INVOLVED ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE STUDY OF EMBODIED AGENCY: CAPTURING MOVEMENT THAT EVADES THE EYE

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Abstract

Providing understanding on the micro-level foundation of the activities of organizations is dependent on ethnographic approaches (see e.g. Desmond 2007; Kellogg 2009; Michel 2011; Nippert-Eng 1996; Wulff 2001). While these approaches contain several variations of one general theme, there is still room for a form of ethnographic research that we have named involved ethnography. In this approach, the researcher is more involved with the social community being studied than a typical ethnographer, but less involved of that than an actual member of the same community. In addition, involved ethnography takes into account and builds on the process in which a researcher may during the fieldwork turn from an outsider into an active partaker in relation to the community being studied. We believe that this form of ethnography is an especially critical tool in the examination of the subtle variations in how organizational routines are being implemented. To support our argument, we present observations from an ongoing study on professional dance. In this context, variation in micro-level organizational routines materializes in the form of embodied agency as a substantial part of dancers' work consists of shaping routines through the means of bodily and aesthetic expression. In its entirety, the study makes two main contributions. First, it operates as an example of how involved ethnography is conducted in practice and thus permits us to define the most distinctive characteristics of this approach. Second, it provides general insight into

the kinds of conceptual phenomena that can be addressed with this particular form of ethnography.

Keywords: involved ethnography, organizational routines, embodied agency, professional dance

INTRODUCTION

"The man looks himself but is unable to see under the surface.
Neither himself nor the world around him.
Our feelings are mysteries and formed in our imagination.
Thus, our thoughts have nothing to do with the reality.
At that moment, when his thoughts encounter my imagination
borns the feeling that conquers the room without walls
my innermost."
(Freelance dancer, solo production)

In general terms, ethnography is most often considered a way of analyzing and writing about social life (Watson 2011). Ethnography is, thus, a combination of method and subject, which makes it more a research approach than a concrete, pre-defined set of methodological tools to be used on the field (Van Maanen 2011). While there are slightly varying views on the core content of ethnography, it has been widely adopted as a way in which understanding on the micro-level foundation of social structures, such as organizations, can be reached (Kellogg 2009; Michel 2011). However, as organizations become increasingly dispersed by their structure and dynamic by their nature, traditional ethnographic approaches become more and more difficult to apply. As a response, attention has been directed to a wide array of moderations and reformulations to previous ethnographic approaches. These include autoethnography (Ellis 2004) and reflexive (Davies 1999), institutional (Smith 2001), critical (Madison 2005), visual (Pink 2011) and sensory ethnographies (Pink 2009).

While each of these reformulations extends the prevailing imagination on the ways in which ethnography may be conducted, they do seem to lack something that we in this paper put forth under a name of involved ethnography (henceforth IE). Involved ethnography has some resemblance to insider research (cf. Brannick & Coghlan 2007; Taylor 2011) because also the latter highlights the importance of the researcher's emotional commitment to the research phenomenon. The distinctive character of IE, however, is based on the idea of positioning the

researcher simultaneously as an insider and an outsider rather than only one or the other (see Dwyer & Buckle 2009, 60−61). What is more, IE reminds the researchers of organizational phenomena about the possibility to choose their research objects among those in which they have already become personally involved with prior to starting the study. Such objects may also be the easiest ones for a researcher to obtain research access.

The potential of IE as a methodological approach lies in its capability to get the researcher beyond the subtle variations in how individual actors implement organizational routines. In the context of dance, these variations materialize in how individual and groups of dancers express pre-defined movements and other elements (e.g. voices, sighs and glances) of a dance piece. In addition to the leeway the dancers have in conducting these physical activities in a particular manner, at the same time they also have an opportunity to express various emotional states. Together the physiological and emotional aspect form the basis for embodied agency with which we refer to dancers' leeway to act according to their own interests within prevailing conditions and, at least to some extent, even to change these conditions (see Feldman & Pentland 2003). Hence, dance as a research object offers an exceptional opportunity to study organizational routines that in this context materialize in the form of embodied agency. This is because a substantial part of dancers' work is based on carefully rehearsed routines that have been repeated numerous times, but which are at times of public presentation conducted through the means of personal, instantaneously produced expression. Getting beyond words and the surface level of routinized actions with the help of IE is here possible not only due to the researcher's familiarity of the field of dance, but also to her various, complementary positions in relation to the field during the research process. In such a situation, the researcher is not limited to one point of view from which the research phenomenon can be observed.

This paper will proceed as follows. The next section discusses previous ethnographically-oriented research with respect to the position that it takes towards researcher being an insider or an outsider in his or her relation to the phenomenon under study. The section especially draws attention to insider research and autoethnography, which have the most in common with the form of ethnography being sketched and developed here. The section closes with reflections on the nature of organizational routines and embodied agency and the potential that IE could have in providing further understanding on these and social phenomena of a similar kind. The section thereafter describes how we used IE in the present study on professional dance. Then we move to the presentation of the empirical findings that especially

intend to show the usefulness of IE by describing the conceptual progress that it permits in the study of organizational routines and embodied agency.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The purposes of this paper lead us to two theoretical discussions to which we intend to link the already conducted and still ongoing empirical study. Firstly, we need to pay attention to the extent to which various forms of ethnographic research differ in their orientation towards the position that they propose for the researcher with respect to the phenomenon being studied. Secondly, it is essential that we briefly outline recent research on organizational routines and embodied agency as we this way may clarify the nature and areas of potential conceptual contribution that IE as a methodological approach may be expected to yield.

Different insider-outsider positions among ethnographic research

As a general methodological orientation, ethnographic research has a long tradition in the field of management and organization studies. In part, this is because ethnographic research is diverse by its inherent nature and it can thus be applied in multiple ways and for various purposes in organizational settings. It has remained free from technical jargon (Van Maanen 2006, 18). Most often, ethnography is defined as a method that involves participant observation and interviewing by the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, 1). More recently, it has become typical to consider ethnography more as a methodological approach towards a research phenomenon rather than merely a method for collecting empirical evidence. Such views underline the nature of ethnography as a process of experiencing, interpreting and representing knowledge about culture, society, organization or individuals based heavily on ethnographers' own experiences (see Crotty 1998, 7; Pink 2011, 22; Van Maanen 2010; Watson 2011). These views also highlight that ethnography can be systematically reflexive about the researcher's positionality (Yanow 2009). This development coincides with the emergence of new variations and exemplars of conducting ethnographic research. We have collected most important of these in Table 1 below.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Out of the recently prominent variations of the general theme, critical ethnography especially focuses on changes in cultural forms and engages in examining political, social and economic context for these forms rather than in the activities of individuals or groups (Carspecken 1996). The critical ethnographer calls into question taken-for-granted assumptions about these cultural forms and moves from questions of "what is" to those of "what could be". However, critical ethnography has been criticized for its aim to address social change without systematic attention to researcher's personal position towards this change. As a result, contemporary critical ethnography puts more weight on this aspect and sees the research process as an ongoing dialogue between the researcher and the Other (cf. Madison 2005, 5−7; 14). As another example, visual ethnography highlights that human experience may be triggered and expressed through visual material. Still, images and words do not play the same role in academic work and words cannot be replaced by images in theoretical discussion of the implications of ethnographic studies. Nonetheless, in visual ethnography the form of the relationship between the researcher and the research object depends largely on the researcher's background and research interests (see Pink 2011, 6; 39; 52).

Autoethnography is also a distinctive form of ethnography because it refers to the situation in which the researcher addresses specific research problems on the basis of his or her own experiences. In a sense, autoethnography draws from the tradition of participant observation and engagement in personal experience. It is also an approach that uses the researcher as a subject (Haynes 2011). From the perspective of feasibility, it has several strengths. These include the ease of establishing research access and rapport, reduced resource requirements and reduced problems with translation. In contrast, the challenges of autoethnography include the difficulties to provide critical observational distance to the research object, potential role conflicts, and the fact that such positions cannot be easily arranged (Karra & Phillips 2008).

In the broadest sense research membership can be viewed as a three-level typology in which researchers may become involved in either peripheral, active or complete membership roles (Adler & Adler 1987; see Figure 1 below). When the different ethnographic approaches are arranged with respect to relationship that they impose between the researchers and the research object, we may recognize a clear continuum between relatively distant and ultimately close relationship. When we supplement the ethnographic approaches with those that have only concentrated on the degree of closeness between the researcher and the research object (i.e. insider-outsider and insider research) we may make three observations (see Figure 1 below). First, ethnographic research has recognized several degrees of such closeness whereas

for non-ethnographic research this aspect has not been as important. Second, although insider research in several senses does not represent ethnographic research that shares a distinctive way of collecting and reporting material from the field, but, instead, represents a wide array of methodological arrangements, it has a distinctive commonality with autoethnography. Insider research most often refers to studies by full members of particular communities on these same communities. The researcher thus shares an identity, language, and experiences with the other members of the community in question (Asselin 2003). The opposite of this situation is a researcher that only forms the contacts needed to conduct the study in a pre-defined form (Brannick & Coghlan 2007). In any case, when the researcher by him or herself is firmly tied to the research object, the process of intimate research then may even be called a type of autoethnography (Taylor 2011). Actually, there is no longer a clear subject-object distinction in organization and management theory and the social experience should be considered as intersubjective rather than subjective (Cunliffe 2011, 651−653). In addition, a large body of methodological literature exists on insider research and ethnography, which recognizes the criticality of the researcher's role as an actor and active partaker in the phenomenon under study (see e.g. Brannick & Coghlan 2007; Dwyer & Buckle 2009; Labaree 2002; Taylor 2011).

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Third, despite the substantial attention among the ethnographic approaches towards this aspect there are still forms of relationships between researcher and the research object to be identified. In particular, it seems that there is room for ethnographic research that would recognize potential provided by changes in the relationships between the researcher and the research object during the research process. This third aspect is exactly the one that we consider involved ethnography (IE) to provide new answers to. On the one hand, this is because the researcher operating in the spirit of IE is more involved with the community being studied than a typical ethnographer, but less involved of that than an actual member of it. In other words, he or she is neither an outsider nor an insider. By using the word "involved" we emphasize the researcher's own experiences of the research phenomenon and his or her personal, emotional involvement in it. On the other hand, involved ethnography

recognizes the process in which a researcher may during the research process turn from an observer into an active partaker or even a temporary insider. This is due to the researcher's previous involvement in the field and his or her previously established social connections and more or less intimate relationships to actors representing the object of research. Up to date, such gradual changes have not, however, been recognized as an essential characteristic of ethnographic research.

We expect that IE is a methodological approach that proves critical especially with respect to increasing understanding on phenomena that require relatively close proximity between the researcher and the research object, but which at the same time benefit from the researcher's opportunity to distract him or herself from it. The study of organizational routines in general and embodied agency in particular are examples of such subjects. We claim that in the study of these phenomena simultaneous sensitiveness to experiences and feelings of those representing the research object and to those of the researcher are essential for delivering empirically rich descriptions of the research phenomenon.

Organizational routines and embodied agency

When set in a wider conceptual context, we see organizational routines as a way in which actors accomplish agency in organizational settings. In the sense that agency refers to actors' opportunities to alter the conditions in which they operate and thus become masters of their own fate, there is reason to see it neither utterly large nor limited (Barnes 2000; Barley & Tolbert 1997). Instead, there is reason to consider, for example, individual people who often try to and occasionally also succeed in producing change in their social context, especially when facing difficulties or challenges (Seo & Creed 2002). In addition to such visible structural changes, however, agency may also materialize in more nuanced variations in how individuals and groups of individuals conduct routines in personal manner. Agency thus materializes as active engagement of individuals in on-going social actions in which they selectively locate and implement routines and tailored forms of action (Emirbayer & Mische 1998; Feldman & Pentland 2003).

In the study of routines it is important to make a distinction between their ostensive and performative aspects (Feldman & Pentland 2003). The ostensive aspect of routines refers to the prevailing understanding by a particular actor of the key characteristics of the routines in question. The ostensive aspects are thus different kinds of heuristic scripts used by individuals of the same routine. In contrast, the performative aspect of routines refers to the way how the

actor in question actually conducts them. The important connection between these two aspects is that when performing routines at specific time and space individual and social actors to some extent moderate their conceptual understanding of the routine which then has an effect on the next performance of the same routine (Feldman & Pentland 2003; Pentland, Hærem & Hillson 2010). As a result, in the ostensive sense, the actor's understanding of the routine has changed. While this attention to organizational routines is interesting by itself, it is even more interesting as a tool for the reconceptualization of agency in contexts where the human body plays an important role (e.g. Kellogg 2009; Michel 2011).

Embodied agency consists of bodily knowledge (see Parviainen 2002) that is is connected to routines in the sense that it covers simultaneously the latter's ostensive and performative aspects. Together, these form the basis for professional development and change. Bodily knowledge refers to an individual's ability to know in and through the body including kinesthetic empathy and aesthetic ability to express oneself through movements (Parviainen 2002; Koivunen & Wennes 2011). Embodied agency can also be connected to discussions of aesthetics, vulnerability, relationality and spatiality (see for example Aalten 2007; Campbell, Meynell & Sherwin 2009; Maitlis 2009; Noland 2009). For example, embodied agency materializes as a result of the vulnerability of the body. In bodily-intensive professions physical limitations and the possibilities of injuries are always present. For an individual, the risk of a forced early retirement at an early phase of career as well as physical pain and exhaustion indicate to him or her that there are limits to the extent to which body can be used as an instrumental for one's agency (Michel 2011; Maitlis 2009). Taken together, these characteristics make embodied agency an excellent exemplar of how individual actors use their leeway to implement routines in a personal way.

The connection between involved ethnography and embodied agency

We have above described the nature of involved ethnography (IE) as an approach in which the researcher is close enough to the research object without being a 'native' in the sense given by insider research or autoethnography. What is more, involved ethnography contains the idea of the researcher coming to a closer position in relation to the research object during the research process. On the other hand, we have also described organizational routines and embodied agency (EA) as a conceptual phenomenon whose understanding could be extended through involved ethnography. This is especially because IE fills the necessary requirements for recognition of the minor adjustments of routines through which EA takes place. The

researcher must be actively present and acquainted with the research object, but he or she must at the same time be able to distract him or herself from it. Figure 2 below illustrates this position.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

METHOD: INVOLVED ETHNOGRAPHY IN ACTION

Research setting and empirical material

Embodied agency is in the present study examined in the context of dance both because dancers' profession is physically demanding and because dance consists of repetition of various bodily movements that are never exhaustively practiced out. By observing dance, it is possible to make observations on embodied agency as the artistic expression involved gradually develops both through offstage practicing and onstage presenting. In this paper we focus on the research material collected from two sub-settings that form a comparable pair within the context of dance. The first of these is a dance production of one dancer and the other consists of several dance productions conducted in Dutch National Ballet. The empirical material collected from the sub-setting of ballet includes interviews conducted in Finnish National Ballet in 2009. We have two reasons for concentrating on these two sub-settings in this research paper. Firstly, material collected from these two settings is sufficient to illustrate the possibilities of involved ethnography by showing how it facilitated capturing the distinctive characteristics of the phenomenon of embodied agency in an easily understandable form. Secondly, the way in which, one of us gradually turned from an outsider into an insider position as a researcher can be readily described via this research material. Table 2 below gives details of all the research material collected. Although we here use only a limited part of the entire body of empirical material, our understanding over the rest helps in the interpretation of these observations.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Analysis through the eyes of involved ethnography

Briefly stated, in the present study involved ethnography has become a methodological thread for a long journey that still continues. As a start, we may say that there is a researcher who had personally practiced dance for over a decade before entering this particular field with a social scientific study in mind. This permitted her with an access to the settings in which professional dancers operate. It also provided her with sufficient understanding of the substance area in question to convince them of the nature and overall non-harmfulness of her research work. The first round of research contacts to dancers took place between 2008 and 2009, when she conducted 21 semi-structured interviews with professional dancers, both from ballet, freelance and dance teaching contexts around Finland (see Table 2). Thereafter, the occasions and situations in which she has been in contact with dance include a 7-month-long freelance production, a two-day dance workshop, a one-week visit to Dutch National Ballet and a 4-month-long solo production. As already stated, we here focus on the research material collected from ballet and solo dance sub-settings as they offer a complementary picture of the phenomenon under study.

As an indication of the continuing contact it can be mentioned that in a forthcoming dance production she will be working as a choreographer's assistant. She will be responsible for marketing and communication of the production, rental of training facilities, organizing of dancers' accommodation, and planning of the rehearsal schedule and promotion gigs. Taken together, these aspects suggest that she has gradually formed a position of involved ethnographer with respect to dance.

The researcher had Dutch National Ballet, the other sub-setting of dance examined here, in her mind prior starting the study. This was because she had been living in Amsterdam for half a year and she had gone to see the performances of the group weekly. By having this kind of familiarity with the organization she now had courage to contact a Finnish dancer of the group. The dancer helped her by advising who to contact and to negotiate with to get the research access. It took almost two months before the access was agreed and the time frame for the visit fixed.

The researcher conducted the fieldwork in Dutch National Ballet during the first week of August in 2011. As the researcher entered Dutch National Ballet the first morning the executive secretary came to welcome her. The only mishap was that the secretary thought she was coming to hold an audition for the dancers as she had forgotten that the researcher had

agreed with her about the visit. This led to a confusing but humorous situation in which the researcher had to assure the executive secretary that she was not here to hold an audition and seeking dancers for any production and explain the purpose for the agreed visit all over again. Thereafter the days in the Dutch National Ballet started always with a morning class during which the dancers practiced certain routinized series most of the time at the barre. The morning class took 90 minutes. The schedule of the day for all the dancers was visible in the monitors in the corridors. After the morning class the dancers divided in small groups to practice different works in the rehearsal studios. The researcher went along with the Finnish soloist who introduced her to other dancers and familiarized her with different parts of the building.

During the five days in Dutch National Ballet the researcher attended various rehearsals varying from classical ballet do contemporary dance. She was in contact with dancers representing the entire age range of the company and the differences between the rehearsals of two or a few soloists to the rehearsals where all the choir dancers were present. During the rehearsals where tens of dancers were present the researcher felt herself neither an outsider nor an insider as she was not introduced to the group but she still knew the terminology of classical ballet. It was easy for her to follow the rehearsals and understand the technical challenges the dancers were faced with. She tried to keep herself as invisible as possible not to disturb and affect dancers' concentration and interaction with each other. She was free to move from a class to another as she wanted. She wrote down to a note book all kinds of observations from overall atmospheres of the rehearsals to dancers' emotional and facial expressions, speech and mutual interaction. The most beneficial for the researcher from the perspective of the present study was to explore the everyday practices of ballet dancers offstage and to pay attention to the slight variations of the dynamics of different rehearsals and people attending them. Getting behind the scenes allowed her to discover the ways in which dancers use their embodied agency in varying forms of individual movements and scenes.

The process of the solo dance production, which forms the second sub-setting of dance examined here started in the summer of 2011. It is important to note that although there is only one dancer involved, this project also represents social action. This is because the key initiator of the project, a dancer-choreographer needed several other professionals to create a presentation that could later be exposed to public audience. In practice, after recognizing

some preliminary ideas to carry out, she contacted her friend, a music designer to discuss them. The light designer was found after two months of searching. It was September 2011 when the researcher here became involved in the dance production. She had known the dancer-choreographer already for over 10 years in the form of having attended dance classes together and becoming friends with her. Now she asked if she could come to follow the dance rehearsals from the very beginning. The dancer-choreographer accepted the proposal without hesitation. Obtaining research access to the solo production was much easier than the one to Dutch National Ballet because of the researcher's long-time personal friendship with the dancer in question. In addition, solo production as a sub-setting for research is also more flexible than ballet.

Thereafter, the researcher attended dance rehearsals, took numerous photographs and video-taped many of the rehearse sessions. She also wrote 30 pages of field notes where she described the situations both offstage and onstage and wrote down the dancer's speech and had informal conversations with the dancer-choreographer and the other persons involved with the project. These include sound and light designers, a technician, the owner of the presentation venue and some individuals from the audience after the premiere. These research activities took mostly place in rehearsal studios, dressing rooms and the theatre, but to some extent also elsewhere such as in cafes and lunch places.

As far as photographs are concerned, a hybrid approach to their production was applied (see Ray & Smith 2012, 296). In other words, a part of photographs were taken by the researcher during the observation situations to help her recall and later report the essential features and the overall atmosphere of individual sessions. Another type of photographs was formed by those that the researcher had asked from the dancers to be used as research material. These were to be especially meaningful for the latter and thus useful in describing how the dancers saw their work. The aim here was to explore subjective photographic meaning through collaboration with research participants (see Ray & Smith 2012, 291). Based on the chosen photographs and dancer's convictions related to them the researcher then made her own interpretations.

In addition to photographs and videos, the researcher also used two drawings made by a dancer (see pictures 3 and 4 in the Appendices) as triggers to textual responses among the individuals being observed. Showing the drawings describing the worlds onstage and offstage to other dancers than the one who had drawn them lead to surprising responses. In part, this

was because the dancers were asked to tell the researcher freely what first came into their mind as they saw the drawings. Nonetheless, they talked in an emotionally-laden way and told the researcher points that would have remained hidden by only interviewing. For example, when the researcher asked the dancer how would the story change if there were two men, not a man and a woman in the picture 4, the dancers could not change their story. The responses triggered by the drawings thus suggested that gender may not be one of the key issues in dancers' self-expression, which may partly be androgynous. Instead, other elements such as relaxation, absence and withdrawal as a part of their their work came under discussion.

The researcher attended the rehearsals of the solo production that lasted from two to three hours at a time approximately twice a week. The rehearsals were organized in the evenings or during weekends, and scheduled and outlined always at least one week ahead. Usually only the dancer-choreographer and the researcher were present at the rehearsals. This contributed to the emergence of a relaxed, confident atmosphere in which open, deep discussions between the researcher and the researched could take place. For example, the dancer often started to talk to the researcher on her own initiative, without any invitation from the researcher's side. At the end of November 2011, the work of the project team intensified as the premiere approached. The sound and light designers were present at all rehearse sessions and the interaction between them and the dancer-choreographer was vivid. It was an ongoing process that was constantly in the dancer's mind. There was also no longer a clear distinction between work and leisure, which in part indicated the dancer's commitment to the production. The premiere took place on the 8th of December 2011 and two other performances were also held in the same month. There were only three performances to make sure the presentation venue to become full every evening. The duration of the solo piece was 30 minutes.

Why would, then, this way of conducting fieldwork be an especially fruitful tool in the study of embodied agency? First, as embodied agency in dancers' work is materialized in slight variation in the repeated bodily movements, being present at the rehearsals from the very beginning to the different public presentations is critical. In ballet, for example, the difference between the offstage's chaotic situations and the onstage's illusion of a perfect, ready-made performance is enormous. In contrast to the general audience, it is also visible for the involved ethnographer. From such a position, it is also possible to take into account the fact that dancers are very careful not to repeat the bodily movements too often to avoid irritation, boredom and "over-doing". In a solo production the dancer has more degrees of freedom to

decide how and when to train than a classical ballet dancer, who is training a piece as a part of a group. In fact, this is quite a critical issue especially for the dancer of the solo production who asserts that the rehearsals of the presentation should not become overly routinized. For professional dancers of ballet, getting bored is inevitable and they do not consider it a threat. The opposite is the case with the dancer of the solo production.

By being present on the field in the position of an involved ethnographer the researcher is able to identify how individual actors may change their working styles over the course of the project. Despite the inherent repetitiveness of a dancer's work, even individual motions and gestures are never exactly the same. Instead, they are always to some extent unique by their nature and produced in a specific temporal and spatial context. In a ballet context the technique is practiced daily to make the key components of the ostensive aspect of routinized movements clear for the dancers and easily conducted so that for the performative aspect of routinized movements could be given more space (see Pentland & Feldman 2003). To notice the sensitive, extremely small nuances of the dance pieces demand both long-term presence and emergence of a situation in which those being observed no longer recognize this to be the case. As insiders the dancers are not able to distract themselves from their subjective positions and to analyze these changing nuances. The involved ethnographer, however, is able to do this. In this way it is possible to compare variation between the same piece of dance at different times and spaces.

Second, having the acquaintance with the substance (i.e. dance) and being continuously present may lead the researcher to a situation in which he or she is being asked to participate in the activity being studied. For example, when the dancer of the solo production asked the researcher for her opinions about some details of the choreography only a day prior to the premiere, the latter was more or less totally astonished. How would the dancer be able to internalize and believe in the recommendations that the researcher would make and implement them in the presentation the following evening? As a result, the researcher tried not to suggest any radical changes as there would not be enough time for them anymore. This episode can be taken as an indication of the fact that although the researcher had tried to maintain at least to some extent the position of an outsider, this had not prevented her from becoming a member of the group involved with the project.

Hence, the approach of IE opens up potential for interventions also from the side of those that represent the community under study. These interventions in the form of discussions need not,

however, indicate frustration. This is because professional dancers, for example, may appreciate the discussions with the researcher as opportunities for reflection on their own work. This characteristic has confluences with so-called engaged listening (see Forsey 2010), which is an important but often neglected ethnographic practice. In many cases, ethnographers report more of what they hear in the field than what they observe. Still, it would be more useful to allow engaged listening, in which ethnography is defined according to its purpose rather than its method and in which researcher's engagement with the lives of the researched is central, to sit on an equal footing with participant observation. From this perspective, an involved ethnographer is able to use a kind of participant listening that allows both the researcher and the researched to communicate more freely than if he or she was not involved in the field. Whiteman (2010) argues that a kind of emotional heartbreak can help researchers analytically connect their research material with the views of the people that they study. We argue that in this case the researcher's emotional experiences and reactions were useful as analytical tool in the study of embodied agency. By being emotionally sensitive the researcher was able to identify various atmospheres of different situations that she was observing and by this way build a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon in question. For example, she could live through the transformation of the solo dance production from the rehearsal studio to the theatre where the project group spent the last week before the performances.

Third, the acquaintance with substance being examined also provides the researcher to see beyond the surface of bodily activities. That is, the personal involvement of the researcher allows him or her to set aside "bodily messes" (see Martin 2002) such as sweat, pain, blood and dirt and to direct the attention to the social processes involved. In the case of dancers, their bodily movements and physical struggle need to be attended, but this struggle by itself need not be the core content of their embodied agency. As a result, while doing the fieldwork, there is a need for the researcher to take notice of and interpret everything that dancers do and how they express themselves both verbally and nonverbally.

EMBODIED AGENCY: MATERIALIZATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL ROUTINES IN BODILY-INTENSIVE PROFESSIONS

The work of professional dancers includes a constellation of routines which aims at coaching the dancers into a top level shape at the event of onstage public performance. Beyond routines there is a professional leeway which evades the eye, but which allows dancers to implement

their professional routines in their own personal manner. For example, when exercising at the barre, classical ballet dancers may go through the exercises in a routinized manner, while simultaneously creating new mentally constructed ways of conducting the exercises and in this way, use and extend their embodied agency (EA). In this way, they think how to approach an individual bodily motion in their own way:

> "I create internal tasks for myself to make the routinized exercises at the barre more meaningful and interesting for myself." (Dance teacher student)

The exercises at the barre aim both at warming up ballet dancers' muscles and at improving balance and flexibility and maintaining technique. This is the visible, repetitive side of their work. The so called inner tasks, instead, are important because as a key feature of embodied agency they are the main point for understanding where the inspiration and persistence comes from for practicing their profession.

Embodied agency may emerge in different ways and in different forms depending on the organizational context. For example, whereas in a solo dance production the dancer is able to listen to his or her body carefully, in ballet productions there are more strictly defined schedules and other conditions for practice and performance. Thus in the latter case, the bodies of individual dancers may become instrumental for obtaining purposes that they themselves have not defined. As one former ballet dancer describes:

> "I couldn't take it anymore. I wanted to decide of my own body by myself and not let it be instrumentalized." (Freelance dancer, former ballet dancer)

There could have been two reasons for the former ballet dancer to move to work on freelance basis from the embodied agency's point of view. First, she could not develop inner tasks for herself within the relatively restricted setting of ballet. Second, she might not bear the fact that in the setting of ballet the physiological dimension of EA is even more constrained than the emotional dimension. This happens because the occupational culture of the ballet creates an obsessive world where dancers aim at fulfilling the aesthetic rules and creating an ideal body (see Adler 2007).

In the case of the solo dance production, the dancer was also the initiator of the whole endeavor. This allowed her a substantial amount of professional leeway. She was able to start with the production with her own ideas and decide who to work with. In other words, EA not only occurred through self-defined and -implemented routines, but she could also define the

working schedule and think more closely about some details of the piece than if she were working with a large group. Working alone also promised more liberties in forming bodily movements that she would find meaningful for herself and for her artistic expression in general. From the perspective of routines this means that working alone allowed the dancer here to start re-working the ostensive aspects of bodily movements in a sense that later appeared as performative routines at public presentations (see Pentland et al. 2010). This claim partly coincides with the distinction between offstage and onstage aspects of dance work. While the audience only sees one form in which bodily movement routines are performed onstage, backstage has witnessed numerous variations of these routines that have been produced under pressures of time, physical fatigue and pain. The latter may no longer be recognizable in dancer's seemingly weightless steps onstage where he or she creates an illusion of lightness by using the will power and technique (see Aalten 2007). In other words, whereas the onstage is connected to the dancer's will to perform in a particular way, the work offstage is a basis for this performance.

> "I dance through myself for the audience. Performing for the audience kind of closes my story." (Freelance dancer, solo production)

Hence, activities conducted both offstage and onstage shape a dancer's embodied agency. In the case of the solo dance production the dancer was seemingly conscious of her freedom to make individual bodily movements meaningful for herself in her performance. Her awareness of the freedom was naturally not a surprise as the start of the solo production in the first place was a result of the dancer's desire to create a work of her own free from external pressures. The embodied agency onstage is thus a result of routinized repetition offstage. For example, the rehearsals of the solo production had a certain, routinized pattern that started as stretching and imagining practices. In the latter, the dancer went through some scenes of the piece and spoke out loud to the researcher her ideas inside her head. As in the picture 1 below, she then put the music on and danced through some scenes or, quite rarely, the whole piece.

INSERT PICTURE 1 ABOUT HERE

This is to say that dancers' embodied agency requires striking a balance between doing and resting, practicing and feeling as the following quote suggests:

> “I wouldn’t like to go through this piece before the premiere too many times not to get bored with it.” (Freelance dancer, solo production)

When we take a look at the sub-setting of ballet, the atmosphere of the dance rehearsals gradually intensifies and the run-throughs multiply as the premiere approaches. The individual dancers do not have an option; they have to train harder and harder by repeating the individual movements and scenes at an accelerating pace. This differs, for example, from professional athletes who start to slow down their practicing as the competition season approaches. As a ballet dancer describes it:

> ”It is a constant competition season that we do have here. It makes this profession mentally hard.” (Ballet dancer, Finnish National Ballet)

The ballet rehearsals typically focus on very slightly varying nuances that are hard to verbalize. One example of this is a scene rehearsed at the Dutch National Ballet. The male and female soloists were practicing a pas de deux from the ballet Swan Lake. The practitioner stood in the front side of the rehearsal studio and a piano accompanist was also present. The scene starts with the male dancer’s walking from the corner across the stage. He went through the start of the scene, which consists only of walking, over and over again and the practitioner interrupted him several times. The accompanist always caught up the correct point in music and seemed to be used to the fact that rehearsals may be overly lengthy and fragmented. The practitioner was not satisfied with the posture and with the emotion that the dancer succeeded to convey to the audience. After twenty minutes of walking and several re-starts the practitioner sitting next to the researcher asked her: “Did you see the difference?” The researcher replied: “Yes, I did”, and the female dancer smiled at the researcher as she knew it is a matter of such small nuances that it is almost impossible to see the difference without being somehow involved with the scene. Still, the researcher noticed the variation although the dancers doubted it. Why then, the dancers are using so much working time for refining these kinds of emotionally-laden details that may be invisible to the audience? Naturally, refining small nuances is a way for the practitioner to show his or her competence and power over the dancers. However, the overall atmosphere of the dance piece builds on the whole and if the feeling is missing one can recognize it. From the involved ethnographer’s point of view, following the rehearsals allowed her to compare different versions of the walking scene and notice the small variations that would keep hidden without seeing the same scene multiple times.

Although dancers' training consists largerly of repetitive series of motion, the training could be described as kind of a battle every working day as the routines can be performed in multiple ways in dancers' work (see Feldman & Pentland 2003). One example of this is a normal working day in Dutch National Ballet when five dancers were having a rehearsal in the studio. One of the dancers was practicing in the middle of the studio while the practitioner was following at her in the front side of the studio. The dancer was practicing fouettée pirouettes which can be considered as a technical benchmark of a professional dancer. Just a moment before another dancer had turned several of them smoothly and was satisfied. The atmosphere was tense. The practitioner tried to stay positive and encouraged the dancer in the following way:

> "Everybody hates the left side, it's horrible, it's built that way. So don't get pissed off yet." (Ballet master, Dutch National Ballet)

At that point, the researcher was surprised about the extreme difficulties in practicing these kinds of routines. It is also mentally tough as the other dancers are following the one who conducts the pirouettes on his or her turn in the middle of the studio. There is always competition between dancers as they are trying to implement the emotional and physiological aspects of embodied agency in their own manner. The various emotional loadings offstage are not instantly observed but through the means of involved ethnography they become gradually visible. For example, the researcher here was able to recognize hints of various emotional expressions offstage, such as sadness, sarcasm and display of power between dancers and other actors involved. These are also interpreted in the picture 3 (see the Appendices).

Observations on dancers' work both offstage and onstage form the basis for studying the tension between the ostensive and performative aspects of organizational routines (see Pentland & Feldman 2003; Pentland et al. 2010) and their connection to EA. While the offstage repetition of bodily movements seems to be chaotic as no public performances have yet been conducted and the pressures of the forthcoming performances become harder to bear, the onstage performance seems a complete opposite. As shown in picture 4 (see the Appendices), the onstage could be described as a weightless space in which the lightness and ease of movements is performed and the emotional aspects of EA dominate the physiological ones. In part, this is understandable because among dancers public display of such variation is considered a sign of being unskilled.

> "As you always don't have the wow-feeling, you need to develop it by yourself. The audience needs to get value for money, although your own feeling is not always the best possible. When the audience doesn't see it, that is professionality." (Ballet dancer, Finnish National Ballet)

In a way, the offstage practices thus seem to represent an agency of "doing", in which the working body becomes instrumental of nature. Onstage practices, instead, can be described as an agency of "sensing", in which the feeling body is emotional of nature. For example, as the dancer steps onstage he or she stops listening to the "instrumental body" and moves to listen to the "feeling body". The technique that is learned based on the repetition of embodied work may thus be converted to serve the senses. In the words of the dancer here:

> "I still would like the technique to be visible as I dance although it sometimes feels to restrict my working." (Freelance dancer, solo production)

Although embodied agency is materialized in individual projects, it can also be considered a lifelong process in which the individual operates between fulfilling one's own professional and personal desires and those of his or her colleagues and audience. For dancers, projects in which they are the sole representatives of their own profession the embodied agency is about letting go of the fatigue and distress of offstage practices and concentrating on the piece onstage. In general, as the doing offstage develops into expression of feeling onstage, embodied agency also involves a certain amount of courage as the dancer is leaving his or her understanding of the routine being performed behind and sets exposed to the critique formed based on the unique performance that will soon vanish. For example, as the premiere approaches, the dancer tries to calm down by thinking that there is nothing to be done anymore, at least in front of the audience. She accepts her vulnerability and surrenders (see picture 4 in the Appendices). She doesn't want to make any changes and is not so critical towards herself anymore:

> "I concentrate only to get the best out of this with the material and the expressions that I have gained by this moment". (Freelance dancer, solo production)

Compared to the rehearsal studio, the atmosphere at the theatre where a dance piece is performed is completely different. It is full of emotional charge. In a way it feels as the circle would close and the dancer were more ready to perform than what she thought to be before. The space has a huge role behind this. It complements other elements of the production such

as the choreography, the music, the lights, and the audience. The picture 2 below conveys the magical atmosphere of the theatre when the dancer of the solo production is performing on the stage and the premiere is in motion. The other elements that have been lacking from the rehearsal studio further support the dancer in making the piece more ready than it was before ever being performed.

INSERT PICTURE 2 ABOUT HERE

The moment of a dancer stepping onstage is thus about letting go of the offstage experiences and giving space for EA. In the same way as in the poem with which we started this research paper the dancer wants to create a particular feeling by dancing with someone else, also EA intends to get beyond expressed words and movements to catch the several ways of feeling free in the middle of organizational routines, both offstage and onstage. In this sense, EA is like a room without walls; an invisible way to professional leeway that can be creatively applied in many ways which then open avenues to multiple directions. In this manner the involved ethnographer is able to distinguish the particular moment of relaxation when the dancer steps onstage as she has seen the constant aspiration for improving his or her work already offstage. Getting beyond words and visible actions that are available for everyone is possible for the involved ethnographer due to her familiarity of the field under study and her various, complementary positions during the research process. In the following quote crystallizes the moment of surrender in between offstage and onstage:

> “I can’t help myself from being what I am.” (Choreographer, dance artist)

Being present in the moment is meaningful for a dancer onstage; it is the clue of the performance. The presence is connected to EA and organizational routines in a sense that if a dancer is able to consciously utilize the personal aspect of performing routines onstage, he or she is more aware of this side of routines and more present in his or her work. This leads to a situation in which the dancer feels her presence while dancing and, this way, mediates it to other actors involved in the production. This creates an environment where the aspects of organizational routines and embodied agency are recognized not only by the involved ethnographer but also by the other dancers.

CONCLUSION

The present paper has aimed to make two contributions. First, we have above described the characteristics of a distinctive form of ethnography, that is IE, in general and particular terms. A researcher following principles of IE is more involved with the social community being studied than a typical ethnographer, but less involved of that than an actual member of the same community. In addition, involved ethnography takes into account and builds on the process in which a researcher may during the fieldwork turn from an outsider into an active partaker in relation to the community being studied. Second, we have demonstrated the kinds of conceptual progress that IE or ethnographic work of a similar kind may lead to in organizational settings. We believe that involved ethnography is an important tool in the understanding of organizational routines in general and the characteristics of embodied agency in particular. Embodied agency refers to agency that materializes in the repetition of activities. Above we described how by making the same bodily movements over and over again the dancer gets used to his or her working practices and in this sense constructs the separation and social positioning of her expression from her previous doings and those of others in the same field. In this sense, repetition is a mechanism through which actors may gradually alter their ostensive understanding on the routines that they later perform (Feldman & Pentland 2003; Pentland et al. 2010). In the context of dance, it is thus the very slight nuances of bodily movement, gestures and expression through which dancers become agents in their field. By expressing themselves in some particular way dancers become masters of their own profession in a way that evades the eye of all such research approaches that do not take seriously the role of the researcher's involvement in the field being examined. Getting beyond the surface and capturing the hidden movements of the actors on the field is thus the strongest promise that involved ethnography can make to all of those researchers that share the general interest in conducting ethnographic research.

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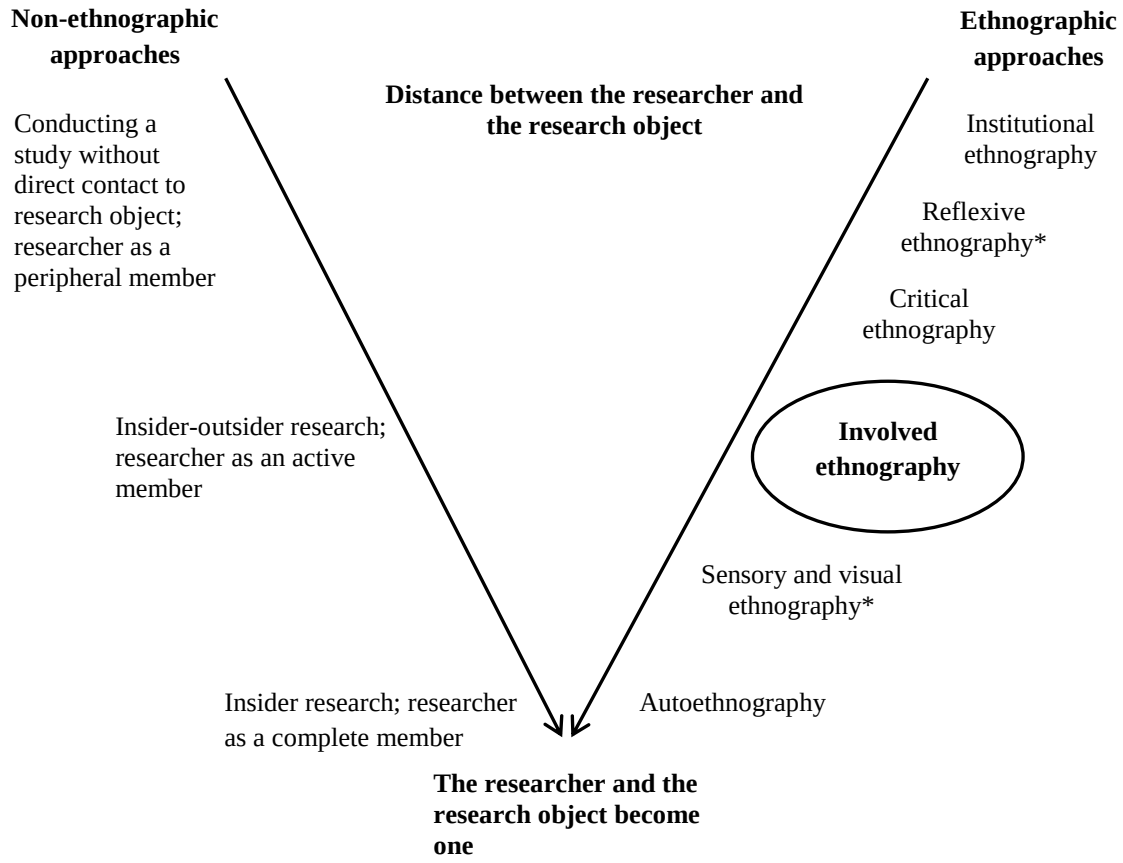
Table 1 Differences between ethnographic approaches

Form of ethnography	**Distinctive features**	**Nature of the researcher/research object -relationship**	**Basis of the relationship construction**
Autoethnography (Coffey 2002; Ellis 2004)	Explores the researcher's personal, subjective experiences.	Intimate, subjective, personal.	The self and the field become one.
Critical ethnography (Madison 2005)	Focuses on large political, social and economic issues and social change.	Deep dialogue with the Other.	Sees that we should move our attention from our subjectivity to in relation to the Other.
Institutional ethnography (Smith 2001)	Aims at investigating policies and social practices in institutional contexts.	Distant.	Theory-based.
Reflexive ethnography (Davies 1999; Walsh 1998)	Seeks to reflect social reality and highlights that the researcher's subjectivity does not have a negative effect on the study.	Partly objective.	Recognizes the subjectivity of the researcher and assumes that objective data can be produced and subjectivity can be avoided by recognizing it.
Sensory and visual ethnographies (Pink 2011; Valtonen et al. 2010)	Identify the multi-sensory nature of organizations. Experience is produced through sensory and visual material but this material cannot fully replace words.	Depends on the researcher's personal experience, theoretical assumptions and other factors.	Locally constructed.

Table 2 Summary of the empirical material generated by March 2012

Quality of the empirical material	Duration and time frame
Participant observations • Freelance production • Dance workshop • Dutch National Ballet • Solo production	 September 2010 – April 2011 May 2011 August 2011; app. 20 hours of observations. September 2011 – December 2011; app. 50 hours of observations.
Interviews • 21 Semi-structured interviews with professional dancers in Finland from which 14 were women and 7 men.	 September 2008 – March 2009 app. 1 hour 30 min (shortest 50 min, longest 1 hour 50 min); litterated text app. 200 pages.
Photographs, drawings and videos • From dancers • During fieldwork to recall observation situations	Solo production: app. 40 photographs, 2 drawings (onstage/offstage), 4 hours of video material.
Field notes and documents • Field notes • Ethnographic diary • Informal conversations with dancers • Newspaper clippings concerning dancers' work	 Solo production: handwritten notes, app. 30 pages. Dutch National Ballet: handwritten notes, app. 10 pages. 2009 – 2012
Forthcoming (participant observation) • A dance theatre production • Another freelance production • Finnish National Ballet	 April 2012 – September 2012 June 2012 – October 2013 Autumn 2012



*Does not take an unequivocal position to the researcher and the research object.

Figure 1 Relationships between the researcher and the research object among different research approaches

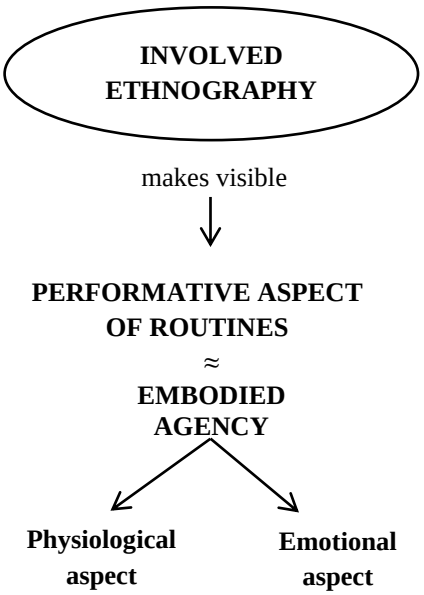


Figure 2 Involved ethnography in the study of embodied agency

APPENDICES

Picture 1 Dancer of the solo production practicing alone

Picture 2 Dancer of the solo production onstage at the premiere

Picture 3 A dancer's visual interpretation of offstage

Picture 4 A dancer's visual interpretation of onstage