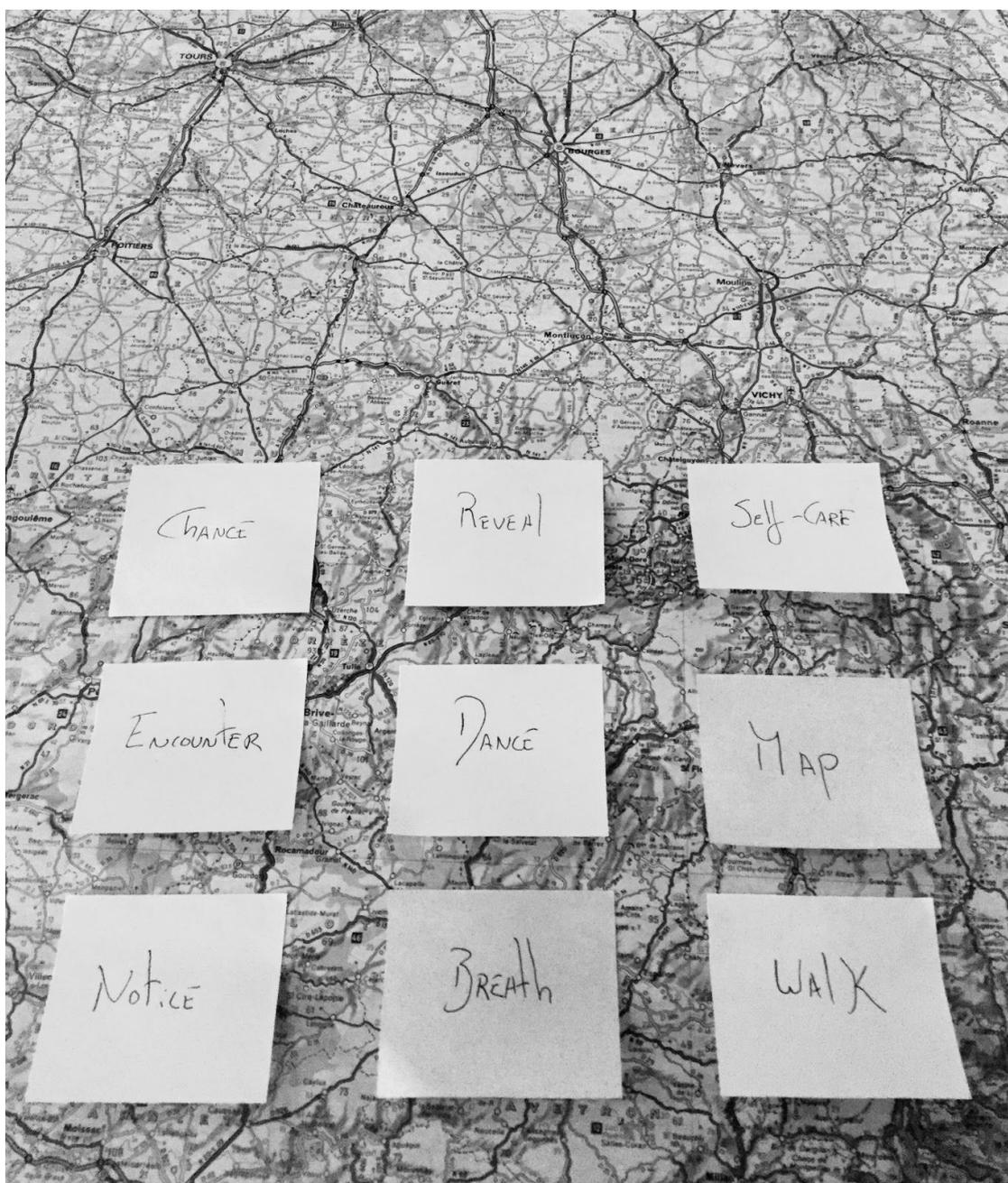


DRIFTING WITHIN NAVIGATION. Multiple Fields of Experience and Ecology of Practices

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Dancer, Choreographer



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“I work only with lost and founds.”

Clarice Lispector

“Everything I do not know forms the greater part of me: This is my largesse. And with this I understand everything. The things I do not know constitute my truth.”

Clarice Lispector

Soliloquy

Soliloquy¹ means to speak alone with ourselves. It has a Latin root - *solus* (alone) and *loqui* (to speak). It is a form of speech where we speak our thoughts out loud to an invisible and unknown audience.²



Sara Anjo, “The body and the meaning of clouds”

<https://soundcloud.com/sara-anjo/the-body-and-the-meaning-of-clouds>

¹ <http://saraanjo.wixsite.com/saraanjo/soliloquy>

² This form of discourse became known with the philosopher Saint Augustine in his *Liber Soliloquium*, where the philosopher searches for a way to prove the existence of God through an intense process of argumentation in the form of an inner dialogue. The inner dialogue, as a form that unravels a discourse to be shared with others, was one of the main purposes of the soliloquy during my research.

In this essay, I use the term soliloquy to name an artistic practice developed during my participation in *Das Choreography* master's programme in Amsterdam at *Das Graduate School*, between September 2014 and November 2016. This practice attempted to articulate, unravel and share a discourse concerning the research I made. It was developed through the medium of sound, with a collage of voice recordings and soundscapes, as exercises that I called audio choreography. In fact, the words of this essay originated in the form of a soliloquy, while I was in a peripatetic walk that took place in Lisbon during an artistic residency at Largo das Residências, in February 2017.³

My research during the master's programme explored an ecology of practices (a term borrowed from the philosopher Isabelle Stengers, that I will contextualize later on) and developed multiple fields of experience, both in indoors and outdoors environments. Indoors, it took place in spaces of performative contexts such as studios and stages, and outdoors in more natural contexts such as parks and forests.

I explored different kinds of dances and walks, looking mostly at contemplative, meditative and ecstatic work, inspired by the practice of other choreographers and artists, as well as yoga, chi-kung, dynamic meditation and mindfulness exercises. I worked with dances such as small dance (inspired by the choreographer Steve Paxton), moving in slow motion and moving in stills (inspired by Meg Stuart), oracle dances (Jennifer Lacey), dances starting in a specific body part, for instance the heart/sternum (Anna Halrpin), spontaneous ballet (Maria F. Scaroni), dynamic meditation (Osho) and shaking and pulsating continually the body (inspired by several dancers and artists). I explored walks such as walking backwards (inspired by a chi-kung exercise), "lungs choreography" - a breathing and walking exercise (inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh), walking as a manifest (by Maria Gil), Telepathic Walks (Alice Chauchat) and Chair Game - a walking and sitting exercise (Diego Agulló). During the master's programme, pulsating and shaking the body became one of the most important exercise; later transformed in a stage piece titled [Shaped as a Tree](http://saraanio.wixsite.com/saraanio/shaped-as-a-tree) which premiered at Negócio-ZDB, in Lisbon, April 2016.⁴

³ Peripatetic from the Greek, means "walking" or "given to walking about". It became known by Aristotle's habit of walking while lecturing. Nowadays it is a common term in the artistic context to name the exercise of talking through the stimulus of walking. Walking and putting the body into motion inspires and activates thinking, and therefore it is a helpful tool to speak out loud our thoughts.

⁴ <http://saraanio.wixsite.com/saraanio/shaped-as-a-tree>



Sara Anjo, "Em forma de árvore"

<https://vimeo.com/223876086>

These experiences were expanded with two different parallel practices. One was mapping, a notation exercise that scores and maps the work through writing and drawing, following the logics of body sensations, feelings and memories. Before, during and after the practice, I always developed (alone or collectively) a map of the practice, that has been used as a reflection guide. The other one practice was the soliloquy. Soliloquy worked as an interconnective tissue between the several practices, and it also helped to develop a voice for afterthought, thus opening possibilities in the research practices I developed.

With both mapping and soliloquy I attempted to develop a living archive, tracing what remained from the practices and echoing their various possibilities. Scores and notations add, as the artist Myriam Van Imschoot argues, "further possibilities of extension, (re)emergence and access to these performance documents, as they drift in and out of context(s) and echo their multiple existences." (IMSCHOOT, 2013, p. 52)

In the context of my research, drifting in and out of contexts and echoing multiple existences became fundamental, because I was building a living archive through several different practices. To illustrate that, I want to describe a moment developed with my colleagues and peers in one of the masters' sessions. Several kinds of materials that informed the research at that moment were brought to the studio: branches collected from outdoors walks, a repetitive dance based in a kundalini yoga meditation, an image compendium with a specific visual imagery, the first Soliloquy titled "The body and the meaning of clouds", the research plan, and some texts: "Rhizome" by Deleuze and

Guattari, "How long is the coast of Britain" by Mandelbrot and Thought in the Act by Erin Manning and Brian Massumi.

In the beginning of the practice, while showing these different materials, it was proposed to set up the same materials in space, dividing ourselves in small groups. Each group was responsible to organize how one of the materials would be available in the room. In this way, the space was transformed into several different zones, small territories where these materials co-habited. An immersive area for listening was created for the soliloquy, that was sort of tent surrounded by curtains where we could lay down to listen. The branches were spread on the floor together with the pages from "Rhizome", creating a labyrinth. The visual imagery was displayed all over the room, on the walls, in the windows and in a sofa. The text "How long is the coast of Britain" surrounded a table, which became a confessional lounge area, with a carpet underneath with wine and glasses available. The pages of the research plan were hanging as if clothes drying in a line. The book *Thought in the Act* was available in a set-up of a couple of chairs, suggesting a reading date. After that we all gathered and did a collective mapping exercise by drawing together the display of the room. We drew a guide that allowed us to navigate as well as to drift. Navigating and drifting was basically what we did. We took decisions and followed desires navigating in the space, exploring, for example, the soliloquy zone, taking a pause to lay down and listen. Or we drifted in and out of contexts to something unexpected, letting something that was echoing to lead us, like playing with the branches and the rhizome text, transforming those materials in a sort of oracle that revealed some kind of fortune. Or we sat together under a table, drinking wine and chatting about what was going on in the room, while a colleague was stepping and dancing above us. Or we even sat in a chair reading *Thought in the Act*, while watching what was happening in the room and doing an audio recording of it - one more soliloquy.

In this session, while the multiple fields were coexisting, the immersive area of the Soliloquy and the mapping area generated an enormous curiosity. We became interested in how they could be further explored, how they could re-emerge. From then on, I kept working with this ecology of practices, paying special attention to the living archive of these two practices.

Sara Anjo, **DRIFTING WITHIN NAVIGATION**
Multiple Fields of Experiences and Ecology of Practices

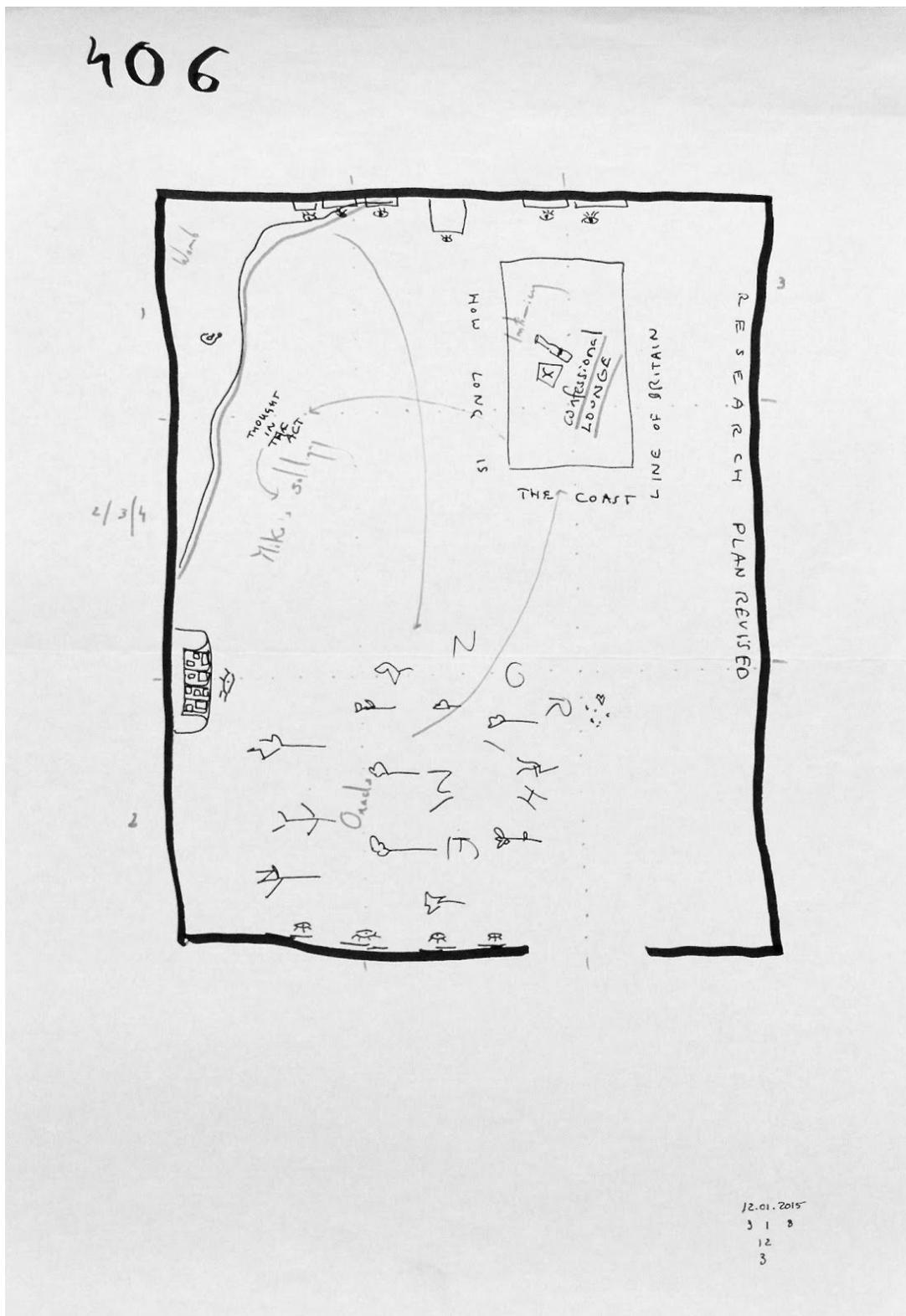


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Map drawn collectively during the master's session

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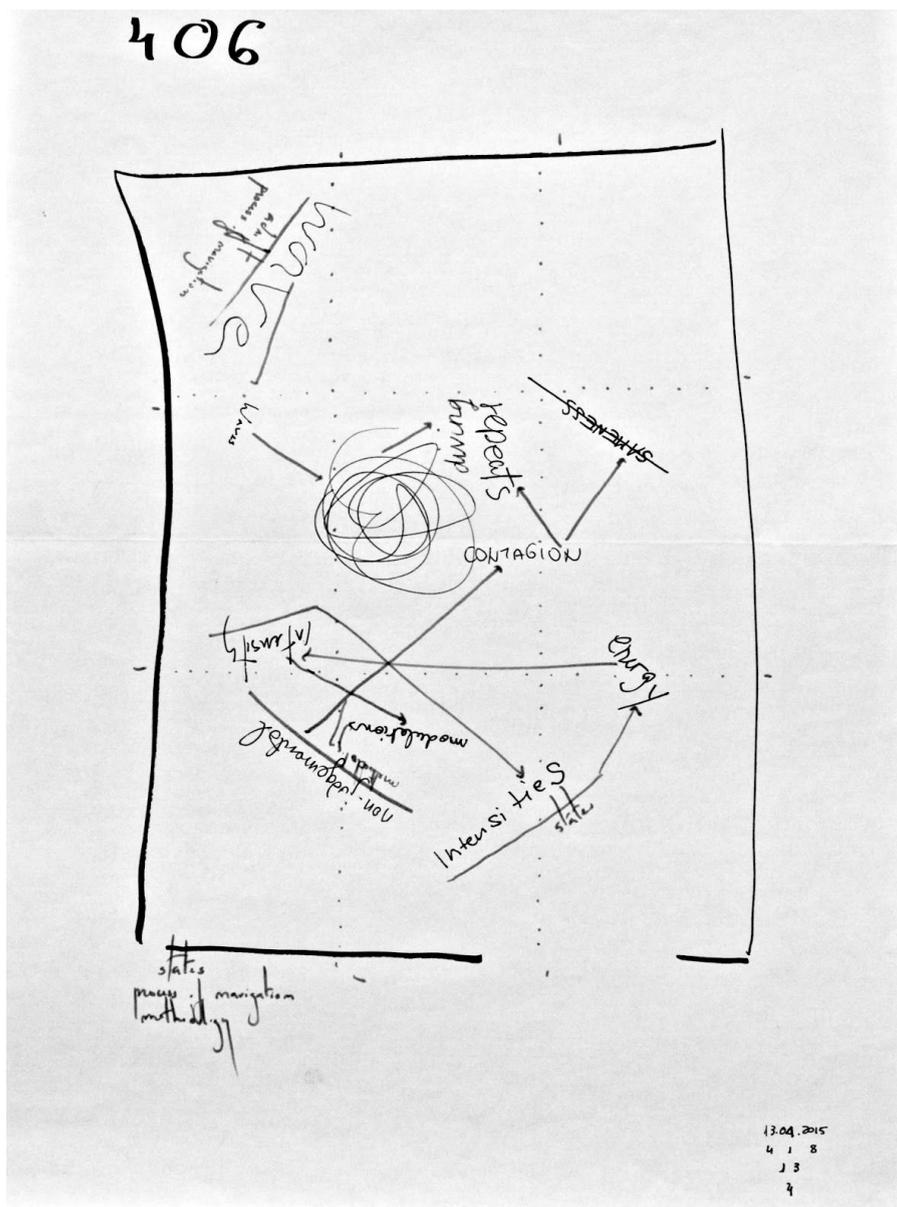
Drifting within Navigation

To navigate while drifting is a paradox - these are two very different actions. Here I am referring to the Portuguese expression, “navegar à deriva”, that literally translated means to navigate by drifting.⁵ This is a sailing metaphor that expresses the possibility to navigate by using the forces of nature and the momentum, like currents and wind. It means to navigate without controlling the direction, but by following the tides. The use of these forces allows to drift, in other words, to navigate within them rather than controlling them. As a result, you detour from your initial direction and need to work with what is happening in the moment. It does not mean that the initial direction is lost; it means that some negotiation needs to be done between the goal, the initial direction, and a deviation that leads to a new direction. In the session I just mentioned, for instance, our directions were the materials, the task of setting the space together and drawing the collective map. All the rest was a process of drifting within navigation, a negotiation, a detour, a new direction. That’s mostly how my research was operating, as a process of drifting between different practices, exploring the body from its multiplicity. Navigating through the forces of the momentum, allowing unexpected experiences or possibilities to emerge.

To continue to illustrate this process, I want to show another map from the same session, although exemplifying a different perspective. The map shows the movement practice, where we all dance together a kundalini yoga meditation. The dance itself illustrates the possibility of drifting within navigation: it is a durational dance that takes around 30 to 40 minutes during which we follow a pattern, repeating the same steps. The steps are: step forward, sideways, backwards and sideways again, starting with the right side and repeating with the left as if drawing a cross figure. Inevitably, this pattern is transformed because of the duration of the dance. Within the same dance structure we also explored different things, like space orientation, speed, the relations and encounters that occur between the people dancing, and the way the movement is done taking the body to different sensations, qualities and states.

⁵ This expression has some similarities with the concept of “dead reckoning”. In navigation, dead-reckoning (deduced reckoning or DR) is the process of calculating one’s current position by using a previous determined position, or fix, and advancing that position based upon known or estimated speeds over elapsed time and course. The corresponding term in biology, used to describe the processes by which animals update their estimates of position or heading, is path integration.

This feedback map gathers one word from each one of us related to what was felt. In the map we can identify the words: waves (which was written by three different people with a font suggesting the motion of waves), intensities; modulations; contagious; diving; repeats; non-judgmental, and sameness with a strikethrough. Here the sailing metaphor becomes underlined, enhancing the experience of following modulations and intensities as if moving with the rhythm of tides.



Feedback map from the dance meditation practice

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Coliloquy

Initially Soliloquy was a solo practice. Once some curiosity arose on how to explore this further, we developed a collective experience in other's masters' sessions. In this way, Soliloquy entered a realm of collaborative cosmologies and it was transformed in Coliloquy.⁶

In the other sessions, similar to the one described before, we had several materials with the difference that this time, apart from the dance and movement scores, all the other material (texts, images, sounds, maps) were in our devices (computers, phones, recorders). We did not set up "a space". We were not aware of what we were going to use and how. We warmed up the session exploring movement in stills and shaking our bodies. Then we brought in the devices, working with the Coliloquy and making a improvisation. This time the intention was that the research world could be more appropriated, crossed or disrupted by the others. The different zones and territories inhabiting the room were formed by each one of us and by the different propositions and inputs we were bringing in. We knew our goal was to explore a living archive, we did not know how to do it and we had to follow the logic of the moment, facilitating contexts, thinking relations between bodies, concepts and materials. We had to tune to what was latent in the room, what was emerging, present but yet not visible. As my colleague and peer Thea Patterson says we were using an *emergent dramaturgy*.⁷ We were working with tools of composition with the potential of what was emerging, being extremely attentive to the possible paths that were being drawn, the multiple possibilities and where the current was taking us. Here again we were working with a process of drifting within navigation. We had some initial guides, we had an environment of potential and all the rest was to be unraveled by our coexistence in the room, by the encounters, relations, attunements and constrains that were operating.

In this way, Coliloquy became an environment of potential, where we had to tune to what was emerging, to the relations and affects that were being revealed. There was

⁶ <http://saraanjo.wixsite.com/saraanjo/coliloquio>

Coliloquy was proposed to distinguish the solo practice from the collective one. Therefore, the *solus+loqui* was transformed in *coli+loqui*. This name was proposed by the artist and choreographer Martin Nachbar, who was present in the master's sessions as an external mentor.

⁷Thea Patterson is a choreographer, dramaturge and performer based in Edmonton, Canada. We were colleagues during the master's programme, exchanging and inspiring each other's work. In her research, Patterson was interested in developing choreography as an emergent process. She explored that by developing the concepts of glimmer and slides. These concepts addressed an enormous attentiveness to what is latent in a performance. <https://theapatterson.wordpress.com/>.

not a pre-established environment. It was transformed in an existential territory, where the different zones of the room were a sensing-space of social, performative and embodied experience.

I mapped the session in my notebook when it ended, writing about the sailing metaphor:

we were on a studio, a roofless studio, with clouds as ceiling, walls of wide and faraway horizon and with atmospheric sounds. We were not in a performance, neither a practice, this was simply our place to be. The studio floor was made of earth and our feet were opening clefts as if drawing maps. While our bodies were moving clefts would appear on the ground like roots and rhizomes. Those clefts would map the history of our lives, the encounter and co-existence in our multiplicity and difference. No matter how much we were drifting or emerged in chaos, the ground would manifest those lines of movement as a unique and irreducible truth. Our bodies expressed a particular universal history.

Becoming a collective work, Coliloquy made me realize that the work, more than looking specifically to formal questions that would lead to a stage piece; dealt with practices that open up spaces, allowing for an event of togetherness. Thinking again about the sailing metaphor, the research was working with strategies of guidance and how those, coming from a solo proposition, could become a collective one.

It became relevant to reflect how others were being invited to the work and how they were coexisting in it. In this sense, I started to look at questions like: How does the process of drifting within navigation activates bodies co-encountering and coexisting in space? How does this process develop a state of encounter and conviviality? How does it generate a moment where worlds of ongoing subjectification are unraveled? (BISHOP, 2006). From these questions, three specific concepts became significantly relevant: the *Ecology of Practices* – a technology of belonging from the philosopher Isabelle Stengers (STENGERS, 2005), the *Weak Method* from the choreographer Jennifer Lacey (LACEY, 2015) and the *Intensive Map* from the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (DELEUZE & GUATTARI, 1987).



photos from Coliloquy presentation at DasArts Graduate School, Nov 2016

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Ecology of Practices

I have been continuously using Stengers' expression "ecology of practices" since the beginning of this essay. What became relevant in Stengers' proposal was how an ecology of practices can be "a political ecology were a social technology of belonging, assumes coexistence and co-becoming as the habitat of practices." (STENGERS, 2005, p.5) Stengers proposes an ecology of practices as a tool for thinking, in particular for thinking what is happening, and where the decision (or direction) "is making the maker as it is producing the relevant relation between the situation and the tool." (STENGERS, 2005) The decision, or direction, takes place in the moment of relation with the environment. Thinking and feeling "par le milieu", through the environment. As the double meaning of the French expression states, looking at the habitat, the middle and the surroundings, exploring a decentralized territory, where different zones are not restrained by a hierarchical value, but are fostered by their diversity of feeling and include their limits. Stengers' proposal of thinking "par le milieu" entered the work as a way of exploring, structuring and activating the space and the practices, since we needed to operate within several different co-existing zones and encounters. Its use allowed to develop a transitory path through indoors and outdoors environments and to drift in and out of contexts.

Stengers also argues that an ecology of practices is a technology of belonging, that addresses what people think and feel because of their sense of belonging:

social technology of belonging, as it deals with people who are not only social beings but people who belong, would then be that technology which can and must address people from the point of view of what they may become able to do and think and feel because they belong. (STENGERS, 2005: 5)

This technology of belonging is not about producing, but about challenging and fostering, because what matters in the situation, changes according to one's sense of belonging. The effects generated by what becomes important in the environment create belonging as experimentation. As Stengers mentions:

The problem for each practice is how to foster their own force, make present what causes practitioners to think and feel and act. But 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. (STENGERS, 2005: 8)

Looking at Stengers' arguments, ecology of practices becomes a relevant concept to keep exploring the research as an open field with multiple possibilities where we challenge and foster a situation of belonging. Where we are busy thinking and feeling together, and to make that pass from hand to hand. Valuing singular and different gestures, belonging to what matters in the present moment. Accordingly, drifting within navigation is also about the capacity to be aware of the relations that emerge, inhabit and affect the environment. It is a process that attempts to develop an environment that leads to a new constitution, a result of experimental togetherness.

Weak Method

The second concept that enriched the research was Jennifer Lacey's "weak method", a method that exists as a "vague travel guide, a shape-shifting map to navigate a shape-shifting terrain." (LACEY & POPA, 2015: 1). Jennifer Lacey was a guest artist in one of the masters' seminars, where she shared this method with us. It was surprising how it spoke so directly to drifting within navigation in content and language-wise. It was a method that clearly addressed the sailing and traveling metaphor, mentioning map, travelling, and navigating a shape-shifting terrain, a territory of multiple possibilities. It addressed the question of finding our way by vague means, in other words, allowing something that is latent and undetermined to "direct" and "decide". It also addressed the unexpected possibilities that take form as an impermanent event, a transitory territory where zones are changing. Finally, it also addressed the notating an impermanent landscape, that follows thinking and feeling "par le milieu". What became interesting, when reflecting about this concept through the eyes of drifting within navigation, is how it underlined the investment in openness, in the pleasure of not knowing, of the "vague travel guide". This openness made me realize that because there is no precise goal or

direction, there is not an aim of completeness. There is not the desire to overcome incompleteness, rather the desire to make it compelling through an environment of potential, attentive to what and how is happening. The state of openness goes beyond the ultimate end and there is no purpose in completing something. What matters are the relations and encounters that are occurring, to think and feel, to affect and being affected. There is the focus in an openness that allows a different constitution, grounded by existential territory and experimental togetherness. Lacey's method influenced the attentiveness to the potential of the environment without the need to achieve a goal or to find its completeness. What remains as weak or shallow is to force things to find a clear and steady result. On the contrary, the potential is revealed in the latency of the moment.

Intensive Maps

Looking at drifting within navigation as an ecology of practices supported by open methods, made me also understand it as a sort of "ecosophy"[1] (GUATTARI, 1989),⁸ borrowing Guattari's term for a complex environment that reorients the understanding of ourselves together, developing a different constitution. This environment promotes an understanding based on heterogeneity and difference, where the process of belonging is enhanced by challenges caused by no expected followed order.

This ecosophy is drawn as an "intensive map". As developed by Deleuze and Guattari in "Rhizome" from *One Thousand Plateaus* (1987), intensive map speaks about the body's inextricable extensive and intensive dimensions. It is a chart of shifting constellations of affects, which advocates a corporeal cartography, fielding through bodies and ongoing multiplicity of positioning in movement. (DELEUZE, GUATTARI, 1987). This "intensive map" is:

open and connectable in all its dimensions, it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification [...] It is a continuous, self – vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or extended end. (DELEUZE, GUATTARI, 1987: .24)

⁸ Ecosophy, a term from the philosopher Felix Guattari, is a study of complex phenomena, including human subjectivity, the environment, and social relations, all of which are intimately interconnected. This interconnection is emphasized by heterogeneity and difference, synthesizing assemblages and multiplicities in order to trace rhizomatic structures.

The idea of intensive map has been important for the research, as it enhances the primary relation with the body. It sustains the drifting within navigation, the multiple fields of experience, the ecology of practices, the experimental togetherness, and openness as a corporeal experience, as a map based on bodies experiences. In the context of the research, it traces the affective paths and relations between the practices. It traces the process as well as it records what happens. Intensive map became a key point that clusters the “intensity” of the research and became an inspiration to the research statement. Like that, the following micro-manifesto was developed:

- An intensive map is a process of drifting within navigation open to the unknown and unraveling the pleasure of not knowing.
- An intensive map is an environment of potential, being sensitive to what is latent, yet not visible.
- As an intensive map is an open guide, with the potential to get lost.
- An intensive map is an embodied chart, a corporeal cartography. A map of the extensive, intensive and affective dimensions of the body.
- An intensive map is developed by an environment of encounters, by coexisting and co-becoming bodies, developing an experimental togetherness.
- An intensive map is about thinking and feeling, affecting and being affected by the inhabited moment.
- An intensive map is never complete and refuses reduction.

Open Conclusion

This essay, this solo-coliloquy does not attempt to be complete. It has gaps, loose ends, it remains an open travel guide, a process that is unraveling a direction by detours, by choreographed trajectories still emerging and already in transition. Nevertheless, it approaches a process that reflects on how it is more and more important to develop a thinking space and time to experiment togetherness. More relevant than the direction, it is important to pay attention to what is occurring, what is happening in the environment within which we exist, an environment cohabited by differences and challenges. What remains as the aim of this artistic research is to keep developing tools for thinking and sensing together, tools to tune, sustain and guide our attention. Tools, therefore, that reveal or bring us back something, tools that simply unravel extra and ordinary things,

using chance and openness to find our way in the world. Nevertheless, and bringing this essay to a closure, I want to add that the process of drifting within navigation reminds us of the pleasure of not knowing, of letting ourselves be led by the present moment. It reminds us as well, that in multiplicity and difference we are becoming more and more connected and apart from all the contradictions between us in the world: WE DO BELONG!

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