

# Embodiment work in Ethnographic Collaborations: Composition, Movement, and Pausing within the Multiple Sclerosis Society in Russia

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## Abstract

This article – grounded in ethnographic fieldwork within the organization of chronic patients with multiple sclerosis in Russia – empiricizes and problematizes the work it takes to craft ethnographic collaborations with care. We attend to the notion of collaboration 'from a body', or, rather, from bodies-in-movement. By scrutinizing three turning points of our ethnographic fieldwork along with our relations with partners in the field, we specify how movement matters in ethnographic collaborations. Attention to the embodiment work allows us to specify the energy and resources such collaborations ask for and that are otherwise silenced or neglected. We distinguish three instances of embodiment work in such collaborations – composition, moving with and being moved by, as well as pausing. By attending to how 'we know' through crafting and maintaining ethnographic collaborations, this article contributes to a broader question of how to care for differences in ethnographic collaborations.

**Keywords:** care, composition work, embodiment work, ethnographic collaboration, moving and being moved, pausing

To move is to create (with) sense. A body perceives through difference. A change in environment provokes a sensory event. (Manning, 2009: 66)

In this article we attend to the work of crafting ethnographic collaborations while puzzling with the question of how to do so with care (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). We approach the notion of

collaboration by attending to the invisible work which moves through and in between the multiple *we1* in ethnographic happenings. To do so, we explore embodied instances of collaborations 'methodographically' (Lippert and Douglas-Jones, 2019; Lippert and Mewes, 2021 (this SI)), i.e., with attention to how our research practices get into



the research accounts. By whom and by what are we moved (not least, moved to collaborate) in our ethnographic accounts, and how? And whom and what do we move with and without, and how? How do we embody “different ways of figuring (not) knowing and (not) moving/being moved by an ‘other’ and how does this matter for the question of ‘how to care’ for scholarly accounts” (Jerak-Zuident 2020: 190; see also Coopmans 2020; Davies 2021)?

Our approach is prompted by three concerns: a. relationships of care embedded in (or not) and emerging from collaborations; b. the kind and amount of energy and resources which move collaborations; and c. transformative and ‘monstrous’ (Star, 1991) effects and affects of being “in the action, (...) finite and dirty, not transcendent and clean” (Haraway, 2004: 236). We, therefore, ask what doings and feelings are put together, and how, in the messy labor for instigating and maintaining collaborations with partners in the field, and what could this imply for the “epistemology and politics of engaged, accountable positioning” for the “better accounts of the world” (Haraway, 1988: 590).

To explore these questions, we ground our methodographic analysis in fieldwork related to the study of the social movement of patients with multiple sclerosis in Russia; and start by positioning our work in between the work on collaboration in ethnography and Science and Technology Studies and the literature on embodiment and ‘view from a body’ (Haraway, 1988). We explore what this positioning suggests for alternative epistemologies and thinking with care. We then work with this analytical quest when attending to the ethnographic work within the patient organization Russian Multiple Sclerosis Society (RuMSS); analysing three moments of the fieldwork, we explore how ethnographic collaborations are crafted ‘from a body’. The first moment discusses the work of composition; the second deals with effects of ‘moving and being moved’; and the third one attends to pausing, suspending the movement as an imperative but often neglected instance of embodiment work in collaborations. We conclude by discussing what embodied sensitivity suggests for knowing with care when crafting (space for) ethnographic collaborations.

## Ethnographic collaboration ‘from a body’

Our quest for articulating invisible work in ethnographic collaborations finds its place in between the body of work on collaborations in STS and ethnography (Blaikie et al., 2015; De la Cadena et al., 2015; Sánchez Criado and Estalella, 2018; Zuident-Jerak et al., 2015) and that on embodiment (Myers, 2005, 2008, 2012; Myers and Dumit, 2011), feminist embodiment in particular (Haraway, 1985, 1988, 1997; Harding, 1991). The latter, as Haraway (1988: 588) articulates, creates “nods in the fields, inflections in orientations, and responsibility for difference in material-semiotic fields of meaning”. This placement in between leads us to explore ethnographic collaborations ‘from a body’ (Haraway, 1988) with ethico-political implications, accentuating such collaborations as ‘sensory events’ (Manning, 2009). Ethnographic collaborations ‘from a body’ are in a sense not only ‘epistemic collaborations’ (Sánchez Criado and Estalella, 2018), emphasising the establishment of horizontal relations with research counterparts. Ethnographic collaborations are also a sensory, embodied, affective, and kinaesthetic movement away from a modern figure of ‘modest knower’ – i.e., away from a figure of the knower who strips knowledge from its place (Haraway, 1997). In this sense, embodiment work can be approached as a research practice and as ‘method’ of collaboration for knowledge that expands epistemic practices through attention to what is embodied – i.e., situated, partial, ‘affect-full’, and grounded in place. Inspired by the ethnography of embodiment or sensory ethnography (Feld, 1982; Mascia-Lees, 2011; Myers, 2012, 2010; Myers and Dumit, 2011; Pink, 2015), we focus on the invisible body-grounded work of ‘laboring together’ during the fieldwork within the organization of chronic patients with multiple sclerosis in Russia. Our puzzling with ethnographic collaboration ‘from a body’ invites us to “start to ask better questions, not just about the conditions of possibility that shape relations of power among bodies, but also the regimes of perceptions that conceal as much as they reveal about these bodies” (Myers, 2020: 98). We propose thereby to infuse the notion of ethnographic collaboration with a

very specific kinaesthetic and affective modality imprinted in embodied senses and sensations.

This study of ethnographic collaborations ‘from a body’ is also close to articulations of non-idealised and practice-oriented notions of care (Martin et al., 2015). Exploring what we put into collaborative relationships, on an invisible and still very practical level, we are disciplined to instantiate where attention falls at a specific moment, taking seriously Spinozist warning that we just do not know what a body can do. This is kin to asking ‘how to care for our scholarly accounts’ (Jerak-Zuiderent, 2020) as

Care is a selective mode of attention: it circumscribes and cherishes some things, lives, or phenomena as its objects. In the process, it excludes others. Practices of care are always shot through with asymmetrical power relations: who has the power to care? Who has the power to define what counts as care and how it should be administered? (Martin et al., 2015: 627).

Vivifying the instances and embodied senses of ethnographic collaborations moves into action a feminist commitment to ‘thinking with care’ (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012) and accounting for the world-making effects of (re)searches and representations (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011). In this respect, this article also shapes the notion and practice of methodography as an embodiment of ‘care troubles’ in the relations of knowing. As we, the multiple ‘we-s’ (Star, 1991) who compose the figure of the knower, engage each other in the labor of collaboration to compose a common world, this inevitably crafts asymmetrical relations of care (De la Cadena et al., 2015; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011, 2012).

What we touch upon here is body-, place- and moment-specific; it is ‘situated’ (Haraway, 1988). The invisible work in ethnographic collaboration manifests in glimpses, in sensory imprints, in traces on the ground as we make steps in the field, in body postures, and movements of thought. It gazes silently from behind the lines of clean ‘executive’ accounts (Star, 1991) and it is always on the move to escape executive prosecution.

As Star and Strauss (1999) have shown from the various ethnographic fields, the invisibility

of work is contextual and fluid. The process of collaboration, in this sense, supposes movement back and forth from making work visible to silencing it – in specific places and in specific times. And, therefore, it supposes sensitivity – first, to movement; second, to the relations which make up this movement; third, to a ‘motile’ (Jerak-Zuiderent, 2020; Munro, 2012) craft of putting and heterogenous places and relations together. “‘Motile’ refers to moving/being moved by an ‘other’ [in the broadest sense; however,] not like mobile in the sense of crossing boundaries. It rather refers to a flickering, a shifting back and forth” that transforms, “changes all and everything involved irreversibly: [Including r]esearch practice” (Jerak-Zuiderent, 2020: 194-195 drawing on Munro, 2012). This has consequences for the figure of the knower.

Let us now specify this approach to ethnographic collaborations ‘from a body’ by moving into the context of social movement of chronic patients (Epstein, 1996); i.e., the context where activist discontent with ‘who is allowed to know’ has been changing the standards of good science, the notions of credibility, and the value of experiential knowledge. What follows is a drawing of a methodographic landscape through which we puzzle with the question of how to care ‘from a body’, as well as possible, in ethnographic collaborations.

### Moving within the Russian Multiple Sclerosis Society

From 2016 until the end of 2019 Alex was engaged in fieldwork within the Moscow regional chapter of the Russian Multiple Sclerosis Society (RuMSS).<sup>2</sup> It took many journeys back-and-forth to Moscow between April and September 2017, November 29 until December 1, 2017, and June until August 2018 while keeping continuous exchanges of video calls, emails, messages in between. This going back-and-forth in and out of the field was eventually logged as 15, combined online and in-person interviews with key interlocutors, spread out through multiple encounters, field observations, and memos. Beyond the ethnographic logs there were impressions, practical arrangements, learning from patients how to ‘care well’ for Mul-

multiple Sclerosis (MS), 3 where to put attention, and amazement with the life of ethnographic movement itself. This epistemic journey into a patient organization, a living and breathing instance of a social movement of chronic patients, kept escaping our fixation on Moscow – where the Moscow chapter of the Russian Multiple Sclerosis society would predictably find its place. It required Alex not to put her self into the field, but to put, unput and repute people and things together while moving with the field.

Consider, for instance, that the Moscow RuMSS chapter, as the RuMSS itself, does not have a physical office or set place of work (although one appears on the official web resources). This organization appears and disappears in the meeting rooms of the Ministry of Health, in rehabilitation locations, in congress halls hosting conferences and workshops, in open browser tabs, infinite emails and video calls, etc. The ethnographic movement on which we base our explorations of what is put into ethnographic collaborations, thus, was constantly creating epistemic spaces – field sites and ‘para-sites’ (Myers, 2020; Marcus, 2000). The latter refer to “experimental sites that take shape alongside ‘fieldwork’, feeding off of and feeding into ethnographic research and writing (...) in which ethnographers can improvise, alter, and reorient their theories and methods through collaborations and experimental practices” (Myers, 2020: 101 drawing on Marcus, 2000). ‘Parasites’ in our case manifested in a volunteering as an interpreter for the Russian delegation during the London International MS Federation meeting or multiple trips or co-organizing the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference “Social Sciences & Health Innovations: Multiplicities” in Tomsk, Russia (among others). It is this space-creating capacity of ethnographic movement within a social movement of chronic patients that prompted us to focus our methodographic analysis on ‘para’, fluid, un-official moments which became turning points of moving our multi-sited fieldwork further.

Moving within a social movement of chronic patients multiplied field sites, ‘messed with the method’ (Law, 2004), and made us ‘finite and dirty’ (Haraway, 1997) by revealing the in-betweens of our research methods and patients’ improvisatory life. It invited Alex to engage with the concerns

of chronic patients in Russia practically: volunteering as an interpreter, co-organizing artistic and academic events, doing yoga, riding horses, and celebrating the International MS Day at a long communal table full with sweets and fats ‘our neurologists do not need to know about’.<sup>4</sup> We propose that attending to the instances of such movements within a social movement is a *methodographic practice* of keeping the question of ‘how to care’ as well as possible in scholarly accounts alive (Jerak-Zuident, 2020).

The social movement of chronic patients in Russia generates *and* maintains space for multiple entangled moves and movements by and with many: Rolling on a wheelchair through the inaccessible urban jungles, moving forward legislation, doing rehabilitative exercises, pressing a button on a voice recorder, pointing to a disturbing voice recorder, eating, driving, dressing for a presentation at the All-Russian Patient Congress – just a few examples to instantiate the scope we are referring to. The social movement which we encountered within the RuMSS is beyond identity politics, but rather refers to the literal and heterogeneous work to compose ‘evidence-based activism’ (Rabeharisoa et al., 2014). It comprises the experience of illness, documenting and sharing these experiences (through sociological research and patient schools), transforming these experiences into solutions (legislation clauses, guidelines for socio-medical expertise), and advocating for these solutions (writing petitions, lobbying, creating public councils to the ministries and medical institution) (Endaltseva, 2020). Still differently, it also comprises putting together the maintenance of a body with MS, the maintenance of communal interests, the weaving of solidarity ties through online communities, ‘how do you do’ calls, yoga classes, and collective celebrations of the International MS day.

Our ethnographic journey constantly moved back-and forth, beginning with reaching out to the RuMSS as a PhD student in France and responding to a student’s request for an ethnographic study. It required the becoming of *us* which starts from, drawing on Puig de la Bellacasa (2017), the ethical-speculative imagination to why collaboration is needed and how to put together what the multiple *we* care for. The embodiment work in

this collaboration started with the very moment of being moved by each other in many ways and with manifold ways of relating to MS. It is in this sense that collaboration requires care for energy and resources: bodily and emotional resources for asking questions, telling and learning to listen to stories; financial resources for travels; cultural resources to be responsive; and social resources to find the right people and be in the right place at the right time.

### Energy to collaborate

Collaboration, especially in asymmetrical relationships of knowing (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017), is a relationship which demands energy, both kinetic or potential (i.e., generated by movement as well as stored in things at places), and resources which go into the movement (physically-materially, affectively, or symbolically). This is not any kind of energy, as Latour (2010) also emphasised. Energy to collaborate cannot be harvested from 'a gigantic steam engine' of epistemic competitions and hierarchies, which moves relationships of critique. It seems not enough and not the right kind of energy. Instead, relationships of collaboration call for a heterogeneous and collective "slow process of composition and compromise, not by the revelation of the world of beyond" (Latour, 2010: 478). 'Slow' is one of the key moments here – it allows for going back and forth, rerouting, getting lost and found as the field sites move and multiply. Keeping it slow requires bodily, kinaesthetic, financial, and emotive resources: taking a plane to Russia over and over; adjusting the passage from one step to another; waiting for collaborations without imposing their necessity.

The energy it takes to collaborate, we suggest, is generated through invisible, embodied work: listening emotively to MS stories, finding place in a busy schedule for a meeting, choosing a right moment for a question, overcoming fatigue and pain during the interview. Relationships of collaboration require time and space for back-and-forth movement – physically, emotionally, and epistemically. They are not necessarily symmetrically reciprocated, and smooth (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017: 121). This we will see further in a story of Alex's ride in a grey Renault Megane, and it also

appears in Sánchez Criado and Estalella's (2018) moments of 'frictions' with their interlocutors in the field.

'Frictions' here do not refer to competition or hierarchies. Rather it is a way of relating to place which disciplines to keep it slow<sup>5</sup> when we compose and recompose the field. We suggest that methodographic attention to how bodies energize epistemic collaborations is a way to slow down our knowledge-making process. The need for latter, drawing on Puig de la Bellacasa (2011: 85), might be crucial for doing science and technology while "our beautiful planet is sore". This promise of slow methodography for the relationships of knowing is vivid on a mundane level when small moments here and now are taken seriously as mattering for 'our planet'. Imagine, for instance, eating to still the hunger vs eating while at the same time paying attention to every micro movement in the physical eating process, and in addition - to every thought connected to the choice of attending to eating instead of thinking and doing something else. As we suggest and specify more in depth in the examples further below, ethnographic collaborations 'from a body' are not much different when we cherish Tess Lea's warning that

when we (re)present coherence we deny fragmented realities, and in so doing, ignore the way governing hierarchies are recharged when we misleadingly affirm the idea of correction through ethnographic exposure and evaluation, rather than conveying the coursing of power through the most banal and neglected moments." (De la Cadena et al., 2015: 452).

In "An Attempt at a 'Compositionist Manifesto'" Latour (2010) argues for 'manifesting' or making visible the need to slow down, pause and reconsider the ways of 'processing forward'. This need comes around as 'compositionism' – "the task of building a common world" with "certainty that this common world has to be built from utterly heterogeneous parts that will never make a whole, but at best a fragile, revisable, and diverse composite material" (Latour, 2010: 474). Latour (2010) considers 'compositionism' as rooted in performative practices, as something not to take for granted and not a destination point (Zuiderent-Jerak et

al., 2015). His manifest points to the limit of critique in knowledge-making; of the opposition between what is 'natural' and 'constructed', scientific and political. The question for Latour (2010) is in differentiating between the 'good' composition and not (see also Zuiderent-Jerak et al., 2015); in "where (...) we get the energy to act" (Latour, 2010: 477). Our methodographic quest for embodied ethnographic collaboration, thus, is a 'compositionist' quest; an articulation of a performative, fragile, never complete generation of a common world while maintaining its fragmentation pre-, during- and after ethnographic fieldwork. And not least, while attending to the flow of energy in collaborations (also, in a very material and embodied sense: taking a plane to get to a place fast and with less effort, walking slowly because inability to lift a foot – a common MS trouble – creates friction with the ground). Composition work of collaborations, as we account for our ethnographic journeys further below, is in that sense emergent, grounded in what is embodied, 'in place to place with' and is done *with care* for "our accounts in the composition of things" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011: 88).

Let us explain this methodographically through the three vignettes of what we perceive as turning points in our fieldwork. We start from a moment from an international conference Social Science and Health Innovations: Multiplicities in Tomsk, where Alex was a member of the organizing committee. What would a mundane and unavoidable act of walking as a group between different conference locations suggest for our analytical attention to the relationships of care embedded in (or not) and emerging from collaborations? And how does this relate to caring for energy and resources?

## Composition

Let us invite you to a Siberian city of Tomsk in Russia. It is late May 2019, 15 degrees Centigrade and sunny. A group of people is walking from the Tomsk State University (the conference venue) to the Stroganina Restaurant featuring traditional Siberian gastronomic wonders after the first day of the international conference 'Social Sciences and Health Innovations: Multiplicities'. The walkers are key-note speakers, some organizers (including

Alex) and advisory board members, and students volunteering as guides, mediators, and interpreters. They are walking as a guided group. The guide's movements offer a frame for the bodies' attention, showing the path and local wonders; yet walkers' bodies keep twisting occasionally sideways and backwards, and towards fellow co-walkers, like ripples from curious gazes. First time tourist gazes, time-to-time visitor gazes, local hospitality driven gazes. English-speaking polyphony makes this group an object of locals' curious gazes. Sounds, features, clothing, manner of walking compose these walking bodies in mutual twists and turns with passing by Russian-speaking representatives of about 500 000 Tomsk inhabitants. Each step composes with Tomsk landscape, history, culture, and everyday rhythms. The walkers' feet form connections with the ground, a relationship more or less certain or pleasant, depending on the quality of ground at each step, different health states and habitual time zones, and the amount of our familiarity with Tomsk weather. The ground has been here before the walk, and it will stay after the walk, imprinted by the size of the walking feet, individual and collective weight, the relief of the soils or shoe brands, the resonance of breaths and voices. Here a bit to the side, the pavement will be better in a moment. Turn left, that street is less noisy; actually, wait – there is more to see here. Did you sleep well? Here is a sculpture of a policeman, a protagonist of a diligent character from a well-known children's tale. Careful, watch your step. Are you still okay to walk? Not tired? (Fieldnotes)

This walk in Tomsk in late May 2019 is a very specific collaborative movement in our ethnographic fieldwork – it changes time and space for the social movement of chronic patients in Russia, particularly those with MS. It recomposes the *we* and crafts relations with Tomsk among 'key' conference participants invited to a hospitality dinner, along with research curiosities this conference is infused with. Appreciating this walk as an important part of ethnographic knowledge making, reminding of what a dancer and philosopher Erin Manning (2009) articulates for thinking of movement always in relation to something and someone:

Walking is all about taking the next step. Walking is never one-off: the momentum of the last step feeds the advance into the next one. To take the

next step is to step with the feeling of walking. To step with the feeling of how we are already moving is to move-with the immanent activation of the senses spacing. This means that we walk with, as well as within, the environment perceived relationally (Manning, 2009: 49).

Those who are walking as a group in Tomsk are not rushing directly to the restaurant at that moment. Eating is not the destination or objective. Rather, we who are walking that night as a group are walking through and with Tomsk, putting together quiet and equipped rooms of the Tomsk State University, different physical, cultural, and epistemic departure places, and local concepts of good dining. This walk does not only *take place* in Tomsk; it places those who walk together *in relationship* with Tomsk, and it places the multiplicity of Tomsk at the moment of this walk within and in between the bodies, our memories, beliefs, and social worlds. This walk is a together-placement, a *composition* – from *com* - “with, together” and *pose* - “to place,” “to cease, lay down” (from Latin *pausare*).

According to the Cambridge dictionary, (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020), composition is something that someone has created or written (text, artwork, music piece); the process of creating or writing something; an arrangement, a choreography or scenography. In performative practices, such as Real Time Composition, composition points also to the aligning of space, temporality, action, and relationship between the audience and performers. Walking in Tomsk at that moment becomes in a sense a composition, as it is literally guided by the conference organizers’ (including Alex) experiences and knowledge of place. At the same time, it is a process of establishing relationships and a part of a conference organization. Approaching composition as a process, a product, and a practice of pausing, slowing down to put things together “while retaining their heterogeneity” (Latour, 2010: 474) requires work – ‘composition work’. It is this work that we need to re-fragment again methodographically to emphasise how it matters for ethnographic collaborations which keep asking the question of how to care as well as possible.

The walk in Tomsk composes a specific *we* and crafts the space for this specific *us* together

with Tomsk – researchers, students, and health professionals who take a pause from daily routines to share reflections on the multiplicities of health and illness. Each here is accompanied by different interests, commitments, institutional requirements, or behind-the-scenes collaborators. One of *us* in Tomsk is a president of Russian Multiple Sclerosis Society Yan Vlasov, Professor of Neurology and Neurosurgery at the Samara State Medical University, a carer for a person with MS, a charismatic leader, and one of the most influential figures in the Russian patient movement. Yan is invited as a keynote speaker in a plenary with Vololona Rabeharisoa, a professor of sociology specializing in patient organizations at the Center for the Sociology of Innovation, Mines-ParisTech, Paris. This is the first time that a non-academic knower is opening “Social Sciences and Health Innovations’ conference, and it manifests this year’s topic “Multiplicity” – of knowledges, evidence, health states, and innovation ontologies. Putting Yan and Vololona in one plenary is the conference organising team’s position to nourish local relationships between the social sciences, medicine, and ‘social changers’, and to craft – at the same time - the position of Tomsk as a place where such relationships are possible.

This small “student city” of Tomsk – as Russians call it, due to its many universities crammed on a small territory and its historic fame for hosting repressed intellectuals – hosts the ‘Social Sciences and Health Innovations’ conference for the fourth time. This is a result of a collaborative endeavour between the PAST center (studying intersections of science, technology, and society) at the Tomsk State University, the Siberian State Medical University, and Maastricht University in the Netherlands. The only regular collaboration place for a small community of Russian scholars working on the intersection of medical anthropology and STS. For Yan, meanwhile, moving to Tomsk in late May 2019, instead of attending his regular lobby meeting to improve the quality of life of Russian MS patients, or instead of seeing the patients of his own, is a compromise. It is not a taken-for-granted ‘yes’ to establish collaborative ties and not a ‘status quo’ move. Yan puts together his curiosities and his previous commitment to share best-practices of patients with the public counsellors,

to the Tomsk regional office of the Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing. Yan is moved not only by an abstract curiosity for collaborations between the patient community and social scientists (although he mentions at the dinner table that this curiosity indeed exists). He is also moved by Alex's previous engagements in the work of the RuMSS which fed this curiosity (volunteering as an interpreter, sharing her preliminary observations at the collective events). And – not least – Yan is moved by the paid travel and accommodation which would allow him to fulfil previous commitments made towards activists in Tomsk, working 2234 kilometres from Yan's usual place of work.

Arriving to Tomsk from all over the world to attend the 'Social Sciences and Health Innovations: Multiplicities' conference in different roles (as organizers and advisers, as volunteering students or renowned keynote speakers) does not impose our ethnographic and others' work on Tomsk life and it doesn't impose Tomsk on our (not only research) quests. From what we learn with Yan, it is a composition. By drawing methodographically on this walk in Tomsk, we craft space and time for a slow, non-abstract, sensory, and embodied composition with and within Tomsk and each other in ethnographic happenings. Here we move "not to populate space, not to extend it or to embody it, but to create it" (Manning, 2009: 12); a composition sensitive to what is in place to place *with*.

This walk in Tomsk, as we account for it, is also nurtured by months and even years of invisible organizing work and by a long-term relationship between the Tomsk State University and Maastricht University in the Netherlands. It took many walks to compose the relationships we step into in May 2019 (meetings, funding applications, Russian-Dutch sociological fieldwork on Tomsk ground). And it will take many more to maintain them and do so with care for Tomsk and those who are invited, and – more importantly – who are not invited to Tomsk. In that sense, we consider the composition of the walk in Tomsk as a 'matter of care' (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011) – i.e., a slow crafting of a common world with care for what is there and not there to place with.

The way we move methodographically through the account of this specific walk gives enough time to perceive who and what do not have enough resources to walk, and to imagine how to re-compose next time to be more careful to the neglected and marginal experiences. As Alex was sensing the flexing and stretching of muscles while stepping up and down the stairs on the way to Stroganina, she arrived to know through experience that no MS patient, no one suffering from this chronic illness were – and could be – there to place with in this particular moment. This absence was not only a matter of finances. It is also not a sudden revelation but rather a "going along with things to see where they lead" (Jerak-Zuident, 2020: 194 drawing on Garfinkel, 1967) and, perhaps, what Tim Ingold (2010) calls 'becoming knowledgeable,' "an improvisatory movement – of 'going along' or wayfaring – that is open-ended and knows no final destination. (...) [A] sense of knowledge-making, which is equally knowledge-growing" (Ingold, 2010: 122).

Our account of the composition work allows us to attend to marginalisation and care in a specific way: The experience of Multiple Sclerosis could not be composed through this walk; due to the fatigue, which puts a body with MS on pause; due to the discriminations which push MS patients into concealing their illness; or due to the financial lack many chronic patients in Russia live with. However, this very limitation of our account, of not including those who live with MS in Russia directly in this walk, we suggest, is not a forever-so constraint. It becomes through the re-fragmentation, a sensory commitment to slowly re-compose, and an embodied provocation of the "political and ethical imagination in the present" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017: 7). This absence, this limitation fosters through the methodographic re-fragmentation relationships of care and reparation of 'energy overconsumption' in ethnographic composition.

Empiricizing and problematizing the embodiment work it takes to attend to the invisible kinaesthetic and affective work becomes thereby a way of acknowledging responsibility in a shared world where "phenomena remain unseen, intangible, or otherwise imperceptible, not because of the biological limits of our perceptions, but as a



result of ongoing and active forms of disavowal, denial, and forgetting” (Myers, 2020: 99). What is usually taken for granted in collaborations - bodily movement, emotional labor, relationship maintenance, technical support - are ‘matters of care’, material, affective, embodied work and “productive doings that support liveable relationalities” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011: 93). Insisting on asking what and how we put into ethnographic collaborations, we believe, fosters compositions which “re-affect an objectified world” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011: 99). And it also sensitizes us to the rendering of the figure of the knower through the work of “(not) moving and being moved by the other” (Jerak-Zuiderent, 2020: 190) in ethnographic collaborations in the broadest sense; to the composition of *we*.

Let us slow down even more in the following vignette. Keeping close what we have learned about the relations of care, this time our analytical attention will travel into the transformative and ‘monstrous’ (Star, 1991) effects and affects of being “in the action, (...) finite and dirty, not transcendent and clean” (Haraway, 2004: 236). Still with care for the energy and resources it takes.

### Moving with and being moved by

It is September 2017. Igor Tsikorin [at the time, the president of the Russian Multiple Sclerosis Society] and Alex are on the back seat of a grey Renault Megane, a taxicab arranged by a polite woman attentive to details. Her email signature revealed her as “Olga” – a travel manager for the Moscow office of an international pharmaceutical company. Igor and Alex are moving towards the Gatwick International Airport after spending four days at the Multiple Sclerosis International Federation (MSIF) annual congress in London. Olga was helpful not only with arranging this taxi ride, but also with supporting all the movements Igor and Alex were to exercise. She has dealt with Igor’s and Alex’s visa applications, booked their flights and Alex’s hotel reservation. Igor’s hotel was arranged by MSIF within the framework of aid to the representatives from the developing countries; this aid also included waiving our registration fees. Olga’s work is subtly woven into the composition of movings and knowings in London in September 2017 and, at the same time, it is to be discovered only in the

invisible space in between email boxes, phone calls, and daily schedules. (Fieldnotes)

Olga’s work is placed in between – between bodies, societal institutions, private and public spaces, and it moves with Alex and Igor in London. This placement in between and on-the-move (coming to life only through doings, makings, movings, and storymakings) also hosts the work of other team members of the RuMSS. Such as the work of Yan Vlasov who strategized this trip and convinced Olga’s employers to support international MS knowledge exchange for Russian patients. Or that of Olga Matviyevskaya, the Moscow MSS president who asked Alex to serve as an interpreter for Igor’s trip to London, since professional translation services were too expensive. Or also the work of Pavel Zlobin – the head of the RuMSS international department who due to his MS progression could not participate, and instead of that briefed Igor and Alex on the state of affairs and the RuMSS’ strategic vision.

As we craft back and forth our ethnographic collaborations with attention to how they transform *us*, we take seriously the kind of work that *moves with us* in a grey Renault Megane, whether it is visible or not. This points also to the work which *we are being moved by*, both in a sense of who makes practical arrangements (and on the bases of what and whose resources) and in a sense of being affected by the ‘invisible work’ (Star and Strauss, 1999) (consider Pavel’s not presence in London due to exacerbation). What interlaces with the work of composing, and composing with MS, in our ethnographic collaboration in a grey Renault Megane is that we are *moving with* and we are *being moved by* an emergence of an ethnographic *we*. This emergence is transformative, motile, in the sense that moving/being moved transforms all those involved in the composition through and with an ‘other’ (Jerak-Zuiderent, 2020). The *we* we refer to here is “at once heterogeneous, split apart, multiple - and through living in multiple worlds *without* delegation, we have experience of a self unified only through action, work and the patchwork of collective biography” (Star, 1991: 29). What we propose, drawing on Star (1991), is that bodies are imperative and unavoidable in crafting collaborations (consider how Pavel

could not go to London or how Alex was accompanying Igor as an interpreter).

Movement – in the broadest sense – instantiates and is experienced through bodies, and always in relation to something or someone (Manning, 2009). What we learn from the invisible work riding in between Igor and Alex in London, drawing on Manning (2009), is that *we*

(...) always happen[s] in the middle. Not first a thought, then an action, then a result, but a middling, “we” the result of a pull that captures, for an instant, how the thought was already action-like, how the body was always also a world. Not first a body then a world, but a worlding through which bodyings emerge (Manning, 2019: 1).

Thinking methodographically of how we compose while moving with and being moved by Olga’s, Pavel’s, Yan’s, Olga Matviyavskaya’s work sensitizes us to the way most of patients’ work is done within the RuMSS - in the middle, with bodies which are fragmented and improvised, entailing a motile craft of moving with and being moved by each other. Charismatic leaders (mostly male and sometimes not having MS), such as Yan or Igor, represent the RuMSS’ victories and demands in a visible way, by lobbying at official institutions, forging connections with governmental officials or pharmaceutical companies, leading regular sociological surveys on the quality of life with MS. Their movements are traceable through media articles, through references in the conference programs and invitations to the official events. Meanwhile, such representations are maintained by an extensive net of local groups and relationships within RuMSS.

The RuMSS is an umbrella organization uniting the work of 47 regional MS organizations (in their majority without physical offices), mostly through online spaces, national surveys, and regular practice-sharing events. Each regional organization is a world of its own where people suffering from MS share and invent artefacts (books or recorded DVDs of ‘good’ rehabilitative exercises), body maintenance practices, emotional support, collective festivities, petitions to fix inaccessible sidewalks or old hospital facilities, and more. On the regional level, a lot of work stays ‘invisible work’ (Star and Strauss, 1999), appearing and

disappearing as it moves through times and places. This work is not documented in the ‘best practices’ or organizational guides of the RuMSS. Some of this is because it is not considered to be worthy of documentation time and effort – local networking, emotional support, work specific to the region (snow cleaning services). And some is not documented because invisible work must stay invisible, such as semi-legal exchange of medications among patients, which repairs bureaucratic delays in the official care provision (Endaltseva, 2020).

Let us move back into a grey Renault Megane and explore through Alex’s memos what else transforms us and makes us “finite and dirty” (Haraway, 2004: 236) in ethnographic collaboration.

It is September 2017. Our movement in a grey Renault Megane is composed with my old-fashioned voice recorder laying between us; the Russian language that we speak, excluding our driver from our meaning making. The road; the petrol; the RUB to GBP ratio which was discomfoting for many Russians that year. My voice recorder’s intake of Igor’s hesitant explanations of the RuMSS budgets, friendships with pharmaceuticals, and current difficulties. Igor and I do not know each other that well yet – in fact, this trip is our first face-to-face encounter; our journey into knowing each other through MS. On the fifth day of this journey Igor starts sharing less official accounts of the Russian patient movement.

(...) I am quickly travelling with my eyes from Igor’s face to my notebook, where his reflections on the 4 days in London take shape in the form of sentences. The sentences under a star sign indicate what is sensed like a movement of previously still, unclear points. Meanwhile, the sentences under an exclamation mark are memos with emerging memories/reactions/sensations in this particular moment. This kind of taking notes allows me to catch the turning points in the RuMSS story making and, at the same time, to attend to how I am being moved by it or how, as it seems to me, Igor is being moved. At the same time, this kind of notes compose my body into a posture oscillating between notes and Igor, head down and head up, hands working and hands waiting.

(...) Igor notices this back-and-forth movement and confesses that it's not easy to have a comfortable and open conversation in such a setup. London, silent driver, fast running hands after each explanation. I apologize and laugh that we are negotiating our comfort zones. I point to the driver and comment that he must also be uncomfortable with so much Russian and a voice recorder in his car.

(...) Igor tells me about the importance of a friendly drink with this or that governmental official at least once in a fortnight. I take a note with a star sign. I raise my eyes from time to time to nod and make visible that I am attentive, and I am with him. The cab driver is driving, he doesn't speak Russian and cannot relate to our conversation. At one moment Igor pauses and smiles, "I see you are always taking notes". I smile back – "well, it's a part of all that ethnography trouble I got myself into". "I know only two professions that are so good in keeping track: CEO's secretary and secret services...and you definitely don't look like a secretary. Are you not telling me something about your research?" I smile once more and draw an exclamation mark with a memo "third time I am being asked something similar. September 2017. Economic sanctions and purging of foreign capital in Russia". (Fieldnotes)

Moving with and being moved by, as we infer from what note-taking instigated in a grey Renault Megane, is a kinaesthetic, affective, and compositional collaboration embodied 'with sense'. Natasha Myers (2005;2012) argues that such back-and-forth becoming together move us away from 'modest knowing' (Haraway, 1997) into the ethico-political embodiment. Moving with and being moved by in ethnographic collaborations, when taking notes in a grey Renault Megane or growing suspicion to note-taking practice, crafts space for ethnographic collaboration 'from a body' (Haraway, 1988). It sensitizes us to composition; to re-fragmenting space, temporalities, actions, relationships, and body postures between researcher and researched.

As we learn with Sánchez Criado and Estalella's (2018), moments of 'friction', such as the one we encountered in a grey Renault Megane, are needed to slow down, and notice what is at place to place with. How to place complex note taking as a car moves through London with a voice recorder

in between the movers? How to place non-ordered ethnographic work, not meant for surveillance but done with care for solidarity, in a social movement of chronic patients in Russia? Drawing on Manning (2009) while going back methodographically to the space of Renault Megane we propose that "we move not to populate space, not to extend it or to embody it, but to create it" (Manning, 2009: 12).

Myers (2020: 99) specifies that affective co-mattering of bodies "are not just happy associations or consensual relations", like care enactments in ethnography (and beyond) may suppose misalignment and frictions (Atkinson-Graham, 2015). Moved by Igor's comment, Alex puts together that starting with 2015, Russian geopolitics has been marked with a strategy of separating from economic relationships with the western countries. She puts together with this grey Renault Megane readings about repressive measures towards those who collaborated with foreign NGOs and cultural organizations, nationalist ideological slogans in Russian mass media, and sanctions regime established after the Ukrainian conflict in 2015. Moving with Igor, notes, sanctions, Renault Megane, and also being moved by them, provokes a 'sensory event' (Manning, 2009). As we become transformed through back-and-forth movement with frictions we engage in ethnographic collaborations 'from a body'.

Let us slow down even more, going back to Alex's notes and observations. As we pause to take tea after a yoga class with MS patients, we attend to the kind and amount of energy and resources which move collaborations: how else is it possible to move with and be moved by?

## Pausing

We sit around a tea table after a rehabilitative yoga class. It is June 2018. Eight people sipping on herbal tea and sharing sensations, stories, and reflections which come to mind after hanging upside down, finding stability in bendings and planks, and anticipating this final savasana meltdown. Natalia [a person with MS and a former vice-president of the Moscow chapter of the RuMSS] teaches the art of movement. My phone's voice recorder, placed on a table next to a big teapot, around which the eight of us are trying

to keep our backs straight on tiny tabourets. Face down, my phone holds space for Natalia's teaching while I chat with a married artist couple, both with MS, about their innovative material for long-lasting candles, recently presented at some regional Art Salon. Turned screen down, to pose as little signalling as possible, my phone welcomes Natalia's story as I allow my body to be in its presence. I slightly hear the story of Natalia on the background of my learning about candle alloys, knowing that I will go back to this place when listening to the recording back at my writing desk.

(...) In a conversation with a woman with MS, not a Moscow MS Society member, Natalia explains: When I first started to take classes in 2016, they [instructors] made these complex structures with chairs, ropes, supports just to put me in one position. After the first class, I came home and cried. How could I arrive to neglect my body so much? How could I become so reckless with my own wellbeing?

A woman with MS: Hard to believe now – what was the reason for you arriving in this state?

Natalia: My activism, or rather that style of activism which I followed in the Moscow MS Society. I was doing so much public work and never linking it with the imperative work of maintaining my wellbeing: caring for my body, spending time with my grandson.<sup>6</sup> (Fieldnotes)

In June 2018 we encounter a different composition and a different mode of collaboration than that of September 2017. Instead of moving back and forth from note taking to listening, Alex suspends the movement. Putting her voice recorder in the middle of a tea table, as eight people with MS pause after the yoga class, Alex ceases, lays down engaging fellow movers in collaboration. The voice recorder and body fatigue after the class forefront slowing down, attuning to senses and affects, composing with what is at place in a Yoga Studio, and not imposing ethnographic collaborations. What is also known 'from a body' in a Moscow Yoga studio is that collaborative action with care for heterogeneity demands moments of pausing and questioning where 'do we get the energy to act' (Latour, 2010) from. Suspending movement around the tiny tea table makes us sense – like when walking in Tomsk or sitting in

a pre-ordered Renault Megane – that movement requires energy and resources. This is relevant both to the social movement of chronic patients and to the ethnographic movement within it. Through composing slowly and moving with and being moved by each other we 'become knowledgeable' (Ingold, 2010) that movement is not an innocent endeavour. Moving, whether it is a bodily displacement or (not) pulling out a notebook, requires energy and is full of supporting 'invisible work' (Star and Strauss, 1999) of maintaining the movement.

For many people with MS movement – the 'mundane' act of moving we do each moment of our lives – comes with (a lot) of invisible work and resources. This is not different from Olga's behind-the-scenes work of arranging our London trip or the burning of fuel in a grey Renault Megane. As we come to sense how energy-consuming our practices of movement are, we wonder what the work of pausing, suspending a movement in attention to 'what's in place' would suggest for knowing with care and with 'less of us' (Puig de la Bellacasa and Papadopoulos, 2018). 'Good composition' (Latour, 2010) for ethnographic collaborations 'from a body'; we suggest therefore, requires an embodied sense for *pausing*.

Pausing doesn't mean absence of movement; it implies sense-full suspension of acting – not taking notes or not acting as a vice president. It is a particular mode of movement, which does not impose, provoke, or analyse the situation; but rather refines the resources and energy which nourish the movement. Natalia's pausing recomposed her relation to the RuMSS and activism 'from a body'. By suspending her 'activism' Natalia arrived to caring for '*the imperative work of maintaining wellbeing*' while still caring for the social movement of chronic patients, but differently. Natalia is no longer a vice-president, yet she organizes rehabilitative yoga classes, gives supportive phone calls to the society's members, participates in conferences and events. She does all this, when there is enough energy and resources; and she encourages her patient-collaborators in a yoga group to do the same. In the case of Alex, suspending active movement of note-taking did not remove ethnographic movement from the movement of chronic patients; rather,

it rearranged what kind of movements Alex puts energy into.

Through a methodographic journey into our ethnographic movements within the social movement of chronic patients we propose, therefore, that pausing requires work of crafting space for ethnographic collaborations. These collaborations may (or may not) happen when there is 'good composition' (Latour, 2010) and enough energy for it. This is both the case in a sense, with Natalia's pausing with the movement of chronic patients in Russian, and with suspension of a habitual research practice. To appreciate the challenging work required to pause, we find it helpful to think with Manning's (2009) specifications in the "Mover's Guide to Standing Still":

"It is more difficult to stand than to move" (Feldenkrais, 1981:44). Standing still is a metastable activity: the stillness demands precise adaptation to the micromovements of a shifting equilibrium. To stand still you have to move.

Everyone sways. You may think you're standing still, but actually you're drifting, shifting slightly to the left, your ankle twitching as your weight moves to the ball of your foot, your knee bending slightly as you take in a breath (...). Standing still requires constant correction. (...)

Stillness is always on its way to movement. When you stand still, you don't feel the "how" of movement stilling unless you're asked to feel the stillness. Then you find you can't stop thinking about how you're moving. (Manning, 2009: 43).

When we cannot stop thinking of how we move in ethnographic collaborations; when we compose, when we move with and are being moved by, and when we slow down and pause (for example, to take a cup of tea in a yoga studio while learning about candle alloys) – we move closer to knowing with care. Pausing and working towards stillness, we sense, allows enough energy to question "the effects of our accounts in the composition of things" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011: 88).

### For care in epistemic collaborations

In this article we explored methodographically how embodiment work in 'epistemic collabora-

tions' (Sánchez Criado and Estalella, 2018) could instantiate a 'method' of knowing with care and a source of 'energy' to slowly compose a common world with appreciation for (ontological) differences of the social movement of people living with MS in Russia. We lean analytically on an emergent approach of 'methodography' (Lippert and Douglas-Jones, 2019; Lippert and Mewes, 2021 (this SI)), a generative moving back and forth between research practices and accounts, proposing that such analytical nexus disciplines to question the presence of care work in scholarly doings and non-doings. The research and analyses above, therefore, do not lead to more or less of patient participation; they do not hope for more or better evidence-based guidelines or policies on MS. What we are hopeful about – also in terms of methodographic scholarship – is the importance of embodiment work in different epistemic collaborations for nourishing postcolonial sensitivity to the emergent constitution of 'worlds'. Such methodographic attention to the embodiment work is hope-full in questioning taken-for-granted realities. There is a speculative-ethical move we engage with when moving methodographically within a social movement of chronic patients with MS in Russia. It seems 'fleetingly subtle' (Verran, 1999) but ontologically generative and makes all the difference for embodiment work in ethnographic collaborations. This move

"starts from the obligations that we have to a certain field. We do stuff, because we are obliged by the situation, the occasions in which we are engaged. (...) ['Do it with less of yourself'] becomes then thinking carefully about interdependencies, relations, positions within a certain field, a certain ecology and what you produce, what you leave behind and how not to be harmful through what you leave behind. In many cases also how you can be beneficial, but in most cases how you can live a life or practice a life in which you will allow others to share the stuff that you do by retracting yourself. (Puig de la Bellacasa and Papadopoulos, 2018: n.p.).

Ethnographic collaborations are not necessarily symmetrically reciprocated or smooth; however, paying attention to embodiment work in such collaborations helps to 'start from the obligations one has to a certain field' - in our case, the social

movement of people living with MS in Russia. The embodiment work when 'doing with less of ourselves' in ethnographic collaborations also helps to attend to the energy and resources such collaborations ask for and which are otherwise silenced or neglected. This can happen by making evident 'what is in place to place with' in a certain field, like noticing that there is no place for MS patients in the walk in Tomsk. It may also happen through taking seriously what kind of resources it takes to collaborate. From whom/what and at what cost to place in place people and things while not resolving 'away' such differences through our scholarly accounts (consider Olga's, Pavel's, Yan's silent presence in a grey Renault Megane)? By attending to how 'we know' through ethnographic collaborations, this article contributes thereby to a broader question of how to care for differences as we shape an ethnographic *we*. Let us slow down and pause once more:

We expanded the notion of 'epistemic collaborations' with a sensitivity to what is invisible, petty, and out of place when people and things are put together in ethnographic accounts. We have done so through three analytical anchors: a. relationships of care embedded in (or not) and emerging from collaborations; b. the kind and amount of energy and resources which move collaborations; and c. transformative and 'monstrous' (Star, 1991) effects and affects of being "in the action, (...) finite and dirty, not transcendent and clean" (Haraway, 2004: 236). Each one was grounded in three instances from our ethnographic fieldwork.

The sensitivity to the invisible and neglected comes with responsibilities for and responsiveness to the forces which keep a common world alive, with the work of maintaining solidarity and ethico-affective relations. It comes with 'becoming knowledgeable' (Ingold, 2010), in a sensory and embodied way, of 'what are we encouraging caring for' (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011: 92) as we commit to collaboration. Our attention to the embodied and often invisible instances of collaborations – the work of composition, of moving with and being moved by, and of pausing and slowing down – is thus an invitation to not take

for granted what we put and what we do not put into a figure of the knower when crafting ethnographic accounts.

As an ongoing strategic quest for responsible research and innovation (Burget et al., 2016; Von Schomberg, 2013) grows exponentially the desires for collaborations in funded research proposals, we argue for the importance of not taking for granted the energy and resources required for epistemic collaborations. Appreciating embodied work in this sense generates hopes which are not to 'produce [just] more research'. Rather, this is a hope to nurture care for the interdependencies within a certain field through collaborations without imposing or neglecting what is brought into and what is left behind *after* retracting from this field.

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## Notes

- 1 Our usage of ‘we’ in this article goes back and forth from the literate ‘we’ – Alex and Sonja – to a conceptual *we* – relations of mutual belonging, emergence of solidarity position and genuine interest in each other and each other’s work, which nurture collaborations. Whenever we refer to a conceptual *we* (in italics) we do so with interrogation, curiosity and puzzling, not as a statement of assertion.
- 2 This fieldwork was a part of Alex’s PhD project (EHESS, France-Linköping University, Sweden). Sonja has served as a supervisor for Alex’s dissertation together with Isabelle Ville.
- 3 MS is “a chronic and progressive immune-mediated disorder of the central nervous system (CNS), characterized by inflammation, demyelination, and neuronal degeneration” (Feys et al., 2016: 34) with physical, cognitive, and psychological symptoms, as well as visible effects on the social lives, such as decrease in employability or disempowerment?
- 4 Quote from the fieldwork.
- 5 We invite the reader to take ‘energy’ as more than a metaphor or a figure of speech, but rather as a resource which is ruled by laws of interdependency/relatedness reminding us of what we learned in physics classes. The same goes for the relationship between friction and slowing down.
- 6 Fieldnotes, June 2018.