenhagen (July 10, 2017); two separate Skype conversations with Lone Thellesen and Lena Bjørn (September 18, 2017), mostly in order to clarify the ethical considerations of the study and its purpose. Unreferenced quotes throughout our text are part of this collection of interviews.

To guide the interview with Lone and Lena, we had prepared the following five open questions, which focus on deep story, value, and core factors.

Q1. When, where, and how did you come to know each other in the first place? Please tell us your respective life stories BEFORE you met.
Q2. When, where, and how did you work together for the first time? Was your first joint work fascinating and satisfactory enough for you? If so, please tell us how it was. If not, please tell us how it was not?
Q3. When and how did you decide to continue working together? What did you say to each other when you decided to continue?
Q4. When and how did you come to form a theatre company? Why did you name the company Dacapo Teatret? If you shared some visions, goals, objectives, policies, and plans for development in the beginning, please tell us.
Q5. Please tell us one of the most impressive works you did together in the foundation period of Dacapo theatrical company.

Interview with Preben Friis and Henry Larsen

From the same perspective, we had prepared the following four open questions for the interview with Preben and Henry.

Q1. When and how did you come to know the activities of Lone and Lena (or Dacapo) in the first place? What were your first impressions of their activities? Please tell us your respective life stories BEFORE you came to know them.
Q2. What was your first work with Lone and Lena? How did you come to work together with them?
Q3. Was your first work with them fascinating for you? If so, please tell us how it was. If not, please tell us how it was not so satisfactory. How did you decide to continue working together with them?
Q4. Please tell us one of the most impressive works you did with the company.
Q5. How do you locate and evaluate Dacapo start-up activities in the socio-political and economic contexts of Denmark during the foundation period?

Early days

Dacapo's early days are very much linked to Lone's personal history. She was the one who felt the organisational and personal need to investigate what theatre could offer to her company. In her narrative, Lone told that, at the time she started having a special interest in theatre, she was an occupational health specialist and head of the occupational health and safety department at a can factory in Odense. She was interested in the paradigm shift that was underway with the creation of production groups. It required new forms of collaboration and leadership roles. Creating dialogue across subjects, education, hierarchy positioning was a central issue in those years. According to Christensen (2009), Danish workers and society in early 1990s were in "a situation where the welfare state is challenged by the process of globalisation. This challenge is felt in several areas: in the labour-market, where workers are met with demands for more "flexibility", new types of jobs are created - especially in the information technology sector, and Danish companies are sold to foreign investors."[3] Lone recalls that the can factory she worked for in Odense experienced such changes in management, inducing various work-related anxieties in its workers who felt the need to talk together and engage in meaningful conversations.

[3] Christensen, L.K. (2009). 1982-2000: The recent years.

Based on the successful experience of her chairperson speech at a national convention of occupational health specialists in 1990 where she invited two actors to co-host the speech, Lone was determined to stimulate dialogues and reflections among factory workers using some theatrical methods. She had once read a professional journal article on forum theatre workshops for industrial workers in Sweden to improve their occupational health. So Lone began by asking a local theatrical company performing forum theatres for children to implement similar performances for the can factory workers, but the company refused to do so.

Then, Lone joined and acted in a local community play directed by Lena at a discontinued clothing factory: Brandts Clothing Factory in Odense. Lena was a community play director, playwright and actor. She had always been fascinated by reaching out to people who do not usually encounter the arts and helping them learn in theatrical performances. Lone asked Lena to help her implement forum theatre at the can factory, and Lena accepted, thinking that forum theatre was a little out-dated. After a successful first performance at the can factory, they formed a forum theatre club of factory workers, and performed forum theatres in the factory, as well as in other factories both in Denmark and abroad.

A turning point was the invitation from LO (*Landsorganisationen i Danmark*, that is, the *Danish Confederation of Trade Unions*) to a larger collaboration concerning changes in the labor market. According to Lone's supplementary information (personal communication, July 6, 2020), "a fundamental collaborator in LO was consultant Charlotte Detliff. LO, in collaboration with Minister of Labor Jytte Andersen (Social Democratic Party), had started a major effort to meet the [demands of] the broad changes in the labor market. A number of initiatives were disseminated through forum theater, which Dacapo was asked to develop. We made a budget on research, instruction, salaries, scenography and a tour and LO paid. The first initiative we took part in focused on personnel policy. Later, followed [other topics for our work:] production groups, management and the inclusive labor market". This is how Preben recalls this period:

> Lone and Lena […] got some money to create a small performance that would tour. […] Lena wrote a little performance [and] I came in as the director. We worked -like we do for any performance- with a kind of forum technique. At that time it was *stop forum*. Which means that we played a little performance of 25 minutes then we said to the audience "now we will start the performance again. As you have seen, it didn't work out very well. If nobody interferes the next time we play it, it will end just as badly - so it depends on you as an audience to say *stop*". It was really hard to get anybody to buy the performance. It was about illiteracy in companies. […] It was very cheap, but until we had the opening [the première of the performance, note by authors] we did only a few performances[4]. After that, it spread very quickly. We were playing in companies for unions. [..] The unions and the social democrats had the idea of introducing a "10 points programme", [in Danish "ti punkts program"], in which the second theme was leader roles - not managerial roles, but who takes leadership, what is leadership and how does that work for employees. After the first performance [on illiteracy] the union came back and said how about doing something about this theme [leadership]? And Lone suggested that it could be interesting to involve the managers' union, too. And it was the first time where the workers' union and managers' union collaborated

[4] For precision's sake, we must report on Lone's clarification that LO had actualy paid for the tour (personal communication, 6 July 2020).

> on a project by giving money to produce this performance. Lena and I wrote the script and started touring. There, I was also an actor with Lena and another actress. I think that what is important here is that on the opening night, which was at the managers' union premises, the television was there, the heads of the workers' union and the head of the managers' union, and the Minister of Labour were there, sitting in the front row: we had become accepted in companies. If all these people were there then it must be ok, even though it was theatre.

Until this point, the Dacapo enterprise was only a project - "there was no Dacapo" (Preben). But after *Change - the spice of life* -as the performance was called- (Banke & Holsbo, 2002, p. 146) then companies started calling to book the performance, because the word was spreading. All the interviewees were asked to recall the moment in which they realised that their activities were shifting from *amateurial* and *community-based* to an established consultancy company specialised in organisational theatre. They all agree in emphasising the importance of artefacts and organisational frames, including the physical settings. What they mention is that, after the success of *Change - the spice of life,* the telephone kept ringing with job requests. Their group had the necessary members for playing forum theatre (professional actors and a "joker", that is the consultant/facilitator who is "hosting" the conversations during the performance), and now apparently also spectators. The question was, what to do? Preben goes on:

> Since the telephone kept ringing, with people asking for the performance, we sat down, put the answering machine on the telephone, and we talked about "what are we doing?" Then we decided to say both Lena and I were able to go on playing. Lone was not. She was supposed to be a joker in the performances so three actors and a joker. Lone was still working for the can factory so she could not tour so much. Then two other people came in and were facilitating and joking for the performances. So we decided to say, "let's give it 6 months to see where it goes" and we opened up the phone line again.
>
> It was a very cheap performance, but Lone was raising the price a little bit every time the phone rang [laughs]. So finally we came to a point where we could actually make a living from it. Apart from the money we got from the unions [for the planned tours], we also started to get income from giving performances [to other companies], which was very fine at that time.
>
> So we played it a lot for a couple of years, and then we started getting other people in as actors and joker, and meanwhile Lone also resigned from the can factory, and we decided to continue the company. I am not sure exactly when that decision was, but there was a date when we made that decision. After, we agreed to say let's give it half a year - and then we could see if it was still running, so why not just continue? […] The opening was in October 1996. I do not think it was a formal decision.

What seems to make a difference in the interviewees' narratives is the presence of an office, of a company telephone and a company car. Before that, administrative tasks were done in Lone's livingroom. However, Henry challenges Preben's experience of informality, by saying that, when he was employed in 1998, in the company there was already "more than a formal decision, you had an office, a person taking care of accounting, it *was* a company".

In this exchange between Lone and Lena, the negotiation of meaning about this early stage is clear and comes out as slightly humorous:

> Lone: The feeling of being a company came when we got an office, before that we were in my living-room.
>
> Lena: Also, at the beginning we were thinking of it as a project, then it became something different (that was more than a project). We were freelance at the beginning.
>
> Lone: The process was smooth and effortless. I raised the price every day when people were calling, because they were calling all the time.
>
> Lena: We had to tell her, now you must stop! We are not worth this price! (both laugh) […] This period showed that Lone came from a company and Preben and I from a different place. We had this discussion about what should we do if actors get sick? And I told Lone, actors never get sick (laughs). Until they leave the stage, they are never sick.
>
> Lone: When we had an office and we hired an administrator I had the feeling that we had a company office. Rooms and spaces are very important.

With the establishment of the company, with name, office, administration and intention, the early years gave place to a whole new period: the new life of the Dacapo Theatre consultancy company.

Empathizing Encounter: (Co-)Seeing and (Co-)Sensing with Embodying Bodies

Cognitive scientist Francisco J. Varela and his colleagues explain human cognition as "embodied action", which highlights "first, that cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities, and second, that these individual sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context" (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 2016)[5].

Based on this view of embodied cognition, management scholar C. Otto Scharmer develops Theory U, which explains the transformation of individuals, groups, organizations, and societies in stages of Downloading, Seeing, Sensing, Presencing, Crystallizing, Prototyping, and Performing (Scharmer, 2016; Senge et al., 2004). He also emphasizes that these stages proceed mainly as collective movements of Co-initiating (Seeing), Co-sensing (Sensing), Co-presencing (Presencing), Co-creating (Crystallizing and Prototyping), and Co-evolving (Performing)[6].

It seems the first two stages of (co-)seeing and (co-)sensing are especially relevant to the stories of Lone and Lena. Scharmer adopts Varela's idea of three gestures of becoming aware: suspending, redirecting, and letting-go as the keys to (co-)seeing, (co-)sensing, and (co-) presencing in the opening process of the U[7]. He describes three principles of (co-)seeing as "clarify question and intent", "move into the contexts that matter", and "suspend judgement

[5] Varela, Thompson, & Rosch (2016). Paragraph 7, "Cognition as Embodied Action" section, Chapter 8 Enaction: Embodied Cognition
[6] Scharmer, C.O. (2016). "Our Field Journey: This Book" section, Introduction.
[7] Ibid. "Francisco Varela on the Blind Spot in Cognition Sciences" section, Chapter 2 The Journey to "U".

and connect wonder"[8], and four principles of (co-)sensing as "charging the container", "deep diving", "redirecting attention," and "opening the heart."[9]

We find these principles of (co-)seeing and (co-)sensing are met in the stories of Lone and Lena on the successful implementation of forum theatre played and enjoyed by the workers themselves on the shop floor of the can factory. Lena and Lone recall vividly the process of first performing forum theatre at the can factory. It is worth digging deep into this methodology by listening to their voices as follows (*our emphasis*):

> Lena: I have a memory that is quite strong. I remember that was the research we did for the first play. You could say, on a meta level, Lone was the one who knew what she wanted just to be about - the psychological working environment in a factory, how do you look at people - and I was the one who had to get that down into lines and scenes. So my research was partly talking a lot with Lone, and partly talking with workers in the factory, because always when I write things, I need to talk with people, to listen to them, to look at them to grasp what they say, how they talk and how they think.
>
> I remember we interviewed some women on the production line and I asked them, could you please mention to me three things that make you and your workday happy and nice, and three things that make you upset somehow. I do not remember anything about what they said, but I remember that, when one woman was asked the question about what was difficult, what was upsetting her, she almost cried. [I thought] oh my God, this is important. I got this feeling that what we were doing was important, because working life for all of us takes up a lot of our waking time, and so when people are unhappy in their working life, it is important to work with them.
>
> So the process was, as I said, discussing with Lone what kind of angle, what kind of approach we should have, and talking with different workers, and also being allowed to walk around in the production department. I remember this very distinctly. The can factory was a big iron structure and the production hall was big, and there were some yellow lines, which you were not supposed to cross because then you could be run down by a truck. I remember walking around in this production area and taking in the whole atmosphere, how it was to work there.
>
> And then after the research period, I sat down and wrote some scenes. […] I remember that the first time I read some scenes for Lone, she laughed, and she was very happy, and I was like "Wow!', which made me of course very happy.
>
> So this process of listening, and looking, and writing, and delivering, and getting a response from Lone was, for me, and has always been very happy because that is somehow what I am good at, that is, grasping the everyday life and the conflicts between people, and the humour. For me, it is always important for there to be some humorous tone, not to everything, but something we can laugh about *because people recognise it*. They recognise the woman who is afraid of going to another machine and says as much. So the process of doing something *recognisable* makes me very happy.

[8] Ibid. "The Shift from Downloading to Seeing" section, Chapter 9 Seeing.
[9] Ibid. "Principles" section, Chapter 10 Sensing.

> Later, on a weekend at the summerhouse on Fyn, with the whole crew - all [were] factory workers, who were going to be the actors - I read the scenes for them and they also found it was [so], maybe they came up with some… some extra things I do not remember very much. […] I read what I had so far for them and we tried it out probably.
>
> Lone: What you [Lena] have just described is fundamental to Dacapo. The things that became reality were this cooperation [between Lena and Lone]. You [Lena] thought building a bridge with what I was thinking was important, and what I wanted was to have groups of people coming into dialogue. That is very difficult to command: "you have to talk together." Suddenly, when you came and read something for me, I said "*aha*", this moment of "*Yes!*" [It is] like a love poem - in three sentences, everything about love is clear. Here you came up with complex themes, in so few sentences, for me […] a whole new possibility of getting a dialogue between very important and different groups of people in this [factory]. That is the reason I said "*Yes!*"
>
> I do not know what she [Lena] is doing exactly but that is the point. I know what I want, but I do not deeply understand how it functioned in your [Lena's] head, which can create this on and on and on. Sometimes [I asked you] how can you do this? [You said] you did not really know either. But I think you sense people and you are grounded, and you sense the atmosphere. Fantastic!
>
> Lena: For me it was not theoretical. It is also a gift for me to have someone say "I wanted [the performance] to be about this because this is important, this is important". Because it would take me years to know what is important here. I got that served on a plate. So it is true this was a very unique cooperation because we each had our strength. And for me it was like playing.
>
> Lone: I think the theatre is special compared to movies or paintings or poems. It is lively in another way and it is involving in another way, when you use it. The dynamism is really special. I did not know this before I saw it. I was so surprised.

In the above narratives we can see examples of principles of (co-)seeing like "clarify question and intent", "move into the contexts that matter", and "suspend judgement and connect wonder" as well as those of principles of (co-)sensing such as "charging the container" and "deep diving". We can also understand how the bridge between the different perspectives of Lena, an outside playwright and theatre director, and Lone, an inside occupational health specialist, helped them to "redirect attentions" and "open their hearts", which are two other principles of (co-)sensing.

However, we need to ask more profoundly why and how their forum theatres triggered these collective processes of (co-)seeing and (co-)sensing among factory workers. At this point, we can refer back to the foundational notion of "embodied action" of Varela and his colleagues, which emphasises that human cognition is "embodied action", as human bodies with various sensorimotor capacities are embedded in a more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context. In the interview, Lone and Lena recall that, in making and performing the forum theatre, factory workers revealed their embodied, and mostly suppressed, feelings and emotions such as tears, sadness, fear, laughter, humour, or happiness. As we saw above, Lena admits that the factory workers' crying, fear, and laughter moved her body and feelings and motivated creation of the first performance.

Varela and his colleagues emphasise the importance of "compassion" in the process of becoming aware[10]. Scharmer argues that we need to develop the capacity of opening our heart, which is "our ability to access our emotional intelligence, or EQ: that is, our capacity to empathize with others, to tune in to different contexts, and to put ourselves into someone else's shoes" as one of three instruments of new social technology along with the capacities of opening our mind and will[11]. He also details the effectiveness of "empathetic" listening and dialogue for (co-)sensing[12].

Cognitive scientist Paul Thagard argues that the human capacity of "empathy" can be partially explained from three different hypotheses. The first hypothesis sees empathy as a kind of analogical mapping relying on verbal representations of someone's situation, the second sees it as "emotional contagion" through the (unconscious) mimicry and behavioural synchronisation among interacting people, and the third, latest hypothesis sees it as physical experiences employing visual-motor representations produced directly by mirror neurons (Thagard, 2010, pp. 190-192).

Although the third hypothesis might need further testing, these hypotheses help us understand how forum theatre at the can factory led factory workers to be "empathetic" to each other, and initiated the collective processes of (co-)seeing and (co-)sensing. These forum theatres made the physical bodies of actors and audiences interact directly in the performances, and revealed embodied work-related feelings/emotions, providing some "cathartic" relief.

Forum theatre also triggered empathetic dialogues among factory workers to reflect together on their work experiences, which generated further feelings and emotions. Lone and Lena recalled they made it a habit for all participants to sing together the songs they had created at the end of the performance, which helped them to calm their "heightened" feelings, and to (re)embody new reflections that will bring them to act differently. Lena described the singing together as a "poetic break" (Lena).

Theatre as research

One of the clear recurring themes in the interviews is the understanding of Dacapo Theatre's praxis as inquiry and research. This is expressed in several ways and is coherent with other studies on the artist's approach to creativity (Chemi et al., 2015).

Talking about her engagement with the emerging practice of organisational theatre, Lone tells of her anxiety about acting on stage: "I was scared to act, it's different when I am myself on stage". According to Lone's clarifications (personal communication, July 6, 2020), her attempts to be on stage were very limited: she had tried an acting part in the performance that Lena directed at the Brandts Clothing Factory, when they met each other, but it was mainly "in order to experience the process and find out why I didn't dare or could play theatre". Except from that, she had tried to get on "a five centimeter tall stage some years earlier, in the course of a revue at a political association – and I found out that the five centimeters made impossible any action. It puzzled me and made me curious", this was her motivation in participating to Lena's theatre production, the opportunity to try something she was not able to do, the exploration of "a new land".

[10] Varela, Thompson, & Rosch (2016). "Ethics and Human Transformation" section, Chapter 11 Laying Down a Path in Walking
[11] Scharmer, C. O. (2016). "The Inner Territory of Leadership" section, Chapter 2 The Journey to "U".
[12] Ibid. "Dialogue: Enacting the process of Conversation from Field 3" section, Chapter 17 Conversational Actions.

Even though she was used to *performing* on stage in her profession in the HR department (public speech, dissemination, networking), the occasions she felt comfortable with were linked to the organizational dissemination of content she developed herself, and would deliver as a professional. Her role in acting was very limited and associated with mixed feelings. She felt an anxiety that she did not feel when she was on stage in the role of organisational disseminator. At the same time, she felt an intuitive attraction towards the medium of theatre, and reflected: "I saw the process of theatre and that was fantastic. […] I wanted to *research* what is this competence that makes people act?" (*our emphasis*). Lone explicitly uses the word "research" for her interest that would lead to the search for missing knowledge and experience. This seems to be the drive that motivated her in initiating this journey where amateurs in a factory are involved in theater.

In a similar way, but interestingly with different words, Preben describes the working process at Dacapo Theatre as a *digging deeper* that would occur during the rehearsal period: "I like this way in which, [during] the rehearsal period, when you dig deep…". It is implied in his account of the early years' work processes that this digging deeper was a method of inquiry, in order to search for what was not yet known.

Henry is even more explicit about it and cites an example of how this research under the surface was done and came about. He recalls that the group had applied for and received funds to develop new organisational methods by means of theatre. This money, he believes, made possible the free experimentation of the company: "because of that [funding] we could have time to develop, to go out and talk with people in companies and develop new things. I started developing conversations with Lone and Lena". These conversations enabled the emergence of tools to think and operate with, which were surprisingly effective both for customers and for Dacapo employees. Henry mentions one manager who "was struck by the knowledge we collected by just walking around and talking to people; he said that it would have taken him a lot of time to do so". In the group, they "intensely discussed this, how we could understand that [positive effect]" (Henry). In Henry's narrative we see how crucial having room for free (and funded) experimentation was, and how all knowledge was negotiated in conversations with customers and within the group. In his later clarifications (personal communication, July 7, 2020), Henry specifies how he understands "freedom" and "experimentation": "in my work I do not at all see that we have 'free' experimentation. I agree that we had a unique opportunity to experiment, but the negotiations with customers – and within the group- is not free – unless we take Charles Taylor's understanding of being free – that you are free because you are in interdependencies with others".

This was stretched to a higher level when Dacapo Theatre started collaborating systematically with scholars. Again against the background of personal connections, Lone happened to meet Patricia Shaw from the University of Hertfordshire, UK. Shaw was an expert in complexity theories, and she and Lone quickly clicked. Their conversations began to include the whole group, which was invited to perform in the UK and got involved in this academic community. Eventually, Preben received his MA (Friis, 2004) and Henry his PhD (Larsen, 2005) at the University of Hertfordshire, UK.

The narrative that most of all describes Dacapo Theatre's early years as a process of research is Lena's account of the creative progression that characterised her early work, with Lone first, and with the ensemble after:

1. Interest in writing has always been "there"
2. She feels the need "to talk with people, to listen to them, to look at them to grasp what they say, how they talk and how they think". So she collects

interviews ("I asked them, can you please mention to me three things that make you and your workday happy and nice, and three things that make you upset somehow")
3. She is responsive to people's reactions ("I do not remember anything about what they said, but I remember that, when one woman was asked the question about what was difficult, what was upsetting her, she almost cried")
4. She is attentive to intuitions ("[I thought] oh my God, this is important. I got this feeling that what we were doing was important")
5. She collects observations *in situ* ("walking around in this production area and taking in the whole atmosphere, how it was to work there")
6. She writes down her observations or scenes based on her observations and interviews
7. She seeks a peer's feedback (Lone)
8. She includes the feedback in the final work
9. She reads the scenes to the actors as part of preparation for the stage ("I read the scenes for them and they also found it was [so]").

Lena's description could equally be related to qualitative ethnography in any social field. The method used is common to any social research: interviews with participants and field observation are used in order to collect knowledge about the context. These interviews are informal and narrative. The actress-as-researcher has a specific curiosity but does not limit or delimit her scope beforehand. She broadly looks at what is emerging through conversations and observations. Similarly, her field observation is described as a "wandering about" ("walking in the production department and taking in what was happening") while registering the feeling and mood of place and relationships.

Lena addresses this methodology explicitly as a "research period" that precedes her analytical work, which basically consists in writing scenes and revising them against the background of peer feedback. Writing is here a tool to think with, an embodied platform for creative interpretations. The result is a serendipitous analysis that surprises both - the actress-as-researcher (Lena) and the consultant-as-researcher (Lone). The core of the creative process is the progression of: listening, looking, writing, delivering, getting a response, and repeating the process of response. The very last stage of the preparation process is then the prototyping on stage, together with the other members of the ensemble. Laughter is here perceived as the appropriate response and a sign of achieved effect. At the same time, it is also the indication of playfulness and joy, elements that are (ought to be) present in all creative research.

Henry sums up effectively the similarities between the artistic process of creating a performance and the process of scholarly research: "I think of [the Dacapo working process] in a different way, that we basically… of course, we move in a different way when we do research but what we actually did in Dacapo was basically research as well. It brought us to the university. It has the same foundations". Even though Henry acknowledges different methodological approaches, he can also see that Dacapo Theatre's collaboration with scholars and universities was welcome. Indeed, it was based on the same fundamentals. This is something that some of them still pursue, for instance Preben mentioned in his interview that, shortly after the interview, he was going to give a talk precisely on the topic of art and research, on how artists and scholars have much in common. However, Henry specifies later on that scholarly partnerships were sought against the background of similar interests: "we were looking for ways of understanding what happened in a non-individualistic way, so not all scholars, and not all universities were equally important for us" (personal communication, July 7, 2020). But what conditions make possible this conversation between theatre and academia? What topics emerge from this embodied research?

The places of possibilities

When Lone's work started to receive visibility and attention from Danish stakeholders, some representatives of the union asked her if she wanted to work for the LO (the *Danish Confederation of Trade Unions*). She turned down this prestigious and favourable proposal because she had an intuition that she could investigate something new through theatre. She says:

> We started because we met each other and then when I joined the theatre production at Brandts Klædefabrik. I was allowed to be in the group making theatre without anyone demanding anything of me, and it created a new space of possibilities. It's a kind of freedom to be the most stupid in the group. What I saw came in with no filter, because I had no knowledge.

Eventually LO provided a substantial amount of money for a number of large projects of this kind, but Lone went on building this *space of possibilities*. In Lone's clarifications (personal communication, July 6, 2020), it is apparent that Dacapo's position as an autonomous and economically independent organization is important to its founder: "we did not get donations and did not apply for it. We got large tasks, for which we received money to find solutions to. [This was] because we were the best at communicating LO's initiatives and because creative key-people in LO saw the quality in this kind of dissemination. My opinion from the start was that we should only continue if the companies / customers would pay the price. We were self-financed and thus free". Dacapo's early years were characterised by this experimentally free space, where participants were linked by serendipity ("we met") and kinship (Haraway, 2016). When these individuals recognised in each other the same drive, they rapidly committed to each other in the frames of a working project. More than commonalities in personalities, mindsets, ideals, and backgrounds, they were brought together by interest, curiosity, intuition and trust.

Several times during the interviews all four interviewees emphasise the deep differences that the founding members had, and how these differences were turned into a core strength, by simply addressing them. Lone, Lena, and Preben agreed early on to go through shared group therapy with a professional psychotherapist from Aarhus University, Benedicte Madsen. The collaboration with Benedicte lasted several years and included the growing group of employees. Lone, Lena, and Preben all agree, retrospectively, that this shared experience may have made the difference in Dacapo's survival in the early years. Simply addressing the issues at hand and engaging in a dialogic organisational strategy, they managed to get through problems as they emerged. In addition, the trust they report having in each other must not be underestimated. The space of possibilities is based on the possibility of being accepted, even if different, of being a part of the group, even if not knowledgeable, of being allowed to experiment, even if mistakes are made.

This space of possibilities is for Lena something even more personal. She tells about her childhood in a little Danish village, where her father owned a grocery shop. Her life was characterised by a crowd of customers, villagers and family moving around the grocery store. In her narrative, this crowd would include people of all sorts, whom she would observe carefully and interact with. Later on, she would reflect retrospectively that her early engagement with Dacapo Theatre was a way to give life again to the village situation: "I try to build the village around me and the grocery shop" (Lena). We can see in this effort a way to establish a space that is special because meaningfully affective by means of relational exchanges.

In a different way than for Lone, Lena's work with theatre seems to have allowed her to establish an extraordinary space for storytelling, where people are close and interact closely with each other. According to Lone, any retrospective view on the early years at Dacapo Theatre ought to show the complexity of "what is actually going on when things are possible". In this statement, we see again her trust in the impact that theatre can have: to make things possible, to open up a space of possibilities.

Relational project

All the narratives in the interviews seem to characterise the space of possibilities as a relational space. According to Lena the early years up to the foundation of Dacapo and the ensemble's early years had two levels: the dramaturgical fictive level where actors take a character and play scenes, and the other level, that is relational. She says of the early performances in the factories: "The fiction was one level, the other was what happened amongst people". The making and experiencing of performances seems to have had a cohesive role, bringing together employees from different departments and organisational levels. About her early work with community theatre that she was involved with before Dacapo, she says: "People were coming from different realms. They would have not known each other if not for the theatre project" (Lena).

However, this seems to be only initiated by the performance, and then truly developed by means of dialogue. In this sense, forum theatre was the methodological frame that could allow for the optimal structure of dialogue against the background of embodied knowledge. Lone's own main interest was in establishing these dialogues in the companies:

> My passion was to create dialogue. That different people could talk together. Many of the actors from the community play in town were also participating in the theatre in the factory. The environment was solid: this is important when you start to do something strange. We worked in a big group that was very enthusiastic. The HR was very engaged. CEO Uffe Borgen backed up all the way and made premises available at the factory. We were allowed to go on tours around the country. We still got paid, but our revenue went to the factory. A unique settlement. The role of a gatekeeper [is fundamental] - if you have this influential person, then a lot of others are following. The legitimisation was easy.

In this quote, Lone explicitly reveals her passion about dialogical exchanges. Moreover, she draws a picture of entangled relationships, where community work would spill over into the factory work and the other way around. This seems to have been possible against the background of solid organisational environments that felt confident in trying experimental approaches and in concretely investing in new activities (Lone's personal communication, July 12, 2020).

This strength was due to the engagement of, amongst others, central individuals, whom Lone herself calls "gatekeepers". According to Csikszentmihalyi (1996), a gatekeeper is the individual who holds the power of definition for access or exclusion of new ideas into a given field. Sociocultural approaches to creativity explain the role of gatekeepers as withholding the capacity of individuals to fully unfold their creativity in actions that can become meaningful to others. When this happens, a single original idea can become appropriate to other individuals in a given field, to the extent of being able to change the rules of the game (domain).

In Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) understanding, these processes are recursive in time and based on constant negotiations of meaning. This is mentioned in Henry's interview, where he emphasises that the focus of Dacapo Theatre was in the way actors and audiences related to each other. The way in which the ensemble negotiated their relationships was a special kind of dialogue: "We were in these intense discussions" (Henry). These intense exchanges allowed the ensemble to evolve through the years and adapt to changing needs. Henry describes this endless adaptation as being due to a specific notion of working life, an understanding that the ensemble intuitively worked with during the early years and then investigated systematically when they became established.

Close partners in this inquiry were scholars and their networks of peers. The theoretical framework of understanding was complexity theories. For instance, Henry recalls one of the conferences in this network where the "event contributed to change something in the company, we developed a sense of what we were doing, very influenced by this way of thinking about social interaction". What is also interesting in this recurrent change and steady commitment to self-renewal and understanding is that the members of the ensemble actually kept on engaging themselves in learning endeavours.

Pedagogy as tool

Boal's theatre of the oppressed (2008) can be said to be inherently pedagogical, inasmuch it is inspired by Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed (2005). Like the Freirian utopia, Boal's theatre envisions actions of sociocultural change in the world, with the purpose of building a more equal, democratic, and just society. The choice of forum theatre and Lone's interest in Boal places Dacapo's early years in this genealogy. Therefore, the pedagogical aim was clear from the beginning.

However, the interviews reveal more levels of pedagogical exchanges than that delimited to ensemble/audience relationships. For instance, Lena suggests that the early years before founding Dacapo were characterised by models of self-pedagogy and peer-learning. Lena says about her work in the community plays that she was producing before Dacapo:

> Out of necessity, I learned to write and direct, as I was the only one who had some professional training in the theatre and no one else had, and we needed a playwright and director. I am very much self-made. I didn't know about [forum theatre]. Lone said, "don't worry, we will learn it, I know someone who can teach us".

Very clearly, Lena defines herself as "self-made", an autodidact. This is surprising, because she had, as she also says in the quote, some professional knowledge and training in acting and theatre. She also had previous experience on stage and held an academic degree in Dramaturgy from Aarhus University (personal communication, July 8, 2020). Still, she felt herself to be an autodidact. This has been seen before in artists' narratives (Chemi et al., 2015) and it is a statement that should be taken into consideration.

The actress experienced her work with the ensemble in the factories as formative in itself, and giving her the knowledge she needed for the task at hand. This is telling of a broad understanding of practical knowledge as coming from one's self. In her retrospective narrative, Lena sees herself learning -out of necessity- from the practical work. The other part of her education seems to be due to peer learning, as a variation of self-learning. Neither Lone nor Lena was acquainted with forum theatre, but this did not dampen Lone's curiosity and the drive to "find" the knowledge they needed in their network. They would eventually

learn as they went along, continuously renewing this learning journey accordingly to the needs of the ensemble.

Conclusions

Summing up, we can emphasise that Dacapo Theatre's work consisted -in its early years- in bridging differences. Their strategic organisational alliances built bridges between the founder(s) and supporters (individuals in the same network of acquaintances, people who were like-minded or very diverse in professional background, competences, or personality). They brought people together in their interventions: employees with their colleagues, employees with their leaders, employees with their imagined self (character on stage). Even their creative processes were based on the bridging of different creative competences: Lone and Lena's collaboration merged the former's visions, need, interest and knowledge, and the latter's practical knowledge, intuition, skills, and craft. Last but not least, they brought together unexpected things, such as theatre and factory, places that were (and are) estranged from each other in their purpose, culture, values, and routines.

Reconstructing a glimpse of this *building site* has been inspiring and thought-provoking. The process of collecting original narratives for the present study has been extremely rich in new insights about the qualities of negotiation and participation in the making of an organisational theatre company. The voices to which we hope to have given wider space in order to bring embodied and sensory qualities to already known information (Darsø, 2004; Friis, 2004; Larsen, 2005; Darsø, Meisiek & Boje, 2006) or in order to bring to light new knowledge. Lone, Lena, Preben and Henry did not just contribute to a scientific study, but they gave us part of their youth, their laughs about funny experiences, their worries about the huge challenges they encountered, their doubts and questions about a past entangled with their own emotions and sensemaking. We hope we have achieved our aim of including the reader in this conversation investigating what made the difference in Dacapo Theatre's early years, and how the protagonists defined the difference between *early years* and the establishment of the company.

What stands out for us is a sentence from Lone's interview, when she was explaining what they were doing in the factories: "we made a party". Dacapo's organisational theatre was about involving bodies that were used to factory work and leading them to dance, enjoy, reflect and talk to one another. It was about making a party out of life, not in the hedonistic-instrumental way, but rather in a meaningful-enquiring approach. Bringing pleasure to the factory was a radical move that still today can inspire change against neoliberal models of production. What Dacapo Theatre truly worked with in its origins was the exploration of "a new space of possibilities".

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