

# Introduction: Mapping Theatre

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*“The entrance to the hall was barred by a big panel, leaving two-meters-wide passageways at either side, on which Jed had displayed a satellite photo taken around the mountain of Guebwiller next to an enlargement of a Michelin Departments map of the same zone. The contrast was striking: while the photograph showed only a soup of more or less uniform green sprinkled with vague blue spots, the map developed a fascinating maze of departmental and scenic roads, viewpoints, forests, lakes, and cols. Above the two enlargements, in black capital letters, was the title of the exhibition: THE MAP IS MORE INTERESTING THAN THE TERRITORY.”<sup>1</sup>*

A world with fluid borders has profoundly influenced the field of theatre and performance. The mobility of theatre makers and audiences transcending state, national or institutional borders, and international collaboration and workshops have become ordinary practice. At the same time, one can perceive the fluidity of traditional drama and performance genres, the mixing of different theatrical styles and art forms, the development of new forms of performing arts and the convergence of embodiment and technology. Nevertheless, theatre researchers and critics not only have an obligation to clarify or map the fuzzy and dispersed field of drama, theatre and performance, but also to map the influx of new terminology. The contributors to this issue were encouraged to discuss the difficulties

they face in dealing with drama or performing arts systematically or analytically and what kind of solutions they have devised. As an outcome of the call for papers, the number presents theoretical, cognitive, geographical, statistical, ideological and historiographical approaches to the mapping of theatre.

However, what does mapping as a term and an activity actually mean? One of the most sophisticated explanations is presented in the *Oxford Dictionaries*<sup>2</sup> where the noun ‘map’ is defined as a diagrammatic or two-dimensional representation of land, sea, cosmos, or representation of data, showing spatial arrangement or distribution of something over an area. When a map is a fixed representation of data of a certain type, then mapping – making a map or associating and linking different elements of data to each other – as an activity tends to be more fluid, playful and innocent. Mapping is an endeavour to achieve a better understanding of impalpable and intangible phenomena, to create alternative maps and mappings, or to circumvent fixed perceptions arising from simulacras and simulations.

Can the map be more interesting than the territory though, as Michel Houellebecq in the quote above stated? Is it possible that an essay on a performance or theatre provokes more emotions and ideas than the performance or theatre field itself? We think it is possible and it has, therefore, been our aim as editors of *Nordic Theatre Studies* to stimulate our readers with the verbal and graphic mappings of the authors. From this, it follows that intellectually structured thinking and verbal statements can also be considered as mapping.

Teemu Paavolainen in his article “Meaning in the Weaving: Mapping and Texture as Figures of Spatiality and Eventness” presents some critical and alternative ideas to the traditional notion of mapping. His main aim is to advocate a dramaturgical ontology of events rather than objects, or ecologies rather than cartographies, stressing, thus, not only the physical, but also the temporal qualities of mapping. Nevertheless, he is a pioneer in this respect, preferring the metaphors of texture and weaving to current idioms of becoming and emergence that were central in the last number of the journal titled *Theatre and the Nomadic Subject*. Finally, Paavolainen proposes different models of dramaturgy and context: chain, braid, space, event.

Hedi-Liis Toome endeavours to create a map of theatrical experiences based on the empirical reception research conducted among general audiences of eight spoken theatre performances in Tartu, Estonia. She has used factor analysis, a method of data reduction, to assemble 24 different performance characteristics into factors. The author decided to use the five factor model because of its relevancy and possible connections to reception theories. The factors were labelled by Toome as Aesthetic, Entertainment, Personally Challenging, Complexity and Conventionality Factor. However, the statistical program also pointed out some overlaps of characteristics that could be included into different factors, particularly between the Aesthetic and Personally Challenging Factor. Thus, the article demonstrates, among other things, the interpretative role of the researcher in the analysis of data and mapmaking and highlights the relevancy and possible connections of statistical mapping to reception theories.

Next, two articles deal with the perceptual mappings of spectators, analysing the ideologies and practices of participatory theatre. Joonas Lahtinen draws especially from Jacques Rancière’s and Marcel Mauss’s views of human perception and experience, using terms like ‘sensory fields’ and ‘collective body techniques’ as the main concepts of the framework. Sensory field refers to forms, intensities and elements that the senses of an organism register amidst the continuous flux of stimuli and that affect the organism. Collective body techniques, on the other hand, are the behavioural patterns learned and

adopted through observing and mimicking other people’s behaviour both unconsciously and intentionally. Lahtinen suggests that the sensory field opened up by the performance and the collective body techniques employed in it can be located with the help of ‘situation fragments’, that is to say, descriptions of specific memorable sequences and feelings. He applies the method of situation fragments in an analysis of Lois Weaver’s *What Tammy Needs to Know About Getting Old and Having Sex* (2008).

Thomas Rosendal Nielsen, in his article “Theatrical Complicity as Medium of Emancipation”, investigates the position of spectators who are framed as an accomplice in the exploitation and representation of suffering and violence, taking under examination the production of *Sálo* (2010) by the Danish performance group SIGNA and Tim Crouch’s *The Author* (2009) at the Royal Court Theatre. By applying the systems theory of Niklas Luhmann, the two performances are represented as elaborately structured games of observation. The focal point of the theory is the notion of ‘observation of observations’, which simply means observation on how observations are observed. Observation as a term and how it is used by Rosendal Nielsen seems to correlate with the sensory field in the previous article by Lahtinen. In addition to the similar approaches to performance analysis, the articles also share similar ideological stances in discussing the role of the spectator in participatory performances and the possibilities of emancipation.

The next article, “Activating Imaginative Attention and Creating Observant Moments in the Everyday Through the Art of Walking” by Cecilia Lagerström, also deals with perceptual mapping, but from the point of view of the practitioner. The author discusses a collaborative project on walking that she has been conducting together with the actress and tightrope walker Helena Kågemark since 2013. Their aim was not so much to work on the mental mapping of an environment but rather – to explore how the environment and walking influenced their mind: how it created observant moments, activated imaginative attention, facilitated new thoughts, enabled the participants to see existence from new places, encouraged associative and metaphorical thinking, etc. The mapping of theatre

was also conducted geographically and socially, because works of performing arts were presented in public spaces, spectators were engaged with in different ways, and wider audiences were reached than those who normally go to the theatre.

Louise Ejgod Hansen, in her article, presents three different mappings of the regional distribution of theatre in Denmark and contrary to the former ones, takes a more sociological and political stance. Together, the three mappings cover important aspects of a national theatre system: production (subsidy), distribution of performances and theatre consumption. Like Toome, Hansen bases her research on statistical data sets, presenting a range of various official theatre statistics. Whereas Toome's perspective was the reception, Hansen's is the politically regulated mapping of theatre that poses important questions as to how cultural policy makers may act on the mappings. While her research particularly concerns a current debate on decentralization of theatre in Denmark, it also raises a range of methodological questions of mapping, especially regarding the limitations and inconclusiveness of the data sets.

Laura Gröndahl's article endeavours to map the development of scenography education in Finland, at the University of Industrial Arts from the early 1970s to the 2000s. In contrast to the other disciplines of theatre, this is a unique affiliation which highlights the double character of scenography as both a visual and a performative art. Gröndahl maps the developments of the curriculum from the disciplined rational pre-planning and conceptual analysis of the 1970s, to the subjective individualism at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, and finally to the interactive, self-regulating processes in the 2000s, asking to what degree such developments are related to individual teachers, to more general cultural tendencies and policies, as well as to material and organizational conditions. Both Hansen's and Gröndahl's mappings tackle the influence of the institutional organisation of theatre practice and education on the ideologies and practices of the institutions and practitioners but also on political decision-making.

Anne Fiskvik offers a historical perspective on mapping, presenting a performance history of the

nineteenth century Johannesénske Balletselskab and contextualizing their place in the traditions of itinerant performance. In particular, Fiskvik analyses the ensemble's reliance on family members as performers and its popular, diverse repertory, consisting of national and character dances as well as pantomimes, thereby offering an insight into historical dance practices and styles, which so far, have only been marginally researched. The article demonstrates not only the historical background of theatrical mobility and internationalization, but also the diverse cultural contacts existing in Scandinavia.

Finally, Pauls Daija analyses the first play in Latvian, an adapted translation of Ludvig Holberg's *Jeppe of the Hill* (1723, Latvian version 1790). While traditionally interpreted as a work of anti-alcohol propaganda, Daija argues for a political reading, which positions the play in the revolutionary era of Europe. The author calls attention to the play's staging of changes in Latvian peasant identity and to how the setting to late eighteenth century Courland underscores the play's social conflict as also being an ethnic one, thus pointing to a change in the Latvian-German colonial relationship. Accordingly, he argues, the play may be read as a part of the Baltic Enlightenment emancipation project and as a hidden debate on serfdom and the colonial framework of Courland society.

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## NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Michel Houellebecq, *The Map and the Territory*, Vintage, London 2012, e-book, chapter 5.
- 2 *Oxford Dictionaries*, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/map> (accessed 1 December 2015).

