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4 Embodied bordering: crossing over, protecting, and neighboring

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Growing as one academic body,
Different organs / supporting / enabling each other / in unison.
Drawing, breaching, maintaining borders.
Separating / neighboring / living-together-with.
The sensing body / absorbed in the already existing / long before this academic
body.
Reaching out / over the borders / to make a difference.
/ **Bordering.** /

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> *For how long have the existing power relations inhabited my body, circulated in and through the cells, organs, and muscles, hindering the flows of energy?*

In a growing body, organs can specialize because they develop in unison, supporting and enabling each other to come into being. Following this principle, our study as one academic body is, therefore, less about joining together and more about growing together by allowing each of us to achieve a certain reach. Such a working body is first and foremost about what we have become to call 'bordering', which exceeds making, breaking, or maintaining borders. As a verb, bordering – as doing and being – is as much about separations as it is about neighboring, living-together-with on shared borders. In doing bordering here, we – Pauliina, Pikka, Susan, and Joonas – began with joint writing to examine bodily sensations of a specific moment or a period of time influenced by existing power relations coming from far beyond our individual lives, yet again emerging in our very own bodies, drawing and breaching borders. Doing so, we are encountering problematics as well as possibilities to act differently in relation to the prevailing power relations, concerning ecology, inequality, othering, responsibility, self-preservation, and collectivity.

Bordering as research in making

How did bordering as a form of writing take place in practice? Due to the mobility and meeting restrictions, a border of its own kind, we began to meet regularly online and to negotiate different suggested themes to understand each other's perspectives. We could only see each other's torsos, or the four talking heads cut off, or as an audible but invisible voice, framed and joined into one figure by the windows of a video call display. We tried to find a consensus into which kind of general principles this book chapter would lean towards. Should all our chosen empirical examples by Susan, Pikka, and Pauliina, in their uniqueness, still be unified by writing them in a common spirit and form? The theme we chose to explore was embodied boundaries, based on which Joonas designed and drew the illustration to make us able to imagine a research paradigm as one and without a specific terminological weight in accordance with a certain body of literature.

Engaging with one another is a lengthy process. The slowness of proceeding with our work through every two-week conversation was troublesome from emerging experiences of lack of productivity within our embodied business ethos. In another sense of the word, however, the process was highly productive

since it both helped all of us to develop our thinking and to create connections between our experiences. For example, when a feeling of needing to defend one's view could have led to separated ways, thinking together enabled us to 'translate' them into one's 'own wordings', so that all could understand and accept them in a genuine attempt to understand one another. This co-creation of connections would most likely not happen if we had approached this writing with speed and without these often two-hour-long conversations. Thus, since it appeared that we were working within several borderlines and could not find an easy way out, we decided to dedicate ourselves to *stay with the trouble*, as per Donna Haraway's (2016) book title.

Conversations on doing academic work differently relate to post-qualitative research, born as a countermove to qualitative research that gets stuck into pre-formed protocols, analyzing methods, and tools (see St. Pierre, 2017; 2019). Even if we agree that with prevailing protocols we can only 'perhaps add another small brick that hardly mattered to fill a gap in a structure of knowledge' (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 691) and want to engage with producing knowledge that really matters, it is still difficult to recognize these practices as guiding our everyday work in academia. As Jenny Helin (2020, p. 2) put it: '[a]s long as a piece of writing is expected to fill a gap – rather than create gaps through thought-provoking research that takes us by surprise – it is no wonder that much research passes by unrecognized'. Therefore, pausing to reflect on ontological and epistemological questions with colleagues the way we did, enabled us to confront what this means in practice. Something must be done differently in order to prevent repeating or echoing the previous ways of doing research. Doing differently also feels different; time-consuming horizontally, while producing depth vertically.

Helin (2020, p. 12) argues that this constant requirement of speed and productivity can lead to 'machine-like writing' which 'makes it almost impossible to create the connections needed between ourselves and the texts we write' and difficult to contribute meaningfully and authentically to academic conversations. Her proposal is to question these given pressures and engage at least in some 'vertical moments' with our writing, which we understand in our collaborative writing as an attempt to seek connections and a more profound understanding of each other through these 'time consuming' conversations. According to Helin, vertical thinking of time enables the possibility to reach higher and dive deeper into the process of seeking what is really important to say in our texts.

Trying to detach from prevailing academic practices of machine-like article production, we must also think about how we want to write and what things

we want to emphasize in the form of an article. For example, through feminist perspectives and practical trials, Ahonen et al. (2020) question masculinist ways and forms of writing research such as polishing, finalizing, squeezing the knowledge into a neat package by distancing the researchers' body from their research (see also Pullen and Rhodes, 2008; 2015; Thanem and Knights, 2019). We also must question, following Vagle and Hofsess (2016), the need to purify or to fit into the orthodoxy of one philosophy or ideology in our collaborative work when it is coming from neighboring social sciences fields and specific academic traditions. In doing this work, we strived for 'epistemic friendship', a form of collective knowledge-making (Nguyen et al., 2016) to overcome differences in seniority, gender, disciplines, and our own embodied experiences. By practicing solidarity in academic work, we did so not only out of epistemic respect but also for enabling and strengthening friendships.

Altogether the aim of our work, which we start to present in the following sections, was to move away from the case study form, beginning from a third-person description of sociomaterial entangling, and move toward a first-person approach, where we stay with our bodily borders, in their encounters, sensation and sensibilities, our responses and responsibilities, extending and proceeding inside-out. According to Jennifer Mason (2011; 2019), evaluating qualitative research, in general, should be based on its resonance in the reader, the deepness of the understanding it creates, and its power to illuminate some phenomenon. Hence, the purpose is to give insight into the phenomena through multifaceted and multi-sensory experiences instead of producing 'maximum data' reports (Mason, 2011; 2019).

Following these premises, we selected just a few examples and focused on writing through them what embodied bordering could mean and how it is experienced through bodies that are themselves in constant movement and becoming; that is, also producing a certain kind of bordering in doing so. As such, Susan's and Pikka's stories are based on autoethnography. This means that while our embodied experiences are co-constituted within the entangling of various bodies, these experiences are not just personal but instances of shared academic practices (for example, Bell and King, 2010; Katila and Meriläinen, 2002). Pauliina creates illustrative stories that are based on her notes from embodied facilitation she guided in three organizations. In these stories, she combines her own perceptions of her bodily sensations with her notes on participants' descriptions of their bodily meaning-making processes. Joonas, in turn, was bordering with all of these stories during the research process, and drew a draft of the picture to support the joining of our different and intersecting themes.

In the first story, Susan delves into her experience on the influence of COVID-19 in an attempt to protect herself from infection, and how this is actualized in different kinds of normative routines to block her body borders from an alien intruder. The attempt to wash one's hands clean from the crisis takes her to the root of the problem, to an ecological crisis in breaching and moving further the borders of the natural habitats of different animal species and the microbes inhabiting them, and how our societies have drawn strict borders between such interspecies relations and cohabitation. Next, Pikka's story examines the body as a porous bordering in the context of the academic research project. She portrays how her white body becomes apparent in relation to black bodies in a Namibian shopping mall and the power relations thus carried. Her reflections address how her body in the context of Western academic and teaching practices within which white, relatively wealthy and healthy actors operate, does not question its privileged epistemic standpoint. In the third story, Pauliina draws from examples in her PhD research material gathered from embodied facilitation, to articulate movement and examine how bordering as border making is felt through the moving bodies. Here the changing qualities of borders can push otherness away in negative ways, but also protect from violence or other harms. Pauliina discusses how needed bordering can also be processed and strengthened through embodied methods.

Hand in hand with the troublemaking

Soap runs between my fingers. I scrub my hands madly. This must be the 20th time today. The backs of my hands are red and itching. I turn off the tap using a clean paper towel and throw it into a dustbin. A quick look in the mirror to check that the face mask is covering my nose and mouth properly. When I turn around, I see a woman standing right behind me, queuing for the washbasin. She is not using a mask. Neither is she following the social distancing rule. My heartbeat accelerates, and I grind my teeth together. I glance at her angrily and move on fast to reduce the risk of catching COVID-19. My friend, who is a medical doctor treating COVID-19 patients in an intensive care unit, told me the other day that she would not wish the severe version of this illness even for her worst enemy. In critical cases, the body starts to fail and there is a real chance of death. The problem is the immune system spiraling out of control and causing damage throughout the body. A shared thought of the virus attacking and moving through my body, damaging my lungs, heart, and brain makes me shiver.

I want to convince myself that by following the rules set by the authorities, that is, washing my hands tens of times per day, avoiding close contact with

other people, and using a mask when shopping at a grocery store, I can protect myself from the SARS-CoV-2 virus which can be at its worst a life-threatening disease. I draw and confirm the borders of my biological being by these ritualistic enacted norms. Then why is this confirming compromising the surface of my skin, as if I'm rubbing it off? Is this a symptom of something else that is compromised?

Rather than from cleaning of the skin, answers may be found from the clearing of forests, from where this spiky fuzzball-looking virus might have come across into our crowded cities. Scientists say that originally the virus came from an animal, most likely a bat, with which people have had close encounters when compromising the borders of their natural habitat; that is, that its spread was caused by human encroachment into forest land (Thomas, 2020). Also, the ability to fly has made bats capable of crossing long geographical distances and the borders between varieties of ecological niches, from predator to pollinator (Timmer, 2012). Further, the borders at the cellular level of the bat's body become compromised by developing oxidative stress during flight, which can lead damaged DNA to leak while, concurrently, preventing repair pathways from causing excessive inflammatory responses (Mann, 2020, p. 545). This is one of the evolutionary adaptations leading to the possibility for bats' immune systems to harbor a lot of 'outsider' organisms inside their bodily borders and to tolerate and host these others.

In contrast, the human immune system is intolerant and only a very small number of human bodies can adjust to SARS-CoV-2 virus without experiencing any symptoms. So far, at the time of writing, this virus has sickened more than 343 million and killed over 5.5 million people worldwide (Worldometer, 2022). It seems that only a vaccine can stop the pandemic. It is ironic that to protect myself from the virus I need to predispose myself to a vaccine containing tiny fragments of the 'other', either a messenger RNA, or an adenovirus vector carrying a blueprint, and to a needle piercing the border of my skin all the way to my very flesh. We shoot the messenger, build a wall following the blueprint and declare our independence. Whereas bats can co-exist with coronaviruses without getting sick, human bodies can tolerate coronaviruses only when they have been weakened into a 'controllable' form. I tolerate the other in me, only as its master.

The feeling of uncertainty and lack of control over the virus has put me on edge. I fixate on routines, like handwashing, to lessen my fear of the unknown. However, the virus is not new. Bats are known to have co-existed with viruses, including coronaviruses, for 65 million years (Pennisi, 2020). Coronavirus is an old acquaintance for humans too. Biologists reason that all life on Earth

shares a single common ancestor (Than, 2010). Over millions of years, life has diverged in different directions and formed partly separate communities and ecosystems. Human viruses, bat viruses, all life is scattered into numerous bordering communities of their own. The encroachment of humans into the homeland of the wild breaks the balance since they do not share borders but take them away. Destroying natural habitats and catching wild animals for food have created the perfect conditions for coronaviruses' spillover from wildlife to humans (Thomas, 2020). Re-encountering the old acquaintance is disastrous because human bodies are no longer prepared for it.

In our management bachelor's program, we teach students to look at business from a critical, social scientific point of view that sees ethics, ecology, and business as part of a wider, planetary whole. One of our key messages for the business students is that economic activity should be organized in such a way as to enable peaceful living with various forms of non-human entities and species – microbes, animals, plants, houses, soil, water, air, and planets, for example – and in various places and spaces from homes to cities, forests and beyond (Kinnunen and Valtonen, 2017). We argue for the need to accord more-than-humans expanded agential status instead of treating them as 'resources' or as having the role of merely 'serving human needs'. We are also critical of the view according to which technology can enable us to minimize planetary harm because it reinforces the belief that ecological damage can be solved by the same means that caused it in the first place (ibid.). While on the one hand I am fully committed to the idea of peaceful co-living with other species, on the other hand, the global spread of the coronavirus has made me yearn for the development, effectiveness, and coverage of the vaccination program. In this crisis situation, I am inclined to trust biotechnology. I'm eager to counter the co-existence with the virus and the warning of the ecological crisis of the Anthropocene which it carries, in order to keep on living. *My hands are clean.*

We, humans, have striven for almost complete isolation from nature, shutting other lifeforms out of our living spaces, or rather taking over theirs. We take what we want from nature but try to avoid exposing ourselves to an embodied entanglement with other species, especially of the freely flying forms. This weakens our immune defenses, which then forces us to isolate even more effectively, and abandon our 'natural' role in the ecosystems. This results in a situation in which the new 'strangers', like COVID-19, are more and more destructive to humans. However, from the virus's point of view, we humans are the 'stranger'. We have intruded into its living spaces, and it is trying to obtain a balanced relation with the human species. It is not in the virus's interest to be fatal to its host. Humans cannot totally isolate themselves either from

living or abiotic nature, because we are *very much part* of nature, and in *all the ways* dependent on it, where even different bacteria protects our body, mucous membranes, and skin. *One hand washes the other*.

Meanwhile, as the pandemic continues to thrive, and different variants have appeared, the spread of the virus is being controlled by enforcing national borders and their crossings. Besides the officially addressed names for the variants, the public discourse continuously identifies the viruses with certain states and nations, evoking nationalistic and racist tones. Different mobility containment measures have been taken to make the virus 'respect' national borders but managing the threat with strategies for elimination is, besides being discriminating, virtually impossible to carry out (see Du Plessis, 2018, on the concept of microbial borders). Pathogens, however, have many other ways of spreading: they can be carried by animals, spread through the air, or through surfaces.

As such, several vaccination programs have already been running for a good while; the interests of the nations are also established in the distribution of vaccines, where geopolitical and economic interest take place. In particular, developing nations continue under hardship; the expected timeline for the global pandemic also prolongs as different variants have the possibility to further develop regionally. In the attempt to manage the viral non-human, mundane nodal technologies, such as facemasks and toilet paper rolls, become precious global commodities but also manage our gendered, raced, and classed identities through media panics, the deification of hygiene, concerns with bodily integrity, the resurgence of taboos, the feminization of the body, neocolonial logic, the (re)signification of the abject, and an emphasis on inequalities related to access (Sikka, 2021). The regional and national differences on the lack of medical protective equipment, medicine, vaccines, hospital beds, personal space in overpopulated districts, and even for clean water and soap, have historical origins from earlier oppressions and continuous inequalities. These concern, for example, the decolonization of Africa, where the actions of the IMF and World Bank contributed to the privatization of certain natural resources, limiting access to them and leading to debt, corruption, and poverty negatively influencing the people. These circumstances draw and breach the line between the reality of the phrases from Publilius Syrus and George Orwell: *We are all equal in the presence of death, but some are more equal than others.*[1]

Becoming a white body as part of a research project

My skin breathes the warm air full of sunshine in Windhoek, Namibia. My body – carrying the sunshine of my childhood – resonates with the warmth providing a sensation of being at home. I step into the Mall, which embraces me with a soft air – only a bit cooler than outside. The mall seems familiar to me with its Continental look of fashion shops and shiny corridors. People are dressed up like Europeans – only that they all are black, except me, a white, blond, middle-aged woman. The black bodies pass in and through my porous body, rupturing the resonances of comfort I just had. Waves come over and a whirlpool circulates in my body. I try to control the storming resonances by assuring my body with the visual sight of the blackness: I can see only black people and thus there are only us, me being similar to the others. But my body does not let me cheat it: a desire to blend into the crowd, to be the same as others, intertwines with the sensation of difference. Simultaneously, when the porosity of my body lets the black bodies in and through it, confronting the power relations that I carry in my body, the boundaries of my white body become visible and sensible.

Within all the familiar elements – the sunshine of my childhood, the European-looking mall and the clothing of people, the decent temperature of air conditioning, my work history in the white organization – the black bodies hit and pierced my body. The black bodies provided resonances that confronted me with the familiar resonances of the situation. My body tried to calm down the whirlpool of resonances through the hope of fitting in. Still, I became different in my epistemological standpoint materialized by my body. My unawareness about the lives of other people epitomized the deficit of my standpoint. I didn't know how many of them, for instance, have wiped the dust off their shoes after a long walk from the township to spend a hot day in an air-conditioned mall. I didn't know which of them work for the government or live in air-conditioned apartments in downtown Windhoek City. I was just dropping in and passing by visiting here, embodying no understanding of life here, and having the possibility to cross the borders and travel away whenever I wanted to with the EU money that I came here with in the first place.

However, the black bodies did not only disrupt the situational resonances but the intersecting power relations of race, class, gender, and dis/ability already accumulated in my body. The confronting resonances in my body awaked the layers of colonial history and structural racism that I – with many others today (Lentin, 2018) – wanted to deny. The omnipresence of structural racism (Lentin, 2018; Puwar, 2001) can be seen parallel to the human's ignorance of the biodiversity of nature, which, under pressure, has enabled viruses such as

COVID-19 to find new master-animals and spread into a pandemic due to global mobilities. I am also a virus carrier, the virus of Western practices of power relations intersecting and infecting race, class, gender, and dis/ability, manifested in and between the bodies, consuming the Other. The Western academic practices of research mobility took me to Namibia to have an influence on the Others (Dahl, 2020). The purpose of our EU-financed multinational research project was to participate with young university students in various development projects for several spheres of their lives. The research project drew from design thinking (Stickdorn and Schneider, 2011), which was seen as a rising method for developing services and business within Western academic and business practices. I believed in the method and wanted to spread the 'gospel'. I embodied white people's understanding of ourselves as a source of good praxis and a desire to make a difference (Ferguson, 1998; Swan, 2017) with which I suppressed the fleeting sensations of uncertainty before my trip.

I feel shortness of breath because I know all too little of the problematizations of research and development projects in Africa in general and in Namibia in particular. I try to familiarize myself briefly with these issues through a few discussions with my critically oriented colleagues at the faculty of social sciences. But I'm busy, as I always seem to be. I defeat the prickling in my body by dwelling within the business development practices of business organizations and teaching practices of our university. The entangling of my body with the rhythm and challenges of business communities deposit confidence onto my body, which reassures me to believe that I have the capability to teach the university students in Namibia.

Within Western business development and teaching practices, the norm has been to perform. Within these practices, the power relations of privileged white and relatively wealthy and able-bodied actors have not been questioned. These practices have mostly enhanced an understanding of a relatively autonomous human agency, capable of solving emerging problems. These power relations had disciplined me as well as other actors to repeat the practices. I had felt anxiety about the gendered nature of them, but I had been quite ignorant regarding questions of race. Looking back, I admit having reconstructed the Western-centric standpoint while believing that our participatory approach was progressive and worth exporting to help others (Meghji, 2021). That is the power of (post)colonialism that I carry in my whiteness as it was addressed by the encountered blackness at the shopping mall. The contrast that became visible to me were superficial differences, reducing the distance between us to the borders of the bodies, our skins. This is not bound to my family's history, presence, or absence on the continent, but it is due to my ethnicity, the status printed on the cover of my body. That I cannot whitewash away.

I could not leave the feeling behind evoked by that moment of bordering, of becoming white among the black. My body alerts me (Hemmings, 2005; 2012) to start to become aware of the intersecting power relations. However, it is only through my white privilege that I *can become* aware of asymmetrical power relations. The subaltern subjects do not have the choice. Bordering needs to continue. It means greater sensitivity to multiple ways of being and knowing different to the Western theorizations both in my life and work: listening, reading, and surrendering to unbelievable, provisional, experimental as well as unsettling travel toward different knowings (Ravenscroft, 2018).

The felt sensations of the bodies in the border making

I had turned the lights down in the dance studio where we were. The bodies start to move in the dusk space closer and further from the chairs where they have 'placed' their emotions and thoughts about the person or situation they want to reflect on. They walk and they stop. They turn away and they face the chairs and I ask them to aim their attention to their visceral body sensations, thoughts, and emotions that move in their bodies during the exercise. I 'open' my body to sense what is 'in the air', to sense what kind of resonance the moving bodies and their gestures evoke in my body. I 'open' my gaze to see the qualities, their individually different styles of moving. I remember how the teacher in my dance and movement therapist training emphasized how important it is to learn to look at the others with the 'gaze of acceptance', hence, just to observe through my whole body, what is happening in the 'flesh' of that moment, but still refrain from interpreting further what I notice. The ambience is concentrated and intense. How can I say so? Where in my body do I feel it? My body recognizes the state that I've learned to call 'concentrated' in the 'flesh' of facilitation.

After the exercise, I'm curious to hear how the participants, who work in the care-giver professions, make sense of their experiences. One of the participants talks about the boundaries between her and her client; she was thinking: 'I found a way to respect my boundaries … and it felt really good … I was somehow more determined, self-confident, and free … I understood that I don't need to stretch too much my boundaries to still be able to take care of my client … I was able to give up, to give permission to myself, to let go of things I cannot control … It was a releasing experience, I felt freedom … I found some kind of balance so that I managed to be supportive but still trust my client's own capabilities to take responsibility for her/his process. At the same time, this exercise felt like I got closer to myself … and somehow I felt this gave the client more space to be in peace in her/his body too.'

I think that this participant talked about what it feels like to stand on one's own feet without the need to stretch excessively oneself at the service of the other. This was a kind of realization of the bordering process that happened in the 'flesh' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968 [1964]) of the facilitation session, hence, in the relational co-movement of my facilitator's body and the participants' bodies. Through the 'distancing' exercise, this participant was able to find a new way of thinking about the relationship with her client. Connecting her attention to the visceral sensations, emotions, and thoughts that emerged in her body while she and others were moving and I was watching, brought her 'closer to herself' without losing the feelings of care and connection with the client about whom she was thinking.

Therefore, the experienced boundaries are felt as a sensation of 'being more or less separated from the world' (Dambrun, 2016, p. 91) and as the difference compared to the other (Verhage, 2008). Using the movement analytical concepts of space, this participant's expression of 'coming closer to herself' could be described as a capability to stay more in her own space, in her individual kinesphere,[2] where she does not need to try to excessively expand herself to the self-space of the person she was thinking about. In the participant's experience, this notion enabled them both to move more freely in their common space, without either one 'taking over' or intruding excessively into another's personal space. This resonates also with philosopher Levinas' thoughts that we need to be able to take care of ourselves in order to be available to the other (van Manen, 2016, pp. 117–18). In this exercise, bodily awareness helped the participant to create this healthy distance, where she was able both to take care of herself and to be in service of the other. *Borders were created through embodied reflection.*

As Walsh (2000, p. 79) put it:

> Boundaries can be understood as the assumed, and generally unspoken, rules that we internalize about the physical and emotional limits of our relationships with other people and groups. They protect our privacy and reflect our individuality. Through boundaries we organize our social worlds and communicate our positions within them.

Through this perspective, the boundaries can be thought of as something protective but also something where we can find knowledge about ourselves compared to others. Accordingly, we are moving in the 'flesh of the world' as differentiated perspectives upon it (Merleau-Ponty, 1968 [1964]; 2012 [1945]), which means that our bodily existences have – in Husserl's terms – their unique 'styles' of relating, which are distinguished from other perspectives on

'flesh' through 'their unique ways of moving, gesturing and acting in respect to what is given in their intentional environment' (Heinämaa, 2018, pp. 539–40). The embodied facilitation is based on recognizing these 'styles' of moving in our 'intra-actions' (Barad, 2003). Slowing down to reflect these patterns that emerge through body awareness and movement exercises, can help participants to 'open up to situations and people with freshness again and cope with the present situation constructively' (Karssiens et al., 2014, p. 237).

Even though our 'styles' of acting have some permanence, the body's embeddedness into the 'flesh of the world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968 [1964]) shows itself in our situational, changing, and ever-evolving experiences:

I listen to the participants' stories of their clients' difficulties, and I suddenly realize how tired I am. It is hard to focus on what they are saying, and I soon notice why. … In addition, to having felt fatigued even before I came here, their stories are of heavy subjects. When the participants speak about their clients who have recently lost their loved ones, I recognize how difficult it is to prevent myself from falling into the darkness of my own emotions, of my own devastating loss which I experienced recently. Suddenly I remember another participant, who explained that when she was exhausted because she had flu, it was difficult to keep up the boundaries she needed to maintain to survive all the negative feedback she gets in her leader's position.

Even though my experience as a facilitator and my client's experience in her role as a leader differ from each other, they are similar in their notions of how, for example, tiredness affects our intra-actions: The borders become more porous. When borders become more permeable, it seems to enable some sort of injury of self. The leader felt that she became too vulnerable in front of the others' attacks and in my case, I felt that merging too much on the emotional level with the participants' stories of their clients' losses made the facilitation difficult for me. Because I was tired, the participants' stories, which I would have otherwise been able to handle from a healthy distance, now almost drag me into the heaviness of my loss. At the same time, the realization of what was going on in my body, helped me to stay connected with the others and to the situation we were in together.

Therefore, every encounter opens, not only to a harmonious attunement with each other but also to potential harmful activity (Verhage, 2008). Even if the harm is not caused purposefully, the porosity of the boundaries can harm in other ways. This theme is discussed for example in the compassion exhaustion conversation (Rothschild, 2020). That is why it could be useful to think more about boundaries and how they are constructed and crossed in and through

embodied actions. More importantly, there are embodied actions that can help in making the boundaries more solid and protective, which could be useful for our everyday coping in our work situations. For example, I managed to continue working, when I recognized that I was going too deep into the participants' stories. In addition to realizing what was happening in my body, I followed the embodied action of breathing out more consciously, to balance the excess 'intake' of the stories' emotional responses in my body (Buckley et al., 2018). This helped me to continue better the facilitation session and to direct my attention to the participants' needs instead of letting my emotions take over my actions.

These examples illustrate how bordering on human encounters is always an embodied process. In the latter example, the tiredness of the body transformed the capability to solid, safe bordering and made the felt sense of borders more porous. But we are still not only at the mercy of the situation and our entanglements in the 'flesh'. These examples show how aiming our attention to the situational body can help not only to recognize our 'styles' of relating but also to find some new ideas that help us to cope in constructive ways in the given situations.

Making-of 'bordering'

How did we make sense of all this? To examine our bodily sensations and the reasons in them, we turned to approaches deriving from material feminism and corporeal phenomenology. Material feminisms as an ethico-onto-epistemological framework (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008; Barad, 2003) aims to identify and transform gendered, environmental, anthropocentric, racial, and social injustices from multidimensional angles (Calás et al., 2018; Pullen and Rhodes, 2015; Revelles-Benavente, 2018). Material feminism opposes representationalism within which the language is seen to represent or construct the objects. Rather, it emphasizes a constitution of phenomena within the co-constitutive process of material-discursive elements (Barad, 2003). In fact, according to material feminism, there are no ontologically distinct 'elements' or entities but indeterminant phenomena, which 'are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting "components"' (Barad, 2003, p. 815).

Hence, our bodily sensations and our experiences of them are entangled with and inseparable from discourse, other humans, and more-than-human bodies. Still, through our sensations and experiences, we acknowledge that within material feminism and corporeal phenomenology we should be cautious when

thinking and talking about 'humans'. These theorizations could be accused of being a Western-centric perspective when using 'human' as if it could speak for all humans even though some 'humans' have always been excluded from 'humanity' (Meghji, 2021; Schulz, 2017). Even though Karen Barad (2003) writes carefully about 'humans' in quotation marks to unsettle the concept, she is also accused of using 'we' as if it could talk about a universal 'us' without the locality of the agential cuts that she otherwise embraces (Ravenscroft, 2018).

How is it possible then for human beings to sense and make sense of the world of such constant flux of indeterminacy? Within the process of intra-actions both discursive and material 'elements' exist in relation to one another, and we can examine momentary local separations of the body from other inherently inseparable intra-acting elements (Barad, 2003). Bodily sensations as well as the separateness of our bodies become meaningful through specific agential intra-actions, acknowledgeable in disruptive moments when opening to the world exposes one to the invasive entry by others (Doyle, 2009). Here is where bordering becomes an ontological ground for the study at hand. Merleau-Ponty's corporeal phenomenology (1968 [1964]) offers a possibility to examine the embodied experience of our own bodily sensations as well as embodied experiences of other human bodies within the discursive-material entangling while bordering.

Merleau-Ponty talks about being in the world with our bodies, orienting ourselves through sensing, and while sensing the world with our bodies, the world becomes part of us: 'the things pass into us, as well as we into the things' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968 [1964], p. 123). He emphasizes that our bodies are made of the same 'flesh' as the world, in which physical Nature, life and mind are considered as 'diverse folds rather than as essentially separate categories' (Coole, 2010, p. 96). Thus, we set to work in parallel the Merleau-Pontian thinking about the co-constitution of bodies and the world and the Baradian thinking of co-constitution of human and more-than-human. We see Baradian thinking as providing us with a focus on process and continuous becoming: it is through specific intra-actions – in our case 'bordering' – that bodily borders become constituted. Merleau-Pontian thinking, in turn, enables us to focus on the embodied experiences of ourselves and others within the bordering (see Coole and Frost, 2010). Through bordering we acknowledge the fleeting moments of embodied disruptions capturing the agency of our bodily sensations, disrupting the existing power relations, and momentarily constituting and stabilizing our bodily borders, to be differently – together with. *To stretch but not to strain. To come halfway, but not to take over. That is the matter of bordering.*

With/drawing borders

The collaborative writing and drawing in this book chapter could be described with such verbs as joining, resisting, negotiating, connecting, listening, arguing, accepting, rejecting, and appreciating, to mention some. We began by negotiating who of us would be able to join and according to which borderlines we would have to proceed in the matter of time, substance, and contribution. This all became testing of our borders – those of our bodies in work and of literature, lines drawn by experience, expertise, and life histories – to commute over and across, to stretch and to respect, *to meet each other halfway.*

The opening and closing of our borders consisted of invitations and joined interests, uncertainty about the possibility to contribute to the joined efforts timewise and substance-wise, doubts concerning the fit, elaboration, and commitment with the scientific discourse of new materialism, post-anthropogenic conversations, and the phenomenology of the body, in a tight shared space. On the matter of writing, we started to question our own attempts to squeeze our message within a narrow scope and restricted perspectives. Do we really need to flatten our ontological and epistemological perspectives to one consensus to be able to bring something that matters into the discussion? Then again, could these negotiations actually show and indicate how blurry and unfinished our thinking is, or how this elusiveness is actually not only a condition of our thinking but of the world itself, and whether we can border one from the other? Is it rather about being on the edge than in the core of things? Issues with empirical and theoretical vastness, differences, and details became the matter of what we already shared, or rather of what we had begun to compromise and confirm: that of sharing our borders. Before long, sharing became caring, as the studied embodied unease, fears, pressures, losses, and labor became collective.

While many doubts were pronounced by different members concerning their individual cases or the cohesion of the joined work, someone(s) was there to embrace and to encourage the thoughts, and all the criticism presented by oneself to the others often brought the analysis together rather than leading to dispersion. And the borders, in breaking and making, became bordering, an activity in which to encounter, engage and generate differences that we shared, since they were not indifferent. This continuous border-crossing enabled finetuning our ontological and epistemological assumptions emerging from time to time as slightly different. These came out as a contrast, not a conflict; instead of attempting to highlight one or the other, it brought out the specific importance of each approach. In the end, they were not strangers but neigh-

bors, embodied and entangled with each other and to the surrounding world (Merleau-Ponty, 2012 [1945]), bordering one another.

Looking back to the illustration, our three cases are bordering on each other. They claim their individual embodied experience while contributing to one figure, drawing its borderlines that intersect, cross over and leak, and where the sensations and sensibilities move along the lines and are felt together, among 'us'. While the three examples might seem to be about inter-species, inter-racial, and inter-organizational relations, they are about intra-relations, intra-bodied, in-the-Flesh.

The bat and human bodies intra-connect by the virus on a scale of pandemic disruption. While the management of the pandemic has shown and will show a greater number of inequalities between different groups of people, it has in one sense equalized the sense of loss. This concerns the sense of lost safety, freedom, space, and lives, in other words, the ways how we can define our own borders. These disrupted and disturbed borders have become concretely felt in our daily lives, when the body of the other individual brings the feeling of danger and irritation, and in the moments when the sore hands are joined under the running water. As one cannot claim that the pandemic treats us equally, it does raise the sense of facing a loss, momentarily compromising and enforcing those borders that divide people into those under greater risk and with less help, and those with advantages and access. Furthermore, the virus breaches the border that has been drawn to separate humans from nature and the consequences which this and the pushing of nature's borderlines have caused. While the virus is dwelling within human bodies, we are forced to dwell within the walls that we have constructed around us, equalizing if not making it even with the lost habitat of the bats, to feel the pain of uneasiness.

The walls of a mall also equally host the bodies within a familiar mundane setting, which becomes disrupted when the blackness and whiteness articulate each other out. This sensed difference of the very outer border of our bodies underlines the depth of the color that it surfaces but goes deeper than the skin to the sediments of the unequal power relations. At these moments of contrasts of colors, the borders become visible and felt. The colonial practices leak out from the white porous body that carries them within, while the awareness of inequality is evoked by the majority of the black bodies as they enter and leave the mall. These disruptions do not leave the body by exiting the Western-style mall for the inequalities remain. These borders go beyond bricks and mortar and therefore necessitate the borderlines of the body to remain porous, and the senses open for the evoking sensations and sensibilities for different ways of being and knowing.

As we carry the bodies of others in the color-dictated colonial and racist history, we also carry the institutions with us and encounter them in other people within the organizational practices. In the service work one body may carry the weight of many; felt and experienced while connecting with them. The encountering may disrupt and compromise the borders of the very self without careful negotiation, felt as the weight of the world, a sensation of suffocating burden. The sharing of burden must take place in a caring manner so that the body does not become exhausted or insensible by the unequal share of disturbances. Here the porosity of our personal borders may become intolerable, and the open encounter becomes a question of ensuring our borders and protecting our very being. The border may remain as a place of equal encounter, where we can safely face each other without violations, and face ourselves on the edge of our individuality.

While we – Pauliina, Pikka, Susan, and Joonas – have been bordering with our varying case studies, we have learned that the borders presented within and between the stories are not that which separates us, but that which we share and have in common. We come halfway, to split the difference, to find a middle ground, and to come into a settlement. Compromising goes together with compromising; as the verb means both to 'give and take' and to 'put in jeopardy', and that's what we have done. Further, following Bruce Braun's take on approaches to posthumanism, we are recognizing the non-anthropocentrism extending far beyond us and taking a deconstructive responsibility in the bounding of the human figure, where the body is an unfolding of the world (Panelli, 2010).

Thus, in bordering we moved beyond the common anthropocentric imaginary of the epoch of the Anthropocene. Our illustration carries the hu(wo)man figure in its core, but the emphasis is on the lines, those that border and connect, while the familiarity of the figure of our bodies lingers and is stuck with us. Any attempt to erase it completely would be evasion and self-denial: we are a part of the more-than-human world, not apart from it. If we cut off the figure, it simply leaves a vacuum and the lines do not connect. We cannot, and accordingly, we should not figure ourselves out. And that is where the problem arises, and we must stay with it. Human shows itself as a border and borders are for separation, connections, agreement, and disagreement, for crossing over and living along, bordering one another, like a thread of life, a common lifeline stitching, crisscrossing, and entangling together. Bordering is about compromising, in the sense of breaking and making, moments of disruptions from where awareness arises, and connections can be made. It concerns as much the onto-epistemology of this work, as the making of it together. It comes with the 'good' and the 'bad', with the respect to keep and to contain,

and intersect and transform. Considering bordering as an ethical claim, to remain and to do differently, *we are staying with the human.*

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Publilius Syrus (fl. 85–43 BC) was a Latin writer. His original quotation goes 'As men, we are all equal in the presence of death.' Eric Arthur Blair (1903–1950), known as author George Orwell, wrote in his novel *Animal Farm* (1945): 'All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.'
2. The area of space that one can reach with the body parts without moving from one spot (see Laban, 2011).

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