

A Flashmob as a Case Study for a Methodology within Group Artistic Creation (MGAC)

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Abstract

In this paper a methodology within Group Artistic Creation (MGAC) is introduced as an artistic-led proposal through a case study, the Performance-*Flashmob Peace Parade*. This methodology is based on choreographic proposals, debate, performance techniques and practices based on a *democracy of experiences* that promotes dynamic and open ways of knowledge making. *Peace Parade* was developed between March and September 2018 and premiered at São João's fair in Évora, Portugal, June 22, 2018, in a co-production with Évora's City Council and the Center of Art History and Artistic Research from the University of Évora, joining a philharmonic band, the author and 17 actual and former students of Arts School - University of Évora, Portugal.

Introduction

Separation between artistic practice and research is one of the dichotomies that has continued to be dismantled in the last few decades through practice-based research and practice-led research. These modes of knowledge-making offer benefits over qualitative research, the latter having methodological restrictions that made it difficult to convey the outcomes of both researcher and artist. Brad Haseman (2006) explains:

in recent years some researchers have become impatient with the methodological restrictions of qualitative research and its emphasis on written outcomes. They believe that approach necessarily distorts the communication of practice. There has been a radical push to not only place practice within the research process, but to lead research through practice. (100)

Practice-based research is foremost a research process conducted by exploring artistic practice. Practice-led research concerns itself with the nature of artistic practice and leads to new knowledge significant for that artistic practice. The types of *methods*, their *features*, and their *validity* are mapped often through case studies, especially in practice-led research, since context and specificity are important tools to frame the (sometimes) impossible task of enclosing the artistic process within a pre-existing framework.

This paper focuses on a practice-led research case study which is “intrinsically experiential and comes to the fore when the researcher creates new artistic forms for performance and exhibition” (Haseman 100). It was designed along four main stages: 1) initial ideas about the project; 2) known methodologies as references; 3) artistic practice, self-reflection, self-criticality; and 4) outputs. Outputs can take many forms, from methodological proposals to critical thought-production alongside the artistic piece. It is key to note the importance of the *democracy of experiences*, as well as methodological diversity within this project. Following Mika Hannula, Juha Suoranta and Tere Vadén (2005), “a democracy of experiences and methodological diversity together characterize a possible mature, intelligible and coherent starting point for (artistic) research” (24). The authors describe *democracy of experiences* as “a view where no area of experience is in principle outside the critical reach of any other area of experience. (...) In principle, any area of experience can

challenge any other area, and there are no fundamental hierarchies among fields or types of experience” (30-31).

As an artistic researcher, performance artist and pedagogue, I find myself navigating an *open* field with some drawn relationalities. Participatory group artistic creations and associated research are very intriguing fields to dwell on, since “artistic research is a way in which experience reflectively changes itself. Moreover, in the spirit of the democracy of experiences, all areas of experience are at play in this circular or spiral movement, in the hermeneutic of (artistic) experience” (37). By *open* I refer to the simpler mathematical definition reformulated for this purpose: we say that a set A is open when a small variation of an element of A still belongs to A. This means that I am considering here that every small variation of any validated methodology in the field is valid. If we consider a classic methodology, the variation can be larger than a more radical one approaching the boundary. The case study *Peace Parade* encompasses a multiplicity of methodologies and practices previously considered as possibilities, and these were decided and organized throughout the creation process. In this process several tools from performance art, movement analysis, movement composition, site-specificity, and artistic research were utilized. A special tool was considered in this case: the continuous negotiation with participants of every proposal and idea, opening the space for other approaches and other formulations. The layout of this paper renders an attempt to take the reader on a journey inspired by the creation process of *Peace Parade*, from the initial proposals and questions to the more general *Methodology within Group Artistic Creation* (MGAC). This journey offers a possible methodology for consideration in group performance artistic-research projects.

Peace Parade - The Origin

In April 2018, I was challenged by Évora city council’s representative Carmen Almeida, and by heads of the project Performance, Heritage and Community within CHAIA (Center for History of the Arts and Artistic Research: University of Évora), Isabel Bezelga and Ana Tamen, to create with a group of art students and former students from the University of Évora a *Flashmob* for São João fair.¹

Isabel and Ana challenged me to accept this project, proposing also the special help of a theater finalist student at the time, Helena Baronet, and a former theater student, Hâmbar de Sousa, whose production and management skills could be of use. The project premiered on the 22nd of June 2018, and we presented it for three other days, 26th, 28th, and 30th of June 2018. Carmen Almeida proposed some initial conditions: a) the time of the several presentations along the fair were not on the official program, only the name *Peace Parade* was announced as an unexpected event along the fair, so it would have to be a *Flashmob* ; b) a part of the *Flashmob* would have to happen on a specific site on the fair, the Exhibition Tent, with artifacts and photography from 100 years ago, including a contemporary version of the carriage where the Armistice took place created by the architect João Sotero; c) it would have to respond, with a contemporary perspective, to the fair's 2018 theme: "Évora for Peace, 100 years of Armistice," since the City Council wanted a symbol of contemporary peace embedded in heritage because the fair happens in the same area in town wherein a monument dedicated to the soldiers who died in World War I is situated; and d) it would be a plus for the City Council if we could collaborate with another Évora-based cultural association or group.

I accepted the challenge and took some days to prepare myself for meeting with Helena. This time was important for me to formulate possible ways and methodologies, as well as ways to discuss the difficult theme of Armistice, where a peace treaty was signed at the end of World War I. This treaty between European countries centered on the division of colonies among them (Portugal was a colonizing power that still resists dealing with its problematic history). At this point, I decided to collaborate with Helena and Hâmbar on the direction and production of the *Flashmob* and also with students on the choreography, connecting together the overlaps and interconnections between performance art, movement composition, and site-specificity. For many of them, collaborative methodology was unknown territory.

After several brainstorming meetings with Helena and Hâmbar, we proposed our project to the City Council. We would create four different moments: a **Walk** around the fair into the Exhibition Tent, a **Dramatic Scene** inside the Exhibition Tent, a **Final Choreography** in the street with live music played by a local philharmonic band with Portuguese ex-combatants (of colonial war), and an **Homage** to dead soldiers on a walk into the monument. After the City Council accepted this plan, we gathered fifteen students and former students from the Theatre and Music departments at the University of Évora's School of Fine Arts. We also invited dancer and choreographer Sérgio Diogo Matias to help with the **Final Choreography**, since Helena, Hâmbar, and I wanted to perform.

We prepared a combination of somatic exercises and specific concepts that felt important to discuss before starting our artistic practice process. This “kind of methodology” was open enough to embrace changes through practice and also to inform said practice through methodological challenges. The creation process would lead us to a methodology constructed and recontextualized, possibly eclipsing our initial ideas.

As a performance artist coming from a mathematics background—and university lecturer in scenic movement composition disciplines—I was interested in performance art as a way to promote knowledge, radicality, individual and collective voices, and community among students. I always found—and fought for—ways for students to create their own performance pieces. Accordingly, some of the fifteen students we gathered for this project already had experience with performance art tools and processes and could share knowledge with their colleagues. I was interested in the opportunity to explore site-specific tools, so I divided rehearsals between the university and the site of the Fair. It was not possible to be fully site-specific for two reasons: Évora has an average temperature of 35°C – 38°C at that time of the year, making it almost impossible to work during daylight. The Fair was also in the process of being assembled by a construction company, so most of the time it was noisy and offered no space for us to concentrate and rehearse.

In *Peace Parade*, we dwell in the possibility that performance art brings of connecting established practices with everyday life actions, exhibiting their performativity and discursive force. As Erving Goffman (1956) notes,

the legitimate performances of everyday life are not ‘acted’ or ‘put on’ in the sense that the performer knows in advance just what he is going to do ...But [this] does not mean that [the person] will not express himself...in a way that is dramatized and performed.... In short, we act better than we know how. (70-74)

Performance art is an overarching term for works that “may be presented solo or with a group, with lighting, music or visuals made by the performance artist himself or in collaboration, and performed in places ranging from an art gallery or museum to an ‘alternative’ space, a theater, café, bar, or street corner” (Goldberg 2011, 9). In *Peace Parade*, I was especially interested in highlighting togetherness within diversity and dissonance, as well as practices centered on autobiographic experiences. Following Marvin Carlson (2011), in performance art “its practitioners do not base their work on characters previously created by other artists but on their own bodies, on their autobiographies, on their specific experiences in a given culture or in the world, that become performative in that practitioners are aware of them and exhibit them before an audience” (4-5). Utilizing our deep interest in performance art and movement composition as essential tools for working with students allowed Helena, Hâmbar, and me to propose *Peace Parade* to the other students and former students as a hybrid performance piece between the concepts of *Flashmob* and site-specificity. It is intriguing that there are not many *Flashmob* references in published research, considering the term was coined around 2003 following a series of events—the MOB Project, organized by Bill Wasik in the streets of New York City. In conversation with some performance artists and contemporary dancers, I realized that most of them have a hard time considering *Flashmobs* as valid as artistic objects, due to the connection with social media branding: *Flashmobs* are used frequently by the fashion and cosmetic industry, even if historically we may associate this kind of event with performance art and activism. According to Rebecca Walker (2013),

flash mobs share a number of characteristics with the performances of the Dadaists and Surrealists in the early 20th century, as well as with the Situationists and

Happenings artists of the 1950s and 60s. These characteristics include simultaneity of action, a general spirit of anarchy, tactics of juxtaposition, (...), the use of detournement (a hijacking or alteration), an emphasis of place and space, and the use of games and play. (2)

We were not interested in developing the *Flashmob* through all its features, but instead, we wanted to rescue some classical characteristics such as the sense of unexpectedness, the simultaneity of action, tactics of juxtaposition, and an emphasis on place and space. As explained, the concept was developed for a specific site but wasn't always rehearsed on that site, however it still differed from the style of performance that is fully rehearsed somewhere else and then transferred to a specific location. We rehearsed the work on the site without having worked there before, like a typical *Flashmob*. Even if not fully considered a site-specific piece since it was not fully created on site, it nevertheless maintained connections and references to the site. It was inspired and created for a specific place and, as Nick Kaye (2000) describes, it “might articulate and define itself through properties, qualities or meanings produced in specific relationships between an ‘object’ or ‘event’ and a position it occupies” (1).

***Peace Parade* – Encyclopedia of Exercises and Tasks**

Before digging into *Peace Parade*'s creation process and methodological choices, let us introduce a list of tasks and exercises used. Each group used different exercises and approaches, in order to have diverse tools and focus that, through practice and negotiation, would lead us to construct a *Flashmob*-inspired group performance piece.

Exercises and tasks were divided into four main groups: Physical Training, Individual/Group Selves, Inputs to Generate Material, and Construction.

A. Physical Training

We used techniques centered on focus and connection with the group: Pilates (A₁), Body Balance (A₂), Conscious Movement (A₃), Cards Game (A₄), Kung-Fu-based practice (A₅), and Stretching (A₆). These techniques did not have to be part of the same rehearsal; they were simply a set of exercises that we could combine differently throughout the process. The Cards Game was proposed by Hâmbar de Sousa, together with other

colleagues/participants, and was inspired by card games they played during rehearsals and at home for fun. The exercise goes like this: we choose a deck of cards, which have four suits: Clubs, Spades, Hearts and Diamonds. We associate to each suit a specific exercise/workout as, for instance, push-ups, little jumps, and bending the body to the front as if it is a board. Then, the number that appears in the card is the number of repetitions of the exercise corresponding to the suit. Ace means that we have to repeat one time, the knight means that we have to repeat it eleven times, the Queen means that we have to repeat it twelve times, and the King thirteen times, respectively. When the Joker appears, each person can choose the exercise and the number of repetitions.

B. Individual/Group Selves

This section was devoted to exercises from contemporary dance, including: Free Individual Improvisation (B₁), Free Duet Contact Improvisation (B₂), Free Group Improvisation (B₃), Structured/Restricted Individual Improvisation (B₄), Structured/Restricted Duet Contact Improvisation (B₅), and Structured/Restricted Group Improvisation (B₆). Throughout, we utilized specific prompts (music, spoken text, or even silence) as offers for generating material.

C. Inputs to Create / Performance Tasks

This section was devoted to some exercises and tasks inspired by Vera Mantero, with whom the author participated in several workshops and laboratories, and also by Nicole Peisl (Forsythe Company) in her joint work with philosopher Alva Noë. Mantero is considered one of the representatives of “new Portuguese dance,” a disrupting movement of the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, where the concept of a discursive body emerges as a consequence of the opportunity of some Portuguese dancers and choreographers to study and learn abroad, especially in the United States, after the almost 50 years’ dictatorship ended in 1974, and also from the fact that some European dance companies were directed by American choreographers with new perspectives on body and movement presentation; the body becomes a producer of artistic discourses. The importance of Vera Mantero’s work is referenced by the philosopher José Gil (2001).

C1. Individual walk from word/phrase inputs

Everyone stands with their back against a wall. From there, they are asked to produce a walk to a specific point in the room. The workshop leader provides the artists with thematic words or phrases from the piece. As the participants walk, they evolve movement into their trajectory, inspired by the given words. For instance, if we chose the words “war,” “20th century,” “come back,” and “win or lose,” every individual expressed their own body association with the words.

C2. Individual Human Sculptures from word/phrase inputs²

The group is dispersed inside the rehearsal room, and when a word or phrase is verbalized, each performer has to create a “body position” and freeze for two breaths.

C3. Group Human Sculptures from word/phrase inputs

Small groups are asked to construct a “human sculpture” in response to a word or phrase. This is a beautiful exercise to create meaning through negotiation inside groups.

C4. Vision Camp/Follow the Leader from word/phrase inputs

The group joins together as a mass, looking in the same direction. When a word or a phrase is verbalized, the person in front does a move or a set of slow moves that everyone follows, and when this person—the leader—turns to face a new direction, the new person in front becomes the new leader. This process continues for at least ten to fifteen minutes, to generate a unity of breathing and a focus on what is being done, including others’ actions. This is an important task to get people together, focused and creating space for respect, since everyone will be a leader at some point, if we lengthen the duration.

D. Construction/Debate/Thoughts

In this section we presented several tasks organized around the piece's conceptual landscape. We understand landscape in this paper as a framed moving image but also as a conceptual formulation. As Arnold Berleant (2019) affirms in *Philosophy of Landscape: Think, Walk, Act*:

...landscape is not a place that can be clearly demarcated. It is not a natural object like a mountain or a river, nor is it a location such as a valley or an island. In fact, a landscape is nothing at all. Etymologically speaking, landscape is an expanse of the perceived environment: a scene, a region, surroundings as viewed by an observer. (...) Moreover, landscape has been used metaphorically in ways that do not always suit a visual meaning, such as 'earthscape' and 'spacescape' and even in referring to memories of one's previous home as an internal landscape. (9)

Utilizing this theoretical framework for landscape, we offer the following structure for the process of developing new work.

D₁. Initial Proposal

The *Initial Proposal* may have several origins: it can arise from personal, individual artistic and/or aesthetic concerns, it can arise from an external proposal, or it can arise from a group debate on some specific issue. The *Initial Proposal*, or *Proposed Image*, refers to the *Axiomatic Image*, as defined in (Santos 2014) and developed in (Santos 2019). This *Axiomatic Image* is inspired from the concept of mental images defined by António Damásio in *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (2010). The initial proposal in this context of group creation in *Peace Parade* was in fact proposed by external figures, but we reorganized the proposal, creating our own.

D₂. Debate over Theme

Empathy, creation of *intersubjective matrices*, following Daniel N. Stern (2004), is essential to pursuing healthy debates. The initial proposal allows many directions as well as many ideas to be generated and discussed. This allows new ways for

material to arise. This step within the construction is made of two moments along the process: a first debate where the group joins and the idea is presented, discussed and brainstormed, as well as several bibliographic references given in order that each performer can do his/her/their own research; and a second debate about a set of thematic questions given to the performers to be answered and discussed, as well as about the process so far.

D3. Choreographic problem-solving

This step is present in several moments along the process. It is difficult, in a dynamic process, to define how many choreographic problems a group is solving along the way, since it is a continuous path. Everything is always being questioned, tried out, used, discarded, and decided. This choreographic problem-solving is related with the use of several *Sub-Images*, as presented in (Santos 2014, 2019), as well as a *Dynamics* that allows us to connect them and create meaning.

D4. Thoughts on the process

After the final presentation, the performers were asked to deliver two pages of personal and artistic thoughts on the process (individual, duet, group, answering questions, debating, participating in choreographic problem-solving).

Peace Parade – A Performance-Flashmob and its Own Methodology

In every artistic practice there is an associated labor: gathering material, reflecting on it, bringing up new material, and working this new material until it becomes an artistic object. But this does not mean that any artistic practitioner is also a researcher. As Anna Pakes (2004) explains, “the key difference between practitioner-researcher and ‘ordinary’ artist is then the extent of her awareness of, and explicit reflection on, her art as an appropriate creative response to the initial questions. Or, it may be the intention to approach art making as research-based rather than “purely” artistic endeavour” (5).

The methodology introduced in this paper is practice-led research, where inputs come from artistic practice, and research outputs are also intersubjectively connected with practice. As Carole Gray (1996) defines it, practice-led research is “firstly, research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners; and secondly, that the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners” (3). The methodology and associated research came from artistic practice context – the timings, the debates, the exercises, the tasks, the division of labor and the not-so-hierarchical ways of creating: “the language has to be open, critical and intersubjective, not universal or complete. This is yet another methodological requirement arising from the self-reflectivity of hermeneutical research: one cannot insist that the theoretical description and language must include conceptual categories and tools that destroy the experience they are about” (Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén, 2005, 45). This is a methodology where we trust artistic practice as our main source and context, but where we are not afraid of using diagrams and numbers to help us create meaning within artistic creation.

The methodology proposed in this section is to be considered within collaborative artistic research projects, where negotiation is an important tool, allowing participants access to theoretical debate and choreographic choices. It is also a collaborative process, with three interconnected “landscapes”: **before rehearsals** (initial point and open methodology proposal), **during rehearsals** (continuous reformulation of methodology), and **after rehearsals** (opening the methodology as a possibility within other contexts, with respective reconfigurations).

This methodology considers documentation and diagrams as fundamental tools. Most rehearsals are videotaped.³ The presented schemes become fundamental for organizing concepts, exercises, time, and tasks. Adequate physical training was developed and notes from rehearsals and debates were taken, reformulated and contextualized here. As C. Manzella and A. Watkins (2011) argue in a performance art context, “documentation is often the only way that many people, even scholars, will ever interact with a work of

performance art. Performance art and documentation need each other” (28). These diagrams are very useful in performance-led research, since they allow artists-researchers to map their practice-research, to configure some connections and reconfigure them along time, as well as to establish new connections and new possibilities through diagrammatic exploring.

Before Rehearsals

The first meeting between us and City Council’s representative Carmen Almeida took place on the 21st of March 2018. Afterward, we had several meetings and decided to include a total of eighteen people, in order to create impact of scale, since the proposal was a *Flashmob*. After the acceptance of the *Proposed Image* by the performers, we decided to engage in stimulating performers with several videos on different movement approaches, as well as documents on World War I and the Armistice. It was important for us that democratic experiences could be actively present. This would mean hard work on raising awareness of the theme, as well as on several different movement techniques, in order for the group to be ready to be active participants along rehearsals.

During this time, the first *Sub-Images* were settled: **Walk, Tent, Flashmob, and Homage**. This means that we reached a common idea of how we should approach the *Proposed Image*: we would do a walk around the fair, then we would arrive at the tent where we would have a dramatic scene inside, then we would do a choreographed *Flashmob* outside the tent. Finally, passing by the monument, we would pay homage to the dead soldiers. It took two months to develop the project, beginning with first meeting with performers on the 22nd of May 2018.

The Rehearsal Process

On the 22nd of May 2018, we had a meeting with most of the invited performers (some of whom could not be present, since they were completing a semester abroad), where we explained the proposal, our constructed *Proposed Image*, and how we reached the *Sub-Images*. We asked if they were available to engage in this type of project and invited them to bring ideas, texts, drawings, and reactions to the theme.

We also introduced four questions as inputs to permeate our thoughts during rehearsals:

1. What do you know about the World War I Armistice, now one hundred years ago, along with its negotiations, and the Portuguese participation?
2. What do we know about the concrete place where the Fair happens and consequently where the Performance-Flashmob will occur?
3. One hundred years later, what is the importance of commemorating, from a critical viewpoint, the Armistice as the end of a devastating war?
4. How can we see Europe today through the lens of World War I and the Armistice?

As the performance had to be premiered on the 22nd of June 2018, we had four weeks to work. We devoted each week to one part of the process.

First Week

Week 1 was dedicated to physical training, with several proposals and inputs to challenge the body.

In this first week, we had three rehearsals:

Rehearsal 1: 28 May 2018

We started with A₁ and A₃. Then, we proposed B₄, and the restriction was to let the body fall on the floor, get up again and fall again, working later on the transitions. Then, we decided to let go the restrictions, and we went to B₅ and B₆.

It was the first time our bodies met, and so we asked performers to engage in B₁, with the possibility to go to B₂ and B₃. Then, A₆ to finalize.

Video Example: <https://youtu.be/SHZeEwPiOw4>

Rehearsal 2: 29 May 2018

We started with A₁ and A₃. Then, A₂ and A₅. Next, A₄, A₅, and A₆. Then, we engaged in B₆, focusing on the restriction of the construction of improvised human sculptures with free inputs and free duration of sculptures, as well as free time to construct them.

Video Example: https://youtu.be/FsXzQtdJ_XI

Rehearsal 3: 31 May 2018

We engaged directly in B₆, but with more intricate parameters: to construct human sculptures with free inputs, but using three to four breaths to construct a sculpture and one to two breaths inside each sculpture.

Video Example: <https://youtu.be/wCTe1uoOSnA>

Second Week

In Week 2 we dedicated ourselves to generating material. To do this, we needed to first meet and then debate our collected information on the Armistice. This meeting took place on the 5th of June 2018. We discussed what we read, the movies we watched, how we discovered details, and how we might develop critical thinking from this information and acquired knowledge. In this meeting, we wrote several words and phrases that we then used as common words, phrases, and thoughts in the following three rehearsals.

Rehearsal 4: 6 June 2018

We started with A₁, A₃ and then B₄, adding the restriction of walking around the space and stopping on the sound of one clap of hands, and freezing into a constructed human sculpture until a new clap of hands—when we would continue walking around the space. The exercise was repeated using an input word or phrase instead of a clap of hands, and this was added to C₂. Then we moved to C₄, where the input words and phrases were used as inspiration for the type of movements and actions

created. Finally, we went to C₃ allowing input words and phrases to generate material.

Video Example: https://youtu.be/8_wiePaK24o

Rehearsal 5: 7 June 2018

We started with B₁ to generate quick awareness of body, space, movement, time. Then we worked on A₆ and C₃. After a small pause, we engaged in C₁ and then had a final conversation.

Video Example: <https://youtu.be/mGOPwd119Wc>

Rehearsal 6: 8 June 2018

We started with A₃ and then A₄. In this rehearsal we did the same exercise with different inputs for B₆, with the restriction of being together and stopping on the sound of one clap of hands and freezing into a constructed human sculpture until a new clap of hands, where we continued walking around the space. Then the exercise was repeated using an input word or phrase instead of a clap of hands, and then C₃.

Video Example: https://youtu.be/y3hnS-0Rh_Y

Third Week

During Week 3, we started to define the choreography inside the Sub-Images: **Walk**, **Tent**, **Flashmob**, and **Homage**. In **Walk**, we worked on walking around a space for twenty to thirty minutes, inspired by the soldiers coming home from the war, wounded and traumatized, falling, but never giving up. In **Tent**, we discovered a new Sub-Image: the gathering outside the tent needed a transition to enter the tent and develop a dramatic scene inside. So we added a new Sub-Image we named **Tent #1**, where we gathered outside and developed a group movement before starting a staccato piece used to enter the tent and start the next Sub-Image: **Tent #2**. In this Sub-Image, we developed choreography, using

individual and group human sculptures and a large cloth as references for the idea of peace. To construct the *Flashmob*, Sérgio Diogo Matias helped us choreograph a set of movements with the music that the philharmonic band would play. **Homage** was yet to be rehearsed, but it would consist of a walk past the monument, paying homage to dead soldiers and peacefully leaving the Fair.

In the third week, we had six rehearsals.

Rehearsal 7: 11 June 2018

We developed work on the first two Sub-Images: **Walk** and **Tent #1**.

Walk: We focused on defining how we could walk, how much time we could handle walking off balance without the group falling apart, and how we perceived time: how long is twenty to thirty minutes when walking?

Tent #1: We established this by forming a line together, after the **Walk**, and outside the tent. In this line, we worked on the improvisation through the idea of an organic body, one that undulated in response to the idea of arriving back from war. Then we would need to construct a transition to get into the tent: a staccato walk, going back to the fear the soldiers had before the Armistice.

Video Example: <https://youtu.be/Hop95JBJGpk>

Rehearsal 8: 12 June 2018

We repeated the **Walk**, but outside the studio, to be able to connect with the several distractions, including the wind, the light, and the open space. Then, we passed to the third Sub-Image: **Tent #2**.

Tent #2: We divided the group of eighteen performers into three groups, two groups with seven performers each and a group with four people. The first two groups had

the goal of creating a movement metaphor for the negotiation of the Armistice, and the third group was to create human sculptures together as a metaphor for the possibility of togetherness. We also had a big cloth that we wanted to incorporate as a metaphor for peace.

Video Example: <https://youtu.be/OO-ywgHLweY>

Rehearsal 9: 13 June 2018

This was the rehearsal of **Tent #2**, where we worked on establishing individual human sculptures to be shared and choreographed within each group. These sculptures were used to present a metaphor for the negotiation of the Armistice. The group also worked on creating group sculptures representing a search for togetherness.

Video Example: <https://youtu.be/V9F8YC6qFWE>

Rehearsal 10 – 14 June 2018

Sérgio Diogo Matias arrived to give feedback on **Walk**, **Tent #1**, **Tent #2**, and to help us choreograph the **Flashmob**. He proposed a floor exercise from contemporary dance to warm up: rolling on the floor in different proposed directions, flows, and levels (from laying down to sitting positions), to explore the connection between movement, focus, and memory. We then engaged in a structures duet using contact improvisation – B₅ – having as a rule that one person would manipulate another person to move in certain directions, levels, and dynamics. To finish the warm-up, we did free movement improvisation (B₁ – B₃).

We executed **Walk** and **Tent #2** to show Sérgio Diogo Matias our achievements and also our concerns, debating also over **Tent #1** (D₁ – D₃). We finalized this rehearsal with Sérgio Diogo Matias' starting point proposal for the **Flashmob**.

Video Example: <https://youtu.be/SkuLUDcg0jc>

Rehearsal 11:15 June 2018

Consisting of a choreographic construction of **Flashmob**.

Video Example: <https://youtu.be/5ftwR5ORtJY>

Rehearsal 12:16 June 2018

Sérgio Diogo Matias directed the rehearsal. We started by warming up the body with conscious movement (A_3) on the floor and then structured movement improvisation ($B_4 - B_6$), having several movement dynamics inputs to be challenged continuously but to not settle down in any of them. Then, we re-did the **Flashmob**, and realized that it would be necessary to create one more **Sub-Image** to finish the piece. We started by hugging each other in group as a commemoration of the Armistice, but also a commemoration of that group energy and the work done.

Video Example: <https://youtu.be/LQo1wJwrLaw>

Fourth Week

This week was made of four site-specific rehearsals to repeat the piece from beginning to end and to solve possible problems. During this week, **Homage** was completed: a set of collective group hugs while walking from the **Flashmob** to the monument, then a moment of devotion to the monument before disappearing. **Homage** was developed as a way to move from the **Flashmob** to the monument, where we could pay homage to dead soldiers. Architect João Sotero, who organized the exhibition along with the City Council, and who made a contemporary object inspired by the original carriage where the Armistice was signed, asked why we weren't connecting directly with the monument. This led us to create the moment of paying homage to the dead soldiers.

It wasn't possible to visually document rehearsals within this week since all rehearsals were at night, and there wasn't enough light for the camera.

After Rehearsals

On the 22nd of June 2018, we premiered the piece at the inauguration of the Fair, and we repeated it on the 26th, 28th, and 30th of June 2018.

Video Example: <https://youtu.be/RsXaeP2miwU>

Between this date and the end of September 2018, the participants shared, via email, their thoughts on the creation process.

MGAC – A methodology?

Peace Parade was a relaxed artistic process, one in which everyone was very excited to work and share experiences. It was also a learning process for everyone, since no one had experienced this type of process before. This last section distills our methodology for consideration and application when working on group performances projects.

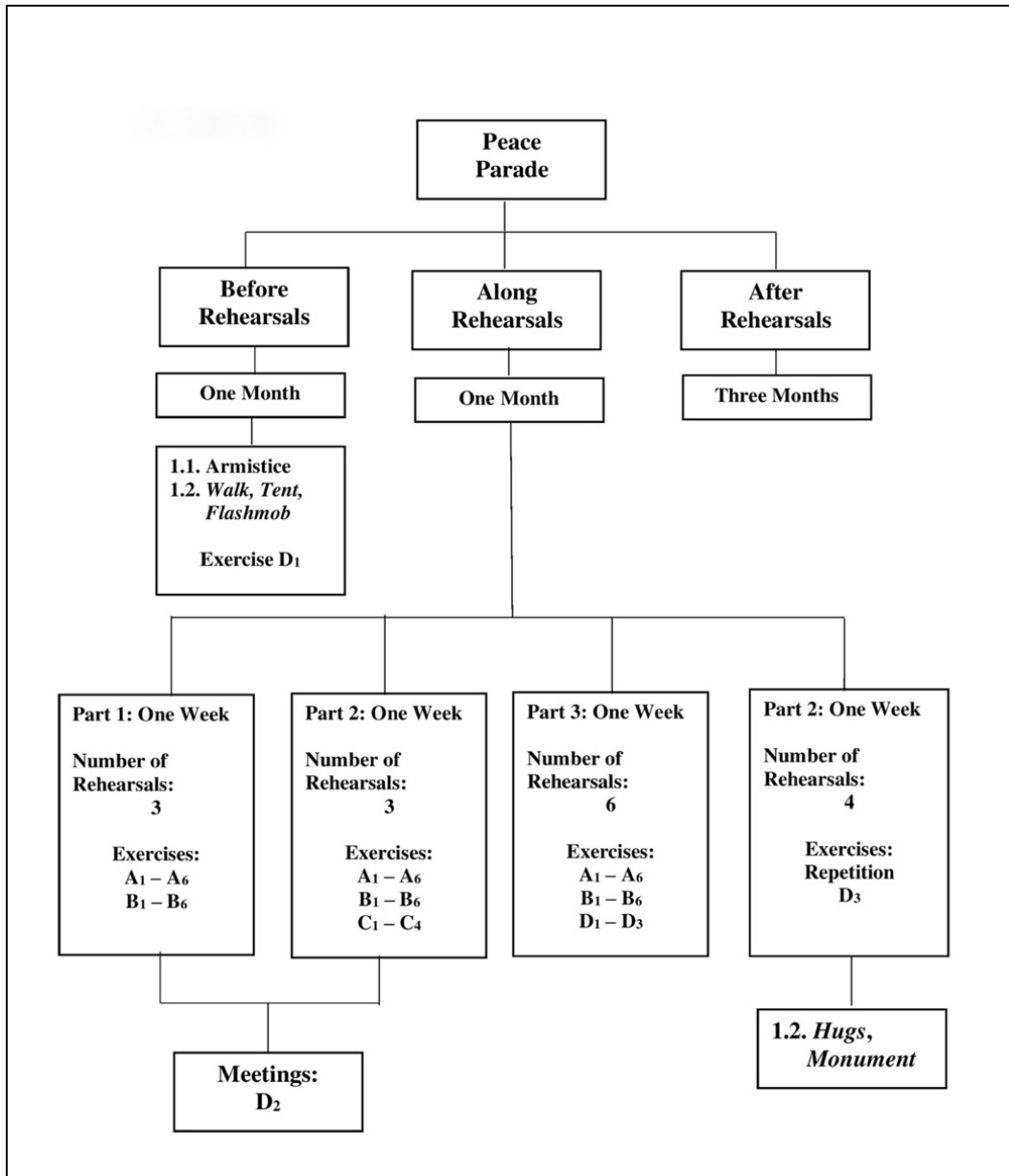


Figure 1: The Chronology in *Peace Parade*.

The Methodology

Diagrammatically, we have compiled the entire process as a Methodology of Group Artistic Creation (MGAC), as shown below:

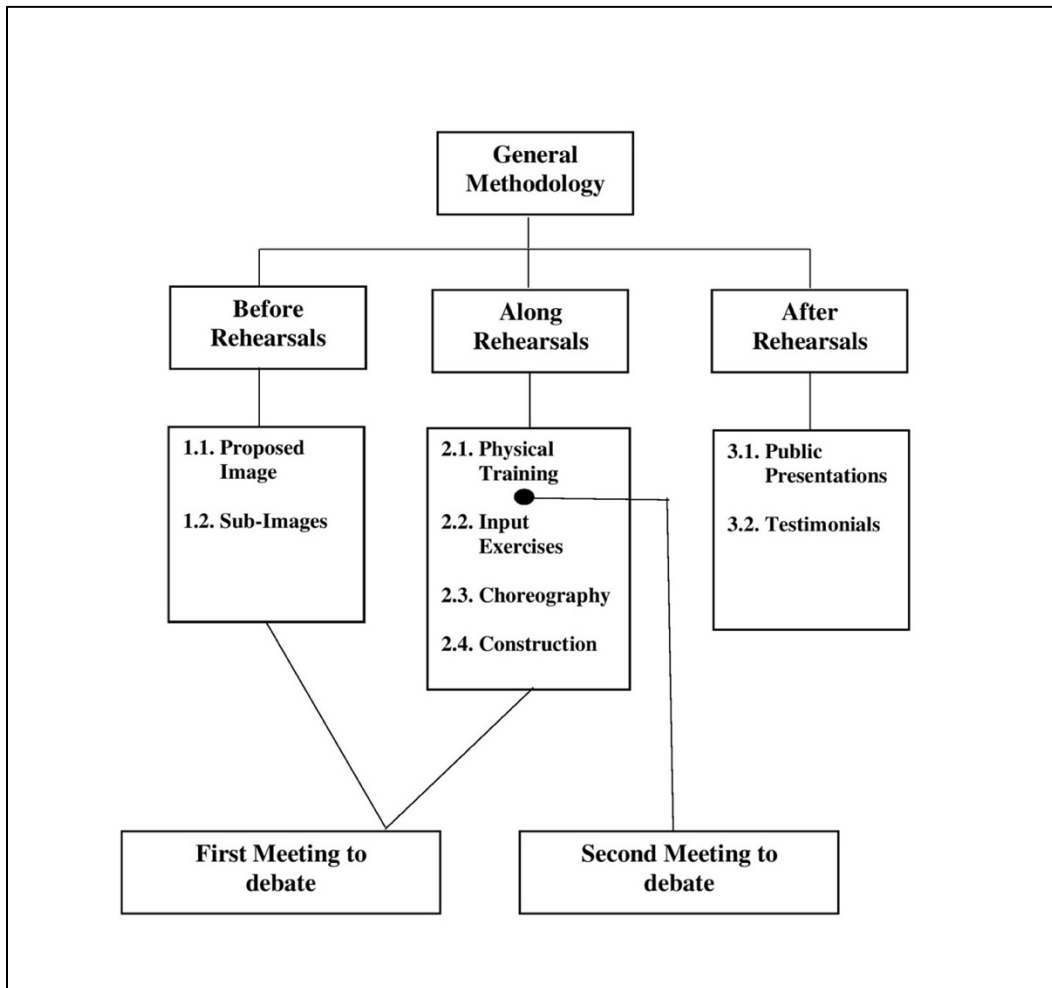


Figure 2: Methodology of Group Artistic Creation (MGAC)

The Chronology

How might this methodology be used for a total of N days? The chronology presented here is a proposal for organizing a process; it is flexible depending on the individual project.

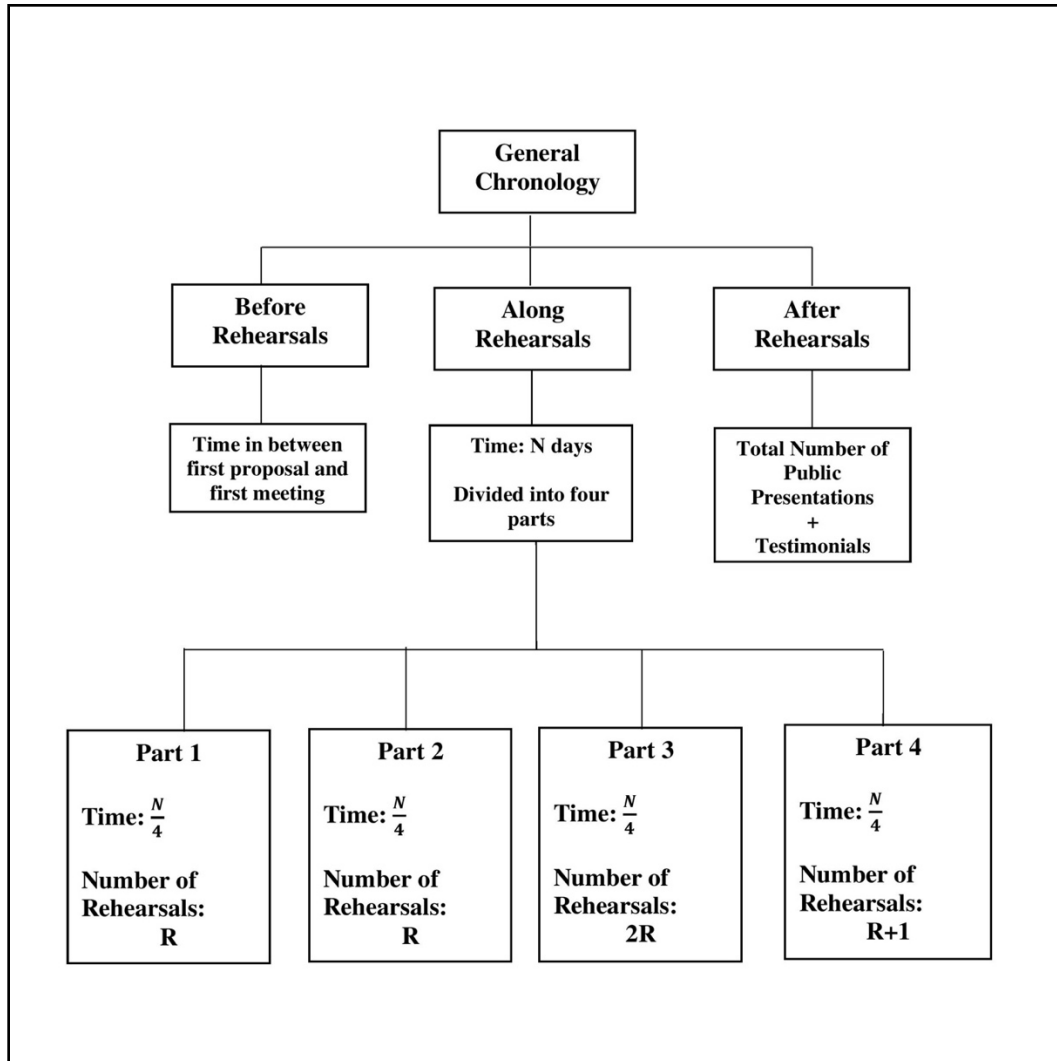


Figure 3: The Chronology of MGAC.

The total number of days for rehearsal is N . We divide this number of days in four parts, ideally each of them with an equal number of days: $K_1=K_2=K_3=K_4=\frac{N}{4}$. Like this, the total number N of days has to be a multiple of four, and this is one of the limitations associated to this chronological proposal. Nevertheless, it is possible to divide the four parts into different numbers of days, depending on how we want to manage rehearsals, as well as the importance of each part within the process. Assuming now that N is a multiple of four, Part 1, made of $K_1=\frac{N}{4}$ days, is composed of R rehearsals. There is an important extra-rehearsal in between Part 1 and Part 2, with an important debate over the Proposed Image

and what can we build from the questions arising. Part 2, made of $K_2 = \frac{N}{4}$ days, is composed of R rehearsals, Part 3, made of $K_3 = \frac{N}{4}$ days, is composed of 2R rehearsals and Part 4, made of $K_4 = \frac{N}{4}$ days, is composed by R+1 number of rehearsals.

Final Remarks

Assuming that artistic research projects are contextual at their core, mapped through case studies, it is possible to consider new methodologies as well as self-reflection in a continuous basis within each process. This paper aims to bring a methodological proposal to performance-led research, *MGAC*, from a group artistic project, *Peace Parade*, participating on the dynamics of the field. Although *MGAC* arises from a specific context—commissioned by a public institution, in collaboration with a research center and several students from an Art School at a public university—it is presented here as a possible tool for other groups. This methodology can be used to help a group organizing a creative artistic process, since it is open enough to allow artists to re-contextualize and reformulate it along the way. Its application and possible reconfigurations along critical points are interesting and still open paths to pursue.

Endnotes

¹ São João fair is a traditional annual fair at Évora, Portugal, where traditional and new local businesses are present, as well as a cultural program, where people can see a concert, eat great food, and also buy something for the house, for instance. The first São João fair was in June 24, 1569. At the time, fairs were important for defining salaries, negotiating the prices of pigs, and being a meeting place for the development of nearby populations.

² Tasks C₂ and C₃ are inspired by exercise “Poetic Ethnography” from *La Pocha Nostra*’s work in *Exercises for Rebel Artists* (61). The main difference is that our tasks are negotiated by the individual himself in C₂ and by the group in C₃ instead of being an exercise of trust where one person decides to work with another person’s body as sculpture and canvas, as in *La Pocha Nostra*’s work.

³ The rehearsals that were not videotaped happened at night, in the street, before the fair’s opening, without sufficient light to record them.

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