

COLLECTIVE WORK PRACTICES IN THEATRICAL REHEARSALS

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ABSTRACT

How a new play emerges by different contributions made by the playwright/director, the actors through text writings, rehearses, improvisation, interactions and collective meaning-making? What is the role played by participation, space, and materiality, in these interactions? This paper aims to show the collective dimension of artistic practices in the process of development of a new theatrical play. We intend to show how shared understanding and new insights emerge from situated social interactions of doing and saying that take place on the stage during rehearses. Using the concept of distributed cognition (Hutchings 1995) as well as the practice-based approach of knowledge in workplaces (Gherardi 2009), we show the situated nature of the development of a new theatrical play. Through a detailed analysis of the development process, we argue that the new show emerges by interactions between different social actors, professional expertise, bodies, spaces, materials, which are situated in time and space. This system of fragmented knowledge (Bruni et al. 2007) is mobilized through a shared engagement in the object of the activity (Engeström 1987; 2000) and a fluid process of participation we will describe.

INTRODUCTION

This article proposes to look at the emergence of a new theatrical play as result of collective doing and knowing. In particular, following the suggestion of practice-based studies, we consider the work practices in which the composition of the new play takes place. By adopting a practice-based approach to inquire into how work is actually accomplished (Gherardi 2012), we study how creative working practices are developed within situated ways of working and talking about it. The aim is to show the heterogeneous and collective work that is implied in the emergence of a new artwork.

PRACTICE-BASED STUDIES AND COLLECTIVE WORK

In recent years much attention has been paid to practice theories from organizational and management scholars (Brown and Duguid 1991, 2001; Orr 1996; Gherardi 2000; Orlikowski 2000; Nicolini 2012). Despite its differences (Nicolini 2012), this heterogeneous group of empirical studies represent 'a practice turn' (Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina & Von Savigny 2001) that invite us to pay attention to how society, as well as organizing, is produced in every day (social and work) practices.

What is distinctive of this stream of research is the connection between practice and knowing and learning (Elkjaer 2004). Practice-based studies (PBS) go beyond a cognitive consideration of knowledge describing knowledge as an activity (knowing-in-practice). In PBS knowledge is defined as an activity as a collective and distributed 'doing', situated in time and space (Gherardi 2009). The situated dimension of the activity (Suchman 1987) tells about the importance of the concept of context. In this view, the context isn't only a container of actions, but it is a dimension in which the interests of the actors and the opportunities of the environment meet and define each other (Gherardi 2012). The context, in this view, becomes the ecological environment in which the subjects perceive and interpret the signals and indicators that come from it, while at the same time they interact with others, and they are involved in try to make sense of the meaning of their actions (Garfinkel 1967). Not by chance, one of the sociological traditions that contributed to the bandwagon of PBS (Corradi et al.

2010) has been ethnomethodology. The ethnomethodological studies of work (as it is developed within the tradition of workplace studies, see Heath et al. 2000; Engestrom & Middleton 1996; Parolin 2003; 2008) considers the ‘naturalistic’ analysis of settings the only way to comprehend the activity of working with its collective actions, its situated practices, and the meanings given to the latter. They view work as an activity in which the objects and subjects present in the setting constitute and give sense to the activities that arise from their interactions. According to Heath, Knoblauch and Luff (2000), ethnomethodology is used in workplaces to examine the practices, procedures and socially organized competencies in which participants employ tools and technologies in emergent production and into the coordination of social action and activities. Focusing on the intelligibility of actions, ethnomethodology analyses the micro-practices that enable actors to coordinate themselves in work settings. This importance of the situatedness is also shared by another tradition of studies part of the “bandwagon” of practice-based studies (Gennai et al. 2010) symbolic interactionism. By conducting observation in situ, all those traditions seek to grasp the experience and points of view of subjects who give sense to objects and situations through interaction. For this approach, attention to situatedness entails examining the meanings shared by subjects, objects and practices in the ‘place’. The place is conceived as an ‘ecological space’ in which collective dynamics and interactions with machinery occur (Star 1996). The concept of ecological space is also at the base of Hutchins work on distributed cognition. Hutchins (1995) considers a complex activity, like ship navigation, the result of a collective effort of a team who performs “distributed cognition”. The studies on the cognition in the activity systems (Hutchins, 1995; Lave, 1988) show how many complex functions and activities could not be realized individually. These actions are complex because they emerge in systems of joint activity, distributed and mediated by specific artifacts. Using insights from different PBS theories, we analyse the work of a group of theatrical professionals dealing with a new production.

THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND METHODS

The paper presents an empirical research carried out following the process of development of a new play in a small group of professional theatre based in Bergamo, a medium city in northern Italy. The interest on the ideation/production phase of a new artefact (in this case a new show) originated from previous studies of the first author regarding the design and production of physical artefacts (Parolin 2010; 2012; 2015; Parolin and Mattozzi 2012). While theatre as the setting of inquiring depends on the second author, who works professionally as playwright and director. The second author was writing her master thesis on creativity in theatre (Pellegrinelli 2017) while the two authors decided to set up a small research together.

The idea was not only to use the access of the production phase in theatre but also to design a transdisciplinary research project able to provide a fruitful dialogue between professionals and researchers (Montuari 2015). In particular, the second author took the role as a researcher within a familiar setting. The inspiration for this choice is the self-ethnography proposed by Matt Alvesson (2003).

A self-ethnography is a study and a text in which the researcher-author describes a cultural setting to which s/he has a “natural access”, is an active participant, more or less on equal terms with other participants. The researcher then works and/or lives in the setting and then uses the experiences, knowledge and access to empirical material for research purposes. This research is, however, not a major preoccupation, apart from at a particular time when the empirical material is targeted for close scrutiny and writing. The person is thus not an ethnographer in the sense of a professional stranger or a researcher primarily oriented to studying the specific setting. Participant observation is thus not a good label in this case, observing participant is better. (Alvesson 2003: 174).

The second author has been part of the team of production as playwright and director of the new show, and she contributed in gathered data thought a self-ethnographical diary filled out during the period of rehearses. However, designing a project with the use of different methodologies, the research team attempts to develop a triangulation of data to create a richer picture of the phenomena (Denzin 1994). Using a mixed methodology (video and audio records, self-ethnographic diary, ethnographical observation, interviews and documentary work), we gathered a range of qualitative data that allow us to present some excerpts showing the role of human and non-human interactions in the emergence of new artistic product. Using several data from within the practices (self-ethnographic diary and ethnographical interviews) and external observation (ethnographic observation, video and audio records) we can provide a deep description of the situated and collective nature of work in the new production process in theatrical work.

A CASE IN THEATRICAL WORK

As previously introduced, the empirical research has been carried out studying the new show production process within a small theatre group, based in Bergamo and active in Italy at the national level. The new play has been produced by “Luna e Gnac”, a professional theatre company specialized in plays for children. The theatre company is composed of two actors (Federica Molteni and Michele Eynard), and one of them is also a cartoonist. Luna e Gnac is also part of “Residenza Iniziare”, a network of different artistic subjects that share services and manage a theatre in surrounding area of Bergamo (Italy). The writing and the direction of the new play have been entrusted at Carmen Pellegrinelli, second author of this contribution and another artist involved in “Residenza Iniziare”. She worked already with Luna e Gnac directing their last five plays.

The new show tells the story of Alfonsina Morini Strada, who has been the first (and only) woman to run for the bicycles' competition "Giro di Italia" in the 20ties of the last century. The process of emergence of the new play is related to a broader project proposed on the occasion of a national call for funding for artistic work offered by Valdese Church in 2016. In particular, the story of Alfonsina has been chosen to compose a trilogy of plays about the sport and civil/human rights. The idea of the proponents, Luna e Gnac together with Carmen Pellegrinelli, was to plan three plays, addressed to children, about real stories of men and women in sports who contributed in political and social rights development in Italy. In particular, the personal story of Alfonsina as sports(wo)man, was the occasion to underline that woman can also follow her dreams and excel in disciplines traditionally dominated by men. Together with the stories of Gino Bartali, who worked for the anti-fascist resistance during the Second World War, and Samia Yusuf Omar, an Olympic athlete from Somalia who died in the Mediterranean Sea in the attempt to reach Italy, would compose a trilogy focused in sports as well as human rights. However, the founding wasn't granted, and the brother project of the sports and human right trilogy was set aside.

Nevertheless, it was the opportunity to take part in another important national competition for funding addressed to artistic production (Next - Laboratorio delle idee's call for founding 2016/2017) provides another push for the development and shapes the project about a show on Alfonsina's life. For this occasion, the playwright rewrites the first description of the project within the Next application format adding more details on purpose and the flavours of the story. The format includes information about the proponent subject, the title chosen, and the artistic description, the synopsis of the play, the contacts, and the production schedule. It is in the artistic description that the nature of the new show proposal starts to take shape. Using a quotation taken from the book "Piu' veloce del vento" [Faster than the wind, our translation] about Alfonsina Strada (Percivale 2016), the text presents the character of Alfonsina in a way that would drive the further depiction of her personality. In the following excerpt from the ethnographic diary, we can see how the quotation is used.

Excerpt 1

The quotation, taken by the *incipit* of the book, allows the reader to go directly to the poetic core of the world of the protagonist through an "image". This "image" seeds something related to what is emerging in the show and its contents. "*By riding a busted bike, with the determination of a warrior and the athletic preparation of a seamstress, Alfonsina arrives and runs.*" This image speaks to the character of the protagonist, which embodies what has so far been made with abstract theoretical reflections. These considerations indicate a need of think over gender stereotypes (Excerpt from the ethnographic diary, our translation).

From this excerpt, the quotation appears to be used to create a vivid idea of the character of Alfonsina who seems strong (and determinate) as a warrior and precise (and prepared) as well as a seamstress. She rides a "busted" bike that suggests something about her economic situation as well as her determination to run (probably in a competition) notwithstanding it. Moreover, influenced by another important reference used to talk about Alfonsina's story the book titled "Gli anni suggestivi di Alfonsina Strada" [the roar years of Alfonsina Strada, our translation] (Facchinetti 2004), the text presents a particular point of view used to narrate Alfonsina's life events.

Excerpt 2

It is in a café located in a provincial area of the north of Italy that a discussion - about the strange creature that decides to face an impossible challenge, among appreciation and ridicule - takes place. Alfonsina Strada induces discussions, creates fractures, and raises questions. The characters that inhabit the local café, talking about this bizarre and brave woman, they talk about themselves, their fears, their dreams, the old and the new stereotypes because cycling is and remains "a male stuff."

(Excerpt from the application for the Next call for founding 2016/2017 presented by the group, our translation).

The Alfonsina's story is presented as it was perceived by the public opinion of her times, the twenties of the last century, in the nowhere land of the provincial villages. Those Alfonsina's story characterisations are from the references and have been part of the project selected by the Next competition committee. Once the group has the confirmation of the selection for Next competition (August 2016), they settle some preliminary meetings (September 2016) and a schedule for rehearsals from February 2017 to April 2016, to be able to present the new show at the Next event planned for May 2017. In those preliminary meetings, the group agree to use a bright blackboard, with the extemporary drawing and shadows together with actors performance, as a technique for telling Alfonsina's story. The bright blackboard is a characteristic of the plays by Luna and Gnac. They use it a lot to take advantage of the expertise of Michele as a cartoonist. In the preliminary meetings, they also decide to hire a young actress, who has masculine characteristics, for playing the role of Alfonsina. The director/playwright was looking for a character (and a body able to embody it), capable to subverts the traditional gender's stereotypes. The project aims to use heroic sports epic to narrate a story of women empowerment.

Excerpt 3

We choose to speak about sports together with women rights because we think it is important, in this country and within this historical context, to offer positive role models able to engage girls in their realisation project, still too much interpreted by male heroes.

(Excerpt from the application for the Next call for founding 2016/2017 presented by the group, our translation).

In spite of this, they also decide to collaborate with a scenographer for the aesthetical and spatial care of the project of the new show.

THE FIRST DRAFT

Working on several references about Alfonsina the playwright composed a first draft of the script. The text presents a structure of (part of) the play and proposes specific scenes (written in the form of monologues or dialogues). The group used this preliminary text as a base for production rehearsals of the new play.



Figure 1: The group works reading the first draft of the script during the production rehearsals in theatre. From the left: Carmen (playwright and director); Federica (actress Luna e Gnac); Laura (actress adjunct); and Michele (actor Luna e Gnac and cartoonist).

The group, using this preliminary text (the first draft of the script), works through improvisations and attempts of interpretation the characters, movements, and other characteristics of the *mise en scène* of the story. Through collective readings, improvisations and exploration of the different opportunities, the theatrical script emerges from the production rehearsals. Instead of being previously created and simply adopted by the actors, the script is composed and refined by the collective work in theatre. The draft script¹ is used as provisional, open text, which definition and stabilization occur in production rehearsals². The first draft of the text, provisional and without the indications of movements and music that characterize a mature theatrical script, also provides the structure of the new play. The first part of the script starts with the introduction of the character of Alfonsina. Then it presents the Alfonsina's relationship with her mother

1 The concept of provisional object, applied for instance to prototypes, is already developed in the design research (Binder et al. 2011; Koskinen et al. 2012). It also plays a special role in the literature influenced by the Science and Technology Studies (Storni 2012; Parolin 2015; Coletta et al. 2014; Mattozzi and Parolin, *forthcoming*), where an analysis of the evolution of the object is able to (re)trace objects as "matters of concern" (Latour, 2009).

2 One could say that the theatre, as the site of production rehearsals, works as the studios works within the tradition of STS's informed "studio studies" (Farias and Wilker 2015). As Bruno Latour point out, in architectural studios - or engineer's design department - object's controversial nature is made visible (Latour 2005: 80).

that characterizes the asphyxial familiar and social environment from which she originates. The following part of the show present Alfonsina's discovery of the bicycle described as the desired object. The last two parts are related to the relationship with her sister (representing the magic helper), and her relationship with the father (the antagonist, who represents the conflict). In the following paragraphs, we show in detail the work made by the group during the rehearsals that help the director/playwriter to add specifications to the theatrical script to compose the new show.

THE EMERGENCE OF A SCENE

With the purpose of showing the process of emergence of the final script, we illustrate how the group works at the scene that is devoted to present the relationship of Alfonsina with her mother. This scene, as presented by the draft, shows the contraposition among the two characters and their worlds: the mother, who embodies the past, old values, the subordinated role of women, and Alfonsina, who represent the tension towards the future, the freedom, and women's emancipation.

Excerpt 4

Mother: Alfonsa, Alfonsa! Come back here: wouldn't you make the village speak about you? You are rowdy! Look at your battered dress.

[...]

Mother: Came on! Sit here close to me. Look how fine you sew embroider, nobody does it! Look the precision of it, look the perfection of it.

(Excerpt from the first draft of the script).

During rehearsals, the group works at the scene starting from the playwright's text that is used as a sketch. The group starts to work on the development of the scene reading and interpreting the text. In the first place, a division of roles by gender suggests to Federica to lead the mother role. However, the director, who intends to use irony on gender stereotypes, prompt entrust Michele – the only male actor – for reading and interpreting the mother's character. Reading the text, Michele improvises a characterisation of the mother's character by using a sharp voice.

Excerpt 5

Carmen: Then, from this time, you became the character directly *{Michele is already on the stage at the end of the previous scene}*.

Michele: I became the mother directly... Alfonsa, Alfonsa! Come back here, wouldn't you make the village speak about you. You are rowdy! *{When Michele is reading the text he also interprets it, adding specific features to the mother character: a distinct sharp voice, gestures, and moves walking back and forward on the stage}*.

Min 7.30 of video VID_20170202_183234

From this excerpt emerge that a contribution to the scene arises from the actor's proposal when he is staging the character. The voice, the intonation, a

characteristic way of moving the body, are all elements that help to translate the text on the stage.

If it is mainly the collaboration among Carmen (playwright/director) and the actor (Michele) that gives life to a character, the entire group is involved in the development of it. As in excerpt that follows Michele's proposal an intervention from another actor adds something to the scene.

Excerpt 6

Federica: it would be nice if it could have a big bottom that seems slamming the pillow... Alfonsina! *{She strikes one hand with the other, mimicking the action of slamming the pillow}.*

Min 7.47 of video VID_20170202_183234

The intervention of Federica adds a feature to the character that offers an insight to the costume designers. Even if she is not on the stage interpreting the characters, she is part of the process proposing a feature (a big bottom) to characterise the mother character ironically.

The work they do to put the first script on the stage implies reading the text standing and occupying space on the stage. This phase also implies to face the problem of movements and orientations of the bodies. In the following excerpt, we see Michele struggle with uncertainty related to the interaction between the mother's and Alfonsina's characters.

Excerpt 7

Michele: And then she arrives... because I am saying it to her... *{He turn from the front orientation to the public to his left indicating a fictional engaging of another character in the communication (see fig.1)}.*

Carmen: She could also be a drawing...

Michele: Look at your battered dress!

[...]

Carmen: here I have to understand if Laura [the Alfonsina character's interpreter] is on the stage with you...

Michele: Maybe, it could be a drawing before and then she could come [in person] ...

Carmen: Yes...

Min 7.51 of video VID_20170202_183234

In this excerpt, Michele is wondering if his character should turn to Laura/Alfonsina as in the script the entrances on the stage and the movements are not specified. However, reading a sentence that is addressed to Alfonsina, he looks for the Alfonsina's presence on the stage saying "And then she arrives... because I am saying it to her...". Interrogated by Michele's reflection, the playwright/director speculates about kinds of the presence of Alfonsina on the stage (as a drawing or embodied in Laura).



Figure 2: Michele stands and acts the Mother's character while Federica and Laura are reading the first draft. Carmen (on the right of the picture) is observing the scene from the public point of view. Michele is turning to his left toward an imaginary Alfonsina.

The reflection about the presence of Alfonsina is activated giving a body to the mother's character. The issue of the presence of Alfonsina on the stage, together with the different hypothesis, emerges by dealing with the problem of orienting Michele's body. The use of the bright blackboard allows to include the opportunities of drawings. This reflection about the physical presence of the characters is further elaborated, and leads to a scene made by shadows (see figure 3). The shadows of the two characters of the scene, created by the actors' bodies located at a different distance from the light source, exaggerate the contrast (big/small) between the two personages and result in a comic effect.



Figure 3: The final appearance of the part of the mother's scene made by shadows (photo by Enzo Mologni from the premiere).

The second part of the mother's scene presents a different relationship between the characters. Here the mother engages Alfonsina in working with her. This part of the text refers to the biography of the main character that, before to become a bicycle racer, worked as a dressmaker.

Excerpt 8

Michele: Came on! Sit here close to me *{mimic an invitation for approaching to an imaginary Alfonsina on the stage}*.

Michele: How skilled she is!

{Interrupting the acting} Carmen: here I image a little choreography... didin, didin, didin *{she moves her hand miming the action of sewing, the loop of the stitch}*.

{She is not finishing her movement and onomatopoeic sound with her mouth yet that Michele starts to perform the same gesture using the sheets in his hands as if it is the textile}.

Min 9.14 of video VID_20170202_183234

In the excerpt the playwright/director, interrupting the performance, adds an idea of movements that was not indicated in the first draft of the script. The world *choreography* she uses to refer to this movement seems to suggest that the entire part of the scene could be driven by a coordinated movement of the two characters. To introduce this concept, she proposes a movement, together with a repeated onomatopoeic sound, using her own body. Very quickly Michele starts the action of mimic the sawing activity suggested by Carmen, adding a new detail. He acts to mimic the sawing using what he has in his hands to support the action. The suggestion of the action of embroidering with the assistance of an (imaginary) textile, together with a greater emphasis on movement (exaggeration of the movement), gives the action that constitutes the choreography of the scene. This specification for the scene, even if not underlined further, is approved and become a foundation for the final version of the scene in the show.

Excerpt 9

Carmen: Ah! Here an embroidery textile has to be shown *{referring to something already discussed in the group}*.

Michele: How fine are you embroider; nobody does it as you do!

Federica: *{Interrupting the acting and assuming the mother's character}* It is a pity that I am not able to read it!

Carmen: *{Clapping}* Exactly, nice, nice! *{Collective laughter}*.

Michele: *{Improvisating, and overlapping with Carmen}*: Look the precision of it, look the perfection of it. Look at it. Those, are the moments in which I regret that I cannot read... I do not understand what you write... What did you write, my dear? *{Collective laughter}*. Cheers to Holy Mary! *{Collective laughter}*.

Federica: *{Acting again as the mother's character}* It's a pity I am not able to understand

Michele: It's a pity I am not able to understand... However, I'm a woman from the 19th Century, what do you expect from me? *{Collective laughter}*.

Min 9.24 of video VID_20170202_183234

In the excerpt, the director interrupts Michele's performance for adding something that was not specified in the first draft of the text. During the dialogue between the two characters, she wants to see the images of the textile embroidered by Alfonsina that present texts of help request. She takes this idea from a comic book by Jackie Flaming, another reference indicated in the Next application, in which embroideries with the writing "help", "save me", "I cannot do it anymore" appear to express the women's discomforts in being relegated in the house. The idea of using these images in the Alfonsina's show (who works as dressmaker) was introduced previously by Carmen, even if not indicated in the script yet. During the rehashes of the scene, she recalled this idea, enlightening the contrast between the dialogue and the images. The shared understanding of the scene based on this contrast allows the collective improvisation. Federica, acting the mother character, introduces a funny phrase able to emphasise this contrast between the inner world of Alfonsina and the interaction with the mother making fun of it. Even if she is not the assigned to perform the mother's character, she assumes her identity and illiteracy as her characteristic suggesting that she is not able of reading what Alfonsina writes in her works. She does it acting as the character and proposing a new phrase that is identified as effective for comic by the group. The Carmen's claps, the collective laughter, Michele's replication of the same phrase, all together produce the knotwork (Engestrom 2005) able to appoint the proposal to the scene. The final script develops the scene starting from the insight suggested by Federica (see fig. 3, and the excerpt n. 10 from the final script).



Figure 3: The mother misinterprets Alfonsina's writing (Aiuto/Help) on the embroidery (photo by Enzo Mologni from the premiere).

Excerpt 10

Mother: Fonsina!! Fonsina!!

Holy Mary looks down !!

It is not possible... the dress is all broken, where did you run, after the gills?

You do not run with your dress!

What do you want to show, your panties to the boys?

[Alfonina turns and gives her back to her mother]

Mother: My dear ten years you are no longer a baby. God sees you.

[Alfonsina looks up if she puts her hands on her face]

Mother: You have to behave like a Miss.

You're almost in the age of having a husband.

[Alfonsina turns slowly, giving her back to her mother]

Mother: And It pulls out a bit of femininity!

[Alfonsina turned to her and scared her mother]

[Alfonsina walks from left to right, behind mom follows it]

Mother: Even though I could not learn to read and write, I know some things very well.

That if the female does not act properly, it slips into hell like water from the drain

[Mother falls, slips]

Mother: Who let the soap, messy!

[Alfonsina and the Mother Come forward, in the prospect on the left.]

Mother: Come on, Fonsina, help me.

But look how you grew up.

It looks like a moment ago that you get me alive

[Choreography of seam movement]

You're so good in to embroider

As you do embroidery, nobody does it here at Fossamarcia

Look at the precision, look at the perfection of the points.

[The images are appearing]

[Images of designed embroidered with texts: "I can't do it anymore"]

Mother: Look good at the hem

[Images of designed embroidered with texts: "Help"]

Mother: Embroiders like yours only the poor Aunt Teodora was able to do it, he died with the needle in his hand...

[Images of designed embroidered with texts: "How boring"]

Mother: The chain point comes straight to my heart

[Images of embroidered textile with texts: "I can't do it anymore "Save me"]

Mother: The "Salve o Regina" this I take away for Don Angelo for the Mariano month

(Excerpt from the final script, our translation from Italian)

DISCUSSION

In the previous session, we presented some excerpts that exemplify how collective work shapes the emergence of the new play. In the case analysed, the final version of the script emerges from collective work practices during the production rehearsals. An important role in rehearsals is played by the first draft proposed by the playwright. This text introduces a structure for the story, a sequence of different scenes, and proposes some of the dialogues that compose the shows. However, the first draft works more as a provisional text than what a mature theatrical script. During the collective work of staging the show, the group collaborates to define the characters, as well as to define better the script. A relevant aspect on this regard is the collaboration that enables the emergence of the characteristics of the characters. The work practice in which the theatre group is engaged consists in a collective reading of the initial text. Reading the text, the actor improvises the characteristics of his character (voice, gestures, movements, etc.). In creating a character, the proposal of the characterisations that create the features of person plays an important part. The attune of the voice, the inflexions, the specific gestures, the way of walking, together with the physical appearance, all these aspects constitute the character. In reading the text (and climb the stage), the actor starts to propose peculiarities for the character. The proposals can be discharged (as it was to the first interpretations of the Mother's character proposed by Federica) or used to constitute a detailed character (as it happened with Michele's proposals). It is important to notice that this practice involves the entire group of work. Even if the main line of communication - also evident from the positioning of the bodies - is among the actor who interprets the character and the director (see fig.1), there is a collective participation to the creative practices. The entire group collaborate to characters and scenes definition as an object of work of production rehearsals (Engestrom 1999). This aspect is particularly evident in the contributions of Federica. Not only she proposes a corporal characteristic for the mother character, but she also introduces new phrases through a temporary personification of the character.

The individual participation in the practice has various levels of engagement depending on the situation. Thanks to the shared object of work in production rehearsals practice; each participant can change his/her participation to contribute to the situation. To understand how knowledge is distributed within a community who works together, Hutchin (1995) introduces a distinction between different situations that distribute attention and knowledge (awareness, local awareness and global awareness). In this perspective, the members became able to give a glance at what is happening behind their specific task. They can do it because they have the entire view of the situation. The focus here, is the conditions of reciprocal understanding in a situation characterised by multiple perspectives of whom are sharing the same space of work (Gherardi

2012). In a study of coordination centre of France railway RER, Joseph (1994) identifies different “acts of presence” (be aware, distance themselves, get ahead, resume the situation) that are usually at work in a situation in which a group work collectively mobilise attention and common orientation.

Similarly to Joseph’s and Hutchin’s workers, our theatre group differentiates the participation during rehearses, letting open the possibility for a change in the structure of participation. The Federica’s example shows when cooperation within the team changes and frame of participation mutates. The activity of understanding and anticipating other can slip like shifts and overlap of complementary initiatives aimed at a common and emerging goal from the action. The human interaction and shared understanding of the situation are crucial in this collective process of construction of a new artwork. However, it is interesting to notice the role of the ecological context and materiality. In the collective process of construction, an important role is played by the context of the action. The context is where interests of the actors and the opportunities of the environment meet and define each other (Gherardi 2012). The history of the new show is connected and shaped by specific calls for founding. The choice of telling the story of Alfonsina is related to a broad idea of using sports heroes to speak about social rights. The format of the call for competition also, influence the way in which the show has been structured (both regarding the production and way of presents the contents). The references used for knowing the account of Alfonsina story gives some opportunities concerning specific episodes of her life as well as a particular point of view on them. Similarly, also the bright backboard plays a crucial role in enriching the varieties of narrative styles (live performance, shadows, draws, and live drawing, etc.). Some of these opportunities are enabled by the cartoonist capability of a member of the group. For this reason, when Michele is asking for the presence of Alfonsina on the stage a drawing as alternative can be proposed. Then, once the scene became two-dimensional, it can easily be translated into shadows.

CONCLUSION

This article looks at the emergence of a new theatrical play as result of collective doing and knowing. The composition of the new play performance is a result of several contributions and expertise. An important role is played the playwright/director who composes the first draft of the text that is used in rehearses. However, in the work practice of the production rehearses, all group is involved a development of the artwork. The characters of the play (i.e. the mother) are constructed mainly within the encounter form the text (particular phrases or dialogues) and the proposal of characterisation made by the actor who interprets it. The *mise-en-scene*, putting the text into space, implies to consider multiples aspect not considered by the text (i.e. entrances and exits of the character from the stages).

Those elements offer opportunities as well as constraints. Following the way in which the work is actually accomplished in rehearsals (Gherardi 2012), we notice that all the components of the group are involved in the development of the new artwork. Even when the focal attention is the single actor who is performing a task (i.e. interpreting a phase), the group is working, acting and knowing together. The participation can shift from peripheral to focal for adding phrases or specific features to the character. Take the world interrupting the performance, assuming the character point of view, or the one from the public, are all ways to contribute with individual knowledge to collective object of work. The members of the group react to the proposals clapping, approving, making ironic comments, following the new track, confirming the additions, etc. These comments constitute the collective knotwork (Engeström 2005) that constitute the frame in which the stabilisation of the final script takes place.

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