

Shifting Focus

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Abstract

Erin Manning's concept of the minor gesture invites a changed approach to education and encourages a radical reconceptualisation of studying within educational institutions. Using examples from her teaching with students in teacher training as well as from her artistic practice, Elke Mark studies the intertwinement of her varied collective, practice-theoretical research approaches with Erin Manning's philosophical concepts in order to apply them to qualitative inquiry and educational research.

Keywords: performance art, tactile-performative research practice, sensuous knowledge

This call for the coursing of minor gestures within frames of everyday life involves crafting techniques that create the conditions not for slowness exactly, but for the opening of the everyday to degrees and shades of experience that resist formation long enough to allow us to see the potential of worlds in the making.
(Manning, 2016, 15)

Preface

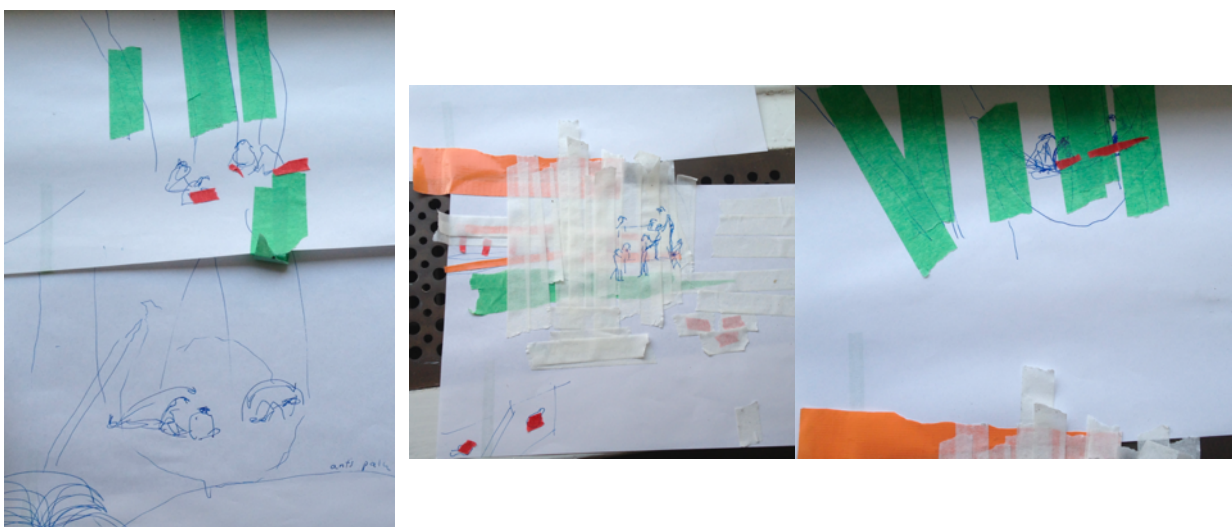
My experience of research-creation in several *SenseLab* meetings in Canada and different European states revealed and confirmed the importance of exploring unfolding and inflecting processes, which I had developed previously in my own artistic performative and textile art practice as well as in various collaborative encounters. Rarely have I experienced such a stimulating, interwoven artistic and philosophical exchange on an equal footing. Apart from various online-meetings, I feel privileged and grateful to have been able to attend various meetings in presence. Erin Manning's and Brian Massumi's conception of these events

encouraged thinking in motion and thinking in the act and enabled a practice of understanding and reflection on what we were experiencing during the reading sessions on selected philosophical topics. The inclusion of a variety of so-called ‘pop-up-propositions’ from the participants opened up a field of shared experimental practices which others could join and that made the potential of these encounters palpable. Moving with the propositions such as setting up installations, ‘building’, visualising conversations by drawing or going for a walk as well as cooking and eating together led to experiencing a vital entanglement of accompanying forces and to surprising experiences. Inextricably linked to physical movements, this enriched the felt dimensions of thought and created a growing field of shared aliveness and vitality. I felt welcome to be part of the event, which was understood as a place of care and hospitality, including the more-than-human.

Through participating in the *SenseLab* event, I was surprised to discover many references to Erin Manning's artistic work and her writings which are close to my own approaches to life-living in the world. After an introduction to the background of my own artistic practice, I will therefore use various examples of my practice to address the interdependencies with Erin Manning's concepts, which also affect my teaching in school classes and in teacher training. The introduction of a different approach towards studying and learning as Erin Manning suggests, has great impact on teaching, in particular in institutional education structures. Following Erin Manning's outlines of the concept of minor gestures instead of major gestures opens up a path which easily includes already existing but mostly unnoticed connections to the *worlding* around us. In my teaching practice in third cycle higher education I rely on Erin Mannings subtle gentle yet firm invitation to create and ensure changed learning conditions. Taking encounters with the vitality of thought in motion as a fundamental approach towards learning will have impact on knowledge gaining processes from an embodied and more-than human perspective. The encounters have encouraged and strengthened me to hold on to my conviction that living together differently is possible - despite all resistances. Thank you, Erin.

Figures 1–3

Drawings of the Affect-o-Meeting. Weimar 2017. Photos: Elke Mark.



Encounter – Practice as an Artist Researcher

The main focus of both my artistic and scientific work is the exploration of the sense of touch and of felt experience. The practice as well as the writing arose against the background of my artistic practice and cannot be viewed in isolation from its embedding in the continuous practical implementation. Working mainly in Performance Art and procedural textile art, this encourages a bodily reflected view onto research-creation as an instrument for investigations into the field of tangible knowledge.

In order to register the mutual permeation of experience a positioning beyond polarization is required. Moreover, this concept asks for an understanding of positioning not as static connected to a certain place but rather thought as a mobile position similar to moving on top of a wave. This requires a felt relation to the environment that exceeds visually guided changes of position and allows insights into the dynamics between “what is seen and what is felt” (Manning, 2016, p. 75). I am committed to a natural inclusion of felt dimensions in education and to develop along with it new ways of sharing those impressions.

My artistic background in research-practice is manifold and led by an interest to find access to the background layers of our everyday movements that we carry out without taking much notice of it. Through focusing on ‘self-evident’ movements that lie below the threshold of consciousness it is possible to theoretically and practically follow the influence of precise vagueness on the process of knowledge formation in its dynamic interaction. In order to find a verbal expression for accompanying an ongoing process and to develop a vocabulary suitable for it, I use elements of micro-phenomenological research practice (Petitmengin, 2007). This allows us to go beyond the typical representation of experience as an acting subject and instead discover our entanglement with the world. By following the unfolding and refolding of thoughts in a slowed-down movement, we are able to recognise precise details as part of our thinking in motion, such as concrete colourings, sizes and dimensions, feelings, sounds as well as different angles on moving and changing images and the change of perspectives that takes place. Without judgement, we can also access rarely consciously perceived ‘non-realistic’, sometimes dream-like virtual sequences of our nevertheless real thinking.

Erin Manning invites us to take small, inconspicuous gestures and experiences in their influence on procedural changes seriously and to have a closer look at their embedding in the environment. With a shift towards the field of pre-reflective and pre-verbal feelings and movements and therefore to areas prior to cognitive perception, we come closer to encounter thinking in its dynamic genesis. It is the procedurality of movements, the shaping and *in formation* that “is capable of keeping minor gestures alive” (Manning, 2016, p. 103).

According to Erin Manning, it is a *force* or a tendency that we follow instead of assuming an initiating impulse from *within* an individual. Her concept of relational movement depends on preacceleration which includes “the virtual force of a movement-moving before it is consciously felt as such” (Manning, 2016, p. 153) and integrates the virtual as co-composing aspect into the

moving with felt experience.

‘Eigensinn’ – Bodies Own Right

The body follows its coherent feeling. Moved by affection, by touching and being touched, in the structure of an impenetrable network of relationships and loose ends, the body develops a drive that transcends the individual in contact, beyond interaction. Following its own laws of effectiveness in expansion, changeability and dynamics, it is a mobile field of forces that refuses to be fixed in clear definitions and terms and eludes complete, deliberate steering and control. Erin Manning emphasises the relevance of the body as part of a more-than human ecology and as one factor of a potential activation within the relational field. Referring to the concept of the 'landing site' of Arakawa and Gins (2002) she points out that this is not to be understood as spatial nor does it ask for preexisting subjects of objects (Manning, 2016, p. 101). Moreover, it shifts attention to felt experience “still in germ” (p. 101). With the shift toward a *bodying*, which understands the body in continuous co-composition with the environment, we enter into a complexity of a moving-thinking field where *bodying* cannot simply be understood as happening *inside* a body or mind but rather as a transversal force that moves across and beyond it (p.115). Embedded in an ecology which includes more-than human elements as well as atmospheres and forces, individual bodies are no longer addressed as certain bodies rather than as transindividual (p. 128). They relate to the environment and find themselves connected in transversal modalities such as shape, intensity, rhythm, and movement.

Moving

In the world we experience ourselves in the process of becoming and thus as a sentient and constantly changing living organism. As a participant in the more-than the human is not placed in the center but in dynamic interdependencies in the relational field. Following Erin Manning’s (2016) proposal of a certain attention to the field and to its potential shifts the discovery of vital space-creating movements is enabled. These are characterised by undirected, 'dance-like' impulses of movement from the perceptive centre of the body that extends the physical space into a felt field.

Erin Manning's thoughts are similar to ideas found in the writings of the philosopher and psychiatrist Erwin Straus (1891-1975). In his theory of a dynamic unity of experience (1935), he connects *sensing (Empfinden)* with an irreducible connection to movement, in particular to a self-movement (*Sich-Bewegen*) that precedes a subject and intentional action. He sees a movement towards cognition already beginning in a preliminary stage of perceptual cognition, in primary expressive grasping, that is still entirely attached to grasping in the tactile sense. Through tactile impressions, whose thousand-fold nuances everyone understands without having to learn them, we can, according to Straus, open up a speechless, signless world. They both, Erin Manning and Straus, explicitly include forces of the field itself. Understanding space and movement as participating forces is also reflected in Erin Manning's expression of *tendings* of the field (Manning 2016, p. 118). These can be perceived as soon as we understand ourselves not as the centre of the

world but as part of a larger alliance with the more-than. The forces of the field affect human and non-human participants and can be felt through our bodily sensing experience. The preceding reflections on the body and moving are to be understood as integral, embedded components of my practice which I will address below.

Ecology of Practices and Techniques of Relation and Encounter

It seems paradoxical to choose permeability and fragility as starting points for describing impressive yet hidden forces of processual change as Erin Manning describes them according to her own writing process as a writing-with “pushed to a limit” (Manning, 2016, p. x). But it is precisely this ability to make us vulnerable that opens up access to the forces that are lastingly perceptible and that set us in motion again, even in the recollection of a memory. Following Erin Manning’s proposal to invent techniques which allow us to experience thought-in-motion, I will focus on certain aspects of her concept of the minor gesture that are particularly significant to me and present them with examples of their application in my artistic work and teaching practice. The new techniques to be invented are artistic research in its own right which enacts concepts in process and are not to be misunderstood as a kind of social science methodology.

The decision to include techniques which embrace minor gestures into the teacher training encourages students to study their impact while working with others and sharing a joined experience. Together they develop playful concepts which they might apply to their school class teaching.

Students experience the procedurality of the event individually yet as part of a collective co-composing. In the practice bodily experimentation and a variety of material examinations are encouraged. By intensifying the perception of rhythms, duration and spatial conditions, attention is not only directed to the development of a bodily feeling for oneself but for respective counterparts and other elements in the field. The individual development of each person is anchored in a connectedness with the environment, beyond the interaction and interplay within the group. Experiencing the diverse body- and movement-related practices by themselves first enables the teacher training students to study relation and process in a different way in order to develop and implement changed concepts in their own teaching. In studying their experiences in the field of aesthetics, visual and ephemeral arts, students can explore their movements and relationships to the forces of the field. Equipped with their own body as an elementary instrument for coping with the changing procedural demands, future teachers are thereby enabled to awaken and sustain in their students the deep interconnectedness of movement and forces in the environment. Through the offer of shared experiences the range of movement patterns like following, accompanying or guiding along the field of forces becomes understandable through tracing their own bodily impressions. By actively implementing and further developing one's own ideas and observing the activities of others a large repertoire of examples and ideas is created, a multifaceted pool that everyone can use in manifold repetition to vary ideas.

In the next section, I will share examples of my own art works and their connections to Erin

Manning's concepts. First, I will talk about relation and encounter in the collective performance art practice of *PAErsche*, followed by different pieces that take up practices of *agencement*.

In Process/Open Source Sessions – PAErsche Performance Art

The collaborative *In Process-* or *Open Source Session*-format builds on the bodily attentive presence of each participant, viewers included. This particular work format is practised, researched and continuously developed by the international performance art network and cross-disciplinary laboratory called *PAErsche* based in Cologne, Germany (www.paersche.org). It emphasises concepts of performance art practice which challenge one's own attitude in order to investigate further in the field of encounter. Erin Manning's conceptualisation of an event is an essential element of the collective practice of *PAErsche*. Continuous changes in intensity, shifts in location or in the speed of movements as well as an expansion of the field to include all audience members can be experienced by everyone present in subtle changes, connections and procedural unfolding of the performance (Manning, 2016, p. 197).

Figure 4

Orangerie May. PAErsche Open Source Session. Cologne 2011. Photo: Rainer Mark.



Figure 5

Strom im Vagus. PAErsche Open Source Session. Cologne 2019. Photo: Jörn Vanselow.



While experiencing the development of different phases in *Open Source Sessions* the paradoxical simultaneity of procedural event-time is felt (Manning, 2016, p. 104). Erin Manning characterises event-time on one hand related to particular activities happening in the here and now, accompanied, on the other hand, by an openness to yet unthought and unforeseen shifts (p. 104). Instead of assuming an independent human subject as a stable center of experience she emphasises the co-composing nature and relationality of minor gestures which shape the collective work sessions.

The production of empty spaces in contemporary performance practice provides space for contingency, for processes that elude plannability, that take shape out of the unfinished, the hesitant and the uncertain. Contingency is not to be misunderstood as arbitrary, but as something unexpected in its difference. In the failure of interpretation and the suspension of spontaneous impulses, performance art attempts to counteract the permanent tendency to fill the empty space - with explanations, memories, ideas, and ultimately a sense - by first creating distance - distance, a gap, a 'buffer zone' - which, however, in the simultaneity of absence and presence, further increases the sensual presence.

In addition to the already multifaceted moments of experience that occur in solo performances between performance artist and viewer, an increase in the range of perception into a shimmering complexity takes place within a performative group event. If there is an emptiness at the beginning, this is by no means to be described as something missing. In the awareness of potentiality, in the presentiment of what is to come, it stretches out between the bodies of the participants and becomes perceptible among themselves as an expansion beyond the individual which leads me to the description of the idiosyncratic 'logic of the performative in Open Source Sessions.' Viennese philosopher Krassimira Kruschkova (2013) writes: "The thinking of the collaborative is a thinking of unstable counter-running, which exposes itself to its own irredeemability, which only knows momentary stabilizations instead of a permanent equilibrium."

(p. 183). .Kruschkova explores the influences and activities of individual participants during joint activity and comes to the following conclusion: “The idea of being with others, of a community of those who do not belong to anyone, [...] does not presuppose any common ground of a group, no constant plural, it exposes itself to its lack. Only through this suspension of togetherness is it conceivable to hold together what is shared and what is different. Without symmetry, redemption, restitution” (p. 189).

An essential part of my teaching, developed in my collaborative artistic practice, are techniques which enable a dwelling until surprising movements in the field across different registers evolve. To include performance art practice in pedagogy and teacher training allows a certain framing of experience. Participants may follow the inflections, the resonances and felt elasticity in the shaping of the ongoing processes in enlarging and unfolding the field of awareness to a presence that is already there – in the air, invisible, vital, dynamic. Enhancing the atmospheres in a co-presence rather than being an active intruder, not wanting to add actively to the already existing but to connect to the field as a lively part of it – a co-presence in Erin Manning’s understanding taken as “patient attentiveness toward *what the field wants*” (Manning, 2014, p. 6). In order to answer her question of how those two modes can co-exist we can rely on our bodily feeling and a flexible moving viewpoint in the midst as described in the following section.

The description of the minor gestures in *PAErsche*'s open source format goes hand in hand with the approaches underlying other artistic collaborations, which I am going to share in more detail below. I will then look into my lecture performances before introducing the tactile-performative research practice as an instrument of research-creation in education.

Moving Practices of Agencement

Experiencing situations of agencement is stimulating, accompanied by unspecific alertness and an increased interest in staying in contact with the forces at work. In her call for agencement rather than agency Erin Manning proposes a shift towards a continuous changing field which is still in formation and does not focus on the idea of a fixed subject-based identity. (Manning, 2016, p. 123)

The practices presented here have emerged from artistic, participatory project initiatives in which the connection to sensual, bodily impressions in the encounter with oneself and others is of central importance. Based on bodily experience these moving practices take relational implicit, ‘silent’ experiential knowledge as base, and thus focus on the process *in formation*, instead of promoting the accumulation of information knowledge – not least in order to (re)trust our own fine senses in contact and encounter with the more-than human.

Affirmation and Fabulation – Political Impact in Artistic Work Related to Historical Events

We often fall silent given the weight of experienced injustice. But instead of leaving people mute

and concerned in the face of overwhelming inhuman experiences, it is precisely the impulses of minor gestures that enable us to follow new paths and to enter the open field of encounter. Erin Manning encourages us to take up the not-yet existing movements and to look at past and future in an intertwined co-existence. Instead of taking one particular perspective the fabulation mobilizes different views (Manning, 2016, p. 224).

The examples of the exhibition *'FliehKraft'* (centrifugal force) and the artistic guided city walks of the *'StadtWandlerinnen'* (German double meaning: city walkers and city changers) could be understood as an answer to Erin Mannings question of *"how else could we collectively invent modes of existence without reducing experience to that first wound that has already been worried enough?"* (p. 224). By following inherent intuitive forces we can experience a new relation to the past in a shared present. The concept of affirmation offers a different approach towards valuation. Describing it as an 'activist philosophy' that has its own rhythm Erin Manning foregrounds the *fielding* as a 'tuning of affective tonality' that invites new directions in felt experiencing (p. 216).

'FliehKraft' (Centrifugal Force) – Performative Exhibition

In Erin Manning's (2016) philosophy thinking is always connected to moving and starts in the midst of a situation (p. 116). In the performative exhibition *'FliehKraft'* I focus on an aspect of movement that is not based on *active* movement but emphasises the experience of being set in motion and being moved in the experience of centrifugal force. If we find ourselves in the middle of an event we experience a force comparable to centrifugal force which can be observed from the outside, but can only be experienced in the midst of it. Centrifugal force can be perceived by those involved, for example sitting in a car if they are turning into a curve and are moved along with it. It cannot be perceived or experienced from a distant (observer) position outside the event. The term is derived from the Latin verb *fugere* (to flee) combined with force or power (Kraft), which allows a double reading in the German language. Besides centrifugal force the term *FliehKraft* relates to the strength one needs to master a flight. My suggestion *'FliehKraft'* to a call to find a name for the Refugee Centre in Cologne where I used to live next door was accepted and was taken up in various participatory projects. Here, centrifugal force was placed in a tense relationship both under the aspect of mechanical-physical effective dynamic forces and with regard to the strength, endurance and courage of people who had to flee. The project continued until the performative exhibition *'FliehKraft'* in the Hamburg Gallery Einstellungsraum¹ took place in 2017.

During the opening a meeting took place where Dr Barbara Waetzmann, an 87-year-old witness to the upheavals during World War II, and the young Syrian Anwar Alrahwan shared their experiences. Supplemented by the story of Auschwitz survivor Blanka Pudler (*Canary*, Mark, 2008), which I documented in the years of regular contact in Budapest, Hungary and Germany from 2004 until she died in 2017, their stories unfolded in the encounter between them, myself and guests

¹ [http://www.einstellungsraum.de/archiv_mark.html, accessed on 27.07.2021].

on site.

Figure 6

Dr Barbara Waetzmann talking about her experience. Hamburg 2017. Photo: Christina Dieckmann.



Figure 7

Installation 'Canary' – Blanka Pudler. Hamburg 2017. Photo: Elke Mark.



The opening started with a joint performance by Anwar and me called '*towards each other*', in which we were literally writing '*towards*' each other: Starting from two ends of the space we took paper rolls on the floor and Anwar wrote his Arabic characters from the right, while I began writing in German from the left side. Beginning with the incidence of having the same birthday, the written narratives unfolded. The visitors could read the resulting sentences, while the written Arabic was read out loudly by one of Anwar's friends. The fragile soundscape including the experience of understanding and non-understanding the language opened up a lively exchange between Arabic-speaking guests who had already understood Anwar's sentences while others still had to wait for its translation and the other way around.

Figures 8–10

Performance by Anwar Alrahwan and Elke Mark at the opening of the exhibition 'FliehKraft'. Hamburg 2017. Photos: Christina Dieckmann.



The performance was followed by a lecture by Anwar about his flight in 2015, which began in Syria and ended in Flensburg, close to the Danish border. Barbara was talking about her experiences fleeing as a child with her mother and sister from the east of Germany towards the north. While thinking and talking about their flight experiences, the individual survival strategies came into focus. To survive the deeply frightening and undignified living conditions, both Anwar and Barbara emphasised the active support of unknown men and women – in addition to the supportive experiences of social support from family, help among friends or refuge in faith.

In the exhibition, books and boxes could be opened, video and audio guides could be used to get to know important memorabilia from the narratives that played an important function in survival. Listening to the stories of Anwar and Barbara and touching the objects encouraged visitors to suspend their inhibitions, leave the initial alienation behind and made it easier to start a personal conversation afterwards, feeling themselves part of the intensifying field of cross-generational exchange event.² Erin Manning (2016) insists on affirmation as a significant experimental force

² In a follow-up exhibition ('*Transitions*' Kunstkreis Preetz, Germany 2018) Anwar and I looked for an expression that underlines the deepening of our friendship. Finally, we took my poem '*Inside*' as the starting point for an spatial audio-installation in which our voices could be heard speaking the short lines in various languages:

that emphasises openness to continuous change of becoming rather than maintaining the *it is*-state, vibrating in resonance rather than coming to a close in reactivity. Here, a field of encounter is opened that values and acknowledges differences without interpreting and judging. Mutual inclusion in the movement of affirmation allows differences to coexist (p. 202). The feeling-moving with the field enables steps on not-yet existing paths to a vitality in the encounter, a potential where the event affects all present.

The experience of the activating power of affirmation enabled all present to connect with the unfolding event. After recognising a decreasing tension in the room, people felt invited to share thoughts and stories without excluding painful experiences and memories. Even the neighbours joined in the vivid, colourful, joyful encounter.

‘The StadtWandlerinnen’³

The background to the collaboration with Hanna Kalkutschke and the driving force behind our artistic guided city walks is the desire to keep an eye open for minorities and marginalised groups in society and to encounter our fellow human beings with great openness, especially in times of pandemic-related cuts.

Figures 11–13

Lilith, metal sculpture as moving site of remembrance. Flensburg 2017, 2019, 2020. Photos: Elke Mark.



The artistic tours (since 2017) provide information about thirteen witch trials in Flensburg (1564-1620). During the first walk the public rehabilitation of the 31 known victims by the provost of the Evangelical Church took place.

The accompanying metal sculpture *Lilith* is a visible sign and works as a ‘wandering place of

Inside I open the door and let you enter

³ [<http://elkemark.com/toverie-hexenwahn-und-aberglaube/>, accessed on 27.07.2021]

remembrance' in changing public places throughout the city. Also the annual commemoration event '*Upright Against Injustice*' each April 30th, invites meeting, remembering, and pausing as an impulse for rethinking. Erin Manning (2016) underlines: "Cuts orient process. They dramatize it. When the dramatization is allied to the power of the false, a new contour emerges that undoes the cut of its hold on the *what was*" (p. 220). Dwelling impulses of following movements only have to be taken up in the experience of a collective attention which not longer is only an act of resistance but accompanies the shaping of a differentiated perspective. Erin Manning's philosophy challenges our attitude:

Once affirmation takes over, what is left is not reactivity, but risk— the risk of the not-yet, of not knowing, of not even knowing how to know. Study is all we have—the curious exploration of what the in-act can do (p. 218).

In both projects university students were invited to participate and develop own readings, projects or meetings. Working in public space requires complementary practices, for example to be able to spontaneously involve random passers-by in activities. In preceding workshops, experiences were gathered outside protected spaces in order to integrate them into the realisation of further performances or meetings in public locations.

Let me continue with a glimpse of my lecture-performances on 'Sensory Knowledge', which are part of the introductions to teacher education seminars.

Lecture Performances

In the lecture performances on 'Tactile Knowledge' which include tactile and proprioceptive perception as well as the sense of balance and smell, I invite attendees to let go of the handrail of known concepts and to enter a field of an unknown terrain of yet unfamiliar, dynamic, relational and sensuous knowledge. Again I refer to Erin Manning's (2016) concept of *agencement* by inviting change in the field in a way that "the directed intensity of a compositional movement alters the field of experience" (p. 134).

During these lectures the participants can follow parallel to the heard my minimal performative actions. Gradually an atmospheric level of experience is activated which casually invites the listeners to become aware of their own involvement in any form of knowledge generation and encourages them to engage with a level of tangible (pre-) knowledge. The underlying nature and complexity of tactile-kinesthetic experience as well as the sense of balance are illuminated from interdisciplinary perspectives and translated into a perceptible interactive event. Here is a short example to illustrate this: While I read the following passage aloud, I slowly take off the fur of the cuddly toy dog (as shown in figure 14).

"In our skin, which is made up of several layers, receptors are embedded which register temperature, pain and pressure in addition to surface perception. Three different skin receptors are distinguished. The epidermis contains pressure receptors which react to a mechanical action by opening small channels in their membranes, so that positively

charged particles flow in. This generates an electrical signal which is transmitted to the brain. The stronger the pressure, the wider the openings and the more intensive the signal to the brain - accordingly, there is no irritation at lower pressure. The minimum pressure is about 3 mg, which corresponds to the weight of a down feather. In contrast, the movement of the skin - for example, when a mosquito weighing only about 2 mg lands - is registered by the touch receptors located deeper in the skin, which react to changes, regardless of weight. Touch and speed receptors are already activated at one micrometer, which is about the thickness of a 50th of a mosquito's leg. Even deeper are receptors that react to acceleration and vibration of a stimulus. They register, for example, the vibrations caused by the wing beat of a mosquito at a distance of just one meter. All this happens without any of these stimuli ever crossing our threshold of consciousness“ (Tactile Knowledge [Excerpt]).

Figures 14–15

Displacing Time. PAErsche Open Source Session. Cologne 2012. Photos: Béatrice Didier.



This lecture performance was also performed in collaboration with *PAErsche* where after a traditional start, the spoken lecture broke the mold, opening up to a visual storytelling about distance and closeness in relation to touch and to one another. While attending to my voice and movements, some members of *PAErsche* started rearranging the room. This prompted the audience to experience visible and physical changes without excluding a sense of unease.

‘I Set My Foot Upon the Air’ – A Thinking-Moving-Reading Practice⁴

Following, these lecture performances were translated into an interactive tactile-kinaesthetic

⁴ For more information see Mark, 2016.

moving practice by the use of a ribbon approximately 60 meters in length on which the whole lecture was printed as one single line. This was included into a lecture performance in Prague. During the lecture I moved around and finally left the space while the audience could still listen to my voice via a speaker. Everyone could start reading the ribbons and find references to what they have heard earlier or would come later on. One had to move in order to read or sometimes could not finish while the ribbon moved on. Including different layers of movement the intermingled complexity in this situation reminds me of Erin Manning's description of *carrying the feeling* where she highlights a relational collective practice in the in-acting which opens up to new ways of relating to one another and to the environment (Manning, 2016, p. 163).

Figures 16–18

Passing the ribbon through the audience. Is There Some Method- Conference. Prague 2015. Photos: Roman Dvořák.



On other occasions the ribbon was already set up, in the entrance of a lecture room or outside in public space, serving as a guide system to those who joined the lecture or seminar. In order to read people had to move along the ribbon. The individual or collective reading led to shared experiences related to the written information.⁵

Figures 18–20

Reading the 'Tactile Knowledge'-ribbon. Performative installation. Hamburg 2018. Photos: Michael Panknin.

⁵ For more information about this installation take a look at *Funny feeling - Introducing a performance art approach towards visual literacy*, Mark, 2019.



Not only the moving and sensuous perception were important here but also the connection to non sensuous perception, that Erin Manning (2016), referring to Whitehead, explains as “a concept that describes the folding of past tonalities into present events. [...] It means that the tendencies of pastness contribute to how the current event unfolds” (p. 133).

Tafelrunde (Round table)

In the *Tafelrunde*, a meeting that I initiated after moving to Flensburg which is located at the Danish-German border, we met on a monthly basis to eat and talk. Conceived as a meeting open to anyone interested in art, these round tables provided a space for interdisciplinary encounters and a platform for experimental dialogue and thinking. The collective dinner conversations rely on a notion of performative sharing that creates a space for tracing impulses and implications of the unthought. This includes an openness to an intuition that Erin Manning emphasises with reference to Henry Bergson and that leads to active inquiry by inventing ‘open problems’ (Manning 2016, p. 10).

In moments where the spoken word reaches its limits and threatens to exhaust itself in repetitions, the transformation of a thought into a shown action, in its difference, ambivalence and ambiguity, is able to offer new starting points. As an example let us follow a visitor during a meeting on the topic ‘one’ who gets up to present her contribution as described in the following paragraph. Later on I wrote this description and included her impulse in my lecture performances by re-enacting her gestures while reading the passage aloud.

‘one’ - she says quietly and points with her right finger upwards, she lets her hand sink again, takes a short break. She says ‘one’ again, repeats the word and the gesture, several times, gradually followed by an accentuated, distinct stamping with her right foot. She varies the tone and volume, finally holding her hand at eye level to - suddenly - add a ‘two’ after pronouncing the ‘one’. She repeats ‘one, two’, looking slowly from one hand to the other. Repeating this, parallel to what is being said, a gentle turn of the head appears at first, then a sideways rocking movement of the body, which - increasingly rhythmically - changes into an alternating movement of the now stretched right and left arm and in the further

course, The movement of both legs, finally including the movement of both legs, leads into a tension-filled, energetic march - in order to dissolve completely suddenly 'one, two' - 'three' into the swaying tone of a waltz beat, which changes into a lively dance 'one, two, three'. one, two, three'. Turning while dancing, the expectation of the 'four' remains open ...

In this short performance something happens. Movements, transitions, rhythm, voice, body, time and space form a strangely mysterious unity in the body of the performer in a captivating consistency and in the simultaneity of the sensual impressions, which visibly extends into the bodies of all participants.

One does not have to be musical to grasp the peculiarities and qualities of the changing bars, which are reflected in the rhythmic beat and nodding of the audience. A space unfolds in which the respective rhythms echo even after they have faded away. The act described here follows its own logic of performative action. Starting from the visual perception, supplemented by sound, atmospheric mood and movement, and also evoking numerous associations and connections with memories, a complex, multimodal offer of perception emerges, which opens access to a wealth of knowledge hidden in our bodies. A knowledge that is fed by movements and the reservoir of unconscious perceptions and is hardly accessible in language. In astonishment we take note of her dance and take it up as an impulse for a change of perspective in the ongoing exchange. (Mark, 2016, p. 190)

Figures 20–21

Swirl – Nachklang. Burgbrohl 2017. Photos: Boris Nieslony.



Nachklang (Resonating Echo)

In the ongoing shared collaborative practice with the Swiss dancer Monica we have developed the

concept 'Nachklang'. With 'Nachklang' we invited a non-verbal bodily response in movement as an in-between-step in order to come to an appropriate language for the permanent changing dynamics. Different formats of performative 'making' and non-making are used to explore the notion of 'Nachklang'. Instead of focusing on certain details all our approaches allow us to enlarge the attention to the surrounding, enhancing the atmospheres in a co-presence rather than being an active intruder. This means rather to step back from wanting to 'do' or to 'add' something but to connect to the ongoing processes in the field as a vivid part of it, taking co-presence as "patient attentiveness toward what the field wants" (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 6). But this should not be mistaken as a passive attitude, in the contrary. Erin Manning insists that the rhythms of the minor gesture act as an activating impulse that moves on and finds resonance in background layers of the felt and the yet unthought. In this combined practice-theoretical approach, a different vocabulary can be developed to describe ongoing processes which at first glance seem paradoxical: the process of crystallisation into words can involve vague but yet precise descriptions whereas other terms are left in undefined, liberating vagueness.

Tactile-performative Research Practice

I close with a brief overview on the study for my doctoral thesis, conducted with students of teacher training in the Institute of Aesthetical and Cultural Education at Europa-University in Flensburg, which led to a tactile-performative research practice. This approach starts with bodying and takes the unpredictable into account. In order to leave the path of pre-constituted experience, the practice was further developed in collaboration with the students of the follow-up seminars. Leaving predetermined steps behind, we approached the changing process week by week in unintentional movement. This is described by Erin Manning as a process of research-creation. She writes:

When this happens, something has begun to take form that exceeds the registers of making on one end and thinking on the other. A movement of thought [...] becomes active, and in this activity a new register begins to take shape. This new register is neither art per se nor philosophy: it is study, it is practice, it is speculation. (Manning, 2016, 13)

By observing and experimenting, possible steps of change could become apparent by providing experimental framings. Those suggestions invited us to experiment in fields of experience where we could not fall back on familiar empirical values and preknown habits. By putting known patterns out of action, the view and body were opened to the unknown. Located at the interface of rational and concretely perceptible experience, this research practice leads a creative-reflexive approach that stimulates a comprehensive and in-depth examination of an object of investigation.

The transition we went through could be summarized in five phases related to the following calls:

Bring the object into motion

Let the object sound

Let the object disappear

Bring the object under tension

By explicitly including tactile-kinaesthetic elements in the research, the preceding active experience of one's own bodily involvement, in this case the intuitive hand movements in the phase of handling the object, could be included in follow-up dialogues. We are invited to dwell a little bit longer in a state of preparation (*Einstimmungsphase*) which takes its own time. Instead of following a leading, focused attention immediately we linger to collect more impressions of the field in order to artificially expand the moment which took split-seconds later on. This waiting asks for patience in order to let the process unfold.

By combining a qualitative, experiential approach with an (experimental) artistic research exploration, it was possible to gain access to hidden tactile-kinaesthetic movements of the hands in background levels and to follow the intuitive dynamic genesis and transformation when approaching and touching an object. Changing details in the felt experience in its genesis can be gained in a co-composing approach without losing sight of the overall context.

Conclusion

Erin Manning's call for an inclusion of relational sensory and felt knowledge in learning environments has been illustrated along various astonishment-led research practices. Embedded in an ecology of practices, her invitation for an acknowledgement of the minor offers new perspectives on the complex interdependencies and the potential in the relation between movements and thinking. Her vision of keeping and encountering the difference led to discovering ways of learning without taking the human agency as a point of departure.

By appreciating non-visually guided research we can place more emphasis on the inclusion of prereflective and preverbal perceptible and felt experiences into life-living and learning. The concept of a moving subject that emerges in the process of moving opens up exciting perspectives on the potential of collective learning intertwined with the environmental more-than which introduces a feeling-related approach to qualitative inquiry in educational research.

Erin Manning encourages us to move joyfully with the event. Including the invitations of her concept of the minor gesture into learning enables us to feel the permeability of events and meet the unpredictability in the field of resonances in different ways – as a welcome invitation to include the minor into an (educational) knowledge acquisition which is of particular interest given the subtle sustainable interventions and changes associated with the current Covid pandemic. Including research-creation practices into educational concepts enable the discovery of the richness of hidden movements in an oscillation between self-encounter and collective field experience. Let us follow the invitation to collectively experience unexpected surprises in the transrelational field: “The in-act is where the joy is, where the minor gestures tune experience to its more-than, where activity is not yet dedicated to a cause, or to an effect, but open for the desiring“ (Manning, 2016, p. 188).

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