July
2022

Inclusive
Science and
European
Democracies

Gibberish
improv theatre

GIBBERISH REPORT

Facilitating for Listening: Art-based Methods of Engagement and Communication

Gibberish Report

Facilitating for Listening:

Art-based Methods of Engagement and Communication

Contributors: Martin Loeng, Sophia Efstathiou & Marius Korsnes

Introduction

This report invites you to learn, teach and practice the art of *facilitating for listening*. Facilitating for listening involves creating group work, exercises and learning moments that offer participants in workshops and other events such as public meetings and gatherings, the psychological safety to get both actively engaged and actively heard. Facilitating for listening draws from best practices in improvisational theatre so that group participants are heard and listen to one another. Just like other skills, listening needs practice.

Here we help you understand the art of "facilitating for listening" in three steps, illustrated through three examples or sets of "games" and "exercises" drawn from improvisational theatre adapted to an academic setting. The first step is **Building Participation**. This is the often overlooked but nevertheless emphatically important act of "warming up." While for many facilitators and participants warm-up games appear silly, pointless or even insulting, they "build the room" and the social rules of the ensuing participation. We go so far as to say that you cannot properly facilitate *for listening* without warming up your participants to the point where they feel comfortable and ready for participating.

The second step is **Stimulating Engagement**. We show how you can create games and exercises tailored to a particular subject or theme. We illustrate using game-like rules (for example, time-constraints and cognitively impossible memory tasks) that provoke creative problem-solving in the questions of ethics (in Efstathiou' s example). In Loeng's example the structure of the storytelling exercise he prepared for fieldnote-taking ethnography students forces participants to misremember. Success and failures become the basis for subsequent learning. The trick here is creating and using participants' own experiences, as opposed to primarily relying on a lecturer's store of knowledge. The structure of the exercises is what help these experiences occur.

The third step is **Reflection**. Exercises usually are followed by creating room for reflection. The facilitator steps into a more active moderating role to facilitate conversation based on what the participants did in the exercise. In the reflection phase we most easily recognise the act of listening. Here the facilitator and participants may 'interview', nod and encourage, as they listen to other participants with their ears. A room full of people sharing and listening attentively together is in this way achieved in the reflection phase.

These three steps play into each other. Without properly warming up and an active engagement in the exerciser (ideally without a kernel of nervousness), group talk, and reflection is far less meaningful. We want to stress that what we mean by "listening" is not simply using your ears but has a social nature. Being able to share and listen to others with your ears is *achieved*. These steps are there to help achieve this. For the facilitator, means going into and out of active, authoritative, aware, speaking, and listening roles as the event unfolds. Ultimately the point of "listening" is not to use your ears, but to engage with others in a way that:

1. Builds others' willingness to take risks and communicate with everyone in the room,

2. Stimulates engagement shared and personal, lived moments, which

3. Can be used to reflect and to learn, posing genuine questions.

The art of "Listening" in Improvisational Theatre

Our experience with improvisational theatre is what gives us this definition of "listening." To use the art of listening outside improvisational theatre, it helps to understand the logic

of practicing and learning improvisational theatre.

Improvisational theatre cannot be learned in a traditional sense. Early proponents of "improv" Keith Johnstone and Viola Spolin both make this point explicitly. It is not like a regular classroom with a knowing teacher and a learning student - or what Paolo Freire calls the "banking concept" of learning: the knowledgeable teacher "deposits" knowledge through lecturing into the students' brains. The principle of "listening" is often understood to be the opposite of this banking concept. The facilitator tries to change who has the authority to speak and this changes the dynamics of listening. The participants' own experiences need to be seen and heard and built upon as the true gold of the learning encounter. In improvisational theatre we know this intimately, participants have to do exercises and scenes and listen to each other in order to truly learn and have fun.

I.   Step One: Building Participation

Improvisational theatre people are good at warming up. Warming up by standing in a circle singing a silly song while waving your arms around like an animal is, of course, awkward for many. Which is exactly why we do it; to prove that taking risks, being silly, and making mistakes is *not socially punished*. A technique we in Gibberish use is that the facilitator creates a social rule: "Whenever someone makes a 'mistake', we all cheer for them". Yes, this sounds forced, but participants learn to appreciate the intention: to create a positive atmosphere. Its purpose is to prove over time to everyone involved the lesson that we *want* you to take risks and fail. You are rewarded for trying your best and sharing of yourself. Whether you are able to exquisitely sing and wave your arms around like an animal is not really important. That you are really trying to sing and wave your arms around like an animal with others around you is important. In other words, the warm-up exercises we do build the atmosphere and social rules of the next one or two hours.

Practicing scenes in improvisational theatre *without* properly warming up is one of the most counterproductive experiences you can have. Trying to "listen" to people is difficult when you are obsessed with how you yourself are sounding (self-consciousness), or with what you yourself might want to say next (what we call "being in your head"), because the environment is stacking up the stakes against you if you fail to do well or if you fail to impress. (Just think of how much stock is placed on a "good" academic question - and the barrier this can create for people raising questions they have.) As we learn from practicing improvisational theatre, creating engagement in a room of people who are not ready to speak, and share is not good "facilitating for listening." Below we present a series of different warm-up exercises and show why they might be used.

i.   Greetings with a Handshake

This opening exercise emphasises welcoming everyone in the group, including folks we have not yet met, or who we do not know very well yet. The exercise starts by walking around in the room, greeting people, and presenting yourself: "Hi, I am X (first name)." A focus is placed on maintaining eye contact. This is a simple way of getting strangers to acknowledge and see each other.

The facilitator can follow up from this warm-up by allowing room for non-verbal interactions among group members, where they are invited to attend to not only words, but movement and rhythm. The facilitator instructs the participants using the following steps: 1. Participants begin walking and exploring their own areas; 2. Then they are told to move in relation to each other and move together, bringing attention to each other; 3. They are to "move apart, but somehow stay in contact" (e.g., could be a rhythm, eye contact, rushing

past each other, etc.). The purpose of this is to have the participants solve the problem of moving apart while in contact with one another; 4. They "come back together" (maybe into a circle?) and, in the end 5. They are now to make a group sculpture based on a topic related to the workshop or event they are participating in.

The purpose of this exercise is first and foremost to get people who do not know each other to feel comfortable interacting verbally and non-verbally. As the move-around-the-room exercise advances, participants are made aware practically and perhaps conceptually of their place in the room. Their place in the room becomes a focus and builds into a broader awareness of how they create collective movements, rhythms or images together. Individual action and collaborative action are demonstrated in the exercise, contributing to setting the tone of the group's future work. Comments from participants after this exercise tended to be that it increased their awareness of their personal space and shared space. We can use this kind of warm-up to direct participant's attention toward the social labour of being together in a workshop and being aware of each other.

ii.   Scenography construction and relating to one another

Another way to invite a group who do not know each other well to work together is to build what would be a familiar situation for them. To start with, one person steps forward and says for instance "I am a tree", taking up the physical posture of a tree. Then, each participant, one at a time, adds to the scenographic image by declaring who or what they are in relation to this (whether it be an object or a character), e.g., "I am the apple hanging from the tree", "I am the caterpillar inside the apple", and so on until a larger complete image is created. This can be done as few or as many times as makes sense and as much as participants enjoy.

This is a very structured warm-up, so what does it do apart from showing that it is safe to be playful and imitate trees and caterpillars inside apples? By asking participants to physically position themselves in relation to each other (the apple to the tree) their attention is drawn to how they can position themselves in relation to others also outside the exercise. If the event or workshop has a theme related to social and cultural relations, or something to do with space, this exercise introduces these concepts wordlessly and builds sets of shared associations. Further, if there already are hierarchies within the particular group involved, say a group of employees in a particular company, or stakeholders in a community project, the exercise helps flatten these hierarchies by inviting people to assume new and variously related roles. Flattening the hierarchies of the room helps quiet participants feel the "right" to speak.

One of the authors of this report, Loeng, always introduces exercises like this by directly stating its underlying purpose. In this case, he would say something like: "Okay, today's event is all about the importance of social dynamics and relations, so we're going to practice being socially dynamic in this silly warm-up." This lets everyone know that the focus of the exercise is and focuses their attention on the "hidden" meaning.

iii.   Flipping Scripts: Name/Clap and Stand/Sit

Another typical warmup is the following, used in improv theatre shows for warming up audiences or for a setting with lots of people in a room. When we have used this in a lecture hall, it works wonders for nervous and reticent stiff-bodied students or staff in Norway.

The exercise asks people to say their names, all together out loud, and to clap, followed by standing up, and sitting down. The facilitator commands are "Name," "Clap", "Stand"

and "Sit." After playing around with these commands, the facilitator then flips the meaning of the instructions. When the facilitator says "name" people have to clap, and when the facilitator says "clap" people are to say their names. The same with sitting down and standing up: people should sit when told to "stand" and vice versa.

This exercise helps prove to people that moving their bodies, being loud and laughing is allowed and that it can be fun. The structure of the warmup *forces* them to become confused by flipping the scripts and to "break the rules". Instructing participants to act differently to what they are told opens up the possibility for "failing" to follow the rules as the right choice and part of the game, as of course participants will fail to flip the scripts, e.g., saying their name instead of clapping etc. At the same time, the facilitator can fail too to follow their own instructions providing a good example of how improv exercises can help shake hierarchy and expectations—and cater for failing as embedded in the practice. A silly game like this in a lecture hall communicates to everyone involved that this is not a normal lecture where you will sit and listen to the lecturer for 45 minutes. In other words, it Builds Participation.

iv.   Drawings

This is another exercise we have used at the start of a class on "interdisciplinarity"; that is, how researchers and scientists from very different disciplines can collaborate better in the same project. The exercise is simple. Students were asked to *draw* how they perceive the connection between their own research and society on a piece of paper. Then they present and discuss their drawings with another person (for example, the person to their left). After this, they present their discussion in plenary.

What always happens is that through these drawings they focus in on how people understand the underlying logic of their science differently. For an urban sociologist, the drawn connection might be between policies and equal access to urban spaces, while the engineer may draw connections between people, movements, and infrastructure. The drawings and the task bring out their assumptions about their discipline, while making it plain that listening actively to others' perspectives is wanted. Furthermore, they discover how their views can be complementary. The students' own drawing and reflections on their drawing then provides the launchpad for understanding "interdisciplinarity" further.

The exercise's author, Marius Korsnes, received feedback from a group of colleagues and in follow-up interviews with students who participated that it worked well to keep students engaged and active. This technique involves preparing the students to draw something, even if one may not be good at it. The participants experience support from their partner, because everyone knew that the drawing was done there and then, in the moment, and the expectations are therefore low for doing an 'excellent' piece of work.

v.   How to do warm-ups

We propose that warm-ups are - though often overlooked - essential when strangers (or colleagues!) come together, especially if we want to build a level field for contributions. The art of listening starts by making people feel comfortable with speaking and participating. As such, which exercises or approach you use should be determined by that goal and the group involved. If silly sit/stand games work, that is lovely. Or maybe a more cerebral or abstract game like the Scenography Construction is better because it subtly introduces a concept (like social relations and individuality versus collective) and makes physical participation feel easier. While the "fun" aspect of warm-ups is also frequently overlooked and misunderstood, we have learned that when everyone is genuinely having "fun" the groundwork is properly laid for mutual listening.

Once you understand the purpose of warm-ups, a whole world of exercises and approaches opens up. The most common objection to warm-ups comes from not understanding what they do, and so we suggest making sure participants know why they are doing warm-ups. Let them in on the secret.

II.   Step two: Stimulating Engagement

While warm-ups are a fairly easy concept to get one's head around, including exercises or games as the main course of a workshop can be a little more complicated. The role of facilitator is to step back from the talking "teacher" role. Instead, the facilitator's role is to lay down the rules of the game, set it up, and actively listen to what is going on.

The key is games and exercises that are structured with a purpose. We will offer two examples here both used in academic settings. First, we discuss the game *Virtuous and Vicious Designs* that has been used as part of reflecting and learning about responsible research and value-sensitive design, by playing with the ideas of being a responsible, or irresponsible, designer. Second, we discuss the hectic *Storytelling Fieldnote exercise*.

i.   Virtuous and Vicious Designs

While the rules of the game stimulate and shape the engagement, we normally following this by providing room for reflection and listening. This is especially important when the object of learning is failing, making room for mistakes and for taking risks to be safe. In Virtuous and Vicious Designs, created by Sophia Efstathiou, moments of failure and irresponsibility are coded into the structure of the exercise just as much as moments of reflection are. This combination enables this exercise to exemplify, demonstrate, and advance participants' understanding of 'good', 'ethical', and '(ir)responsible' design. It does so by playing with the idea of things coming with a 'script' for proper, or responsible use (Latour 1992). Only after proper warm-up exercises have been done to build trust and set the stage for collaboration does this combination of hectic design and calm reflection begin.

The exercise uses a mixed format of a card-based game, and more open-ended improvised performance (see Pérez et al. 2019). Participants are divided in teams of 3-5 and they pick cards from two decks of cards, holding cards face-down until a 4-minute timer starts. One deck contains 'virtue-ise' or 'vice-n' verbs invented by Efstathiou to describe virtue/vice as something imparted through an activity. For example, one might pick the verb "fairorise" defined as "make X enable fairness" or "sadate = make X generate sadness". The other deck contains cards with the objects to be redesigned (the missing Xs). So, they might be tasked with "fairorising an alarm clock", i.e., redesigning an alarm clock to enable fairness, or "sadating an alarm clock" i.e., redesigning it to generate sadness (Figure 1).
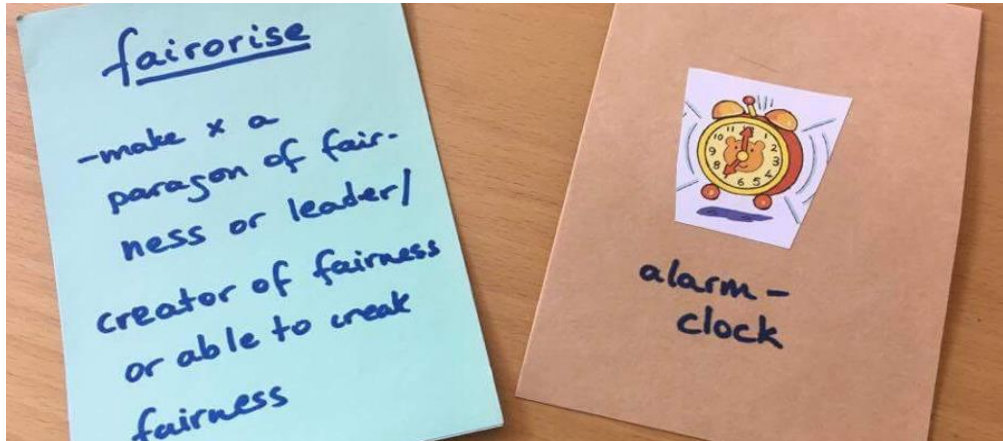
Figure 1. *Virtuous Designs:* Cards from the game - Photography by Efstathiou

One way to play the game is by offering the same object card to two teams and inviting one to pick a virtueise verb and another a vicen verb. Players in each team are given a worksheet where they are prompted to draw an image of their design, to name it, and briefly describe it. In the first round, players in each team are to work individually with the same prompt cards shared among the team members. Importantly: they only get four minutes to invent, draw and name their virtuised or vicened inventions on their worksheet. We then move to a second round of again four minutes where players share their designs in their team and come up with an uber-design for the team, e.g., picking one of the suggestions or combining their characteristics.
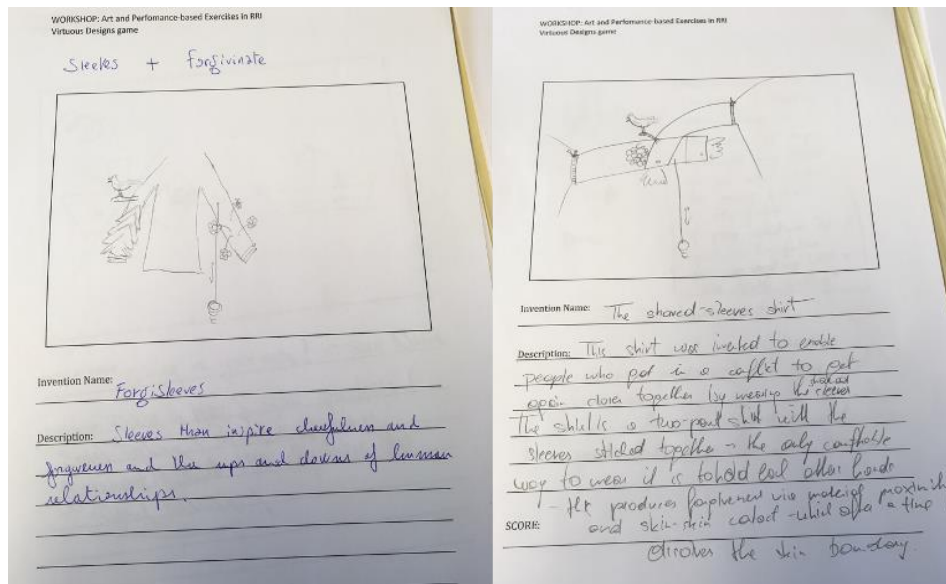

Figure 2. *Forgivinate + Sleeves:* The shared-sleeves shirt. The forgivesleeves are two shirts with one sleeve joined that would be worn by people who are in a conflict and need to forgive each other. The only comfortable way to wear the shirt would be to hold hands, which the designers say, would enable forgiveness through skin-to-skin contact and by transgressing the social boundary. The drawing has added features from the forgivesleeves design (bird perch and yoyo) as it was chosen for the winning design for that team. These two designs were made in the Society for New and Emerging Technologies workshop October 14, 2016. (Photography by Efstathiou).

The game playfully engages with the discussion about how technology should be used, and what is good, ethical, and responsible. It codes (ir)responsibility, creativity, and failure by using tricks like time pressure and humour that prompt people to think a bit more freely and take some risks. A crucial element here is improvisation; participants are to think and act fast, almost too fast. The four-minute time constraint activates a creative versus critical response, mandating that ideas are accepted and built on to get to the result fast, versus

stopping to analyse and critique at every step. That students experience this directly means they are made more aware of the difference between fast creativity and critical reflection on a design.

Notice that the facilitator's role is nearly invisible here. The facilitator primarily sets up the rules of the game. They step back and make sure participants have the space (but not time) they need to do these tasks. This is an example of the facilitator *not* always being a teacher. The focus is on the participants playing the game. As the facilitator it is crucial to be actively listening to what happens. If a group appears to not understand, help them understand it.

What designs happen, some really irresponsible ones? Like a bed that will not let anyone fall asleep by jolting them and tilting them at an angle when they are about to fall asleep. This was a bed design that "cruelises" people (makes people cruel, enabling cruelty). As you will have noticed, designing irresponsibly is coded into the game. The "vice-n" verbs and the time limit prompt participants to forgo critically engaging with their design, breaking established "scripts", sometimes making truly irresponsible designs. Can a vicious design be responsibly made? Is a virtuous design responsible? When you observe an interestingly irresponsible design in contrast to a more lovely one, you know what to ask the participants about when discussions begin in plenary.

How this game is structured gives participants and facilitator the raw material they need to reflect on the nature of technology's scripts, and responsibility and irresponsibility in design. The structure of the exercise and the "learning" is purposefully connected. Again, the structure of the game is to place the participants' experiences at the centre. The facilitator cannot easily *teach* irresponsibility but can certainly help participants actively explore the contrast by responsible and irresponsible designs. Feedback from participants has emphasised the benefits of having fun (the joy of playing) and the creative/imaginative work the game prompts, such as the virtueise and vicen verb concepts and the resulting inventions.

ii.   Storytelling Fieldnote Exercise: The hectic storytelling exercise for social scientists, ethnographers or other active listeners

The premise of Martin Loeng's exercise *Storytelling Fieldnotes* is that taking fieldnotes in qualitative social science research is a type of storytelling. This exercise transforms the usually textual, solitary, and theoretical subject of fieldnotes into a practical and social one that reflects the social nature of taking fieldnotes. It takes place between two people, by listening to and retelling the other's story. That we misremember or selectively listen to certain parts of others' stories is built into our way of listening, and this exercise makes participants aware of this.

Interpreting fieldnotes through narrative theory allows us to approach fieldnotes in two unique ways. First, a short introduction to narrative theory describes what elements make up any story (senses, emotions, actions, sequences, setting, materials, characters). Participants soon understand that these different 'narrative elements' represent the analytical and interpretive choices that necessarily go into a fieldnote. What, in essence, do you remember more easily when people tell you about their lives?

Second, the exercise turns fieldnotes from an abstraction into an activity. It casts fieldnotes not simply as an object of discussion but extends them into a social practice of people attending to each other's stories. The exercise is so designed to make active listening, empathic skills, and social acceptance of others' failures necessary tools to creating those learning moments born out of failure that the facilitator makes clear are intended from the

outset.

While *Storytelling Fieldnotes* can be done as a whole workshop, with several exercises, warm-ups, short moments of lecturing about fieldnotes and narrative theory, it all culminates in what Loeng calls the *Storytelling Fieldnotes* exercise. For facilitation, it is critical to do proper warm-ups and to explicitly state that the main exercise of the workshop is meant to be difficult and provoke failures. The exercise is created to be near impossible to do perfectly.

This is how to exercise is laid out:

First Round: Each participant has a short moment to read a pre-printed short fairy tale card or recall a short personal story (something that does not require participants to expose themselves too much). During the first round, they sit in pairs facing each other telling each other their story.

Story Switching, Subsequent Rounds and Grapevine Storytelling: In the second round, each participant enters a new pair, and tells the new person *the story they just listened to*. They do not tell their own story, but others' stories. They try to listen for narrative elements that come out in the story (for example emotions, or the setting). The participants move on to a new pair, with new stories switched every round. Each round, they must tell the story they just heard. For two to four (or more) increasingly mentally hectic rounds, each participant must tell, listen to, remember, and retell several of all other participants' stories as the pairings rotate (none of them repeating). To make things more complicated, in each round the facilitator gives them instructions to listen for a particular narrative element of the story (actions, sense, emotions, setting and landscape). This is where it gets (deliberately) overwhelming, and the facilitators should make sure to listen to what is going on.

Plenary Round: In the plenary round, everyone, including the facilitator, sits in a circle. Each participant must tell the story they most recently heard to the entire group – with an instruction from the facilitator to try to include the narrative elements. Each participant therefore gets to *hear their own story* told by another person after many retellings. The story has most likely changed dramatically through the grapevine - exactly as planned! This prompts the reflection phase.

Reflecting on Retelling Failures: Participants are encouraged by the facilitator to talk openly about how their own story and the last telling of their story by others diverged. It is important to take time to discuss the 'mistakes' made here, because those are the moments of learning. What was difficult or easy to recall? Whose story was easier to remember? Emotions and personal perspectives? Settings, atmospheres and landscapes? What did we learn about that art of taking fieldnotes or of interviewing? What were we not aware of? What about making our own stories memorable? Through the facilitator's questions and participants' discussion, we find connections between these experiences and the art and ethics of taking fieldnotes.

The *Storytelling Fieldnotes* exercise uses storytelling and improvisational theatre principles like listening, and accepting failure, by explicitly setting participants up for failure and building on that failure. This helps achieve what Berk and Trieber (2009) describe: making students actively engage, using multiple -including emotional- intelligences. The whole premise is collaborative, the task so cognitively complicated it is nearly impossible to do flawlessly. Participants should know this in advance.

These intelligences and skills are there not for their own sake, but to make participants

analyse their experiences, failures, and gain a deeper understanding about the interpretive side of qualitative research and fieldnotes. Or more generally, how do we listen and remember others' stories? By explicitly setting participants up for failure by telling them that we will discuss and learn through those moments of failure, this workshop achieves what other kinds of educational tools rarely achieve: making a research method and its scientific, interpretive, and ethical questions into a social practice and an object of discussion. Using improvisational principles, the facilitator invites participants in on the set up, so they can take control of the task of listening, retelling stories, and of getting them wrong.

III. Step three: Reflecting

When participants exit the playfulness of a game, and start talking together, we are entering the all-important moment of reflection. This is when the value of these games is earned.

After most exercises or series of exercises, there is a round of reflections. This is to understand 1) how the exercise was experienced, and 2) what it contributed with in terms of the topic in question. The group reflections after each exercise form part of the 'listening' and making aware of what happened: they make room for the facilitator to stay open and vulnerable to participants' feedback, and participants also comfortable and able to feed into and shape the course of the engagement event. This step should not be left out, as it can be considered to be what 'realises' or completes the game or exercise, by sharing what the group thinks of the exercises in question. In other words, the reflections are integrated parts of the exercises themselves. Facilitators need to first prepare, then conduct, and then 'listen' and 'make aware', to maximise the potential of techniques from improvisational theatre in the teaching process.

For example, in the Storytelling Fieldnotes exercise, once everyone told a story, everyone had heard *their own* story told through several pairings of a grapevine. Every time the original storyteller would tell everyone what had changed. For example, in one personal story the ethnicity of participants and location of a church had changed slightly by the last retelling. This made everyone aware of how critical details for a social scientist can invisibly change. This was only revealed by addressing the "mistake" and asking: What was difficult or easy to say or remember? What did we learn about that art of listening – as taking fieldnotes or interviewing?

By incorporating moments of silliness and failure into the frame of such workshops, we would allow participants to expect and recognize them as part of the task, as learning opportunities. In other words, the value of reflections is coded into the engagement exercises from the start, allowing facilitator and participants to work together toward those moments of learning and insightful dialogue. This makes it clear from the outset that moments of embarrassment or failure can allow participants to build on these experiences through reflection.

Of course, space must be created for them to do so in between listening to a lecture or performing creative or storytelling tasks. From the first introduction by the facilitator, through warm-up games and icebreakers, facilitation works toward moments of listening and learning from each other – and participants already know this. Sharing mistakes or irresponsible designs *is* the task, a necessary building block to realise the value of reflection about design or fieldnotes. The learning value of that moment is enhanced when others use that mistake to reflect on their own mistakes, and so build dialogues of critical

reflection on what knowledge is, and how knowledge and learning are also socially constructed.

IV. Psychological Safety and Listening

The three steps discussed here build on the idea of psychological safety to enable listening. It is such a tenet of the art of listening that it is worth taking the time to understand it more deeply. Amy Edmondson has developed the concept of psychological safety as a key in well-functioning organisations. Psychological safety is defined as the belief that it is safe to speak up and speak with candour in a professional setting. One of the examples Edmondson analyses in her work is the last flight of the NASA Columbia shuttle in 2003, which completely combusted upon re-entry into Earth's atmosphere. The investigation into this case showed that there was an engineer, Rodney Rocha, who upon studying the videos of the launch from a nice sunny day in Florida, saw a small speck fly across the screen. Rodney was worried about what is called a 'foam strike', a part of the equipment coming loose and making a hole into the body of the shuttle. Rodney discussed this with his immediate higher-up and got permission to put together a team to investigate this: They concluded that they could not be sure without further images taken of the shuttle -something possible to ask the US Department of Defence to do when the shuttle was going to pass one of their satellites. The request for imagery was denied -partly because of an embarrassment factor. NASA wanted to underplay the risk. Now the moment of truth came in a meeting, 8 days into the mission, and the only day in the 16-day mission when the issue of the foam strike was on the agenda. Rodney was present -and in the periphery. When the issue came up, he stayed silent. After the fact, when asked why he did not say anything about his worries his reply was "I just couldn't do. I am too low down (his one palm going low) and she (Linda Ham, mission management team leader) is way up here (his other palm raised high)."

This is a terrible story, costing the lives of 7 astronauts, and destroying the shuttle. But it offers a wonderful example of how organisational culture and meeting facilitation can raise the bar very high for asking questions and taking the risk to be seen as intrusive, ignorant or stupid. The reply of Rodney that he "could not" do it, speaks also to how these barriers are experienced almost like physically disabling: it was not "I chose or decided not to say anything" but rather indicating an almost physiological experience of being unable to speak up. Self-protection and containment are often a fear response, in answer to a psychologically unsafe environment. And it costs as many good ideas as bad ones from being listened to.

Good facilitation that achieves this sense of safety for these exercises is central to their successful implementation. This is why improvisers have such focus on "fun". *Facilitating by listening* demands enough participant and facilitator vulnerability to not only take risks and make mistakes, but also to openly talk about their own lack of knowledge, uncertainty, and mistakes. It involves letting go of the defences and control provided by professional 'front' and authority of a leader/teacher, to engage with participants as another fallible human being. Many improvisation-inspired educational exercises provide a safe space for failures, mistakes, and differences of interpretation, and build learning moments by addressing them non-judgmentally. From warm-ups to game structures and facilitating reflection, *listening* builds on the recognition that everyone involved has to feel able to participate.

Conclusion

This report has presented some tools and steps, inspired by the art of improvisational

theatre, as tools for *facilitating for listening*. We analysed this as happening in three steps, illustrated through examples used in an academic or other work setting. **Building Participation** starts with the often overlooked but still emphatically important "warming up" of the team or group gathered. Warm-up games may seem silly, pointless or even insulting, but accepting and becoming part of this silliness is precisely the point. Allowing people to act silly, as part of the work to be done "builds the room" and sets up social rules allowing for 'silliness', 'stupidity', and mistakes to happen. Warm-ups even give these often-embarrassing experiences a fun and even positive twist as part of the vulnerability needed from facilitators and participants in successful engagements. We would even go so far as to posit that ensuring psychological safety -as Edmondson flags- and *facilitating for listening* rely on 'warming up' or otherwise ensuring a team feel comfortable and ready for open participation.

The second step is **Stimulating Engagement**. We illustrate this through games and exercises tailored to a particular subject or theme. We show that using game-like rules (in this case, time-constraints and cognitively impossible tasks) can provoke creative problem-solving as in Efstathiou' s example. In Loeng's storytelling exercise for fieldnote-taking ethnographers, the structure forces participants to misremember. These mistakes then become the basis for learning. The trick in stimulating engagement is creating and using participants' own experiences to fuel their further engagement and learning.

The last step discussed is **Reflection.** In the reflection phase we most easily recognise the performance of listening; often the facilitator may ask questions and wait for answers, or 'interview', nod and perform listening to participants. The listening we are after though is not listening for what a leader, in a position of authority or control, wants to hear or elicit from the room, but making opportunities for what people are saying and asking to be heard and attended to. Facilitating during the reflection phase is focused on bringing out and sometimes guiding participants' discussion. In Loeng's example, this means directing attention to misremembrances and the art and ethics of fieldnotes. In Efstathiou's example, it means prompting responsible and irresponsible designs to generate a better understand of designs' "scripts". The reflection phase is when all the work really pays off.

In our experience, a good indicator such exercises are working is that there is laughing and humour operating in the room. If people can enjoy, nod, smile, express interest, and laugh good-humouredly at their own and others' irresponsible designs or misremembrances, they are making those "mistakes" safe to touch. This means they are using those moments to learn and grow. For participants to reach any kind of enjoyment in making mistakes, it is critical that they feel socially safe. The kind of negative responses, e.g., of dismissal, eye-rolling, ignoring or ridiculing that certain leaders or participant may be wont to give team members are directly counter-productive. Participants who feel they must defend themselves are not going to enjoy themselves nor reach any good moments of creative engagement and genuine contribution to a social dialogue and discussion.

There are thousands of games and exercises out there to pick and choose from. In this report we have tried to communicate the underlying logic of "listening" through such exercises. Whether for improvisational theatre, academia, or any other social gathering, we believe that the three steps and principles of Facilitating for Listening can be applied to great benefit. Which exercises or games those are is ultimately up to the facilitator and the purpose of the gathering. We know from experience that a room full of people ready to participate and to listening to one another cannot be taken for granted. We also know how immensely rewarding and constructive this is. The tools presented here will help you achieve that immense reward.

Further Reading

Alon, U. (2014). Performing Science. Performance Studies in Motion: International Perspectives and Practices in the Twenty-First Century, 328-41.

Argyris, C., & Schon, D. A. (1974). Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness. Jossey-Bass.

Berk, R, A., and Rosalind H. Trieber. (2009). 'Whose Classroom Is It, Anyway? Improvisation as a Teaching Tool'. Journal on Excellence in College Teaching 20 (3): 29–60.

Dudeck, T. R., & McClure, C. (2018). Applied Improvisation: Leading, Collaborating, and Creating Beyond the Theatre. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Efstathiou, S. (2016). Is It Possible to Give Scientific Solutions to Grand Challenges? On the Idea of Grand Challenges for Life Science Research. Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C 56: 48–61.

European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Mazzucato, M. (2018). Mission-oriented research & innovation in the European Union : a problem-solving approach to fuel innovation-led growth, Brussels: European Commission Publications Office.

Feyerabend, P. (1975). Against method. Verso.

Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed. Bloomsbury publishing USA.

Funtowicz, S. O., & Ravetz, J. R. (1993). Science for the post-normal age. Futures, 25(7), 739-755.

Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P., & Trow, M. (1994). The new production of knowledge: The dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies. London: Sage.

Hackman, J.R. (1987). The design of work teams. In: Lorsch J. (Ed.) Handbook of organisational behaviour (p. 315-342). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Harding, S. G. (1986). The science question in feminism. Cornell University Press.

Hooks, B. (2014). Teaching to transgress. Routledge.

Horton, J. (2008). 'A "Sense of Failure"? Everydayness and Research Ethics'. Children's Geographies 6 (4): 363–83.

Horton, J. 2020. 'Failure Failure Failure Failure Failure Failure: Six Types of Failure within the Neoliberal Academy'. Emotion, Space and Society 35: 100672.

Hulme, M., 2018. "Gaps" in climate change knowledge. Environmental Humanities 10, 330–337.

Huutoniemi, K., Klein, J. T., Bruun, H., & Hukkinen, J. (2010). Analyzing interdisciplinarity: Typology and indicators. Research policy, 39(1), 79-88.

Kaldewey, D. (2018). The Grand Challenges Discourse: Transforming Identity Work in Science and Science Policy. Minerva **56**, 161–182

Facilitating for Listening

Latour, B. (1992). Where are the missing masses? The sociology of a few mundane artifacts. In Bijker, W. and J. Law (eds.) Shaping technology/Building society: Studies in sociotechnical change. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 225-258.

Lélé, Sharachchandra, and Richard B. Norgaard. (2005). 'Practicing Interdisciplinarity'. BioScience 55 (11): 967–75.

Mourik, R., Robison, R., Breukers, S. (2017) Storytelling - SHAPE ENERGY facilitation guidelines for interdisciplinary and multistakeholder processes. Cambridge: SHAPE ENERGY.

Nowotny, H., Scott, P. B., & Gibbons, M. T. (2013). Re-thinking science: Knowledge and the public in an age of uncertainty. John Wiley & Sons.

Owen, R., Macnaghten, P., & Stilgoe, J. (2012). Responsible research and innovation: From science in society to science for society, with society. Science and public policy, 39(6), 751-760.

Owen, R. J., Bessant, J. R., & Heintz, M. (Eds.). (2013). Responsible innovation (Vol. 104). Chichester: Wiley.

Pérez, E., Efstathiou, S., & Swierstra, T. (2019). Getting our hands dirty with technology. Peripeti, 16(30.7), 104-121.

Rosa, H. (2020). The uncontrollability of the world. John Wiley & Sons.

Sawyer, K. (2007) Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration. New York: Basic Books.

Sawyer, K. (2004). 'Creative Teaching: Collaborative Discussion as Disciplined Improvisation'. Educational Researcher33 (2): 12–20.

Sawyer, K. (2019). The creative classroom: Innovative teaching for 21st-century learners. Teachers College Press.

Sjøvoll, Vibeke, Geir Grothen, and Lars Frers. (2020). 'Abandoned Ideas and the Energies of Failure'. Emotion, Space and Society 36 (August): 100709.

Schinko-Fischli, S. (2018). Applied Improvisation for Coaches and Leaders: A Practical Guide for Creative Collaboration. Routledge.

Schwarz, R. M. (2013). Smart leaders, smarter teams: How you and your team get unstuck to get results. John Wiley & Sons.

Schwarz, R. M. (2017). The skilled facilitator: A comprehensive resource for consultants, facilitators, coaches, and trainers. Hoboken

Silvast, A., & Foulds, C. (2022). A Sociology of Interdisciplinarity. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Turner, J. (2020). '0–39%: The Beginning of an Infrastructure of Failure in Academia'. Emotion, Space and Society 35: 100647.

Veine, S. (2006). Det spontane rommet - rommet hvor alt kan skje. I Steinsholt, K og H. Sommero, (red). Improvisasjon. Kunsten å sette seg selv på spill. Oslo: Damm.