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The meshwork of teaching against the grain: embodiment, affect and art in management education

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a reflexive ethnographic account to problematize conventional approaches to academic teaching that focus purely on rational, disembodied, and linear production and consumption of knowledge, in neoliberal, metric-driven academic environments. Interweaving diary notes and reflexive dialogical exchanges with images of arts-based teaching, we discuss how we might engage both students and teachers in embodied and relational forms of learning and knowing grounded in experiences of unknowing and unlearning. We discuss the potentials of exposing in the classroom the messy, 'dirty', dreamy, sensuous, embodied, affective and artistic work that informs *teaching differently* to disrupt conventional Business School pedagogies. Engaging with such creative possibilities might, we suggest, meaningfully transform management education and enable educators to cultivate an epistemic humility that transcends the ego. Therefore, this meshwork of teaching against the grain might also help resist and hopefully reframe contextual constraints and hierarchical dynamics impeding meaningful and relational Business School pedagogies.

Diary-*ing*

I am sitting in front of my computer with warm tea on a cloudy Saturday afternoon. I am a bit moody today and the abrupt temperature drop does not help cheer me up. Nevertheless, I feel inspired thinking of the virtual workshop that I was invited to mediate on embodied writing as a collaborative practice including the experience of writing and publishing embodied pieces as an early career female academic. I love the topic and feel that I have enough to share. I am anxious to find a way to engage the audience. I wish I could see the people, touch them, feel their bodies moving in the room and bring materials to work through creative exercises. Will we still be able to 'reach' each other through the screen? Yet, the virtual environment might be an opportunity to awaken senses differently. I also think of the chance to develop a class from scratch, without having to follow the 'sanitized' content and format that I am usually expected to teach in the Business School. Very fancy models and theories, no doubt; but most of these are based on positivistic approaches, which reject the ambivalences of life, learning and teaching (March 2006), assuming that knowledge is something certain, distanced and bigger than us, to be learned fully and consumed uncritically (Höpfl 1995). I often feel that, as teachers and students, we are expected to leave our affective bodies outside the classroom and disconnect them from the course materials and/or discussion topics. Unfortunately, the Business School discourse, which constructs academics as 'stakeholders' and students as 'clients', who should receive 'homogenous' class experiences

regardless of the very specificities that (can) make any class special, is based on a structurally and contextually bound (Boncori, Sicca, and Bizjak 2020), cost-saving and profit-making capitalist model that promotes individuality, limiting possibilities for relationality in the classroom (Fotaki and Prasad 2015). Academic colleagues are right: in an era where academic environments follow the neoliberal competitive and managerialist mode of performance, based on super-imposed, normative control mechanisms (Sousa, de Nijs, and Hendriks 2010; Izak, Kostera, and Zawadzki 2017), academic work is evaluated against standardized, disembodied market-oriented practices, such as quantitative rankings in relation to research, teaching and service excellence (Hartmann 2019). Beyond the fact that these reflect unrealistic performance requirements and workloads, thus augmenting pressures on academics (Boncori, Sicca, and Bizjak 2020), they also promote a culture of passive consumption of knowledge (Parker 2018), foreclosing possibilities for knowing and learning through creative student-teacher exchanges. I couldn't agree more with Mittelman's argument that (2019, 708, cited in Boncori, Sicca, and Bizjak 2020):

> 'world-class', higher education institutions are shifting away from their core missions of cultivating democratic citizenship, fostering critical thinking, and safeguarding academic freedom … stress[ing] rationalist thinking rather than other modes of reasoning, as in the arts, classical languages, history, and philosophy.

Unfortunately! As educators, we are asked to encourage students to memorize content and apply it unreflexively in 'real life' managerial situations. We educate them to believe that, as professors, we have the 'correct' answers, thus not acquainting them with the ambiguities, contradictions, uncertainty and ignorance, which might be crucial in knowledge creation (Zembylas 2005; March 2006; Kostera 2014). We obsess them with linear evaluation systems, grade thresholds, and metrics that they 'have to' meet to comply with systemic processes, knowing also that our teaching evaluations depend on abstract, quantitative students' scores, finally becoming victims of institutional pressures and discouraging experimentation with content and methods (Rhodes, Wright, and Pullen 2018; Boncori, Sicca, and Bizjak 2020).

The normative way we socialize ourselves as teachers in neoliberal academia reminds me of my PhD experiences, with all the dominant methodological standards that we were expected to follow to provide 'significant contributions to the field', without even knowing why or what we wanted to talk about (Mandalaki 2020). Maybe preparing this workshop could be a creative space for interrogating these topics to identify connections between my research and teaching practices, which I then might be able to transfer to the classroom. As utopic as it might sound, I could experiment with integrating more of my artistic practices in my teaching, as I do in my attempts to write *differently*.

<div align="center">…</div>

> **Noortje:** *Sorry to interrupt your engaging narrative. I am just thinking I am so glad I don't work in a traditional Business School! My department – a School of Governance – focusses on Public Administration and Organization Studies. There are parallels to what you describe. The curriculum is dominated by (post)positivist research, both in numerical and symbolic terms. As teachers, we are expected to act as disembodied authorities, and students are often seen as passive, empty vessels waiting to be 'filled' with pre-defined knowledge. Yet, there is some openness to other ways of knowing, researching and teaching that seem absent from mainstream BS contexts. I believe we need alternative teaching methods to train our students – who will become the future managers, politicians, and CEOs– to become critical thinkers, feelers and do-ers that can enter into ethical relations with others and the (natural) environment. I have been teaching differently for years, using walking, drawing, theatre, music, collage and slow reading to engage students and collaboratively think/work/make sense of organizational processes, dynamics and experiences. I can draw from this to add insight, questions and doubts from the practice of 'teaching differently'.*

Emmanouela: *Oh … I didn't expect you that early. Your experience sounds intriguing! I look forward to drawing inspiration from it!*

<div align="center">…</div>

I know that 'writing differently' might be risky for my early career status given the reproductive power of sanitized academic discourse (Pullen and Rhodes 2008). Yet, I experience this as an act of care for/about me and hopefully others, during the endless hours spent in front of my computer screen. Education, at least etymologically, is meant to be an act of care as well: *edu-care* or according to another reading *educere*.[1] The very etymology of the word implies a process whereby knowledge is not implanted as a fixed given into students' passive minds, but rather students are encouraged to *experience* the 'outside' world to be confronted with the limitations of what (they think) they know and encounter the 'not yet' known (Ingold 2015). Ingold (2015) describes this process as a walk in the maze, whereby arriving is not the objective but rather 'every point is already on the way to somewhere else' (135); such that the walker (student) becomes attentive and sensitive to the surrounding environment, experiencing learning as grounded in embodied experience.

Experimenting with *teaching differently* might offer possibilities to go beyond the standardized teaching format and the general assumption that we should stand as disembodied subjects in front of our various audiences to rather meaningfully care for and about each other through open encounters that confront us with our own epistemic limitations (Zembylas 2005). It might open space for not/un-knowing, uncertainty and critical reflection since this teaching emerges directly from sensuous embodied moments of living and relating with the *other* (Swan 2005; Michels et al. 2020); like it happens in tango (Mandalaki and Perézts 2020), in our dreams (Cixous 1993), or in art making (Taylor and Ladkin 2009; Atkinson 2013; Biehl-Missal 2015), for instance.

As I am reflecting/writing these thoughts down, I come across the special issue call for papers on 'Teaching what is not there'. Brilliant, this is exactly my topic. The call asks questions like: How can we go beyond the sanitized Business School curriculum? How can we integrate arts into Business School education to create spaces of ambivalence, rupturing the view that knowledge can be known from a distance (Berthoin Antal and Strauß 2016)? This greatly resonates with the challenges I currently seek to overcome. I have long been playing with the idea of arts-based teaching also thanks to my arts background, which unavoidably informs my pedagogical approach in class, not necessarily in the *what* aspect, usually assigned a priori, but in the *how* which I adapt to my style to nurture critical exchanges with students. Maybe Audre Lorde (2017) is right that there are no new ideas but only news ways of making them felt, known, knowable and understood.

When we could still teach physically, I was asking students to dance in couples to experience *how* it feels to touch and move with each other, to develop a shared sense of responsibility and inter-corporeal awareness. Couple dance also teaches us the notion of space and the materiality of the sensual body, which we forget and/or hide behind the 'suit' of the professor, the student or the manager (Mandalaki and Perézts 2020) reminding us of the creativity that our bodies and minds are capable of (De Keersmaeker 2020). It teaches us what it means to work for a shared objective while remaining autonomous; this opposes the neoliberal individualistic logic of competing against each other (Painter-Morland 2011), ensuring instead that we can hold each other when we lose our step, participating equally in the collective effort. In tango, we get entangled in a sort of undefined unity: we are 'two in one body' something in-between, neither/or (Barad 2014, 174) in a vertical moment (Helin 2020), where our materiality is immersed in joyous entanglements of spacetimemattering, which we cannot fully explain rationally. And we improvise. This embodied knowledge does not exist a priori; it is re-made constantly in the context of our continuous becomings with other human and non-human subjects, providing a creative resolution to the constant negotiations between order, structure and freedom (Mandalaki 2019). We certainly (need to) know some steps in advance but we don't learn standard sequences of steps to be followed blindly. We create these while moving together and in tune with the music, experiencing learning as a process whereby there is 'no independent corpus of knowledge to be passed on' (Ingold 2015, 136).

My tango teachers describe our dancing bodies as the unheard musical instruments, actively participating in the making of the dance. This requires awakening senses, opening the ears to listen, being attentive to the crescendos and the silences to perform the 'syncopas' and the 'volcadas'

with the rhythm. It is a bodily communication; we need '*to make our bodies available to each other and to the music*' to produce something together, regardless of whether we lead or follow. Couple-dancing is an invitation among equals; It requires intention and sensing of the intention for the dance to be performed. We create sensuous knowledge together with our vulnerable bodies (Swan 2005; Mandalaki and Perézts 2020). My tango partner put it beautifully: '*It is a sensorial demand that leads the dance. We visualize the space around us by feeling it; not even looking at each other's feet*'. I love this idea of '*sensorial demand*'; a demand emerging from the sensing body, not from the disembodied rationality informing traditional Business School pedagogies (Höpfl 1995). One of my tango professors expressed a related view: '*In the western world, we are obsessed with a-priori interpretation and knowledge. But, in tango, we discover things on the way if we are attentive to each other's bodies and the music*'.

Indeed! The western ontological and epistemological paradigm that shapes our broader epistemic 'knowing' habits, which inform what and how we teach (Simon 2003; Zembylas 2005), is built around order and structure, often leading academics to construct rationally produced knowledge as superior to knowledge developed in/through the body (Thanem and Knights 2019). It is challenging to circumvent super-imposed structural constraints to engage with teaching differently, as such attempts are usually considered unaligned with neoliberal academia's managerialistic culture and performance objectives. Yet, I feel that such structural barriers should not stop us from experimenting with creative teaching practices to bring about meaningful change. Following Ilaria Boncori, Sicca, and Bizjak (2020), instead of understanding institutionally-embedded academic constraints merely as tools of top-down control, we might as well use them to disruptively 'challenge inequality and preset standards' (56) through individual and collective forms of resistance manifested also in everyday micro-political, invisible, unplanned but continuous practices (Prasad and Prasad 1998). I agree. Exploring other spaces of knowing, like couple dancing and artistic practices broadly, which make bodies susceptible to the surprises of the (un)learning process and aware of their corporeal vulnerabilities, might help us rethink taken-for-granted assumptions around *what* and *how* we learn and teach to creatively challenge contextual barriers that constrain us. I remember Lorde again (2017): even if our 'oppression' doesn't originate to us, our 'liberation' surely does and we need to start this liberation in the every-day practices we embody.

> **Ely**: *I love what you write about uncertainty, being vulnerable but keen to change and explore, creating dialogical exchanges to challenge the status quo of academic teaching. What you write about dancing makes me think of the importance of trying to deal with or at least being aware of our egos, as teachers. Last week, I was sitting outside, near the port, where I saw some fascinating roller-skaters. I went to buy skates on the spot, naively thinking, 'I might get back home roller-skating'. I spent three hours trying but it was a disaster. Then, I realized that I didn't know how to use the breaks … another disaster! I started watching YouTube tutorials. Despite my excitement, my next trial didn't succeed either. I returned the skates and got reimbursed! I felt disappointed with myself. The first thing that I experienced, was how vulnerable I felt while trying to roll publicly. This feeling of learning new things, a new physical activity, whereby your body can show instantly the skills and confidence you master … kids don't care usually, they try, fall, take risks; own their experience. As a tall, grown-up man, I am easily noticed when roller-skating, losing my balance, and shaking. This reminded me of the feeling of learning something new, feeling helpless, lost and vulnerable and of the importance of practicing for improving.*
>
> **Noortje:** *Indeed, the intellect is not superior to or separate from the body (Thanem and Knights 2019); knowing and learning are also spatial and material practices. In a course called 'Change and the Imagination' that my colleague, Jeroen Vermeulen, and I designed and teach, we focus on 'making' as a way of connecting students' personal interests, with social challenges and academic debates. One of the expected course outputs is*

inspired by Charles Wright Mills' (2000) idea about the sociological imagination and the 'file'. Throughout the course, we ask students to keep a 'file' to track 'personal troubles' and 'public issues'. This resembles a scrapbook that students fill with their dreams and challenges, drawings, conversations, text, images, paintings, newspaper clippings – anything inspiring them (e.g. Images 1 and 2). This way, students are positioned as knowing subjects in relation to social and political issues by engaging with their personal experiences through material realities of newspapers, scissors, glue, pens, fabric, tape and others. What happens is an 'unlearning' process, whereby students are invited to address their life experiences and ideas as constitutive of education. They ask questions, become active, confused, collaborative and creative knowledge makers, instead of passive knowledge consumers. It resonates with the idea of 'research-as-craft' (Bell and Willmott 2020). As E describes, this learning process is often marked by discomfort, clumsiness and doubt, both for student-learners and teacher-learners since it actually requires unlearning taken-for-granted assumptions and learning anew. For many students, the course presents new, meaningful ways of thinking and doing in their studies and social life. For others, it feels irrelevant. In student evaluations, comments range from 'This was the best course I ever had. Every MA student should take this course' and 'Very special course that has taught me to think differently about academic work, creativity and life' to 'The course took too long'. and 'I would have preferred a thematic module'.

Emmanouela: *Much of what you share resonates with my tango experience, in which un/learning is guided through embodied relationality and affective engagement. It figures prominently in the 'file' I keep after every class, some of which I expose here ☺*

…

It is very informative how my tango teachers answer our questions; their movements escape words to complete the unsaid parts of the knowledge we create. It makes me reflect on my teaching practices, usually informed by habitual patterns of interpreting and knowing everything a priori (Ahmed 2000). Learning relationally through our active embodied dancing presences, promotes collective reflexivity, whereby we ask questions; we unsettle 'one-fits all' approaches and learn anew by doing things, co-creating knowledge through our collective embodied becoming (Calás et al. 2021). This relational un/learning process also disrupts the idea of the teacher who is/has absolute authority. When my tango teachers explain a step, they invite us to dance with them, often doubting about their steps and starting again, giving us an active presence in the learning process. We all

Image 1. Students' 'scrapbooks'.

Image 2. Students' 'scrapbooks'.

stand and look each other straight in the eyes, embrace how vulnerable our bodies can become and respect each other. This contrasts with the university classroom, where the spatial arrangements usually demand students to sit with their backs to each other while professors stand in front of them, implicitly reinforcing dominant power structures.

The embodied learning my tango teachers demonstrate rather resonates with what Zembylas (2005) calls a *pedagogy of unknowing,* founded on attentiveness, sensibility, awareness of vulnerability and responsiveness. When we dance, we listen to each other and develop new ways of knowing grounded on the *experience* of our vulnerable bodies, not on constructions of ourselves as 'knowers' based on totalizing categorizations of the process and the other as 'known beings' (Simon 2003). We rather let the *other* 'enter in' (Todd, 2003). This leads us to unsettle our epistemological commitments to knowledge and question our egos to experience rather the ethical potentials of relationality and humility in acknowledging the impossibility to know 'everything' a priori (Zembylas 2005). I wonder, can't we get inspiration from such embodied 'unlearning' experiences to resist the contextual constraints that conventionalize *what* and *how* we teach in neoliberal academia? This could eventually re-center Business School pedagogy towards dialogical critical reflection in student-teacher exchanges (Calås et al. 2021; Michels et al., 2020).

OK! It is past time and I'm exhausted. I think I'll dream of dancing tonight …

A few days later

Rainy Tuesday morning. I have a skype call with the colleague that invited me to mediate the aforementioned workshop to exchange ideas on the content and approach. I feel nervous, not knowing what to talk about, trying to 'order' my messy mind. I share with her my tango experience and the parallels I identify with research and teaching. We share perspectives on research practices inspired by the senses and art-making and seem to resonate on the need to engage more of these into our teaching. A critical moment was when she said that the idea for this workshop started with a dream. Amazing and so resonant! Will she believe me if I tell her that I also have very vivid 'academic' dreams? I often see Editors and Reviewers 'punishing' me or congratulating me. Other times, I appear in scenes exchanging with students, friends and co-authors; this enables me to find the words and/or meanings that escape me when I am awake. My dreams are often unsettling but

they hold some 'truths'. I am currently reading Hélène Cixous (1993) book, *Three steps on the ladder of writing,* where she discusses connections between dreaming, writing and knowing, explaining what we can learn from our dreams: all of the unconscious, tacit, levitating, unfinished, embodied knowledge (Helin 2019b) that disrupts binaries and that can transform conventional learning patterns. She explains that in our dreams our unconscious leads us with its own language, which takes different, fluid forms, opening possibilities for questioning what we 'think' we knew and learn it differently. Recently, I also read Jenny Helin's (2020) piece about rupturing the horizontal notion of time. I discuss this piece with my colleague too; this vertical moment of immersion where magic happens, like in our dreams (Cixous 1993); when we don't know 'how long' the experience lasted. It is an exploration of one's depths beneath the ground, where conventional time, space or power dynamics are renegotiated and overturned (Helin 2020).

I consider integrating the idea of dream-writing/learning (Cixous 1993; Helin 2019b) in the workshop. But, then how can I connect this with my tango experience? What a messy meshwork am I in! But isn't this what life is all about? An intertwining of material and immaterial, human and non-human elements, whereby 'everything tangles with everything else'; Ingold (2015, 3) has put it so poignantly! A smile smothers my face. I remember Cixous (1993), again. She explains how our topics often surprise us, choosing us more than we do. I cannot put this unsettling feeling into words, but this is part of this embodied relational process that confronts me with the impossibilities of knowing, and I enjoy it so much!

…

> **Noortje:** When we describe the 'file' as a place where students can reflect on their dreams, some stare at us in disbelief. You see them think 'How do my dreams relate to my studies?' We try to emphasize the idea that 'personal troubles' inform and connect with 'public issues' (Mills 2000). I see this as feminist research/practice/pedagogy (e.g. Ahmed 2016).

> **Emmanouela:** The more unsettling the better, I think! It challenges standardized learning patterns.

…

As I am writing, I wonder what I am going do with this account. Maybe nothing; this is not the objective either. This process is about embracing the 'dirtiness' and uncertainties academic work entails (Höpfl 2007; Pullen and Rhodes 2008). This is what I wish academic teaching could be: a collaborative embodied practice understood *as-production,* not only for-production (Clarke, Corlett, and Gilmore 2020; Mandalaki and Daou 2020), where moments of non-teaching matter and inform student-teacher exchanges.

Teaching transcends a performance enacted in front of an audience. It is not only about what happens in class, but also about what happens before: the embodied *dirty work* of non-teaching, traditionally seen as contaminant to normative thinking and learning traditions (Cixous 1993; Höpfl 2007). By rendering this dirtiness invisible, we lose the senses and with these, 'all the small and great secrets of joy' that can transform our academic practices (Cixous 1993, 120). It is in these *dirty* processes, where ideas are nurtured, reflected upon and interrogated through life events that enliven our contents, inform our methods and interpretations thanks to everyone that inspires our approaches, including the readings that we do (Pullen and Rhodes 2008). Can't we bring these in the classroom to enable reflexivity and critically engage students in collective and active knowledge creation that disrupts the 'sanitizing' tendencies of 'pure' normative pedagogies?

…

> **Noortje:** The dirty work of (non)teaching also involves creating a safe learning environment where we can play, enjoy ourselves and experience productive discomfort together, I think. In the aforementioned course, connection and collaboration between students and teachers are essential. The course culminates in an exhibition where students present their work and reflect on how it was inspired by personal experiences, ideas, dreams, social issues and academic debates. One student performed a 'secular

sermon' to reflect on religion and identity using music, spoken word and imagery. Another student made black pudding from superfluous pigs' blood to problematize the wasteful use, of particular animal parts for human consumption (Images 3 and 4). The group was invited to taste and smell the pudding, without knowing what it was. After, we reflected on cooking, eating and sustainability. Another student presented a black sheet with a hole in it. The black hole in space was just discovered; the student explained how it was symbolic for the situation she faced with her terminally ill brother. She made us all step through the hole and reflect about uncertainty, strength and social support. As you might imagine, this exhibition was enabled by trust, relationality and collectivity within the group and consolidated these, while also raising questions about boundaries. If you ask students to meaningfully engage their personal troubles, how do you ethically navigate the uneven hierarchy? Isn't grading in this setting a violation? How do you ethically turn the collective conversation into an individual grade? Where does productive discomfort turn into an unsafe learning experience? As professors, we discussed these things amongst ourselves and with students. We were adamant about the need to engage as learners too, by making, exposing and presenting assignments and artworks ourselves. My point is: to facilitate and partake in this kind of supportive learning community, teacher-learners need to reciprocate the vulnerability of student-learners.

Ely: *My first reaction to one artwork, during students' final presentations, in the art school, was intense questioning many of the student's decisions. For some reason, I felt offended for what I perceived as lack of honesty or the 'non-seriousness' of the work. Later, the director's comment opened my mind: 'We don't want to scare him; it is his first artistic presentation ever'! I had totally forgotten that. I was still isolated in my own world, not socializing for a longtime now. I was focusing on the essence of the work but not on the person who is, indeed, central here! Later, I had an evaluation meeting with him and apologized for the public criticism. We had an interesting discussion; he agreed with some of the comments and saw what was missing. Our dialogue functioned as a trust-building process between us. What I am trying to say is that, as a new tutor I feel vulnerable too, like the students who try to integrate, create connections and develop their art. I feel I am learning too; how to engage with a subject that is my whole life, Art, with interested students who start exploring its (im)possibilities.*

Emmanouela: *This is tricky. I am not sure how we could grade such assignments, in 'metricized' academia.*

…

Image 3. Students' artworks.

Image 4. Students' artworks.

When I went to sleep that night, I entered a dream without transition (Cixous 1993) –true story- where I met some of my colleagues. I could recognize their faces and 'touch' them (what a dream during a pandemic!). We discussed research, teaching, our dreams, artistic interrogations, the affects, vulnerabilities and insecurities surrounding our academic work, the need to question taken for granted academic assumptions that promote social and epistemic injustice and hierarchies. We talked fearlessly and said things we usually would not dare to. Cixous (1993) explains how in our dreams 'we possess, the unknown secrets', saying things that are 'never said' (85) to 'restore these moments when we are greatest … in strength and in weakness – when we are magic' (ibid, 90) disrupting normative understandings of what knowledge is and how it is created. In my dream, we were just e-n-o-u-g-h, without much justification and we accepted each other's differences, beyond metrics speaking of/for us. I don't know how long it lasted; this is one of these experiences where you feel so immersed, as if pulled by a creative force that ruptures normative expectations of time and order (Meldgaard-Kjaer and van Amsterdam 2020). I don't know how to interpret it, but should I? Maybe Cixous is right: 'the dream's enemy is interpretation' (1993, 107). Isn't interpretation the enemy of our pedagogical approaches too?

What a beautiful mess! Good luck putting things in order to work through the development of a 'proper structure' for my presentation. But is 'order' the objective, really, especially for a workshop on embodied writing, which in itself resists this idea of linearity, finality and structure (Höpfl 2007; Ericsson and Kostera 2020)? I send the document to a friend and colleague, who is engaging with arts-based teaching to ask for her view. I am anxious to see what she thinks.

…

Noortje: *Hahaha, I have already been writing myself into your narrative! This reminds me to practice slowness more. Sometimes, I am too eager to create connection. This also links into your ideas about time, because linear time and chrononormativity are intertwined with and informed by capitalist ideas about productivity (Freeman 2010), subjecting academic outputs to strict time-management practices deeply unaligned with the*

very unquantifiable nature of academic work (Anderson 2006; Boncori, Sicca, and Bizjak 2020). Yet, I feel good when I write, when I publish, when my metrics accumulate (although I hesitate to admit it). This marks my value in neoliberal academia, doesn't it? Do we expect students to learn in a linear, capitalist-inspired way too? What would non-linear learning look like? And wouldn't we need a different way to assess it?

Emmanouela: *Hahaha … You remind me to practice slowness too. Thinking of your point on non-linearity, I wonder whether our messy exchange makes any 'logical' sense. Yet, what we do here profoundly resonates with me, as a reflexive encounter shaking taken-for-granted assumptions and positioning learning as an accomplishment of collective becoming (Calås et al. 2021). Can't we do something similar in the classroom?*

<p style="text-align:center">…</p>

A few days later

I come back to this document and feel perplexed by its messiness. I make a cup of tea and go on Facebook to distract myself. I stumble on an artistic performance created by my artist friend, Ely: "Hide To Seek…An August In Homesession". He is hidden behind objects in front of an unaware, passer-by audience that he is also unaware of, since he is hidden. I watch for a while to feel how I feel, exploring various dynamics playing out in the scene. I am also part of the audience but behind the camera, as I can see the artist and the passer-by audience – I observe the documented version, not the 'live' one. Thus, the performance has a triple face: one for the unaware audience, one for the audience that sees the documentation and one for the (unaware) artist standing in the middle. People passing by usually don't stop, but for the audience behind the camera the piece is taking a different dimension. It is stimulating how visible and invisible bodies, objects, matter, space and time intermingle, and how this awakens curiosity for understanding 'what is not there', 'who is not there' (Images 5 and 6). There is silence. The artist is there but 'he is not', there is a kind of structure for how to look at it, but it is implicit. How does this link to my current concern of developing this workshop and, more broadly, to the need for integrating artistic, sensuous approaches in academic teaching to involve 'what is not there'? What is hidden that we don't talk about but seek to find in the Business School classroom? And (how) does this link to my tango experience, dreams and inspiring encounters with colleagues?

<p style="text-align:center">…</p>

Noortje: *I worry about how to teach 'Change and the Imagination' this year. How can we collectively engage in 'making' online? What kind of a learning context can we provide, if we cannot physically engage with each other and materials? Your description of the artistic performance makes me think about the university classroom as a normative space, with students sitting and teachers standing in front. This implies a particular top-down pedagogy, i.e. students as passive consumers and teachers as active authorities that transmit knowledge. During the aforementioned course, we trade the university building for the nearby art school for a day to explore creativity as a practice of undergoing without beginning or end and without a particular product in mind (Ingold 2014). In fact, we experience learning through 'unlearning': destroying materials, unmaking things and building something new from the ruins (Images 7 and 8). The images reflect the importance of affective and sensuous relationality between bodies – student bodies, our (teacher) bodies, bodies of objects (Michels et al. 2020). Art school students join this meshwork of bodies, spaces and academic readings. We exchange what these processes teach us about ourselves, the world, creativity, change and imagination. We need to seriously rethink our course if we go online.*

<p>…</p>

Image 5. Artistic performance.

Should I appear on the screen or hide during the online workshop? Maybe play with silences and sounds or show a recording of myself? Or maybe project this performance and invite the participants to write the senses evoked in them. Involving the body when we teach is about awakening and recognizing the senses, bringing to the surface what we usually hide and silence in masculine academia (van Amsterdam 2020) and giving the means to uncover deeply buried truths and expose embodied selves differently in front of our various audiences, like this performance. Likewise, we

Image 6. Artistic performance.

Image 7. Creative teaching encounters in the art-school.

are not alone when we teach, we are with all these other bodies (including invisible ones behind the screen), which are necessary for engaging in collective reflection that enables learning (Calås et al. 2021). Isn't this artistic process and the questioning that it evokes eye-opening for going beyond the

Image 8. Creative teaching encounters in the art-school.

totality of knowledge (Berthoin-Antal 2013)? I wonder what E thinks. His tutoring experience, in the art school, might provide some inspiration.

…

> **Ely:** *I think there is a difference between teacher and tutor. Unlike teaching, which is often based on 'facts', in tutoring, there is no right or wrong but mainly guidance as part of each individual's investigative process. And maybe here is the 'how' that comes forward. Personally, as a tutor, I feel that the challenge is to introduce the infinite ways to see Art and art practice: the liberty and freedom that an artist needs (within themselves, ideas and pieces) for pushing ideas, asking questions, and reducing self-obstacles. This is an everyday struggle for artists. Maybe we need to remind ourselves that teachers are also students, trying, failing, unlearning and learning from it differently; to remove the ego, and the idea of the teacher authority who is 'never wrong'. Even writing these thoughts, I feel I am learning about myself. Maybe these reflections do not make sense or maybe they do. You know, sometimes thoughts contradict each other. It might be uncomfortable but it enables accessing learning and knowing differently.*

> **Emmanouela:** *What you describe reminds me of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's (1994, 176) quote: 'Art undoes the triple organization of perceptions, affections, and opinions in order to substitute a monument composed of percepts, affects and blocs of sensations'. Also, thinking of your comment on the messiness of the text, while reading again, with all of your feedback/ideas/experiences/responses now integrated, I couldn't resist and replied to most of these, knowing that this might make the text even messier. I thought of maybe changing some of the initial text to propose a 'logical' flow for the reader. But, I all the more resist this idea as we engage deeper in this process together and share this desire for doing things differently, as a way also of hopefully engaging our audiences differently. Maybe we could reflect on our collective process together in a sort of 'discussion' section?*

…

Reflecting on the process

We are three friends and colleagues working in different national and educational contexts. Yet in our exchange, we realized that we shared several underlying common questions, not only related to *what* we teach but crucially to *how* we teach. We decided to write this piece, as a reflection on our experiences, to stress the dirty, vulnerable, dreamy, artistic, collaborative and (un)conscious background processes that take place before teaching, and which usually remain hidden behind disembodied and affectively distanced contents and student-teacher exchanges in structurally-bound neoliberal academic contexts (Boncori, Sicca, and Bizjak 2020). Emphasizing and valuing the messiness of teaching preparation, we call for understanding this as an indispensable part of teaching itself; teaching not only *for-production* but also *as-production*. We contemplated the structure of this text given how 'undisciplined' such a non-linear account, or maybe 'non-disciplinary' (i.e. questioning the existence of clearly identifiable boundaries between disciplinary territories in knowledge development), as one of the reviewers appositely suggested, might appear vis-a-vis the structure of publishable academic texts. Yet, we agreed that exposing our messy, vulnerable, embodied truths, was the only way to do justice to how we deal with teaching challenges in our respective disciplines and our research interrogation around this (Ericsson and Kostera 2020). Produced in the context of a mutually responsive, 'ongoing, multivoiced and multimeaning process' (Cunliffe 2002, 131), our methodological approach might thus resemble a 'reflexive' ethnographic one (Cunliffe 2008), whereby the research topic, outcome and writing construct knowledge as inherently relational, embodied and dialogical (Helin 2019a). By presenting this dirty account (Pullen and Rhodes 2008), we thus call for the need

to *teach differently* by exposing the *dirty* 'whats' and 'hows' of teaching that remain invisible, as this special issue calls for. This is needed, we believe, because the Business School context reproduces a problematic capitalist ideology – focusing on clientelism, profit, metrics and individualization – that has led to worldwide environmental crises and ethical misconduct of businesses and leaders. Because Business Schools train students who will become future managers, businessmen and -women, politicians and CEOs, this context, we suggest, also provides the possibility to disrupt these destructive neoliberal tendencies. It reminds us of our ethical responsibilities, as educators, to teach our students differently by embracing uncertainty and unknowing so that they are enabled to think, feel and act critically in resistance to dominant ways of working (Zembylas 2005).

We draw inspiration from each other and the surprises of life, including our dreams, collaborative exchanges, or artistic practices; all that is considered 'impure' and thus rendered invisible in 'classical' teaching traditions (Cixous 1993). We recognize how these *dirty* aspects bring us to terms with our limitations making us question taken for granted assumptions. We share our concerns and inquietudes, exchange views and ask questions to which we might receive other questions as answers. We learn from each other's pedagogical approaches and from life events, as our dancing, artistic practices, trials, failures, and dreams turn us into students multiple times before we teach a class. This brings us to experience the impossibility of knowing everything a priori and from a distance (Ahmed 2000). As Zembylas reminds us, such '"impossibility" does not denote what is not possible, but that which does not appear to be possible' urging us to embrace a pedagogy of unknowing (Zembylas 2005, 150), which counters the western ontological and epistemological approaches informing disembodied teaching methods. This, we suggest, is important, because it stresses the value of *unlearning*, making us realize that coming to terms with the unknowable realities is all we can know/do/accept. It enables us to recognize our vulnerabilities and cultivate a certain epistemic humility (Murris and Bozalek 2019), as teachers and students, to transgress the ego (Simon 2003; Ericsson and Kostera 2020) and to acknowledge that the 'simple' does not exist, but only simplified versions of complex realities. Bringing this attitude to the classroom might lead us to no longer identify as the professorial authority that masters absolute knowledge but rather promote conditions for actively involving students in knowledge creation. We might invite our students to dance, expose them to an artistic performance and/or bring creative materials to play together to acquaint ourselves with the ambivalences, complexities, enchantments (Cixous 1993; March 2006) and impossibilities of knowing (Kostera 2014; Berthoin Antal and Strauß 2016). We might share with them our dreams and invite them to do the same to travel together 'from one amazement to the other' not knowing when this will all end (Cixous 1993, 98). We might expose stories and collages of our teaching preparation to reflect on these together, engaging in sense-awakening and thought-provoking relational, dialogical exchanges that make us question taken-for granted assumptions related to what and how we learn urging us rather to embrace *learning through unlearning* amid embodied processes of collective becoming (Calås et al. 2021).

By engaging in encounters, which encourage feeling, thinking, experimenting, dreaming, dancing, imagining, exchanging, sharing and relating, we nurture a learning environment whereby reason, bodies, imagination and the senses are mutually embraced; we 'empty [students'] minds of all normal content' (Zembylas 2005, 145) inviting them to experience relationally and collaboratively their own epistemic limitations. It is in such relational exchanges that we can regain our own voices as teachers and students to disrupt systemic powers that treat these as peripheral (Painter-Morland 2011). In this way, we suggest, we might create caring relationships with our students (Essen and Winterstorm Varlander 2013) and convert the class to this organic place, where knowledge is developed and practiced through sentient, affective bodies recognized as material, vulnerable and fecund (Swan 2005; Michels et al. 2020).

Encouraging learning through unknowing and unlearning instead of passively implanting knowledge ready for consumption might encourage a reflexive exploration of long buried, absent, invisible or silenced places, which are crucial in teacher-student interactions (Statler and Guillet de Monthoux 2015). Our teaching then will not be one of forcing interpretations or rushing through the assigned

content but an unfinished, non-linear process in the making, whereby dropping the will to know 'everything' might offer the possibility of recognizing the value of learning from others' differences and embodied experiences. This embraces an embodied ethics of unknowing (Westwood 2015), whereby nurturing ethical relationships by 'witnessing the unknowable Other … in seeing, feeling, and acting differently', becomes more important than the acquisition of knowledge (Zembylas 2005, 152). This challenges how difference and diversity as entrenched in power structures are often reduced into knowable 'sameness' in the neoliberal university (Ahmed 2000), encouraging rather a reframing of power/authority relationships based on genuine sharing and relationality between different, vulnerable bodies (Fotaki and Harding 2017). As Sheena Vachhani (2019, 20) puts it, instilling 'plurality of voices and dialogic readings in our classrooms' helps us rethink how we relate with our students and challenge our urge to think and teach rationally.

Engaging in such messy embodied explorations, we may then join forces to disrupt the horizontal chronormative dominant academic spectrum, often presented in disembodied PowerPoint formats and demanding time-framed outputs. For such exchanges, we suggest, activate epistemic micro-revolutions in learning, making us recognize the need to rupture normative and binary forms of thinking, blindly sustained by conventional neoliberal Business Schools pedagogies (Helin 2020). Yet, we acknowledge that this revolutionary process comes with its limitations and struggles, related, for example, to grading students' collaborative and creative work; the shifting power-relations between students and teachers that can produce insecurities and ambiguity; the limitations of normative academic educational spaces; and ethical questions regarding the personal and emotional openness and proximity between everyone involved in these radical educational practices.

Furthermore, we are fully aware, as one of the reviewers noted, that the above might be seen as limited, isolated efforts for meaningfully disrupting institutionally embedded disembodied pedagogies, in neoliberal academia. However, we also agree with the same reviewer that 'the revolution has to start somewhere', and it is in this spirit that we decided to present this collective reflection to suggest that even on a micro-political level, individual, invisible or unplanned efforts to question contextual constraints in relation to teaching and knowledge might matter (Thomas and Davies 2005). We join Boncori and her colleagues to argue that such 'subterranean forms of individual resistance and group debates' referring to both practical matters and value struggles are not negligible in the battle for long-lasting change (2020, 58). For these show how at our respective individual or collective levels, we unite to reject hierarchical disembodied barriers impeding meaningful possibilities for learning in the Business School classroom, focusing on *how* (i.e. differently) we can use these barriers to disrupt the very practices that they sustain. We also believe that, as educators, we should actively work with our institutions and the committees approving the teaching curricula to introduce such changes into a structural level to participate, through Business School education, into shaping a future that is desperate for doing things *differently* in an increasingly changing world.

Our text is a call to arms towards our academic colleagues to engage with their own *dirty*, disruptive, creative and reflexive means to resist normative pedagogies. Doing so, we suggest, not only promises to creatively enliven student-teacher interactions, but also to contribute slowly yet meaningfully to transforming the Business School context such that radical changes in management education, like the aforementioned, become an institutional priority. For, instead of places where '*goals* or *diplomas'* are produced, we aspire for our schools to be interminable embodied 'places of [un]learning and maturing' (Cixous 1993, 156), where the impossibility of absorbing knowledge through disembodied methodologies is recognized and embraced (Murris and Bozalek 2019). *Teaching differently* through genre-blurring methods that do not follow linearity but rather encourage creativity, reflexivity and imagination, might thus allow both teacher-learners and student-learners to meaningfully engage our daily micro-politics to enact forms of resistance at our respective levels, hoping to open avenues for shaping academic cultures, which embrace the need for *unlearning* outdated 'truths' and *learning differently*.

Our account resonates with debates calling for the need to involve our sensing bodies as sites of knowing, to go beyond understandings of knowledge as an affectively distanced intellectual given

(Swan 2005; Essen and Winterstorm Varlander 2013; Ingold 2015; Michels et al. 2020; Calås et al. 2021). By proposing genre-blurring *dirty* teaching work as a space, where relations to knowing can be redefined, we also contribute to debates discussing the need to embrace pedagogies of unknowing and (un)learning (Höpfl 1995; Simon 2003; Zembylas 2005; March 2006). We also extend literature discussing the creative potential of arts-based teaching methods to bring us closer to our own epistemic limitations (Atkinson 2013; Berthoin-Antal 2013; Berthoin Antal and Strauß 2016).

Last but not least, writing this account, reminds us of the importance of using research space to reflect on our teaching practices to understand these processes as complementary and not as separate parts of the academic 'profession'. We realize that the subjective dimension involved in such reflexive (auto)ethnographic approaches is often the target of critique seen as biased, fragile and incomplete knowledge (Gannon 2006; Chang 2013). Yet, engaging with (auto)ethnographic methods is also a meaningful way to uncover embodied, affective realities that normative systems render invisible and 'hidden', broadly (Panayiotou 2021), and in relation to management education specifically. We do not propose the presented reflections and suggestions as absolute, generalizable truths but as learnings emerging from embodied realizations and situated experiences of living, hoping that these inspire further critical reflection, in the academic community, on the need to transform Business School pedagogies, through engagement with ethnographic approaches. We suggest that bringing the anxieties and subjectivities related to our teaching into our research and vice versa, gives this interrogation an embodied, organic, material, reflective space to grow, to breathe, to experiment with ideas, formats, (im)possibilities, doubts and errors that we usually render invisible when we enter the university classroom. Our research and teaching practices then become inter-dependent processes; like partners in a tango, who together create embodied knowledge guided by their 'sensorial demands'. This might enable us to ask (deeper) questions in our teaching (as hopefully in research), to reinvent the pedagogical potentials of our vulnerable, embodied selves and the meshwork they engage with (Ingold 2015) to shake dominant academic practices and hopefully develop us towards the teachers that we would have liked to have. We would like to close with one of the reviewers words: 'yes, we need meshwork but not only of teaching against the grain, but seeding some grains of truth that can grow despite ingrained framing of hierarchical powers that might continue being sustained by Business Schools'. Resonating with this need, we hope that the current account inspires future research to further question the disembodied culture of academia both in relation to teaching and to other academic practices subjected to structural constraints.

Note

1. *Educere* is derived from *ex* (out) and *ducere* (to lead).

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