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THE ART OF PLAYFUL MESS: CO-CHOREOGRAPHING THE EARLY YEARS DANCE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

The Place of Departure

> I approach a single-story building that looks like a typical kindergarten in Finland. Around the building, the children are engaged with the materials of the yard: the sandpit, swings, a slide, and some trees. With excitement, I enter the double-locked gate to this kindergarten as an artistic researcher conducting her fieldwork, asking what would emerge when a dancer-pedagogue-researcher spends several months in an early childhood education context using her artistic expertise creatively and intuitively in the encounters with children and adults.

The orienting research question above has guided my doctoral research in an emergent manner. My inquiry is placed in the field of artistic research and within the post-qualitative framework (e.g., St Pierre, 2015). In this article, I share some of my experimentation in dance pedagogical settings with three groups of children in one kindergarten – altogether 46 three to six years old children and 13 adults – through an intra-active approach, where the entanglement of children-artist-world is considered as a prevailing condition (Barad, 2007).

Through this article, I invite readers to take a critical standpoint on adult-led orientation, value the relational ways of working, and consider children as experts on play and embodied artistic thinking. I am searching for opportunities to co-choreograph the pedagogical spaces with children, resulting in a deeper understanding of the diverse talents and needs in early years education communities, leading towards more inclusive pedagogical practices.

I will first share my view on dance and choreography as inclusive practices, followed by my approach to artistic research as a creative translation process. After that, I will discuss the implications of posthumanist (Braidotti, 2013), new materialist (Barad, 2007), and intra-active (Lenz Taguchi, 2010) theories for my dialogical (Buber, 1923/1993) dance pedagogical practices. I will discuss the intra-actions and entanglements of artist-children-materialities in the dance workshops at the kindergarten, aiming at being inclusive also to the influences of matter in children's lives within the mundane everyday environments of the educational settings.

As one of the central research findings, I will introduce the novel drawing-based Storyboard Method created by children who participated in my inquiry. The Storyboard method is a child-centered and playful technique for co-creating choreography that facilitates the distribution of artistic agency among children and adults. I will address the concepts of play and playfulness with the thinking of Massumi (2014) and Huizinga (1949, 1967). The connection of play to artmaking is further discussed by the philosophy of Gadamer (1960, 1991) and Kofman (1988). Finally, I will discuss the implications and significance of this inclusive and participatory approach to relations and agency in early childhood education.

The Concepts of Dance and Choreography in This Study

In this article, dance is understood widely as a holistic and multifaceted social and cultural activity deriving from one's embodied creativity. The dance pedagogical practice in this study is based on improvisation and creative dance, without an orientation for any specific dance style or technique. The inclusive starting point is that everyone can dance and succeed, and there is no one right

way to dance or perform a movement. Instead, a multiplicity of expression is valued, as in Anttila's (2013b: 52) work on dance and embodied learning at the context of school.

The concept of choreography is used to discuss the various practices and patterns structuring the individual dances, pedagogical arrangements, and even the everyday life and activities of children in early childhood educational settings (Anttila, 2013a). Choreography is connected to relational thinking through Manning's (2013: 75-77) writing about choreography as a proposition to arranging bodies in space and time and framing relations that emerge between bodies and surroundings. In my research practices utilizing the Storyboard Method, choreography is a proposition written in a drawn format to be used as a framing for shared meaning-making and to create embodied relational responses to the ideas, materials, and each other in and through movement.

Artistic Research as a Process of Translation

I consider my pedagogical practice within artistic research as art, research, and a way of knowing and thinking (e.g., Hannula et al., 2017; Rouhiainen et al., 2014; Varto, 2017). Loukola (2017: 91) describes artistic research as embedding the research deeply in making art rather than having art made its object of examination. Loukola (2017) also points out a central objective of making 'tacit' more 'explicit' in artistic research. This is challenging for a dance pedagogue, dealing with phenomena occurring beyond words on the level of embodied, sensual, and ephemeral experiences. Artist-pedagogue and posthuman scholar Kind (Diaz-Diaz and Semenec, 2020: 80) extends articulation's exact nature and challenge into working with children and different materials, producing "an experiential lived kind of feeling knowing".

Consequently, I am employing a framework of post-qualitative methodology (e.g., Denzin, 2013; Koro-Ljungberg, 2015; St Pierre, 2015) to support the diversity in data and allow entanglements of theories and embodied knowing. My methodology has developed emergently in line with Koro-Ljungberg's (2015) theorizing about fluid methodological spaces as situational and in continuous change. My research data exists in multiple formats, such as writings, drawings, photos, videos, and material artifacts, which are being revisited in various ways to discover new connections and to produce new (p)layers and entanglements with the data, me, theories, and the research context. (Koro-Ljungberg, 2015)

As a strategy to deal with the challenge of explication of embodied experiences, I have started to consider artistic research as a process of translation, inspired by Farquhar and Fritzsimons (2011), who take the concept of translation into a pedagogical framework to enhance reinterpretations and thus, diversity. They also consider translation more a process than a product, not providing a copy of the original (Farquhar and Fritzsimons, 2011: 653-57). Both in my research and pedagogical practices, I am constantly shifting between body language, words, and drawings, aiming to embrace a state of not-knowing. In this context, not-knowing means a refusal to harness already existing knowledge to adult-led management of pedagogical situations. Instead, not-knowing involves holding back the desire to take control of the situation through embodied emergent listening, which I will return in more detail later in the article. The state of not-knowing is also embraced in posthuman childhood theorizing (Malone et al., 2020). I propose that these theories present a lens that educators could use to develop a sense of comfort with letting go of the need for certainty and control and trusting the children's capacity for artistic creativity with surrounding materiality.

Relational Ontology in Intra-Active Pedagogies

The posthuman (Braidotti, 2013) and intra-active (Barad, 2007; Lenz Taguchi, 2010) theories transform the thinking of ontological and epistemological questions towards intertwined and relational views. The concept of ontology as relational arises from Barad's (2007) notion of intra-action, "where the encounters between things, beings, and forces are constantly, actively reconfigured as a result of their relationships with each other" (Malone et al., 2020: 89). This reconceptualization may have several implications for diverse aspects of early years pedagogies, which I will address in the following paragraphs.

Following Lenz Taguchi (2010: 48), I consider the relationship between being and learning as dissolved, which is described by the concept of onto-epistemology. A similar interdependence concerns also matter and meaning, which enables pedagogical practices to be viewed as "habits of teaching and learning that are tied into material-discursive conditions of things and matter, as well as ideas and notions of learning" (Lenz Taguchi, 2010: 49). Thinking beyond separate labels, categories, and binaries is rooted in Barad's (2007) theory of entanglements, in which entities exist only through their entangled material-discursive intra-actions. In the context of early childhood dance pedagogies, this allows children to become seen as agentially entangled with objects and materials, such as artefacts, toys, architecture, and the broader materialities, such as bodies, relations, and educational settings (Malone et al., 2020: 38).

When education is approached through constantly shifting intra-relationality and entanglements, the perspective moves from individuals towards a more collective distribution, for example, agency and responsibility. Through this line of thinking, it is possible to deconstruct some of the central binaries operating in the field of pedagogy, such as child–adult and student-teacher dichotomies. This study aims to blur these dichotomies, which tend to position the child as inferior and less than the adult. (Malone et al., 2020: 38)

Towards Co-Choreographed Pedagogies of Creative Dance

> Kindergarten gym. A group of eight children and their teacher are already familiar with me, but dancing is new territory for most of them. I start leading a warm-up dance with music, moving close to the floor. I give instructions verbally and by dancing. I notice some uncertainty in the participants, but I also sense the enthusiasm and curiosity that are bubbling up under the confusion. The tension is released as we move and begin forming a shared idea of dance. I raise my imaginary antennas to the extreme and try to sense the events, attempts, and bodily thinking in the shared space-time from the interlude of my movements. I see an exciting movement made by a child and name it in front of the group. Without stopping the flow of the action, I ask the child to show it again and suggest that we all try it in our ways until we each continue with our movement again. Numerous ideas emerge, which I pick up, and we try out as if I were acting on my hunter-gatherer's instincts. (Colliander and Anttila, 2022.)

This description of choreography as pedagogical hunting-gathering is my adaptation of Turpeinen's (2015) "Raw Board Working Style," where you pick up, name, and use the movement ideas presented by children together in a group, aiming at a shared conceptualizing and meaning-making through movement. I have experienced this approach as a fruitful way to start working in different contexts, and all ages since everyone's body and its capability of movement become the starting point for artistic and communicative expression.

This way of working also supports distributing the choreographic agency, allowing thinking in and through movement as a shared process. This way, the dance pedagogical space becomes a way of being and working together where

everyone, including the educators, may nurture their sense of artistry, which Kind (Diaz-Diaz and Semenec, 2020: 76) also describes in her practice as an alterierista and early childhood educator.

Dance Pedagogy as an Embodied Dialogical Attuning

> A dance workshop is in full gear. "Look at me! Tuire, look! Look at this! TUIREEE!!!!" Shouts of attention-grabbing exclamations fill the room during our robot dance. "Now I am looking," I tell a child who shows me his movement and is about to show more of his ideas, but I ask him to hold on. I now ask the child to look at me in turn and show him my version of his robot. The child thinks my movement doesn't match his idea well enough, and another round of mutual showing, watching, interpreting, and evaluating follows.

I aim to encounter children, the co-creators of my research, with an orientation that supports the formation of a mutual sense of togetherness, safety, and respect. In my experience, the feature of becoming seen is vital for children; only when that need is fulfilled can it be possible to see others. This reciprocity resonates with Martin Buber's (1923/1993) dialogical philosophy and Emmanuel Levinas's (1982) thoughts about one's ethical responsibility for others. Biesta (2017/2020: 37) extends the concept of dialog to encompass our relations on a broader perspective than relationships between humans. For him, arts education represents a world-centered process, which seeks to perceive what it is to engage in dialogue with the world without being the narcissistic center of the world itself.

As a dance pedagogue, I aim to sensitively listen to the pedagogical situation with my whole body in an orientation described in Buber's (1923/1993: 25–28,

52) philosophy as a dialogical I–You relation compared to the objectifying I–It relation with the world. This kind of approach to listening as a holistic and embodied activity may also be theorized with the concepts of emergent listening, rooted in Reggio Emilia pedagogy (Rinaldi, 2006) and further explored by Davies (2014). According to Davies (2014: 1), emergent listening is about remaining open to the whole of life and its movement.

Dance Pedagogy as an Intra-Active Practice

My explorations with the dialogical approach have led to a critical standpoint toward adult-led and goal-oriented linear working methods. I have used the concept of emergent listening to develop my skills in how to read situations through, both learning to give the needed impulses for working and postponing my urge to intervene when an occasional messy creative chaos appears (Colliander, 2016). I have also become aware of how the playful and less result-focused orientation to space, materiality, and movement enables more holistic encounters with children and how it might lead us as researchers to much more nuanced and complex knowledge (Diaz-Diaz and Semenec, 2020: 73). By this I mean knowledge, which is found – or encountered – in conditions, where multiple simultaneous ways of being and doing are allowed and respected, as in the following event.

> The sea theme in our dance workshop has raised the idea of dancing fish and setting our bodies into movement in different ways and directions in the space. Unexpectedly, one of the children has found something on the floor, which stops the exercise and shifts his focus to a tiny thing on his palm. The teacher of the group is just about to command the child to put the distracting thing away, but I am quicker than her and ask the child to show us the treasure he has found. As he opens his hand, we see that the treasure is a tiny ball of expanded

> polystyrene. At the same time, the ball falls from the hand to the floor in a jump-like movement. I instantly imitate the ball, repeating the jump and collapsing on the floor. This invites the whole group to figure out how this tiny creature dances and what can be learned from it.

The ball-child entanglement created an impulse that started choreographing us and had artistic agency, leading us to widen our movement explorations. This aligns with Bennett's (2010) thinking, as she argues that matter is not passive but has an active and productive capacity, which she articulates as vibrant. In posthuman theorizing, agency is considered intra-relational, involving multiple human and nonhuman beings and forces. Early education dance pedagogies allow children to be seen as sharing agency as one among many agentic actors in the collective of human and nonhuman worlds. During the dance workshops, the children are surrounded and relationally engaged by and with the materialities and forces in the space-time-bodies. These entanglements often become visible through actions that are unexpected and unplanned, as in the case of the ball of expanded polystyrene described above. (Malone et al., 2020: 81, 99)

Thus, instead of focusing on the human ability to act on and have power over the situations, it might be feasible to acknowledge the force of things (Bennett 2010). According to Rautio (2013), children often apply an aesthetic-affective openness toward their material surroundings. The teachers often see this as a distraction to the learning process. Barad (2007) has inspired Lenz Taguchi (2010: 44) to theorize movement as part of the intra-actions as "part of the productions, performances, and phenomena created in processes of intra-actions in-between different matter; for instance, waves of water intra-acting with the stones." Depending on the nature of the encountered material, the directions taken and the qualities of movement that are created may be diverse

and multiple, the process of becoming a way of embodying one's imagination. Thus, according to Biesta (2017/2020: 73), making art is an outward orientation of expression and simultaneous exploration of one's imagination and desire featuring an inward direction.

Myers (2019: 231) writes how a posthumanist and new materialist perspective considers agency "not something to be possessed, but instead lies in the intra-connections and the collectivity of actions." Emphasizing the in-betweenness may enhance the possibilities for a pedagogue to support the artistic agency of children since agency becomes shared rather than something separate that the adult needs to legitimate the child with. Paying attention to and searching for ways to be together with children in more open-ended and not-knowing strategies helps to shift the focus of the activities from individuals towards relations, responding to ideas that the entanglement of the children-artist-world proposes, which I am sharing next. There is a question of power involved in thinking about agency. Beyond the teacher-student binary, the power may be considered as distributed to all the involved entangled actors and agencies. Thus, it becomes realized in a continuous negotiation of the constantly shifting dynamics between us and everything we share.

The First Steps with Drawing as a Communicative Tool

> I am giving instructions, but only a few children sit and listen. One winds himself impatiently, another is immersed in interesting material detail in his trousers, and a third has already set off to explore the space, with a friend following behind. I ignore my first impulse to resolve the situation by forcing the children back to listening. Instead, I put on the music, we start moving, and collective action emerges. Nevertheless, I am dissatisfied because the shared moment of being and becoming seen at the beginning of our dance workshop was

> missing. For the next time, I decide to use pictures alongside spoken expression, which is already a familiar method for children from kindergarten practices. I equip myself with paper, markers, and blu-tack. The children suggest the "dance soup" ingredients, and I draw the emerging ideas on paper. My actions are pulled into different directions with constantly varying rhythms: the time I spend drawing each picture is measured by the intensity or lack of children's attention, and the act of drawing is physically moved further away from my body so that everybody can see the drawing process. Once a picture is finished, I attach it within sight, and we explore the theme, thinking with and through our bodies. Sometimes, the drawings need to be specified by the knowledge produced in dancing, such as an arrow indicating the movement path in the space.

Tesar (2014: 360) argues that early childhood education, or any other frame of education, can be viewed as an ideologically charged setting that governs children through dominant and resistant discourses. Also, Anttila (2013a) and Hohti et al. (2019) discuss the restricting, controlling, and normative constraints often present in educational settings. During my research in kindergarten, I aimed to contest the culture of guidance and control in my practice. I noticed that the amount of freedom within my dance workshops was much more tremendous than the children were used to, which resulted in radically acting out their unusually comprehensive agency. This produced a chaotic diversity of individualistic explorations instead of focusing on a shared and collective process. My unplanned pedagogical experimentation with a combination of talking, drawing, showing, and seeing worked as an entanglement that facilitated the focus of children's attention on the shared space and their more active participation.

The Storyboard Method Emerges

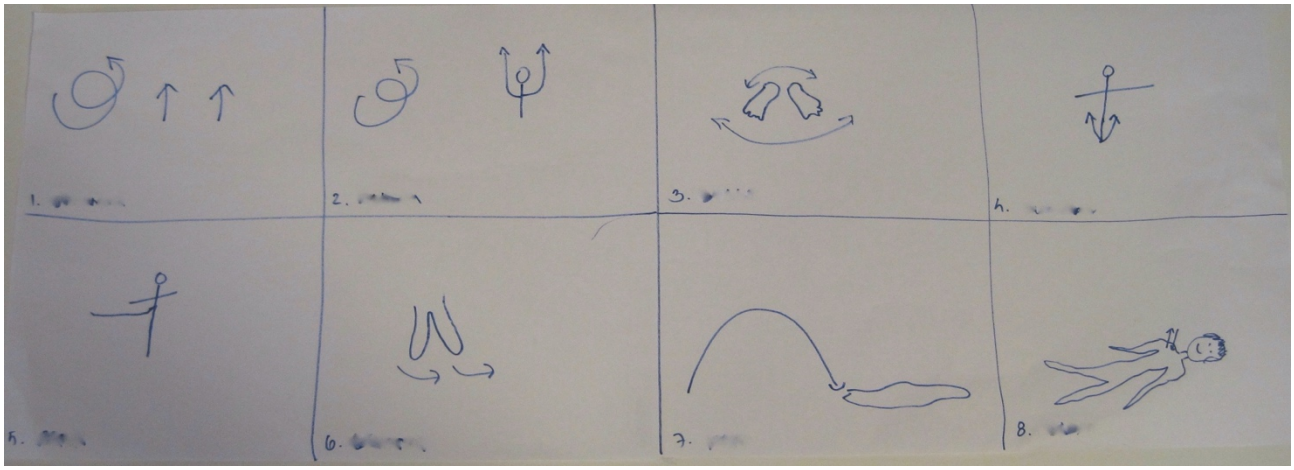
One of the teachers told me that some children wanted to dance when I was not present in their group. This led them to develop a method for planning and sharing choreography through drawing called the Storyboard. Since I was not present, I don't know exactly how the process evolved, but the storyboards drawn by the children were presented to me as the product of their artistic agency and choreographic skills. The children drew the ideas for the movements in a numbered grid on paper, which produced a choreography in an illustrated format. Later, we worked on these storyboards so that each choreographer had an opportunity to teach their choreography to others.

> I participate in our dance workshop as an official student and the children with their storyboards as teachers. The drawings of dancing figures, with additional signs for the amount, quality, and directions of movements, help the children teach their choreographies and support memorizing the dances. I soon notice the opportunity to create small performances from the material, and I transform into a choreographic assistant and a sound technician. The choreographies are performed on the spot to those children and adults who happen to be nearby by the end of our dance workshop. We also explore using several pieces of accompanying music in varying moods and styles and discuss how the different qualities of music affect the dynamics of dancing.

We continued working with the Storyboard Method in several ways. I found out that besides the original aim of producing choreography for a solo performance, it could be used to promote equal distribution of artistic agency in creating collective choreography. Importantly, it also offers the opportunity to participate regardless of one's age and language abilities, since the acts of drawing and showing may replace the spoken message. The storyboard choreography may be constructed with miscellaneous ideas, have a specific theme, or present a

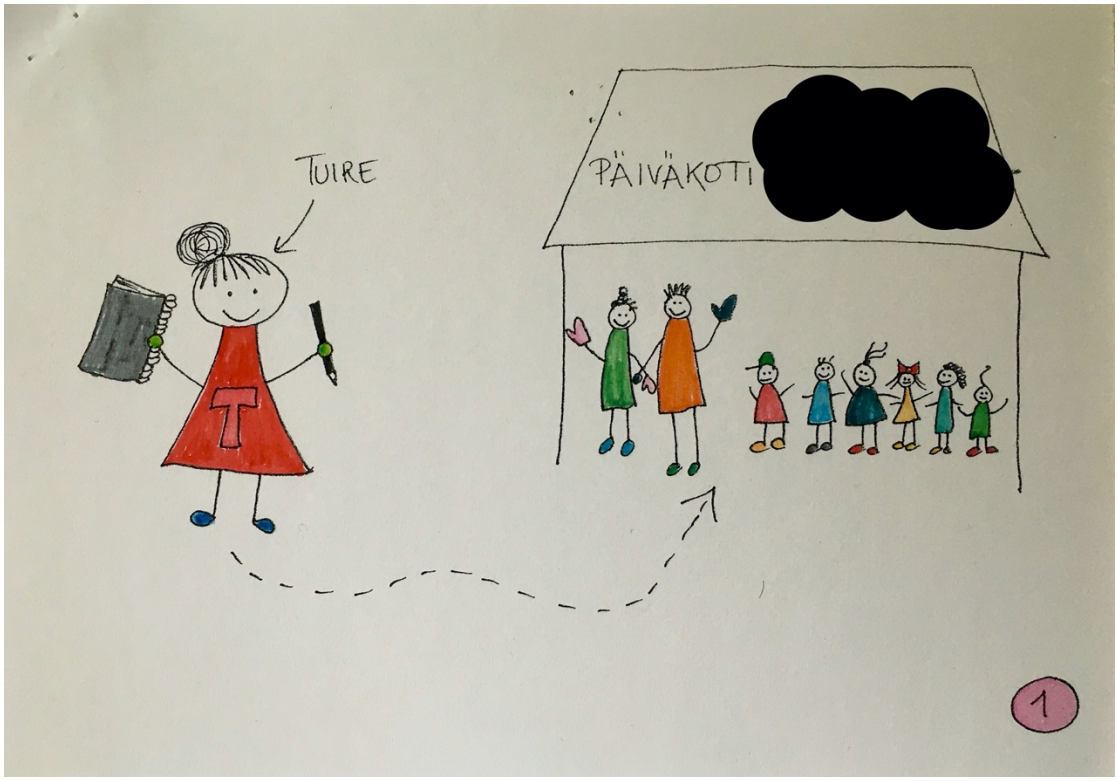
narrative. Anyone, or everyone, of the participants can suggest an idea, which will be translated into a drawing on a numbered grid. Writing the choreography can be done based on first showing the movement and finding a way to express it as a drawn figure or first deciding and drawing the idea or theme for the movement and, after that, figuring out how to dance it.

The children gather to sit on chairs arranged in a half circle in front of the bulletin board-like information wall. Most of these children have not yet experienced working with the Storyboard Method. I begin by introducing the method and the idea of using it to co-choreograph a dance within a small space at our disposal. I draw a grid with eight squares, as many as the children involved. I show the empty grid and tell the children that each can introduce a movement idea as part of a collectively created dance. I put on some music to give the children a moment to try their dance in a small space and discover their ideas. Much movement and sound are created as the music starts, much more than I could have imagined. The music stops, and I start collecting ideas one by one. I watch each movement shown, translate the idea into a drawing, and show the resulting image to the group. We continue by exploring the movement together. One of the children thinks about his suggestion for a long time, scratching his head. After a while of not getting forward, I suggest that his idea would be the movement already happening, the fingers scratching the head. He accepts my suggestion, and I draw the movement in grid number six as “running fingers.” Playful interpretations emerge, transforming the movement into space around us and across the room's surfaces.



Picture 1: Storyboard choreography created in a small space. Drawing: Tuire Colliander after the ideas of the children. Photo: Tuire Colliander.

Pandemic Variations with the Storyboard Method



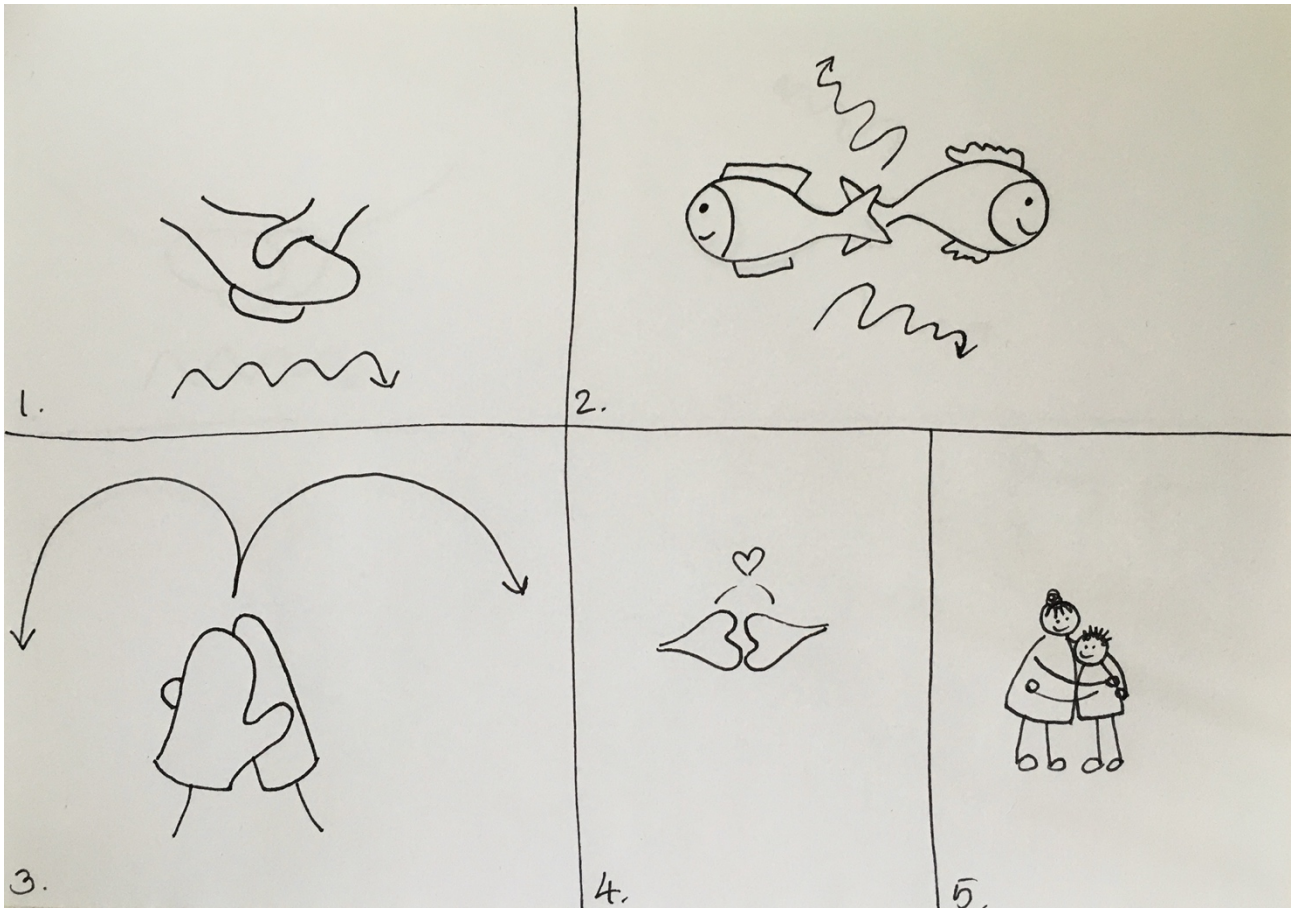
Picture 2: The first page of the drawn information sheet. Drawing and photo: Tuire Colliander.

> We are studying the drawn version of the information sheet about my research with the children. On the first page, Tuire-the-researcher and the people in the kindergarten greet each other. This picture gives us an impulse for dance: The Greetings Dance. We spread out dancing in the space, and I encourage everyone to greet the others in different ways. Several variations are learned and named, the embodied activity always preceding the verbal conceptualization. Each greeting comes to have its inviting gesture, which the person encountered will be able to join. A raised palm – give a high five, an extended thumb – take your thumb and put the thumbs together like they were kissing, a happy smile – smile back. We meet, greet, become connected, and know the secret codes unknown to outsiders.

These seemingly small, inviting gestures created for the dance seem like powerful invitations to an embodied play that has the agency to structure this co-created choreography. This relates to Massumi (2014: 5) writing about the transformative potential of the gestures used as invitations to join the play:

> The ludic gesture releases a force of *transindividual* transformation. The immediacy of the transformation that the gesture's execution induces qualifies the ludic gesture as a performative act. Play is made of performative gestures exerting a transindividual force.

A few months after the above-described invention of the Greetings Dance, the pandemic terminated my research at the kindergarten. The only way to connect with the children was through WhatsApp videos sent to teachers of the groups. This led to transforming the Greetings Dance into a choreographed solo version. The Storyboard was not included in the video as a drawing but emerged later as I prepared a conference presentation.



Picture 3: Storyboard choreography of "The Greetings Dance." The choreography comprises movements of shaking hands, fishtails, gimme fives, kissing thumbs, and hugging little fingers. Each grid is repeated eight counts in the music, and the last two grids are four counts, respectively. Drawing: Tuire Colliander after some of the pre-existing and co-created movements for the dance exercise. Photo: Tuire Colliander.

Yet another way of using the Storyboard Method emerged during the pandemic circumstances, which led me into a process that Davies (Diaz-Diaz and Semenec, 2020: 25) describes as being "intra-active in the emergent imagining-playing-thinking-becoming of the children and of me in relation to them". The central agential factors included the isolation during the pandemic, the presence of a construction site next to our home, the keen interest of my three- and nine-years-old sons in the explosion work done at the construction site, and my need

to learn video editing and sharing on a digital platform as part of my doctoral studies.

> We have agreed to work on an explosion-themed dance with my sons. My older son has a greater understanding of the technical details of the explosion process than I do, which is helpful as we begin to draw the Storyboard. The younger one needs help drawing and coloring, so we all draw the pictures together, and the traces of our markers blend. Once the Storyboard is completed, we translate the events into the movements and sounds of our bodies. The working space is a small area in the children's room, which limits our spatial possibilities and guides us to close body contact. We rehearse and learn the structure of the choreography within which the movements become improvised. The performance is captured on the video, which ends with the youngest one running towards the camera and demanding, “Show me!”.

Picture 4: Storyboard of a co-choreographed and co-drawn dance narrating an exploding work at a construction site. Drawing: Nikolas, Kasimir, and Tuire Colliander. Photo: Tuire Colliander.

Storyboard Method as a Playful Tool for Distributing the Choreographic Agency

The issues of diversity and gender are becoming more pronounced in the early childhood education dance pedagogical practices, which Anttila (2013a) also discusses. In my experience, diversity both complexifies and enriches pedagogical situations. This should not result in viewing diversity as a "problem" that needs a "solution," as Arndt (Diaz-Diaz and Semenec, 2020: 5) also argues. Instead, it would be fruitful to find ways of working in a meaningful and inclusive way in diverse communities, considering a wide range of interests, possible

special needs, and different linguistic skills. The Storyboard Method might work as a practical and viable technique that other educators could apply in various educational settings. I propose that by using drawing as a creative means of writing, the communication between adults and children, as well as among children, may become more reciprocal, playful, and thus supportive of intra-active artistic cooperation. Davies (2014:12) references Reggio Emilia pedagogy's idea of children having a hundred languages for their expression for deconstructing the hierarchy and dominance of traditional forms of languages:

> The concept of a hundred languages is not only a way of crediting children and adults with multiple communicative potentials: "…it is a declaration of the equal dignity and importance of all languages, not only writing, reading and counting . . . for the construction of knowledge."

Manning and Massumi (2014: vii) expand the concept of thinking to become a mode that manifests in corporeality, with dance becoming thinking in movement. Manning's and Massumi's (2014: 41) thinking also resonates with my view on artistic research as a translation process as they theorize the relation between language and movement:

> Language cannot fully describe movement. Movement does not give itself over to the order of language any more than it surrenders itself integrally to visible form. The orders of experience are incommensurable. There is always a residue, a holding itself in reserve, each in its own element. --- In the middle they, they splay together in their difference.

They (2014: 42) continue that although incommensurable, movement and language meet and resonate in the thinking-feeling. I want to add that resonance takes different qualities depending on the language in question. Drawing as a way of writing choreography may create an additional, often playful, layer of inspiration for embodied thinking and contribute to new and unpredicted

possibilities for artistic interpretations, as in the following event in the kindergarten dance workshop.

> We are adding imaginative ingredients to the Dancing Soup and exploring the embodied versions of the components through dance movements. In kindergarten, the children always get Xylitol pastilles after lunch, and someone proposes that these pastilles be added to the soup. I quickly start drawing many of them, small and round. The children immediately notice that some of the drawn pastilles resemble buttocks. An extraordinarily humorous and playful interpretation of dancing buttocks-pastilles emerges.

One way to enhance the equal distribution of the artistic agency between adults and children in my study has been to include play and playfulness in my pedagogical approaches and trust children's expertise in play and their artistic activity. Many dance pedagogues, e.g., Sansom (2009) and Stinson (1997, 2005), have discussed the relationship between play and dance. According to Sansom (2009: 34, 38–39), the dance that originates in play produces experiences of joy and pleasure and enhances a growing understanding of self, others, and the world. Similarly, in my experience, the dances originating from the child-artist-world entanglements often lead to a more engaged working together and may result in surprising creativity flows.

In my view, there are similar qualities in artmaking and children’s play, as they both engage creativity, exist in their own right, and contain aesthetic and performative dimensions. Huizinga (1949) writes about the long history of play and its importance for cultures. He argues that play forms an integral basis preceding human culture, as culture does not begin with the play or from play but in play. (Huizinga and Kaila, 1967: 12, 68) From an arts education

perspective, the intertwining of play and artmaking is fascinating and finds its theoretical foundation, for example, in the philosophy of Gadamer (1960, 1991). According to him, a work of art has the same mode of being as play, and art as creation is like a play insofar as we are not masters but subjects of the play as well (Gadamer, 1960). Kofman's (1988: 112-13) thinking further supports respect for children's play. Kofman draws a parallel between an artist and a child, claiming that play is present at multiple levels in an artist's work, as the artist tries to repeat what the child is doing before reason and judgment become constraints on actions. In line with these theories, I argue that the value of a child's expertise in play deserves greater appreciation and consideration in pedagogical practices.

Additionally, I have noticed that play and playfulness facilitate less result-oriented and outcome-focused ways of working, transforming the interest from the product to the process, which I have described in this article through multiple examples from my fieldwork. Dancing can be considered embodied play, as discussed with the inviting gestures of the Greetings Dance. In dance, sensing and knowing through our bodies is central, which shifts the pedagogical focus to sensorial encounters, embodied relations, and response-ability beyond the spoken. As adults, we could learn from children by becoming free of habitual constraints and rational, limiting ways of thinking in artistic work through playfulness.

Implications for Early Childhood Education Practices

The powerfulness of the Storyboard Method lies in its potential to accommodate diverse linguistic skills and a wide range of age groups. It may be utilized to increase the possibilities of equal participation, facilitating more democratic artistic processes. Created within a dance pedagogical context, this method supports more holistic, inclusive, and participatory forms of learning, which

aligns well with contemporary educational paradigms. I will next discuss the practical implications of the Storyboard Method to pedagogical relationships and agency.

Several binaries, such as teacher-student, child-adult, and performer-audience hierarchies, may become contested and blurred through the Storyboard Method. In creating choreographies through the Storyboard Method, the educators may undertake the position of a co-creator with neither the requirement for expertise nor the knowledge of the result of the process beforehand. Additionally, there are no requirements for particular dance expertise since the choreographic material arises from the improvised movements that may be collectively created from ordinary everyday movements and activities. In my experience, the critical element towards reciprocal and playful co-creation seems to be the educator's capability of embodied sensitivity. This may be achieved through emergent listening, aiming at tuning in and staying open to surprising ideas and possibly messy outcomes that following the suggested ideas produces.

In addition, the Storyboard Method may enable children to be active agential creators in their artistic processes by offering a framework where the guidance of adults is not central or even needed at all. Thus, it might represent a way for children to resist adult and policy governance as a form of "childhood underground," which is described by Malone et al. (2020: 157) and Tesar (2014; 2017). The Storyboard Method shares Kind's (Diaz-Diaz and Semenec, 2020) view of dance pedagogy as primarily not about verbal forms of thinking but focusing on thinking with the body, in movement, and in correspondence with others, including the surrounding materialities. Similarly, the ideas are not considered to be coming from the child but emerging "in the meeting of things, in the touch, in the intersection of materials, in what the materials propose," as Kind (Diaz-Diaz and Semenec 2020: 80, 83-84) states.

Conclusions

This paper aimed to present several practical examples of how integrating intra-active dance pedagogy into posthuman, new materialist, and childhood studies in the context of early childhood education might emerge. At the beginning of this paper, I presented my research question and continued with additional questions about co-choreographing the pedagogical settings through an intra-active approach. I shared how artistic research could be considered a translation process by exploring drawing as a form of writing. As a central research finding, I introduced the drawing-based Storyboard Method as a child-centered technique for co-creating choreographies. Through several practical dance pedagogical examples with the contextualization to posthuman and new materialist childhood studies I aimed to describe the multiple possibilities this novel method entails.

I argue that this inclusive approach might have the potential to transform the practices of choreographing pedagogical settings into more collectively driven creative processes with a shared artistic agency. The understanding of the power of materialities and the more-than-human intra-actions could lead to becoming inclusive for the materialities and thinking with these agential forces in educational settings. Taking children's perspectives into account may open new worlds, previously invisible to others, especially to adults. My hope is, that this research and its findings may be relevant not only to the context of dance education but to other educational and policy frameworks around the world.

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