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Expanding and resisting - choreographing relations through performative stop-moments as an emerging choreographer-researcher-teacher in dance

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ABSTRACT

In this article I inquire into choreographic-pedagogic stop-moments, identified through bodily felt intensities and affects, in the Bird project. The Bird project was a collaborative dance project that took place in an elementary school in Norway in 2020, where, as a choreographer-researcher-teacher, I cooperated with the teachers and pupils in the third grade. I bring out my own doubts and preconceptions from former choreographic projects as a starting point for the inquiry and ask: How do stop-moments from the collaborative Bird project work perform my emerging practice as choreographer-researcher-teacher? I explore this question inspired by the methodology of a/r/tography and performative inquiry, as well as the theoretical landscape of agential realism and the expanded notion of choreography. The diffractive analysis of two affective and bodily felt stop-moments has led to the creating of entanglements between theory and practice in choreography, research, and teaching, which expands my emerging practice as a choreographer-researcher-teacher.

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Introduction and research context

In the doctoral research project in focus in this article I am interested in creating choreographic-pedagogical insights, premises/principles, and propositions for choreographic work in primary school. These emerge from the collaboration between myself as a choreographer-researcher-teacher (Irwin et al. 2006) and four primary school teachers and pupils in third grade (Flønes et al. 2022). As a part of the research process I participated in the interdisciplinary Bird project (Figure 1) initiated by the school.¹ Here, I was interested in exploring the cooperation between the teachers and myself, and how we prepared and carried out a creative dance project with the pupils on the theme of birds. The pupils also worked with the theme of birds in several subjects like language and mathematics, also encountering other artists from disciplines such as visual arts and music through creative workshops.

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Figure 1. A pupil in the Bird project improvising on the theme of birds. She is making an expanding movement with her arms, like a bird spreading her wings. (Photo by Elisabeth Røvær/Screen Story).

A place of doubting the modern – an impulse to start this project

This whole project starts from a place of doubting my existing practice. Through working with children in numerous school projects, I have had a repeated feeling of stilling the spontaneity of the children's dance. I have been stuck in modernist choreographic ideas and methods (Østern 2017b), where the choreographer is the one arranging the dancers' movement (Monni 2015), creating some kind of structure 'and a closed whole' (Monni 2015, unpaginated). The feeling of being stuck in a modernist choreographic ideal had to do with my own trajectory through dance and the master-pupil oriented teaching methods that I had both been exposed to and learned through my dance education in becoming a dance teacher. Also, choreographing in previous school projects I was often asked by the school to produce a final product, like, for example, a dance performance. In practicing choreography and dance in this way, I experienced setting restrictive frames for myself and the children's dance, making me work with choreography in a result-oriented way. What I rather wanted to do was to focus on the process and to set democratic frames where the children had the possibility to influence the creative content and the form of the outcome, with myself as the choreographer-teacher guiding and supporting the children's process (e.g. Shapiro 1998; Anttila 2007a, 2007b; Østern 2010; Anttila and Sansom 2012; Stinson 2016). This was also more in line with the contemporary dance scene that I had encountered as a professional dance artist in Norway. From my work in numerous dance productions I had experienced a shift into more participative processes, where as a dancer I went from just contributing movement material to also being engaged in discussing concepts and choreography as part of a larger artistic team.

But somehow I did not manage to bring these ways of working over to the context of dance teaching with children. In creative processes with children I have had the distinct impression of not doing justice to the children's dance. The struggle manifested itself as a bodily intensity (Massumi 1995), as stop-moments (Fels 2015). For example, when the children engaged in their dance with a particular kind of wildness, quality, or intensity that surprised or amazed me, the intensity of rush spreading through my body made me alert to the fact that something important was happening in front of me. In these stop-moments it was as if the body was

telling me to act, to move (Fels 2015), to do something with what was being offered to me. But as I failed to go along with the children's proposals, the intensity of stress struck me, as if the body went cold in an instant. I did not feel confident that I would do justice to the children's dance, which felt like a disappointment in terms of the children, as if the vivid potential of a shared creative process between us had slipped away. This is an example of stop-moments from which I can learn and move.

I then came across the works of dance researcher Eeva Anttila through the following quote:

Is it possible for us, adults and arts educators, to become more aware of our desires to choreograph our children's and students' lives and consciously widen the aesthetic perspectives and choices for them? [...] Perhaps, by becoming aware of the great influence of these patterns, the patterns could gradually become more flexible and allow for greater agency for growing children to be in charge of their bodily actions and interactions. (Anttila 2013, 122)

What Anttila suggests made immediate sense to me and resonated with the doubts that I had around stilling the children's dance. Going into my PhD project, creating choices and movement (in a wider sense) for both the children and the teachers and myself, became a huge concern. For example, how could I create more possibilities for the teachers to engage in the choreographic-pedagogic process? Having doubts about my stilling of the children's dance and pondering on how to create movement encouraged me to explore conditions for collective processes in the project.

Another concern that I wanted to address in the research project, was the separation between the practices that I engage with (Taylor 2016) between choreography, teaching, and research. Over the years as a dance practitioner in choreography, teaching, and research, I have had the experience of exercising these practices as one. For example, my dance practice nurtured my teaching and research through situations where I felt that I was activating the bodily skills that I, for example, used in dance improvisations (Flønes et al. 2022). In the arts field in Norway there was a public discussion where some spoke for a separation between pedagogy and doing/making arts² and others that problematized and sought to bridge such a separation (Angelo and Kalsnes 2018; Østern 2018b; Sortland and Gudbrandsen 2021). Doubting the modern also means that I am challenging these separations within dance and teaching, and also expanding the discussion to include research, taking on an a/r/tographic point of view (Irwin 2004, 2013; Le Blanc and Irwin 2019; Lee et al. 2019; Triggs and Irwin 2019).

With these experimental possibilities in mind, I have been seeking theory and readings through which I can stretch my thinking and practice. Reading, for example, about a/r/tography (Triggs and Irwin 2019), about performativity (von Hantelmann 2014) and a performative research paradigm (Østern et al. 2021), about the expanded notion of choreography (Lepecki 2006; Klien and Steve 2007; Foster 2010), or agential realism (Barad 2007) has in this way stretched and shaped my emerging practice as a choreographer-researcher-teacher. In this article my ambition is to stop at moments of stretching and shaping, to diffract the theories, notions and concepts mentioned above with my doubting of the modern, and to unwrap how this process has performed my emerging practice as a choreographer-researcher-teacher. As a starting point for this inquiry I have formulated two analytical questions that lead me through this article: *How do stop-moments from the collaborative dance project*

perform my emerging practice as choreographer-teacher-researcher? And what choreographic-pedagogic insights emerge from the inquiry?

With these in focus I would like to highlight the entanglement of practice and theory. In writing this article, I am searching to create understanding of how this encounter has influenced me in becoming a choreographer-researcher-teacher.

In the following, I describe the theories and methods used, before moving through the chosen stop-moments, and then ending up with a discussion.

Theories and concepts

Choreographic disturbances: creating cracks

In preparing the dance project, the expanded notion of choreography (Lepecki 2006; Klien and Steve 2007; Foster 2010) slowly expanded my own understanding of what choreography is and how it performs my practice as a choreographer-researcher-teacher. Now, the expanded notion of choreography is a part of the ever moving development of choreography (Foster 2010). Anna Leon (2020) points out how the development of choreography through time has been a journey ‘characterized by plurality, coexistence, change and friction’ (70). Leon believes that today we should rather talk about choreographies, the concept inhabiting multiple and negotiated interpretations. For me, thinking of choreography as negotiation already cracks the framework that I had set up for myself in former experiences, and has helped me to think and do with choreography as I inquire into the stop-moments in this article.

Finding myself in the ongoing negotiation of what choreography means to me, choreography moves beyond dance. Allsopp and Lepecki (2008) point out the ‘shift towards the conceptualization of choreography in terms other than or additional to the arrangement of bodily movement’ (4). In their definition of choreography, Gormly and Klien (2008) outline choreography both as a structure and a way of ‘arranging relations between bodies in time and space’ (unpaginated). The connection to movement, human or non-human, is still present in choreography, together with an interest in inquiring into relations. This is elaborated further by Klien and Steve (2007), who propose that ‘if the world is approached as a reality constructed of interactions, relationships, constellations and proportionalities, then choreography is seen as the aesthetic practice of setting those relations or setting the conditions for these relations to emerge’ (220). Østern (2018a) understands choreography ‘as a starting point for movement that is particular, situated and in-and-off-the-world’ (26). Reading with authors like Foster (2011), Manning (2013), Taylor and Fullagar (2022) shapes my expanding understanding of choreography as a relational and lived apparatus for creation.

Thinking *with* (Jackson and Mazzei 2012) a relational approach to choreography is a way for me to disturb the modern, but also a way to disturb the traditional separation between choreography, research, and teaching. Joy (2014) imagines ‘the choreographic as a set of dispersive and generative strategies, calling our attention to these shocks and seizures and spasms within the contemporary.’ (27). To me, Joy here proposes thinking with the choreographic qualities of movement. Østern (2018a) is also concerned with the choreographic qualities in the movement created by choreographic-pedagogic

entanglements. She sees them as: ‘structures, restructuring, cracks, pattern, re-patterning, affective movement qualities, exploration, relations, volatile meaning-making’ (Østern 2018a, 26). To me, Joy and Østern’s attention to these qualities ties relations (choreographic relations) between choreography, research and teaching.

Reading my own doubt about stilling the children’s dance with a relational approach to choreography, attuned to choreographic qualities, feels like staring into a crack of possibilities. Choreography has to me moved beyond the borders of dance, expanding into my choreographing-researching-teaching practice as a relation-making apparatus, where the relations can move with choreographic qualities. One of my first choreographic gestures is then to re-structure my point of view, reaching over towards the agential-realist approach (Barad 2007) in acknowledging that doing justice to the children’s dances could happen through the performative intra-actions between matter (the children and myself) and different material-discursive practices. I will tap more into that in, for example, *Stop-moment 1: Doing justice to the children’s dance*.

A performative becoming as a choreographer-researcher-teacher

This project is positioned in a performative paradigm (Østern et al. 2021) for post-qualitative inquiry (St. Pierre 2021, 2019), within a post-humanist (Braidotti 2013; Taylor 2016) theoretical framework with a relational onto-epistemology, as described by Barad (2007) and Deleuze and Guattari (1994, 2003). The term performativity leads through this article. To clarify what I speak about when I speak of performativity, I will give an account of Barad’s writings on performativity, and of Hantelmann (2014), who writes about performativity from the perspective of visual arts.

Barad (2003) post-humanist notion of performativity is rooted in the Austinian (Austin 1975) linguistic and philosophical definition of the concept, and then based on works from authors like Foucault (1970), Butler (1990), and Haraway (1991). Barad (2003) performativity is a critique of representationalism and verbal reflection as the dominant way to describe the world. She states that it is not possible for the world to be reflected, as it is always becoming through a range of material-discursive practices. For example, the dance project and this inquiry is becoming-with the material-discursive practices of thinking, sensing, dancing, writing, and image-making. Continuing on these lines, Barad (2003) considers performativity as a way of creating the world, or creating sense of the world. She thus moves away from the idea of established truths and emphasizes rather that ‘practices/doings/actions’ (Barad 2003, 802) matter for how we become-with the world. For example, I find that a relational choreographic approach performs my challenge of stilling the children’s dance, because it offers me an expanded set of choreographic possibilities to work with.

I also bring in Hantelmann (2014) distinction between performance as ‘performance-like’ (Østern et al. 2021), and performance in the sense of, for example, how doubting the modern *performs* me as an impulse to write this article. She argues that this is ‘mainly because it is impossible to clearly define what a performative artwork actually is.’ (2014, unpaginated). Østern et al. (2021) posit that the same goes for research: ‘there is no performative research because there is no non-performative research’ (5). To me, it seems like the notion of performativity that I trace here is occupied with matters of practice and process rather than product (which resonates with the Baradian shift from

truths to ways of doing, or the post-modern shift from *a* choreography to choreographing relations). Or, said differently, practice matters. How I *do* research, choreography or pedagogy, for example separately or entangled, matter for how they become-with the world.

Methods and materials

Doing inquiry intra-acting with affects and intensities

In this article, I *stop* at moments which I sense as specifically important. Being attentive to what is making me stop is part of how I am inquiring into these moments. This brings me to methods of inquiry, which I will describe in the following, as well as how I have generated the research material and maneuvered through the ethical aspects throughout the process.

Looking back at the time before I entered academia, the feeling of not only dancing, not only teaching, not only choreographing, but inhabiting all of these three practices, followed me through the years (Figure 2). When planning the dance project, it was clear to me that I wanted to engage through entangling choreography, research, and teaching as one. *A/r/tography* (Irwin 2004, 2013; Le Blanc and Irwin 2019; Lee et al. 2019; Triggs and Irwin 2019) is a practice-led research methodology that helps me to engage with the rhizomatic connections (Irwin et al. 2006) between life, theory, art, teaching, and research practice.

The research material used in this analysis is created through a 'journey mapping' (Chappell et al. 2011, 20) with my own log writings, photos, video from the workshops, written reports from meeting the teachers, dance improvisations, literature that I have read, the socio-historical context, my own life memories, as well as transcorporeal material not written down anywhere, but existing as felt bodily intensities (Massumi 1995), which I recall through my body as I write. As I gain an overview of these multiple layers of the project, I see that a fieldwork of the body, motored by transcorporeal processes (Lenz Taguchi 2012), emerges as a method of inquiry. Here I search for stop-moments, which I am made aware of through affects and intensities. In the following



Figure 2. Sharing my improvised bird dance in the first workshop. (Photo by Elisabeth Røvær/Screen Story).

section I describe the concept of stop-moments emerging from performative inquiry (Fels 2002, 2010, 2015; Fels and Belliveau 2008), and give an account of the notions of affect and intensities drawn from the works of Massumi (1995), Deleuze and Guattari (1994), and McCormack (2013).

According to Fels (2010), performative inquiry ‘recognizes the learning and questioning that emerge through performative processes and engagements’ (3). One example is how the encounter between my modernist background, the pupils, dance, dancing, teaching, and doubting performed me as an impulse to enter this inquiry. Stop-moments emerge through performative encounters (Fels 2010) attending to the senses to what makes us stop (Fels 2015). For example, in my affective bodily experience of stilling the children’s dances, the intensities and affects mark my body with a stop, making me aware that something is going on as ‘a state of suspense, potentially of disruption’ (Massumi 1995, 86). According to Massumi (1995), intensities are embodied reactions that are revealed ‘in the skin-at the surface of the body’ (85).

My strongest memories from the dance project are those which are stuck as bodily marks of intensities in my body. For example, I can vividly recall a sensation of openness or suspension spreading in my body when witnessing the pupils dancing in ways that I would not have imagined. The intensities that flood through my body create affects. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) writes; ‘Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them’ (164). The intensities and affects move me and make me act. But also my bodily engagement with the unexpected way a pupil dances makes me stop, makes me dwell, and then kickstarts a diffraction: for example, connecting me with a memory, creating a new idea, or even changing my relationship with the pupil. There is a developing flow in this movement: the pace and heat of the felt intensity in my body rising, then slowing down to stop, then dwelling, and then accelerating into something new. To me, attending to this movement makes me think that it has its own choreography, or its own choreographic flow.

The choreographic flow that I experienced resonates with the notion of affective space developed by McCormack (2013). For McCormack, affective space is the ongoing process of intensities in-between bodies, where the disturbances and perturbations from moving bodies create sensed and atmospheric affective spaces. The affective qualities of spaces and bodies are intertwined and increase each other (McCormack 2013). In light of McCormack, I also wonder how affective spaces perform the research. It is not far-fetched to think of the stop-moments as renderings (Irwin and Springgay 2008) from situations where affective spaces are in motion.

As I write I come to recognize that research methodology, choreography, and pedagogy entangle through affective, relational, embodied practices. Hickey-Moody (2016) connects affects and pedagogy through her concept of *affective pedagogy*. For her, affectivity has to do with ‘the capacity of change’ (Hickey-Moody 2016, 258), for example how a dance undertakes ‘the pedagogical work [...] in inviting new ways of seeing and relating’ (258). I find that my dancing and affective engagement with the dance project both as a choreographic-pedagogic project and a research project invites for seeing and relating the entanglement between choreographing-researching-teaching.

As I have described, stop-moments performed and recognized through affects and intensities are a methodological tool that generate research material in my study. In the

following, I describe how I have entered and carried out the analysis through the concept of diffraction (Barad 2003, 2007).

Cutting-together-apart: diffracting through the research material

In the analysis I cut through stop-moments from the dance project that I have sensed as being of specific importance. Attuning to stop-moments through my senses I understand as engaging with my research as a transcorporeal becoming (Lenz Taguchi 2012): ‘those bodymind faculties that register smell, touch, level, temperature, pressure, tension and force in the interconnections emerging in between different matter, matter and discourse, in the event of engagement with data’ (267). The transcorporeal is a part of the material-discursive apparatus (Barad 2007) that I set up in order to inquire into the stop-moments. The material-discursive practices that I engage with are, for example, thinking, sensing, dancing, and writing (Lenz Taguchi and Palmer 2013). These practices intra-act, as entanglements (Barad 2007). As they become-with each other they materialize, for example, into sense (Juelskjær 2019). One example is how thinking with theoretical concepts and affective and sensed experiences creates sense-making for me through this inquiry. Thinking with the Baradian concept of entanglements provokes me to reconsider ‘what causes what, where, how and when’ (Juelskjær 2019, 180) in the research process: for example, how my own background and my lived and embodied perspective from the dance project performs the research.

As I am thinking with theoretical concepts and affective and sensed experiences, a diffraction happens. Diffraction is a physical phenomenon describing waves (either water, sound, or light waves) that overlap, bend, and spread after meeting an obstacle (Barad 2003, 2007). The agential realist approach is occupied with what the waves, or diffraction, can create (Bozalek and Murriss 2022). I experience that thinking with theory and lived experience is a diffraction that creates, for example, new questions that lead my research into sometimes new and unexpected ways.

Diffractive inquiry is a sense-making process that allows me to both create and inquire into difference (Lenz Taguchi 2012; Lenz Taguchi and Palmer 2013; Barad 2014; Bozalek and Zembylas 2017). I do this through making agential cuts (Barad 2007, 2012) in the phenomena inquired into. The diffraction between theoretical concepts and lived experiences is one example of a cut, or rather the cutting-together-apart (Barad 2007, 2012) of different materials from the research. The cut I make is actually ‘cutting and relating’ (Juelskjær 2019, 79, my translation) theoretical concepts and lived experience. The movement of cutting-relating creates difference that calls for attention (Lenz Taguchi and Palmer 2013).

In the following, I give an example of how mobilizing the transcorporeal apparatus (Lenz Taguchi and Palmer 2013) diffracted into a methodological insight. As I started writing this text, my first exercise was to search for stop-moments through remembering back to the preparations of the dance project. My approach was to think back to experiences that engaged me bodily. I noticed, for example, that the situations where I had experienced some form of bodily stress came easily to me: they conveyed an urgency, something that I needed to figure out. Although I could remember situations where I had experienced enthusiasm or joy, they nevertheless did not seem urgent in the same way. However, when I went back to the notes that I had made during the project,

I had written vividly about these situations, too. And I could remember how I had felt carried away, like floating on the sky, after a dance workshop that had a good flow.

The diffraction between these two observations makes me realise how entangled and close I am (Lenz Taguchi 2012; Østern et al. 2021) with my research. I mark the research (Barad 2003), but the research also marks me (Østern et al. 2021). In the latter example, I believe that the negative experiences stick with me more because they call for my sense of justice. But that does not mean that they are more important than the successful moments in my teaching. Admitting this is something to learn for future work. However, this is a reminder of why it is important to create rich and diverse research material, where different perspectives and attunements can diffract.

Ethical considerations

In the previous section I started to move towards some of the ethical implications of the chosen method of inquiry. Making agential cuts into a phenomenon means that certain entanglements are created. Cutting-together-apart thus includes *and* excludes possible sense-making, and this is of ethical moment. For Barad (2007), ethics is not separated from onto-epistemology, but entangled as *ethico-onto-epistemology* (see also Kuby and Zhao 2022). This allows me to think about what I do (epistemology), how I do (ethics), and what I create (ontology) as entangled, with a relation of obligation to each other (Barad 2012).

Also, the notion of response-ability (Despret 2004; Barad 2007, 2012; Bozalek and Zembylas 2017) makes me aware ‘that everything is potentially in touch with everything else’ (Juelskjær 2019, 45, my translation). In reading Barad with my practice as a choreographer-researcher-teacher in the dance project, I understand response-ability as my ability to respond to the entanglements, both human and non-human, of which I am a part. To what do I respond? How do I respond? What does my response create? This includes my capacity to make myself ‘available to (act upon) multiple forms of response. Another sensorium must be set up in order to listen, to notice, to ingest’ (Juelskjær 2019, 45, my translation). The latter quotation brings me back to the research apparatus that I set up in order to do my research. For example, being attuned to the transcorporeal as a part of this apparatus will make me response-able to entanglements that I might have overlooked. This becomes an ethical issue, since it brings to the forefront how the framework I set up allows for agential cuts that create *a* kind of knowledge. But this insight also expands into the dance project and the choreographic-pedagogic situations that I set up, and the gestures (Despret 2004) that I activate in the emerging relations in the dance workshops. What I do in the dance workshops creates space for certain responses, and others are left out. This is of pedagogical-ethical importance.

I also acknowledge that doing research within the field of creative dance with children, in their everyday school environment, brings along a range of ethical challenges (see, e.g. Richards, Clarck, and Boggis 2015; Østern 2017a) that I have had to maneuver through. I found it, for example, challenging to figure out how I should represent the children through video material from the dance workshops in research presentation (this is thoroughly described and discussed in a forthcoming article). I experience the entangled choreographing-researching-teaching practice that I describe in this article as response-able to the ethical challenges of such a project. Because of its relational approach (e.g. La

Jevic and Springgay 2008; Braidotti 2013; Ellingson 2017) to these practices, I find that ethics is constantly considered and practiced.

In the following, I write myself through two stop-moments that I have sensed as making a difference in the dance project. They have contributed to specifically important expansion in my choreographing-researching-teaching practice by offering me resistance and flow.

Observations, analysis and outcomes

Stop-moments of expansion

Stop-moment 1; doing justice to the children's dance

I entered the dance project doubting my existing practice and wondering how I could work differently this time. In preparing the dance workshops, I asked myself how I could create more possibilities for the children, for example through verbally posed propelling questions that could help them in the process of creating their own dance (Figure 3). Cutting-together-apart propelling questions as a way of doing justice to the children's dance with the expanded notion of choreography (Lepecki 2006; Klien and Steve 2007; Foster 2010) and response-ability (Despret 2004; Barad 2007, 2012; Bozalek and Zembylas 2017) changes my perspective towards a propelling practice. Here, a cascade of questions (Juelskjær 2019) appear:

- How might the constituent features of a propelling act be recognized?
- How could a propelling act offer response-ability for the children?
- How could a propelling practice render me response-able towards the pupils, in my quest of acting on their impulses and the impulses of the choreographic process itself?

I now share an example of a response-able propelling act that I explored in order to meet some challenges I experienced with one of the classes in the dance project. Within the class there were challenges with engaging some of the pupils. Talking with their teacher, we wondered if some of the pupils needed clear, limited dance tasks in order to feel secure in the dance workshops. For some, it



Figure 3. A pupil exploring a composition task given in the workshop. (Photo by Elisabeth Rønvær/Screen Story).

seemed like improvising as a group made them feel uncomfortable and thus difficult for them to focus on the dance exercises. We saw that some of the children often tuned out of the proposed dance task and instead fooled around and played with their friends. In this precise situation I was struggling to find propelling questions or acts that could engage the whole class, and I experienced that the small group of pupils were disturbing their classmates. It was necessary to turn the situation around.

I had noticed that the children tended to talk about other animals rather than birds. At the beginning of every workshop session I danced a short improvisation on the theme of birds for the pupils, afterwards asking them to describe what they saw or noticed in the dance. My first reaction to the children in these conversations ignoring birds was to think about how I could get them back on the track of birds, instead of accepting and exploring that my dance directed them towards animals in general. To me, this is as good example of how the modernist heritage actively performed my choreographic-pedagogic impulses in the workshops. Instead of letting myself go where the process took me, I resisted and tried to get the process back to a more pre-planned route.

In taking advice from my PhD supervisor, she proposed creating bird dances together with the ideas of animals, making animal-birds. She also pointed out that ‘We ask the children to be creative, but then we do not appreciate what they bring into the process’ (Dybwik 2020, personal communication, 7 September), which I felt described well my own reaction to the children’s proposals.

Making animal-birds opened up for allowing the pupils to have agency over the choreographic process, which felt ethically and creatively more in line with my expectations of the kind of choreographer-researcher-teacher I wanted to be and the notion of collaboration that I wanted to build the project around. My modernist heritage of believing in the need to be in control of the choreographic process was challenged. An expanded choreographic path opened up: what could I do now in order to encourage and continue the idea of animal-birds? And how at the same time could I deal with the need to engage some of the pupils in something that made sense to them? I landed on the idea of creating cut-out fantasy birds that we could later bring into the dance exercises (Figure 4). I distributed paper cut-outs of all kinds of animals, birds, and robots; and glue, pencils, and a sheet of paper to each of the pupils. My inner voice at the time of the workshop was asking if this was dance.

Now, post-project, I see the making of these collages as a choreographic attempt to create movement and a relation between my dance, the pupils’ experience of witnessing animals in my dance, and their embodied (and perhaps tacit) experience with birds through the dance exploration tasks. The animal-bird collages interrupted the flow of dance exercises in the workshops (a flow that I as a dance professional took for granted), allowing the pupils a broader range of creative practices to explore with. These explorations were still embodied, moving: a dancing practice. As I see it, the making of these collages was a choreographic disturbance (Joy 2014; Østern 2018a), where I myself also interrupted and questioned my flowing preconceptions about what dance, choreography, and propelling acts are supposed to be. For both the pupils and myself this became a possible disruption or crack that would potentially allow us to climb into something different.



Figure 4. A fantasy bird collage made by one of the pupils. (Photo by Elisabeth Røvær/Screen Story).

To me, this is a good example of how a relational approach to choreography (Foster 2011; Manning 2013; Taylor and Fullagar 2022) could be set in practice in classroom dance activities, as choreographic leadership (Østern 2020). Through letting the children's impulses perform me as movement creating disturbances, I as a dance educator had to set aside my own desire of maintaining my vision of dance education: a vision that, despite its intentions of being collaborative and inclusive, maybe actually excluded certain bodies, certain aesthetics, certain practices from the collaboration. For the children, I would claim that their possibilities for response-ability in the dance project broadened: a possible response being not wanting to dance. Also, the different aesthetics of their fantasy-birds offered me a possibility to get to know the children in a new way (Hickey-Moody 2016). Instead of struggling with the difficulties of engaging certain pupils, my focus turned towards what they created and how that could inform me and how I planned the project further.

As a propelling act, working with the fantasy bird collages first and foremost did justice to the children, but also to the children's dance by acknowledging that some of them needed more time, or another entrance through support from other practices of engagement other than only dance tasks. Thinking with Barad, I see that I expanded my

choreographic-pedagogic toolbox when I also let engagement with non-human materials (paper cut-outs) matter in the dance workshop.

Stop moment 2: affecting and being affected, an example of engaging the teachers

In the dance project, I wanted to explore and find ways for the teachers and myself to entangle our practices. This ambition was motivated by several unsatisfying experiences from earlier projects in schools, where the teachers, for example, took on a disciplinary role, or did not engage in the workshop at all. This coincides with other studies that problematize teacher and artist co-operations in school (see Hall, Thomson, and Russell 2007; Chappell et al. 2009, 2011; Snook and Buck 2014). I was eager to change this, and hoped that the teachers and myself could work as a team. My assumption was that encouraging the teachers to co-create the workshops together with me would equip them with insights that could make them feel free to engage the pupils in explorative dance activities when I was no longer present at the school. This was communicated to the teachers through preparatory meetings, where we met to inform and to set the schedule for the project. In these meetings the teachers expressed that it was hard for them to fully grasp what the project would finally become, and because of this it was difficult at this point for them to engage in the project as much as I did.

It was necessary to find another way that would connect them to the dance project, and I invited them to a preparatory workshop together with me. I got forty-five minutes to give them a lived experience of what I wanted to do with the pupils, to discuss the expectations we had of each other in this project and to share ideas of how to carry it out. Inspired by the a/r/tographic methodology of entangling different practices (Irwin et al. 2006), I planned the preparatory workshop with discussions and dance tasks, as well as performing a dance for the teachers.

My dance was improvised to a flowing and melodic music. The teachers sat in a half moon formation on the floor and I danced in between them. As I danced, I experienced a heightened attunement to sensing the room and the people in it, and I felt entangled with the space and the atmosphere in the room. The affective space (McCormack 2013) that opened between myself and the teachers in this situation performed me, rendered me response-able to dancing as a relational practice. Even though the teachers were sitting still, the posture of the body, the turning of a head, the intensity of their living bodies, accompanied and performed my dance. The affective space we created together encouraged me to flow, make pauses, accelerate, change direction or quality, repeating my movement or just passing through. The sensation of the affective space becoming created a surge of joy through me, forging a connection with the teachers and the class room, the school.

It was as if the dance created a crack in our relationship and in the teachers' relationship to the project (Chappell et al. 2011); as if it was opening up for a conversation to start, a togetherness to form, and visions of what this could become. When I sat down afterwards, we started to talk about how my dance would perform the children. In the experience of my dance the teachers carried the pupils with them. They started to imagine how the pupils would react and how this kind of project could benefit the children: for example, that exploring with dance and performing could offer the pupils a possibility to exit their comfort zone and exercise courage, or that dancing could offer the pupils a different language of expression. They also warned me that some pupils would probably experience this kind of dancing as

unfamiliar or even awkward. Through this conversation the teachers opened up a door to the children that I had not access to before, and which I could use in planning the workshops.

I then proposed the teachers to join me on some explorative dance tasks that I had also planned to do with the pupils. After trying out these tasks together, I asked them how it felt to dance. One teacher answered that she had experienced the beginning as being difficult, but once we got going she had immersed herself into the dancing. She also experienced sensing the dynamics of our group strongly while dancing. Another teacher commented that she enjoyed the feeling of dancing together in silence. She questioned whether, but hoped that, the pupils would be capable of maintaining such a silence, and that they would also get to feel the togetherness that she had experienced in dancing together in silence and concentration. They all noted that time was an important ingredient in immersing oneself in dancing together like this.

As I see it, sharing a dance and talking about it afterwards offered us an important moment of response-ability to each other and to the coming task of supporting the children in the dance project (Figure 5). Dancing together offered us a possibility to entangle our different worlds, which would benefit the dance project and the children. Our conversation also steered into teaching methods: how we could engage the children in the theme of birds in order to create response-able dancing situations for them, or how we could support the creative work of the children through different ways of response. The teachers agreed that their bodily participation in the workshops would be important for the pupils' experience. I agree with the teachers, and suggest that the teacher's bodily participation in the dance workshops was not only important for the pupil's experience, but also for their own experience of the project.

Cutting-together-apart with my fear of not engaging the teachers, the close and affective space created through dancing, and talking together in the preparative workshop made us intra-act with and be response-able to each other, the pupils, and the emerging dance project. Reading with the expanded notion of choreography, I understand this as choreographic, creating a movement in our relationship, and for entanglements of choreography, research, and teaching to form.



Figure 5. The pupils are sharing their bird dances for each other. (Photo by Elisabeth Røvær/Screen Story).

Choreographic-pedagogic insights from an emerging post-humanist dance education choreographer-researcher-teacher

In this article I inquire into how two stop-moments from the dance project have performed my emerging practice as a choreographer-researcher-teacher. The analysis of stop-moment 1 has made me aware of my own modernist preconceptions of dance education activities and to reconsider how I can lay the grounds for response-ability (Despret 2004; Barad 2007, 2012; Bozalek and Zembylas 2017) through broadening my approach to dance. In this article I inquire into how two stop-moments from the dance project have performed my emerging practice as a choreographer-researcher-teacher. Here, we experienced that dancing and attuning to what dance created between us performed our response-ability towards each other, the dance project, and the children.

The experiences gained through the project has led me to think about my skills, or technique (Taylor 2016), as a *dancing* choreographer-researcher-teacher in elementary school. Diffracting with the expanded and relational notion of choreography (Klien and Steve 2007; Gormly and Klien 2008; Foster 2011; Manning 2013; Østern 2018a; Taylor and Fullagar 2022) has made me aware of these skills. Dancing provides me with a set of aesthetic pedagogical tools that support and at the same time create disturbances as I am choreographing-researching-teaching. The disturbances can be of ethical, aesthetic, or pedagogical matter, but they call for my attention through the impulses shared from the affective space (McCormack 2013) between human and non-human matter. To me, choreographing with dance as a material-discursive practice (Barad 2007) in the preparatory workshop with the teachers ‘opens up a pedagogical space’ (Østern 2020, 144). Here, I can respond to the impulses that I sense from the teachers (carrying with them the pupils in their dancing bodies), listening and including in the process whatever comes from them.

I now recognize a shift in my being-with dance in a pedagogical context, which resonates with affective pedagogy (Hickey-Moody 2016, 264): ‘being changed by art and seeing this change as a kind of learning, mobilizes the idea of a being of sensation as teacher’. Listening, with the body, to what the affects and sensations teach me, is a skill or technique that I find important for the post-humanist (Braidotti 2013; Taylor 2016) choreographer-researcher-teacher.

Choreographing response-able relations in and between human and non-human matter, both myself and other(s), is one central task in the dance project. This shifts the premises for what and whom is choreographed. For example, as in stop-moment 1, where I choreographed for response-ability through the engagement with other materials and material-discursive practices (the paper-cut-outs, scissoring, and gluing fantasy birds). Choreographing relations without dancing in the dance project disturbed my vision of dance, changed it even. I now recognize this to be a good example of a transformative choreographic-pedagogic moment (Østern 2018a). The children’s cut-outs of animals and birds into new fantasy becomings, acts as an allegory of how I felt like cutting-together-apart the modernist with the post-human into new choreographing-researching-teaching becomings and possibilities in the dance project and the research project as a whole.

Notes

1. Initiated by the musician and music teacher Liv Runesdatter and funded by The Cultural Schoolbag/Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education and Research in Norway.
2. as discussed in e.g. <https://www.kulturradet.no/kunstloftet/vis-artikkel/-/kl-artikkel-2009-olehamre-intervju-anette-therese-pettersen> or <https://www.scenekunst.no/sak/scenekunst-og-pedagogikk-to-sider-av-samme-sak/>.

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