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Is this Choreography? Choreographing conditions for innovative practice in everyday work

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Abstract

The article introduces some of the concepts from experimental contemporary dance and choreography, such as "body and materiality", the "method of practice", and "undoing everydayness", that have not been addressed much in the "dance and organization" theory. It expands the application of dance methods from the predominant field of leadership practice towards the innovation management and development of innovative competence of employees in organizations. The concept of "body and materiality" suggests that employees could focus more on engaging the body and materiality when innovating in order to balance the external drivers of innovation (such as market trends, user needs, and increase of shareholder value) with their own needs, desires and well-being, but also to make use of the vast possibilities of embodied knowledge that is often excluded from innovation processes. The "method of practice" proposes to give more attention to the process rather than just the performance or result of innovating, using methods, such as "doing less" to create more time to reflect, finding "meaningful questions" to innovate around, and using "improvisation" as a method to develop new ideas through the practice of spontaneous experimentation. It shifts the idea from using innovative competence to perform a desired effect through prescribed top-down innovation projects towards developing innovative practice through durational bottom-up exploration. "Undoing everydayness" hints that innovation can come closer to everyday work routines of all employees, by challenging existing norms and combining critical thinking with exploration of potentiality in everyday work. Concrete examples of activities through which these concepts were materialized in a choreographic intervention at the Art of Management conference 2016 are described and their potential to be applied in organizations discussed.

Keywords: innovative competence, contemporary dance, choreography, undoing everydayness, body, practice

Is this Choreography?
Choreographing conditions for innovative practice in everyday work

The use of dance-based knowledge and methods in organizational context is a relatively new field of practice and research, but with a growing interest, especially in Europe (Biehl-Missal and Springborg, 2016; Johansson Sköldberg et al., 2016). In 2014 and 2016, a special stream on "dance, choreography and organisation" was hosted at the Art of Management and Organisation Conferences in Copenhagen and Bled. In between the two conferences a special issue of the journal *Organizational Aesthetics* on "Dance, Organisation and Leadership" was published in 2016. These events took place in parallel with the first publications of other articles, a few doctoral theses (Springborg, 2014; Müller, 2015; Zeitner, 2016; Satama, 2017), and the first book (Biehl, 2017) related to the same field of study. Looking at the current practice and literature on dance-based interventions in organizations, it can be observed that leadership development is by far the most common field of applying dance-based methods in organizations (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010; Zeitner, 2016; Hujala et al., 2016; Ludevig, 2016; Matzdorf and Sen, 2016). On one hand, dance has been used in organizational theory as a metaphor to point at the possible relevance of movement, rhythm, non-verbal communication and similar dance related concepts (Chandler, 2012) which can provide a new perspective on the way we look at and understand organizations. On the other hand, dance-based methods have been applied in practice to enable people to explore the sensuous, embodied, and aesthetic qualities of work (Hujala et al, 2016; Satama, 2016) and to develop different types of intelligences that address also tacit and embodied forms of knowing (Blom and Chaplin, 2000; Zeitner, 2016). Among the researchers in this field that have been exchanging their experiences within the frame of the Art of Management and Organisation Conferences, it can be observed that they are exploring different types of dance practices, from classical ballet, ballroom dancing, tango, modern dance, and others.

This article addresses two issues that have not been discussed much in the current literature about dance in organizations. On one hand, it looks at the theory emerging from a specific field of dance – the experimental choreographic practices that have developed in the last two decades mainly in Europe. These practices mark the beginnings of a "dance-philosophy", arising from the material practice of dancing, and are radically rethinking the relationship between the body, movement, time, and space (Cvejic, 2015b, pp. 17-18) – the basic elements choreographers usually operate with. On the other hand, the article tries to expand the possibilities of using dance-based methods from the leadership area towards the field of innovation management, specifically in the context of developing innovative competence in everyday work of employees in organizations.

This is an important organizational issue today when innovation plays a central role in organizational competitiveness (Reuvers et al, 2008; Shalley et al, 2009) and cannot rely anymore on a few select people working in a special department. Innovation more and more depends on engagement of people from across disciplines, functions, and organizational levels (Trokhan, 2007; Abstein and Spieth, 2014). This means that innovation has become a core competence that should be distributed throughout organizations. The current literature on innovative competence highlights various attitudes and skills needed to innovate. Some authors talk more about psychological traits and attitudes of innovators (Amabile, 1983; Cerinšek and Dolinsek, 2009; Nanda and Singh, 2009), other about the functional skills for innovation (McGourty et al, 1996; du Chatenier et al, 2010; Dyer et al, 2011) and recently more attention is given to the interactive skills needed to practice innovation in teams and in more complex collaborative networks (Hargadon and Bechky, 2006; Darsø, 2012; Bissola et al, 2014). The overall focus, though, is on the cognitive skills, like divergent, associational, and convergent thinking. This absence of other capacities is problematic, especially since the research on

competence suggests that being competent in any field of practice involves both intellectual and emotional capacities, and the use of intuition (Illeris, 2013). The more holistic approach to competence development implies that dance-based methods could be interesting to look at to support people to access, explore and develop also their sensuous and embodied knowledge (Hujala et al., 2016; Satama, 2016; Ludevig, 2016).

A core aspect of innovative competence is the ability to combine both creativity and experimentation as one generates and develops new ideas, and the ability to critically question, evaluate ideas and move forward towards their implementation. This makes the concepts and methods from experimental choreographic practices relevant in the context of innovative competence development, because they combine, as will be later explained in more detail, the "method of practice" that supports a continuous creative experimentation in everyday work, and the idea of "undoing everydayness" with a more critical attitude of questioning existing norms in everyday life and work. But to those two aspects choreographic practices add also another layer of working with the "body and materiality", which is most often absent in the mainstream innovation management. Contemporary choreographic practices can thus on one hand shift the traditional approach of innovating that focuses on the application of cognitive skills towards entering the practice of innovating by engaging the body, senses, fantasy, and feelings, and thus bringing the individual and her inside-out perspective to the centre of learning (Hujala et al., 2016). On the other hand, they can also help employees combine the ambidexterity of constantly iterating between radical experimentation and critical reflection, which is at the base of moving from idea generation towards idea development, selection and implementation in innovative processes (Bozic Yams, 2016).

The article shows how choreographic tools and ideas can be applied in a real work situation through examples of different activities that were implemented as part of a choreographic intervention at the Art of Management and Organization conference in Bled in September 2016. Conference participants were invited to re-frame how they could participate in academic conferences, developing their innovative competence at work. Since one of the activities that was part of the intervention were choreographic scores or tasks that encouraged participants to experiment in new ways with their practice in conference participation, examples of such scores are woven into the article to invite the reader to become more aware of the typical parameters that choreographers usually work with, such as the body, space, time, and context in which the work takes place.

The absent body and why we need its presence at work

> *Score 1:*
>
> *Breathe in, breathe out. Breathe in, breathe out. Breathe in, breathe out. Look away from the screen for ten seconds and notice the space you are in, the colours, shapes, temperature.*
>
> *As you return your gaze to the text, put attention to your feet touching the ground, notice your butt touching the chair, notice your chest moving with every breath, notice the top of year head. Make a short massage of your face and continue reading.*

The score above invites you to continue reading while practicing being aware of the space you are in and sensations in your body. As choreographer Mala Kline suggests: "We live the everyday life expelled from our bodies, from its presence, from its sensibility as the ability to affect and be affected, from experiencing, from its eroticism, from language in relation to body, from empathy, from time of the body" (Kline, 2016, p. 11).

The distancing from our bodies started to happen already in the renaissance with the development of anatomy in 17th and 18th centuries, when the body became an object of scientific inquiry and we started to perceive it as some sort of an independent machine that became transparent, allowing us to turn a person inside out, observing the structures behind the bodily operations in search of knowing and complete revelation of the body (Kunst, 1999, pp. 26-27). Descartes (1989) equalized organic with the mechanic and lifted the body as a machine where each organ has its function and is in relation with the other organs. In his mechanistic view of the world the body is separated from the mind, and while the body is part of the nature and its laws, the soul and consciousness do not have a place in nature (Kunst, 1999, pp. 29-30). This mechanistic view of the body in a way remains present until today, just that the new technologies now allow us to extend, excel, intervene in, manipulate and control the body, allowing us to form new models of virtual bodies that transcend the spatial and time limits of the natural body (Kunst, 1999, p.218).

Phenomenologist Drew Leder in his book "The absent body" (1990) interestingly explains why the Cartesian dualism of body and mind is still so present today. On one hand, humans establish themselves through their sensorimotor surface of the body through which the self meets external world (Leder, 1990, p.11). In this meeting of the environment and other people our perceiving organs recede from perceptual field to enable us to focus on sensing, perceiving and interacting with the world around us. On the other hand, our internal organs, which are performing visceral functions in the depth of the body are also crucial for sustaining our lives but largely unavailable to our conscious awareness and control (Leder, 1990, p. 36). That the body is so often absent from our experience, even though human experience is rooted in the bodily, is essential to the body´s functioning in everyday life. The unfortunate thing is, that the body often only becomes the focus of our attention when it becomes dysfunctional, for example when we experience pain and illness, and we suddenly become aware of it as an alien presence that we want to repair (Leder, 1990, p.82). Dysfunction and body awareness thus engender each other. The fact that the body is on one hand so often absent from our lives and on the other hand remembered especially at times of error, helps explain the Cartesian distrust of the body and its persistence in time (Leder, 1990, p.86).

Digitalization of our lives in contemporary society strengthens this feeling of alienation with the body as people spend more and more time in the virtual worlds. Technological development also enforces the idea that our bodies are machines that can be measured through gadgets, such as smart watches, manipulated by plastic surgery, and their performance optimized through meticulously planned diets and training programs. Despite of the possibilities enabled by new knowledge and technologies that allow us to manipulate the body, the body still importantly influences our personal experience of life, pleasure, pain, illness and destiny (Kunst, 1999). Our deadly and perceptive body, according to Lyotard (1998), is still the only body for thinking about complexity of thought.

Modern neuro science provides evidence for the idea that cognition is embodied and that "mind" and "body" are not separate, but rather part of one organic process, and that all meaning, thought, and language emerge through the embodied process of an organism´s interaction with the environment (Johnson, 2007, p.1). The evidence from cognitive science shows that meaning is to a large extent "shaped by the nature of our bodies, especially our sensorimotor capacities and our ability to experience feelings and emotions. If we look at pre-linguistic infants and at children who are learning how their world works and what things mean to them, we will find vast stretches of embodied meaning that are not conceptual and propositional in character, even though they will later make propositional thinking possible" (Johnson, 2007, p. 9). The fact that even our most abstract concepts, such as love, are rooted in the bodily experiences that came before we had words for them (for example when our parents were taking care of

us as babies), highlights how our bodily experience influence our perception of the world around us. Sheets-Johnstone (1979) suggests that it is through movement that we discover ourselves and inhabit a world that has meaning for us. It is in the movement that we discover our arms that extend, spines that bend, knees that flex, and make sense of ourselves (Sheets-Johnstone, 1979, p. 136). It is through movement in the space and interaction with the objects and people that we become human and start create meanings (Johnson, 2007).

Since the discoveries about the importance of body in our processes of perception, experience and interaction with others have become more prominent, more attention has been given to the meaning of body also in the context of organizational studies. Satama (2017) discusses multiple subject areas related to body that have been explored in organizations, for example the sensory ways of learning and producing knowledge within organizations (Strati, 2007; Yakhlef, 2010; Bazin, 2013;), the relational aspects of collective sharing of meanings in organizations (Ropo and Sauer, 2008; Patriotta and Spedale, 2009), and gender issues concerned with how the self is constructed through the gendered bodies (Muhr and Sullivan 2013; Rumens and Kerfoot 2009). Leadership is also an important area within organizations where studies of the body have started to take more place as the body becomes the "carrier of emotion, desire or motivation" (Pullen and Vacchani 2013, p. 315), looking more closely at different aspects of embodied leadership (Sinclair, 2005; Hansen et al. 2007; Ladkin 2013). Since the senses form the basis of experiences and the felt meanings (Satama, 2017), the sensing body is very central in organizational life, even if traditional organizational theories are based on "bodylessness" (Hansen et al. 2007). Experiential learning and creation of new knowledge and meanings are at the core of any innovation process, so becoming more aware of the body and exploring how we can use it as a resource and enabler when innovating is an interesting topic to explore also in innovation management. As contemporary dance researches the body and materiality as one of its core topics, the next section of the article looks at the concepts and methods used by choreographers that could contribute to development of innovative competence development in innovation management.

Concepts from choreographic practice and their potential application for enabling innovative competence development

Observing the field of contemporary dance and choreographic practice, it is important to notice that a shift happened in the mid-1990s when a wave of choreographers from across Europe started to seek a new poetics, one which would upset the knowledge about dance and the prevalent notions from the past, either the centrality of self-expression in modern dance, the formalist-abstract paradigm of dance with mystical undertones and its phenomenological heritage, or the later poststructuralist readings of dance (Cvejic, 2015b, pp. 11-13). The new approach to choreography is centred on "what dance or performance is, how choreography could be expanded beyond the movement of the body and how the way dance is made necessarily determines performance" (Cvejic, 2015b, pp. 12-13). This means that the contemporary choreographic practices question the established ideas and norms of what a dance performance should be, and propose that creative process or how the artistic work is done is in the centre of a performance. And last but not least, that choreography, as a way of thinking and working can be used in other fields of practice, or as an extended practice (Hewitt, 2005; Spångberg, 2013).

One of the core topics that contemporary dancers and choreographers explore in their work is body and materiality.

Body and materiality

In the digital age we live in today the body is often erased from our radars. Focusing on body and materiality as an essential part of contemporary choreographic practices is therefore a form of "resistance to the present processes of immateriality and abstraction that take place as a massive intellectualization and technical expropriation of the language that causes a separation, capture, and alienation of materialized and embodied processes of life" (Kline, 2016, p. 16). It is not that choreographers abandon language but they reinvent it by reclaiming matter, body, sensibility, affective power, emotion, experience, and connection with the world (Kline, 2016). Performing arts are very material per se because performances are "the site not only of 'heavy' bodies but also of a real gathering, a place where unique intersection of aesthetically organized and everyday real life takes place. In contrast to other arts, which produce an object and/or are communicated through media, here the aesthetic act itself (performing) as well as the act of reception takes place as a real doing in the here and now" (Lehmann, 2006, p. 17). As choreographer Katja Legin (2015) suggests, a good performer uses her presence and awareness of the body and what´s happening in her while being on the stage as a resource while performing. In this way her presence becomes more alive, and is a reflection of what is happening right there in the moment, in contact with the specific space and audience sitting there that night (Legin, 2015).

> *Score 2:*
>
> *Pay attention to the sounds you hear at this very moment. What do you hear? Listen as long as you need to.*

The above score invites you to sharpen your listening and become aware of how the surrounding affects your mental and emotional state. Using anything that is sensed at the moment as a potential gift to the creative process is the attitude with which contemporary dancers work. Although the sensing body has always been important to dancers, their relation to body and materiality has changed significantly in time. In the classical ballet, the body represents a character and a specific form of aesthetical and technical perfection that is in a way artificial and quite distant from the natural body of everyday life. This is why the dancers in modern dance in the first half of 20th century moved towards the body as the original source of individual self-expression, allowing the movement to freely flow from it (Cvejic, 2015a, p.19). This almost mystical relationship to body-movement in modern dance proposes that emancipation happens through the body´s experience of its own truth as its nature (Cvejic, 2015a). The choreographers in contemporary dance have a different attitude towards body and materiality. They question whether authentic movement exists at all, and intentionally rupture and reinvent the relation between the body and movement with various procedures (Cvejic, 2015a), such as deconstructing and reconstructing the movements, exhausting them by endless repetition, slowing them down, standing still and not moving at all as they are expected to, etc. When exploring the body as a source of inner feelings, they do not only express them through the form of the movement, but actually expose their bodies to real pleasure and pain, researching the limits of where the body can take them. They also question if the dancer has to be trained in order to perform, they question where dance can happen, what conditions there should be for a dance, and what needs the dance fulfils. Contemporary dancers thus apply and begin their creations from a rather experimental and critical attitude towards the body and materiality.

This experimental attitude towards the body and movement in contemporary dance can be interesting for innovation management practice. Bringing the body back to work and using it more consciously and holistically can shift the starting point from which innovating operates. It suggests that instead of initiating innovation processes outside-in, looking first at the market,

trends, and consumer needs, and then innovating around them with the focus on problem-solving, the innovation can start from within. It can start from the individual connecting with her body and through it to her inner drives, feelings, values, and needs. Satama (2017) similarly discusses the importance of embodied agency, which for her means that people act in ways that are coherent with their personal desires at work, working within the limits and pushing against them, provoking and questioning them when needed. This can help people direct the focus of innovating on questions that are meaningful for them. It does not mean that external perspectives would not be taken into consideration when innovating. On the contrary, contemporary dancers very actively observe what is happening in society and respond to it in their performances, involving also various external collaborators in the process of making, from dramaturgs, light, set, music and costume designers, but also the audiences that they engage on a different scale throughout the process (Bozic and Olsson, 2013). It rather means that the starting point of innovation could come from inside-out instead of outside-in and could thus take the process of innovating into another direction. As Verganti (2016) suggests, the challenge for organizations today is not to produce more new ideas, solutions and product functions to a plethora of already existing products and services, but rather to help both employees and users find the right direction and make choices that are right for them. This means that the skills like acting from awareness of body, space and people around us, and then using body, fantasy and feelings in explorative ways to experiment with new ideas can become important resources to strengthen people´s innovative competence. Illeris (2013) suggests that it is crucial to engage both emotional and cognitive capacities, and intuition when developing a competence. New models of management and innovation also stress the importance of a more holistic and humanistic approach to organizing work (Laloux, 2014; Scharmer, 2009; Verganti, 2016) that engages people on all levels, through their minds, body, hearts, and will.

The next concept from contemporary dance that can be used to develop people´s ability to innovate is called the "method of practice".

Practice

The "method of practice" (Cvejic, 2015b) is usually focused on a set of questions or problems that the artist is concerned with in her work and the conditions she wants to create to explore these questions in time. A lot of attention is given to the process and its materiality, exploring relations, language, voice, time, body gestures and other aspects that can enable the composition of performance unfold in time through the practice (Kline, 2016, p. 183). The concept of practice reframes what is traditionally understood as *performance*. "Performing implies a competence related to the ability to achieve something or have an effect" (Cvejic, 2015a, p. 68). The concept of performance plays an important role in the wider society today, where the focus is often on achieving set results, using competences and resources in the most efficient and effective way. But the idea of practice shifts the focus from the act with effect towards a temporal process, where "emphasis is on the duration of action rather than the effect" (Cvejic, 2015a). "Performing" in this case "suggests a frequentative form of doing which provides or generates something in time rather than being reduced to felicitous or infelicitous act that achieves, fails to achieve, or transgresses a certain expected effect" (Cvejic, 2015a, p.68). This does not mean that performing cannot have an effect, but it shifts the focus away from effect towards the process.

The idea of practice is interesting for the concept of innovative competence because traditionally the goal of developing and using innovative competence in innovation management would be to improve performance and achieve an expected result or effect. Success would be measured by quantified performance indicators, like the number of new ideas, products, services or business models, and their contribution to growth, profitability, and shareholder

value. Even in dance, the production system through public financing often forces the dancers to apply for money on product-basis, being financed for a specific project that should result in a performance, and evaluated with quantified measures, such as the number of shows, the number of visitors, etc. Production cycle times in dance are often extremely short, most commonly between one to three months. Among contemporary dance choreographers a new way of working has thus evolved, which is a kind of revolt against the production system and performance measurement thinking, and is called the "method of practice".

> *Score 3:*
>
> *What is your practice of reading an article? Sitting on the floor, with a cup of coffee? Tea? Reading on a train? We invite you to change a little detail of you reading practice at this very moment. Move to another spot in the space or put on/off the music, bring yourself a drink or change the light in the space. Notice how these little changes affect your reading practice.*

This score invites you to reflect upon your own practice of reading and challenges you to re-think your existing routine. In the following section a few methods that choreographers use to experiment and constantly develop their everyday work practice will be given. They were chosen because they relate to the "method of practice", are relevant in the context of developing innovative competence, but also because they are quite frequently used by contemporary choreographers. They are focused around "driving questions", "slowing down and doing less", and "improvisation".

American choreographer Deborah Hay describes her choreographic practice in her book "My body, the Buddhist" (2000), where she explains how her research is *driven by certain questions* or themes that become the base for bodily exploration and inquiry in the dance studio for several years. Instead of instructing dancers a specific repertoire of movements or dance technique, the themes or images provide a focus and frame for developing her practice. Some of these topics have acted as the base for daily research for many years. Examples of such themes or questions could be "Every cell in my body perceives that alignment is everywhere", or "What if where I am is what I need?" (Hay, 2000, pp. 103-104). The body in this setting must be awake and attentive as it becomes a site of exploration and infinite possibilities, rather than a tool for mastering specific skills (Foster in Hay, 2000, p. xiv-xv). This research through dialogue between the body and an image creates material and in time Hay makes decisions about choosing those impulses that most vividly reflect and amplify her experience of working with the image (Foster in Hay, p.xv). This is also how she distinguishes between the everyday practice and choreography that slowly takes form through practice: "They are two different animals. The practice is like the conscious heartbeat of the dance. The choreography is simultaneously the conscious choices I am making within the form" (Foster in Hay, 2000, p. xv).

Stopping the time and doing less is another common focus in the practice of contemporary dancers. Bojana Kunst (2012) suggests that the "ability to do less, to insist endlessly on this less and on that which could still be is what opens a human being to the dimension of time, it is what makes him historical and communal at once. This potentiality to do less gives human activity sustainability, and to art it gives durable and autonomous power to re-think the borders between diverse modes of human experience" (p.153). Kline (2016) gives the example of work "Recollections" by choreographer Dalija Acin Thelander in which a space is created for the audience where one does not need to perform, produce, or actualize anything. One can just be and attend to being here and now, observing others in the shared space. The audience is invited into an almost empty studio with some objects, like the headphones with recordings available

on to listen to, but it is up to the audience to decide what to do with them and whether to act upon them.

It is precisely the gesture of "doing less", framed as the withdrawal and suspension of the demand to produce and perform in order to rather make a space for simply being there and attending to the common "being together" here and now, that makes a rift in the habitual modes of production of self and work. A space of "active undoing" opens in this rift in the habitual … Recollections take us to the space of possible, the possibilities of life not actualized and recalls in us that there is always more to life than what is actualized. (Kline, 2016, p. 146)

The third method that choreographers often use in their practice as a tool for experimentation and creation of new material but also as a method in their performances, is *improvisation*. Improvisation is the ability to respond instantly in the moment, combining intuition, creativity and work tasks without a previous plan (Nisula, 2015). Improvisational attitude means that one must be present to be able to respond instantly to others' proposals, saying "yes, and ..." and building further on them (Sawyer, 2000). Improvising helps individuals and groups to not over-rely on schemas and set patterns of thinking but to break away from them to create something new (Lewis and Lovatt, 2013). As choreographer Burrows (2011) says, dance material are movements that arise through the process of improvisation and that he later puts into relation with each other to make a choreography. Improvisation, according to him, brings the freedom to let yourself respond to the impulse of the moment and come to the right structures without limiting it with formality. In improvisation it is important to trust the material and accept what comes easily because material is to be discovered through this explorative process, not controlled (Burrows, 2011). An essential part of experimentation and improvisation is to have the courage to go into unknown and fail because improvisation by definition means you go into a new territory where you also have to fail. The ability to improvise is crucial for innovating in today´s world of fast changes, where one has to develop the capacity to react instantly to continuous changes happening in the environment which often can´t be predicted or controlled.

Summarizing the ideas around the "method of practice", it can be said that the focus shifts from performance towards the durational process of making by applying procedures of stopping the time and doing less, finding important questions that become the driving force of exploration, and using improvisation as a method to generate new ideas around these questions, going into unknown and taking risks, trusting the process that it will create new knowledge. This challenges the traditional focus on performance and end product or result in management. In the context of innovation, applying the method of practice would mean to shift the focus from a specific set of skills (innovative competence) that should result in expected results - new products, services and processes, towards the practice and process of innovating. This could redefine the concept of innovative competence into the concept of innovative practice. To develop an innovative practice, one would need to take time to stop and do less, to connect with her own body, needs, and allow questions that are relevant and could drive the process of innovating to emerge. It would mean that one would embark on a journey where she would re-construct and explore driving questions through a process of experimentation and improvisation. In this process she could use tools from contemporary dance to choreograph different possible relations between how body, movement, space, and time that could be used in her practice of innovating. It would also demand from a person to not always just optimize and maximize the effects of everything she does for the sake of producing expected results, but to be sometimes bored and create an empty space for something new to happen. To allow oneself to explore potentiality or the space between what one already does and what one might never do but could do.

The last concept from contemporary choreographic practices that we chose to present in this section and which can be relevant for developing innovative practice at work is about bringing art and everyday life closer, enabling the exploration of potentiality in the commons of everyday life, and is called *undoing everydayness.*

Undoing everydayness

Everydayness in contemporary dance relates to different things. On one hand, many choreographers explore topics and movements from everyday life in their dance works. On the other hand, the venues where they perform have moved from theatres to different sites of everyday life, like the streets, squares, factories, cafés etc. In that way the performances come closer to the venues of everyday life and the audience gets engaged in another way. Contemporary dance choreographers often invite the audience to actively engage or even become the performers in their performances. Everydayness in contemporary dance has its origins in the Neo-avant-garde in the 1960s-70s, when the choreographers of Judson Dance Theater started to fuse art and life, and used new types of physical sites, like galleries, the street and other places from everyday life for their performances (Cvejic, 2015a, pp. 96-97). They sought to democratize art, taking it away from a form of bourgeois entertainment and elitist venues, trying to produce the "real" in performance art (Cvejic, 2015a). They actively invited the audience to reconsider their habitual perceptions of movement (Rosenthal, 2011, p. 65). The works like "Man Walking Down the Side of a Building" (1970) and "Floor of the Forest" (1970) by Trisha Brown are examples of such performances that make the audience reconsider such simple everyday acts and movements as walking, dressing and undressing. The first one by putting a man in a harness walking down a seven-storey building in downtown New York and the second one by making two performers traverse a rope grid suspended from a frame in the air and with clothes hanging from it, undressing and dressing again as they climb through the rope grid (Rosenthal, 2011). Even though experimental choreographic practices today in some aspects build on and refer to the tradition of avant-garde, they also reject its promise of the real and live presence produced by the theatre, rather exploring, undoing and reinventing the given structures of theatre (Cvejic, 2015a, p. 97). In this sense exploration of potentiality and undoing everydayness has become an important aspect of contemporary choreography.

> *Score 4:*
>
> *Take a look through the window and observe people, street and objects. Take a minute and continue reading.*
>
> *What kind of performance did you just witness? What was the story line, what kind of scenography did you encounter, what was the pace of the piece?*

Score 4 invites you to undo your current everyday situation by observing it as a dance performance. Sometimes "undoing everydayness" demands a simple thing like switching the lenses through which we observe the world around us. An example of undoing everydayness are some of the performances of choreographer Dragana Bulut. In her work E.I.O. she invites the audience to decide upon entering the theatre whether they want to be workers or viewers in the performance. If they decide to be the workers, they are asked to go to the backstage and if they decide to be viewers they are asked to pay a financial contribution for which they receive a ticket with the sum they contributed. The viewers can then observe how the performers enter the stage where different objects and materials can be found. The performers are asked to perform during a set time. They know that those watching them will in the end be asked to choose their favourite performer whom they thought performed best by giving them a financial reward – their ticket money. As one sits and observes the "workers" on the stage,

a lot of questions about what work and performance mean start to pop up. E.I.O received *The Prix Jardin d'Europe* 2010, the European dance prize for young choreographers, with the following explanation that "through this performance, with minimal resources and much imagination, the concept of work is deeply redefined, questioning the means of production both in art and real life, the creation, distribution and the value of art".

A lot of the works of contemporary choreographers try to reclaim potentiality by strategies of "undoing" the common ways of working, creating possibilities to form alternative ways of being and doing that emerge from another relation to life (Kline, 2016, p. 17). This "undoing" gives freedom and power to the individual to find her own voice and explore new ways of seeing her own everyday life. Experiencing these performances thus challenges us to go through undoing the habits of being and perception, reconstructing a problem within a performative set up, in order to produce a new understanding of commons and undergo a transformation (Kline, 2016, p. 183).

The ideas around "undoing everydayness" from contemporary dance can have some interesting implications for innovation management and the concept of innovative competence or practice. On one hand, they might suggest that the topic of innovation can move from traditional association of innovation with new technologies, products and services towards innovating something as mundane as everyday work routines, but from a new position where the body, our senses, fantasy and emotions are actively engaged to explore alternative ways of being and working. It also means that innovation does not have to happen in a special space like the "innovation room" where there has to be table tennis, colourful beam bags, and a videogame console. It can happen in the everyday spaces where people work, be it a meeting room, corridor, or even elevator in the office building if they find new ways of using them or see them with new eyes. It suggests that innovation does not have to be planned top-down and performed by a special team of geniuses in the R&D department but can be done by any employee. Any employee can become the innovator and develop her own innovative practice in her everyday work. But the conditions need to be set for her to be able to continuously undo her own everydayness, questioning the existing norms and getting the space and support to try out alternative ways of being and working that are more in sync with her own needs and feelings.

The question then is, how these ideas can be applied in a concrete situation that is part of daily work routines in organizations.

The case of choreographic intervention at the AoMO 2016 conference

Participating in academic conferences is a regular work task for academics, so the idea of choreographic intervention at the *Art of Management and Organization Conference* in September 2016 in Bled was to try out how concepts of "body and materiality", the "method of practice", and "undoing everydayness" could be used to develop innovative practice in the context of academic conference participation. Academic conferences have followed an established format for a long time, which is why the intervention challenged participants to undo the taken-for-granted norms of conferences, critically question their established format and experiment with choreographic tools to find out what could mean an innovative practice in conference participation for them.

Each participant received a short description of the conference intervention called "Is this Choreography?" in the conference bag with a manifesto "Choreograph your own conference!" where she was encouraged to re-think the YES to … and NO to … things about academic conferences. A short live presentation of the intervention was also given on the first day of the conference.

Engaging with the body through morning tuning-in

Before each conference day started, participants were invited to join a morning "tuning-in" session. The idea of tuning-in was to start the day by engaging the body through movement, giving participants the time to become more aware of their body, feelings, space, context, and people with whom they would engage during a work day. To switch off their other thoughts and focus on what was relevant for them in that moment. In this way another starting point was created that shifted the focus from pre-existing expectations of how one should "perform" in a conference, towards being closer to what she really needed from each day.



Morning tuning-in session of participants at the AoMO conference 2016

> *This was a nice experience, creating more awareness (of me and others) than I would have normally. A normal day of work starts as others, and then stress continues. This is much, much, better.*

As it can be seen from a reflection of one of the participants, tuning-in was received positively. Other reflections revealed that it helped individuals to be more alive and present in another way at the conference, setting their attention towards the questions they wanted to explore. It was an attempt to apply the concept of "body and materiality" in the often very "bodylessness" conference context, inviting participants to engage more holistically, using their senses, hearts, minds and will.

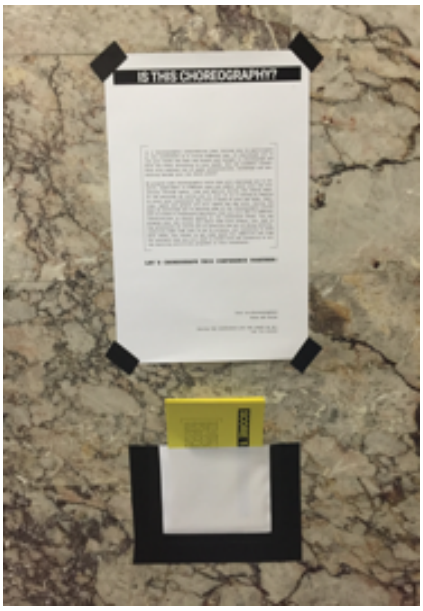
Choreographic score cards as a tool for developing innovative practice in conference participation

The concept of "score" is something that choreographers in contemporary dance use a lot to set a certain frame within which the dancers are then encouraged to improvise and experiment. A special collection of score cards was developed for the AoMO conference as a tool to try out how ideas around "body", "practice" and "undoing everydayness" could be applied in the conference setting. Different installations were built around the conference venue where cards with choreographic tasks were available to participants. The tasks proposed participants to do small experiments, using their body, space, time and relation to other people in new ways to undo their existing habits and develop an innovative practice in conference participation. For example:

Score 5:

After a session go to the next session or to a coffee break in extreme slow motion. Take at least 10 minutes to get to your destination. Don´t talk to people while doing it. Just focus on experiencing the conference happening around you and sensations in your body when being in slow motion. Write about what you experienced on the other side of this card afterwards. Place the card in one of the "Is this choreography?" installations at the conference venue.

The score presented above played with the idea how participants could undo an everyday act like walking from one session to another, using the idea of duration and time. Participants were suggested to slow down the movement and become more present and aware of sensations in their body and different aspects of the conference, stopping the time in a context where everyone is very busy and running from one paper presentation to another.





Different installations with choreographic score cards that were placed around the conference venue, together with the description of intervention "Is this choreography?"

Participants were asked to write their reflections about how they experienced the scores and share them with other participants by placing them back in the installations around the conference venue. They were also encouraged to propose their own scores that the other participants could try out. The idea was that the installations with scores and reflections on them would become a parallel conversation going on among conference participants, establishing some sort of meta-level discussion on what the conference was all about and how participants were experiencing it. As one of the reflections written on a score card by a conference participant below shows, the tasks on score cards opened doors for experiencing the conference from a new perspective, and noticing the un-noticed.

You remind me of someone … Yes, of my turtle pet Ella! She moves so slowly and everyone loves her. As I move slowly I notice the un-noticed. The art works, the signs directing people towards the rooms, the people. Other people notice me as I become the object of their observation and comments. I have arrived at the point where I wanted to start my participation in this conference.

Undoing everydayness by practicing the Art of Doing Nothing

Every day at 3.00-5.00PM, when it was time for the last session in different conference streams, participants were invited to alternatively participate in the "Art of Doing Nothing". In these sessions, they were invited to sit on the grass next to the conference venue and observe what was going on there as if they were watching a dance performance. With this simple task, the everyday situation of a conference was undone and potential created to see alternative scenarios of a conference through new lenses. Participants created time to stop and reflect, observing their everyday work situation from a distance, which started a process of self-reflection, and topics that were important for participants personally but wouldn´t surface otherwise emerged, as the following notes by one of the participants show:

> *The music of silence, of doing nothing:*
>
> *The voice of traffic and the look of built buildings gave the structure, the main basic line for the start of this piece of music. Birds questioned what is this all about? After a while the music changed; it was the nature that came back, gave shape to my real life. I was wondering about the thoughts of "the Maestro" last night. What gives the rhythm to my life. I think it is trees, according the seasons. Four slow beats in a year, autumn, winter, spring, summer. Wind making difference. Birds coming back from the south. This was real mindfulness. Thanks!*

Practicing the Art of Doing Nothing also engaged the imagination of participants and invited them to explore alternative ways of being at work. Conversations facilitated after observation sessions started many interesting discussions that critically questioned what was going on at the conference and initiated new ideas, as the following example written by one of the participants reveals:

> *KPIs for doing nothing – invert the whole idea of constantly measuring performance.*
>
> *NO to brainfulness.*
>
> *The room for doing nothing at conferences.*
>
> *Open space format at the AoMO conference: you gather at breakfast and create agenda for the day, anyone can propose anything.*
>
> *The regular weekly practice of doing nothing in companies: bosses invite the employees to do it together and then share reflections.*
>
> *The silent lecture at university: you start in silence and then allow anyone to say something if it emerges.*



Conference participants practicing the "Art of Doing Nothing" and sitting in a circle, engaged in a debate afterwards

Embodying ideas through a paper performance

Another activity through which participants "undid the everydayness" of a conference paper presentation and engaged "body and materiality" was tried out in the conference stream focused on dance and organization. Instead of having a traditional PowerPoint presentation, different bits and pieces of the paper were scattered around the room as an installation and the existing classroom furniture repositioned in a way to become part of the "paper installation". A short introduction was given by the author of the paper, telling what was the score the audience was invited to perform. Participants in the session were first asked to take 20 minutes to walk around the installation and take in what was of their interest, reading the text scattered around the room. There were also empty papers and participants were encouraged that one of the possibilities was to write their reactions or thoughts that the reading of text fragments from the paper stimulated in them. Afterwards, everyone was invited to perform a new version of the paper during 20 minutes. The score for the "paper performance" was that anyone can start and continue without a predefined order. Performing could include anything – reading existing bits of paper or the newly written texts by participants, dancing, creating sounds, etc. When 20 minutes passed, a totally new version of the paper was co-created and embodied by the audience. There was a sense of excitement and high engagement in the room.



Participants engaging with the "paper installation" and improvising a "paper performance" together

Discussion

In the introduction two issues that the article wanted to address were exposed. The first one was to look at and discuss the theory and concepts connected to a specific form of dance – the experimental choreographic practices in contemporary dance, something that is missing in the current literature about dance in organizations. The second was to expand the use of dance knowledge in management from the area of leadership towards the field of innovative competence development within organizations, exploring in what way the concepts from contemporary dance could contribute to its development. In the theory part of the article, concepts around the importance of "body and materiality", the "method of practice", and "undoing everydayness" were introduced. The concepts were then materialized through a choreographic intervention at the Art of Management and Organization Conference in 2016 in Bled.

Looking at the theoretical ideas and the results of the practical intervention, there seem to be some interesting implications for the innovation management field. Conceptually, the ideas from choreography suggest some changes for the concept of innovative competence. First, they imply a shift in focus from skills that should produce a specific performance and effect towards giving more attention to the process and practice of innovating. One result could thus be to suggest a change from the "innovative competence" concept towards the idea of "innovative practice". By introducing the "body and materiality", choreographic concepts also propose that a more active role should be given to the body, the use of senses, intuition, fantasy, emotional capacities and embodied knowledge in development of innovative practice. This would help individuals to start innovating from within, work more closely to their needs and desires, and centre their practice of innovating around questions that are meaningful to them and do not only respond to external needs of users or expectations of company owners. And third, the concept of "undoing everydayness" suggests that innovating does not have to happen top-down and be predominantly related to developing new products and services in R&D departments, but can be brought closer to all employees by innovating something as mundane as their everyday work routines. This can make innovation less abstract and closer to everyday problems at work. Often employees see innovation as something distant to them and almost as a burden because it is another extra activity that management expects them to perform on top of their existing work responsibilities. They often lack a sense of ownership because even though they might suggest ideas how to change things in organization, the ideas usually get lost somewhere in the idea management system and no one really knows what happens to them. But with this shift of making the practice of innovating part of everyday work routines, each individual develops her own practice of innovating, and becomes responsible to innovate within her own area of responsibility. In contrast to ideas of continuous improvement in innovation management, which are participatory but focus on looking at what people already do, and then stimulate them to continuously introduce small improvements to optimize work processes and make them more efficient, ideas from contemporary dance suggest to rather "undo" existing norms and more radically explore new "potentialities" of what could be but is not yet there at work and might never be. This involves both the capacity for critical thinking and questioning the status quo, but also the imagination to envision something that does not exist yet.

When the concepts of "body and materiality", the "method of practice", and "undoing everydayness" were materialized in the context of the AoMO conference to question and explore what an "innovative practice" of participating in the academic conference could be, the initial reactions were positive and the results demonstrated that ideas proposed in the theory chapter created some of the desired effects. The main challenge is that the conference setting is quite specific as it is an event limited by a very short time span that does not provide conditions to really develop one's innovative practice at work, which needs more time and experimentation

for the new behaviours to become truly embodied by a person. Nevertheless, the intervention highlighted the potentiality of using choreographic methods to develop innovative work practices and gave examples of concrete activities that could be transferred also into everyday work of people in organizations. For example, introducing the idea of tuning-in through the body and movement at the beginning of a work day or meeting could help employees heighten their awareness, making them feel more centred, grounded, relaxed and inspired at work, as participants in the conference reflected. It could help them focus more on their own needs, balancing them better with external expectations. Similarly, choreographic score cards or simple experimental tasks could encourage employees to stop and do less, reflect, and improvise with new ways of using body, physical space, time, and interaction with their colleagues to develop innovative practices in everyday work. Even ideas from the "paper performance" could be used to innovate the traditional formats of meetings, presentations and knowledge sharing in organizations that would create a higher sense of excitement, participation and creativity in communication and development of ideas. Practicing some form of "Art of Doing Nothing" could be also beneficial in organizations to create space for "doing less" in the performance-oriented corporate culture, with a schedule filled with constant activities and no time to stop and reflect. Employees would in this way open the potentiality for silence, self-reflection, noticing the unnoticed, and emptying the mind to create space for something new to happen.

Critical perspective

On a more critical note, there are several limitations both of the concepts and empirical results presented in this article. Although the idea of shifting from a top-down approach to innovation management towards a more democratic, participatory and humanistic way of involving people from across the organization and making innovation part of everyone's everyday work is appealing, there is a problematic side to it as well. If in the industrial age, workers' bodies were used in factories through physical work while their souls remained outside of workplaces, in today's society, knowledge workers are expected to use their intrinsic motivation, intelligence and creativity as key resources to generate value at work, practically leaving their soul in the workplace (Berardi, 2013). When subjectivity and creativity become the core input into work processes, people's private space can be abused (Kunst, 2012). So, although engaging people more holistically at work can increase employees' motivation, engagement, well-being and a sense of purpose at work, it can also be misused. Another critical question is how many organizations today are truly ready to shift to management models that are not solely based on performance, but are more humanistic, people-driven, and actually care more about people´s engagement and well-being than maximization of profit and shareholder value. While in the Northern Europe, participatory management models based on bottom-up employee engagement are becoming more common, in the vast majority of the world these ideas are still quite far away from the mainstream practice.

Nevertheless, it can be concluded that this article contributes to a better understanding of some of the core concepts within contemporary dance and choreography that have not been discussed so much in the dance and organization literature, highlighting their possible application in the field of innovative competence development in organizations. The specific examples of activities proposed at the AoMO conference make it easier to understand through what kind of practices the choreographic knowledge could be translated into organizational contexts to provide enablers for individuals to develop their "innovative practice in everyday work". Not by prescribing them a formula for success, but rather by encouraging them to continuously explore and re-define their own way of innovating in everyday work routines, following their needs, desires and imagination.

What is happening in contemporary dance and performing arts today is that grand gestures, utopian ideals and promises of emancipation are being replaced by small, punctual gestures coming from individual and diverse artistic practices, addressing particular situations, contexts, and problems related to them (Kline, 2016, p. 42). These singular acts of resistance allow us to observe, contemplate and reconsider how we form our perceptions, enabling another choice, sensibility and knowing to take place (Kline, 2016). They question the performance art itself and its proximity with everyday life. They stage through different settings the act of thinking, and set conditions that enable the subject to establish relations with its potentiality, life as such, and numerous variations of possible materialized modes of being (Kline, 2016, p. 44). They apply specific forms of work as an individual and collective practice of "alternative life", examining "not what we are but what we are not but could be" (Kline, 2016, p. 175).

If we take this as an invitation for organizations, and think how to replace the grand gestures of top-down innovation management practices by bringing innovation closer to everyday life, paying attention to particular contexts, situations and questions that people find relevant, enabling them to embark on a journey of experimentation to develop their own innovative practice, undoing everydayness, exploring what alternative work strategies could be, and how new meanings could be created in this space of potentiality, an interesting future might start to unfold.

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