

Editorial

-- Patrick Campbell (MANCHESTER
METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY)

-- Adriana La Selva (GHENT UNIVERSITY)

This Special Edition of *Documenta* is dedicated to the Parliament of Practices (PoP), a platform for generative knowledge exchange, based on dialogical forms and devised tactics, initiated by Marije Nie and Adriana La Selva in 2020.¹ PoP grew out of the work of Cross Pollination, a nomadic laboratory for the dialogue in-between practices, founded by La Selva and Nie in 2017. Cross Pollination features a core group of seven practitioners from different artistic backgrounds, who have over the past six years developed a shared *studioness*, an ability to collaborate on performative research projects that elaborate upon the legacy of the twentieth century theater laboratory.² PoP expanded upon Cross Pollination's laboratory practices, transposing these to a broader social context, engaging a range of different artists and researchers in horizontal modes of knowledge exchange and creative dialogue.

PoP challenges disciplinary divisions and responds to the growing neoliberal trend for portfolio careers in the Arts by hosting and facilitating ongoing dialogues across different fields of knowledge, offering freelance artists and independent researchers a sense of shared community. Parliament Sessions have taken place in a range of different contexts and settings over the past three years, including online encounters, theater festivals, academic symposia and community-based projects across Europe and Latin America. These sessions provide opportunity and space for sharing and exchange based on personal and professional practices and artistic genealogies. Discursive and dialogical methodologies have emerged that seek to articulate the intangible knowledge of embodied praxis; artists inevitably share this tacit know-how to a certain degree, but often struggle to speak about it or put it into words. By balancing speech and action, discourse and collective creative experiences, PoP sessions establish dialogues between participants, enabling them

to speak *about* their practices *through* their practices. Far from a cerebral, hermeneutic process, this experience is frequently joyful and empowering, contributing on a micropolitical level towards practices of citizenship and democracy, offering tools for a more creative and sustainable way of being and becoming together.³

PoP is grounded upon our professional experiences of the theater laboratory, a space in which practical know-how and discursive forms of knowledge exchange sit side-by-side. It is also framed by a number of key concepts generated within the fields of philosophy, the philosophy of science and critical theory. In terms of dialogue we are inevitably inspired by the work of David Bohm (1996), particularly his focus on *active listening*, although we reconfigure his approach from our background in the (performing) arts. Latour's notion of a Parliament of Things was inspirational in terms of giving voice to our practices as 'quasi-objects': "the object-discourse-nature-society whose new properties astound us all and whose network extends from my refrigerator to the Antarctic by way of chemistry, law, the State, the economy, and satellites" (1993, 142). Quasi-objects manifest through connectivity, generating networks, collectives, and communities: this has been our experience of the generative role that practices play within the dialogical context of PoP. Isabelle Stengers' notion of an *ecology of practices* (2013), is also key to the way in which we think of our artistic *techné* as a *tool* for thinking and as a means of approaching others in a way that foregrounds the individual's *professional culture*. Intersubjective exchange is mediated by the divergent borders and guiding principles of each participant's practice, enabling us to:

... make present what causes practitioners to think and feel and act [...] it is a problem which may produce also an experimental togetherness among practices, a dynamics of pragmatic learning of what works and how. This is the kind of active, fostering 'milieu' that practices need in order to be able to answer challenges and experiment changes, that is to unfold their own force. This is a social technology any diplomatic practice demands and depends upon (195).

Through our dialogical methodologies, we exercise our practices as *tactics*. We understand the term 'tactic,' following Michel De Certeau (1988), as a subversive physical thinking often diametrically opposed to the 'strategies' employed by institutions to circumscribe

relationships and daily behaviour. Thus, when employed tactically, our practices can have a political currency, reconfiguring human relationships in ways that are more consciously creative and democratic. A key praxical framework for us is the concept of 'bodies of knowledges': the crafted constellations of embodied memory and *techné* unique to each individual body, honed within the context of a given *praxical territory*. The term praxical territory denotes "... the discipline-specific knowledge we each carry and its imbrication with our wider, lived subjective experience" (Nie et al., 2021). This fusion of craft and life opens up a 'space and place' that reverberates with legacy and landscapes of mutual belongings.

In many ways, this Special Edition acts as a discursive iteration of PoP: articles have, for the most part, been written dialogically or focus on the ways in which (performative) dialogue generates novel forms of knowledge. Whilst professionals from a variety of different specialist fields have contributed to the publication, we hope that connections can be made across texts. In this way, the curatorial process has been akin to a *Spatial Fabulation*, a Cross Pollination tactic that was developed out of a deconstructive embrace with Donna Haraway's *oeuvre* (2016).

Our spatial fabulations draw from visual arts practices such as collage, installation, and media design to compose a reflection-in-movement about a collective Session. They gather traces from the work that has taken place – texts, images, video, sound – and place them in a constellation literally connected by strings, creating a tied labyrinth of companionships. The practitioners, but also external visitors, are invited to thread their way through, making a pathway of their own. This interaction with the constellation of threaded material awakens memories, responses and invites action on reflection and meaning-making. In this way, no one is in charge of defining what happened, and the ephemeral, the invisible and the disregarded is still able to resonate inside (La Selva, Campbell, Nie, Maciel 2021, 12).

Thus, we envisage that, taken as a whole, the journal can also form a dialogical assemblage with the reader, an *entanglement* to paraphrase Barad (2007). We invite you to *thread your way through* the

gathered articles, reflecting on the traces of conversations, creative processes and investigative research that populate the coming pages. Through this labyrinthine process, an epistemic web should emerge, one grounded on the pragmatic know-how of the professional artist and (practitioner)-researcher and their capacity to collaboratively generate knowledge and build communities of practice.

The first section of this edition – *Dialogues* –, engages practitioners and researchers connected to the Parliament of Practices platform in conversation with researchers and artists they have built a relation with throughout their careers. It sketches out the ways in which the genealogies of the authors collide as they articulate a certain ecology that emerge in-between their practices. The second section- *On Dialogues*- presents and discusses several methodologies built through dialogical creative and interdisciplinary forms. Through the curation of these articles, we suggest that a liminal space exists on the edges of the cognitive patterns underscoring such methodologies that allows for emergent potentialities to manifest, unveiling inter-epistemic insights within performance cultures.

The first Dialogue, entitled '*Transforming the Past into Presence in Dialogue with Eugenio Barba and Julia Varley*', is based on a conversation that **Patrick Campbell** and **Adriana La Selva** held with **Eugenio Barba**, Artistic Director of renowned theater laboratory Odin Teatret, and Odin actress **Julia Varley**. The two artists reflect on the recently inaugurated Fondazione Barba Varley, an NGO founded to give voice to the 'nameless': theater groups and independent artists working silently and often anonymously at the borders between theater and activism across the globe. The issue of dialogue is explored in terms of communication and relationality, with a focus on the tacit awareness – the bodies of knowledges - of the theater laboratory practitioner. A number of new tactics developed by Barba and Varley are discussed, such as *The Journal of Theater Anthropology*, ISTA: New Generation and Living Archive: Floating Islands. Having recently left their long-term base at Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium in Holstebro, Denmark, Barba and Varley reflect on a new phase in their artistic careers in relation to issues of legacy and transmission.

"In the Studio" with William Kentridge features a dialogical interview between contemporary multimedia and performance artist **William Kentridge** and scholar **Vera Mihailovich-Dickman**. The pair's long-

term complicity (they were students together in South Africa and Paris) allows for a warm repartee, predicated on a performative set of visual prompts, employed by Mihailovich-Dickman as a dialogical tactic to elicit affective responses from Kentridge to questions posed. Kentridge extemporizes on mark-making, the notion of Johannesburg as expanded studio and his work with the center for the Less Good Idea. They both reflect on their experiences of virtual processes during the pandemic period, with a focus on Kentridge's films about life in the studio and Mihailovich-Dickman's experiences with *Embracing the Unknown*, a project that emerged out of the online meetings of the Parliament of Practices from 2020-2021. Concluding the article, Mihailovich-Dickman explores Kentridge's Chamber opera *Waiting for the Sibyll* (2019) in relation to issues of fate, serendipity and the power of border-crossing collaborative creation.

In *'Dialogue and Repertoire: The Ever-Changing Nature of Walking and Talking Together'*, Performance Studies scholar **Diana Taylor**, founding director of the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, engages in a dialogical exchange with dancer, performer and practitioner-researcher **Andrea Maciel**. The concept of dialogue is explored in relation to the activities of the Hemispheric Institute and Taylor's theorising in her published body of work. The entangled relationship between the archive and the repertoire is explored in light of the potentiality of performance and practice-research to challenge the ontological fixity of the written word through repetition and reformulation. A genealogical link is traced between the so-called War on Terror, officially articulated as a (counter) attack on external state enemies, and the more recent attempted *coup d'états* enacted by representatives of the far-right in both the USA and Brazil, which have turned this violence inwards, inflicting it upon the nation-state itself. The segregating tendencies of contemporary identity politics are touched upon, in contrast to the plurality and multiple subjectivities cultivated by the Hemispheric Institute's cultural activities. An increasing process of intersubjective rigidity and intolerance is articulated as an elimination of symbolic processes of collective dialogue and negotiation based on shared empathy, which flies in the face of performance as an act of imaginative questioning and world-making. The links between neoliberalism and trauma are expanded upon and *walking and talking together* emerges as a potential dialogical model for shared artistry and activism, predicated upon interrelationality, collective respect and mutuality.

Vinicius Torres Machado, Lucas Breda, Verônica Lo Turco Gentilin, Carmen Lopes and Dentinho engage in a fascinating dialogue regarding the work of Cia Mungunzá de Teatro and the group's activist partners in *'Shedding light on the Light District: artistic processes in and around the Teatro de Contêiner'*. In 2016, Cia Mungunzá set up Teatro do Contêiner, a makeshift theatrical space fashioned out of a container, erected on public land without state support in Bairro da Luz, one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in the center of Sao Paulo, where large numbers of impoverished and addicted people live rough on the streets. Machado's own difficulties in developing relational artistic projects in the area serve as a starting point for the conversation, as he generously gives space to members of Cia Mungunzá and project stakeholders to reflect on the challenges and creative discoveries uncovered over the course of the project's lifetime. A braided vision of relational arts fusing theatricality, activism and radical care emerges, giving voice to one of the most dynamic dialogical community arts projects to emerge in Brazil over recent years.

'Like the space in-between Beats: A Dialogue on Dialogues' closes the first section. It is a written transcript of a performative dialogical flow between **Marije Nie** of Cross Pollination/PoP and **Lotte van den Berg** of Building Conversation, a Dialogical Art project. The two artists' discourse traces the space in-between practices, ethos and ideas, following impulses and allowing for an organic flow of communication to occur. Issues pertaining to role-fluidity, reciprocity, listening, participation and actualization emerge in relation to the concept of 'conversation as action'. Rather than a debate grounded on the upholding of arguments, Nie and Berg listen to one another and respond in the moment, reflecting on their artistic processes and projects. The text perhaps most clearly reflects the ebbing and flowing of a discursive encounter, one that echoes the specific praxical territories of theater making and performance, with its focus on centering, embodiment and improvisation.

The first article on dialogue - *Talking to Myself: a Dialogue between Practice and Performance* by **Julia Pond** - offers a ludic exploration of the entwined ontic implications of performance and practice in relation to contemporary work culture, through a dialogical exchange between the author (Julia) and her performative persona (Julia Pond, CEO of the fictional company and performance installation BRED).

Once confined to the private sphere or to the field of practice as daily personal activity, questions of subjectivity, individuality and affect are unpacked in relation to the repetitive performativity of today's mediatised, corporatized workplace. The ways in which the latter penetrates muscular memory, impacting and imprinting upon intimate experiences such as motherhood, is explored through this playful pastiche of the Platonic dialogue. Interestingly, the binary divide between self and persona begins to blur as the subject of artistic practice is broached: the installation-as-artwork allows for processes of 'mixing', 'fermentation' and 'rising', permitting a third, dialectical plane - artistic authorship - to emerge beyond corporate performativity and the practices of daily life. It is here that the author's agency appears, in the description of her performance, which rearticulates the tropes of digital capitalism in a slippery, critical fashion.

Leonie Persyn's *'Unfolding a Series of Suggestions: A Reflection on a Publication Practice Permeated by Dialogue'* looks at *unfolding* as a tactic for dialogical knowledge exchange and generation within the field of publishing. The notion of the *researcher-as-dramaturg* emerges out of Persyn's own practice, indicating the ways in which she has begun to creatively explore and evaluate the spaces in-between her research, her collaborative creative projects and their reception, particularly in print. The publication *A Series of Suggestions* (2022) serves as case study, reflecting upon Persyn's collaborations as a dramaturg with three contemporary artists - Polish-Belgian choreographer Kinga Jaczewska, Dutch in situ artist Rita Hoofwijk and Belgian theater maker David Weber-Krebs. The 'book' consists of a box containing two postcards and five A3 posters folded into a Mini-Zine, which are all accessed through acts of unpacking and unfolding. The reader's journey - which fuses tactile experience and discursive exegesis - serves as an analogy for the complex ways in which artistic practice, its research and dissemination consist of constantly folding relationships between time, space and movement, processes that allow for both sense-making and imagination to flourish.

'Slow Togethering' as a Tool for Dialogic Development amongst Dance Dramaturgs' by **Miranda Laurence and Sara Živković Kranjc** explores dance dramaturgy as both a dialogical process and practice. The term 'slow togethering' is coined as a means of expressing

dialogue over time, a process of becoming that is shared, allowing for praxical insights to emerge. The novel format of the article aims to performatively disrupt the conventions of logical, sequential thinking, whilst reflecting the overlapping, braided ways in which dramaturgical tactics and dialogical exchanges generate collective knowledge. The writing itself is framed as practice-research; the two lines of narrative were generated following clearly defined protocols, and the resulting texts were then thoughtfully formatted on the page in relation to one another. Thus, the article represents a discursive iteration of slow togethering, one that opens up a 'third space' for the reader, allowing them to creatively engage and interact with the text, both as 'choreographic' visual score and as discursive exegesis articulated through the printed word.

'The Politics of Everyday Life in the Performer's Experience: Practices of Engagement in Teatro do Vestido' by **Gustavo Vicente** explores the lasting impact that dialogical political engagement as creative process can have on the life and practice of theater artists. Reflecting on his experiences as a collaborator with Lisbon-based company Teatro do Vestido on the performance *Juventude Inquieta (Restless Youth)*, part of a larger project entitled *Labor (Labour)*, Vicente sketches out a 'choreography of engagement', one in which field research and documentary theater approaches offer a working methodology that transcends theatrical production as *poiesis*, impacting makers on a deeply personal, affective level. Dialogical processes allow for the scenic articulation of collective trauma - such as the violence inflicted on the Portuguese population by the Salazar regime - whilst interpersonal encounters during research and development processes serve as a potential *event* for the actor, in Badiou's sense of the term (2013), opening up enduring affective territories that expand the political potential and efficacy of theater.

The dialogue between architecture and choreographic practices is explored in **Elias D'hollander's** *'Articulating Architecture: A Speculation with the Joint of Choreography and Architecture in Radouan Mriziga's 55 and the Palais de la Dynastie (Brussels, Belgium)'*. Examining from a decolonial perspective the ways in which Mriziga's choreography 55 (2014) disrupted the Palais de la Dynastie, constructed for the Brussels World expo in 1958, D'hollander traces the *joints* linking the two together in a deconstructive performative embrace. Drawing on post-structural thinking the author articulates the efficacy of

Mriziga's work, which speculatively transfigures the monumental nature of the Palais by establishing a particular ecology of practices, one that foregrounds the fleshy joints of Mriziga's dancer's physique and the sacred geometry he maps out in chalk on the reception hall's floor, a design that harks back to Maghreb architecture.

Finally, in *'Motherhood as Resistance in the Bio-Performance Analfabeta: an Interdisciplinary Dialogue between Biology and Performance'*, **Paulina Bronfman and Alejandra Zúñiga-Feest** reflect on a performative response to a collaborative creative process with Adriana La Selva of Cross Pollination/Parliament of Practices, developed at The Third Conference of the Nucleus of Artistic Research (NIA) of In/Inter/Disciplinary Laboratories hosted by the Faculty of Art of The Pontificia University of Chile (LAB IID) in 2022. The potential for dialogical collaboration between the arts and the sciences is explored, and the bio-performance enables an eruption of the personal, as Bronfman reflects on migration, motherhood and 'becoming illiterate', a process framed by biologist Zúñiga-Feest's research into the resistance and resilience of plants growing on volcanic substrates in the Andean region of Southern Chile. This interdisciplinary encounter is explored as a potential model for border-crossing, generative processes of knowledge exchange and dissemination that fuse and blur (the scientific) method with artistic tactics and subjective experience, indicating a potentially fertile ecology in-between distinct practices and epistemes.

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Notes

- 1 Marije Nie is a professional tap dancer, musician, performer, teacher and artistic researcher, working internationally for more than 25 years. Sharing knowledge between artistic disciplines, with communities and with professionals outside the arts is a main topic in her work. Nie was a long-term artist-in-residence at Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium (DK), a member of artist-driven concert space Splendor (NL) and co-founder of Cross Pollination and The Parliament of Practices. Adriana La Selva is a fellow FWO researcher, working on a Ph.D. at S:PAM (Studies in Performance and Media) – in association with the IPEM (Institute for Psychoacoustics and electronic Music) – at Ghent University, where she is investigating what it means to practice an archive, by addressing the transmission of embodied practices through virtual media. She is a member of theater group The Bridge of Winds and co-founder of Cross Pollination.
- 2 Other core members of Cross Pollination include Andrea Maciel (Brazil); Alex Boyd (UK); Gonzalo Alarcón (Chile); Patrick Campbell (UK) and Jonas de Rave (Belgium).
- 3 For more info on the Parliament of Practices, please refer to La Selva, et al. "Parliament of Practices: No-Topian Tactics for Praxical Dialogue.", 2020.