Facilitator

Ingrid Cogne

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Biography

Artist and dramaturge working across choreography and visual arts, Ingrid Cogne is currently a senior researcher at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna with an Elise Richter PEEK fellowship for project *The dramaturgy of Conversation*. Cogne sees choreography as a way to create movement and suspension, circulation and time, positioning and displacement in relation to Economy, Knowledge, Work, and Individuals. In order to problematize the dramaturgy of (existing or created) situations, she conceptualizes artworks in the form of sculptural articulated objects in movement, expanded choreographies, as well as arts-based research projects.

Abstract

Facilitator has for ambition to address the different functions this notion, and its sisters, can carry. Guided by my interest in conducting research without leading, I have been creating situations of co-research wherein a 'situation' becomes the 'facilitator' of the co-working process. Does the situation—the one facilitating—need to (re)invite (again and again) co-researchers/workers to have an attitude of responsibility and engagement? What does it mean to (accept to) enter a long-term project for a (proportionally) short period? What does it mean to (accept to) be the one initiating a situation that is to be

expanded? When initiating something bigger than oneself, 'facilitating' becomes a tool to be defined time and time again. From focusing on 'how' to sit together to think 'space', a co-attitude should be the factor that allows for reaching of another layer of knowledge and activates going further than (just) 'participating'.

Keywords

Knowledge, Communication, Circulation, Engagement, Responsibility, Situation, Co-, How

Positioning

In this articulation, I navigate through knowledges, methods, practices, and tools developed during three long-term researches[1] and revisit the ways in which I have been approaching, questioning, and developing—the role and function of—facilitation in working situations (be it artistic or research oriented).

'Respect' and 'communication' are values that I encountered when I was a kid learning 'how' to be—thinking, functioning, behaving in order to be—part of a sports team. I started to use the notion of 'value' as a strategic tool in the methodology of *Six Formats* (Cogne, 2018a). Over time, tactics and strategies have been refined: the goal of the team was to score, and each team-player would contribute to that. Most of the time, winning was fulfilling in itself. Sometimes, some egos would prioritize earning the credits, which fragilized the value of team-work. At that time, such attitude would not benefit or expand beyond the micro level (inscriptions in territory or in history remained extremely ephemeral).

'Engagement' and 'responsibility' are values that I implemented in my second research project, when I felt that 'respect' was lacking in communications and actions. Even if the research had for ambitions (and values) to think and do "bigger than oneself" (Cogne, 2018b, p. 13), a statement had to be performed in order to insist on horizontal hierarchy (neither is a host a sovereign, nor is a guest a king) and on reciprocity (neither is the host a leader, nor is the guest a follower) in order to place the situation at / as the heart of the relation.

The relation *Authorship and Responsibility*, proposed as a theme for the seventh Art of Research calls for, according to my perception, the notion and practice of 'ethic'. "Ethics is everywhere. In everything we do there can be an ethical component" (European Commission, 2013, p. 3). 'Authorship' and 'ethic' are topics that I have been constantly considering and keeping in mind, re-evaluating along my career—as artist, researcher, dramaturg, writer, editor, as well as supervisor—in order to protect myself and take care of my peers, at the same time. It is as such a sensitive activity. Where is the respect located in this? How to negotiate the locations and relationalities between individual, collaborative, and other knowledges with oneself and with others?

In arts-based research, 'appropriate' and 'common' languages link the practices in an intertwined way; it happens to be difficult to identify, where to start or stop the right of using the words that others use in their practices and / or research without quoting them; this sometimes blurs the line between the source and the authorship. Even if it is the responsibility of all persons involved to take care of and be responsible for the (own and shared) authorships, I think that especially in the case of my current research project *The dramaturgy of Conversation*, which is based on languages and wording, deciding upon common rules, such as ways of quoting each other and identifying common or re-appropriated knowledges, has to be taken care of together. In all my works and researches, I have been dedicating a particular attention towards the preservation of each of the participants' languages, mine included, to resist the ap-

propriation of common languages—since I am of the opinion that communication, meaning, and understanding do not require a unification of languages and wordings.

I have always been thinking, that I or my contributions would be stronger when 'welded' with those of others: i) in a collaboration, a collective, or a community, ii) in situations of meeting or (in-)betweenness, and iii) within multi-, trans-, or interdisciplinary artistic projects and artworks. Initiating and / or contributing to these various configurations of gathering people and knowledge, I see my articulation as being in perpetual re-construction and negotiation. My research focus is on the activation, articulation, and circulation of knowledges and on 'how' these processes unfold in a 'dispositif': "a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of [...] in short, the said as much as the unsaid" (Foucault, 1980, p. 194). The latter can translate into tacit and practical knowledges, which require a particular attention to what wording might not be able to communicate.

Choreographic knowledge—such as RE-, DIS-, or CO- think / place / articulate one element (be it visible or not, material or not), as well as the system of bodies and elements in which it is involved—is unfortunately underestimated. Have you ever felt the energies at play in a room, in a place, in another person, in between peoples when gathering?

A choreographer has skills and knowledge regarding the details and overview of organism and organization. The combination of 'how to move', 'how to be with', and 'how to combine' elements (material and immaterial) is / has to be situated[2], and the relation(alitie)s facilitated.

To facilitate

This verb implies two types of gestures and activities: tracing back to Latin, *facilis* means either 'easy'—which became in English facile as 'easy to do' and 'faculty' as 'ability' (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Yet, *facilis* also comes from *facere* that means 'to make or do'. It is the latter implication, that I relate to when using the notions and gestures 'to facilitate', 'facilitator', 'fa-

cilitating' in the contexts of what I call re/search and define as: studying 'how' one does while being in 'the doing'. Facilitat-e / -or / -ing is considered as a methodological tool in my work. Yet, in order to be considered as methodology, its 'how' has to be articulated—be it with wordings or movements. 'How', in other words 'the way in which' one does, is a recurrent notion in my work chanting / punctuating my written matters to address methodology. 'How' is both an articulation and question, even if I am aware that placing 'how' in a sentence is not always grammatically correct, its manifestation often does have an impact.

Facilitating calls for practices and attitudes.

> Facilitating is an opening.
>
> Facilitating is creating and giving space.
>
> Facilitating is not fixing.
>
> Facilitating is not taking care of.
>
> Facilitating is an attitude.
>
> Facilitating is a tool to be defined again and again. (Cogne, 2018b, p. 13)

Facilitating does not want to become leading.

Filtering, reading, listening, and positioning are constantly confronted to RE-.

'Facilitating' and 'situation as facilitator' are dramaturgical tools. They imply strategies and tactics thinking bigger and reaching further than 'production'. They build on practical knowledges (in movement) that call for choreographic and dramaturgical abilities and experiences. 'Facilitating' and 'situation as facilitator' build and are built on three types of spaces: physical, social, and conceptual. The methodology of *Six Formats* proposed particular practices that enable circles of 'meeting':

- from thinking institutional and contextual set-ups of meeting,

- to creating spatial and temporal framings and forms of sociability,

- to supporting spaces wherein strands of research can expand, carry, 'rub on' each other.

Initiator as facilitator

The facilitator searches for these circles of meetings and interactions—from co-researching to co-imagining—and thinks the ways in which a situation wherein hierarchy can be horizontal. The initiator has the vision to gather peers together in order to place and expand the knowledges of their questioning. "What is important for me is to propose a situation that challenges my own process. This situation may invite me to take / choose a different, more or less, precise and specific direction in the manipulation and articulation of what I am processing" (Cogne, 2015, p. 8).

When I create (think, initiate, set up, facilitate) a situation, I conceptualize a matrix (with a variable geometry) that combines a selection of parameters. When facilitating, I send an invitation to each co-researcher to build: a dialogue between one's interests, knowledge, skills, experiences and the ones who are involved in the co-process. How does one's personal research meet a larger context? How does one foster 'one's own', while at the same time fostering 'the over-all'?

Creating situations is a method to study 'what' can be observed in an open but structured process—to detect what is appearing, and to filter 'how' this process is appearing and unfolding—like in a choreographic improvisation (Cogne, 2015, p. 110). The initiator coordinates / manages by gathering, inviting, and placing. How can one unfold such a value as a non-violent principle? How does one articulate and motivate, between theory and practice, both 'vision' and 'doing'?

Situation as facilitator

Conceptualizing, setting up, and proposing a situation as facilitator engage notions such as 'meeting', 'hospitality', 'invitation', 'engagement', and 'responsibility'. Such situation aims at

being with others in order to activate and articulate knowledge. A situation as facilitator allows the initiator(s) to be participant(s). I initiate this with a concept of 'invitation':

> The 'invitation' goes beyond participation. The 'invitation' initiates working situations. It presents the art-based research project *Six Formats*. It calls for acknowledging the 'how' as much as the 'what'. It announces the protocol of processes. It addresses the value of shared, equal and reciprocal 'engagement and responsibility' toward the situation, the processes, the overall research project, others (and another). [. . .] It presents the context in which each format is implemented. It proposes points of departure to be explored by each format's working group. It shares the main visions, statements, and hypotheses of the entire research. It activates the questioning of the format-content-context relation—for that particular format in its specific context. It invites the co-researchers to a dialogue between one's own interests and *Six Formats*—a win-win situation to be expanded. It initiates the circulation of pre-existing or re-articulated knowledge. (Cogne, 2018a, p. n.a.)

A *situation as facilitator* installs a CO-.

> How to facilitate and engage (within) the im/material aspects provided by spaces of 'meeting' and 'working' when arts-based research projects are built on the gathering of people? How to articulate the im/material aspects that support co-researchers to create and engage when co-processing? From co-researching to co-imagining—outside and beyond generalisation that limits its potentialities—CO- wants to be thought as a potentiality instead as a fixed concept. (Cogne & Hölzl, 2018, p. n.a.)

Can a CO- be as particular as it can be general?

> The term 'collaboration' is both useful and vague: the 'co-' prefix is at the root of many other terms, each of which provides a different nuance on the meaning of

> creating together: collective, communal, common, cooperative, coordinated, combined. In practice, each group finds its own language to describe its particular kind of collaboration. There are also different levels of collaboration: the work done together by members of a group has a different quality to the work done between the group as an entity and another, external collaborator. Each of these relationships is defined through practice [...]. The passage from being one to being several, which is made through collaboration, can be complex and sometimes lengthy. (De Wachter, 2017, p. 19f)

Entering a CO- implies a constant openness and attention toward repositioning in order to i) 'to read' the multiple elements in presence (from the context, the room, the amount of people involved, to the intention/goal/task), ii) 'to filter' the relationalities between the timing, activator, and source of the proposals emerging, iii) 'to engage' with one's knowledge, iv) 'to listen' to the others, v) 'to let go' in favor of 'what is going on', and vi) 'to be responsible' of the process. It is a situation of perpetual re-negotiation and transformation. The situation is what makes things happen. The situation calls for choreographic improvisation, meaning that the participants are co-creators and share co-responsibility of its dramaturgy and of the journey of its composition.

Conceptualizing a situation as facilitator has been one of my practices and methods since 2008, in the contexts of collaborations and of my own works / initiatives that involve others. Overtime, my questioning also involved the conceptualization and materialization of objects as toolbox for the situations–such as the *Object of Communication*, created for *Six Formats*.

"When being CO-, a collective identity might arise, be claimed, or questioned. The CO-allows/invites transformation(s) in the doing" (Cogne & Hölzl, 2018, p. 6). Peter Stamer addresses "working together" (Dokter & Stamer, 2014, p. 59) in three layers: coordination, cooperation, and collaboration and takes into account "giving away a certain authorship" (p.

Figure 1. Still from the video-tutorial *Presentificating* (2018). Credit: I. Cogne.

Figure 2. *Object of Communication* at the Gallery Situations (2018, NYC). Credit: I. Cogne.

59) from the second level. When a co-situation is facilitated in order to implement a 'situation as facilitator', the one who facilitated it (initiated, coordinated with a context / host-institution, managed the financial aspect, invited the co-workers) rarely get credit. Acknowledging the authorship of the initiator is compulsory. The working group "needs to attain to the co-originary dimension and expose it without reservation" (Nancy, 2000, p. 26). When and where do(es) CO- start? I observed that thinking and tuning the ways in which CO- can be performed in relation to roles and responsibilities has to be addressed during a pre-process.

> A pre-process is the foundation of working structures and principles of working. In
> the protocol of *Six Formats*, the pre-process is / was a timespace wherein the tuning
> of CO- was meant to happen (for each of the formats and for the entire project as a
> whole). CO- is not at the heart of the project / format, but is one of its components.
> (Cogne & Hölzl, 2018, p. 20)

It is from the moment a 'contract' is established that the process really starts. The contract touches several layers of concerns: from the vision to the relation to time to the ways in

which the co-researchers communicate. This contract is a 'starting point', from which all the participants are co-responsible of the coordination of what has been decided to be done.

> A shared dedication to creating together implies both a projection of ourselves and a production of ourselves; I express and formulate my self by contributing to our shared work, as much as the coming together of our commitments redirects and reformulates my contributions, which slip away from their initial relation to a me that pre-existed them. (Chauchat & Zacharias, 2016, p. 21)

CO- should activate the reaching of another layer of knowledge.

Co-circulation of knowledges

What can be done? _activated and activating knowledge,

How can it be done? _expanded and expanding experience,

How does *Six Formats* want to do this? _trusting and facilitating multi(co-)possibilities.

(Cogne & Hölzl, 2018, p. 30)

Activating is like dropping a stone: it creates waves.

> The water is activated. Each wave moves away from the place of impact and one can observe a certain amount of circles moving away. One of the circles / waves, coming from the impact mentioned before, may meet a wave coming from another impact—due to the drop of another stone. The meeting between two waves affects both waves. (Cogne, 2015, p. 8)

It is at that moment that a knowledge takes a new direction. A co-situation conveys knowledges and leads to the expansion of each knowledge into a new development. Circulation of knowledge addresses 'communication'. HOW to present and communicate?

Along the years, with a particular attention to 'activation' when thinking of the communication of knowledges, I have been working with the notion of 'vulgarization'. Vulgarization corresponds to the use of everyday life vocabulary to make the language used by an expert accessible. The notion of 'popularization' (Cornelis, 1996) is also frequently used to describe this process of transcription into different languages or media. Vulgarization / popularization is an essential means through which science can be processed.

> One can use body (gesture) and spoken (word) languages to vulgarize knowledge. Those mediums propose respectively an illustration and a translation, which require the identification of appropriate gestures and vocabulary to illustrate, reformulate the knowledge filtered. Body and spoken languages are different forms that knowledge can inhabit to appear, be accessible, or communicated. (Cogne, 2015, p. 60)

Live, formal, and / or informal communications navigate between bodily, spoken, written, and tacit languages. How to think and "embrace the 'interval' where the tensions between researching, writing, presenting, and discussing in specific situations stand out, instead of systematically flattening it?" (Cogne, 2018b, p. 60).

In my current research project *The dramaturgy of Conversation*, "expanding" (Krauss, 1979, pp. 30–44) calls for 'translating'. Some information and data are linked and different thinking and positioning, or meanings and understandings are activated as well. When being in a 'co-circulation of knowledges', 'meaning' is created through meeting. Presence and performativity are required—since 2012, when facilitating workshops or situations, I invite participants with a basic rule: "If you are in the room you are part of the situation" (Cogne & Hölzl, 2018, p. 36)—which, in turn, implies a process of 'instant composition'[3] of the different elements that come together, as well as their relations to an overall directionality. Such situation combines 'doing' with 'experimenting', at the same time. Here the CO- expands the respective ideas and per-

spectives of each participant (be it co-activator or co-receiver): something can become apparent and one can identify the gaps in one's own knowledge. "Situations are eventful. And events are relational. Subjects don't decide in a vacuum. Events decide, in relation" (Massumi, 2015, p. 204). This moment can be understood as in a chessboard or a labyrinth: a shared setting where different actions combine: speaking, listening, transcribing, reading, transporting, transforming, and displacing. I encourage the circulation between different degrees of complexity and different knowledges, permitting 'jumps' between different registers: abstract thought, humor, and anecdotes will occur. The instant composition requires the reading of the different routes one can take and the turns one can choose. One is a filter. I talk about 'embodied dramaturgy' that: i) conveys the identification and communication of unknown or not-yet- known knowledge; ii) fosters advanced practices of articulation, as well as the circulation of performing knowledge; and iii) supports the coexistence of registers and forms of knowledge implied, the 'gymnastique' (mental activity) of temporalities, as well as the 'glissement' (shifts in meaning) between fiction and non-fiction. Choreographic modes of working for an embodied dramaturgy is a principle that lets the 'discours discourt'[4] (speech speechifies).

The performative aspect of a 'co-circulation of knowledges' again calls for attentiveness regarding ethical aspects. Even if the situation / event is based on and consists of 'articulating', 'listening', 'asking', and 'challenging', I provide a written consent of procedure to be signed between the different parts dealing with authorship, documentation, and a specification regarding the treatment and communication of the material (European Commission, 2013, p. 14). When communicating knowledges, I dedicate a particular attention to naming, quoting, giving credits to all the peoples involved without erasing my own role and efforts.

When the initiator is confronted with the communication of the concept as well as the initial and expanded knowledges, in a paper or a publication (be it on a website or in printed matter), he / she / they might become hostage(s) of the situation he / she / they initiated—confronted to

ethical questions (like a snake biting its tail). Willing to carry on the sharing, should the initiator continue to facilitate (/ motivate) the engagement and responsibility of the co-situationists?

It is (about) the negotiation of positions and needs.

Along the years, in order to avoid the deletion of my authorship in co-situations, wherever I engaged myself as initiator, co-situationist, or contributor (recently mostly as dramaturge), I started to position myself by organizing the co-situations in categories, that would help me to behave in terms of responsibility, decision, and authorship.

When the project starts with a gathering of peers, I consider that authorship and responsibility of the project is shared from coordination to communication. When invited as dramaturge, performer, facilitator, or speaker: I do not involve myself at all in the coordination. I might contribute to the concept development toward funding application but rather join only for the process and communication of the project—in such a role, I learned 'to let go' the final decision and the ways in which my ideas, knowledges, and contributions are performed. When initiating a project, depending on its context, budget, scale, format, and duration, I identify different circles or people to be involved, with clear roles and timing in the processes of concept development, expansion, and communication—in that case, I curate the project from coordination to communication and care about all the persons involved, including myself, and their respective levels of authorship and types of knowledge contribution. I treat the project and others according to the ethic I would like to be applied on me when I am the 'invited'.

Sharing and responding to "Authorship and Responsibility"

"No Diva – No Ego", she said.[5]

My work is a matrix "à géométrie variable" (Cogne & Caspão, 2018, p. 32), wherein the various languages mentioned in that paper as well as related practices are put at play again and again.

I viewed the conference *Authorship and Responsibility* as an opportunity to (re)visit, review, and present a *catalogue raisonné* (critical catalogue) of situations, formats, and tools I have been activating, gathering, and questioning—in the contexts of arts-based research projects—in order to put the activation, articulation, and circulation of these knowledges (be it formats, tools, practices, and situations) with other participants at play. My contribution was a performative "present(ific)ation" (Cogne & Caspão, 2018, p. 2), wherein knowledges were disposed and placed in dialogue with others references, statements and voices, in order to facilitate their expansion.

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Notes

[1] (2011-2015: PhD, 2015-2018: postdoc, 2019—in process: habilitation).

[2] Cogne, I. (2019-2023). The dramaturgy of conversation. Habilitation Arts-based Research.

[3] A term used by Susan Buirge, Workshop for professional choreographers, Royaumont Foundation, 2012.

[4] Wording by Paula Caspão during the process of *Format Lecture-Performance*, 2016.

[5] A statement I made during *Six Formats*, when setting up a co-process and decision-making dynamic within the working team of *Format Exhibition*.