

Dance, leadership and space

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Dance, leadership and space

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Introduction

In this paper, we aim to ‘unpick’ the spatial elements of leadership and followership in competitive ballroom dancing and to explore how they relate to organisational life. To explain and underpin this relational field, we use examples from our own learning journeys, both as amateur dancers and in our professional roles. Our research angle is best summed up by Stelter (2008):

“[...] body-anchored experiencing and learning can be defined as an experiential person-environment interplay towards change, which has its point of departure in the sensuous basis of bodily perceptions.” (Stelter 2008, p47)

Life in organisations has sensory components. Even in knowledge-intensive organisations, people are not just brains on legs. Our bodily presence and experience are relevant to our identity and how we ‘live’ in organizations:

The body is the immediate precinct in which [...] perceptions unfold, so our current experiences of our bodies influence in decisive ways many of the qualities of the world that is finally deposited into conscious awareness. (Juhan 1987, p.390)

That is why we use Ballroom dancing as an exercise in leadership and followership. Dance, as we do it (known as *competitive ballroom dancing* or *dancesport*¹), is a highly physical experience which contains aspects of leadership and followership that are also relevant for leadership and followership roles in organisational life.

We see Ballroom dancing (like other forms of partner dancing) as nonverbal communication. There are significant parallels between speaking a language and dancing – ranging from

¹ The different terms have come to be associated with different (rival) strands within the world of competitive ballroom dancing, but we use these terms interchangeably here.

‘words’/‘moves’ to ‘phrases’/‘figures’, ‘taking turns’ in a ‘conversation’ to ‘tone of voice’. Although the physical parallel to the latter is difficult to describe in words, it is easy to demonstrate in body - but we cannot insert movements into a paper! Clearly there are ‘translation’ issues between body language (where much information ‘happens’ concurrently) and written language (which is sequential), and on both sides there is plenty of scope for misunderstandings!

Our knowledge results from our own experience as dancers as well as from a number of experiential workshops that we have run using dance. As dancers, we have been on a ‘learning journey’ together for nearly two decades, starting as adult beginners and currently competing at championship level, both nationally and internationally. Being adult learners and coming from an engineering (Ramen) and a humanities (Fides) background, our learning has always involved a good deal of analysis and reflection as well as physical practice; and our different backgrounds have proved complementary, but have also clashed at times!

Since we are both the subjects (as researchers) and the objects (as dancers) of our study, we take a phenomenological and intersubjective view of the leader-follower relationship, aiming to integrate bodily knowledge and experience with reflection and sensemaking (Taylor & Hansen 2005; Hansen et al 2007; Ropo & Sauer 2008; Pink 2009; Shotter 2010 and 2012, Küpers 2013; Edwards et al. 2015). We assume that cognition is embodied, in that cognitive activities (such as thinking, perceiving, interpreting, assuming, judging etc) are inextricably linked to physical existence (Wilson 2002, Stelter 2008, Wilson & Foglia 2011). Here we are taking the view (see Wilson 2002) that both on-line and off-line cognition in terms of leader-follower relations are body-based, often time-constrained, and situated.

When we began to share our experience with others, we found that the bodily, mental and emotional experience of leading and following and of moving in and through space in a leading or following role helps to make people more aware of their own behaviour in such roles. It stimulated reflection on their own behaviour, as well as understanding of how they might want to embody these roles in the future (e.g. whether to change/improve/clarify).

This follows Stelter’s (2008) and Sheets-Johnstone’s view of “the lived body as a basis for experience and perception” (Stelter 2008, p56; Sheets-Johnstone 1999) . It is also reflected in the comment of a workshop participant: “First doing then talking suits me very well. In a few minutes you can in your body experience the equivalent of a two-hour lecture.”

These are not training courses taking an uncritical view of leadership or claiming that participants will be ‘better’ leaders and/or followers following prescribed behaviours, but about giving participants opportunities through dance experiences as well as reflection to enhance awareness (both of self and other) and gain a better understanding of their own actions/behaviours/choices and the consequences and implications of those actions/behaviours/choices (Edwards et al. 2015; see also “context transfer”, Hanna 2015 p127f). Where people choose to engage, their deepened understanding is likely to lead to better leadership/followership *interactions* and *relationships*.

It is important to note that we are not equating what might be considered ‘leaders’ and ‘followers’ in organisational hierarchies with roles/tasks involving ‘leading’ and ‘following’ – those tasks can and will need to be fulfilled by organisational members regardless of their hierarchical standing or their level of formal authority. Senior managers might well need to be ‘followers’ in some situations, whilst more junior staff can well be leading in certain areas or task sets. However, we would hypothesise that the ability to be self-aware, versatile, convincing, and ultimately successful in leader/follower situations would have a positive impact on the way people fulfil their organisational roles.

Whilst we are not claiming that ‘dance spaces’ are directly transferable to organizational spaces, there are parallels in the experience of ‘lead’ and ‘follow’, as people move in and through these spaces, e.g. experiences of closeness and distance, of ‘expanding’ and ‘contracting’, of ‘defending’, ‘asserting’, ‘claiming’, ‘giving way’, ‘navigating’, to name but a few. Interactions such as competing, collaborating, negotiating, teamworking are integral to dancers’ performance on a competition floor as well as to organizational members performing their work tasks.

To our knowledge, these parallels have been largely unexplored, despite increased academic interest in the links between art and management and the way artistic means can provide insights into managerial and organizational life and/or enhance leadership learning (cf. Edwards et al. 2015). Some scholars have used dance as a comparison for leadership styles (e.g. Ropo & Sauer 2008). But only few have applied the practicality and corporeality of dance as a learning tool (Peterson & Williams 2004, Hujala et al. 2014; also management consultants such as Leary-Joyce & Bezy 2012, Ludevig 2014).

In this paper we reflect on how dancers experience aspects of space linked to the way they perform their tasks, and how that can help managers understand aspects of their own roles in organizations.

Dance, leadership and followership

Over the past few decades, the notoriously ‘traditionally gendered’ (or in plain English: sexist) world of ballroom dancing has evolved, and so has its understanding of leadership and followership. Until some years ago, a dance teacher’s answer to a female follower’s request for explanation of complex choreography co-ordination of particular moves might have been, somewhat dismissively, “Just follow and look pretty” – this was actually the authors’ experience with one of the senior figures on the dance coaching scene; but he was one of the last of this generation, and his attitude has now become rare (cf. Winkelhuis 2001, Tremayne & Ballinger 2008, Picart 2006).

Whilst there are, undeniably, controversial gender issues, modern competitive ballroom dancing has moved on and away from stereotypes such as ‘the lady’s role is just to look decorative’ to a concept that takes a partnership approach and sees the contribution of the two roles to the success of a performance as near equal – modern coaches emphasise that the contributions to the whole performance are 51% (leader), and 49% (follower)². This is underpinned by the fact that in same-sex dancing (a growing movement within dancesport) the rules have shifted, allowing, even in competitions, at least temporary changing of roles during a dance.

This change is not least driven by the development of competitive dancing (or ‘dancesport’) from elegant, relaxed movement to a more athletic, powerful and dynamic performance. Like other sports, dancesport is now subject to drug testing³, and there are efforts to include it in the range of olympic sports (Picart 2006, chap 4; WDSF 2012), whilst special fitness programmes aim to develop the physical capabilities that dance athletes require in order to be successful.

In ballroom dancing, the ability to lead does not just mean ‘shifting’ a follower across the dance floor. Contrary to traditional (and still popular) notions, the ‘boss’ in dancing is not the leader but the *rhythm of the music*, as illustrated in Figure 1 (Matzdorf 2005):

² Whilst we have no written reference on this point, we have heard this view from various dance coaches who were international/world champions themselves and/or teach high-level competitors at international level.

³ see <http://www.worlddancesport.org/Rule/Athlete/Anti-Doping> and http://www.wdcdance.com/index.php/news-media/news-archive?news_id=112

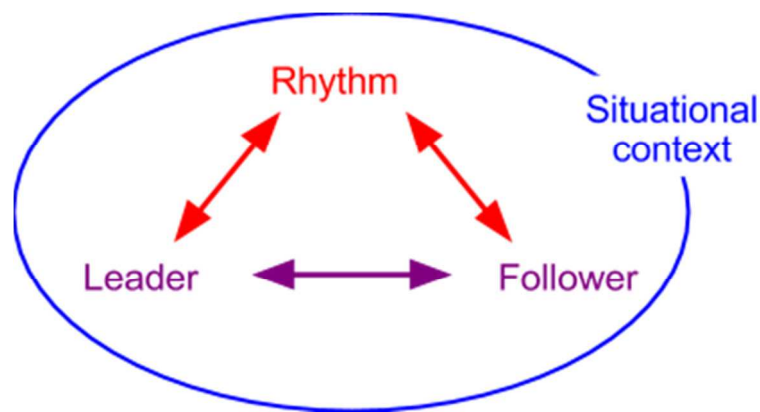


Figure 1: Who is 'in charge'?

So throughout a dance, whilst leader and follower are enacting their relationship, they are both bound by and led by the rhythm of the music that they are dancing to.

The leader initiates movements and invites the follower not just to follow, but actually to take control of the 'communal move', vacating the space that the leader needs to complete their own action. At the same time, each partner is responsible for her/his own balance, and the follower should never 'abdicate' responsibility for his or her own movements. In other words, on almost every move it is the follower's *decision* to follow, unless the leader uses physical force, which would not be conducive to achieving the 'common goal' of harmonious and smooth movement – see Ladkin's concept of mastery, congruence and purpose (Ladkin 2008).

Especially in the demanding field of contemporary dancesport and in the light of the constantly (i.e. from one step to the next) changing mode and intensity of action (i.e. changing 'weight' of initiation and reaction), it might be more accurate to describe the relationship as 'leader' and co-leader', since the term 'follower' often implies too passive a role. Competitive dancing does not require passive "yes-people" or "sheep" (Kelley 1988 & 2008), but "effective" (Kelley 1988) or "star followers" (Kelley 2008) or in Chaleff's (2009) terms "courageous followers". The concepts of "shared leadership" (Slater & Doig 1988), Murphy's (1988) notion of "invisible leadership", or Senge's (1990) concept of leadership as 'collective capacity to create value' are more helpful in this respect. Or, as Boydell et al (2003) sum it up: "This puts the responsibility for leadership on you as a person, but in company and relationship with other people" (p7). Good dance leaders do not confuse 'leading' with

‘controlling’ - the leader’s task should be to enable and support, not to force⁴. This requires the leader ‘listening’ to the follower’s movements and building the follower’s actions/reactions into the way they execute their strategic plan, i.e. the choreography.

‘Crisis management’, i.e. reacting to sudden, unpredictable changes in a couple’s environment (e.g. avoiding collisions with other couples) or in their own condition (e.g. regaining balance after a near miss), is as much a part of the complexity of this situation as is coordination of their different tasks. This sees Küpers’ (2013) description of improvisation as “enactment of inter-practice in leadership” (p342) and “embodied practicing of leadership” (p336) put into physical practice.

Dancing spaces

Personal space

The following diagrams (Figures 2 and 3) explain some of dancers’ ‘spatial experiences’ during a ballroom dancing competition or a competitors’ practice. (For an overview of how dancesport competitions ‘function’, see Tremayne & Ballinger 2008). (NB. Whilst we present these spatial elements diagrammatically as ‘space bubbles’ with clear demarcation lines for ease of understanding, their boundaries in ‘real life’ are far less sharp and more fuzzy.)

In ballroom dancing, a couple⁵ consists of a leader (L) and a follower (F), who share a ‘communal’ space (1), which is the space between the partners, forming the communication interface (remember that dance is essentially nonverbal communication). This is a relatively narrow space formed between the right sides of the dancers’ bodies (approximately from the bottom of the ribcage to the right hip joint). The leader has their ‘own space’ (2), as does the follower (3). These spaces are considered ‘sacrosanct’ and should not be ‘invaded’ by the other person - otherwise it would ‘distort’ the couple’s ‘shape’ (or ‘topline’) and – worse – impact negatively on their communal balance and their ability to move together. We will look at some of the implications of this constellation later in more detail.

The so-called ‘topline’ (defined through shoulder, head and arm positions) which gives a couple a ‘big’ shape and a look of strength, assertiveness and superiority in a highly

⁴ There are some interesting examples from TV shows such as Strictly Come Dancing that illustrate this point: they show leaders ‘dragging’ followers across the dance floor - not exactly an image of smoothness, harmony and ‘togetherness’; the resulting performances look more like fights than dances.

⁵ We are not making any gender assumptions here - for the purpose of this exercise, a dancing ‘couple’ can be two partners of the same or opposite sex. In our workshops, we also ask participants to swap roles, in order to help them understand the different and specific tasks and problems associated with each role.

competitive environment is created and upheld through 'teamwork' by both partners – one alone cannot achieve it. To maintain this shape throughout the performance requires strength, stamina, body awareness – and a certain amount of fearlessness.

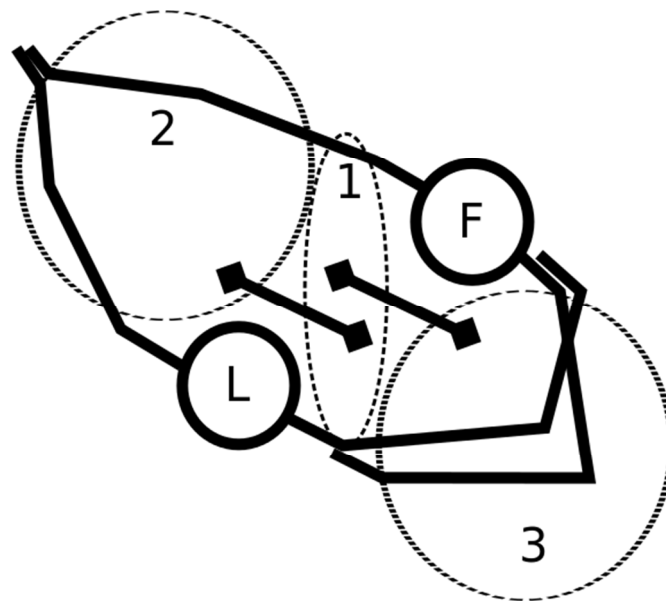


Figure 2. The couple's space

The closeness/intimacy of the dancers has its own issues. The physical closeness required to communicate the lead intrudes on the normal social boundaries of 'personal space/territory' (Hayduk 1981), and it is not an easy task for two people to move "as one body and, through kinaesthetic communication, maintain fluid movement in time with the music, regardless of changes in direction and planned pathways" (Tremayne & Ballinger 2008, p93).

Allowing this closeness to happen, and developing this 'shared balance' requires mutual trust between the partners (Tremayne & Ballinger 2008, p97) and the willingness and ability to find a shared rhythm, which in turn requires 'listening with the body', not just the ears.

Space to move

On the dancefloor, each couple has their own space 'bubble' (4) which they 'defend' against others, sometimes quite aggressively:

With other couples simultaneously competing for space and the judges' favor, space and territory become competitive issues. This distinguishes the competitive ballroom-dance environment from similar sports [...] The distractions that ensue on a crowded floor are unique to ballroom dance.
(Tremayne & Ballinger 2008, p92)

There is also the space a couple is moving into (5) and the space they leave behind (6).

The ‘bubble’ is created at the start of each dance, when dancers vie for starting positions on the floor. Creating and maintaining one’s space is an exercise in assertiveness, nonverbal communication, posture, stance and eye contact, “walking tall and confidently to take up the dance position with head held high” (Tremayne & Ballinger 2008, p105). “Don’t look apologetic – you have a right to be there!” is the advice often given to newcomers.

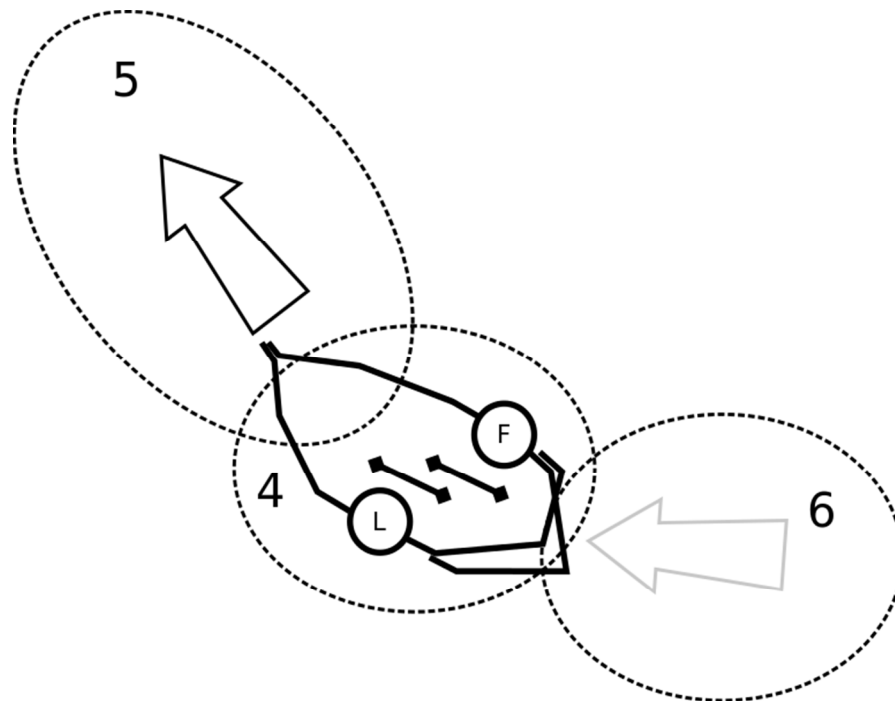


Figure 3. The movement space

As indicated above, competition for space to move into can be fierce. It must be kept in mind that dancesport is not for the faint-hearted – ‘dirty’ tricks (e.g. blocking another couple in a corner, preventing them from moving on, or threatening to ‘run into’ others) and foul play (e.g. elbowing others, or tripping them over) are fairly common, and, unlike in other sport disciplines such as football, there is no formal system of penalties for ‘unsportsmanlike’ behaviour (such as ‘yellow’ and ‘red’ cards). Whilst, in theory, competitors can be disqualified on the grounds of bad behaviour, this is extremely rare (in 15 years as active competitors we have never seen it happen, despite numerous instances of such behaviours). Given that competing couples move fast (even in so-called ‘slow’ dances such as slow waltz or foxtrot) and with much energy and momentum, often on a crowded floor (in the early rounds), accidents are sometimes inevitable, and there is a thin line between avoidable and unavoidable clashes. In this fast-paced environment (any comparison with the business world is not coincidental here!) it is considered a sign of accomplishment if competitors can ‘hold their own’ without having to resort to physical aggression or violence. Sometimes ‘co-

operating to compete' is a better option: We have often seen top-level champions let each other pass, in order to navigate a clear 'run' for themselves.

Whilst competitors usually have a choreographed 'routine' for each dance (part of their strategy for their performance), this choreography is not 'static' or 'cast in stone', as it were: the more advanced competitors are, the more they are able to, and need to, adapt their choreography to the unique circumstances of each actual competition situation: to the size and shape of the floor (large or small, rectangular or square, 'long and thin' or 'short and fat'), the number of competitors on the floor, obstacles (e.g. pillars, a jutting-out stage, the position of the adjudicators on or off the floor, sometimes even standing 'in the way').

So whilst each couple has a 'grand plan', this will need further adjustments in the actual process of dancing – sudden unannounced changes have to be made in reaction to changing circumstances (getting cornered, starting from a different position from the one originally envisaged etc.). It is the leader's job ('floorcraft') to make these changes and communicate them in a timely (split seconds can make a big difference) and clear nonverbal fashion (any kind of wavering, hesitation or uncertainty communicates itself to the follower who is then unsure what to do), so that the follower can pick up the signal, decide on an appropriate action and translate the decision into immediate action. All the time, it is highly relevant to keep up the look of relaxed 'deliberate-ness' and elegance and to look 'in control'.

Peripheral spaces

A dance competition can be seen as a 'transitional organization' (similar to a socio-analytic conference, albeit with a very different primary task!), offering plenty of complexity to the observer, with a high level of self-organization.

This level of complexity brings into existence a lot of 'liminal' spaces (Shortt 2014), which are highly relevant for the dancers. Liminal spaces in organizations, as described by Shortt (2014), are 'in-between' spaces not belonging to any dominant space, not being formally 'owned' – examples being corridors or toilets. In the world of dancesport, these spaces are highly relevant and constantly re-purposed. Changing rooms, corridors, corners of the ballroom, even chairs and seats within the audience seating become places for 'squatting', taking on new temporary functions.

This topic will be addressed in a separate paper.

Leadership and followership in space

As highlighted in the previous sections, dancing, especially in a competitive context, requires spatial awareness in various ways:

- managing 'one's own' space, i.e. leader's/follower's;
- negotiating and managing the 'communal' space, the 'space between', holding the 'communication interface';
- upholding and asserting the 'we' space – the 'team bubble' (4) in Figure 3;
- navigating the dancefloor, acknowledging and managing the presence of others and their movements ('moving obstacles') – this requires developing the skill of 'peripheral vision' (picking up visual clues out of the corner of one's eye) as well as assertiveness and physical presence;
- managing and 'asserting' (and where necessary, 'defending') the 'team bubble' against others on the floor – a situation of competition and collaboration at the same time;
- finding 'private space' for rest, preparation, changing clothes, partnering etc.

As mentioned earlier, we have shared our experiences as dancers in a number of workshops for managers and coaching professionals, using a range of dance-related exercises to experiment with body awareness, self-awareness, and leadership/followership roles and tasks, to raise awareness of the embodied aspects of leadership and followership. These workshops also included reflection sessions, and during the sessions as well as at the end, participants were invited to jot down their thoughts and comments about their experience. To this end, we gave out a set of guiding questions, e.g. "How did it feel to lead/follow?" "What did you feel from your leader/follower?" "How did you deal with 'mistakes'?" "How did you experience your 'job' / your responsibilities?" "What felt good, what felt uncomfortable?" "How did you work as a team?" "What issues did the whole experience raise for you?". We then asked participants to return the forms to us, or to let us take a copy. We have used this feedback to improve the sessions, but also as initial data for our research.

For most workshop participants, the physical experience of dancing with a 'nonlife partner' surfaces boundaries and assumptions in and about the systemic 'web' of leadership/followership interactions (see comments from participants: "Felt my follower

moving with me and was pleasantly surprised. Felt my leader leading & liked knowing it was someone who knew what she was doing”, but also: “Uncomfortable: change of role/relationship when dancing with a member of staff; partner’s discomfort”). Whilst in organizational life teamwork does not usually happen hip to hip, working ‘hand in hand’ and relying on team members or colleagues is quite common. In fact, where close working relationships happen, a certain amount of intimacy is often involved (‘sometimes we just look at each other and we know what the other one is thinking’), and in such cases body language and nonverbal signals can replace a lot of verbal explaining or negotiating, as co-workers develop a mutual understanding of each other’s task, working style and personal preferences. However, this is not an issue that most of us would give much thought to on day-to-day basis, hence the opportunity to focus on otherwise ‘neglected’ aspects of relationships can be a considerable challenge, as a comment from workshop participants suggests: “I have realised that I need verbal communication”.

A snippet from the second author’s ‘learning history’ further illustrates the parallels between organizational life and dance:

Now working in a much bigger team, working on a vital part of a national infrastructure, located in a large open-plan office, I find that it feels like a dance – constantly navigating a crowded and complex environment, leading, being led, teaching, being taught, sensing what others are doing, using my peripheral vision, moving around in a shared space – between desks, between groups, between tasks, between layers in the organisational hierarchy... working to stay grounded, keeping my balance, my weight over my feet, preventing myself from being pulled or pushed off balance.

By this, I mean that many of the tasks that I learned to do as a leader in competitive dance have parallels in the business world. For instance, in dance, I learned to keep my peripheral vision in play, and look for spaces to move into, what others were doing, what space they were going to move into, whether I would need to stop, and to be able to communicate that clearly to my partner. In my current job, I need to be aware of the work others are doing, and how it will impact my own work, or how I can help or mesh with the other areas of work, to prevent ‘collisions’ that take time and energy to resolve. In reviewing others’ work, having my own reviewed, in explaining parts of the system, understanding and having other parts of the system explained to me, in interacting and communicating clearly with people in other teams and parts of the organisation, and in making trade-offs between one task and another, I can feel the strong parallels with competitive dancing.
(Sen 2015)

NB. It is interesting to note the choice of words in the last sentence – ‘feeling the parallels’ indicates how much an essentially intellectual activity (i.e. identifying parallels) has become part of ‘sensemaking through sensing’.

How do the spatial aspects of competitive dance, both as metaphor and as corporeality, relate to life in organisations?

Distinguishing between ‘my space’, ‘your space’, ‘our space is relevant not just in a dance context.⁶ From individual office desks to large open-plan offices, from room layouts for work meetings to informal workspaces such as cafes, from impromptu ‘corridor meetings’ to seminar rooms, from lounges and lobbies to operating theatres, from ‘smokers’ corners’ to toilets – spaces are navigated, negotiated, arranged, sometimes defended, often taken for granted. People do have a relationship with the spatial elements of workplaces, but often this is not explicit. In dancing, these relationships come to the fore, requiring attention, focus, planning: “I became conscious of ‘space planning’ for the first time,” admits another workshop participant.

There are also the feelings of ‘my space’ and ‘others’ space’ – areas of expertise or responsibility that one automatically defends against others trespassing. In many ways, our department is good at handling this because many people are moved between teams, and when this happens, one’s area of responsibility changes, allowing one to move on, and to relinquish one’s old space (both physically and metaphorically) – much like a dance couple moves on and relinquishes the space that they have been defending against others a moment ago. (Sen 2015)

Awareness of others’ space(s) is highly relevant in dancing, especially for leading and following roles (see Figure 2 and explanations), but also in terms of awareness of competitors and the space they occupy. This can feel quite uncomfortable, especially where people are outside their ‘comfort zone’:

Uncomfortable: navigating the space on the floor. (Workshop participant)

Sometimes did not notice them [i.e. the wider environment, such as other people, the floor, the room] - and then sometimes reached a log jam. (Workshop participant)

Not conscious until I bumped into people. (Workshop participant)

They [i.e. others on the floor] were a nuisance. (Workshop participant)

This can also apply in the workplace, where the awareness of and the level of respect for others’ workplaces/desks/work spaces are part of the organizational culture. Another example from the second author’s account of his ‘journey’, evoking an almost ‘nomadic’ working lifestyle, with employees constantly ‘on the move’:

⁶ Whilst open-plan offices have proliferated over the past ten years, and much has been written about the subject in the property management and workplace design world, workplace designers and facilities managers have rarely teamed up with researchers from organizational studies, environmental psychology and neuropsychology to investigate the effects of these – often radical – changes in the work environment on the staff affected.

In a large open plan area, with team seating assignments changing on a monthly basis (though not everyone moves every time), it becomes hard to become too territorial about particular areas, and the fact that we work often across team boundaries – someone outside our team often has expertise we need, so there is a lot of getting up and moving around the space, and discussions and little groups forming and breaking up. The negative side is that it is easy to get distracted, or to spend the day answering questions and contributing to discussions. (Sen 2015)

This poses the question how strong the spatial boundaries in this arrangement might be, and where exactly they might be located – what employees’ ‘bubbles’ would be, to use the earlier image of ‘space bubbles’.

Another question would be about the awareness of physicality of leadership. Sinclair (2005b) comments that “turning to senior levels of organizations, the closer one gets to leadership, the more one is likely to escape scrutiny as a body”. In dancesport, the opposite holds true: the more advanced a dancer is, the more leadership/followership becomes an integral part of the body language, but it also becomes more refined (and aims to be thus).

It is not a coincidence that we speak of ‘knee-jerk reactions’ when it comes to crisis management. The metaphor evokes reflexes, ‘gut reactions’ that happen in an uncontrolled – and by implication, uncontrollable – way, where people (re)act out of feelings of panic, stress, danger. Participants in our workshops commented on this issue: “Control/letting go/letting things unfold when there is a ‘don’t know what will happen next’ scenario.” – “Interesting parallels to real life: rushing through will spoil everything.”

Conclusions and unanswered questions

Where do we ‘dance’ in organizations/organizational life? Where do we glide, sweep, hop, skip, bounce, flick? Where do we squat/hog/occupy, invade, evade? Where do we play, pretend, spot a niche, a gap, or a hole? What happens there/then?

Apart from the dancers’ own bodies, the main ‘ingredient’ of a ballroom dance performance is the space that the dancers have, create, move into/through/out of and ‘hold’ between them. Similarly, in most organizations space is an inherent ingredient of people’s working lives, but it is often paid little attention. Using the ‘playful’ *and* ‘stressful’ medium of dance and giving the spatial complexity more focus should allow awareness of these issues to grow, through the sensory experience.

Of course, it is not possible to reconstruct all the conditions of a full dance competition day for a management learning situation. This would not even be desirable – it would add too much complexity to a situation that potentially pulls participants out of their comfort zone,

challenges their personal boundaries and gets them to focus on their physicality in a way and to a degree that most people are not used to.

However, comments such as “The dynamic between intuition and following a set path”, “Raised my awareness of how as a leader you must be able to work collaboratively with your staff to achieve goal” or “Even in leadership, you have to develop trust for others to follow” suggest that participants gain insights which they can potentially take back into their workplaces. If and how they do so would require further research.

Other issues that arise from these experiences, but are beyond the confines of this paper, are issues of *liminal space*, but also of more metaphorical spaces such *emotional* and *mental space*, or *learning space*. Further research is needed here to analyse the complex relationships between those spaces. We have only just started this journey of inquiry.

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