

STRINGS - A LOGBOOK

THE PROCESS OF MAKING A
PERFORMANCE

ONE TIMELINE

MULTIPLE NARRATIVES

Exposition text

January 22nd, 2020

CHOICE OF AGENT – FIRST ENCOUNTER

I met my colleagues in Agenda 2030 Graduate School for the first time at a retreat in Höör. I had individual encounters with most of them through speed-dates, during group discussions, coffee breaks, at dinner, in the spa or at the breakfast table. Such a dynamic group of dedicated professionals, researchers and human beings with different backgrounds and strong motivation to create changes in the world. I thought, wow, this gathering of people is so unique, the stories and the perspectives, the knowledge and personal commitment. They made a strong impact on me, and I

was affected by the strength and potential of the collective. Still there was a sense of tenderness and vulnerability as most of us had just started our research projects. If I just could capture this in a performance. I mentioned to the group that I had an interest in making a piece with them. I am determined to do work with them as a part of my research. So this is where that journey begins.

September 10th, 2020

REACHING OUT

Today the Graduate School finally met again in real life after six months of digital communications. The theme of our meeting was interdisciplinarity. I came straight from making *Island*, my second work within my project, so I told them about my experience. I explained how the audience met the work, and that my intentions with the work was creating an understanding about what it means to belong, through a personal but performative experience. I mentioned my wish to create a work with the Graduate School and asked if they would consider participating. There was a positive atmosphere at the meeting. People are tired of Covid and are eager to do something together. They have different ideas about what it means to participate, and I tried to explain it did not mean "acting" as in "pretending," but performing, as in performing tasks in a staged setting. The discussion was brief but people were gradually starting to commit to the idea.

CREATING A CONTEXT

November 2nd, 2020

Hi Esa,

I had a really good talk with Una Chauduri. She proposes a four-hour workshop, together with artist Marina Zurkow, where they introduce a game of creating worlds. "Investing in Futures" is a working title for this project where they work with

imagination and collaboration.

The idea is super interesting and playful. She will send a proposal for this in the next days. It is a project that they are developing together. Marina is a prominent New York based, visual artist working with environmental issues.

They will be able to find time during the research week in April between 1pm - 5pm CET.

They would start giving a lecture and an introduction to their previous projects, like Dear Climate, and talk about the arts in the Anthropocene and the role arts have in the imminent crises.

I told her that we could offer a minimum of 1200 dollars (around 10.000 SEK), but I propose that we double the fee since they are two.

what do you say about the fee...can we offer more since they will be two of them?

best Steinunn

February 24th, 2021

"Investing in Futures: Speculative Cosmologies"

a workshop by Una Chaudhuri, Marina Zurkow and Sarah Rothberg

You are receiving this exclusive invitation to participate, since you are a member of Agenda 2030 Graduate School or FoU at the Theatre Academy in Malmö.

There are a limited number of attendees so please sign up only if you can attend.

To sign up for this workshop, please send an e-mail marked UNA to jan.michelsen@thm.lu.se

Where: online (zoom)

When: April 15, 2021

Time: 2-6 pm

"Investing in Futures: Speculative Cosmologies" is one version of a world-building game created by Marina Zurkow and Sarah Rothberg; the guest collaborator for this

version is Una Chaudhuri, with a focus on the environment and the impact of reconfiguring our highly interpersonal relation with it.

The game unfolds over a structured four-hour period in which small groups of participants engage in imagining, brainstorming, and specifying new worlds in response to a series of prompts and constraints. A key element of the world-building process is the creation of material culture artifacts or practices (in a vast range of possible genres) that capture and convey the alternative cosmologies by which humans might relate to the other forms of life on--and to living differently on--our planet."

CREATING A CONNECTION

April 16th, 2021

Fri 16/04/2021 08:33

To:

Una Chaudhuri

Jan Michelsen

Cc:

Sarah Rothberg

marina zurkow

Dear all,

what a delight to be with you yesterday. I have already got positive feedback from so many of the participants. Thank you so much, also you Jan for facilitating the whole thing. Personally this was a valuable moment for me, gathering the research school and my home department together in something so meaningful and fun. It was inspiring and gave me ideas and spirits for the future in life and my arts practice. Thanks for sharing the material with us, much appreciated.

have a wonderful spring (heart)

Till next time...

Steinunn

PRESENTING THE WORK TO THE AGENTS

Sat 12/06/2021, 11:40

Hi all,

in the fika on Monday I would like to introduce my ideas for the performance that I am planning for the spring (May 2022 - during sustainability week) with the participation of you guys. I will explain the concept and go through the rough plan for the project. I have not a title for the work yet and would like to have a brainstorm with you about a title for the project.

I am looking forward to share my ideas with you and start the collaboration - I hope that you will be able to attend.

Until then, enjoy the weekend

best Steinunn

Ps.attached is the outline of the project

PRESENTING THE WORK TO THE AGENTS

The Performance outline

Title: School for Transformation (preliminary title)

Place: Lund University, different departments

Time: Part I: April 2022 Part II: May 2022

Context: Sustainability Week

Producer: Inter Arts Center <https://www.iac.lu.se>

Project: The School for Transformation. Encounters with the fellows of Agenda 2030 research school – May 2022 produced by Inter Arts Centre. Site specific encounters in two parts.

Part 1: The visit. Series of one-on-one performances in different departments of University of Lund. Researchers invite guests to their work space. A dialogue about what motivates you to do what you do. Exchange of stories. Semi staged meeting with elements of ritual.

Part 2: The gathering. An immersive gathering at a ceremonial location in an old building of Lund University. A staged action with elements of ritual. Series of encounters. Equal numbers of hosts and guests.

Preliminary schedule:

August/September 2021

Steinunn visits every member of the Agenda 2030 research school at their workplace to talk about what motivates them for their work. In the meeting we talk about the formalities, expectations and type of commitment.

March 2022: 2- 4 sessions with the whole group at Inter Arts Centre. Rehearsals for the gathering event.

March/April 2022: Script for visit and gathering event ready.

April 2022: Part I.

May 2022: Part II. Gathering event performed 2 – 4 times during sustainability week.

3rd May in Kapelsalen at Odeum and in 5-6th May at IAC, Red Room.

Committing to the work can be different: You can be a private host in Part I.

You can participate in Part II in one or more gathering events. You can both be a private host and participate in the big event.

VISITING THE AGENTS AND INVITING THEM TO PARTICIPATE

June 18th, 2021

I had planned to introduce my project at an informal zoom meeting last Wednesday but too few attended so I postponed it. The office invited me to introduce the project today at the monthly zoom meeting of the graduate school.

So today I went through the practical details of what it means to participate.

I had sent out an outline and a short description of the project to everyone to read before we met. I stressed that there are different ways of participation and that I really would like as many as possible to join.

There was a general feeling of positivity and people showed an interest to participate but I have a feeling that they have no idea of what I am asking for or what the project is about.

As it were, there was no way that I could have a brainstorm with them about the title. There is still plenty of time to prepare people mentally for the participation and I will stick to the working title *School For Transformation* until the work progresses.

Note to self: One tiny step at a time.

November 2nd, 2021

I use every opportunity to talk about the work informally with my peers from the graduate school. I have made a contract with Inter Arts Center about Part II performance and together with Christian Skovberg am trying to find a performance space in Lund.

I am in my first stages of production and I have created an extensive project plan for the work, spreading the workload on to six months from December 2021 to May 2022.

Note to self: This is not the first time you are doing this. Trust in your knowledge and your experience.

DEFINE THE TOPIC

Sun 05/12/2021, 13:39

Dear colleagues,

I am really looking forward to our Christmas party on Tuesday 7th December at IAC, first act at 15:00 and second act at 18:00.

As a First Act, I invite you to a screening of the film Story Telling for Earthly Survival by Fabrizio Terranova. The film is a real gem and if you are not a Donna Haraway fan like myself, you might become one after seeing it.

The screening takes place in the black studio at IAC, Bergsgatan 29, 4th floor. The film takes about one hour and twenty minutes.

After the film I will talk about our prospect work. I have attached an outline draft for the project.

... there will be mingle before the screening and in between acts :)

best Steinunn

December 7th, 2021

From my initial encounter with my fellow researchers, I have been fascinated by what drives us to do what we do. What is the driving force of change? While getting to know them a bit better, the interest deepens. Every single one of the members of the Graduate school has their personal reason for doing what they are doing, there is a background story.

To these stories, I want to pay attention.

I have my own reasons for making work and there are things that inspire me.

I have been seeking ways to share with them my context and introduce them to the mindset of artists, like when I invited Una and Marina to do the workshop with us. To give them an experience of how arts can tackle big questions.

This time I decided to invite them for a private screening of a film by Fabrizio Terranova with Donna Haraway, *Storytelling for Earthly Survival*. The film is an artistic encounter with a thinker.

I invited my colleagues to come and watch the film with me at the Inter Arts Centre and afterwards I shared with the group what touched me in the film and in Donna Haraway's worldview and thinking. Then I went on to talk about our project and opened up for a discussion.

It felt like a meaningful encounter. The people that were there opened up and we had an exchange that created a new kind of bond. We engaged on a more personal level, revealing a more tender side to ourselves. It felt like a right step towards a stronger commitment to the work.

December 8th, 2021

Dear Steinunn,

I just wanted to write to you quickly to thank you for yesterday. It was a very profound experience for me to get a glimpse into your world. To say that I thoroughly enjoyed the movie as well as your explanation of your project is a vast understatement. Instead, I feel like I got to catch sight of an alternative dimension to reality that I am otherwise not aware of. It was a very deep and moving experience for me that inspired thoughts and ideas that I cannot, now that the experience is over, adequately capture again. Only the memory is left, and I am so grateful for it even if it is so much smaller than the experience itself.

So, thank you. Yesterday evening made my life richer.

All the best,

T

Fri 17/12/2021, 13:45

*Hi all, in April and May we will present our Performance called **STRINGS***

The project has different phases.

***1st Phase -January/February:** Steinunn has personal meeting with all members of Agenda 2030. **Recording of video** to be used in connection with the performance. I will send out a booking system for the meetings. I would like to meet you at your working place if possible.*

***2nd Phase - March. Rehearsals for the One on One performance** at IAC and individually.*

***3rd Phase - April. Rehearsals for the big gathering event** at IAC. Dates will be announce in Jan.*

***4th Phase - April. One on One performances** run throughout April (maybe also some in May)*

***5th Phase - STRINGS performed** in Kappelsalen at Odeon in Lund **May 3rd** and **May 7th** in IAC.*

***6th Phase** - spring and autumn 2022. Interviews with participants about the experience.*

*I ask you to reserve the **3rd and the 7th May 2022**- whole day if possible. More dates will follow in January.*

If you are abroad in the period January - March we can meet online.

have a lovely Christmas

Steinunn

ps. I attached an outline of the project

DEFINE THE MEDIATION FORMAT

December 17th, 2021

I am really looking forward to embark on the *Strings* journey.

As the first phase of the actual creation process, I have organised a series of encounters with my colleagues in Agenda 2030 Graduate School, at their workplace. As a part of the group, I am really excited to meet them in their home department, also after Covid (well, it is not over yet...) it's going to be nice to meet everyone in the flesh.

We will be talking about the driving force of their research, and I have invited them to share with me their quality moments and things they love and live for.

I am anticipating light and positive atmosphere, laughter, rising sun and uplifting spirits. The spring is a magical time, a lot of transformation going on and Lund University is an enchanted place during this time of year. It is going to be nice.

I have found a perfect performance place for *Strings Part II*, Odeum, one of the oldest buildings of the University, a beautiful setting for *The Hub* and then we will also have performances at Inter Arts Centre in Malmö.

The first interviews are set in mid January, the one-on-one performative encounters are kicking off in April and *the Hub* in May, in six months.

GATHERING MATERIAL

Tue 04/01, 16:36

Hi all,

you should all have received an invitation from doodle to book a time for an interview with me, and here is another doodle link to the performance date poll.

The poll is checking your availability for the Performances May 3rd and May 7th at 16:00, 18:00 and 20:00. Each performance is max 40 minutes. I have blocked the

whole day as a precaution and put in three performances as a maximum. The number of performances and the number of hours are subject to change. There will be a rehearsal in the morning and performances in the afternoon.

Note: It is OK if you can only attend in the afternoon these days.

<https://doodle.com/meeting/>

best Steinunn

10 January 2022 17:48:16

I am looking forward to our meeting on Wednesday at 10AM.

The chat will take less than two hours.

As a preparation - please read through these questions.

- * what motivates you to do what you do?*
- * what human/non human persons inspire you - how?*
- * what human/non human persons support you - how?*
- * what activities do you love to do in your work/research why?*
- * what are the everyday quality moments in your work/at the office/lab?*
- * What are your daily rituals?*
- * Do you remember any stories from your childhood that relate to your choice of profession?*

The interview will be organic and easy going.

With your permission I will audio record the session for the purpose of creating a script for the performance.

We will film your short answers to these questions:

How would you describe your research to a child?

Can you think of 3 objects that you cannot live without? (can you bring them to the interview?)

Can you think of 3 everyday pleasures?

Can you think of 3 places you have a deep connection to?

Can you think of 3 things you love to do?

In addition: Can you make a list of up to 10 random things that you love/enjoy? (can be anything, a colour, something in nature, activities, songs, characters, fiction or real...)

The video recordings will only be used in the performance with your permission.

best Steinunn

January 12th, 2022

Now I have started with my individual encounters. Today's interview went well. I was drawn into the life, thoughts and reflections of L. What generosity and openness.

This is so exciting. I feel privileged.

I was chaotic and realised that I need to create a setup routine for these interviews. I want to come across as reliable.

Thu 10/02, 07:42

hi A,

I am really sorry to have to postpone our chat today. I have fallen ill with a cough and fever.

There are more time slots in a couple of weeks. Hopefully you can make it then.

best Steinunn

February 10th, 2022

Life is taking over. Covid is affecting the flow of things. I planned the interviews quite tight for two weeks, but people are ill, have symptoms or someone in their close circles is hit by the pandemic. This will take longer time than anticipated. Now I am ill, and I must postpone four interviews at least.

We all have our complicated schedules, priorities and on top of that is the pandemic, like a looming monster.

Still, I am so thankful for the openness of my colleagues. We are planning one-to-one performances with strangers in their private workspaces in a couple of months and they all seem happy about that despite the precarious Covid situation

Monday 14 February 2022 11:52

Hi T

I had a positive covid test on my arrival to Iceland on Friday (I am here for 10 days).

I only got the result yesterday evening. I had a cold last week and had a home test that was negative.

You were the last person I interviewed before I felt ill. I cancelled all my interviews for the week, after you.

Now I am feeling well and on Thursday I will get out of isolation.

I just wanted to let you know.

best wishes

Steinunn

March 5th, 2022

I was looking so much forward to the encounters with my peers. I had anticipated lightness and flow. What I am experiencing is turning out to be something different.

Surely my colleagues are open, generous, and positive about the whole thing, but it dawned on me that I am the only professional theatre artist working with 24 everyday experts individually. I must answer their questions, motivate them to participate, explain to them my intentions and educate them about participatory

performance, collect the material, process their personal stories, and create the dramaturgy for two performances, part I and part II. These tasks at once in a precarious situation of the research is turning out to be too much for me to handle on my own. I am exhausting my own energy, and my motivation is dwindling. This is not sustainable.

The interview was a very useful experience to think reflexively.

The interview. It was very therapeutic

Very rewarding, almost like a meditation session or at least something in a slow enough pace and reflective mode of thinking which offers opportunities to think about broader questions related to work, self, colleagues, the university, research. This is very rare in the hectic academic life, as I have perceived it so far and through colleagues.

It is always challenging to connect with others about who you are, I believe. Steinunn and I talked in a way that made me feel vulnerable and safe at the same time, a good type of vulnerable although it can be challenging.

It made me think more consciously about my motivations for doing research and how I'm connected to the people and objects that surround me. It triggered me to think about these questions that I found surprisingly challenging.

I got the spotlight on my own life and experiences through Steinunn's many questions and our dialogue.

That it was slow, reflective, and based on mutual trust and respect.

March 14th, 2022

I feel somewhere between a salesperson and a journalist. First, I make an effort of selling my idea for the performance, especially how easy it is for my colleagues to participate, they should know that "there is no workload, just to turn up on the date of public encounters and for Part II, *The Hub* and I promise good fun".

My fellows do not need much persuasion, most of them have already made the decision to commit, but still I feel obliged to explain in detail to each participant the implications of participating and to reassure them that it will not take too much time from their own research.

Why am I downplaying their responsibility and that it does not take any effort to participate?

They should not want to participate because it is easy but because it is meaningful. Things that are meaningful, usually are demanding in some way or another.

This project is challenging for all of them, I should acknowledge that more.

They are already taking some of the burden and I truly feel their trust in me and faith in the project.

Logistically it is challenging to manage all the different aspects of the work, it is a piece of engineering, and everything goes into the equation. You need to calculate how everything moves and behaves and how it might affect the experience.

From experience, I know how challenging it is to work with everyday experts, to mobilize a big participatory piece without ever being able to rehearse anything. It makes no sense rehearsing since everything that happens in the performance is for real, so a test run is as much for real as a public performance.

In fact you can only plan it and then do it for real, there is nothing in between.

Note to self: I am dealing with real experiences all the time. There are no rehearsals. The performance has already started and it will never end.

EXPLORING THE TOPIC

March 21st, 2022

In my work the building blocks are experiences, real environments and living beings, human and more-than-human.

Now these experiences have become a heavy burden and I ask myself, why?

This is the part that I had been looking forward to.

What is making this part so draining?

I think the answer is that I have designed a method where the 'host – artist' encounter is an interview, rather than an exchange.

I invite them to share with me stories from their childhood and ask questions about their research, their inspirations and motivations, questions that would touch their core values and sense of identity. This part is deeply profound and touches me to the core. I feel strong empathy towards my interlocutors, and the exchange becomes highly existential. Rather than sharing back my story and motivations, I put myself in the position of the listener, and I feel a responsibility for what they share with me. Deep listening takes a lot of concentration and being the keeper of someone else's truth is heavy. I wonder how different my experience would have been if I would have designed the encounter as a dialogue and I would have shared my perspectives with them.

In this model, I have put myself in the role of the servant, taking up no space, listening to the needs of my interlocutors while suppressing my own needs.

What happens during these interviews is truly profound. My colleagues compare the interview with psychoanalyses or a profound personal opening. I understand that the method I have created has this potential, I have witnessed it, but it leaves me drained. Sometimes I have two sessions a day, and it leaves me completely exhausted emotionally and physically. This came as a surprise to me. I wanted the encounters to be light and effortless, not only for them but also for me.

I feel like I leave each interview with a whole life on my shoulders.

Life is never light – it can be inspiring but never light.

Should I doubt this statement?

Could life be light?

Note to self: Do I always need to go so deep?

CREATING A DRAMATURGY/STRUCTURE

March 28th, 2022

Today I had a very constructive session with Sofie Lebech. Last week I shared with her my anxiety about being alone and needing a partner, so she offered her help.

She gave me feedback on the manuscript for the personal encounters, *We are all Researchers*, and then went with me to Lund to check out the performance space for the gathering part, *The Hub*.

We went to Odeum in Lund and after one hour of dialogue, I had a preliminary structure in place.

This is what collaboration does for me. It makes me see straight.

I have been thinking and processing for some months, having ideas, processing interviews, and trying to digest my impressions in a script. An afternoon with a sharp professional can do wonders.

I feel like I have the structure now - this was a breakthrough.

Note to self: I will never work without a creative partner again.

Tue 29/03, 15:48

M and J,

you will be partners on the 11th of April.

Attached is a draft of the manuscript, a prep list and soon I will send you individually a prompt on how to fit in details from the interviews into the format of the encounter.

The tasks and the questions are open for interpretation on purpose and are meant to start a dialogue rather than lead to certain answers. I hope you find them interesting.

There are four slots available to book on the day. We have no idea of how many people want to come...there is a chance that no one books for that particular day.

In case of full booking, I suggest that we start with M 2PM and 3PM and J at 4PM and 5PM. This might be negotiated depending on the booking situation. I hope it is OK with you.

The booking system is ready and the PR machine has been ignited.

There is now info on Inter Arts Centre homepage:

<https://www.iac.lu.se/projects/strings/>

Do not hesitate to mail or call me on the phone if you have any questions or concerns.

Best Steinunn

INVITING THE PUBLIC PART I

April 1st, 2022

The anxiety I am feeling is partly a consequence of the "How Little is Enough?" approach.

I have reduced the production and concentrated the work so much that what is left is space for the magic to happen. But magic does not happen without spells, and they demand witchcraft and a lot of mental strength. The craft and the mental strength can never be taken out of the process.

What is the craft of making magic in my work?

There is the observing, the deep listening, thinking about, planning, communicating, processing, developing, framing and most importantly being present.

These tasks are intangible, and they are not heavy to perform but **heavy to take responsibility for.**

It is clear, that I am acting without my usual team of creators and producers that I would have in a conventional performance process. I am missing the colleagues that perform, make scripts, sets, costumes, lighting etc. It is only me now. Even if there is no light designer, I need to make sure the light is OK. I will pay attention to all the details of the staging, of the site, of all the elements that will affect the experience of the encounter.

I am not sharing the responsibility of my choices with anyone.

The burden I feel is an affect of this responsibility.

In STRINGS I am responsible for

- The personal stories and other personal details of my participants and partners.
- The wellbeing of the people involved in the encounters, guests, and hosts.
- The work I send into the world and partly its affect on the guests that encounter it.
- The material that is shared with me in my research.
- The knowledge/experiences that I create and mediate through my research.
- The methods that I create.
- My own existential sustainability.

and I make my self response-able to all these aspects.

I have created a porous creation method that invites me to think about responsibility as something that I share with others rather than taking the whole thing on my self.

So, I cannot blame the method for my stress. But it is true that I have called it on to myself by reducing the production and taking on a lot of roles on myself. Maybe there is too much of the old parameters inside of me. I need to question my expectations to the process.

Note to self: Porous creation process enables shared responsibility.

Responsibility equals Ethics.

April 1st, 2022

Breaking promises to self

A few years ago, I suffered burn out. At the time I was a dean at the Iceland University of Arts and there had been a series of challenges situations that had put me in a situation of impasse. I took a couple of months off and then went on to recharge my existential batteries during a sabbatical. I made a promise to myself that I would not be a leader anymore, that I would not try to influence people and that I would just mind my own business. So when I left my job, I signed up for a PhD position.

Somehow, I find myself repeating old patterns.

In my research I have now created a situation where I am leading a group of people convincing them to do things my way. I am trying to influence all the participants, hosts and guests.

The PR is extra challenging. To convince people you do not know to come to your performance. It is hard, especially if you are creating something so marginal as I am doing. In *Strings* I have created a concept that involves a performance in two parts, a one-to-one performative encounter and a participatory "mock workshop". I have no idea of how to promote this so an ordinary person would want to book a ticket.

I feel like I have to explain in detail what the performances entail, because they are so experimental. For me the concept is very straight forward and easy to engage with, but for a mainstream spectators it is hard to imagine what it is about.

If you had to explain to a person what a regular theatre performance was, that had never been to the theatre before, it would be equally complicated. This is the downside of doing experimental performance and research.

You need to convince people to engage with your work and explain in details what it is going to be like...

This is partly what is draining my energy.

Tue 05/04, 14:42

Hi all,

Strings I, We Are All Researchers, starts next week and people have started booking. Now we need to organise STINGS II, The hub.

Description STINGS II: The Hub:

The guests are invited to the lab. There are minimum 12 members of the Graduate school hosting the event. We all wear white lab coats. On arrival the guest will get a coat and a name tag. The guests will be divided in to four groups. In each group there will be two or more members of the graduate school. The groups visit four stations. There is a host from the graduate school at each station. At the stations the group gets different tasks to perform together .

Station yellow: Empathy Intervention. A is the station guard.

Station red: All the things I love. J is the station guard on the 3rd/who volunteers for the 7th?

Station green: All my connections. B is the station guard

Station blue: My research. I is the station guard.

M will be there with his guitar and play music (who wants to play music with M?)

Steinunn will be in the role of master of ceremony with a great gong to control the movement of the groups.

In the end each group has a short presentation and there will be a graduation ceremony where every guest will receive a diploma with their full name saying that they are truly researchers.

The structure will be refined and I will send out the final manuscript in due time.

Commitment - The performance takes about 1 hour 20 minutes.

Lund - May 3rd at 17 and 19. AND/OR Malmö - May 7th at 15 and 17

No rehearsal is needed. You just have to be familiar with the tasks and be there in person half an hour before the performance starts. After the final performance I will invite you all to my home in Malmö to drinks and food.

I ask you to please sign up for the performances ASAP.

Best Steinunn

W dniu czw., 7.04.2022 o 13:36

Hi V,

you have booked a meeting with a researchers at JURIDICUM 12th April at 14:00.

The performative encounter will take place at the Faculty of Law at Juridiska institutionen, Lilla Gråbrödersgatan 4, 222 22 Lund.

Please come to the main entrance of the building no later then 5 minutes before your appointment.

There will be a sign in front of the door where we will meet before I escort you to the researchers office.

In case of cancellation please reply to this email.

I am looking forward to meeting you.

Steinunn Knúts Önnudóttir

April 11th, 2022

The first day of performance and I am so anxious. I have been looking at my email the whole weekend to check the bookings. They looked OK for the week except for the first day.

At last, yesterday evening one person booked for todays performance. I was relieved.

I worry too much about the booking situation, the stress level is out of proportion.

Todays encounters are in the chemical department with two candidates. J was not feeling well and had to withdraw. It is perfectly OK but still it went into my solar plexus as a feeling of rejection.

I get hurt by the booking situation and I get hurt by the questions and concerns of my colleagues, the participants.

It is a big load to lift, and I feel much too pressed.

The work becomes an extension of my person somehow and in this context I feel like an outsider. I feel vulnerable but I am at the same time aware that I need to be strong for the participants, that are even more exposed than me, more out of place.

The thing seems so complicated. Not that the dramaturgy doesn't work smoothly, but the whole thing needs to be explained to the guests. This is a performative encounter, the host/guest setup, and the whole participatory element as such.

M was also a bit anxious, but we had a very good run with me as the guest. It became truly a performative encounter. I enjoyed doing the work as a guest. The external guest came 40 minutes late but they were super positive and loved the entire thing.

All in all it went well but I am drained after the day...I think it is my stress. I need to find a way to deal with it.

April 12th, 2022

Morning

I am writing this in the morning before I drive to Lund. One cancellation for today and I am already on a brink of a nervous breakdown.

I had a walk in the morning trying to enjoy the sun and the spring. I am getting worried about my Magnolia tree that is starting to bloom too early this spring. Now everything is in a standstill – I hope the tree will regain its energy and continue to bloom.

This also goes for me. I need to find a way to flourish. I should be enjoying myself, but instead, I am suffering. I feel lonely dragging this heavy load.

Afternoon.

The three guests that had booked today either cancelled, or did not turn up.

I did the piece with both my lawyer colleagues. I took good time with them and I had interviews with them afterwards. It felt meaningful.

Maybe I need to find a way to change the strategy for the work. There seems to be a Jinx on the whole thing. I am much too anxious and the whole thing has become too much of a burden.

I got a mail from B that has the day tomorrow. Their kid is ill, and they will not make it. Luckily E can take the guests that have booked for tomorrow.

Note to self. I must surrender to the unknown and accept what is happening.

Tue 13/04, 10:29

Steinunn and B!

I sent this to your phone numbers as well.

I just woke up with a such a bad cold and a fever. I am so sad, because I was looking forward to today so much. I even went to the hairdresser yesterday! I had almost no symptoms yesterday (a bit tired) and today I am in for it real bad.

Can we reschedule?

Can you make it anyway?

All the best, E

April 13th, 2022

Morning

I woke up and checked my mail. A message from E. They have fallen ill with fever and will not make it today. This is so unbelievable. Now it is beyond normal. I will cancel the visits today and hope that my luck will change for next week.

The general feeling is that there is something not working in this model for me.

I am not sustaining my health and my energy in this stress.

I feel very much alone with this massive enterprise, motivating over 20 people to participate in something that they have no idea of what is. They have their research and their lives, and this thing comes on top of everything else they do. Theatre people are so used to put everything else aside when it comes to performances. Now I am experiencing the opposite, life is more important than this performance. I guess it is more natural - but it is new to me.

And for the cancellations. Of five bookings for the first two days, there have been four last minute cancellations or no shows. It comes across as disrespectful of people to book time and not show up or cancelling last minute.

Yet again, the thought of charging a symbolic ticket fee for the guests to invest in the performance with their money. It is against what I believe in, but I understand why many services that have one-on-one bookings, create systems to trigger people to commit. Of course time is our most valuable currency and people's attention is precious. But what people understand is money.

For my research I do not need that many guests. I would say that I need a minimum of 12 guests. But for me as an artist and a person I would like to have more – for the self-esteem.

Still the stress level is too high!

Yesterday I thought that this work would drag me to death – that I would get a stroke or a heart attack or something. That is not normal.

Not to self: I have to to appreciate the guests that actually turn up and forget about the ones that choose to be elsewhere.

Afternoon

I came to work at nine to meet E for coffee at nine o'clock. They did not turn up.

WHAT IS HAPPENING!!!! And yesterday I broke a tooth, and a crown fell out.

What messages is the world sending to me????

April 14th, 2022

I am calm. I have accepted the situation.

Yesterday I met E, they had been at the school at 9 o'clock and did not find me.

Maybe I am creating an inner block that stops the flow of things...or maybe this is happening for a reason.

I remember having the thought that we should start after easter. According to that idea these three first days of the performance were not meant to be.

Also – yesterday, after letting go, I had a wonderful day – stress-free.

I finished my clay at the workshop and had a lunch with my friends at the Theatre Academy and in the afternoon I enjoyed ice-cream in the sun.

I cannot complain.

I have the feeling it is going to be perfect.

April 19th, 2022

Morning:

I am feeling much calmer about the whole thing.

I am prepared for all sorts of things to happen today, out of my control. It is a wonderful spring day. The only shadow is that I received an email from A, that was supposed to be a host tomorrow telling me that his daughter is ill. M will take the three appointments tomorrow.

Evening:

We had a last-minute cancellation for the second visit today. Meaning that L, that had been so dedicated missed their chance to meet an external guest.

I feel sorry for my colleagues that have taken their time off and made the preparations for the encounter and then there is a no-show.

I am trying to find constructive ways of dealing with these situations so I did the work with her and recorded the dialogue as a documentation.

it gave me a story for my motivation that I am not sure that I would have identified myself.

I thought it was a wonderful experience, where I got to meet other people in a very candid personal way as we were given several tasks to complete together. It was also quite an emotionally intense experience, as I felt tired but very satisfied - especially after the interview and String part one.

It was also an opportunity to meet and engage with new people, which was very nice.

It did give me new thoughts about my work which I wrote down after the meetings, ways to understand my theory through practical experiences that was shared with me or that I shared, for example.

I think about my work in a more positive way now.

I am more conscious of being a researcher next to many other roles I have in life. It is quite a new role for me that, through the interview, I became more aware of.

It allowed me to put my life and work into a closer relationship.

CREATING A DRAMATURGY

April 20th, 2022

The day was great. The weather was beautiful and M was very motivated. We had three guests, all artists. They seemed very satisfied with the work, and M expressed their contentment.

One thing happened during the third encounter of the day. M swayed off the manuscript and let the conversation roll freely. The guest was thrilled with the performance. It was a person I new and we spoke about the experience later. I asked about certain details in the piece and that was then I found out that they did not go through the piece.

I let them read the remaining cards. Given the choice, they told me that they would have chosen to finish the piece. M explained to me that at some point the dialogue became so interesting that they saw no need to go back to the the script/the cards. They took the decision by themselves, not consulting the guest.

It made me think of how vulnerable porous structure is.

I cannot deem if, what both of them described as meaningful dialogue, was better or worse than a dialogue that the cards generate. For sure it would have been different – but it would also be different on another day when it was raining or when they had other things on their mind.

I felt bad about telling my friend that they didn't finish the work (they only did 5 cards of 10). I created a dissatisfaction with something they had been perfectly happy about before I mentioned it.

Of course, when you sway so much from the script – the work becomes something different and the few things that are planted in the structure are lost. The structure collapsed but the experience did not collapse, something else took over that was still in the framework of the performance.

This might also happen in more rigid structures when an idea invades the mind of a spectator. The difference in this case is that the whole work goes into the distraction.

When thinking about it, I was sorry that they did not have the closure that is written into the dramaturgy. The free flowing encounter finished when the time was up and they had to stop talking, there was no closure, just a goodbye.

On second thoughts. The idea of the closure is of course my own construct...the work will continue after the guest leaves as it started long before the encounter took place.

Note to self: How should I respond when rogue elements take control? Should I try to prevent it or should I welcome it?

Wed 20/04, 11:14

Hi all in the graduate school,

We will be hosting STRINGSI hub during the sustainable week. Many have already signed up. It is a performative encounter between the members of AGENDA 2030 graduate school and guests that book tickets for the event.

The format is like a workshop with easy tasks and discussions about why we do research. The group is divided in four groups that all visit four stations that focus on different topics. You just need to be there as a part of the group and participate in the activities with your colleagues and the guests.

Below is a further description of the performance.

Can you participate at any of these occasions?

Lund - May 3rd at 17 and 19

Malmö - May 7th at 15 and 17

You can commit to one performance or to all of them and everything in between.

The performance takes about 1 hour 20 minutes.

The performance is for people in all ages so you can bring your kids.

No rehearsal is needed. You just have to be familiar with the tasks and be there in person half an hour before the performance starts.

We need a minimum of 10 people for each event.

At present moment we still need a few more people to commit :)

May 3rd: J, C, K, C, M, I, M, L, T, (E)

May 7th: S, SH, J, B, I, M, M, A, (K)

After the final performance I will invite you all to my home in Malmö for drinks and food.

I ask you to please sign up for the performances ASAP.

Send me an email with a date and a time.

Steinunn

April 21st, 2022

Still a wonderful spring weather. The host of the day is wonderful – very mild, gentle, and sharp. A guest is sitting with them now, and they are taking their time. Now I am afraid that the host will miss an appointment that I know they have in a short while. But I trust that they will have things under control, like they did with me during our test run. I am feeling calm. I understand the precarious nature of the work and I must deal with it.

I have accepted the fact but what exactly I have to do is still unclear to me.

The mantra: Things are as they are. Do not try to judge what is happening.

Today that is easy.

April 24th, 2022

Of only four bookings this week, two were cancelled.

I am trying to understand why it is so hard getting people to book tickets for the performance and then to actually turn up.

I think there are several reasons.

- It is in the daytime, during working hours
- It is in Lund and the audience for this type of performance is in Malmö
- It is unconventional and participatory
- Performative encounter does not ring a bell
- I am new to this place and do not have any followers
- The participants are insecure about what they are participating in and therefore have even harder time than me to promote the work in their circles
- Covid: people are reluctant to book an intimate meeting with a stranger and are more likely to cancel if minor symptoms occur

So, if I want an audience for the work, I need to have a skilled PR person that helps with getting the work to the right people.

I neither have a PR person nor a producer and that is a problem.

I am taking on all the practical, logistical tasks and they are stressing me out.

I need to take this seriously – I'd rather not do the work if it is so stressful.

April 25th, 2022

I woke up with a high stress level. This is not sustainable. My body goes straight into highest level of stress mode. It might be a consequence of my burnout in 2018.

I urgently need to change strategy. I have created these working conditions myself.

This is both too much and too little. Too much stress and too little support.

But here is the thing. I had a series of good meetings today. I had meetings with station guards for *The Hub* about their roles. They were open and generous, engaging with what I proposed to them, taking part and contributing to the decision making. It felt right. It made so much sense to bounce with people about the work – it comes naturally to me. This is how I think and work best, in a dialogue with others. Professional theatre people or not, they are human beings and have an insight that is valuable.

I am constantly trying to make it easy for people to join, but that is not the right strategy. People need to invest and commit, by doing so, it becomes more fulfilling for them also.

How did I end up isolating myself in such a way?

A lot of positive things are happening and everything is steadily moving forwards.

Note to self: I don't need to take my emotions so seriously. They are like the weather.

It felt like there was always a good balance between the two people meeting, one had prepared more and new more but was also in a safe space (me) while the other had to "follow the unknown" a bit more but also perhaps felt less responsibility for the encounter.

The swopping seats also helped this.

I enjoyed the encounter for String part one. We had a very dynamic discussion and it forced me to be very present and creative.

Tue 26/04, 13:37

Hi everyone,

I am desperately looking for lab coats to use in Strings, next week.

I need as many lab coats as possible.

I have talked to different agents at the University, the hospital and Skåne tvätt that services the University, but they cannot help me.

Many of you have access to a lab coat at your institution.

Would you be able provide one or two coats each for next week? We might get enough lab coats with a collective effort.

For those not participating in the performance, I can come and collect the coat at your department.

Other preparations for the Hub are well under way. Looking forward to doing this with you :)

I remind you of the party on May 7th after the final performance - it is also for people not participating :)

best Steinunn

April 26th, 2022

Morning

The only booking for the day has been cancelled.

I am planning to do an encounter with the two hosts of today and sit in as a witness to their conversations. It is a way of making this meaningful for all of us. Not to go down with the disappointment but find a way of making this worth while. And today, the sun is shining and my Magnolia tree is starting to pick up.

Evening.

I was a witness to the encounter of my colleagues today. It was interesting listen to their dialogue, so rich and deep. Two people from different continents both from law, discussing on professional and personal level their worldviews and values. It was so inspiring. I learned a couple of things and there where interesting openings...like comparing law with sorcery, lawyers with wizards. The wand and the cloak and putting spells on people.

But of course it was a big disappointment not to have guests.

April 27th, 2022

Still I am on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

When I was sitting in the office of C in Eden after a good talk with them about their role as a station guard for "Empathy" in *The Hub*, they got a message about an important meeting that they had to attend at the time of the performance, so they had to cancel there and then. Now I need to find a new station guard for "Empathy". Yet another disappointment.

I am thrown back to being 7 years old – when living in Bolungarvík and I invited all the kids in the village to my birthday party and only two came. It is a profound feeling of rejection. I know that it has nothing to do with me personally but there is something with the design of the event that makes it so hard for people to invest their time in it.

The researchers invest their time of course and for that I am thankful, but I also feel responsible for them as well, on top of this feeling of rejection.

But I had a wonderful music rehearsal with M and M at Odeum and then I had a test run with K. They are rock solid in their support. I appreciate that. C also had an encounter that was good for both parts.

I am getting more and more nervous about *the Hub* – and the booking situation there.

I am weighing my options. Should I cut down on the number of performances? Only have one performance in Malmö? Should I cancel tomorrow's encounters? These decisions I am taking on my own. My anxiety is out of proportion.

I had a long talk with my second supervisor yesterday. They talked about staying with the feeling rather than suppressing it. They said that if I allow it to be it will vanish. So, this I am trying to do. It is a very physical condition. It feels like an inflammation

in my nerves and a throbbing pain in the chest and a grip in my throat. It does not look good reading that sentence.

.

I drew three tarot cards today – they seem to have captured the situation quite well.

SELF:

The Hanged Man

A sacrifice mediates the situation and returns it to normal.

The Hanged Man represents the taking of a loss. He's the sacrificial lamb, whether it's accepted with grace or only because it's been forced upon him.

SITUATION:

Eight of Wands

You are caught in a vortex of intensifying demands.

The Eight of Wands in this position indicates that you are running to keep up with people and circumstances that seem to be out of control. Being proactive may be difficult now.

CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES:

The World

You have mastered the elements of your life to the degree that success is a regular occurrence. The World in this position challenges you to maintain a dynamic balance between inner pressures and outer circumstances, your male side and your female side, innocence and wisdom, action, and response. You have grown into your potential. It's wonderful to find yourself at the centre of the universe, in the right place at the right time.

April 28th, 2022

Strings was in the Ecology building today.

Still more cancellations and H had to stay home with a sick child.

It is having the same destructive effect on me.

This performance is very fragile, that is a fact.

With one host at home I did a hybrid run through.

My colleagues are eager to perform the piece even though we do not have external guests. It has a profound affect with whomever you do it with, strangers or friends. It brings closure to the process and has magical potential.

J had one guest. They had a long and deep conversation and both expressed contentment with the encounter. The guest asked if it would be appropriate to seek another more informal encounter with the host later. This is the third guest that asks about this. It seems like people want to continue the dialogue. I try to tone the urge down and invite people to check out the website of Agenda 2030 Graduate School for more information about the candidates.

I am feeling calmer. I feel it in my body that the project is soon coming to an end. I have been preparing the manuscript for *The Hub* and it is coming along nicely. I have been developing the script for the past two weeks together with the 7 designated station guards of the four stations: Care, Empathy, Connection and Love. Each time I have a talk with someone things move and the script changes.

Very special and lots of food for thought. In particular how easy it is to open up to others and talk about personal and "deep" things with strangers.

April 29th, 2022

I met with A to borrow the last two lab coats.

One of the most challenging missions of the project has been providing enough lab coats for all the participants. At last, now I have around 30.

We have place for 20 guests for each performance.

I am finishing the manuscript and will send it by email to my colleagues this evening. I have just the right number of participants for *The Hub* – if only one cancels, I am in trouble.

I hope there will be no more surprises.

May 2nd, 2022

Everything is falling into place. Tomorrow is the opening of *The Hub* and still at every corner there is a challenge. Now M, the most stable participant, has withdrawn from Saturday's performance in Malmö. I guess I will have to skip the music for that day. I am sorry, but things have stopped surprising me.

Whatever happens tomorrow I will not know, but for sure it is all a part of my research.

It made me re-examine my motivations for the changes I am making in my life.

It made me connect some dots in relation to why I do what I do, and I research what I research.

INVITING THE PUBLIC PART II

May 3rd, 2022

I am ready. Sitting at the office at 11 in the morning with my desk very tidy.

I am preparing for the encounters tomorrow. I am as ready as I can be. The sun is shining, and I have the feeling that this will be a good day. The Magnolia tree in my garden and the magnolia trees in front of Odeum are in full bloom. It is magical and the scent is breath taking.

Enchantment is kicking in.

May 4th, 2022

Everything turned out great – people were happy, participants and guests.

The porous dramaturgy opened for all sorts of perspectives – we even had a challenging guest that somehow thrived in the structure, despite a bit of resistance.

They could say what they wanted to say and demonstrate their position to things within the structure.

I am pleased. Someone described the experience to me as both light and profound – that is exactly what I wanted.

Today I have a full day with encounters in The Architect building in Lund.

This will be the final day in Lund as we will be moving to Malmö for the last encounters.

In the Hub, it was enjoyable to talk to strangers about so many different things and to share the, at times little awkward, experience together. It was very intense though, and my mind was very drained afterwards.

I found that it is the times that I have challenged myself and done something that I am slightly afraid of doing that has changed my life for the better. The Hub experience made me very comfortable with the big choice I have just made with my family to move far away and really confirmed to me that this is a good thing to do.

[the] work stretches far below the performance elements of Strings and goes back to us finding ourselves as researchers, how we exist in work and how we exist in this world.

For me the hardest part was to let go of the logic reasoning

I thought it was a profound experience

May 5th, 2022

Now the work seems to roll. Yesterday ran smoothly like planned and it worked perfectly. The two candidates in The Architect building were great hosts and they both had good experiences. My prospect opponent for the 75% seminar and my supervisor were there, and the supervisor was extremely positive. Our challenging guest from Tuesday's *Hub* came and was well behaved and positive. They need attention and this format allows them to have their space, so I am happy that I got to change my view on them.

Now it all feels worth while, the anxiety, the pain, and the desperation that I have suffered through the process.

I am happy that it was not in vain.

But I will definitely change the way I work in the future.

May 6th, 2022

Four successful encounters yesterday and four encounters planned for today. The work is rolling and suddenly everything feels smooth and easy.

What a change.

Malmö is a better suited environment for this type of performances.

The booking situation is much better and there are almost no cancellations.

[I was affected] in the sense that I know that everyone" has "big" thoughts about "big" things and that one is never to underestimate this. Also, that academia has a big role to play in educating social conscious people and encourage more compassion and love in our teaching, to not underestimate what bringing all this people together in a university does and can do.

Fascinating and thought-provoking.

May 8th, 2022

The last Hub was performed yesterday at the Inter Arts Centre. It went well and everyone seemed to enjoy the experience, both the hosts and guests. It was a

different feel to the whole thing than in Lund, less magical but more playful. We had some children present and that might have added to the playfulness. The guests were engaged and motivated. I invited everyone home afterwards and Eirikur made really good food.

December 8th, 2022

Seven months later and I am in Kyoto, Japan.

I am reading my diary from *Strings* and trying to understand why the project had to be so heavy and stressful for me personally. What did exhaust my energy during the process?

There are a few crucial facts that count for my conditions.

I was alone.

I had reduced the production to the point that it was no longer sustainable for me.

I had too little support to produce the piece, mentally and practically.

I was unable to share the responsibility with anyone.

I had already suffered burnout a few years prior to the process, that made me vulnerable to the inevitable pressure of making a work of this magnitude.

The stress levels may have been out of proportion, but I recognised patterns from my previous practice. For a freelancing theatre maker, it is a recurrent challenge in their practice, having to cope with all the threads of a production and being overwhelmed with responsibility that comes with the many roles you take on.

In a project focusing on sustainability, it is only appropriate that I pay attention to the existential sustainability of myself. Existential sustainability for me is when I am nourished; physically, mentally, and spiritually. I am motivated to do meaningful work. I feel purpose and I find myself in a friendly environment exchanging experiences.

Several times in the diary I make a promise to myself to find a new way of working.

So, what did I learn from the process?

I have come to understand that to be existentially sustainable you have to take your needs seriously.

So here is a list of my needs as an artist:

- I need to be in touch with the things I love and that nourish me.
- I need to be present in my body.
- I need good motivation for doing work.
- I need to stay close to my values.
- I need creative partners.
- I need moral support.
- I need practical support for production and promotion.
- I need to be free from promoting or selling tickets while creating a work.
- I need to articulate my own needs and organise the work around them.
- I need to understand the needs of my collaborators.
- I need to share the responsibility with my collaborators.
- I need to tap into an organic flow of things and avoid forcing things to happen.
- I need to treat every encounter as a reciprocal exchange.
- I need to listen to myself.
- I need to enjoy the process.

I will try to honour this list of needs in my future work. In the spirit of the How Little is Enough? approach, I could reduce this to a single sentence.

UNDIRSÍÐA – ARTISTIC ME-THOD OUTLINE

The guests complete the creation by contributing their personal experiences, beliefs,
social and cultural background
into the porous dramaturgy.

The artist is a facilitator for an encounter between the host and the guests.

The site brings context, depth and complexity.
The hosts are co-creators.

ARTISTIC ME-THOD OUTLINE

Me-thod is a pluralistic artistic methodology grounded in situated knowledges and skill set, used with intuition, and guided by embodied criticality.

Performance format

Relations specific performance.

Performative encounters in a Host-Guest situation.

Contemplative performance journey.

Enchantment of everyday experiences.

Steps (*The order of steps may differ*)

Choice of Agent (A site, a community, individual agents)

Reach out to agents – send out information about the project (snail mail, e-mail, posters, notices).

Formally invite the agents to contribute to the piece. Visit the site and explore the territory.

Official introduction meeting with agents and other stakeholders (co-producers, collaborators, local community).

Create connections. Informal meetings with agents/hosts.

Define the specified topics.

Create context.

Gather material; interviews, video and audio recordings, collecting texts/objects.

Define the mediation format.

Create the dramaturgy of the encounter (aesthetics, intellectual/visual/tactile composition, route).

Invite the public.

Sources:

A personal diary from 2020 - 2022.

Personal emails.

Texts have had minor editing.

Only parts of the diaries are used in the Logbook for Strings.

Names of participants have been shortened to the first letter in their first name.

Direct quotations are from an anonymous survey sent to the participants of STRINGS and from Strings guestbook.

Photographs are being used with the permission from the individuals depicted.