

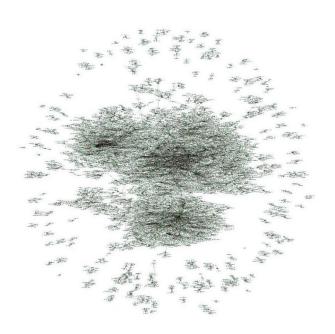
Box 1—" In connection with Jon Fosse being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for 2023, the government will facilitate a new, annual measure that honours the author - an annual Fosse lecture with an associated event under the auspices of the National Library, where a Fosse scholarship will also be awarded. In this way, the government will contribute to highlighting how important Fosse's authorship is for Norway and internationally." Photo: National librarian (left) flanked by the Minister of culture and egality (right).

Of course, wether *theatre is what takes place on stage*—or, at least, is centrally concerned with it—depends on the perspective. A quick reading of Jens-Morten Hanssen's article *Jon Fosse on the global stage*—a *data-analysis* (my transl.) raises exactly that question. The article features a market-analysis of Nobel laureate Jon Fosse's literature, in the light of his international success as a playwright from the late 1990s onwards. The piece was sent to me by Signe Pahle at KHiO's dpt. of *theatre*. Because of this, I took it on myself to develop some reflections on its premises/impacts.

The article was published in <u>Teatervitenskapelige studier 7/2023</u>, in a special issue devoted to *archives*. At face value it reads as a post-interpretive data-analysis of social networks, in which a variety of actors—with primarily a professional approach to Fosse-productions—range from the media, stage directors, festivals and organisations. It features an analysis of *how* Fosse became a European playwright with a global distribution (not why he caught on and what his plays are about). It also emphasises a *know-how* of a variety of tools which the NLN now can propose at the <u>HD-lab</u>.

It features the analysis of a business in the expanded sense, which includes mediation, directing, networking and organising. In terms of its possible target group, it is likely to interest the analysts & applicants at the Arts Council of Norway, and similarly bodies adjoined to public administration dedicated *culture* in/outside of Norway. In this respect, the article draws up the border between art and culture. It emphasises a distinction between digital platforms and tools—that are becoming ubiquitous in archival services—and *data-driven research*: dedicated/pledged to data-modelling.

So, it will be definitively relevant to the people in the business (private sector) and the people monitoring and running it (public sector). To the general reader, with no inside information and little



Box 2. Network of persons involved in all recorded Fosse-production (Jens-Morten Hanssen 2023, p.28). For the expressive dimension of materials as these, see <u>Jacques Bertin</u> work on the semiotics of graphs, and <u>Edward Tufte</u> on infographics.

previous knowledge, the article poses some problems of media-information readability (MIR); because it makes use of methods of visualisation that are regularly associated with big data (like the weather/the internet-traffic) on a statistically small sample. That is: 810 productions, involving 5067 persons, 572 organisations, and 1536 venues. Which is large on the scale of the business, but conspicuously tiny on the scale of big data.

What also challenges what UNESCO has termed Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is that visualisations normally used for open *complex* dynamics (as heat diagrams) are used to analyse *correlation* (from a body of circumscribed data): the *hypothesis* that Jon Fosse's international success was set off by his first works as a playwright in the mid/late 1990s. Long after his debut as a literary author in 1983. In other words, the advanced visualisations used in the article, transpose between correlational data and complex field-observations (in a natural science *lingo*).

The cartographic approach to data-modelling in the article drives on to a conclusion relevant to cultural history: namely, that Jon Fosse's international success as a playwright didn't come out of the blue. The author intends to nuance the common narrative of Jon Fosse's success set off from some Parisian stages, directed by names as Claude Régy (*Someone is going to come*) & Thomas Ostermeier (*The child*), but was prompted years before by directors such as Kai Johnsen, in transborder festivals (e.g. Hungary). It results from the count of nodes and relations in the diagrams.

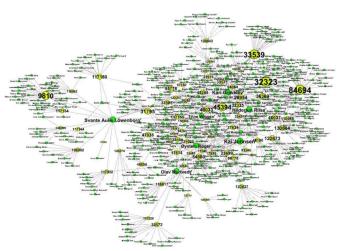
Régy's network counts 3 production-nodes and 18 person-nodes, while Johnsen's network counts 18 production-nodes and 122 person-nodes. But this aspect of Jens-Morten Hanssen's article is *not only* data-driven, but driven by the technologies facilitating data-visualisation: this is a new sense of theatre—which is *neither* a dramatic *nor* an anatomic theatre—dedicated to the collective viewing of data, in which there is no requirement for the *means* to be in proportion with the *materials*: "if you can't count it, it doesn't count" becomes "if it doesn't show it doesn't count."

Evidence does not only come from the data—in an allegedly data-driven analysis—but from the viewing-technology, or meta-models. The aesthetic dimension of this protocol comes with the expressive redundancy devoid of proportionality: if by proportionality, we pledge the use of data-visualisation with a clearly formulated purpose, and to an extent not greater than required. Instead we are witnesses to a turn where case-data with a large share of unique elements, can be mapped to plot in maelstroms of big-data analyses. Subscribing to an ethos where the screen is our stage.

That is, the screen is a stage that can simulate, substitute and erase other stages. Not likely what the author has intended. Digital displays are ubiquitous and hidden in plain sight. Which is why we may need to hatch a degree of lucidity on their workings, and make them speak. Since it is the tacit tendency of how digital displays are *assumed* that makes them our new *stars*. Of which we can say, in <u>Jacques Lacan's terms</u>, that if *they do not speak* it is **1.** because they have nothing to say; **2.** because they do no have time; **3.** they have been silenced. So they always return to their place.

Which is why, in the contemporary setting, mobiles are taking the place of the stars, as where we hold our gaze to navigate. Mobile displays have, in this sense, become <u>sidereal</u>. Which they are not if we understand how they can be <u>assigned</u> (rather than simply assumed). For instance, the graphs presented here in **Box 2** and **Box 3**, the networks can be seen as a complex sum of <u>elements</u>. As such they would simply feature a 1-to-1 correspondence with the data in the article. However, if we see them as elements of a <u>sum</u>, it is clear that the graph is an <u>account of its own</u>.

The gap between *design* and *information*—like saying "I love you" aloofly—in this case, can go in two different directions: one is illusion, the other is fiction. The illusion hatches when the stage/screen is *a world unto itself that contains its own reality*. While fiction is more strategic in the sense that it is *interested* in the real (and will let itself be marked by it): for instance, we can readily imagine that a post-interpretive approach to the growth, development and explanation within Jon Fosse's literary renown, resides in the multiplication of situated views and narratives of people



Box 3—Johnsen, Myrtvedt, Wiggen, Löwenborg, Riise, Røger og Gravklev's Fosse-network. (Op,cit. p. 33). In the scope of the operational network note Svante Aulie Lövenborg (i.e., the larger scope of directors also working as translators).

involved in a Jon Fosse production, including a reading audience and the media.

Thereby the article would be expounded as a case-study (which I suspect it actually might be) for instance integrated in a larger cultural history of international Norwegian playwrights. The focus of the article is mainly *distributive*. Which means that we know preciously little about the *operational* network: that is, where the impact is out of proportion with the number of network-nodes. For example, the impact of a production in France vs. Hungary *on nodes unconnected* to production: e.g., communication through audiences, media and Fosse's novels of language in performance: the <u>felting</u> impact from translations and the novels, once the plays were afloat.