

# A Grounded Theory Suitcase

## Thoughts on the project's theoretical standpoint

### How the Suitcase works with theory

During its first 18 months, A Suitcase of Methods has explored new qualitative methods and gained new knowledge about the experiences audience have with different types of performing arts. This means that we are in the midst of our explorative work, and every day we are learning more about how best and most gently to 'evoke' this personal knowledge that is so difficult to verbalize for the audience themselves. Therefore, it now seems relevant to specify the project's theoretical frame, and explain what part academic research traditions play in our work.

During the project's first year and a half, we have produced reports reflecting our activities, our methods, and our new knowledge, the academic research tradition has worked as a foundation for these reports. We have used relevant theories to support certain perspectives and reflections and to create a frame for the practical activities that are at the centre of the project.

Going forward with the project, this academic tradition and research method will still be part of our work process, but different academic theories will have a supportive rather than a central function in the project.

This way of using theories underlines the fact that we define A Suitcase of Methods as a *knowledge project* more than a traditional research project. A project that works exploratory; testing and reflecting on different qualitative methods. As we carry out studies and try new methods, our knowledge in this field continuously accumulates. We use this knowledge to design and modify our subsequent studies. This way of working bears significant resemblance to the research tradition *Grounded Theory*.

### A Grounded Theory Suitcase

The Suitcase of Methods understands innovation and gaining new knowledge as something that happens in an explorative process, where the final goal remains unknown, and where we continuously reflect on what we are doing, why we are doing it, what we are learning, and what all this means for the next step in the process. Working this way, where previous activities to some extent determine the subsequent step and activity, means that we continuously build on the knowledge we generate. Methodologically this positions the project within the research tradition



*Grounded Theory* (Bryant, A., 2010. *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications). Grounded Theory is characterized by continuous shifts in perspective between an explorative and an evaluative approach. First, you literally dive into the matter and into the field in order to gain as many impressions as possible. Hereafter, you 'pull back' and work deductively and analytically with your impressions before you dive into the mess again. This time with new knowledge and therefore with a new perspective. Grounded Theory is thus a circular process that continues to evolve.

### **Important theoretical inspiration**

The Grounded Theory is thus a frame for the project's explorative approach. The different studies within the project are based on basic ideas from the world of Phenomenology, Psychology and Cultural Studies.

### **Phenomenological conversations**

Our work with qualitative research interviews – or the audience conversations as we call it – is based on a phenomenological tradition. We work with the acknowledgement that the interviewer will always be an active part of the conversation and thus affect the 'content' and the knowledge produced in the conversation. The interviewer must thus practice self-awareness in order to understand how he or she affect the conversation. It is thus necessary to realise that there is no such thing as 'the pure' experience or 'the pure' conversation, which is unaffected by the context, by other people, etc. In our studies, we therefore include and take into account the context of the experience.

### **Using aspects of Psychology**

In our explorative work, we occasionally draw on psychological techniques and theories; for instance, in our aim to create a pleasant atmosphere during interviews, where the audience feel inspired and comfortable enough to share personal experiences, or when we explore the effects and qualities of different questions. Here, amongst others, we are inspired by Professor E.H. Schein's theories on the open interview conversation and his overall focus on listening:

*"Humble questioning is the noble art, which is to get the other to talk freely, to ask questions that you do not already know the answer to, and to establish a relation based on curiosity and interest in the other"* (E.H. Schein).



Additionally, we are inspired by Maria Turri's (researcher in Psychiatry at Oxford University) thoughts on the psychological aspects of spectator processes when experiencing theatre. One of her basic arguments is that the audience's consciousness is very active when watching performance art, and that we, if we use the right questions, might learn a lot about how profoundly experiences with performance art may affect a human being (Turri, Maria 2014).

### **Inputs from Cultural Studies**

Research within the broad field of Cultural Studies also inspire our work. We collaborate with Matthew Reason (professor at the Faculty of Arts, York St. John University), who specialises in developing research methodologies for qualitative audience research, and we look to theories that push and challenge traditional research boundaries between theory and practice (Lehmann 2002; Barret, Estelle & Bolt, Barbara (ed.), 2010).

Summing up, these and other theoretical perspectives work as a support for our knowledge project, and (perhaps more importantly) the academic research tradition ensures a stringency and coherence in the project's methodological and analytical work with the audiences' experience and perceived relevance.

### **Examples of literature relevant for the project**

Barret, Estelle & Bolt, Barbara, editors. (2010): *Practice As Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*. I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd. London, Knowles.

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Caroll, Erin E. & Latulipe, Celine (2011): *Capturing 'In The Moment' Creativity Through Data Triangulation*. Proceedings of the 8th ACM Conference on Creativity and cognition pp. 321-322.



Ejgod, Louise, Ejbye, Tine, Scenekunstnetværket & Randers Egnsteater: *Teatersamtaler – Giv publikum ordet*. [http://www.scenet.dk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/teatersamtaler\\_5k.pdf](http://www.scenet.dk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/teatersamtaler_5k.pdf)

Ejgod, Louise & Lindehave, Anja Mølle (2014): "Publikumsudvikling – strategier for inddragelse eller institutionel udvikling" in *Kultur og Klasse*, vol. 48 issue 118.

Latulipe, Celine a.o. (2011): *Love, Hate, Arousal and Engagement: Exploring Audience Responses to Performing Arts*. Conference Paper 2011. Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems.

Lehmann, Niels (2002): "Pragmatisk dualisme: dannelse mellem rationalitet og rationalitetskritik" i *Dannelse*, Aarhus Universitetsforlag, Aarhus.

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Reason, Matthew (2013): *Drawing the Theatrical Experience – How children watch theatre*, <http://www.imaginate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Drawing-the-Theatrical-Experience-Final-version.pdf>

Reason, Matthew (2012): "Writing the Embodied Experience: Ekphrastic and Creative Writing as Audience Research" in *Critical Stages*, December 2012 no. 7.

Schein, Edgar H. (2014): *Spørg – Den ædle kunst at spørge ydmygt i stedet for at belære*, Gyldendal Business, København.

Simon Høffding, Simon & Martiny, Kristian Martiny (2015): "Framing a phenomenological interview: what, why and how" in *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*.

Turri, Maria (2014): "Transference and Katharsis: Freud to Aristoteles" in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 2014

Uwe Gröschel, Andrew Irving (2014): "Researching Audience through Walking Fieldwork" in *Participations*. Vol. 12 issue 1.

