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Research as reach-searching from the kinesphere

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ABSTRACT

Solitude.
in my office.

Where to start,
what to do,
what to read,
how to make sense of all of this?

Decisions.
directions.
movement.

If I stop pushing forward,
soothe my breath,
dive in slowly,
where do I reach?
The others around,
merging,
affecting.

Choices:
Will this path be a dead end?

To proceed – to withdraw – to remain?

Reach-searching out.
to touch the others, to connect with their words.
Reach-searching in.
to get in touch, to connect with the sensuous body.
All embodied.

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Embodied writing;
kinesphere; body movement;
Maurice Merleau-Ponty;
writing differently; Laban
movement analysis

... 5.

We need a more holistic understanding of human beings in organisations
(Gherardi et al. 2013; Gärtner 2013; Küpers 2015; Parviainen 2011; Thanem and Knights 2019).

... 6.

The body is a medium of interaction in organisations and in research analysis
(Huopalainen 2015; Jääskeläinen and Helin 2021; Mandalaki 2019; Mandalaki and Pérezts 2022; Ropo
and Parviainen 2001; Satama 2017).

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... 7.

Body movement has been researched surprisingly little in organisation studies (Biehl 2017; Huopainen 2015).

... 8.

How can we discuss the researcher's work *through* multidimensional, multi-dynamic, and multi-connected body movements instead of writing *about* them? (Laban 2011; Middelw 2013; Newlove and Dalby 2004).

The body situation in its kinesphere

Kinesphere is the personal space surrounding each one of us and extends as far as we can reach in any direction. Outside our kinesphere is general space; whenever we move, we take our kinesphere with us and displace the general space. If we turn round, our kinesphere turns with us while the general space remains the same (Newlove and Dalby 2004, 17).

I stand here, my feet spread on the floor. My breath moves my chest, expands the space inside me, and empties my lungs while returning everything to the centre. The centre of what? Me, I, my sense of self? I have learned to consider my stomach as my centre, the core of my being. I am not the sum of my different body parts, but I am this body, and I am living through its movements.

In Husserl's terms, this is my **zero point**¹ of experiencing (Heinämaa 2018; Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012; Sheets-Johnstone 2019). I spread my arms, *stretching* them as far as I can, *reaching out* with my legs, still standing in one spot, and I start to draw the boundaries of my *largest possible kinesphere* (Figure 1; Newlove and Dalby 2004). I imagine being inside a personal bubble. The image and movement unite in the kinaesthetic experience.

I return to my desk, let my forearms rest on the table, and *conform* to its hard surface, at the same time *conforming* as a body to the practices of doing research. Sensing the starting places of typing



Figure 1. Researcher in her kinesphere. This picture was produced by Joonas Vola for this article.

with my index fingers – the bulges on the letters F and H – I start to type. I do not need to watch my fingers, as they have learned the locations of the letters and the system of touch typing. Within this *small kinesphere*, where my limbs are close to my torso, only my fingers, forearms, and eyes move. I sense that writing is a fully embodied action, a connection between the movements of breathing, thinking, and feeling (Cancienne and Snowber 2003).

The movement of my thoughts wanders on, pondering what embodied research could mean if I think about it through the frame of Laban movement analysis (Laban 2011). What if research was, instead of re-search – the act of finding what already exists – thought of as *reach-searching* movements from the kinesphere bubble? If so, how far can I *reach-search* through this embodied being, this body that I as a researcher am at this moment? How do other kinesphere bubbles shape my researcher's movements? How would it be possible to write down these experiences? How does it feel to write my *reach-searcher's* path through movement?

The kinesphere bubble that I am is a 45-year-old white woman from a Western country, a privileged woman who has been dancing her whole life and as an adult had the opportunity to pursue academic training. I have enjoyed such opportunities due to the country in which I was born, where society provides education for all regardless of one's family background, financial situation, gender, or age. I know that this is not the case in many countries. During my PhD journey, I have also been incredibly lucky in entering an immediate research environment that is very supportive and open, allowing my experiential approaches to writing organisational research. Not every PhD student even at the same university has had such accepting and open-minded supervisors and colleagues around them.

Of course, my working body entangles with everything else it is. My body carries the memories of three birth-givings and one heartbreaking loss, as well as all the echoes of the relationships I have had during my life. I am composed of the genetic heritage of my ancestors and moulded in all the encounters I have had with both other people and all the other material and intangible things in the world. Every memory of touching, smelling, seeing, hearing, moving, thinking, sensing, and feeling experiences is entangled in the now moment, where the body resonates with its encounters. All these entanglements the body carries in what I have started to call a *body situation*, emphasising that it is the body that bears all the dimensions of its situation. Therefore, situation does not refer only to the specific time and place where I am but consists always of all the marks that life has left on my flesh. Every moment adds a new layer to this timely and unique situation (Rauhala 1982), and through this ever-evolving body in its situation I conform, resist, and choose my ways of moving within the world in which I am embedded (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968).

I turn back, around my vertical axis, twisting my spine in a *horizontal movement* (Newlove and Dalby 2004) to look back, to understand better how I ended up here. I remember how my idea of thinking about embodied research as reach-searching in multiple directions from the reach-searcher's kinesphere was inspired by Jenny Helin's (2023) thoughts on vertical writing. She questioned the image of the research process as linear production and offered instead the image of vertical writing as a way to do research, to "go deep" in the sense of touching that which is most important, as well as finding ways to "fly high," through writing' (Helin 2023, 1). Helin's words resonated in my body as memories of the concrete movement experiences of Rudolf Laban's movement analysis categories: *vertical, horizontal, and sagittal movement planes* (Newlove and Delby 2004). I grew curious about whether research actions could be thought of as movements in multiple directions instead of proceeding in predetermined steps. Since then, I have resisted – with my thinking – writing movements – the idea that research could be done in a straightforward manner and forced into some preformed template, a proposition that would erase the complexity of our embodied entanglements with our research processes.

For me, doing research is more like dance improvisation than *walking directly* from one spot to another. Improvising means for me the creation of circumstances where all possible movement directions, qualities, speeds, and forms become possible. It is responding to the body's impulses, rhythms (Walker 2017 cited in Jääskeläinen and Helin 2021), senses, and emotions to draw

meaning from what has happened and is happening. Sinking into writing through body movements means, for me, recognising my movement preferences (Bartenieff and Lewis 2002; Laban 2011) as a reach-searcher, seeking the connecting surfaces, the touchpoints between those movements, and writing (Midgelow 2013). To write a research paper through these body movements is like I was creating a choreography (see Ulmer 2018), a structure wherein the movements settle in a certain order of words and paragraphs. The movements of the reach-searcher become visible and sensible through the reader's empathising with the movement experiences of *turning, proceeding, extending, bending, retrieving, reaching out, slowing down, accelerating, directing attention inwards* to reflect, and so on.

Beginning from body movements necessitates also understanding them as our primary way of relating with the rest of the world and with words and concepts (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012; Sheets-Johnstone 2019). As Longley (2013, 74) has put it: 'Movement is life itself, without the internal movement of our organs we cannot live. Touch triggers movement and movement engenders life, growth, and thinking.' There would thus not be words and concepts if we did not encounter them first as our kinesthetic experiences (Parviainen 2002; Sheets-Johnstone 2019).

By writing through my body movements I want to show how the experiences of thinking, moving, feeling, and writing are all connected, each being experiences of some kind of movement in and through the body (Longley 2013; Midgelow 2013). I also want to show how researchers' kinesphere bubbles are embedded in their environment and are therefore moving and moved by the world-canvas they are woven into – by the other kinesphere bubbles but also by all their other material and intangible entanglements (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968). Grounding my thinking in a corporeal ontology derived from Merleau-Ponty's ([1945] 2012) phenomenology of the body, I define embodiment as a nexus of the entanglements of the movements of thoughts, emotions, and the body within reciprocal connections with others. Through this ontological basis, I know that resistance, and hence an emphasis on writing in a more embodied way, is movement in itself. It is an focus on stretching the boundaries of what is considered 'academic' while still conforming to the negotiating movements of others in academia because our movements are connected no matter what.

I use Laban movement analysis (Laban 2011) as the inspiration for my emphasis on languaging some of the embodied experiences of my movements as a PhD researcher. By not merely sticking to the mechanistic description and classification of my movements into Laban's categories,² I reach-search their metaphorical power (Panhofer and Payne 2011). I reflect on the movements of my thoughts, emotions, and kinaesthetic experiences by asking what kinds of meanings they create in my body situation. In doing so, I want to encourage fellow researchers to aim their attention at their own body movement preferences in order to reflect on their unique ways of relating to their work (see Jääskeläinen and Helin 2021; Jääskeläinen et al. 2023).

The basic idea of movement analysis is that our habitual movements give us information about ourselves, others, and our embeddedness in the rest of the world:

So movement evidently reveals many different things. It is the result of the striving after an object deemed valuable, or of a state of mind. Its shapes and rhythms show the moving person's attitude in a particular situation. It can characterise momentary mood and reaction as well as constant features of personality. Movement may be influenced by the environment of the mover (Laban 2011, 2).

Therefore, I put forward the idea that we as researchers are, first and foremost, moving bodies, and our ability to think and rationalise is also produced by movements in that body (Sheets-Johnstone 2012, 2015, 2019; Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012). To emphasise how these connections manifest in the researcher's work, I will italicise the vocabulary that could be categorised through Laban's movement analysis while theoretical concepts are indicated in bold italics.

I think and write through my body situation, which also includes my dance movement therapist's training, where I learned how thinking patterns and emotions are understood to shine through our kinesthetic movements, as well as the other way around: changes in concrete body movements can shift our emotional states and patterns of thinking (see e.g. Levy 1988; Payne 2006; Pylvänäinen

2018). Kinesthetic movement is therefore related to learned research practices, which are embodied, 'playing across a range of dimensions a range of realms logic and ludic, critical and imaginary, (kin)aesthetic and (e)motional. In this way, the writing becomes an extension of the multifaceted experience moving' (Midgelow 2013, 15).

Because our writing and researching practices often move us on a pre-reflective level (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012; Ulmer 2018), our reflections on our daily research actions through movement analysis can help us to recognise our habitual working patterns and to stay connected to our sensing and feeling body (Jääskeläinen, Pietiläinen, and Meriläinen 2019; Ylönen 2006). Paying attention to the connections between these different modalities of experiencing the world is also how I construct the writing process of embodied research.

Directing attention to the movement of breathing leads me to sense my body in its wholeness again (Cancienne and Snowber 2003). I notice that the air feels dry in my nose when I breathe in. I notice that intensive thinking movements have caused *tension* in my *forehead, eyebrows, and eyes*. I breathe out air that my body has warmed and moisturised, and I *relax* a bit. I *step back* – I take distance from my immersed thinking – writing to summarise my purpose, which is to reach-search here my opportunities for developing embodied research writing with(in) my situational kinesphere bubble and to explore how it is limited and moulded by the other situational kinespheres. More broadly, I propose that thinking about research through its various options for qualities, speeds, and forms could release the creative powers needed to find one's way along the reach-searcher's path.

Multi-dimensional movements of the reach-searcher

I open my posture and look around the spot I am in with this particular paper. I start *horizontal movement* (Bartenieff and Lewis 2002; Newlove and Dalby 2004) with my upper body. *Slowly, I spiral* to see what is around my kinesphere, my zero-point of research. What surrounds the subject of embodied research within organisation studies? With this *spiralling movement*, I see not only the one horizon that I would encounter by staring straight ahead while staying still but all the horizons that surround this body. I see all the possible directions in which I could move, many possibilities for searching what others have written about the sensuous, writing body in organisations. I *reach out* to the databases and *vary the direction* of my *stretch* with different word combinations. I *catch* books and articles, and I start to read. What I read absorbs into my body situation. I could not remember all that I have read, but what I read changes me, my thinking, and the perspective of my body situation (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012) as my knowledge increases.

I *reach out* to read work from organisation studies on embodiment and 'writing differently.' These fields are vast, and I decide to *use the medium kinesphere*, where my limbs do not extend as far as they could but also do not stay close to my torso, instead moving somewhere in between those distances. I thus *reach* and familiarise myself with the literature that is relatively near my own, limiting my movements mostly to the embodiment of literature building on the phenomenology of the body (e.g. Dale and Latham 2014; Küpers 2015; Ladkin 2013; Thanem and Knights 2019). With the literature on 'writing differently,' I focus on feminist perspectives (e.g. Pullen, Helin, and Harding 2020; Gilmore et al. 2019; Jääskeläinen and Helin 2021).

I am **bordering** (Jääskeläinen et al. 2023) – negotiating with the boundaries and limits of my kinesphere – the endless possibilities of what and how much it is possible to read. The anxiousness starts to choke my throat: I do not think I will ever reach the feeling that I have read enough. Still, *reaching out in medium kinesphere* makes this research possible now. Maybe in the next dance, in the next article, I will be able to reach further, perhaps even relocating my kinesphere, which could open up new kinds of horizontal views.

What comes in repetitive pulses from this reading is the search for a contra-movement against the traditional methods of research writing and the need to understand such writing beyond the body–mind or research–researcher split. The researcher's body is understood through its connections to

the world (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968) and not as a staring outsider who is re-researching the world that already is; rather, they are moving with it and dancing in it (Sheets-Johnstone 2019; Snowber 2012, 2012b; Parviainen 2002). Therefore, writing research is moving and being moved in this nexus of bodies that think, rationalise, feel, sense, make sense, touch, and are touched at the same time (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012).

How is it possible to let this connection become an academic text? St. Pierre (2015) argues that, as a human practice, research cannot be anything else but embodied, because whatever we do, we do through our bodies, which are always already embodied. She thus does not see any point in emphasising the role of the body in academic writing. While her point is valid, I argue that the focus on writing through the researcher's bodily entanglements leaves different traces in the 'flesh' of the reader than those of a text that wants to forget its bodily origin. Understanding research writing as one human action that has transformational power in how we think, feel, and act in 'the flesh of the world' (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968) calls for writing that recognises and shows itself as an embodied process.

Those who have adopted the body's senses and movements as an onto-epistemological basis for their studies (e.g. Biehl and Volkmann 2019; Huopainen 2015; Mandalaki 2019; Mandalaki and Pérezts 2020; Satama 2017) manage to incorporate the dimensions of emotions, senses, and other movements in the body, engaging me in reading with empathy by evoking meanings, familiarity, and closeness (Biehl-Missal 2015; Leavy 2018; van Manen 2016). For example, Suvi Satama shares her fieldnote in which she describes her experience of listening to her whole body through sensory slowness while observing professional dancers: 'I felt distressed for the dancer and the smallest muscles in my legs were moving even though I was staying still and quiet on the floor' (Satama 2020, 218). This notion illustrates the embodied connection between the researcher and her research participants: The observing body responds with its movements to what is happening around it. The researcher cannot be an outsider with regard to their subject of research. Through practising body awareness skills, researchers can become more aware of how their bodies respond to and move with others (see Payne and Jääskeläinen, *forthcoming*), which could also help them engage with their research at an embodied level. Taking the researcher's movements into account opens up new perspectives on phenomena by focusing on the connections – or relationality – between the researcher's body and the phenomenon under study instead of treating them as separate.

The call to write these connections into academic production relates to the idea of post-qualitative research, which is not about offering generalisable new methods to replace previous ones but about expanding the boundaries of what counts as academic research (St. Pierre 2017, 2019). Writing the body in the text is one way of breaking away from traditions, and therefore it is also a political endeavour with roots in *écriture féminine (women's writing)*, first developed by feminist philosophers such as Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous (see Braidotti 1991). This writing movement increased the understanding of how the language itself was (and often still is) the bearer of masculine values. Seeking connections with the women's embodied experiences as textual expressions is one way to challenge the internalised, masculine norms. The *écriture féminine* relies on the ethics of difference, where the other is not seen as a reflection of the self but as an entity that should be valued in their difference (Braidotti 1991; Verhage 2008). There is a variety of different kinds of researchers, students, scholars, and readers of academic texts. Why, then, should different ways of understanding and knowing be forced into a uniform textual format that tries to neutralise the plurality of existence (Pullen, Helin, and Harding 2020)?

The more distant the writings of others I read from my spot are, the more I feel the *tension* between different methodological counterforces. This physical sensation of *pressure* tries to *squeeze* my ribcage tighter. A discussion with a colleague comes into my mind. Why does he not want to offer space for different ways of understanding what it is to know or recognise that these understandings are based on our definition of being a human in the world (Cunliffe 2022; Hujala et al. 2016; Rauhala 1982; Thanem 2015; Tsoukas and Chia 2011)? Only scientific, measurable knowledge can be called research, he says ... These thoughts *press me down, a vertical movement* initiated

by the movements of my emotions: hesitation makes my *knees* weak, self-doubt settles its weight on my *chest* and *slows down the speed* of my movements.

I *turn inwards*, and my attention glides to my sensuous, emotional body, which I reflect on and analyse (Jääskeläinen and Helin 2021). While Helin (2023) associates verticality with *slowing down* or even *stopping*, I propose that vertical movements can be performed at different *speeds*. For example, when reading a text thoroughly and making an effort to really understand what is read, *slowness* is required. In my view, the time spent on this vertical *diving* should be appreciated by emphasising quality over quantity in reading and thinking. But when vertical movements are thought of as an ‘embodied elevator’ (see Jääskeläinen and Helin 2021) in which conscious attention is shifting between recognising body signals and interpreting their meanings to inform research writing (Cancienne and Snowber 2003), the movements can also be experienced as *fast* visits into the depth of the body. The meanings of these ‘inner movements’ are interpreted through my unique body situation, through everything present for me now, including my past, my memories, and my habits of thinking about things, because they all are intertwined (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012). This construction is how I understand what it means to direct attention towards the connections within myself.

Recalling the conversation with my colleague makes feelings of bitterness, frustration, and desperation resurface, which I recognise through multiple sensations in my body. Why can he not acknowledge the significance of phenomenological thinking according to which researching and knowing are considered only movements that approach the phenomenon but never reach it, let alone ‘cover’ or ‘capture’ it (Heidegger 2002; Ropo and Parviainen 2001)? Nor can the phenomenon of the human body – whether one’s own or someone else’s – be totally ‘known.’ For example, I can never write out my experiences as they are experienced, because describing movements in writing and going through them first-hand are different ways of knowing (van Manen, 2016; Midge-low 2013). I can only *approach*, *move around*, and try to *reach* towards them.

I return to solitude, where I *step back* – a *sagittal movement* – which moves my kinesphere in general space. Here, the emphasis is on *withdrawing*, to better ascertain why I think it is important to develop embodied methods in the organisation studies field. Phenomenologically speaking, I am using *epoché*, recognising my *natural attitude* and not taking what is immediately given to me (van Manen 2016). *Epoché*, like the movement of a ballet dancer, *épaulement*, does not face the subject in a straightforward manner. Instead, the head *shifts* in the direction of the shoulder, and the body is *turned* slightly away from the audience. Positioning oneself a bit sideways with respect to what is ahead provides another way to relate with the research subject besides moving *en face*, with the body and the gaze directed towards the audience. In practice, this positioning is at this point an effort to stop and wonder about things that have become self-evident to me. If we just move with the *natural attitude* without trying to bracket (van Manen 2016) our learned ways of relating, the body easily covers the object with its own projections (see Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968), turning them into the mirror images of the self (Verhage 2008). *Epoché* means noticing the strings of the web through which I am connected to the phenomenon of embodied writing. I try to find a way to re-orient my attention and, as such, to possibly find a new angle.

I close my eyes to *reach in*, letting my attention move vertically, asking from my body how I ended up here. I hear the echoes of the methodological literature on post-qualitative and phenomenological research methods. Reading about them has become a force in my body situation, which is *pushing me in the direction* of finding my own way of doing research, my unique path that does not follow any preformed methodological protocols (St. Pierre 2017, 2019; van Manen 2016). Why did this change become important to me? *A sigh*. I *turn* to look again over my shoulder, a movement in the *horizontal plane* (Newlove and Dalby 2004), to look into my past. How did I end up here?

I remember how preformed protocols felt simply too restrictive, too *narrow*, too *forced* to be able to say something about the embodied experiences I had gathered from the facilitation sessions I had guided in organisations.³ The prevailing methods made my shoulders *tense* and my breathing *heavier*. The options for my movements were limited by the rules and structures that had to be

obeyed. It felt like being inside a tight but flexible tube, where I had only a *little space* to move and breathe. I could not go *down* or *up*, nor move my arms and legs, but I felt I was forced to *bow* – a *sagittal movement* with my upper body (Newlove and Dalby 2004) – to certain forms, traditions, and protocols of analysing.

In reading Elizabeth St. Pierre's texts, it felt like she had the power to cut this tube open by saying: 'Qualitative research should be something totally and fundamentally different compared to positivist sciences. There are still many practices, ontological underpinnings, and methodological choices that qualitative research has adopted from natural sciences. We should start talking about post-qualitative research, which genuinely stays with the different understanding of knowledge. Only with that can something genuinely new be born.'⁴

What a relief! I was again able to *flow free* in my movements. My body was no longer forced to perform a certain choreography but was free to improvise – free to find its own way of moving through the research process. At the same time, my newly discovered methodological freedom was also terrifying. Writing this article, I feel once more insecurity and loneliness invading my kinesphere bubble, becoming tangible through bodily sensations: a lump in my throat, *tension* in my *shoulders* and *arms*. A *deep sigh*. Now that I am allowed to find my own way, how can I find it? Insecurity and anxiousness make me *curl up*. How can I make my path my 'own' if I am so entangled with the thoughts of others? How can I ever finish my PhD dissertation so that it is simultaneously something new, done in a unique way, and still able to satisfy the institution's requirements for an academic dissertation? *Throwing* myself onto this insecure path with no guarantee that my efforts would lead to the attainment of these goals required me to rely on one guiding thought: As long as I keep moving, these movement actions will lead to my goals sooner or later. At least, it became evident to me that I cannot *withdraw* anymore, so why not *throw* myself into this exploration with my whole body? In this moving exploration, I must allow myself to get lost (see Vola 2022), to *fall down*, *get up*, try again, and maybe think about moving in *another direction*, all hoping that these movements will lead to an acceptable result.

Writing connectedness

Is freedom of movement a mere dream? My kinesphere bubble is so entangled with other kinesphere bubbles and my research is so dependent on the movements of others that the freedom of choosing my movements starts to seem like an illusion. What does it mean in practice for the reach-searcher's work to be connected, to be part of the 'flesh of the world' (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968)? What does it mean that our movements are at the same time passive and active (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968; Parviainen 2002)?

I understand it to mean that we are both moved by and moving the nexus we are embedded in and that choosing our actions means making a selection within this context. As Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2012, 478) write, the movement/action is always the choice of *some direction*, and even *stopping* – refusing to move – is still a movement, a choice:

I am everything that I see and I am an intersubjective field, not in spite of my body and my historical situation, but rather by being this body and this situation and by being, through them, everything else. From this perspective, [...] I can no longer pretend to be a nothingness and to choose myself continuously from nothing. [...] I can, of course, interrupt my projects at any moment. But what exactly is this power? It is the power of beginning something else, for we never remain in suspense in the nothingness.

How then do my reach-searching movements in this nexus affect the world's flesh that I am part of? The project of writing from embodied ontology is about placing an emphasis on *dismantling* dualistic thinking based on binary oppositions, such as mind/body, individual/collective, visible/invisible, by stating that all these concepts are attached to each other and therefore move together (Daly 2016). It is about showing through writing the reversibility, the connectedness of our bodymind to its environment (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968), finding new concepts with which to describe what is experienced (St. Pierre 2019). Writing embodied research is about repairing the cuts that

Western philosophical and religious thinking has made in the matter of the world and especially the matter of the human body, those which have led us to privilege our thinking capabilities and abandon our bodies as mere objects that should be controlled (Ellingson 2017; Hope 2011; Thanem and Knights 2019).

I *sit* on the floor and think about how the value of doing embodied research could relate to what Helin (2023) meant by vertical writing, which goes deeper to be able to reach higher. But when the *vertical movement*, which happens due to the heaviness of this body – carrying all the memories, all the loss it has experienced – has me *falling* to the ground, how is it possible to find the strength to *reach up and higher* from here? Could it be possible that *surrendering to slow, vertical movements* instead of *rushing and forcing myself forward* could actually nourish my writing movements? ‘To not rush over but try to stay, even though it hurts’ (Helin 2023, 14). Fear of slowness, of being unproductive and incompetent, invades my body. What if I get lost forever?

I try *lifting* my hand because I feel it is the lightest part of my body now. I *reach up*, like a beggar. This hand asks for help. Maybe there could be another hand, someone or something: the energy of the other. Suddenly, I feel someone taking my hand and with a friendly glance, brings us to a place where thoughts of self-doubt and anxiousness can pause. In this speechless conversation between bodies, I can feel that I am understood, seen, and even cherished. I feel privileged to get to experience these kinds of work relations, where theories embody in us as decisions to value our differences (Jääskeläinen et al. 2023). The loving and caring attitude for joint work, each other and those who are involved (Kiriakos and Tienari 2018) *pull* us together merging into the double sensation of touching and being touched (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968).

How grateful I am for the colleagues and research participants who have come my way, and for the explorations that have united us, some for longer, some for shorter periods of time! Our kinespheres, our body situations touch, and in part, they merge with each other and something new starts to evolve. Their thoughts merge with mine, giving rise to shared understandings, thinking together towards something that none of us could create alone. Their affects resonate in my body, moving and shaking, evoking emotions, creating turbulences, calming me down. Our reach-searching bodies are both made of and making these worldly entanglements, affecting and being affected by the whole ecosystem (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968, [1945] 2012; Parviainen 2002). When we begin to move in connection with others, our movements create situationally unique qualities that inform others about who we are as a group or a pair (see Laban 2011). Our unique movements melt into a common dance (Hujala et al. 2016; Mandalaki and Pérezts 2020; Ylönen 2003).

Learning within these connected, touching bubbles is not merely harmonious – it also opens up even more chances to be hurt. The possibility of being hurt follows when I let someone into my personal space, when the kinesphere bubbles touch and merge. This contact is how connections can be formed, but at the same time, reaching out towards the other builds a gateway to being injured, abandoned, and rejected (see Verhage 2008). But I would not want to work in any other way, by distancing myself or by caring less about others and our joint work. No, my preference is to draw closer to others, to colleagues, students, participants, and readers. Writing about this closeness and these connections (see Chadwick 2017; van Manen 2016) is what embodied research means to me.

Reaching in, reaching down, reaching out, reaching high. Here there is an alternation between the *large kinesphere* – which makes me feel confident in expressing myself fully with far-reaching movements, my spine stretched through its whole lengthiness, fearlessly facing what comes, taking all my space shamelessly, experiencing my entire body in its wideness – and my *withdrawal to the small or medium kinesphere*, squeezing myself to be as small as possible, where I feel safe and where solitude nourishes the next iteration of *reaching out* towards others. My *vertical*, ‘inner’ movements, can emerge as putting words to the movements of sensations, feelings, and thoughts, leak (Pullen and Rhodes 2008) onto this page. How much I can afford to leak? How much do I want to reveal?

Why am I scared of showing my movements? They are not ‘owned’ by me. They happen through me as ‘immediately and directly felt dynamic intensities, amplitudes, momentum’ (Sheets-Johnstone

2015, 28) that derive from my relating to someone or something. Even though exploration of the reach-searcher's movements in their kinesphere might seem individualistic or solipsist, combining them with the phenomenology of the body's understanding of its relationality with other bodies, things, and thoughts shows that the kinesphere of the researcher is never detached from the world; rather, its movement qualities have been shaped in the body's entanglements with others (e.g. Winther 2008). Even though the focus is on individual movement experiences and their connections to writing research, these movements are always already embedded in the vast nexus of thoughts had by others, texts written by others, the other bodies we meet, and those with whom we discuss and communicate through our movements.

The learned habits of writing academic texts do not change easily. For example, Emmanouela Mandalaki (2019, 7) reflects on the stubborn nature of the echoes of learned dualistic understandings about what qualifies as doing and writing research, even when we try to write in a more embodied way: 'I was not just a researcher, nor was I just a dancer; I wanted to be both, but I thought that they had to be separate. I wanted to maintain my objectivity in an otherwise fully embodied process.' In my interpretation, it was here that Mandalaki realised that the theories and techniques of doing research are already absorbed in our bodies and have become a part of our embodiment. Further, Sandra Wallenius-Korkalo writes about the moment when it occurred to her that '[t]he body I dance with is the same body I do research with! How, then, to approach my academic body and academic work through this insight? How to dance writing?' (Kinnunen, Wallenius-Korkalo, and Rantala 2021, 663).

I do not think that it was a coincidence that, while focusing their attention towards their sensuous, moving bodies, Mandalaki and Wallenius-Korkalo, amongst others, have become aware of their embodied thought patterns regarding what it means to do research as a body (see Karssiens et al. 2014). Instead, I think that it was precisely because they addressed the body that they noticed it.

Movements of defending

It seems that whenever researchers try to bring the body into the text – to attempt to write *from* the body – they become exposed to the *suppressive* forces that want to erase these methods as a valid way of doing research. The critique can even come as attacks that take the form of *sharp strikes*, which can *cut* and hurt. I recall a recent case where Emmanouela Mandalaki's and Mar Pérezts's research (2020), which was *reaching out* to develop new ways in which the body could be expressed as part of a research paper, faced cyberbullying after successful publication. Reading about this situation *froze* my movements for a moment. When I think of this incident now, negative thoughts make me heavy, my spine *collapse*, and my chest *sink*.

The body seems to be a dangerous topic and medium in academic writing, even though everyone who writes is a body (Walker 2017 cited in Jääskeläinen and Helin 2021). Perhaps the body reminds us of our mortality (Dolezal 2017) and, as such, of the uncontrollable aspects of life. Could the need to overemphasise our capability to rationalise be a reaction to the uncomfortable feelings evoked by these thoughts? Is the knowledge of ourselves as fundamentally vulnerable (Gilson 2014) an intolerable fact for some of us? Could these emotions lead to these aggressive behaviours within academia? What kinds of human emotions lie behind the need for rationalisation, arrogance, the disembodied use of language, and stiff protocols for doing research? Whatever they are, when left unrecognised they will become a suffocating force for the multiple channels of knowing (see Ahonen et al. 2020; Braidotti 1991; Gilmore et al. 2019; Pullen, Helin, and Harding 2020).

The anger and frustration *flush* the negative and *paralyzing* emotional movements from my body. Suddenly I feel energetic and powerful. I want to defend Mandalaki and Pérezts and all of us who seek to write embodied academic texts, even though I really do not like fighting. My movement preference, one part of my body situation, is for *sustained, light, bound flow*, and *slowing movement qualities*. I want to return to those positions whenever possible. They are my home. However, when I have to defend my ideas and be critical towards those of others, I need other qualities, too. I need *quick*,

straight, and heavyweight punching effort qualities (Laban 2011), to defend my ideas against the *strikes* of criticism. I do not usually like these movement qualities, because they take a lot of energy, and therefore I would rather solve confrontations with *smooth* discussions.

Because the world and people are what they are, there will always be those who want to harm others in one way or another. There will always be *tensions*, confrontations, and conflicts between people, and thus I find it useful to consider also those movement qualities that feel unfamiliar and even uncomfortable in my body situation. Little by little I have started to learn to deal with the pain I feel while defending. As at kung fu practice, at first, the pain made me want to *escape, pull back, and close myself* in and others out, to *squeeze* myself into a *small, tight kinesphere* in the *form of a ball*.

I see the same pattern in my daily work in how difficult it is for me to defend my views in our community. Arguing and defending my point of view over our lunch break suddenly evokes a *whirlpool* in my chest. I feel a lump in my throat, and I fight against tears. Why am I so sensitive?! The closer I feel to a colleague, the more their criticism hurts. This frustration comes with thoughts about them not understanding – and not even wanting to understand – me. Self-doubt visits regularly: Maybe my thoughts are not enough. Maybe it is not possible from my body situation to reach far enough to become a researcher recognised and understood also by others. Maybe I just fail.

And how would I defend my work against the accusations that claim autoethnographic methods, which focus on the researcher's body, are narcissistic (see Rhodes 2009; Thanem 2015)? According to the *Cambridge Dictionary* (2022), being narcissistic includes having 'a hard time seeing another person's point of view' and 'having too much interest and admiration for oneself.' Doing embodied research, as it is understood in feminist thought, is based on ideas of inclusion and expansion rather than narrowing down (Braidotti 1991; Pullen and Rhodes 2008), which is quite the opposite of being narcissistic. I would also say that it depends on the purpose of bringing the researcher's body into the text. If the body is considered a reflective medium through which we can learn things that otherwise would remain hidden (see Satama 2017; 2020), I do not see how it could be narcissistic. Or would the research that does not take the researcher's body situation, and thus their unique movements in their kinespheres, into account could end up presenting organisational life as a polished ideal (Pullen and Rhodes 2008), creating an image of the researcher as an exemplary, distant figure that as such is – falsely – capable of perfection? Would this image not lead one to view oneself as a researcher through excessive, even narcissistic, self-admiration?

Competition within academia likewise feels like *punches* that I need to defend myself against. The *slashes* that I take come in the form of rejections from journals and they mould the ways in which I dare to write my next papers. For example, the disappointment at a recent rejection of my paper, which was an attempt at writing an empirical research article in a more embodied, evocative (van Manen 2016) way, has become part of my current body situation as a reach-searcher. It certainly had an effect on how far I dared to reach with the first version of this paper. The wise and encouraging comments from the reviewers gave me the courage to write much more freely from the body in this iteration, enabling me to try to *let go* of the fear. The feedback enabled my movements of writing to *breathe* as *freely* as possible, inhaling the encouragement and exhaling creative movements. Embodied writing is therefore always in movement (de Souza Bispo and Gherardi 2019; Gherardi 2019), and every iteration is a different experience as the reach-searcher's situation changes from moment to moment (see Helin 2023).

Through the freedom of movement to a choreography

The movements in my situational kinesphere here formed a kind of choreography in the sense that they are now written in this article and the words will not change after publication. This choreography took its final form in the process of collective, negotiating movements with the academic community (see Ulmer 2018). Even though my sensing–thinking–feeling–writing movements with this paper have been *frozen* into a literal artefact, the choreography they formed can be followed by the reader. These words can be repeated, reread again and again, like a choreography, but their

interpretation changes as the words *flow* through the reader's body situation, which is different every time.

I developed the concept of the reach-searcher to replace the idea of the researcher as a researcher, with the intention of theorising research writing as something that is always in movement, always happening through the body, instead of something re-found from the outside of the body. I illustrated this idea through my reach-searching movements in multiple directions in my situated kinesphere (space: horizontal, sagittal, and vertical), using multiple movement qualities (effort), exploring different body positions (shape), and highlighting the movements of different parts of my body (body) (Bartenieff and Lewis 2002; Davies 2006; Laban 2011; Newlove and Dalby 2004). If some direction or movement quality did not work, I chose another one. With my writing, I wanted to express closeness, connectedness, and movement, which I think are at the core of the concepts of embodiment.

Sometimes I felt that my writing was fluent, almost *free flow*, but often still *bound* as its *flow* is restricted by the norms, rules, and structures of what is considered academic research even if I try to find my own path forward (St. Pierre 2017, 2019; van Manen 2016). I still consider it important to write the body movement aspect of the reach-searcher's embodiment into the discussion, to approach the experiences of research writing as they are experienced (van Manen 2016). Drawing inspiration from Laban's movement analysis helped me to understand more clearly the infinite possible movement combinations, directions, speeds, and efforts that were possible in my body situation. I genuinely believe that by allowing more freedom, for example through these kinds of special issues, to experiment with movement possibilities, new methodological perspectives can emerge. By trying novel ways of embodied writing, the boundaries of what counts as academic research are negotiated.

My main purpose here was not only to write *about* the academic body in its movement but also to write *through* its movements so that they could work as an example of how movement analysis can be used to trace one's own movement preferences and, as such, perhaps also to locate some writing–movement preferences. Reading about my movements offered the opportunity to imagine them as concrete and visible and thus to find familiarity or foreignness in them. In this experiment, my only rule to myself was to stay connected to my writing, sensing and feeling my body and staying in motion.

But how far can I reach-search from this kinesphere? How deep can I *dive* into *vertical* thinking (Jääskeläinen and Helin 2021)? How high can I reach with these thoughts (Helin 2023)? How widely do I dare to *open up* my posture, and how freely can I breathe while developing, evolving, and growing to become a reach-searcher? I noted that my movements are dependent on those of others, as my reach-searcher's kinesphere is nothing without other kinespheres, merging, colliding, and moulding mine with their movements. Therefore, my movement choices are always limited by the flesh of the world they are woven into (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968). The rest of the world *shakes, breaks, swings, pushes, pulls, touches*, and causes affectual resonance in this body (e.g. Keränen 2018). Living is always choosing some direction, quality, and orientation within a certain body situation, which includes a certain culture, gender, species, time, place, genetic heritage, and sensation of a particular moment (Rauhala 1982). Movement is therefore choosing from among our entanglements with the world (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012).

By acknowledging that I am part of these entanglements, I wanted to explore the concept of embodiment from the body movement perspective – to write about the connectedness of emotional, thinking, and writing movements (Levy 1988; Sheets-Johnstone 2012, 2015, 2019). I let kinaesthetic movement trials, thoughts, sensations, and emotions dance together in my attempt to show in practice how our conceptual thinking is related to our kinaesthetic experiences, emotions, and sensations. We would not be able to think about concepts like *up, down, forward, backward, or twisting* without having experienced them first through our kinaesthetic bodies (Parviainen 2002; Sheets-Johnstone 2019).

Our thought patterns and emotions are understood to shine through our kinaesthetic movements, but it is also the other way around: Concrete body movements can change our emotional

states and patterns of thinking (Levy 1988; Payne 2006; Pylvänäinen 2018). Therefore, kinaesthetic movement is related to learned research practices, which are embodied, often on a pre-reflective level. Movement analysis of our research actions can help us to recognise our patterns of relating and perhaps to find ways of remaining connected with what is happening in our reach-searchers' bodies. We also need bodily feedback to detect our habitual thinking and, for example, reflect upon which values we base our research actions (Sheets-Johnstone 2019; Snowber 2012, 2012b). Therefore, embodied writing can also be thought of as an ethical way of writing research (see Pullen and Rhodes 2021; Rhodes 2009(8)).

Thinking of research as body movements is also one way of understanding the process of writing as a multi-dimensional movement rather than a linear set of protocols (Helin 2023; St. Pierre 2015, 2017; van Manen 2016). These movements try to dismantle over-rationalised modes of doing research, which tend to present it as more straightforward and 'clean' than it is in mundane experiences (Ahonen et al. 2020; Pullen and Rhodes 2008; Satama 2017).

Even if we agree that in truth all research is embodied – because researchers are embodied creatures (St. Pierre 2015) – I argue that there still is a point in emphasising and describing how the researcher is embodied. Understanding better what body movement operating in connection with analytical thinking can mean at an experiential level might help researchers to find their paths, including alternative movement directions when they, for example, feel that they are stuck with their writing. If we wish to develop genuinely embodied research methods, different expressions and hence different movement directions must be trialled, even if these movements put us at risk of being bullied (Mandalaki and Pérezts 2023).

Presenting body movements as the focus of our research methodology also invites us to think about their onto-epistemological basis more thoroughly (see Hujala et al. 2016; Tsoukas and Chia 2011), including the assumption that our understanding of our reach-searching bodies as being part of the world matters to our writing. As Huopainen (2015) and Biehl (2017) point out, it is remarkable how little research attention body movement has received in organisation studies, even though everything we do in our daily lives is some sort of body movement. The information potential of body movement is underused in answering questions like how organisations become organised on a practical, mundane, and experiential level. This proposition does not require a return to anthropocentrism but rather a recognition that organisational structures result from our previous movements' entanglements (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968).

The structures of academic work render manifest, for example, beliefs about what is considered academic research. The body is a medium for highlighting our preferences while doing research: Do we prefer inclusion, expansion, and valuing of differences, or do we want to restrict methodological developments to the ontologies adopted from the positivist sciences (Cunliffe 2022)? Do we want to invest in the creation of something genuinely new (see St. Pierre 2017, 2019; Vola 2022) or sustain old ways of moving and understanding what knowledge is and how it can be produced?

Finally, I hope that you, my reader, did find a way to connect and engage with this text, to let it be not a fixed truth but an opening to new horizons of what is possible (Vola 2022). As Ulmer (2018, 733) puts it: 'Writing is choreography that remains in motion as it spills over and unfolds in multiple directions at once.' I hope that my movements on these pages are an inspiration for you to seek creatively your unique ways of moving with(in) your reach-searcher's kinesphere. Will this impulse allow your movements to burst into a writing dance that is not limited by the weight of the history and traditions behind what is considered academic research?

Notes

1. I use bold italics for the concepts and italics for the movement vocabulary. I explain this later in this section.
2. Laban's basic categories are: body (what body parts move?), effort (how does the body move?), shape (what kinds of shapes does the body take while moving?), and space (how does the body relate to the space?) (Laban 2011; Newlove and Dalby 2004; Davies 2006).

3. In an article that I wrote with Jenny Helin (Jääskeläinen and Helin 2021), I wondered what analysing others' experiences through understanding the researcher's embodied connections to them may look like in a research paper.
4. Interpretation from St. Pierre's texts (2017, 2019).

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