STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

Principles to keep in mind when organising collaborative interdisciplinary research that will include artists as research partners.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

The Dance Engaging Science workshops that took place in the context of Motion Bank/ The Forsythe Company (2010-2013) provided the background to this document. These workshops brought together specialists from the fields of dance, social anthropology, cognitive and neuroscience, medicine, philosophy, cultural studies and architecture to conduct a survey of existing research and lay the foundations for future interdisciplinary research "in which dance itself plays a greater constitutive role." Documentation of the three workshops including a detailed account of who was involved, an interim report and a list of the emerging individual collaborative projects are available on http://motionbank.org. (This Statement is derived from a group task undertaken during Meeting Two: to develop ideas or proposals for ways to inform education and policy makers).

ARTISTS IN COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH WITH SCIENTISTS AND SCHOLARS

These Principles are derived from Dance Engaging Science as a Case Study that stimulated new interdisciplinary collaborative research projects involving artists, scientists and scholars as equal partners. These Principles are not limited to collaborations involving dance, but can help with collaborations involving artists from any discipline. There is growing interest in this sort of research and various developments are underway (e.g. Arts and Science in Motion). However, these Principles are not intended as a rationale for such research, criteria for or measurements of success nor as rules to be strictly followed.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES

Equal Partners

The sense of equality should cover both the personal and professional. The collaboration should be grounded in mutual trust and respect. Mutual curiosity can help to overcome inevitable gaps in expertise and different forms of expression (see Ideas in Materials). Investment and distribution of time, energy and resources should feel equal. Be equally prepared for misunderstandings. Acknowledge possible inequalities arising from external requirements such as affiliations and degrees that might block collaboration as it develops. Discuss basic motivations what is hoped for and expected, but then set these aside (see Design Iteratively).

Ideas in Materials

The question of how (and if) knowledge is produced through artistic practice has to consider the status of material thinking and how ideas are expressed in non-language forms. There is no formula for coming to grips with this issue, but it can be addressed partly through location, i.e. where and when does the collaborative work take place in relation to different processes (see Observation and Perspective)? And time, i.e. is sufficient time allowed for appropriate and useful understandings of this issue to emerge? Suggestion: trigger the imagination with process demonstrations versus finished artworks.

Observation and Perspective

Observation (of any of the practices involved in the collaboration) can expose the different perspectives on a shared research topic in useful ways. How someone is observing, what

they are paying attention to and the role this plays in their thinking can be one way of opening dialogue between different disciplines (see Equal Partners). Instruments are often involved in scientific research – the question of what the instruments measure are also important in understanding methods. Being observed (for example becoming the subject of an experiment) can bring useful perspectives into view. Conversation can be a method. Consider how to accommodate 'guests' observers at different points in the process.

Design Iteratively
As things get going, start to set up clear, achievable targets. Embrace the incremental or small, but don't take time away from things that need time. An important principle: everything can change, aims and objectives rewritten, outcomes redefined. Within the design cycles seek to reduce generalisation and focus on what the particular individuals bring to the table. Perhaps drop the general categories of scientist, scholar and artist – be more specific. Allow iterations to feel incomplete and results unstable -- they can still be results (see Multiple Outcomes). In particular for scientists and scholars the collaboration may render ideas normally explanatory in their own context seem difficult or even impossible to explain here.

Multiple Outcomes
Think about a range of outcomes without a hierarchy. Produce a landscape of interrelated collaboration results that include process. This brings up the question how intangible discoveries are documented & shared (see Documentation). Watch for how results considered less valuable in one domain might be very valuable in another. In some cases, agreement on what constitutes value may not be necessary – reserving judgment can be useful. 'Truly' collaborative outcomes may be desired but are rare – making them the main goal can inhibit the collaboration. It is important to respect and be clear about professional boundaries (see Equal Partners) realising time investment might require an individual to produce a particular outcome, e.g. a scientific paper. However, take full co-authorship as the starting point and seek appropriate publishing contexts.

Documentation
Documenting and sharing the interdisciplinary collaborative process is important with the goal to establish a sense of openness and a demystification of the collaborative process. Allows those who are outside the collaboration to feel they have access to and can participate in some way. Guest levels can be accommodated through access to documentation. This material is different from, although may contribute to a formal publication outcome. In addition, documentation as a form of self-reflection for the collaboration team can engender a sense of shared discourse that will contribute to binding the interrelated results (see Multiple Outcomes). Documentation (including recording and processing the material) is itself a lot of work. A collaborative project might take on board someone from slightly outside to do this (see Facilitation).

Organisation & Facilitation
Taking the time to think about the organisational & facilitation of a collaboration is important. With so many potential points of confusion & misunderstanding, collaborative projects will benefit from a certain kind of facilitation, i.e. having clear meeting structures organised, group discussions chaired, meeting follow up, etc. If all of the principles are in place, there is no need to include an additional individual, but to assign these responsibilities to collaborative team members. Crossing borders between disciplines is difficult enough in the context of the collaboration between individuals, but administration can become complicated if home institutions are not thoroughly committed.