

## **Learning to (be a) dance(r)**

On “becoming the phenomenon” and writing/reporting ethnography

Chiara Bassetti, Ph.D.  
Dep. of Sociology and Social Research  
University of Trento  
chiara.bassetti@gmail.com

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### **Abstract**

The paper methodologically discusses the self-/ethnographic research I have been carrying out for 28 months on the world of dance. Apart from structural and quantitative data that I employed for mapping the field and its boundaries, organisation, internal segmentation, etc., data include in-depth interviews and fieldwork material (field notes, video-recordings, etc.) regarding two Italian companies and the related schools. Moreover, in order to better understand how dance training affects the (sense of one's own) body, I enrolled in dance courses, explicitly putting at the centre of the research my bodily, practical, theoretical, moral and aesthetic learning, and consciously, knowingly and reflexively exploiting my lived experience as an heuristic tool.

I address the epistemological problem of the invisibility of common sense knowledge, claiming for the acknowledgement of the embodied nature of sensemaking, identity-making and understanding, and for a research method – namely, “becoming the phenomenon” – aimed to socialise the ethnographer not only to new beliefs and narratives, nor only practical skills, but also new ways of *being-in-the-world* and inhabiting it. I discuss the process of acquiring – as an adult ethnographer – embodied competence(s), an *habitus*, and pay attention to the analytical opportunities offered by teaching/learning contexts. Finally, since ethnographers' work also consists of making explicit – through the practical everyday work of writing/reporting – the details of their own lived experience, I focus on techniques and strategies for writing (self-)ethnography and accounting for the corporeal and tacit dimension of everyday social life.

**Keywords:** common sense knowledge, “becoming the phenomenon”, embodiment, ethnography, practice, self-ethnography

## Introduction

We use to say that the ethnographer undergoes an initiation to a “new” social world. But the question is: what kind of initiation? Erving Goffman [1989], in one of his rare methodological reflections, already talked about *bodily attuning* in relation to the ethnographer's experience on the field.

Paul Willis, in a recent interview with Roberta Sassatelli e Marco Santoro [2008], makes a further step towards the importance of bodily experience, arguing that

“to be sensitive to sensorial experiences [...] ethnography must come back to that problem, about these living, warm and sensorial bodies, about the palpable sensations which allow us to feel that something shared and *some form of cultural production deep-rooted in the senses exist* [...] these moments of aesthetic sense actually produce a *connection of the body to some symbolic forms*” [Paul Willis, in Santoro and Sassatelli, 2008: 258, emphasis added]

The interviewees themselves, in their introduction, underlined the need, which only ethnography can satisfy, for grasping the tacit dimension of everyday life.

“Ethnographic imagination works in a way similar to that 'necessary symbolic work' that characterises the informal domain of everyday life: [...] it is the only one that can *grasp the suppressed and implicit elements of everyday life*, reverberate them in new forms that cross the boundaries of everyday life, thus making them tools for consciousness raising and reflexivity” [Santoro and Sassatelli, 2008: 247, emphasis added]

This has certainly been one of the objective of my self-/ethnographic research on the world of dance (see next section), and a one that I have tried to accomplish not only through participant observation, but also through what have been variously called “complete participant observation” [Adler and Adler, 1987]<sup>1</sup>, “observing participation” [Wacquant, 2000], or, better, “becoming the phenomenon” [Mehan and Wood, 1975]. In the present paper I shall discuss advantages, challenges, epistemological foundations and methodological peculiarities of practice/body-based self-/ethnography, focusing, in particular, on what we could call “*becoming the phenomenon*”-based ethnography, and underlining some of the differences that the latter presents in respect to other seemingly similar research methods, such as “autoethnography” [Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Alsop, 2002; Anderson, 2006] or “storied research” [Markula and Denison, 2005].

I shall address the epistemological problem of the so-called “invisibility” of common sense (practical) knowledge, resulting from its being both an explicit topic of analysis and an implicit tool of research [Zimmerman and Pollner, 1971] – something that we could state for the *habitus* as well [Wacquant, 2009] – and I present “*becoming the phenomenon*”-based ethnography as a strategy for avoiding the un-reflexive and un-observed use of membership knowledge [Have, 2002: 11] as well as the mis-interpretation and imaginary-driven analysis [Becker, 1998] arising from the researcher's being a *stranger* [Schutz, 1944] to such a knowledge.

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1 Distinguishing it from “peripheral” [Horowitz, 1983; Peskin, 1984; Wieder, 1974] and “active” [Hargreaves, 1967] participant observation.

In particular, I propose a sort of radicalisation of the ethnomethodological “principle of unique adequacy” [Garfinkel and Wieder, 1992], consisting of the acknowledgement of the embodied nature of sense-making and understanding, and of a method whose aim is to study the ethnographer's initiations and learning process (*becoming*) itself, during which s/he becomes socialised not only to new beliefs, narratives and social discourses, but also to new practical abilities and know-how, to new *habitus*es [Bourdieu, 1979, 1980, 1981] and, especially, to new ways of *being-in-the-world* [Merleau-Ponty, 1942, 1945]. Therefore, I shall focus on the advantages of studying the process of acquiring – as an adult, “reflexively reflexive” [Bourdieu, 2001] ethnographer – a new practical, embodied (set of) competence(s) and a new *corporeal schema* [Merleau-Ponty, 1942, 1945; see also Crossley, 2001], and I shall pay attention to the specific analytic opportunities offered by the self-/ethnographer's participation in a teaching/learning context.

This is not only a matter of epistemology and methodology, but also a matter of practice, methods, techniques and strategies for both fieldwork and writing/reporting ethnography, the latter being understood both in terms of field notes and dissemination. The work of the (self-)ethnographer, in fact, consists not only of accessing the tacit understandings of practical knowledge through practice itself [O'Connor, 2007], but also of making every day explicit – through the practical work of writing/reporting – the details of his/her own lived experience about the socialisation to a new social world and the learning of new ways of bodily and sensuously inhabiting it. On this regard, and recognising the necessity of “experimenting with a range of representational and analytical strategies” [Anderson, 1999], I shall present techniques and tools which had proved to be useful in my research experience. In doing so, I shall also ask for a self-reflexive but not self-referential and self-absorbed self-ethnography, which does not renounce to analytical purposes in the name of an absolute subjectivism [see Anderson, 2006; Hughson, 2008].

### **The research: data and methods**

The paper is based on the ethnographic research on the Italian field of dance that I have been carrying out as a basis for my Ph.D. dissertation and as a part of the PRIN 2006 research on professions and semi-professions funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research. Data can be divided into three categories.

There are, firstly, the data relative to the mapping of the field. These comprise, on the one hand, the basic structural data which define the quantitative dimensions of the profession and mark out the boundaries of the occupational community [Van Maanen and Barley, 1984], and, on the other hand, information more generally concerning the Italian dance field and comprising aspects such as the market of supply and demand, the agencies of recruitment and socialisation, the ways in which activities, roles, hierarchies, etc. are organised. This category also includes a series of databases that I have created concerning, on the one hand, Italian professional dancers, companies and schools and, on the other hand, other realities that constitutes the institutional field

(associations, foundations, festivals, contests, university programmes, etc.), the commercial field (specialised firms, web sites, magazines, printed and multimedia editions, etc.) and the imaginary field (literature and narrative, visual arts, cinema, television, advertising, etc.).

The second category consists of a series ( $n = 23$ ) of in-depth interviews conducted with various professionals currently working (also) in Italy: dancers as well as teachers, choreographers and *mâitres de ballet*; expert in various dance style ranging from modern to contemporary, hip hop, ballet, musical, theatre-dance, video-dance, etc.; working in theatre, television, cinema, or musical sector.

The last, broader and more important category of data is constituted by the ones coming from fieldwork. In fact, I have been observing, for an overall period of 28 months, the daily activities of two dance companies (OC) and related schools (OS) differently placed in terms of artistic-professional advancing and differently situated in the national scenario, in terms of core/periphery.

Furthermore, for the first time in my life, I have been attending dance classes and stages (OP), and I have taken part in shows and displays, as an active participant of the considered world, so as to start from personal experience and understand the meaning of becoming (and being) a dancer; in order to acquire a practical mastery, a visceral knowledge, and to explain the agents' praxeology [Wacquant, 2009]. It is not “simply” about putting oneself, one's own body, personality, social situation, etc. in the midst of the set of contingencies [Goffman, 1989] of a particular social – and phenomenal [Merleau-Ponty, 1942; Garfinkel, 2002] – field. It is also about *a*) explicitly putting at the centre of the research one's own practical and corporeal (as well as theoretical, moral, discursive) situated learning [Lave and Wenger, 1991], one's own initiation to a social world, and *b*) to consciously, knowingly, reflexively and “sceptically” [Wright Mills, 1959] exploit one's own lived experience as an heuristic tool.

Throughout fieldwork, moreover, I have gathered about 70 hours of video-recordings concerning the everyday work going on in the dance practice room as well as in the theatre and on the stage. Such data have then been transcribed and annotated accordingly to the principles and procedures of conversation analysis [e.g. Sacks, 1972; Heritage, 1984; Jefferson, 1984; Goodwin and Heritage, 1990; Have, 2001, 2009, 2010; Schegloff, 2007] and, more generally, video analysis, or video-based research [see Heath, 2004; Mondada, 2008; Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff, 2010]

In particular – besides participating in diverse festivals, fairs and other events related to the dance world – I have been conducting my research at three main sites. At the dance school *La Fourmie* and the company of the same name in Trento, I have been conducting 12 months of participant observation and 24 of “observing participation”. In this empirical context I have also collected video materials of both rehearsals and lessons, in which I was actively involved and not. Secondly, for 10 months I have been observing the company *Corpocorrente* of Mantua, the related school and the *mantova danza 2008* festival, which have been organised by the directors of the school/company, and in which I have also participated as a dancer and presenter. The visual material in

this case is mostly photographic. Finally, I have spent 8 months conducting “observing participation” at the course of theatre-dance run by Antonella Bertoni at the *Universidanza* association of Trento.

### **Common sense knowledge and the embodied nature of sensemaking and understanding**

Of what does consist the “connection of the body to some symbolic form” of which Paul Willis talks? And how does it actualises, (re)produces and changes itself? I think that the answer lies in the everyday situated social action and interaction. Munro and Belova [2008: 98] argue that “[t]he issue for body is always to know under which particular set of cultural understandings, or material underpinnings, ‘this body’ is to arrange itself”. To know that the ethnographer needs not only to be there and observe, but also to feel and live with her/his own body that set of cultural *and* material conditions. For what as been my personal experience on the field, for example, I had been surprised about how much I hated my body in the dance practice room, how much I saw it fat, flabby and clumsy in *that* mirror, while usually I feel at ease with my body, and see it, in the mirror of my bedroom, slender, well toned and elegant enough.

This is about self-representations and, more specifically, the sense of self and the relation with one's own body. A different example consists of my experience of how my own body was “received” and (symbolically) interpreted – or made socially intelligible and accountable – on the field, and *from* the field back in broader society and different social fields. For instance, just for appearing as it does and being in some context/frame/place (a backstage, a dance fair, a stage, a dressing-room, a dinner with famous dancers and choreographer, a department of dance, etc.), my body allowed me to *pass* as a professional dancer in various situations, in the eyes of both the professionals and the general audience of aspiring dancers, practitioners and spectators.

A part from the obvious advantages in terms of access, this has also revealed the tacit criteria on which social classification in general – and that of the professional dancer in particular – is based, and the ways in which such common sense, tacit criteria – as both Elias [1939] and Bourdieu [1979] had excellently shown, are connected to *a)* situated context and phenomenal field, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, *b)* corporeality, the latter being understood *i)* in “static” terms, what is usually defined physical appearance, *ii)* in “dynamic” terms, meaning bodily conduct in (inter)action (ways of moving, walking, grasping, breathing..., gesture, eye-playing, proxemics, etc.) and *iii)* in its relation with objects (e.g. points shoes, or an energetic bar appearing from a sport bag, but also dress and accessories in general, etc.) and *iv)* persons, or other bodies, of the considered world.

My corporeality and the ways in which it interacted in and with dance world, therefore, allowed me to analyse, starting from my own experience, the practical application of such common sense criteria. At an halfway point along my fieldwork, after I had

reached a certain familiarity with dance knowledge, languages, representations and common sense, I had started to consciously and voluntarily manipulate my self-presentation in determinate contexts (such as a dance fair, or a dance show's stalls), aiming to explore classification criteria of common sense knowledge and to test the relative efficacy of different identitarian performances. This means that, like Agnes [Garfinkel, 1967], I have consciously engaged an activity of *passing*.

Corporeality is thus fundamental in both – and at the same time – the construction of self and the interaction with the other-than-self. This is something that Charles Cooley [1902] had already noted, talking of a “pre-verbal sense of self”. (Symbolic) Interaction is not an exclusively verbal activity. Each body, in fact, in a determinate context and phenomenal field, presents itself with some perceptible properties to which meanings – and moral values – are immanently associated, on the basis of a common sense, tacit knowledge on which we rely everyday in order to (locally) organise and order the (intersubjective) world and its experience. The context, and the expectations it helps to actualise, have a role in this: meanings, indeed, are anchored not only to the body, but also to the situated world in which, at any given moment, that body is.

It is through this way that the social dimension of life takes bodies, so to speak, because moral norms, representations and categories comes embodied and *practised* in front of us (and by us) everyday. People we meet, indeed, have inscribed on their body their memberships, and inevitably show their embodied history. And this is something that we can't help to see – or, better, perceive, sense – and immediately tie to some meaning, category, symbolic form, etc. At the same time, this tacit dimension penetrates each particular body, installing itself in that body as an *habitus*, as dispositions to acting, perceiving and understanding. If common sense bases on and in the body its own classification, categorisations and expectations – that is, its way to organise and order the world and its ordinary experience – then such common sense must be embodied by members in its potency of perception and understanding as much as of action and sense-making.

Judgement criteria and categories change over time and among different societies, but in everyday situated (inter)action the body is never something indifferent for identity – no matter, and rather precisely because of, its fluidity and being an ongoing process. This is so despite all the attempts made by western culture in order to separate the mind – as the place of self, consciousness, reflexivity and identity – from the body<sup>2</sup>. The criteria on which sensemaking, identity-making and understanding are based are difficult to verbalise, but are not at all irrelevant. What we use to call “sixth sense” is nothing else than our habitual, pre-reflexive, tacit knowledge of the world. But it is knowledge, and the ethnographer must reach it in an *observed* way.

Alfred Schutz [1945, 1953, 1970] had underlined the “problem of knowledge

2 I have discussed elsewhere, for instance, the relevance of bodily consciousness and “reflexivity-in-action” for dancers' work [Bassetti, 2009], or the ways in which their self is constructed, performed [Butler, 1990] and presented [Goffman, 1959] (also) in relation to their own body [Bassetti, forthcoming, see also Bassetti, 2010: 329-82].

intersubjectivity” and had proposed the so called “general thesis of the reciprocity of perspectives”. According to the latter, people are able to interact because, for practical ends, they avoid to interrogate themselves about what is taken-for-granted: it is this tacit dimension, more than a specific set of norms and values – and this is Schutz's main critique to Parsons – that “keeps together” society. Now, the tacit dimension of social life primary pass through the body and its experience. Furthermore, lived experience and the practical application of common sense knowledge are not separable, because they are both concerned with a body in relation to a world in which it acts and is used – habituated – to act. “The sensor and the sensible do not stand in relation to each other as two mutually external terms, and sensation is not an invasion of the sensor by the sensible” [Merleau-Ponty, 1945 (2003:248)].

### **The “invisibility” of common sense knowledge and “becoming the phenomenon”**

Common sense knowledge, or membership knowledge, is problematic and difficult to analyse not only as mainly tacit and embodied, but also because it is both an implicit research tool and an explicit research topic [Zimmerman and Pollner, 1971]. This is the so called *problem of the invisibility of common sense knowledge* and it's something that we could apply to the *habitus* as well, as also Wacquant [2009] argued.

This means that it is necessary to make common sense explicit and to avoid both its un-reflexive, un-observed use and the mis-interpretation deriving from being a *stranger* [Schutz, 1944] to it. The ethnographer's task, in fact, is to grasp with her/his own body the ways in which ordinary experience is organised and provided with meaning in a social field and in the phenomenal fields in which it everyday actualises itself.

As I mentioned, and as other scholars argued [e.g. Have, 2002], the proposed solution consists of what someone have called “conversions” and Mehan and Woods [1975] “becoming the phenomenon” – a definition that I prefer, since it poses accent on the process of becoming, instead of the fact of having become. Furthermore, I propose a sort of radicalisation of the ethnomethodological “principle of unique adequacy” [Garfinkel, 1977: 61-68; Garfinkel and Wieder, 1992: 182-84], consisting, first, of a shift from the requirement of an embedded perspective to the requirement of an embodied one, and, secondly, of directing analytical attention on *becoming* alongside of *being/belonging*.

In a passage that I would like to recall extensively, Nick Crossley [2007] underlines some of the advantages connected to choosing bodily, practical learning contexts as research fields, studying the process that brings from (practical, cultural, interactional) incompetence to competence, from strangeness to familiarity, and, in so doing, analysing members' practical abilities and, equally practically exercised, judgement and classification categories.

In the first instance the teaching and learning process tends to throw the principle embodied

in a body technique into relief. Because the student doesn't always 'get it' the teacher is forced to find ways of *making 'it' more explicit*. They are forced to be more reflexive. And researchers therefore have a greater chance of 'getting it' too. [...] Secondly, this helps to emphasize the point that body techniques are both technical and bodily. They are revealed as technical because it is not obvious to everyone how to do them and they must be learned, sometimes with difficulty. They are revealed as specifically body techniques and embodied forms of knowledge and understanding because *what matters is the ability to do them*. [...] Thirdly, this process can reveal interesting aspects about the corporeal schema and thus the embodied agency of the 'body subject' [...] the inability of novices to detect errors in their own technique and the necessity for teachers or other students to point this out reveals the limits of the corporeal schema, at the individual level, and the necessity that it be completed by feedback from others. It thereby reveals *the social nature of the corporeal schema*. [Crossley, 2007: 88-89, emphasis added]

Furthermore, studying such a learning process in the first person, so to speak, and as an adult ethnographer allow to offer a both experiential and reflexive account of it, since knowledge and know-how have not already become pre-reflexive and passed on the background [see also Sparti, 2005: 141]. This establish a huge difference between, on the one hand, the most part of autoethnographies [see Ellis and Bochner, 2000], “basically autobiography written by sociologists” [Gans, 1999: 542], in which the researcher's studied experience has often taken place years earlier, and, on the other hand, “becoming the phenomenon”-based ethnography [e.g. Sudnow, 1978, 1979; Wacquant, 2000; Bassetti, 2010], in which the ethnographer's *ongoing* experience is observed and “written” *while* taking place.

The underlying principle of this kind of research is equal and contrary to Garfinkel's one concerning inverting lenses. With lenses, Garfinkel argues, “practices that have become embodied transparent in their familiarity – in the familiarity of a skill – now become examinable again” [Garfinkel, 2002: 211]. In order to observe and analyse more “naturally”, so to speak, and more naturally occurring activities, “becoming the phenomenon” – such a phenomenon being one's becoming itself, one's ongoing embodied history – could be a good method for obtaining “examinable” data on practice, learning and embodiment.

Finally, another point should be mentioned: opposing “becoming the phenomenon”-based ethnography to autoethnography also means opposing “the intensive labour of field research” to “the armchair pleasure of 'me-search” [Fine, 1999: 534]. Observing participation, borrowing Wacquant's [2000] definition, is accomplished on the field, and quite rarely without a co-occurrent participant observation. These two activities, actually, are blended and blurred almost all the time in the particular kind of fieldwork that I'm proposing here. Moreover, they are mutually enhancing activities.

### **Fieldwork and “deskwork”: reflexive, experientially meaningful accounts**

What does it means to provide a reflexive account? An what kind of account should be provided? In this section I would like to briefly present some strategies that had proven to be useful in my fieldwork experience as well as in the “deskwork” one consisting of



taking field notes, analysing data and writing/reporting ethnography.

*Whose words? Whose experience?*

First of all it is important to take into account the researcher's position in front of her/himself. Who is the ethnographer to the ethnographer? I have taken – and then analysed – field notes by considering myself-as-aspiring-dancer as a sort of privileged informer, as someone who was in the field, was experiencing it and was part of it – who had the same participative status, and similar experience, of the present others – but, differently than them, was able to communicate to me her bodily, sensorial, sensual, kin(aesth)etic feeling in a non-mediated way. For myself-as-ethnographer, myself-as-aspiring-dancer was one among other informants and research subjects, although a one to which the former had extraordinary access.

This has been true not only in taking field notes, but especially at the level of data analysis. My lived experience has been extremely important, particularly in order to understand corporeal, embodied and tacit aspects of everyday ordinary life, but it would not been enough by itself: other voices were needed, a social feedback and, thus, a sort of response from/in the *observed* (interaction with the) world in which that experience was grounded. As one example among many others, when I was engaged in video analysis in order to study the activity of teaching/learning-to-perform, or the role of corrections in performative learning, I have not employed my own experience as the primary source of data. I was carrying out video analysis, my first data were the video-recordings, and it did not matter if these were concerning a lesson in which I had been actively engaged as a student or not. It has happened, however, that, once reached some point in the analysis, I have exploited my own experience – especially through field notes themselves – in order to test some analytical insight or category.

This way of regarding one's own “voice” and experience constitutes a second difference between what I'm calling “becoming the phenomenon”-based ethnography and autoethnography. We could also talk, with Leon Anderson [2006], of “analytical” vs “evocative” autoethnography. Apart from definitions, what matters, to me, is a (self)-dialogical instead of autobiographical, interactionist instead of self-referential ethnography. It is neither that we can't exploit literary strategies, I believe exactly the contrary, nor that we can't exploit literary text as data or “clarifying descriptions” [Goffman, 1959, 1974]. It is that our own work can't be only literacy, because literacy and research have different ways of telling versions of reality and, above all, have different *methods* for extrapolating such versions from the world they inhabit.

*Which words? Which experience?*

It is also important to find ways for accounting for the experiential aspects of the situated context, for the tacit, usually unnoticed and not easily “verbalisable” dimensions of (embodied) action and interaction. In my experience, various kind of visual and multimedia materials have proven to be very useful, as I shall better illustrate

in the next section, yet there are also other tools for “writing ethnography” [Van Maanen, 1988] in an experientially meaningful way. The following is just a tentative list, concerning field notes and/or dissemination.

- “Instant” conversation analysis when taking notes on the field. It consists of writing down relevant pieces of talk and, more generally, interaction immediately after, and almost during, its unfolding. Notwithstanding some obvious limits of practicability, and the necessity of a certain degree of familiarity with CA techniques, this has revealed to be a way of taking notes on the field and quickly accounting for what is going on not only more accurate and capable of grasping interesting aspect of the situated (inter)action<sup>3</sup>, but also easier and less time-consuming than other ones.
- Messing up with words and concept in order to find words and concepts able to express bodily lived experience. The western “vocabulary of thoughts”, impoverished by centuries of mind/body dichotomy's kingdom, is definitely something that we need to refresh, if we really want to overthrow such a regime. Messing up with words/concepts means exploiting linguistic tools as something useful and malleable, instead of sacred and immutable, and playing with neologisms, “lexical puzzles”, etc.
- Mixed writing genres: descriptive, analytical, narrative, etc. This is about the style of argumentation and writing, and is something on which a certain number of ethnographers have reflected. Among others [e.g. Van Maanen, 1988; Dal Lago, 1984; Richardson, 2000a, 2000b; Santoro, 2007], Wacquant, who has had his own problems in accounting for prizefighters' bodily experience, has then argued that it is pointless to propose a corporeal sociology, sustained by practical initiation, if what one tries to uncover concerning the sensory-motor magnetism of the universe under investigation ends up vanishing in writing [Wacquant, 2009: 17].
- Using large extract from field notes in order to insert in publications and other dissemination materials moments of more direct communication, which enters the mundane and situated details of everyday experience, sometimes succeeding in bringing the audience experientially closer to the studied reality.

#### *Visual and multimedia tools*

Finally, as I mentioned, I think it is necessary to integrate verbal description with other

3 In my research on dance, for example, it has helped in accounting for specific rhythmical aspects of talk. See, for instance, the following excerpts from field notes “The choreographer [...] observes the dancers performing the sequence without music. Hither and thither, he works as a prompter: he does so verbally, by 'saying' the step/movement, and/or vocally, by uttering some syllables (e.g. «ia: pa: stra pa (0.1) e ta (.) e ta (.) e tim e ba») in order to give the tempo, and/or bodily, executing and emphasising some movements” [08-02-29 OC]. “Daniela repeats what the dancers have to think about while performing: «The arm falls (.) up (.) the arm falls (.) up (.) the am falls (.) up» (falling rhythm). They perform again and succeed. «Oh, I've found the key for opening your door! (0.3) Again», the choreographer then says” [08-01-22 OC].

kind of accounts. Photos, diverse visual materials and video-recordings – the latter being reported in printed text non only with transcriptions, but also with storyboards – provide the researcher, first, and then the reader, with a larger ensemble of data. Moreover, the researcher's ability to create images in order to enhance scientific communication [Lynch and Edgerton, 1988; see also Latour, 1986; Lynch and Woolgar, 1988] constitutes, to me, a relevant skill.

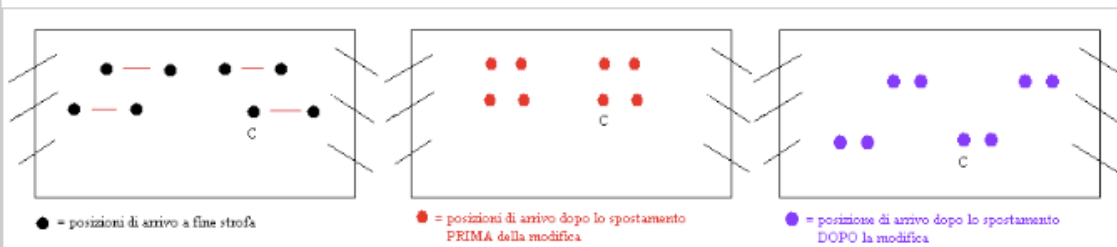
Let's see this latter group of strategies in more detail through some examples. A first strategy I have exploited, especially in field notes, has been the one of integrating verbal description with graphical representations of bodily doings (Figures 1-4). This has allowed me to grasp what we can call “moving memories” and to consider both individual and collective “units” of bodily doing as monothetic monads, in the same way in which myself-as-aspiring-dancer was learning to do on the field, and dancers – as well as all of us, although not concerning dancing – do everyday.



Figure1 : *Stretching on ground*

Figura 2: *Stretching in couple*

Figura 3: *Piquet*



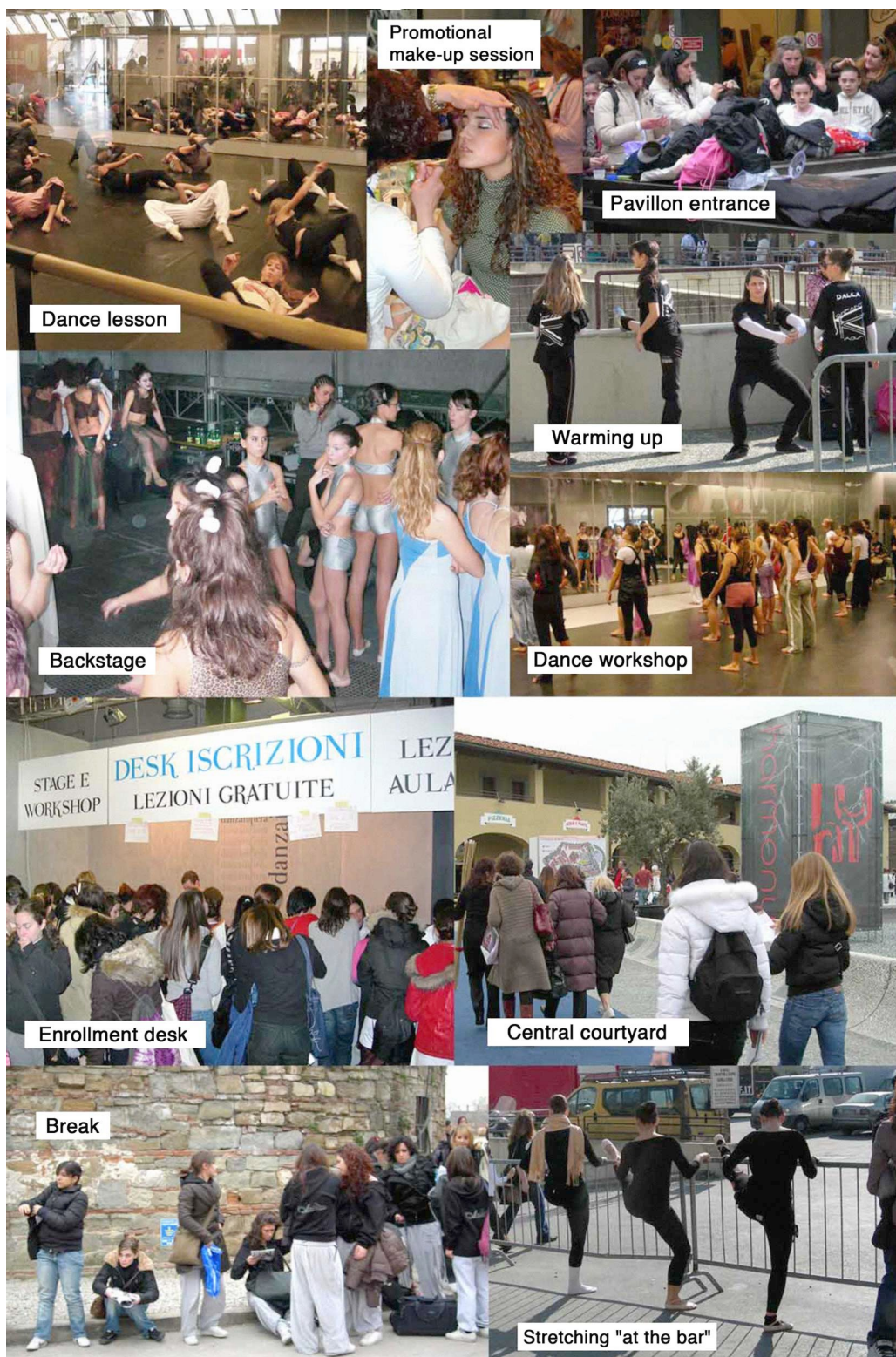
● = posizioni di arrivo a fine strofa

● = posizioni di arrivo dopo lo spostamento PRIMA della modifica

● = posizione di arrivo dopo lo spostamento DOPO la modifica

Figura 4: *Choreographic displacements and relative modifications*

Another strategy consists of employing (ensembles of) images of various kind for descriptive, documentary, exemplifying, or representational ends: single photos or reportage; maps; collages of photos, magazine's covers, paints, advertising, or other pictures. This is helpful in both analysis and dissemination, as provides with images able, to return complex configurations of object, persons, actions, etc. One example, for instance, is a collage of photos taken at a dance fair (Table 1) that I have created in order to provide a visual account for the contemporary outcome of the femininization of western theatrical dance that had begun in the XIX century [Burt, 1995: 10; Adams, 2005]. The collages (Tables 2-5) that I have assembled for exemplifying the double bound of dancers's practice wear with gender and dance style are other examples.



**Table 1:** Pictures from *Danza in Fiera 2008* (03/22-24/2008, Florence, Italy)

Moreover, a very important research tool has been that of video-recordings. On the one hand, the use of video data allows the researcher to observe and see again, so to speak: more specifically, it offers the opportunity of “coming back” to the field in an experientially similar, even if not identical, way and noticing new details through repeated scrutiny and the exploitation of various functions such as ralenty, stop-motion, etc. On the other hand, video-recordings allow to make the others observing and seeing. Since data sharing is easier, video data could be a useful tool for team research and data sessions. As for publications and presentations, it could help in sharing with the audience a complex configuration of acting people, objects, spaces, rhythms, etc., as well as in making recognisable detailed aspects of action and interaction.

When multimedia contents are not a practicable way, it is possible to find various solutions. Recently, Christian Heath, Jon Hindmarsch and Paul Luff [2010] have listed some of them in their book on the use of video in qualitative research. My own solution, alongside to transcription, has been that of storyboards. Storyboards 1 and 2, for instance, have been created in order to describe and exemplify the choreographic creative process, and its improvisational yet recursive and “modificationnal” nature. The two storyboards represent a professional dancer improvising a choreographic sequence (Storyboard 1), first, and then repeating it and simultaneously trying some modifications (Storyboard 2).

One last example, including the transcription of the simultaneous talk, is Storyboard 3. It is an account for a specific dimension of what I call teaching-to-perform, namely, *Isolation*: it is about a particular “move” of the teacher, the aim of which is to make recognizable what will come immediately after as a (series of) movement that she is going to exemplarily demonstrate and students will have to observe, practice and learn-to-perform.

### **Epilogue**

I've stated the relevance of the tacit and corporeal dimension of everyday life. Such a dimension, in fact, “keeps together” society more than explicit values and norms, it constitutes the roots of common sense and practical knowledge and, therefore, it throws light on the ways in which people perceive, act, think, understand and make sense of and within a particular world, context, phenomenal field.

I think we need methods, techniques and ethnographic styles able to grasp such a dimension, to observe it, and to account for it. In doing so an important tool, to me, is what I been defining “becoming the phenomenon”-based ethnography. Another one consists of gathering and analysing, creating and exploiting visual and multimedia material in fieldwork as well as analysis and dissemination.



Table 3: Female modern/contemporary dancer's practice wear



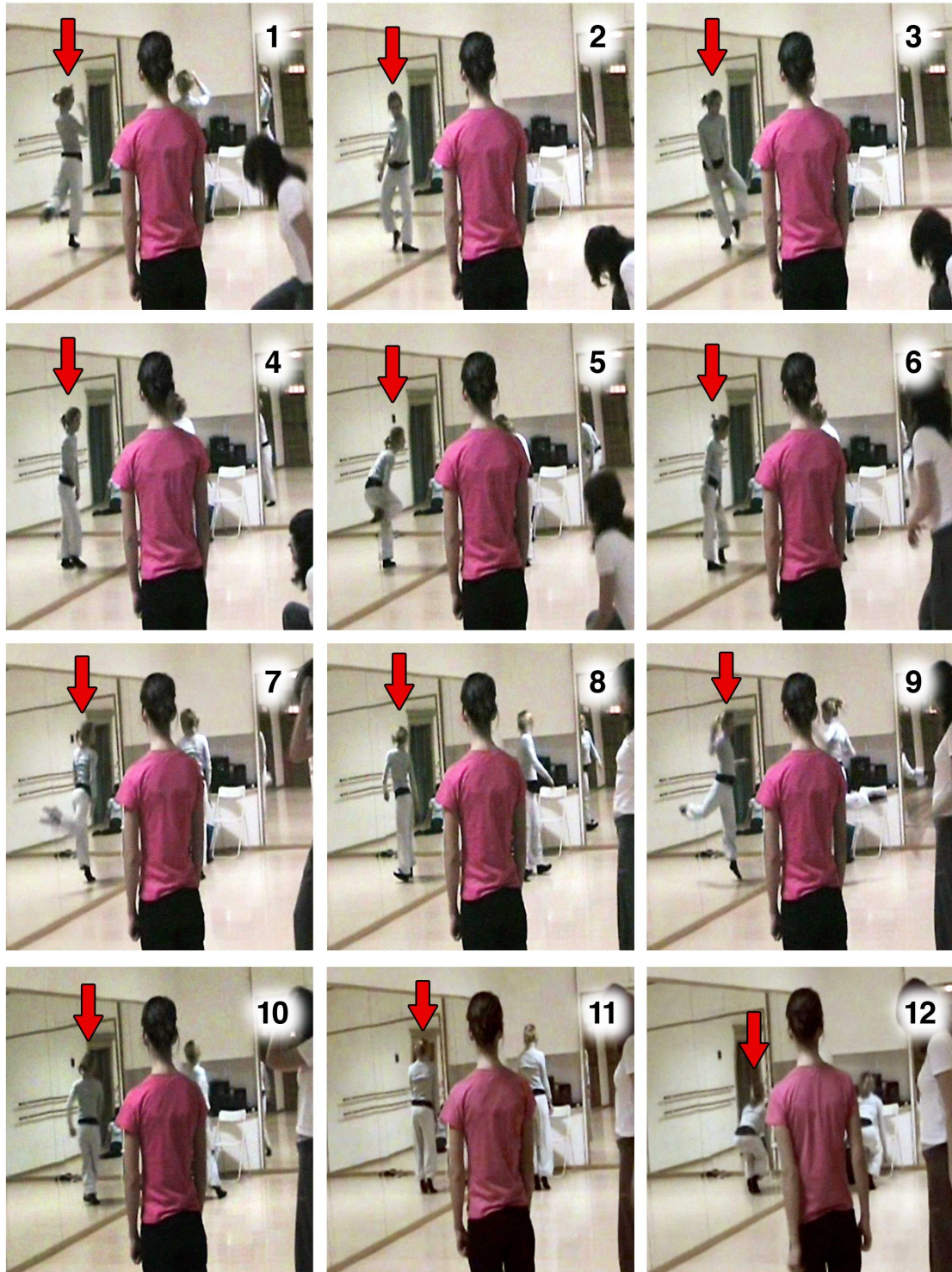
Table 2: Female ballet dancer's practice wear



Table 4: Male ballet dancer's practice wear

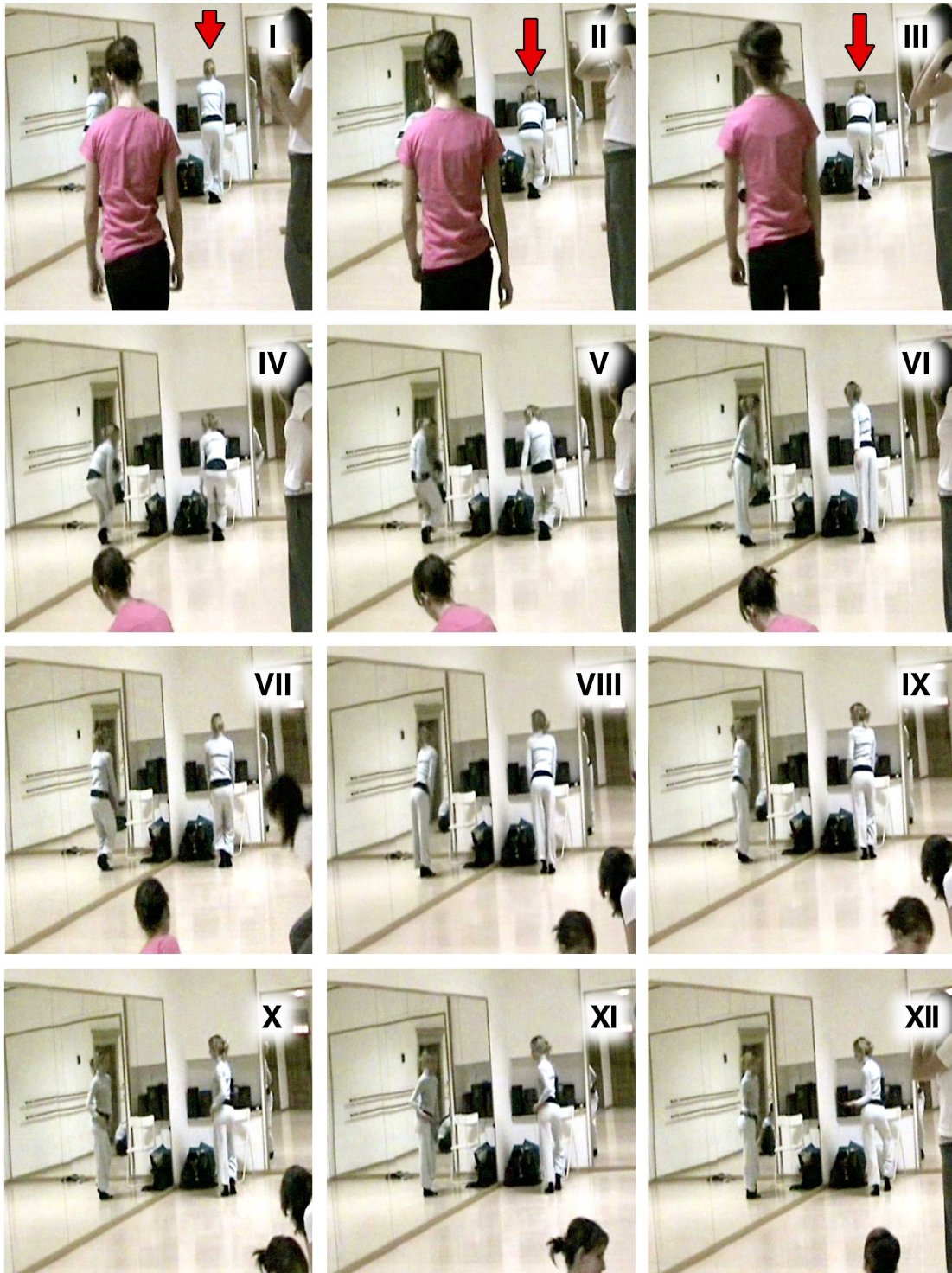


Table 5: Male modern/contemporary dancer's practice wear

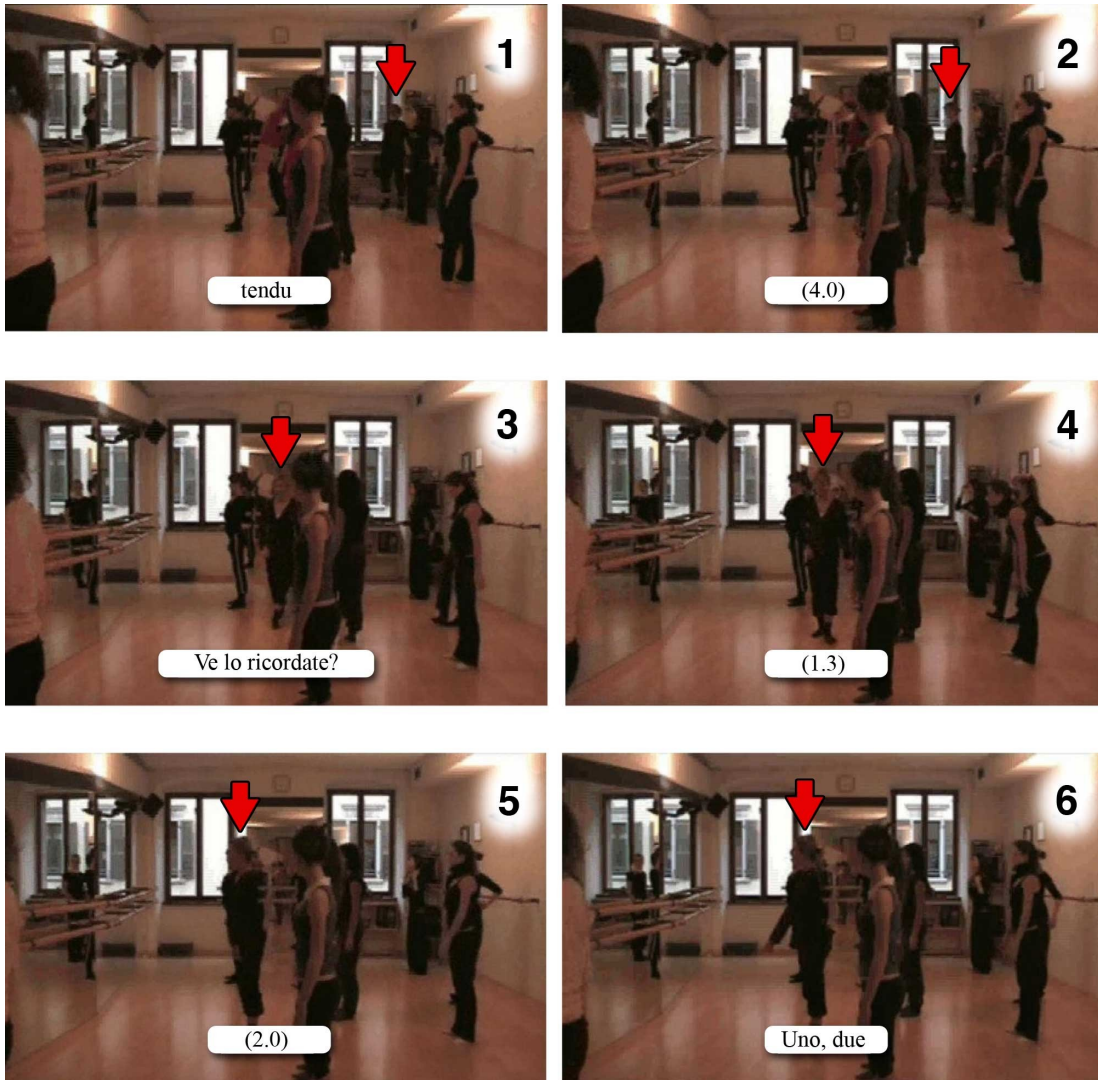


Storyboard 1





Storyboard 2



Storyboard 3: Isolation

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