

An Embodied Approach to Academic Writing?

Signe Alexandra Domogalla

The Norwegian College of Musical Theater, a part of
School of Arts, Design, and Media, The University College
of Kristiania, Norway.

Abstract

This essay is the reflective writing of a novice arts-based researcher on her way towards becoming an a/r/tographer. Through the research questions ‘How can I make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice?’ and ‘How can I better understand my artistic practice through academic writing?’ the author searches for a way of including her art, dance, and the physical experience of the art, in the writing process, hence, an ‘embodied artistic practice’. She seeks foundation in theory, drawing on different views of embodiment, neurocognition, meaning-making in the brain, embodied cognition, and embodied understanding. She searches for a way to make meaning of abstract concepts through movement in relation to the world (hence, ecological), and how she can translate these concepts from written form into an embodied (dancing) artistic practice that will function as a catalyst for new ideas and perspectives, and then back into written form again (academically).

The goal of the essay is to provide the reader, artist or otherwise, coming from a practice-based field of knowledge, with inspiration when embarking on a process of theorization through academic writing. The main focus of the essay is on the learning process of the author, and the style is personal. However, the author attempts to provide a six-point algorithm for the inclusion of an embodied practice to a writing process, based on her findings. This algorithm might be applicable for other a/r/tographers, as well as serve as catalyst for further research on the bridging of practice and theory. Both for artists going into research and students in higher arts education.

An Embodied Approach to Academic Writing? Reflections from an Artist on Her Journey towards Becoming an A/r/tographer

Keywords: embodiment, dance improvisation, artography, academic writing, artistic research, writing, dance philosophy

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Introduction

In April 2018, I attended a one-week seminar on arts-based research. Working as an associate professor of dance in the young institution of The Norwegian College of Musical Theatre (MTHS) and having to produce research for the institution, I felt that I did not have adequate knowledge of the methods and methodology of research to actually make a valuable contribution. Research, arts-based or otherwise, and academic writing felt like one big mysterious sphere that I had trouble initiating interaction with.

Cvejić (2015) writes about how the binding of movement to the body (in dance) — subjectivation — pose two problems that are to

[...]the core of dance's resistance to discursive thought coupled with dance practitioners' mistrust of theorisation, and the difficulty in establishing the work of dance [...]. (p.9).

This might be at the heart of my reluctance. Moreover, I come from a practice-based field that witnesses or has witnessed artistic production as research without making

¹ The Norwegian College of Musical Theater, a part of School of Arts, Design, and Media, The University College of Kristiania, Norway. E-mail: Signe.Domogalla@kristiania.no

the demands that apply to research in other fields, as criticized by Borgdorff (2012, p. 133), Roar (2016, p.315), and Østern (2017a, p. 8).

Wanting to enter into a more academic understanding of arts-based research, as something that happens within or in contact with an academic framework that demands reflexivity, theory, transparency and being critical (Østern, 2017a, p. 12), I struggle and have struggled with everything. Such as making meaning of different ways of articulating ontology and epistemology, as well as drawing the line between artistic work and dissemination of the research in dialogue with peers and relevant fields of knowledge.

However, I was fond of literature in general and academic literature in particular, which functioned as inspiration for my artistic practice² before the seminar on arts-based research; the perceived problem of the coupling of theory³ with practice⁴ became more evident during the seminar as well as in my reflections in log notes during the week and thereafter. Nevertheless, communicating with fellow artist-researcher-teachers at the seminar acted as quite a catalyst for me during the week, and I found a way into academia through my artistic practice. Still, when I got back home and attempted to articulate my experiences on paper in an essay, I had trouble finding the same inspiration and really feeling the coupling of theory and practice. The current essay is my reflection upon the mentioned process, as well as an account of my discoveries and questioning.

2 The way Cvejić (2015) explains that ‘[...] ‘theory’, or rather the reading of texts by Derrida, Deleuze, Deleuze and Guattari and so on, became a resource for choreographic texts[...]’(p.13) we use the word ‘text’ as choreography here. Thus, I have used literature on philosophy as inspiration for my work, but I have not engaged in the reading as critically as I would do if I were to do research.

3 Here, this is the academic linguistic presentation of concepts relating different fields of knowledge in a written text.

4 Here, it is used as the execution of my art form — dance and choreography.

Borgdorff (2012) considers the application of academia to art as a means for art to transcend:

[...] its former limits, aiming through the research to contribute to thinking and understanding; academia, for its part, opens up its boundaries to forms of thinking and understanding that are interwoven with artistic practices. (p. 143)

Through the research questions ‘How can I make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice?’ and ‘How I can better understand my artistic practice through academic writing?’ I explore how, as an artist, I need to, or can, make meaning of the interrelation of art and academia. Bresler (2006b) considers aesthetics at the heart of both artistic experience and qualitative research. In order for me to be inspired to engage in academic writing, I needed to find the aesthetic value of engaging in dialogue with academia. I have chosen to let words be my main vehicle of presentation here, as ‘[...] language does remain a highly functional complementary medium to help get across to others what is at issue in the research [...]’ (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 167) and as academic writing is an integral part of my research questions. However, I use theories of embodied cognition (e.g. Varela et al., 1991; Johnson, 2015) in the exploration of abstract concepts.

Methodology

The creative process has formed the pathway ‘[...] through which new insights, understandings, and products come into being’ (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 146). The formulated research questions did arise from an experienced problem. However, the process of formulating them has undergone such a creative process in the negotiation of meaning, going back and forth between analysis, literature and art, that I find it to be an abductive (Østern, 2017a, p. 19) rather than an inductive approach (Befring, 2017, p. 61). Rather, it could also be called an abductive hermeneutic (Borgdorff, 2012,

p. 172; Varela, Thompson and Rosch, 1991, p. 149) approach, where the play of the different domains go back and forth between existing theories, artistic practices, and experiences.

I aim to establish empathic understanding by mediating back and forth between the personal and the public (Bresler, 2006b, p. 53). I employ an impressionist approach to the analysis of the research material (Befring, 2017, p. 113) which has consisted of log-excerpts and artistic representations, such as dance improvisation and photography, as well as academic literature. During my analysis and in the manner in which I have approached the different readings of theory, based on ideas that emerged as I went along, I have attempted to be as open and critical as possible with my own preconception of concepts in the interpretation of the research material (Østern, 2017a, p. 17; Tjora, 2017, p. 251).

However, to be critical while analyzing oneself and one's interpretation is a strenuous task because of how intertwined the artistic practice, and, consequently, the research, is (Østern, 2017a, p. 9). I have touched upon themes that make me question the basis of who I am as a human being and an artist, as well as why I do what I do. It has been frustrating at times, but I hope I have managed to avoid oversimplification (Bresler, 2006b, p. 65) so that the essay can contribute to discourses in philosophy and arts-based research and not only to my own well-being. However, after reading Østern (2017a) I realize that my feelings of exhaustion (p. 18), inadequacy, insecurity, and doubt in the process are not unique, and that other artists, in general, and movement artists, in particular, embarking on a similar journey, may benefit from reading about my experiences.

Methods

The main methods in dealing with the research questions have been: reflective poetic writing and maintaining of logs⁵, dance improvisation outdoors, writing about the improvisations, as well as the analysis of the written log and improvisations. In addition, I have used hiking, sleeping outdoors, skiing, and running as methods for reflection on abstract concepts from the literature. Further, in analysing the collected material, I have read theory from several fields of knowledge as a means to interpret my artistic renditions and to better understand my own meaning-making process.

The material that has served as the main basis for my analysis are three log-excerpts that were written during the week of the seminar. The style of the log-excerpts is both poetic and, to a certain extent, analytical, or mediating back and forth between the two. In addition, video of several short dance improvisations⁶, relating to the third log-excerpt, serve as additional material in the analysis of the log-excerpts.

5 I am aware that the maintaining of log as a method for research is well documented and widely discussed. However, when I started this writing process I used an intuitive approach to the log that was inspired by my artistic practice and free writing more as a stream of consciousness. The log did not have any particular form and I did not write with any other purpose than merely trying to articulate thoughts in writing. The form that the writing took might have been inspired by a workshop in theatre led by Norwegian theatre director Claire deWangen, at Franje festival in Arendal in 2017, where writing was an integral part of the material being researched. It might also have been inspired by a round table discussion with amongst others professors Per Roar and Theodor Barth at Oslo National Academy of the Arts Artistic Research week in January 2018. The main topic of this discussion was not the maintaining of log, but the topic came up through a conversation about notepads. However, in the case of the logs referenced in this essay there was no particular, pre-planned form in my writings, because I did not start writing with a particular goal or research question in mind.

6 The use of video is one of the most common methods while working with dance and choreography. We use it both as a tool of assessment of our own performance, as a maintaining of log of motions as well as a tool for creating new choreography.

Simultaneously, in the process of writing the essay, I have attempted to recreate the catalyzing events of the week of the seminar through dance improvisation, hiking or otherwise being in contact with nature. I did not maintain an elaborate log of these hikes or experiences, but they affected how I approached the literature, and to a certain extent, which keywords I used for finding literature. One example being that I, at one point, read everything I could find regarding ecology, eco-phenomenology and arts because I experienced a connection with nature while dancing outside.

The final analysis of the log-excerpts was done after several months of writing, re-writing and researching relevant literature, and after receiving reviews from other researchers and the editors. The effect of this distance in time from the original event has been that the analysis is connected more to theoretical concepts, even in my impressionist approach (Befring, 2017, p. 113). This might be due to the fact that my vocabulary has evolved throughout the process. I attempt to look for patterns and developments in my analysis, particularly regarding the choice of words in the log-excerpts, which might describe an embodied approach to learning (e.g. Varela et al., 1991; Johnson, 2015), or serve as examples of a development from a dualistic to a non-dualistic view of the body-mind problem, or the theory-practice problem. However, this analysis, even if not on paper, has happened throughout the writing process, going back and forth between the log-excerpts, the improvisation, and the literature, reflecting the abductive approach mentioned before (Østern, 2017a, p. 19).

Epistemological Stance

This essay draws from several epistemological areas. As expressed in postmodernist thoughts (Gladsø, Gjervan, Hovik and Skagen, 2015, pp. 143-144; Borgdorff, 2012, pp. 136), I do not think that truly original work is possible. Truth is situated, abundant, and non-absolute, and I believe in the floating domains of the arts. However, as I will show later in this essay, I am not always consistent in this stance; occasionally, I

unconsciously fall into modernist (Gladsø, Gjervan, Hovik and Skagen, 2015, pp. 143-144; Borgdorff, 2012, pp. 136) thoughts. The basis for the contradiction probably stems from my education, as both a classical ballet dancer and a contemporary choreographer. I will attempt to explain this more thoroughly below.

Bourriaud (2007 [1998]), in the first chapter of his book *Esthétique relationnelle*, describes a push and pull between the various modernist paradigms and postmodernism, in a way that I find relatable.

The creation of knowledge is best expressed through Merleau-Ponty's perceptual phenomenology. I see my body as '[...] a perceptual field, a surface in contact with the world, a permanent rootedness in it.' (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 240) Nevertheless, phenomenology is a method to characterize the structures that make knowledge possible (in me), but does not purport to absolutely establish certain truths (Pakes, 2011, p. 43).

I also draw on ecological views with regard to how I view the world in relation to me and myself in relation to the world. One of the unifying concepts of the different eco-ontologies, the way I interpret it, is a notion of a certain degree of non-hierarchy between the human world and the other-than human world. Humans are *in* the world, not *on* the world (Owen, 2016; Giannachi and Stewart, 2005; Garoian, 2012; Glasser, 2011; Gamlund, 2012). Eco-phenomenology (Brown and Toadvine, 2003) seeks to bridge different eco-ontologies with phenomenology. 'Eco-phenomenology is the pursuit of the relationalities of worldly engagement, both human and those of other creatures' (Wood, 2003, p. 213).

When I seek to find an ecological approach to academic writing, the goal is to engage in the creation of knowledge through non-hierarchical interaction with the world, and to be able to learn from the world, which consists of both human and other-than-human nature (Stewart, 2010, p. 32). The importance of including an ecological approach to creation of knowledge originates from an analysis of my

process at the arts-based research seminar, where I interpreted the feeling of being outside, in nature, as critical for my meaning-making process.

Projects of coupling theorists (philosophers and others) with practitioners within the arts and sciences (Lehman, 2017, p. 12), and across different modalities in various forms, are widely known and appreciated.¹ In this essay, the aim is to make the process I underwent in the coupling of theory (read literature) and practice (read artistic practice as dance) visible to the reader. However, I did not work completely as a free agent, as the writing process included valuable feedback from editors and reviewers; I will attempt to provide as clear a picture as possible of the process of me as an artist-teacher on my way to becoming an a/r/tographer (Østern, 2017a, p. 11; Springgay, Irwin and Kind, 2005).

I begin by discussing my educational background and how that probably triggered my resistance or reluctance towards the coupling of theory and practice. Through three log-excerpts from the arts-based research seminar and in analysing them, I provide insight into the process that triggered the research questions. Then, I discuss how I applied, or could have applied, the findings from the material in the process of writing the current essay. In my conclusion, I indicate possible themes for further research and exploration.

Who I Am as an Artist

I see myself at the intersection of several aesthetic systems⁷ and this has been true for me throughout my career. In addition to working with a range of different

7 By aesthetic system I mean the different aesthetic rules that govern various art disciplines, or even styles within one discipline. For example, in classical ballet there is a different aesthetic measure than in jazz dance or contemporary dance, based on the different discourses that are prominent within the different disciplines. Another example might be contemporary dance and musical theatre as different aesthetical systems. This also relates to the conflict of modernist and postmodernist thought, described by Østern (2017b), as described below.

movement techniques and approaches, I have worked with different acting techniques, spoken word, and voice techniques. I have also collaborated with visual artists and musicians, both in the more traditional sense, such as with scenographers and composers, and on a more experimental level. Choreography, performing, and teaching are the three unifying concepts of these aesthetical systems.

In my practice, choreography is the writing of a performance, the connection of various narratives and modes of communication (light, space, landscape, movement, and sound) with the organisation of the movement of the *human body* in relation to the other narratives, for example light, space, and sound, as main focus. Choreography could also be defined as the organised interaction between humans and non-humans (animal or landscape) or the interaction between humans in the environment in a performative situation that is mediated in front of an audience. The physicality of choreography and dance goes beyond everyday movement in terms of, for example, repetition or abstraction of concrete movement. Choreography is the organizing principle, or facilitator, of movement and communication⁸.

Art and the Academisation of the Performing Arts

Artists are continuously asked to validate themselves either through their benefit for other academic fields⁹ or through their economic value in contribution to the capitalist growth of society. Here my question is, ‘Why should I have to validate my

8 This description of choreography is my own attempt at articulating my practice. However, the focus and the wording is inspired by the literature that I was reading at the moment. The literature made it necessary to stress some aspects of the work, such as differentiating between humans, and non-humans in regards to choreography. The description is not a static manifesto, it is, as I am, in constant change inspired by my daily interactions with literature, people or movement techniques. The wording “the writing of a performance” for instance was inspired by a seminar with French choreographer Gisèle Vienne in October 2018 where she used the word “write” about her performances (Personal communication, 27.October 2018).

art through anything else (writing/theorization) than my art itself?’ Dancer and researcher Andrews (2018) expresses what has been a concern for me for a few years regarding dealing with writing about my artistic practice:

When I am dancing the body and mind are in constant dialogue but this conversation isn’t communicated through language. However, it can be articulated, but that articulation is a translation, as all experiments rendered in language is. (p. 2)

During the week at the seminar, I became exceedingly aware of my own strong separation of art, and the making of art (practice), on the one hand, and the written academisation of art (theory) on the other. The unwillingness to connect the two is something that is discussed by, amongst others, Roar (2016) in his paper *Artistic Research And The Dance Of Tomorrow* [my translation]. Artists are unwilling to see the value of reflexivity of method and traditional presentation of research through papers (p. 315). This incompatible dichotomy of theory and practice was something that I also had, consciously or unconsciously, related to. Lately, I have used some time to attempt to uncover the origin of my separation of the two.

Pakes (2006) highlights the tendency within *parts* of the dance community to strongly oppose the term ‘Cartesian dualism’. She states that to even think of the connection of mind and body as a ‘problem’ is to get off on the wrong foot. Thus, the dance community fails to recognise the last fifty years of debate regarding the mind-body issue (p. 88). In the analysis below I register similar views in myself. Previous to this writing process, I was convinced that I did not relate to a dualistic view, mind and body were one. However, in my analysis, and in the very research questions that serve as a base for this essay, I do find remnants of the mind-body divide throughout my education (academic and artistic) as well as in the log-excerpts

9 Exemplified by Eisner in his 1998 paper on the validation of art education in the American school system (p. 143).

presented here. Johnson (2015) indicates a long history for disembodied views of mind, in Western thought and language, that I can recognise (p. 2). I was taught to sit down to read and write (thus disconnect from my body) and to be physical in Physical Education or dance (engage my body, but not necessarily intellectually).

Another factor might come from my dance education and my artistic career. In her narrative study *Norwegian contemporary dance educations — between modernism and postmodernism — former dance students reflections on the impact of a dance education* [my translation], Østern (2017b) highlights an ambivalence among former students regarding different discourses of body and technique (among others) that may be derived from the contrast in education:

[...] a contemporary world where modern and postmodern pedagogical and aesthetic paradigms still co-exist, or in the foreground or background, often in unresolved and silent ways. [my translation] (Østern, 2017b, p. 5).

This ambivalence is something that I can recognise in myself and that I struggle with in the making of art, teaching of dance, and here, in how I think about the academisation of and writing about art.

I was educated as a dancer, teacher, and choreographer in Norway during the first eight years of this millennium. The dance and teacher training focused on classical ballet, while the choreography training focused on more contemporary methods for working with, and creating, dance. During the period of my education, we witnessed a turn from a field where the classically trained body was still the epitome of a dancer. Now we witness a field where alternative ways of thinking dance, body, and choreography, so-called ‘new choreography’ or ‘conceptual dance’ (Cvejić, 2015, p. 13) have become mainstream, at least for professionals. Ingvarsen’s proposition of ‘[...] a non-anthropocentric notion of dance and the body[...]’ (Ingvarsen 2016, p. 9) and the choreography of space, cities, and things is an example of the latter.

Parallel to this (or maybe because of), there has been an academisation of the field of performing arts. Cvejić (2015), in her article entitled *From odd encounters to a prospective confluence: Dance-philosophy*, provides a great overview of the academic turn in dance. The need to be able to write and philosophize in writing about art has become a much more articulated demand during the course of my career. Not only for the sake of academisation of the field, providing dance artists with a language to communicate with each other, and with researchers on and in dance, but also in the way the performance is communicated to the audience. In my opinion, perhaps to the point where the writing/reading about, and not the performance itself, occasionally becomes the main event.

What I love about the performing arts, is the manner in which I can experience the performance through my body and my senses. I appreciate the possibility of dealing with both concrete and abstract narratives through the different levels of consciousness within my body. I believe that good performance art should be able to stand alone without a written text to guide the experience of the audience. A linguistic text can serve as an extra layer to a performance, but if it is imperative to the experience, I do not necessarily believe that what I am witnessing is performing art. Actress May (2005) expresses something similar: ‘[...] *the experience is uprooted in the act of writing it down.*’ (p. 347).

Greene (2011) expresses the notion that through dance, the body of the dancer, while realizing itself in motion, is creating a realm that ‘[...] *fuses the dancer and onlooker, body and consciousness, thoughts and perceptions in intensely focused presence*’ (p. 4). In my opinion, dance is a great medium for conveying alternative narratives and changing the way people perceive the world. Believing in this, throughout my work as an artist, I have focused on face-to-face dialogue, and in performing for non-professional audiences using (amongst others) site-specific dance (Hunter, 2012). I see the face-to-face encounters as a means for defusing

contemporary art and the contemporary artist as intimidating concepts¹⁰, as well as adopting a political stance with regard to community and interaction, which are other concepts that I am concerned with. The accompanying linguistic text has seemed like an unnecessary extra layer.

However, there might be a middle ground. More and more Norwegian venues are using both academic texts together with other means of interactions with the audiences in the dissemination of the works that they present. One example being Black Box Theatre in Oslo who extract the academic writing about the performances from the program into separate publications, or small books, which are distributed at the theatre. This provides the audiences with several choices regarding how they want to engage intellectually with a performance.

I see the value in the academisation of performing arts as a means of conveying expertise across fields of knowledge and as a means to reflect upon my own artistic practices. The philosopher Arne Næss articulated that: ‘[...] Individuals have a responsibility to try to articulate their total views. [...] Coupling theory to practice and action to reflection are essential to this endeavour [...]’ (Glasser, 2011, p. 62). Nevertheless, I have this fear that an academic approach in my artistic practice might lead me in a completely different aesthetical direction out of necessity within the rules of the selected ontology. I am apprehensive that this would somehow be in conflict with the artistic vision of aesthetics in my inspiration.

In this portion, I show the basis for my second research question: How can I better understand my artistic practice through academic writing? My initial fear of

10 I don't know of research stating that contemporary art is something intimidating to the public. In Norway, however, I believe that the public dialogue in traditional and social media has had a focus on (contemporary) art as something weird, unnecessary and elitist (a word with negative connotations in Norway). One example could be the Facebook-site "Sløseriombudsmannen"'s treatment of several Norwegian contemporary dance artists among others Mette Edvardsen in 2017 (Røssland, 2017).

academic writing came both from my education and from a personal fear of losing myself, or alienating my artistic vision through philosophy. This is also the basis of my main question: How can I make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice? Although I am obliged to engage in research through my institution (and I want to), I need to make the research, and particularly the writing process, relevant to me and my foundations as an artist.

However, being inspired by the presenters at the arts-based research seminar, I embraced the uncertainty and began exploring the writing.

My Body and Mind as One – Embodied Learning?

There has been a ‘practice turn’ in contemporary theory (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 148; Eisner, 1991, p. 14) with regard to the legitimacy of the body as a place of knowledge; however, this is not only in phenomenology, as referred to earlier in this essay (Merleau-Ponty, 2002).

‘In the context of discovery, pre-reflective artistic actions embody knowledge in a form that is not directly accessible for justification’ (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 148). Nevertheless, the term embodiment is a term that embraces a multitude of meanings throughout different discourses, not only in the cognitive sciences (Galetzka, 2017, p. 1), but also in the field of arts-based research (among others in Tsouvala and Magos, 2016 and Gulliksen, 2016).

Several studies show how physical activity enhances human beings’ ability to learn (amongst others Harvey et al., 2017 and Liu, Sulpizio, Kornpetpanee and Job, 2017). One study by Clement et al. (2018) assessed the function of active learning spaces in libraries, including users’ perception of the space. Although the main focus of the study was on the health benefit of active learning spaces, the authors state that ‘[...] students enjoy the space and attest that it is nice to have a moment to get up and

move around to clear their minds' (p. 168). The idea that physical activity can 'clear the mind' is recognizable through my run towards the Esso tank, featured in the first log-excerpt below.

However, when searching for an embodied approach to academic writing, I aim for a fuller understanding of the term; such an understanding is more related to communication through movement — my artistic practice: dance — and my meaning-making through an embodied practice. If one assumes that the body and mind are not two separate entities, but parts of one biological system that can process and make meaning of abstract concepts, one can view embodiment and cognition through different lenses.

The cognitivist theory sees the human brain as a computer that processes information (Galetzka, 2017, p. 1), and physicalism argues that not all mental phenomena are embodied, but must be explicable in terms of physical science (Pakes, 2006, p. 89). In the field of education, 'embodied learning' could be used simply to explain a learning situation where the student and the teacher are physically present in the same room at the same time (Emig, 2001). Further, in the field of anthropology, related to movement, 'embodied knowledge' could be used to explain how physical concepts and physicality is a bearer and conveyor of identity, as articulated by Downey (2010), or how cultural values shape embodiment in different body practices, as described by Mullis (2016).

The cognitive sciences examine how concept formation and abstract thinking happen within the human brain, and embodied in this sense could just mean physically 'in the brain'. Several studies examine how abstract knowledge is related to human beings' ability to relate language to images (Eisner, 1991, p. 15) or how metaphors show how sensorimotor activity is related to the processing of abstract concepts (Lakoff and Johnson, [1980] 2003; Galetzka, 2017, p. 4). Neurocognition looks at how '[...]the abstract cognitive process and the physiological bodily process

are intertwined and inseparable' (Gulliksen, 2016, p. 2), through the physiology of the brain and neural patterns (also in Bläsing, Puttke and Schack, 2010).

I find that both a common ground of phenomenology, and the cognitive sciences are necessary to take into account to be able to explain both the physiological processes of cognition, as well as my own perception of meaning-making, abstraction, and learning in relation to the world around me. Varela et al. (1991) employ the term 'embodied action', stating that '[...]sensory and motor processes, perception and action, are fundamentally inseparable in lived cognition' (p. 173). Cvejić (2015) connects to such an approach when advocating an upgrade of existing philosophy of dance processes, to include both phenomenology and cognitive sciences (p. 19). In addition, the term 'embodied understanding' as used by Johnson (2015) constitutes one way of articulating an inclusive view of embodiment.

Human understanding is profoundly embodied. That is, it is rooted in how our bodies and brains interact with, process, and understand our environments in a way that recruits bodily meaning, neural stimulation, and feeling to carry out both concrete and abstract conceptualization and reasoning. (p. 7)

Articles written by dance researchers on embodiment reveal some of the same content, but articulated from either a phenomenological stance (or that of the researcher) (Fraleigh, 2017; Mullis, 2016 and Pakes, 2006) or 'embodiment of thought' as a more abstract artistic concept, as employed by Bentsman, Finbloom, McKinley and Traub (2016). The term 'analytic somaesthetics', as proposed by Shusterman (2000), is another way of bridging the gap between phenomenology and cognitive sciences, as it describes '[...] the basic nature of bodily perceptions and practices and their function in our knowledge and construction of reality' (p. 222).

As I have shown here, the term embodied is a complex term that exists in numerous discourses that are often overlapping and multimodal. To me, it makes sense to search for a middle ground between the cognitive sciences and

phenomenology in order to understand how I make meaning through interaction with the environment and in my body.

A combination of the views expressed by Varela et al. (1991) and Johnson (2015) appears viable, as does recognizing the importance of physical activity as a means to ‘clear the mind’ or maybe better put to direct attention: ‘Attention aids perception, which is alive with motility and receptive phases in dance processes’ (Fraleigh, 2017, p. 251). Fraleigh (2017) also expresses that phenomenology is a practice of observation and meaning-making that teaches human beings to pay attention to movement and its innate meaningfulness (p. 249). Taking into into account that dancers experience a:

[...] deep engagement with the physical body and the various modes of expression, feeling, and understandings that can come from a developed practice of thinking and moving concurrently. (Andrews, 2018, p. 3)

and that

Dance has always been a live expressive organism, based on a fundamental physical-sensory relationship to space and the world, to perception/cognition, and to subjectivity, if we retain an anthropocentric perspective. (Birringer, 2005, p. 307)

In view of the above, it becomes more clear why it is important for me as a dancer to search for an embodied and ecological entry to academic writing through my artistic practice of dance. Dancers may not do embodied cognition differently from non-dancers, but our phenomenological account of it may differ. Hence, movement as a mode for learning to articulate about abstract concepts, may not be such a remote idea after all. ‘[T]he potential for the body to move around the object to approach it from a different perspective.’ (Pakes, 2011, p. 41) could be a metaphor for an embodied means to approach research.

The Embodiment of Theory through Improvisation, or Back-Translation to the Artistic Domain

Dance improvisation is one of my main methods in the creation of new material as a dance artist. Through improvisation I explore new movement patterns and intentions in relation to other dancers and/or the environment. Hence, improvisation could function as self-reflective embodied research (Mullis, 2016, p. 61). Bresler (2006a) explains improvisation from the musicians viewpoint as a '[...] disciplined, knowledgeable, and highly attentive response to an emerging reality.' (p. 32). I find such a definition applicable to dance improvisation as well. In addition, improvisation '[...] involves [engaging] with space and place both as mobile, fluid concepts' (Hunter, 2012, p. 259). Apart from the stage, other sites of performance have been important for me throughout my career, and although I have improvised dance and created choreography both in landscapes, cityscapes, and old buildings, I find the exploration of movement in relation to nature particularly exciting and inspiring.

Through environmental dance, dancers have the possibility of disclosing the values of nature within nature itself, by exploring human kinaesthetic consciousness of a non-human nature (Stewart, 2010, p. 33). Outdoor improvisations provide the performer with a completely different kinaesthetic experience, because the gravitational forces, and how dancers perceive their bodies, work differently when there is no levelled floor and four walls to contain them. There is a sense of an extended *liminality* where the boundary between environment and skin is blurred and one is swayed by the kinetic rhythms of the environment (Stewart, 2010, pp. 34-37). Another way of articulating this extended liminality could be that when improvising in nature, one is attempting to project the body toward *nothingness* or nature — to become one with the natural processes of decay and regeneration as they do in the Butoh dance (Fraleigh, 2005, p. 333).

There are several ways of approaching outdoor dance improvisations in terms of what rules the dancer sets for herself as an improviser. As evident in the third log-excerpt below, I attempted to use sound as a point of resonance in my body. '[S]ound can caress, grip, or violate the body [...]' (Bresler, 2006a, p. 30). Through this, I sought to achieve an embodied empathic understanding (Bresler, 2006a, p. 25) with the other-than-human environment and attempted to embody the abstract concepts that I had read about in the course literature. In other words, I attempted to artistically inhabit the theoretical concepts through translation into movement.

Below, I will present three log-excerpts that were written during the arts-based research seminar in 2018. Each log-excerpt is completed by a short analysis of how I interpreted the process I was undergoing in relation to the concepts presented through my research questions. The three excerpts are followed by a discussion regarding how my experiences can or cannot serve as a model for answering the formulated research questions: How can I make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice? and How can I better understand my artistic practice through academic writing?

The Esso Run

The old Esso logo throning on top, gazing diagonally towards the bay that is [the town] and towards the open sea.

In the fjord, several tank ships that have been looming there for a while, looking as if they are waiting for something. Adjacent to the tank at the tip of the peninsula there is a small harbour, and one of the ships is docked.

[...]I am reflecting on my gaze on the tank and myself as a moving body in the world.

The two of us are going to approach each other. I am thriving, trotting away along the winding road.

[...]I let my mind wander — enveloped by the meditative state of running — or I am falling out of my head and into the environment. When I run, I always have a feeling of being inside a bubble where my thoughts are floating around me in a cocoon or like an aura.

I am falling in and out of focus — keeping one thought intensely and repetitive for a while and letting it go just as quickly as it arrived.

Thoughts that are recurring are concerning me and my relation to the Esso tank. From earlier that day, Robert Stake's wise words about himself and his ever-changing perspective as a researcher and human being is reverberating and I am reflecting on how I constantly, at this exact moment, am shifting my physical perspective (Stake, 2018).

My body is moving forward in space and I am changing where I am geographically.

In addition, there is a constant change happening inside my body — when I run I all the time feel something different.

[...]I am in constant change — a reflexive, corporeal, and cognitive process that is filling all of me — I cannot think without my body or outside of my body.

The tanker at dock is continuously buzzing away and the sound is being amplified, diminished, or changing in color and texture as my perspective is being altered. Even though the Esso tank in itself might be a constant form, my perspective and experience of the tank will never be the same, as I am in constant change both physically, mentally and geographically.

(excerpt log: Tuesday, 10 April 2018)

Analysis: Impressions

The log-excerpt clearly shows that even though I wished to have a fully embodied approach to cognition and meaning-making, I still see the mind and the body as two

separate entities. Statements such as ‘myself as a moving body’, ‘let my mind wander’, and ‘my body is moving forward’ (not me?) are evidence of remnants of a dualistic mind/body concept. According to Johnson (2007), it is rather common for a dualistic view to creep into the methods that even proponents of non-dualistic views theorize (p. 112). There is the idea of the body as material, while the thoughts are metaphysically ‘floating around’. However, I use metaphors for cognition that are related to embodiment (‘...let my mind wander’) and cognitive concepts that appear to echo the running activity (‘keeping one thought intensely and repetitive’). As described by Galetzka (2017, p. 3) and Lakoff & Johnson (2003 [1980]), metaphors provide a means to describe how abstract concepts are linked to sensorimotor experience and activation and how human beings understand the world through interaction with it (ibid, p. 183). I also relate my experience to emotion: ‘I am thriving’. The statement of being in constant change indicates a phenomenological epistemic stance that I ascribe to both corporeal and cognitive processes. Still, a dualistic view is evident in the reflections, despite the efforts to oppose such an approach. It is possible that I feel the need to make a division in order to explain the embodied concept. That I, from my education and background, lack the vocabulary for describing an embodied cognition. The stream-of-consciousness of the log reveals which concepts of embodiment and mind are internalized, and which concepts need further integration, such as embodied cognition.

This first log-excerpt represents a first attempt at applying a research method to my work. Without any other particular goal than maintaining a log of thoughts related to arts-based research. Meaning, the writing was not based in a research question or an artistic idea. It simply felt good to write, so I continued writing throughout the week.

An Ecological Approach to Choreographing Wallpaper

On Wednesday we are visiting [a renown artist's] house in the centre of [the town].

The thoughts from the run along the shore have stuck with me and developed during the night.

My experience with the Esso-tank still seems to have some importance regarding my negotiation of meaning in this new landscape that is arts-based research and the application of theory in the context of making art, making meaning through art, and communicating research through and with art.

Entering the house, my attention focuses on all the interesting small details of the house.

The space is quite crammed with all of us centering around the bed. I withdraw into the small kitchen and begin my exploration.

Drawing on my new perspective, I start to explore the room through the lens of my mobile-phone camera.

The macro function allows me to go really close to details, such as the peeling wallpaper and the different textures in the cleaning appliances lying on the floor.

My lens searches for small differences in perspective and subtle changes in lines and how the various textures interact with each other.

I am dwelling with and in the textures (Andrews, 2018, p. 10).

Being enlarged through the lens, the objects gain new qualities as something different — just by looking at them from a different perspective and maybe from a perspective closer to themselves.

Later, on a walk through [the town], I find myself engaged with the rust and texture of an old fire hydrant situated in a small crossing nearer to the hotel.

Upon returning to my room, I make small collages of the textures I have experienced.

By assembling more photographs, I start to choreograph the really focused space.

I am transforming the wallpaper to a more clear form and a movement in space — maybe still as a two dimensional space, but nevertheless a movement in space.

By removing the colour, I can give the textures new meaning as they become something further away from what we normally perceive them to be, or maybe something closer to what really is their possibility or quality as a basis for a choreographic expression.

(Wednesday, 11 April 2018)



Fig.1 Fire Hydrant with rust



Fig.2 Door Molding

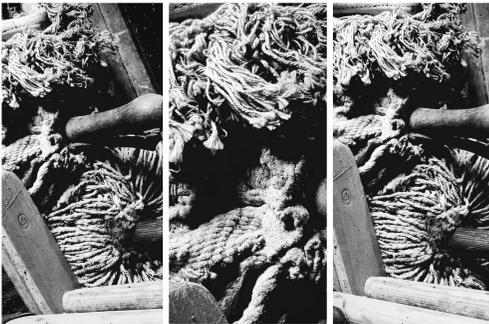


Fig.3 Mop and Cleaning Equipment

Analysis: Impressions

In this log-excerpt, there is less evidence of the problem of embodiment. I seem more interested in translating the ideas to materials outside of myself; thus, there is no mention of embodiment, as described earlier. Instead, the concepts of attention and focus are of interest — bodily concepts, but translated to materiality.

Here is my first articulation of a perceived difficulty in the bridging of theory and practice and the challenge of communicating research on and in art, through and with art, as well as through writing. The fact that I use the term ‘negotiation of meaning’ already provides evidence of the new concepts starting to make meaning to me. Through the lens of my camera, I step outside of my own meaning-making and take on varied perspectives, maybe as metaphors for research.

The discussion at the end of the log-excerpt — where I first state that ‘I start to choreograph the really focused space’ and later ‘their possibility or quality as a basis for a choreographic expression’ — implies a conflict of concepts with regard to what choreography is. The first statement could very well be theoretically founded in the so-called ‘new choreography’ (Cvejić, 2015, p. 13) and the choreography of the non-anthropocene (Ingvartsen, 2016, p. 9). The photographs could be considered to be choreography, while the other considers photography and materiality to be inspiration for movement or the making of a dance, more than posing as choreography in itself. Referring to how I earlier in this essay have described my notion of choreography, as something that has to involve the human body, I am noticing a theoretical conflict within myself, where I, on a written, philosophical and intellectual level have no problem with the notion of a non-anthropocene choreography. However, on an emotional level, and as a dancing body in the world, I struggle with letting go of the domains of dance and choreography to, somehow, give it away to the non-anthropocene. I ascribe this to the before mentioned conflict of modernity and postmodernity in my dance education (Østern, 2017b, p. 5). Therefore, in an attempt to bridge the theory back to the human body in movement, I started dancing.

An ecological approach to dance improvisation

I went for a walk along the shoreline.

Dusk was just about to set in and the light started to become blue. Very few people were out.

I wanted to translate my new knowledge into dance – through improvisation.

While walking, I was searching for ways of documenting the improvisations that I wanted to do, so I chose the space based partly on where I could put my mobile-phone camera.

I was aware of the camera lens as an audience and composed my improvisations spatially based on this — as far as what was possible with the means that were at hand.

With the very close focused photographs from earlier that day at the back of my mind, I was searching for a perspective where the camera would have focus on a close up of the foreground, and with me as a part of the environment in the background.

I chose three different perspectives and also three very different ground textures: sand, stone/pebbles, and a concrete pier.

All the different underlays had their own haptic and auditive qualities.

Before starting the improvisation, I decided to try to make my movement become one with the environmental sound.

‘Sound [...] puts us in the world as no other sense does. It is a distinctly bodily sense that asserts itself with immediacy and urgency.’ (Bresler, 2006a, p. 30)

So I would use the rhythm of the waves, the cries of the seagulls and other sounds as a basis both for the form and texture of my movements.

I wanted to challenge my preconception of how to move in that environment, to adopt a different perspective, maybe a more ecological approach.

How can I become one with the surroundings?

Or go into dialogue with the surroundings on their premise?

What would that be?

So I started my first improvisation in the sand.

Maybe more focused on the softness of the ground than the sound of it, and suddenly noticing that I was being watched by a couple walking their dog.

I said hi to them, trying to normalize what might not be an everyday situation for them, not wanting them to think of me as this weird artist or hippie jumping around on the shoreline.

My experience from earlier site-specific work tells me that going into dialogue, or being open to dialogue —with the people who feel that they have ownership to the place that is being used as a performance space — is a nice way of helping people opening up to an aesthetic experience, that they often appreciate.

But at this moment, I suddenly I become very self-conscious as a person, artist and researcher, I was not prepared for this.

After a short while, I stopped the improvisation in order to change places so that I could reset my mind.

In the next improvisations I felt that I could go into dialogue with the environment to a greater extent and I somewhat managed to incorporate the rhythm and auditivity of the space to my movement and also to research some new movements¹¹.

(Wednesday, 11 April 2018)

¹¹ Link to shared album with the improvisations:
https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipPGmHmk-fDPA_d_fw9N3aeH7umdl3h8cl4G2S3lCXBTsO3csLiERLZLUuir-QlQmQ?key=NGtUQzNFV183TXRzUzhiLW1wYlJlET04xMkNHUkJ3

Analysis: Impressions

This log-excerpt shows a development from the first log-excerpt. In this one, I have begun to make meaning of the new theoretical concepts, such as the use of perspective in research, and the possibility of an ecological ontology, and I am already translating them back into my art form — a translation of written and spoken concepts back into physicality and dance movement.

Østern (2017a), connecting the field of arts-based research to more traditional qualitative research, shows how different parts of an arts-based research process can gain momentum through propellers such as form, meaning, body, and diversity (p. 13). These propellers can provide methodological challenges and destabilisation, but also accelerate the project and give direction (ibid). Here, I observe that my translation of concepts into another art form, the photographs from earlier that day, propelled the translation back into dance. Simultaneously, I began acting more methodically; I chose three different perspectives and three different underlays and, inspired by ecology, set specific rules for my exploration through improvisation in and with the environment. Although the intermission with the ‘audience’ stops the process for a while, or makes me pause for a moment, I manage to reset and use the experience in my continued exploration. When looking at the videos that I made, I realize that my anxiety of losing my artistic identity through going into dialogue with theory (as described in the introduction) was pointless. I still move within my aesthetic frame of reference, at least it looks like me moving. The only difference was the reason for going into the movement in the first place — why, and in relation to what I moved — and that I could have given an audience a theoretical framework for the performance through either verbal or written interaction. I do not have to lose myself by going into a dialogue with academia.

Discussion

The three log-excerpts are poetic and only semi-structured representations of my process that, even if they are naïve, reveal a part of my journey as a budding researcher. The going back and forth between concepts, negotiation and renegotiation of modalities that are eventually presented both as linguistic poetic text, articulated through movement (see video), and discussed academically here in this essay, indicate an arts-based research process that was enjoyable. However, the intermission at the arts-based research seminar was short. How could I continue the momentum that was gained in that situation, away from home, going back to everyday life, and juggling all the demands of professional and private life without going crazy?

I will begin by attempting to articulate the process that I followed during the week of the arts-based research seminar. Then, I will show how I attempted to apply this process to the work of writing and rewriting this essay, and discuss from a phenomenological standing what felt expedient and what did not. Ultimately, I will provide how this process has affected the understanding of my artistic work.

From the three log-excerpts, I read the following process or algorithm — going into academic writing in an embodied and ecological manner that also relates to my artistic practice:

1. Encountering theory through literature and in the classroom.
2. Physical exercise — running.
3. Arts-based encounter of theory through different media and translation of theories to photography.
4. Inspiration and meaning-making through the environment and the site.

5. Connection to earlier experience in artistic practice of site-specific dance work in nature.
6. Reconnection to theory through artistic practice: the back-translation and embodiment of theory through improvisation.

The inspiration and connection to earlier work that I experienced came as a result of the process described in points 1-3. Through the negotiation of meaning across the different fields of knowledge described in literature, encountered as art in the artist's house that we visited, and in the embodied experience of running, I saw a connection to my work as a choreographer and found a way into the theory through something that was known to me. However, the sequence described above (points 1-6) was utterly dependant on the exact events that occurred at the arts-based research seminar. Could I apply it as a universal process? Back home, when I was writing the first draft of this essay, I fell into old ways of being, where I forgot to include movement and physical exploration to my process of reading and writing. Assessing the written result, I see an echo of this — the writing was unclear and stumbling.

While rewriting in October 2018, I wanted to revisit the process from the arts-based research seminar. This time I became stranded in theories on ecologies and went deep into readings concerning this as well as phenomenology. I wanted to know everything about everything and failed to keep focus on one thing. However, this is a part of the process where the research questions emerged from the writing.

Using camping outdoors as a mode of 'getting out of the head' and into the environment, I brought the literature outside in order to read in nature (connecting point 2 and 5). I also attempted to do eco-improvisations as I did at the site of the arts-based research seminar (point 6); in order to embody the theoretical concepts, such as theories of eco-phenomenology (Brown & Toadvine, 2003). I entered into the dance improvisations expecting an epiphany, a sudden theoretical insight, without any results, perhaps due to the reason that I did not give it enough time, that I gave

up too early. The dance felt fake and did not come from a place of inspiration within me. I just went through the procedure. I felt disembodied in my reading and relation to theory. In the writing process, I had a feeling of being a brain with two hands and a behind (that I was sitting on) that was being physically drawn into the computer screen. This feeling made me question my entire hypothesis that there was a way for me to make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice. The research process was laborious and exhausting (Østern, 2017a, p.18), and I lost myself and my feeling of embodied connection to the theory and, thus, inspiration from theory.

Currently, I am re-writing this essay for the second time and I might have found a middle ground. I looked at what had been productive in the week at the arts-based research seminar, and attempted to formulate the points that are described above, and to follow them.

This time it was easier to read and go into new literature (perhaps because I am more used to the academic language of different fields of knowledge), and because the reading was easier, there was more time for structuring thoughts on paper. Relating to points 4-6, I employed an embodied approach to the paper itself. As a dancer, that was one, essential, way of connecting to the writing. I need to physically be part of the writing process. This implies that I have to use real paper to structure my thoughts by drawing and coding through colouring and lying on the floor, using my whole body, instead of sitting on a chair in front of a computer. For me, this created a bridge to my physical being and embodiment as a dancer.

Looking back at the different theories of embodiment presented earlier in this essay, my experiences connect to both the more scientific explanations of embodied learning of abstract concepts and meaning-making (such as Clement et al., 2018, or Kornpetpanee and Job, 2017) as well as the inclusive, more phenomenological

explanations provided by, amongst others, Johnson (2015), Shusterman, (2000) and Varela et al. (1991).

I find that physical exercise (point 2) and being in nature with no particular goal is imperative to have time to understand abstract concepts and to let the mind float. In a busy life, the physical exercise part of the process could just be walking around the block a couple of times. My experience was that walking to work (a thirteen-minute walk) in the morning gave me valuable time to formulate questions or see connections regarding the literature that I had read the night before. This, in a way, became an embodied form of writing, seeing that I sometimes had to stop every ten meters because I needed to write something down.

Perhaps, being a novice in the field of academic writing, this process and feeling of failure in and alienation from the art form is something that is necessary. However, I believe that it would have been possible, with early and continued mentoring, to have had a more constructive process where one could experience a form of artistic connection throughout. In order for this to happen, I believe that artists or artist educators coming from a practice-based background need more tools to translate the knowledge and work processes more easily into the field of research. In a first attempt at translating arts-based research into writing, one needs time for the reflexive process to happen as a circular abductive process over time. Also, some sort of catalyst, such as a seminar, could be productive. I believe that this could lead to more assertiveness when ‘coming out’ as an arts-based researcher who conveys results through writing.

I have not yet managed to make my writing an integrated part of my artistic practice; temporarily this process serves more as an inspiration to the practice than a part of the practice itself. The research, however, provided me with theories that were highly relevant to my artistic practice — particularly within the field of eco-phenomenology which gave me the words to contextualize previous artistic practice, and effectively, future practices.

Through writing and reading academic literature, I experience performances (as an audience) in a different way, and I enter into my own artistic process in a more critical, but also more open, way. The anxiety that I experienced concerning losing the immediate and embodied impact of a performance or work of art, through applying theoretical concepts or philosophy to the work, is completely gone. I realise that the processes or discourses can be simultaneous and feed off of each other. The work of art can still remain the work of art even if I now have the tools to discuss the work academically. There is a choice of simply entering the phenomenological experience of the work. The value of the art in itself is still there, even if it is discussed critically in another forum or through another medium. Therefore, I can say that I gained a better understanding of my artistic practice through the attempt at writing academically.

Conclusion

Is there a way to make academic writing an embodied ecological and artistic practice? Can the artistic practice be better understood through academic writing?

In this essay, I have provided insight into the process of a novice arts-based researcher and the struggles with making meaning of going into the process of academic writing. I showed how embodiment of thought through movement and dance can be important for the bridging of artistic practice to a theoretical field. In addition the result shows how a '[p]rolonged engagement and immersion in both fieldwork and analysis, allows us [the researchers] to 'move closer' [...]' (Bresler, 2006b, p. 56) to the object being researched and thus to take the ideas to the next level (Bresler, 2006b, p. 56).

Through dance improvisation, I have made sense of myself as related to a broader world (Fraleigh, 2017, p. 249) and have experienced an understanding of how eco-phenomenology (Brown & Toadvine, 2003) can connect to the manner in which I

relate to knowledge and how it is possible to communicate that knowledge through academic writing and through an artistic practice. Tsouvala & Magos (2016), working with movement improvisations with students who came from other fields than dance, found that:

[Working with movement] as a reflective and critical practice [...] provided them with new ideas about the body-self and the world that is the basis of our entire intellectual understanding and knowing. (p. 38)

This can perhaps show how the going back and forth between the domains of embodiment (any movement practice) with literature (theory), and writing, can be fruitful going both ways, not only for dancers going into academia.

Can my process be relevant to other artist-researchers? Do others encounter similar challenges? In her paper entitled *Embodied Making, Creative Cognition and Memory*, Gulliksen (2016) included pictures of woodwork, her artistic medium, that she created while writing the paper. Although she does not explicitly discuss the importance of her creation process while writing, her selected texts and photographs appear to indicate that it is important for her to maintain the connection to her art form while academically discussing parts of the embodied making process in writing. This relates to my experience, as a dancer, attempting to keep contact with the art form while writing.

In the doctorate thesis *EXPANDED CHOREOGRAPHY: Shifting the Agency of Movement in the Artificial Nature Project and 69 Positions* by Ingvarsten (2016), the written theorization is even more closely related to the artistic practice and research, and it seems to have been a simultaneous process, at least in parts of the project. Fiksdal (2019) articulates this process more explicitly in her doctoral thesis *Affective Choreographies*. Inspired by political theorist Jane Bennett she (Fiksdal) describes how all aspects of her life — such as hours of sleep, cups of coffee, books read, or the nature of the work space — participate in the creation of *thought-*

movement and *movement-thought* (Fiksdal, 2019, p.25). However, she does not go into detail regarding exactly how this interrelation of the *thought-movement* and *movement-thought* works as a method for connecting academic writing to artistic research and practices, only that there is a connection. Her main concern is describing her artistic findings and the concept of affective choreography, not the process of theorizing in itself.

Similarly, Vist (2016), in her article *Arts-based research processes in ECEC: examples from preparing and conducting a data collection*, discusses how her research and writing process interacts with the practice of her art and creates a ‘[...]rhizomatic in-between, a type of back and forth process between the art medium and the verbal language’ (p. 6). Nevertheless, there is no explicit method or algorithm for how one could cater to this back-and-forth between the practice of the art, research and writing that I can find in any of my sources. The abductive approach described by, amongst others, Østern (2017a, p. 19) merely refers to a non-linear research process. In this essay I have reflected on my own research and writing process in terms of connection to my art form, and through the process a need for a more explicit method has manifested itself.

Academic writing, as all art forms, needs the practicing of certain analytical and reflective skills, that can only be acquired through repetition and intensive exchange of ideas. Or, as Manning and Massumi (2014) put it, finding ‘[...] a technique [that] involves activating a passage between creative forces’ (p. 94). In the discussion above, I propose one technique or algorithm for this that connects with the artistic practice. Below I have attempted generalize the algorithm to fit other artist researchers:

1. Encountering theory through literature or a mentor or peer.
2. Physical exercise—any preferred exercise, such as, running, yoga, hiking or skiing.

3. Arts-based encounter of theory through different artistic expressions or media, and translation of theories to an artistic expression, close to, or in opposition to the artists own expression.
4. Inspiration and meaning-making through the environment and the site or consulting an alternative site.
5. Connection of theory to earlier experience in artistic practice.
6. Reconnection to theory through artistic practice: a back-translation and embodiment of theory through the artistic practice.

Depending on what practice the researcher comes from this can be applied as a process where different modes of inspiration are added, connecting the practicing of the art form to the written material, and vice versa. I see this as a circular and repetitive process (an abductive approach), where it could be equally fruitful to jump back and forth between the different points as to apply the points as a set sequence. The writing process can be a continuous practice that happens simultaneously with the six points. The process needs refinement, further research and testing in various settings in order to investigate its relevance for other artist-researchers. Nevertheless, I believe it could be a viable starting point for artists or researchers who need the inspiration to embark on a academic journey or approach a project from a different angle.

In addition, I find that time is an important factor in finding a way to make academic writing an embodied, ecological, and artistic practice and in making academic writing important in understanding an artistic practice. I propose that A/r/tographer (or artist-researcher) residencies could be developed with this in mind, drawing from experiences with artist residencies. As Lehman (2017) puts it, an artist residency provides the artist ‘[...]a time where the artist can reflect, conduct research, and investigate new works or means of production’ (p. 9). As I experienced at the arts-based research seminar it can be fruitful to spend time away from home in a

different environment (Lehman, 2017, p.9). Possibly being particularly important when entering into a new practice, such as an artist initiating an academic writing practice or process.

For novice artist researchers, it would be valuable to be able to enter into curated encounters with researchers, and artists from their own, or other, fields in order to facilitate an exchange of practices, to teach artists how to practice research that is viable (Østern, 2017a, p. 12). Also, to inspire the use of alternative methods both in the research, and in the written account of the research, and the artistic practice. These encounters would have to include writing academically as a subject of exchange in order to emancipate the artists in academia. This might be particularly important for artists coming from silent art forms, such as dance, where the academisation has happened recently (Cvejic, 2015, p.7).

As mentioned in the introduction, projects that promote dialogue and inspiration among artists and researchers, artists and academics, or artists and scientists are fairly common (See for example Bentsman et al. 2016; Manning and Massumi, 2014; Lehman, 2017). However, it seems that everyone involved in those projects participate on their own terms, which implies that if I were to participate as a dancer, I would bring movement as my main mode of communication. The discussions between the different groups might involve verbalization of concepts, maybe even in some form of written material, but, the way I interpret it in the mentioned papers, the artists are not encouraged to engage in academic writing or dissemination of research that shows methodological reflexivity, theory, transparency and critique (Østern, 2017a, p. 12).

In order to inspire more artists (and especially dancers and choreographers) to present their research in written form (academic writing) I propose that future artist, researcher collaborations should also include mentoring on academic writing for the artists. Despite the enlightenment in philosophy of dance over the last 20 or 30 years

(Cvejić, 2015) and, therefore, an increase in research about and through dance, artist practitioners are not equipped with sufficient knowledge when going into research (Roar, 2016, pp. 314-15), particularly when writing academically or otherwise conveying research to a broader field of knowledge. Borgdorff (2012), states:

‘Research’ is ‘owned’ by science; it is performed by people who have mastered ‘the scientific method’, in institutions dedicated to the systematic accumulation of knowledge [...] (p. 159).

As a practitioner, I want to master the scientific method but I lack the confidence, knowledge, and practice to do so. Through the writing of this essay, I have gained more confidence, but it has been a strenuous and all-encompassing process (Østern, 2017a, p. 18) with a substantial amount of perceived failure on the way. Although, perhaps an all-encompassing, and challenging process is necessary in order to profoundly understand any new field of practice? However, in order to be able to complete the task, and not give up on the way, it is invaluable with mentoring and being part of an artistic, and a research community that provides constructive feedback at various stages of the writing, and research process.

I believe that there is room for more research in the field of bridging the gap for artists going into research and academic writing. Artists, researchers, and facilitators (such as institutions) need to find methods of translation from existing academic and artistic theory, terminology, and practice in order to emancipate the artists who embark on a research process with the goal of dissemination in written form. Possibly, this also aid the creation of new methods that relate to the way individual artists interact with their work.

Finally, I propose research on how one can include an academic style of thinking and writing into the lower levels of higher art education (Bachelor programmes or even vocational training) to a greater extent than it is done today (in Norway) (Roar, 2016, p.310). Throughout the writing of this essay, I have taught my regular classes at

MTHS in jazz dance and composition. I have contemplated how theory and an academic mindset can be included in the dance pedagogy — in the manner in which exercises are articulated, how discussions in class are initiated, or how written material or academic literature is included in movement classes. Going further with this could be a possible future research project.

I have emerged from this writing process inspired (for further research and artistic projects), more knowledgeable, and with more questions that need answering regarding my field of practice and how I relate to research in general. Moreover, I have come to enjoy writing as a form of reflection and I am on my way to understand the academic style of writing as well. As Eisner (1991) eloquently expresses,

As almost all academics know, writing forces you to reflect in an organized and focused way on what it is you want to say. Words written confront you and give you the opportunity to think again. Thinking on its own, without the commitment that writing extracts, makes tolerable — even pleasurable — the flashing thought, the elusive image. (p. 11)

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About the Authors

Signe Alexandra Domogalla is associate professor in dance at the Norwegian College of Musical Theatre under the School of Art, Design, and Media at Kristiania University College. She holds a bachelor degree in dance with dance pedagogy as well as a masters degree in choreography from Oslo National College of the Arts. She is a performing artist both in contemporary dance and musical theatre. As a choreographer she primarily has worked with her own project based dance company. Since 2013 she has been a part of the development of the first Norwegian bachelor program in musical theatre where she teaches both dance, entrepreneurship and other interdisciplinary subjects. Her primary research interest is interdisciplinarity within the performing arts, particularly the coupling of dance/movement with speech and multimodal improvisations as performance.