MUSIC IN DISORDER: COUNTERPLAY, COMPLEXITY AND COLLECTIVE IMPROVISATION

KLAS NEVRIN
ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC IN STOCKHOLM
KLAS.NEVRIN@KMH.SE

ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the ambitions, methodology and preliminary results of the artistic research project Music in Disorder. The project investigates 1) the potential for conceptual experimentation to enrich collective improvisation in music; and 2) how process-oriented forms of conceptualization can be used to augment the force of artistic experience to affect other modes of thought and action (especially regarding views of freedom, control and individuality that are at work in a variety socio-political situations). The concept of disorder is central to the project, and our research experiments with how techniques for disordering are *artistically* related to power dynamics, complexity, difference, and resistance to apparatuses of capture. For example, in collective improvisation power need not be equated with domination, because there are ways to allow for the mutual reinforcement of power. Disorder also invites for differences to act productively against each other rather than seeing them as obstacles to co-creation per se. One of the project's results, as a work-in-process, is the design of a modular method in combination with a conceptual toolbox. This is an approach that could potentially be adopted in areas beyond music, such as other artistic fields, or design processes that involve group creativity.

INTRODUCTION

Music in Disorder is an artistic research project that takes place during 2016-2018, is established at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, and involves a series of artistic productions, research labs and seminars. The research team is led by pianist/composer Klas Nevrin and includes Anna Lindal (violinist), Katt Hernandez (violinist/composer) and Ricard Österstam (drummer). We collaborate regularly with other researchers and musicians, and artistic productions are presented under the name "Revoid Ensemble" (with members varying throughout the project; for more information see musicindisorder.se).

One of the central ambitions of the project is to experiment with techniques for creating what we call *productive disorder* in collective musical improvisation. From a musician's point of view, disordering is a useful concept for how we often experience what we are doing: playfully tweaking, shifting, fragmenting, displacing, clashing, inserting, dissolving, scattering, making irregular or asymmetric. These actions disrupt or transform the orderliness of the musical materials at hand, so that something happens where we have less control over the whole, which in turn yields more possibilities for reciprocal interaction.

One reason for focusing on techniques for disordering is to explore when and how improvisation becomes markedly collective; not simply in the sense of "playing together" but more specifically when something emerges in a way that goes beyond the individual's ability to fully predict or grasp the influence of his or her contributions in relation to the whole, as well as how other's contributions affect one's own playing. This also involves power dynamics, or the relationship between power and domination. How can we powerfully affect each other without dominating? And what methods, techniques, compositions, materials or circumstances enhance the *mutual reinforcement of power* in collective improvisation?

Another important ambition is to cross-fertilize between concepts and methods. On the one hand, this involves exploring how artistic experiences of disorder and non-control might influence how we understand and value those parameters in a wider variety of situations. In this way, the project aims to contribute to an understanding of collective and playful creative processes. On the other hand, by drawing from inspirational resources such as complexity theory and process philosophy, we wish to create new methods for collective improvisation. Conceptualization is also valuable for problematizing and transforming the ethos that is involved in our work.

Throughout the project, we emphasize the broad and divergent spectrum of interests, backgrounds and approaches amongst both the four primary researchers in the group and the extended community of musicians and researchers with whom we collaborate, thus creating a polyphony of orders that is drawn from the disorder of different ways of playing, listening and conceiving of improvised music.

METHODOLOGY

ARTISTIC RESEARCH

We approach artistic research as an intrinsically heterogeneous field in which methodological design to some extent is continually informed and reformed by artistic processes. This entails that we aim for our research, or "research-as-practice", to develop somewhat on its own terms, thus allowing the processes of collective improvisation themselves to affect the continuous development of research methods. We consider this a form of *speculative practice,* "an activity engaged in imagining alternatives, as a form of speculation through practice" (Arlander 2017). We have steered clear of researching our own practices as data to be subjected to, say, qualitative analysis. Instead, we experiment with questions, methods and materials primarily in and through musicking*,* recording experiments, performing concerts, and conduct discussions and analyses (both individually and collectively) based on a flexible and evolving set of concepts drawn from a variety of sources*.* We also regularly invite other musicians and researchers for "lab-days" to present their concepts and methods as an input to the project.

Central to artistic research, in our view, is that it is conducted by artists who research in and through art, so that artistic practices and experiences come to the fore (Borgdorff 2012, Lilja 2015). Also crucial, however, is the credibility that can emerge from research strategies that problematize the subjectivities of the researchers, as well as a contextualization that can make political dimensions surface (Frisk & Östersjö 2013). Experiential accounts are necessary to the extent that they tell us something valuable about artistic practice and intuition. For example, they can articulate the artists' evaluations and embodied knowledge, the music's performative force, and the "intertextual references" between performances or compositions. Although essential, we do not however see them as privileged or unassailable accounts in themselves. Other perspectives and contexts can make us become aware of something in our own practice, and this can react back on the practice and transform it, not least in the re-evaluation of aesthetic and ethical stances. In other words, our research is not about simply communicating an already established artistic practice but rather about how this practice changes in and through the research process.

Östersjö (2017) has proposed that artistic research experiments with interactions between different domains of knowledge that cannot be directly translated to each other. What he calls *thinking-through-music* involves an "agrammatical oscillation" between an *artistic* domain ("characterised by its materiality, instantiated through the embodied knowledge of the artist(s) involved in the creative process"), an *embodied* domain ("what is often referred to as tacit knowledge"), and a *discursive* domain (including "traditionally conceived knowledge production" as well as knowledge "produced within the context of application"). This oscillation can in itself give rise to new forms of knowledge. We are largely in agreement with this view, although wary of overly separating domains from each other. By contrast, we believe it may be even more fruitful to approach them in terms of a continuously changing continuum in which different modes of thought-and-action create resonances and interferences with each other. This approach emphasizes the artistically rewarding ways in which different domains can *modulate* each other, and how *zones of indiscrimination* between domains may be productively activated.

Commonly posited distinctions (subject-object, individual-environment, practice-theory) are not, then, seen as pre-given geometrical positions but rather as continuously shifting transformations or operations. This process-oriented view has repercussions for how we view objectivity. As Karen Barad (2003: 828-9) puts it: "It is therefore not absolute exteriority that is the condition of possibility for objectivity but rather agential separability — exteriority within phenomena. […] We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because 'we' are *of* the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming".

Being part of the world means being deeply involved in its temporality, and in our work this entails a resistance against all forms of capture or fixation*:* the denial of actual temporal passage so that difference of time and place are treated as accidental (Hasty 2010: 204-5). Capture avoids the messiness of irreducible complexity in process, substituting it (through objectification and analysis) with an arrangement of static and distinct parts or factors. Although recognizing the sometimes-beneficial operation of separating various factors and explore how "they" can work together, we always try

hard to return collective improvisation as a fundamentally temporal event, a "complex ongoingness", an event in the making.

Finally, artistic research could be said to address both the academia and the art world (in very broad senses). This implies that artistic researchers have a valuable opportunity to not only enrich and transform artistic experience, but also to influence how researchers from other fields view art, subjectivity and knowledge. Artistic research thus "unites the artistic and the academic in an enterprise that impacts on both domains. Art thereby transcends its former limits, aiming through the research to contribute to thinking and understanding; academia, for its part, opens up its boundaries to forms of thinking and understanding that are interwoven with artistic practices" (Borgdorff 2012: 44).

CONCEPTS & METHODS

In the course of our work we have developed a process-oriented approach in which concepts and methods modulate each other within the artistic process, thus creating a rhythmical circulation between them and enacting a cross-fertilization between experimental thought and experimental improvisation.

This approach is inspired by Deleuze & Guattari (2004b), focusing on the way in which a concept may have an excess of sense, a systemic connectibility that can be mobilized in new contexts (Massumi 2002: 20). It does not, however, entail that concepts are used arbitrarily or metaphorically. Rather, it is to emphasize what music theorist Brian Hulse (2010) calls *usefully vague concepts*. A concept's mobility is what makes it capable of generating a movement of thought that can lead us towards new practices. As Massumi & Manning (2014: vii-ix) argue, it is to "run interference" by opening different modes of thought-and-action to each other, and by articulating concepts "that are already on their way in another mode, in the mode of artistic practice […] Every [artistic] practice is a mode of thought, already in the act. […] Too often writing stands to the side, outside the action, as though the 'real' work happened elsewhere, as though what writing was equipped to do with 'real' practices was merely to describe them—or to proscribe for them, in judgment". By contrast, our goal is "not simply to *describe* the complexity of a work's workings, but to *activate* its modalities of thought, its rhythms, in a new concertation" (ibid.).

Concepts can also react back into our practice, enabling us to act and think differently when making music. In addition to using concepts to develop artistic methods, or transform situations for artistic experimentation, they can intertwine with our ways of listening and reacting: what we listen for, when we react (and to what), or how we make sense of musical events. It is therefore undesirable to rigidly separate between concepts and methods, or between theory and practice, as if one arrived before the other. Moreover, as already mentioned, we have the explicit intention to resist tendencies towards capture, a rigidity that construes repetition as a repeating of "the same" and will tend to stifle creativity. Even though it might *seem* as if we're designing concepts that objectify and analyze, what we are really trying to do is create a wealth of concepts that are always *differently* employed in a temporally fluid process and event-making. In the following I will present a few of the intermingled concept-methods we are experimenting with.

Complexity serves as an entry-point for the development of concept-methods. Although complexity has a history of various usages in scientific contexts, we adopt it as a usefully vague concept that allows us to quasi-systematically experiment with techniques for creating opportunities for musical processes that involve an intricate enfolding of musical events within each other (cf. Borgo 2006). Musically speaking, we see complexity as involving an *ambiguity* through which musical events can be understood in multiple ways. A complex structure does not reference a prior unity and can be approached as an irreducible internal complex of difference, akin to Deleuze's concept of *multiplicity:* It does "not designate a combination of the many and the one, but rather an organization belonging to the many as such, which has no need whatsoever of unity in order to form a system" (Deleuze 1994: 182).

Reciprocal interaction is useful for musical events in which two or more musicians affect each other in ways that make it impossible to understand precisely how it happens. For example, two musical trajectories pursued simultaneously, and with some divergence between them, may contextualize each other in ways (harmonically, tonally, rhythmically, dynamically, etc.) that the musicians themselves cannot predict, or fully grasp in the course of the event. This involves a *double contingency*, which according to Haenisch means that "on both sides of an encounter there are a number of possibilities and that much is undetermined. Neither can know the plans, expectations, thoughts, etc., of the other, and the other is therefore incalculable. […] Sociological system theory supposes that this is not only a problem that first occurs with interaction, but also that only interaction can nullify this circulating indeterminacy. Double contingency is then not only a condition of interaction, but is also only reducible and made manageable by interaction. As the participants influence each other, allow themselves to be determined by one another, and react to each other, structures arise that cannot be predicted (at least not completely) and that are not reducible to the plans and expectations of the individual. However, these structures do reduce the reciprocal indeterminacy of the situation by creating a behavioral coherency that serves as, and enables, a means of orientation. […] The range of possible actions becomes more limited, but at the same time specific actions become possible that were not waiting ready but rather that arise out of this developing situation" (Haenisch 2011: 187-9).

We approach reciprocal interaction as being distinguished by two interdependent conditions: that there is an *equality* (simultaneous influence between musicians, in some important way), and that the musical events involve what we call *assembled differences* (non-coordinated, non-unified; without a common reference point but creating resonances and interferences between them; this differs from "aggregated differences"). We also experiment with various ways in which reciprocal interaction can be enhanced through the use of sketched or partly composed musical materials ("modules") that take structural interrelations into consideration.

Counterplay are strategies that embody a resistance to adjusting to the musical environment, in ways of (anti)listening and (non)reacting, and entail that we play "against" or "beside" each other. This can be reinforced by the use of machines and electronics that use unpredictable algorithms or patterns. Counterplay will typically establish an asymmetry or irregularity between musical trajectories; a differential configuration of amplitude, speed/rhythm, sound color, intonation and/or tonality that can sustain the indeterminacy of reciprocal interaction. It is a kind of juxtaposition, or what Deleuze and Guattari (2004a) termed *disjunctive synthesis:* the production of a series of transversal differences ("this or this or this, and this and this and this"). That is to say, they do not unfold from one point, and the series may traverse and continuously connect different potentials. Inclusive disjunction contrasts to negative disjunction ("either this or that") in its affirmation of distance as that which relates things as different (Colebrook 2010). Counterplay can thus produce "a synthesis of divergent series that do not converge yet somehow manage to communicate by virtue of a *difference* that passes between them like a spark […] differential events flash across our distinct and divergent worlds, creating a relation in this non-relation" (Bryant 2011).

We distinguish between the power to act (*puissance*) and the power to dominate (*pouvoir*), where domination is understood as preventing the effectuation of a capacity to affect or be affected, or the capacity to multiply connections (Deleuze & Guattari 2004b). The power to act need not reduce another's power but can involve mutual reinforcement precisely through reciprocal interaction. Domination can and does of course happen in collective improvisation, but not necessarily so (Bell 2014). In our research, we actively seek opportunities for being forcefully influenced by each other *without* domination. This departs from views that emphasize creativity as being predominantly about "uninfluenced" individual choice. It also contrasts to approaches that emphasize a common characteristic as being fundamental to collective creativity, such as an idiomatic heritage or a stock of musical materials (chords, rhythms, scales, etc.). Our research thus problematizes the pre-conception that collective improvisation needs coordination around a common denominator or reference point, although it does require a shared responsibility to acknowledge when or how dominance occurs (which *may* arise due to differences in idiomatic backgrounds or skill sets, but not necessarily so). This is to invite for differences to act productively against each other rather than seeing them as obstacles to co-creation per se.

Productive disorder emerges from reciprocal interaction and is distinguishable both from situations that involve an unequal power dynamic (characterized by domination) and from musical events that involve *fragmentation* ("unproductive disorder", or dissociated differences with less resonance or "communication", occurrences of which can nevertheless also play an important part in improvised music). When both equality and assembled (or resonant) differences are present, there is a productive tension to work with and something new and interesting can happen. Productive disorder reacts back, as it were, on the musicians.

Importantly, disorder is not seen as the destruction or negation of order but rather as a more complex form of multi-structural, multi-directional, multi-functional or multivalent organization. When several non-coordinated patterns or gestures are working in tension against each other, this may be rewarding precisely due to the interpretational depth thus offered. Musicians and external listeners must then be active in choosing how and when to relate things to each other. Disorder thus involves distributed forms of listening and acting that entail losing control over the improvisation as a whole. Put differently, improvisation becomes more collectively co-created. This approach also prioritizes what Rosi Braidotti (2012) calls *nomadic ethics,* or a non-unitary conception of subjectivity. Collective improvisation can even instigate a process where the improviser becomes an increasingly non-linear or dynamic system (cf. Pressing 1988).

We emphasize that there are many different forms of *control* and *non-control*, and that they typically overlap, juxtapose and transition between each other. It is always a question of mixtures, so control and non-control relate to each other in complex and unforeseen ways within a continuum. It is not the quantitative amounts of control or non-control that determine a creative outcome, but how they are put to work with and against each other in ways that are impossible to standardize. What worked in one situation might not work in the next, even with only a slight difference in material or context. It is, then, the *qualitative* and *situation-dependent relations* between control and non-control that may or may not lead to creative results. This entails that disorder is not simply equated with non-control, yet it can be a useful concept for situations in which non-control has some important qualitative effect on the process as a whole.

Non-control (or "playfulness") is easily suppressed or minimized, not least because of habits. By contrast, control cannot be avoided, since we will always to some extent rely on intentions, goals, interests, plans, and so on. An important challenge is precisely how to invite playful aspects in a collective activity, allowing for

some amount of complexity in at least *some* aspects of the creative process, but not viewing this as occurring in opposition to control. Disorder can stymie conventional interpretive or signifying strategies, thus enacting a performative critique of representation and other apparatuses of capture. It plugs into the creativity of the world that is ontologically prior to capture: a "superabundance of which only a fraction is ever actualized" (O'Sullivan 2010: 201). Grosz (2008) refers to this plenitude as the creative forces of chaos. Such an understanding emphasizes the rupturing potential of art: "its power to break our habitual ways of being and acting in the world (our reactive selves)", as well as rupturing "circuits of reception and consumption and other habits of 'spectatorship'" (O'Sullivan 2010: 197). Disorder is also an important concept for counteracting the idea of a pre-conceived form of order, or set of laws, that music must adhere to in order to "make sense". It invites for opportunities of creative mal-adaptation, productive disobedience and subversive transformation.

To a non-participating listener, disorder and complexity may remain invisible or unheard, the music being experienced perhaps as "some kind of wholeness". Yet, even though an external listener might potentially synthesize musical disorder into an experience of cohesion, for musicians it requires intense listening to the differences that pass between them. It is also common that listeners will experience our music as being more intentionally controlled than is actually the case. One of the goals of our research is therefore to make the disordering aspects of collective creativity visible to others, not least because we feel they are important for contexts beyond music.

RESULTS

Musical recordings and concerts are regarded as results in themselves, constituting an artistic domain of materiality alongside the discursive domain of written texts and verbal presentations.[1] These two domains are not simply complementary but may resonate and interfere with each other, in line with the approach mentioned above. Nevertheless, the music has something to "say" on its own, with a *performative force* "to effect 'movement' in thought, word and deed" and, perhaps, "enable a reconfiguration of conventions" (Bolt 2016: 130). Put differently, "the experiences and insights that artistic research delivers are embodied in the resulting art practices and products. [T]heir persuasive quality lies in the performative power through which they broaden our aesthetic experience, invite us to fundamentally unfinished thinking, and prompt us towards a critical perspective on what there is" (Borgdorff 2012: 47). For example, we regard our music as performing a critique of the attempts to capture musical improvisation, demonstrating in and through sound that *virtually* similar materials, methods or concepts *actually* produce constantly different events. Differences are sometimes subtle and arise primarily within a temporal flow of *affect*; that is to say, the music's expressive force actively encountered by a particular listener. In our view, influenced by Massumi (2002, 2011), affect can activate the potential of new modes of thought-and-action, in and through micro-shocks that enable change by rupturing habits of emotionality (i.e., affect that is "captured" and tied to a more or less stable identity and personal history). This also means that our music may affect listeners in ways that we have not ourselves envisioned, essentially lying beyond our control.

Our research has led to the design of *a process-oriented modular approach* that consists of preparing various types of modules for us to improvise with. The modules supply conceptual instructions and/or musical materials in ways that are concrete yet also flexible, thereby supplying an impetus for combinatorial and variational possibilities. Most modules are designed specifically with the aim of inviting for counterplay and reciprocal interaction. They also supply with a wide range of materials, such as (poly)tonal patterns and microtonal intonations; a rich spectrum of dynamics and sound colors; advanced polyrhythms and polyperiodicity produced by cyclical approaches; or the polymensural combination of divergent tempos and rubatos. This enables our improvisations not only to consistently explore new territories and challenges but also to draw upon the diverse interests and backgrounds of participating musicians.

Figure 1 (Appendix) is an example of a modular score that we have used as a mnemonic device. Each module has a symbol, a color, as well as a name and/or number, depending on the character of the module. In performance, the modules are surrounded by "free" improvisation in which musical materials have not been pre-decided, although of course drawing upon both individual and collective habits as well as reciprocal interaction (so freedom from idiom or influence is not what is intended here). Within the course of a free improvisation we may then utilize any number of modules, in any order, "picking up" a module depending on what arises in the improvisation, and depending on the initiatives of participating musicians. We see this as a variant of Deleuze and Guattari's (2004b) *rhizomatic approach*: allowing for multiple entry and exit points, or a proliferation of connections. There is no pre-determined origin or endpoint, which invites for a nomadic connectivity of growth and propagation. The modules themselves consistently undergo variations (within and between performances), not least due to the varying contexts of free improvisation. There is also the potential for *transgression*: significantly departing from a module's design. All this entails that a particular module might be hardly recognizable between different performances, yet it's virtual force is nevertheless felt by the musicians.

[1] The only publicly available recording at this moment is the CD "Revoid Ensemble" (2016, Found You Recordings, FYR034), but a selection of video and audio recordings (of public concerts and lab experiments) will be published at the end of the project.

A modular approach that allows for various musical materials to be (re)combined has close affinities with, among others, some African and African American traditions, "in which the structural content of music is located in the free play of smaller constituent units. […] Thus, large-scale musical form emerges from an improvisatory treatment of these short-range musical ingredients" (Iyer 2004). This contrasts to methods we used earlier in the project, in which a large-scale form was predetermined with a set order of "parts", and where these parts were either freely improvised or more thoroughly pre-composed. In our experience, the modular approach allows for more intense reciprocal interaction. Without the constrictions of having to adjust to a large-scale form our improvisations can follow more unpredictable trajectories, which in turn leads to the modules being more noticeably transformed.

In laboratory experiments we try out specific variations of, and transitions between, a chosen set of modules, thereby continuously complexifying their potential. For example, we distinguish between different material usages of, and approaches to, modules (with varying ways of de-constructing, re-organizing, disassembling, densifying, granularizing, and so on). We also explore how modules can be connected to each other with the aid of concepts such as permeability (Ligeti 1965) and morphability, or superimposition, amalgamation and role-taking (Nunn 1998). In this work, we also we draw upon studies in spectromorphology and interstructural relations of sound-configurations (Tenney 1961, Smalley 1997, Thoresen 2007), as well as use machines that introduce randomization, audio synthesis and algorithmic generation.

We have assembled a *conceptual toolbox* (Figure 2, Appendix) that brings together all the concepts we are currently using in the project. This map is helpful when experimenting with how to complexify modules. A particular concept, or network of concepts, can give rise to any number of improvisational techniques, even more so when connectibility and vagueness is put to work. The toolbox is also useful when listening back to recordings and discussing how we perceive the music, in order to find new ways forward. It is important to emphasize, however, that the concepts are not intended as descriptions of how the music might be perceived by other listeners, nor do they posit as theory with pretensions of explanation. It is the pragmatic use that is essential, what the concepts make it possible to *do*. We thus agree with Deleuze when he claimed that theory should not totalize but multiply, "exactly like a tool box. It has nothing to do with the signifier... A theory has to be used, it has to work. And not just for itself. If there is no one to use it, starting with the theorist himself who, as soon as he uses it ceases to be a theorist, then a theory is worthless, or its time has not yet arrived. You don't go back to a theory, you make new ones, you have others to make" (Deleuze 2004: 208).

Playing around with modules in laboratory experiments creates an evolving reservoir of *shared experiences,* thereby continuously adding to the potential for improvising with those modules in performance. We make notes from all experiments, which are helpful for retracing our work and when listening back to recordings. We can also re-use the notes to activate new potential. The intention is not to repeat lab experiments in live performance, but the notes can give rise to new ideas and possibilities at a later stage.

DISCUSSION

We have found that the modular approach is highly valuable for quasi-systematically exploring the capacity for a variety of musical materials to be used in counterplay and other techniques for disordering. It also demonstrates how process-oriented conceptual experimentation can aid improvisers to invite for non-control and musical complexity (the combining of heterogeneous elements that differ from each other in some incommensurable way).

One area that we wish to explore further is the use of concepts such as *self-organization* and *emergence*. Undoubtedly, these concepts raise some interesting questions regarding how disorder relates to the spontaneous establishment of "simpler" yet nevertheless unintended forms of organization. When relatively stable tonal, rhythmic, gestural or other patterns emerge as the unforeseen by-products of the relations between assembled differences, what does this entail in terms of power dynamics or hierarchization? How can counterplay persist, or re-enter, in musical events where disorder spontaneously stabilizes into a more coordinated or unified order? How can common reference points ("aggregated differences") be exploited simultaneously, or alongside, non-coordination ("assembled differences"), in different aspects of the music, but without resulting in a hierarchical arrangement of roles between musicians? How can perceptual strategies (of listening, reacting, etc.) avert subordination to a self-organizing whole (in the form of "downward causality")?

These questions, and related ones, arise partly because of the unpredictable development of artistic processes, and partly because of the deliberate experimentation with an ever-changing network of concepts. We wish to acknowledge the inherently unfinalizable character of this methodology, to the extent that every "result" always already implies further problematization and experimentation. This means that nomadic movement into possibly divergent and discordant areas is desirable. Rather than attempting to discipline or avoid deviance (as in hypothesis-driven projections), we wish to invite for a rhizomatic approach at the level of the research as a whole. We are also interested in how the modular approach can be used to inspire similar methods in other fields. One possibility is to develop a *modular workshop* in which participants design their own conceptual toolboxes and modular scores as applicable within their

fields. This would of course be easiest to accomplish in artistic fields that are similar to musical improvisation. But it could also be used for enhancing group creativity in other contexts, in ways that may differ from common procedures.

To take one example: Google Design Sprint is a 5-day process for answering critical business questions through design, prototyping, and testing with customers. In the Sketch Phase, individuals are encouraged to brainstorm ideas and solutions on their own. The presupposition is that innovative ideas are primarily produced by individuals in "concentrated thought", during a short period of time in which the individual should allow for creative impulses, and for weird or impossible ideas to give way to more "inspired" ones. The ambition is to push beyond the first idea in order to generate a wide variety of solutions. These are then utilized in a selection process (the Decide Phase), in which team members critique each solution and then decide which ones have the best chance of achieving the long-term goal.

A modular approach would focus on other possibilities. For example, one could just as well encourage "thinking inside the box", thereby acknowledging the potential for developing and transforming ideas into unpredictable and ultimately very different variations. In this perspective, creativity is about playing around with parameters: If we press or tweak, enlargen or diminish, then something may happen that surprises us. On the other hand, even the most "weird, impossible and impractical" ideas could also be developed into something productive and valuable, perhaps by combining with other ideas. This emphasizes the importance of deviation, which may even redefine the stakes and goals. Above all, however, these and other processes benefit from a collective work that is not reduced to a competitive approach, or to a critical stance that targets the weakness of an idea. Perhaps in a similar way to Appreciative Inquiry, a process-oriented modular approach avoids the "deficiency model" and refocuses attention towards potential: How could this idea be *made* to work? How could it be *intensified* in many directions, more or less weird ones, and ultimately result in something valuable or useful? How could it be *combined* with other ideas, and perhaps initiate a reciprocal interaction between them?

Whereas competition reduces the potential for transformation (or the power to act), collective creativity reaches instead its utmost potential when there is intensification. Unfortunately, criticism all too often takes the form of a practice that dismisses or turns aside; a practice of negativity that is more about subtraction. As Grosz (2007) puts it, "Critique always affirms the primacy of what is being critiqued, ironically producing exactly the thing it wants to problematize. But more than that, critique is a negative exercise. […] It is really difficult to continue to work only on material that you don't like …" By contrast, in order to support group creativity one focuses more on how something can be extended, expanded, twisted, tweaked, and so on. This is similar to *topological transformation*: an idea may be deformed into something highly dissimilar yet without using violence, without "cutting" it. In order for this to happen one needs to focus on the potential for change rather than on what something "is". It is to approach an idea as a dynamic system, with its own connectivity, and with certain degrees of freedom that can be tweaked in infinitely many ways.

A modular approach could assemble ideas in an ever-changing "score". When the ideas are concrete enough to be suggestive, yet simultaneously open enough to allow for experimentation, one could then experiment with these ideas using various methods for variation, transition, combination, re-assemblage, and so on. A rhizomatically oriented set of concepts could be used in order to enable and enrich such experimentation, as well as for designing methods that produce a counterplay, bringing diverse interests and backgrounds into a productive, reciprocal interaction (compare for example Open Space Technology).

As previously stated, one important ambition with the project is to allow artistic experiences of disorder to influence how one understands and values those parameters in a wider variety of situations. They can, for example, problematize views concerning "freedom", "community", "control" and "individuality"; all of which are in many ways crucial to current political issues. It could in fact be argued that managing disorder has become the defining paradigm of neoliberal ideology. According to Deleuze and Guattari (2004b: 516), the 'enemy' of society is increasingly defined precisely by its lack of specificity, as a register of disorder *per se*. And Foucault claimed that power as domination can reveal itself as brute tyranny and yet be entirely "justified" when it is formulated within a morality that appears as "the serene domination of Good over Evil, of order over disorder" (Deleuze 2004: 209). Disordering is thus regarded as a useful concept for destabilizing the idea of a pre-given order to which music or art or nature or society has to adhere to. This shifts the attention from a fundamentally static worldview, emphasizing control, to one that is more process-oriented, highlighting the productive undercurrents and differential relations of all events. It also constitutes an artistic resistance to dogmatic images of Life that reduce difference to matters of identity. However, the full extent of disordering and complexity in collective musical improvisation is not always clear to an outside listener. Performances of collective improvisation can thus benefit from being accompanied by a conceptual experimentation that sparks an interest in how the music is created and why this may be important.

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APPENDIX

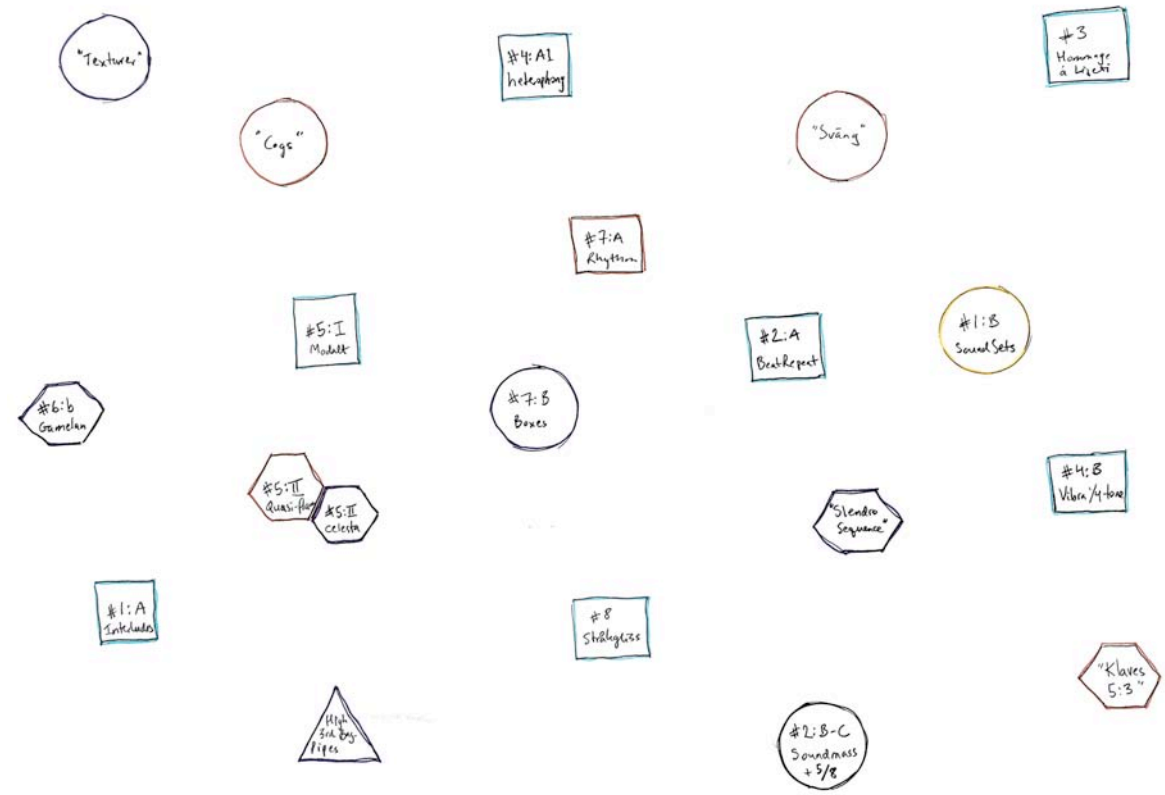


Figure 1: Example of a modular score.

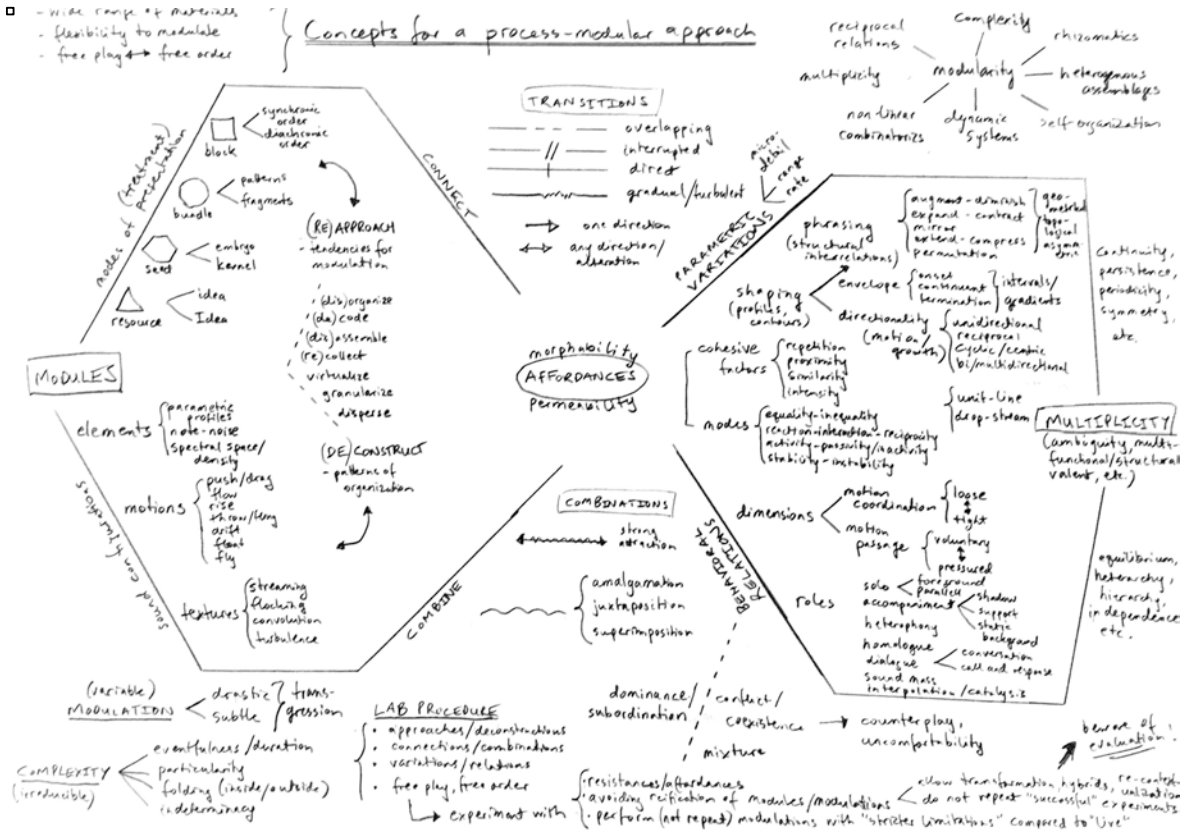


Figure 1: Conceptual toolbox.