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What to do about “The Human” in organization studies? Thinking/saying/doing with the Anthropocene, pandemics, and thereafter

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We are reaching the end of this volume, yet this chapter’s title signals that there are still hanging questions; and that the tasks of answering them – and others that will emerge – will never be finished. Said differently, each of the chapters in this volume, from the introduction to this end(ing) were engaged in a conversation about producing knowledge in, about, with “organization studies” at a time when we (the more-than-human inhabitants of this Earth) are facing calamitous conditions, probably leading to our destruction, and (some more than others) are wondering what is to be done.

We (Marta and Linda) are not writing the above lines for dramatic effects. Rather, we want to reiterate what has been the central motivation for producing a collection like this one. As members of the Management and Organization Studies (MOS) scholarly community, we and the other authors in this volume are deeply concerned that the “knowledge” our field is producing as “legitimate” is not only inadequate for addressing those calamitous conditions but also, more troublesome, that this kind of knowledge may be implicated in reproducing the harms we all decry. Nonetheless, the aim of this volume has not been to critique the field on the basis of what it produces; rather, we wanted to acknowledge conditions perpetuating the production of those forms of knowledge more generally – that is, “the illusion of the human in control” – as well as to offer positive alternatives which may make a differ-

ence in what is produced, perhaps contributing to a better world ... over and over again. In short, the message we hope has been conveyed with each of the preceding chapters is the possibility of “doing otherwise.”

Yet, the above lines sound deceptively simple when we acknowledge that together with the title of this chapter, they also portray the very difficulties of “doing otherwise” when “thinking otherwise” is fundamentally what “legitimate knowledge” seems to curtail. Can we truly question the very notion of “the human” supporting “legitimate knowledge”? Can we truly focus on producing processual knowledge with indefinite aims? In other words, is the becoming of an Organization Studies produced with feminist new materialisms possible?

Thus, we need to write a few more lines to inform our readers and remind ourselves of what it is that we are trying to convey at the end. In the proposal for editing this volume we suggested the last chapter as a re-engagement with another last chapter: the one written by Martin Parker in the Research Agenda volume edited by Barbara Czarniawska (2016). Parker basically indicts business schools and their programs for what they have become and the knowledge they produce. He argues that this kind of knowledge serves to reproduce and justify the market logics under which many other institutions in society are now organized, including the universities where these programs are usually located.

This model of the business school, which originated in the USA, has also become the contemporary model for the university as an institution, and is often referred to as the neoliberal or the corporate university, or the market model of academic capitalism (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; 2001). Fundamentally, the values behind this model frame universities with a particular orientation dispersed through what is being taught, researched, and so on, to the point that little else can be said which would count as “knowledge,” and therefore limiting critical approaches to understanding and evaluating what might be more pressing issues in the world today. In Parker’s words, this is what we “might expect from a form of knowledge teaching people how to make profits” (2016: 148).

Parker does offer an alternative: the creation of Schools of Organizing – an active verb heralding ongoing transformation. This entity would not need a building or defined boundaries but will be oriented toward a process, “organizing,” going on all around us, and overlapping with the interests of many others in the social sciences and the humanities. In this sense, the field of inquiry, including approaches and methodologies, will be much expanded and

unconstrained by the limits so busily demarcating what a “business school” is at present.

While we appreciate the potential highlighted by Parker’s thoughts and suggested actions, these arguments seem to assume that the current incarnation of the business school and the global neoliberal, or corporate, or market model university is truly entrenched and irredeemably so; however, we beg to differ. To explore this possibility, let’s be reminded of the everyday practices that we who presently labor as scholars in these institutions are expected to perform; and then think with an event produced by the COVID-19 pandemic. What would we learn?

What does working in the global neoliberal university feel like these days? For at least the past ten years, we (Marta and Linda) had been listening to increasing complaints from colleagues about the acceleration of the pace of work (for example, increasing the number of publications all the time); the limitations imposed on what could be considered a legitimate publication (that is, journal lists and rankings); increased teaching loads and administration without extra support (for example, reduced teaching assistants); the lack of transparency in how very local individual rewards (a technology of recent vintage) are determined or bestowed (that is, who is worthy of an endowed chair; of a course release; of a publication award; of a teaching award – in particular when several of these include monetary rewards). More generally, the fast-paced competitive climate thus generated has been in full swing, producing visible inequalities among faculty members regardless of academic rank, and permeating the space where “knowledge” is expected to be produced and imparted.

Little by little, and over time, going to work stopped being something to look forward to. Talking with colleagues in the hallways had become unusual more often than not. Everyone is busy producing the next thing, facing a computer screen, and sometimes connected remotely with other colleagues, which might also be good for furthering one’s career (or at least better than talking with the colleague in the office next door ... who might also be busily engaged in similar activities – as well as being a competitor for coveted rewards).

Not much of what we describe above is new for it is part and parcel of bureaucratic institutions, particularly of private ones, where meritocracy (as individualized worth) easily serves as an alibi to justify structural consequences of preferential treatment for certain individuals and not others. That is, the examples just mentioned sound quite logical if we use conventional managerial explanations and include the voices of “disgruntled employees” as the cause for concern – “the system works ok if it weren’t for those people” – evi-

dently “those people” are not as good as they should be for the system to work as expected (as this circular logic goes). However, the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic (and the virus in our midst) shed some light on the limits of this thinking, *demonstrating that it really did not need to be that way.*

Somehow during this period, the competitive practices and climate, and the hierarchical differences it contributed to producing and maintaining, were toned down. The dominant phrase “we are all in this together” became the call to action as we all transitioned rapidly to remote teaching. Support systems – both regarding technical resources and best instructional practices – were devised immediately and continued to be provided all along (in our case for a year and a half). Concurrently, we were being nudged by the university to be kind and compassionate to our students (for example, understanding their concerns, difficulties with classes, with the required work, etc.). As well, conventional teaching evaluations of faculty done by students at the end of semesters were paused, and there was general acceptance that research would slow down as difficulties arose (working from home; caring for family members; travel limitations for data collection and myriad other issues which, as the saying goes, were “unprecedented”). In fact, pre-tenured faculty received time extensions on their “tenure clocks” during this period. And during this period the university was prompt to offer “mental health resources” for everyone – students, faculty, and staff.

It may be the case that what we experienced in our own institution as described above is/was similarly occurring (or not) in other Schools of Management, or Business Schools, or similar programs, in various other universities and in several other countries. However, the main points we are trying to make with this narrative is that the apparently fully entrenched model of the global neoliberal university became easily modified and relaxed at the time of crisis, but what made this modification possible was not that the institution was “nimble” or the participants were “resilient” (phrases we hear often to make sense of what happened). *What happened rather was a going back to the values of community, caring, and concern for others which had not been forgotten but rather suppressed under the weight of “the competitive individual” of Western liberalism, cultivated under “advanced global capitalism” premises, and promoted by our institutional practices.*

Actually, the normalization and institutionalization of that make-believe as the core of the contemporary neoliberal university worldwide dates only from the last 40 years. What Parker’s work highlights as an apparently insidious process very much happening under our noses (that is, unnoticed) and part and parcel of encroaching global neoliberalization, is of fairly recent vintage.

In fact, it was also a concern for some as it started happening in the mid-1980s. For example, at that time the US National Science Foundation established grants, often framed with critical epistemologies including feminists, to address the ethics and values of several disciplines (and we were recipients of one of them). Further, by the mid-1990s there were increasing conversations about the advent of the Western model of universities as a global institution. These conversations focused critically on the kind of knowledge that would be needed and that would be possible to produce in the second millennium, and it was at this point that the notion of academic capitalism also emerged (see *Organization*, 2001).

Altogether, if there were to be a moral to this story, it would be that the contemporary global neoliberal university (and the kind of knowledge it produces, and how it produces it) has a shorter history than what many may assume, that we collectively know where it comes from, and that it can be changed *if we care to remember that it did not need to be this way*. However, *if we forget*, there are immediate unfortunate consequences. For instance, the changes that worked so well during the pandemic at our university started to erode as soon as it was declared that we were “back to normal.” What this meant was not only going back to prior doings; it was worse. One learning for the bureaucracy was that it could increase class sizes for faculty through hybrid courses – with the students in the classroom joined by other students in remote locations. Oh, and by the way, new lists of legitimate journals were produced, eliminating the only critical journal remaining from the prior one, and at the same time adding, for the first time, monetary rewards to publishing in those of the new list.

But it doesn't have to be that way; if we remember we should be able to reverse the labels “unprecedented” and “going back to normal” as they have been used in support of returning to previous oppressive conditions. That particular “normal” is of very recent vintage and is truly “unprecedented” in terms of presenting itself as if “there is no alternative” (TINA anyone?) to its mode of knowledge production. And thus, *if we remember*, “going back to normal,” of course, *should refer to embodying the values of community, care, and concern, and practicing these* as we become with others, human, non-human, and move along in worlding. Do we need a pandemic to realize this?¹

Further, *if we remember*, we should also note that the logic and characterization of much we portrayed above hangs from the (*very feeble*) kernel of one idea: that the ‘human individual’ of Western market liberal political thought – the human of neoliberalism – is the necessary condition for making everything possible and normalized *as if it is* the only way to be human in current times. This “human individual” is notable (in the USA and Australia in particular)

for the weight it carries in the production of “legitimate knowledge,” maintaining the fiction of “knowing” from these reductionist forms, and fostering the actions and practices emerging out of them. It is this kind of human who is required for accelerating the pace of journal articles produced; for justifying how rewards are conferred; and for making believable that structural changes in regimes of inequality would emerge through psychological interventions (for example, by “discovering unconscious biases” regarding “diversity,” and then changing *individuals’* behaviors appropriately). In fact, the question in the title of this chapter says it all, and it has been the guiding concern for the volume.

Thus, following what we originally proposed, this chapter presents the voice of our research collectivity articulating “the-world-and-beyond” as envisioned in each of the volume’s prior chapters. Doing this resonates as well with new materialisms; in our words in the proposal, “‘a doing with’ which cannot be a ‘doing alone’ – more like a world of ongoing assembling.” In actual practice, we asked the authors to read Parker’s chapter and then write a few thoughts on what, under current conditions, would make it possible or difficult to produce the kind of knowledge (on organization studies, feminisms, and new materialisms) hoped for in their own chapter(s). As well, how could the knowledge prefigured in these chapters contribute to changing organization studies, and why would these matters matter?

Our thoughts (Marta and Linda) have been already expressed here but there is much more to say. Following are the thoughts from the rest of our collectivity, each identified by a processual turn of phrase (a call to action?) to which their writing in this volume spoke.

Manspreading (Michela and Silvia)

“Dude ... Stop the Spread, Please. It’s a space issue.” In 2015, the New York’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) used these words on a series of posters launching a commuter civility campaign against *manspreading*. Because these images are protected by copyright, we cannot reproduce any of them here. However, interested readers can visit websites filled with both the original stylized images used by MTA and photos posted by activists who joined the campaign from all over the world. Meanwhile, see Figure 9.1, an illustration created for this chapter to imagine a form of *manspreading* as daily sexism. Here it is intended to act as a metaphor for how feminist scholars may sit uncomfortably in academia.



Source: Image by Antonio Strati, based on original photograph by Richard Yeh/WNYC.

Figure 9.1 Manspreading

In analyzing the place of women writers in leading MOS journals, Auschra et al. (2022) found a dominance of “men’s clubs” when it comes to authorship constellations; and thriving “male islands” when it comes to research topics. In contrast, “women’s clubs” are far less prevalent and no “female island” exists. Can we consider that a manspreading effect is at work here as well? If so, who is sustaining the reproduction of such a practice in MOS?

An answer can be found in the children’s fairy tale “The Emperor’s New Clothes.” Like Stella Nkomo (1992), who used it as an allegory to describe the practice of silencing race in MOS, we deem that cultural manspreading, overlooking women’s and feminist contributions in knowledge production, is made possible by all “court suitors” – that is, organizational scholars – who continue ignoring and excluding Others’ voices. We stay with the little child instead, and rather than continuing with the MOS Emperor’s procession we point to the erasure and suppression of other voices. We call for making room for the plurality of such voices as well as for the alternative views they embody. We call for a radical affirmative action that enables all MOS scholars to acknowledge the importance of differing (that is, positive difference) as constitutive of the field’s existence today.

Lighting (Saija, Ari, and Anu)

Our chapter called attention to feminist new materialist research that is sensitive to the relational, material, and affective character of organizational life. Instead of putting the human center stage or starting from the materiality that surrounds us, this research invites us to do knowledge on the complex entanglements between humans and more-than-humans that enact our realities. Specifically, this research urges us to explore how these realities can materialize differently, perhaps in a less exploitative and more nurturing manner. Such an exploration requires not only critiquing the anthropocentric, gendered, and capitalist forces of organizing that produce the dominant orderings of our ordinary lives but also opening potentials for disruption and animating what has become striated.

We thus shifted attention to an often neglected but fundamental aspect of organizational life: natural light. By approaching natural light as an affective force, we highlighted the importance of being sensitive to the weak/ignored signals, not of the market but of our co-constituted lives with more-than-human bodies. This approach further allowed us to explore the ways in which the emergent organizing powers of natural light unfold through its movements in relations between human and non-human bodies. Building on an autoethnographic work, we expressed our engagement with natural light and how we are part of its agency, that which is physical/biological in nature but cannot be reduced to either.

Understanding such processes of materialization and their ethico-political consequences calls for new and experimental ways of doing research. In many contexts, this also means moving against – rather than alongside – the flows of the neoliberal business school where, among other things, publishing research in the ‘top journals’ is set as a criterion of success and basis for tenure. Publishing research on topics that are not generally seen as “relevant,” with methods that question the current knowledge production practices, is often an uphill struggle with limited possibilities for success in these outlets.

In this context, while doing feminist new materialist research may be challenging due to lack of clear categories, moving targets and the ephemeral nature of phenomena, the phenomena “exist,” are deeply felt, and have an impact on organizing. To temporarily capture these and make them understandable for the readers, narratives and more experimental forms of writing are needed. These are forms of expression that have affectual power (Stewart, 2007); a writing that is simultaneously within academic tradition while interrogating

it (Pullen et al., 2017). Unfortunately, autoethnographic data and poetic modes of expression do not constitute "rigor" as it is seen by "mainstream" MOS journals, where a positivist reverberation on "qualitative" research echoes through the emphasis on large data sets, systematic analysis, "rigor," and clear categories.

Therefore, writing, reading, and reviewing texts that do not follow the "gold standard" of "qualitative research" according to mainstream US journals and represented, for instance, through Yin's case study method and certain versions of grounded theory, is considered flawed or unsound. However, while conventional methods are important for investigating ontologies to which they apply, they leave limited room for understanding relationally emergent processes of materialization that are entangled, messy, affectual and in flux, and do not follow binary logic. Consequently, they offer limited possibilities to thinking otherwise; they are rather poor tools to study that which is only sensed in the moving constellations already turning into something else. Yet, that which is sensed can be highly impactful, and thus needs to be understood. Thus, we call for plurality in ethico-onto-epistemological starting points and methods of inquiry and writing within the top journals of our field.

This is truly a crucial project for the future of the field. That is, to teach our students to think otherwise, to see our relational constitution with the more-than-human would entail that business schools as educational institutions embolden students to see, think, and feel differently. More now than ever we need to nurture scholars, especially young scholars who have the ability and willingness to think otherwise, to be able to have an impact. For this purpose, resources questioning the standardized understandings of what knowledge is, and of how we can know, are needed. The younger student generation has a sense of climate urgency and seems to be open and motivated to think otherwise, but the uncritical "mainstream" in business schools as educational institutions is failing them. Puzzlingly, while "sustainability and responsible management" are at the core of major business school strategies today, business school teaching still places the emphasis on value creation and economic growth; processes in which the human is center stage, leaving limited room for understanding the complex relations of human and more-than-human.

Thus, we would like to pose the following questions: Are we creating a new generation of "game changers" that keep on reproducing the same logic of accumulation through rationalization and capitalization under the guise of sustainability? Will the rays of light as affective force or the virus that intra-acts with our organizational arrangements escape their attention? Will the bug or plant

disappearing in diversity loss be forever gone for not having economic value?
Bordering (Pauliina, Pikka-Maaria, Susan, and Joonas)

Bordering can be seen as part of subjectivity, which is continuously coming into being in and through a materialist process including the specific slice of matter that is human embodiment (Braidotti, 2015). As part of the vital matter which self-organizes continuously, we have made the agential cuts (Barad, 2003) to focus on the human embodiment, sensing, and knowing constituted within human/non-human relations in our academic lives. The boundaries of our academic working bodies are both porous and solid, like the semipermeable membrane in our cells. As part of the academic world's tissue, we are affected by the current theories, trends coming through the intra-action with our colleagues, as well as by our profound interconnectedness across the natural worlds we coinhabit with other species. While we acknowledge that agency is not only restricted to human beings but manifests itself within the force of matter and materialities, we also accept the idea that “the longing, the hope and the imaginary ultimately remain tied to human beings and their everyday and lived experiences” (Bargetz, 2019: 189).

We also share concerns that have been raised about the risks new materialist approaches entail in terms of depoliticization (Bargetz, 2019) but perceive that bordering and the material-affective forces constituted by it can drive ethico-political expressions in contemporary societies and organizations. Within our embodied experiences in the field, we sensed and repeated the asymmetrical power relations between human and non-human, between racial relations, as well as in relations between different people in the workplace. Throughout history these power relations have been enacted by androcentric, Eurocentric, anthropocentric, hierarchical, and exclusionary actions of (hu) man understanding of difference, implying a binary logic of self/us and others/ them with corresponding asymmetrical power relations. However, while other humans and species pierced our bodies – both in the field and during our joint research process – we were bordering with differences to become parts of the same sensing, knowing, living, and working non-hierarchical body with differences. Nonetheless, within bordering our bodies don't let everything in but situationally filter the flow of different inputs through the membrane of self-preservation as part of matter's life force.

The beauty of bordering lies in the power of growing something new in our intra-actions, something which would not be born without becoming in touch with other semipermeable cells. To sustain, to defend, to filter the thoughts and the theories in these situations means that we do not vanish as individual cells but co-operate as part of one large, living, becoming academic body. Our

way of bordering during a joint research project articulated dissent toward the current academic practices in business schools, which emphasize more or less linear efficiency and hierarchical relations between researchers. Through bordering universities can be sites for ethico-politics, which pave the way for a non-hierarchical and, hence, more egalitarian relationship between humans (researchers, students, and lecturers) and human (economy) and non-human (earth). Bordering also provides a political horizon for wondering and wondering, evocative and egalitarian co-operation within neoliberal academia by offering alternative knowledge formations.

Imagining (Janet)

Wearable technologies (WT) are a nexus where technology, politics, economics, and culture meet on the surface of the sexed and gendered body, and increasingly more intensely and invasively on and under the skin of workers' bodies, with biodata collected from WT such as body temperature, blood, saliva, and other secretions. This will enable more rapid responses to pandemic risk management, as will the proximity capabilities of WT (Channa et al., 2021). The use of WT in pandemic management will accelerate, and so will the necessity to understand the justifications being used for such technologies and their impact on vulnerable groups in organizations, and organizational 'life' more generally. Gherardi (2021) argues that feminist new materialisms' (FNM) engagement with the material (both technology and corporeality) starts with management knowledge being a verb (not a noun) and accountable within its location as an ethical practice. Drawing further on Sayers et al. (2022), we add that imagining future assemblages of human, data, and machine using affirmative ethics means we can counter predominant imaginaries and show both their limited scope and introduce further possibilities that enact zoe-centred egalitarianism. The COVID-19 pandemic is an urgent case in point. The COVID-19 pandemic has enabled power/knowledge discourses around wellness technologies, including biotechnologies such as vaccines, to become more visible and has also made more perceptible the imaginaries invoked to justify their acceptance. FNM assists us to understand the confluence of forces acting in workplaces and on gendered worker subjectivities and bodies and provides a manifesto of a certain kind for emancipatory political action within these vectors of power. Braidotti (2013) enables understanding the relevance of activism through enacting affirmative ethics and zoe-centred egalitarianism to understand subjectivity as permeable with other vulnerable bodies and acting to affirm life. Activism starts with an understanding of the significance of desire between agents in a mobile interconnected network, consisting of both

human and non-human agents, and between sexed bodies, and engages affect to create affirmative connections between vulnerable bodies. In this sense we propose that including viruses in organizational theory as active agents, whilst also seeing human agents as socially engaged in relations formed around sexual difference and desire, would enable more innovative and novel understandings of organizational 'life' and contribute to new egalitarian solutions to pandemic management sensitive to unequal and gendered effects.

Re-rhythming (Alice, Ari, and Saija)

Arrhythmic knowledge-production
*We find ourselves out of breath and out of thought,
 producing knowledge at an uneven pace,
 Not responding to anything but a neoliberal machine,
 demanding from rather than becoming-with the world*

The neoliberal university works as a knowledge-production-apparatus of sorts, drawing together bodies, theories, finances, promises of innovation, aspirations and affects into an entanglement of "efficiency" and "productivity." As this apparatus cuts-together-apart, it continuously promotes that which greases its cogs and discards, and marginalizes, that which cannot be fitted into the mold:

Difference

With that, forms of knowing are often cut out too, the sensible, the embodied, the situated, and the political. There is not enough time to stop and think, and there are surely not enough resources to "stay with the trouble" (Haraway, 2016); that is, to linger on how the world comes to *matter*. The apparatus demands that we direct attention away from our tired bodies, liveliness, and co-constitution toward "grand challenges," while still treating sustainable development goals as if they were boxes to be ticked on the way to tenure.

Where could such "contributions" possibly lead us?

When thinking with feminist new materialism(s), we are invited to think through performative accountability, both with regards to our own work and how the world comes into being through neoliberal knowledge-production. This implies working differently with matter and through patterns of mattering. Not as a form of dialectical resistance but rather as an ongoing re-configuration of an apparatus that is not "broken." The neoliberal university was made to feed on the exploitation of bodies and feelings of competition,

inequality, and scarcity. Once we account for that, we can performatively start tampering with its conditions too. Here, a greater sensitivity toward mattering can serve as a means to problematize current conditions, and how these conditions affect our ways of knowing. It allows us to follow the materializations of ideals and relations and not only the intention behind them or the discursive promise they might hold. It allows us to ask: what are the material-discursive “impulses” putting the greater apparatus out of rhythm, and how could these be re-worked? As a response, we slow down, and we stay attentive. Only then can we re-orientate our knowledge-production toward different, and possibly more response-able, ways of organizing. Only then are we in pace with(in) the world’s becoming, restored to our long-lost rhythm. Would it, perhaps, sound something like this?

*Lub dub lub dub lub dub:
the onomatopoeia of a healthy heart*

Curiographing (Anu and Tarja)

Our chapter took a feminist new materialist perspective to advance the development of more-than-human methodologies in organization studies. It started from the premise that the current earthly crisis requires the abandonment of human-centric approaches still dominating scholarly work. Instead, there is an urgent need to recognize that humans co-exist with various earthly inhabitants – such as trees, microbes, animals, insects, plants and rocks – and to involve them into research practices. However, these non-human inhabitants should not be treated as objects of knowledge, but rather as co-inhabitants with which the world is known. They should neither be treated as ‘items’ to be added to the existing conceptual packages and research agendas, but rather as the ones that inspire and enable the development of new, more radical conceptualizations needed in the current era often called the Anthropocene. While feminist new materialist scholars have done valuable work in developing suitable concepts and onto-epistemologies for tackling a current (damaged) multispecies reality, methodological developments lag.

To address this challenge, we reassessed emerging more-than-human ethnographies arguing that “ethno” easily leads to the perpetuation of human-centric methods and conventional views of scientific activity. Therefore, our chapter introduced *curiography* as an alternate mode of inquiry: one that enables to engage with earthly relations in a response-able and polite way. We hence suggest that curiosity – and its philosophical potential, as discussed and put

into practice by feminist new materialist scholars such as Donna Haraway, Vinciene Despret, and Anna Tsing – is a compelling starting point to exploring earthly relations. In particular, we forwarded *polite curiosity*, which Despret views as “a particular epistemological position to which I am committed, one that I call a virtue: the virtue of politeness” (Despret, 2005: 360). Thinking curiosity in this way implies being “hungry for discovery, needy for what must be known and built together, with and for earthly beings, living, dead, and yet to come” (Haraway, 2016: 127). Inspired by these thoughts, we discussed the “need to know with and for earthly beings” in the current era, seeking to cultivating the type of curiosity in research that is open to surprises – in literal, practical, and embodied ways. A demand for an openness to surprise is a key characteristic of curiography. Therefore, it is risky, as it requires a willingness to be changed and transformed by unexpected encounters.

Importantly, cultivating polite curiosity implies that we, as scholars, continually challenge and reassess our own thoughts, doings, and habituated scholarly wisdoms concerning theorizing, knowing, and doing research. While writing the chapter, we became curious about “who are we” as scholars when acknowledging our relationality with other earthly bodies. We consider ourselves indeterminate messmates whose bodies are co-constituted with a variety of earthly bodies – instead of being bounded “human” bodies – and started thinking how this take changes our position as knowers and ways of doing research. As curiosity is something to be practiced, not only “thought,” literal collaboration with various co-constituted bodies might also require thinking about our ways of knowing anew. Furthermore, we went on to challenge the taken-for-granted scientific practice of asking questions which may often take violent forms in the competitive academia and pondered the possibility of asking polite questions. As such, we also paused to reassess theorizing as a form of embodied experimenting, driven by curiosity, always open, always containing ethico-political possibilities.

Altogether, our chapter stressed the need for developing research approaches and practices that go beyond human-centered worldviews and presented curiography as one possible option for highlighting and exploring the relationality of life. Curigraphy is a process of knowledge co-constitution valuing sensitivity, literal embodied engagements, openness, politeness, and listening, and is situated at the crossroads of post-qualitative and post-anthropocentric inquiry. In so doing, curigraphy adds to emerging debates that have analyzed the material and multispecies nature of relational knowing (Meriläinen et al., 2022). The beauty of such analyses lies in their ability to demonstrate the messy, indeterminate, and unexpected nature of knowing. Knowing is not something to be mastered or controlled, but to be lived with. Then it matters.

Airing (Alison)

The corporatization of the university, undemocratic government, management heavy structures, and the commodification of knowledge production have taken hold of many business and management schools in the world. Hanke and Hearn’s *Out of the Ruins* (2012), drawing on Readings’ (1996) account of the corporate university, captures the university in crisis as involving public universities operating as private enterprises, the rhetoric of excellence from teaching and research outputs measured, centrally eroding “academic values and faculty judgement” (p. 12) and an obsession with measuring academic scholarship. Without a doubt we now operate in the “measured University” (Peseta et al., 2019) where research funding rather than the nature of projects is prioritized, ranked publications are counted, and teaching evaluations and awards are highly sought after. Hanke and Hearn (2012: 12) summarize many of the problems:

The mantra of innovation, the hegemony of technoscience, the flow of money and information, the administrative use of information and communications technology for the integration of faculty into client self-service systems, the casualization of academic labor, and the indebted student define how the production of knowledge is orientated and how the university works.

Democracy, academic autonomy, and freedom of speech in many universities is being undermined and eroded. Kotsko (2020: np), discussing the decline of higher education, writes that:

For a generation or more, institutions of higher education have been actively dismantled—in many ways, transformed beyond recognition—by powerful constituencies who are actively hostile to academic values. These constituencies include conservative politicians who view widespread access to liberal arts education as a recipe for social upheaval, and business leaders who want to shunt the expense of training workers for highly technical jobs onto the university system (and ultimately the students themselves).

Within such contexts, the collective Critical Management Studies (CMS) project needs to be developed in nationally specific ways more robustly and urgently than ever before. Our community challenge those with bureaucratic and political responsibility but they need to be held to account when they fail to ensure just and inclusive workplaces. In Australia CMS is not significant, in the UK CMS academics have been fired, and elsewhere critical scholars are aligning more with the mainstream. I keep asking: why are academics not dissenting more? The answer comes quickly that universities are not safe spaces for resistance. Some would ask, what has resistance achieved? Politicizing the

university and reclaiming the university in Australia and beyond is key to challenging narrow conceptions of academic work, productivity, and performance. Building unions against universities that put capitalism and managerialism first is key as Kilkauer and Young (2021) suggest in their article “Academentia: The organization insanity of the modern university.”

How did we collectively get here? Hanke and Hearn ponder whether the “university is beyond rehabilitation” (2012: 12). Turning to generative possibilities of what CMS and feminists bring is a fundamental way forward. For decades we have known that management and business schools are places where inequalities thrive because neoliberalism has rendered some of us and our concerns invisible. Inequalities continued to exacerbate, and these times are no different. But it doesn’t have to be this way. Parker (2016) is indeed right when he says that we need to be careful with what we teach people who manage, organize, and lead the institutions that we are part of. If we mobilize critical alternatives to the mainstream, including feminist alternatives against corporatization, then we stand a chance of tackling the violence that injures. Letting in the air is both survival and an act of resistance.



Source: © Alison Pullen.

Figure 9.2 Paperbarks at Centennial Park

NOTES

1. For another but related response see Alison Mountz et al. (2015) on Slow Scholarship.

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