

GuiDance of Butterflies: Practicing Ecosomatics and Dancing Towards More Sensitive Bodily Presence and Planetary Feeling

Susanna Hannus

ABSTRACT

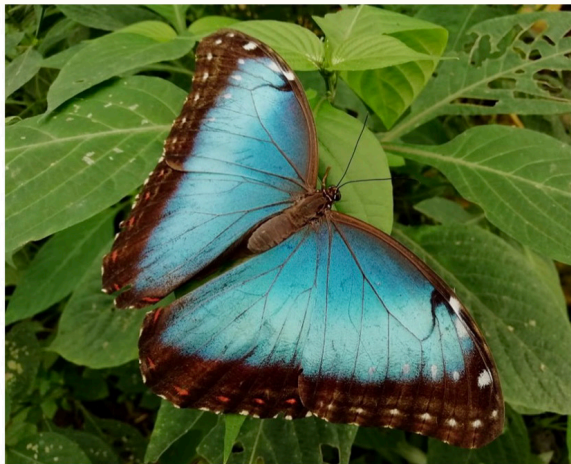
This research is a multi-sited embodied autoethnography in which I combine methods of multispecies ethnography with the autoethnographic methodology I applied before. This research has been done with butterflies and it seeks planetary feeling through dance, embodied research and ecosomatics. The data of the research was produced in Mexico in 2019 and in Spain in 2021 and 2022. It includes photography, videos, ethnographic field notes and photopaintings. This article investigates how the contact with butterflies can affected to our bodily presence and qualities of movement and dance. I look these findings in relation to ideas and practices of choreographers such as Deborah Hay and Steve Paxton and I elaborate on ecosomatic approach that resonates well with multispecies ethnography. I analyze, how the touch and the dance with butterflies created something similar Hay calls "cellular level presence" and lightness of being. I write about special quality of butterflies dancing with the wind and my dances with the wind. I suggest that sharing spaces and moving respectfully in relation to other species could be inspiring in finding new kind of movement, embodied consciousness and knowledge. These experiences could have therapeutical and healing meanings. I suggest that ecosomatics and ecologically oriented dance art and research noticing the well-being of other species could be important in searching planetary feeling, feeling more deeply our biodiverse planet while same time also working for our own well-being.

ABSTRAKTI

Tämä tutkimus on monipaikkainen kehollinen autoetnografia, jossa yhdistän monilajisen etnografian menetelmiä aikaisemmin soveltamaani autoetnografiseen metodologiaan. Tämä tutkimus on tehty perhosten kanssa ja se etsii planetaarista tuntua tanssin, kehollisen tutkimuksen ja ekosomatiikan keinoin. Tutkimuksen aineisto tuotettiin perhosten kanssa Meksikossa vuonna 2019 ja Espanjassa vuosina 2021 ja 2022. Se pitää sisällään valokuvia, videoita, etnografisia kenttämuistiinpanoja ja valokuvamaalauksia. Tämä artikkeli tutkii, miten vuorovaikutus perhosten kanssa voi vaikuttaa keholliseen läsnäoloon, liikkeen laatuun ja tanssiin. Tarkastelen näitä löydöksiä suhteessa koreografien, kuten Deborah Hayn ja Steve Paxtonin ideoihin ja ajatuksiin sekä kehittelen monilajisen etnografian kanssa linjassa olevaa ekosomaattista lähestymistapaa. Analysoin kuinka perhosten kosketus ja tanssi perhosten kanssa synnyttivät jotain samankaltaista, jota Hay kutsuu "solutasen läsnäoloksi". Kirjoitan perhosten erityisestä keveydestä, tanssista tuulessa ja perhosten inspiroimana tansseistani tuulen kanssa. Ajattelen, että tilojen jakaminen ja liikkuminen kunnioittavasti ja eettisesti yhdessä toisten lajien kanssa vuorovaikutuksessa voi inspiroida uudenlaisten liikelaatujen, kehollisen tietoisuuden ja tiedon syntymisessä. Tällaisilla kokemuksilla voi myös olla terapeuttisia ja parantavia vaikutuksia. Ehdotan, että ekosomatiikka ja ekologisesti orientoitunut tanssitaide ja tutkimus, joissa huomataan toiset lajit, voivat olla tärkeitä kanavia planeetan tunnun syventämisessä, jolloin myös planeettaamme ja sen monimuotoisen elämän ja meidän hyvinvointiimme voidaan kiinnittää yhdessä huomiota.

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Susanna Hannus



Introduction

I have been photographing butterflies recently, attempting to understand their messages. I have tried to be guided by butterflies. I have been dancing with butterflies and improvising, with their influence and inspiration. Since I was small, I have been in love with butterflies. “Butterfly,” was my first word.

I want to begin with my butterfly poem: *A dancer flowing through music is like a butterfly flowing with the wind. Butterflies are travelers, dancers with the wind. Do butterflies have wisdom to share with us? Butterflies, butterflies, butterflies. They are masters of lightness. They know how to dance with the wind with little physical energy. Butterflies have the secret of metamorphosis, transforming their bodies from earthly beings into flying creatures, as is imprinted in their genetic heritage, in their embodied wisdom. Butterflies are pollinators of flowers and plants, making life and alimentation possible for other species. An abundance of various*

Photos 1 and 2. Dancing with Blue Morpho butterflies in a butterfly garden.

Photos: Emmanuel Rios and Susanna Hannus.

butterflies is considered an indicator of biodiversity in nature. Butterflies are small but so meaningful, moving upon mountains, transcending obstacles, passing over whole continents, dancing, flying freely, perfectly navigating, finding optimal places for new life to be born. Butterflies, butterflies, butterflies. They leave a beautiful path for future generations.

This is research with planetary feeling (Koistinen and Karkulehto 2021), which emphasises paying attention to the biodiversity of our planet and considering our planet as an interconnected whole. Here, I am searching for ways of ‘feeling our planet’ through butterflies, and I am paying attention to my sensory and emotional connection to our planet in my analysis as well. The methodology of this research project could be called multi-sited, embodied autoethnography. In multi-sited ethnography (Falzon

2009) dense ethnographic description is achieved, producing data in several places, contexts or sites that complement one another. In this research project, I have also combined a multispecies ethnographic approach (see, e.g., van Dooren and Bird Rose 2016; van Dooren, Kirksey and Munster 2016; Hohti and Tammi 2020; Lloro-Birad 2018) with my embodied autoethnographic research practice (Hannus 2018b; 2019; see more about autoethnography, e.g., Anttila 2003; Ellis 1999; Guttorm 2018; Pelias 2004). According to Teresa Lloro-Biradt (2018, 255), multispecies ethnography pays attention to the complex ways in which humans and nonhumans co-constitute one another as agential beings. The researcher is not attempting to make claims about ‘capturing’ an authentic (animal) perspective. The data derived from the research were produced in Mexico in 2019 and Spain in 2021 and 2022. They include photography, dance videos, observational fieldnotes with butterflies, and dance photopaintings.

In this article, I analyse what kind of teachings or inspirations butterflies can offer dancers, somatic practitioners, and all other people who are interested of movement and creativity. I bring my movement analyses into dialogue with postmodern dance developers, such as Deborah Hay and Steve Paxton, as well as ecosomatics. In this article, my research questions are as follows:

1. How can contact with butterflies affect bodily presence and quality of movement, and what kind of bodily reactions and transformations can follow after been in touch with butterflies?
2. What kind of ideas can these embodied experiences and qualities of movement offer to ecosomatics?
3. How can these findings and embodied experiences (Research Questions 1 and 2) help in approaching and strengthening planetary feeling?

This research project is about the *GuiDance* of the butterflies. I am following them to specific spaces and places that they lead me to. Here, metaphorically, I am receiving their choreographic instructions, routes and inspirations of my movement. After explicating my theoretical and methodological starting points and data, the choreography of the butterflies takes me to the analyses of a cellular-level awareness of the body and a sensitive presence in dance. Then, the butterflies help me reconnect with lightness of being and dancing with the wind. I chose to follow the *GuiDance* of the butterflies and analyse these interconnected themes because I feel they are important in understanding the ecosomatic frame and planetary feeling.

From stiff hierarchies and habits to cellular presence and improvisation

This article creates a dialogue with New York Judson Dance Theatre choreographers, such as Deborah Hay’s (e.g., 2000; 2016) work and concepts. I lived and worked as a visiting scholar in Brooklyn College in New York City affiliated with education and, specifically, art education during 2012. During that year, I did my own performances and collaborated with Finnish choreographer and dancer Jenni-Elina von Bagh while producing a performance called *Playing Storytelling* in collaboration with Brooklyn College (PIMA, Performance and Interactive Media Arts, students and art education students participated to our dance and interdisciplinary theatre project). During 2012, I became quite familiar with the Judson Church contemporary dance movement and choreographies of Deborah Hay, such as “Lightening” (2010), which I had already seen in Finland, in Pannuhalli; “Blues” (2012) in MOMA (Museum of Modern Art) in New York City; and “As the Hole Sites Go/Duet” (2012) in Sant Marks Church, in New York City. In all of these performances, I was inspired by the very strong and sensitive presence of the performers in the space and

the feeling that, every moment, the performance could change its direction and create something completely new and different. I read interviews with Hay and articles about her work and watched online videos of her practices. In doing this research with butterflies, I began reconnecting with Hay's concept of a 'cellular level presence' (see von Bagh 2018, 24).

Choreographer Jenni-Elina von Bagh (2018, 24) with whom I worked, has worked with Deborah Hay during "Lightening" (2010). She highlights that Hay pays attention on the "cellular body" (according to von Bagh 2018, 24), which is interesting in terms of this research project. During the time I saw Hay's choreographies and read about her work, I was completing my PhD research (Hannus 2018a), a performative ethnography on hierarchies in education and possibilities for unraveling hierarchies through performativity, such as dance and visual arts, positive emotional dynamics and pedagogy. Hay's concepts and methods seemed, for me, almost counter-concepts to ideas proposed in theories of social structures and power. Hay seemed to propose new avenues for human transformation through contemporary dance.

During my PhD process, I investigated different theories and analyses of power. Well-known sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (e.g., 1998; 2000; 2002a) argues that social hierarchies are difficult to transform because we humans are very attached to certain ways and patterns of perceiving, evaluating and acting (*habitus*), which are connected to our social class and background and to the social structures of the societies in which we live. These ways and patterns of perceiving, evaluating and acting are connected with the type of education people grow up with, and they are deeply embodied. For example, from a Bourdieuan perspective, certain kinds of dance education, such as ballet, contemporary dance or street dance, and correspondingly music education, such as classical music, rock music or hip-hop music education, could be seen as training (formal or informal) that produces or strengthens

certain kind of *habitus*, which may not be so easy to change.

Critical developers of Bourdieu's concepts have written about counter-training (e.g., Liimakka 2013; Hannus 2018a), meaning that the habits that are most deeply embodied may require counter-training, that is, repeating otherwise or practicing new corporal methods.

Gilles Deleuze (1997; 2013), for his part, writes about dramaturgical action, referring to an activity via which we can re-create, re-compose or transform ourselves or our ways of acting and moving by 're-habitualizing' ourselves, that is, exploring variation in our activities and utilising repetition. For me, Deborah Hay's thinking and practice seem very inspiring in relation to my research because it seems she is reaching further than Deleuze. Philosophically and practically, for me, it seems she is striving to go beyond movement habits while emphasizing the freshness of the movement and directing dancers' attention to the cellular level, where micro-level organic transformation is happening all the time.

In a parallel way, contemporary dance choreographer Steve Paxton considers the meaning of small-looking movements in the body. Small dances can generate new embodied modes of knowledge through orienting oneself to that which is not yet known during the improvisation process (Hohti and Tammi 2020; Mäkelä 2018.)

Dancing in the nature and ecosomatics

In the last decade, practitioners of arts, dance and movement therapy and body-based somatic therapies have begun to incorporate ecological perspectives and nature immersion into their approaches (e.g., Berger 2008; Berger 2020; Beauvais 2012; Nelson 2018). According to Satu Palokangas (2022), who is a Finnish artist and developer of *ecosomatics*, *ecosomatics* emerged around 2007. I participated in her somatic

trainings in 2013 and 2015, which is why I prefer to refer to her. There are many other dance artists who have worked with the outdoors and formulated their work in relation to nature, such as Isadora Duncan, who performed already at the beginning of the twentieth century, and, later, Anna Halprin, who founded Tamalpa Institute, a movement, dance and expressive arts therapy institute.¹ I began elaborating on my dance practice in the outdoors and nature in 2012, when I was living in New York.

For Palokangas (2022), ecosomatics is a practice of ‘rewilding’, protecting and restoring our natural resources. While somatic practices help us attune to the inner life of the body and overcome the mind-body split, ecosomatics helps us attune to the inner life of the body and “more-than-human” (Beauvais 2012, 278; Mattenson 2018, 4). Somatics researches the sensation, perception and inner impulses in the body and develops our kinesthetic and sensory perceptions. Ecosomatics also includes the environment and one’s awareness and relationships with the natural world, in which humans and nature are understood to be engaged in a collaborative, creative process of witnessing and moving, receiving and offering (Mattenson 2018, 11, 20; Nelson 2018; see also Palokangas 2022).

Multi-sited embodied autoethnography, research data and photopaintings

The methodology of this research could be called multi-sited (e.g., Falzon 2009) embodied autoethnography that combines multispecies ethnography (e.g., Lloro-Birad 2018; Hohti and Tammi 2020, 17; van Dooren and Bird Rose 2016; van Dooren, Kirksey and Munsen 2016) with embodied art-based autoethnography, as I have developed previously (Hannus 2018b; 2019; see as well Anttila 2003; Mäkelä 2018). In my autoethnographic research practice, photography has been important, and I have adopted the methods of visual ethnography (e.g. Pink 2007) since I worked

in an old-fashioned photo studio from 2000 to 2004, during my studies in university. Amy Stich (2011) has written about how truly ethnographic, dense description is full of colors and life, while academic black-and-white is often loose.

The data regarding the butterflies were produced in 2019 in Mexico, as well as in 2021 and 2022 in Spain. In the first phase of this research, during from January 2019 to July 2019, in Mexico, I photographed all the butterflies I saw. I took 248 photos of more than ten types of butterflies and wrote fieldnotes regarding my encounters with the butterflies. I did this in the spirit of creating dense multispecies ethnographic data, as well as familiarising myself with the movements, habits and flying routes of butterflies. Night butterflies came to my house several times in the village of Tepoztlan, in Mexico, where I stayed in 2019. I visited the Monarch Butterfly Reserve in Valle de Bravo, where the monarchs fly from Canada to spend the winter and have their babies. I also went to Sierra Gorda National Reserve, which is one the most biodiverse areas in Mexico. There, I could spend time with an abundance of butterflies and dance with them. Afterwards, in November 2021, I constructed a photopainting collage in which I combined photography of the yellow butterflies from the Sierra Gorda area and dance photography taken while dancing in the turquoise rivers of Mexico. I gave the name ‘Butterfly River’ to this photopainting (Photo 3).

I call these collages and this technique I have developed ‘dance photopaintings’. I have written an article in Finnish about this technique (Hannus 2011). I started developing this technique more than 12 years ago as an interdisciplinary art practice. Initially, the idea was to create visual pieces in which dance, photography and painting could meet in order to tell a story. My dance photopaintings have been shown before, for example, in Art Center Salmela, in Finland, and in several theatre and cultural spaces in Finland and New York. I have often integrated photopaintings



Photo 3. 'Butterfly Rive' photopainting. Photos Susanna Hannus and different photographers. Photopainting Susanna Hannus.

into my performances. Making photopaintings is a method of artistic research in which I attempt to explicate my bodily understanding and combine it with rich ethnographic photographic data. I like to cultivate artisanal or organic textures and painted details, which arise from my imagination and embodied interpretations of the research process. The photopaintings shown in this article were displayed just before the publication of this article, in early summer of 2023, in a botanic garden called Talvipuutarha, in Helsinki, Finland.

In the second phase of this research, in December 2021, I traveled to Spain in order to continue investigating the influence of butterflies on dance in a butterfly park and in the nature in more detailed way. I discovered that, in southern Spain, there was a large butterfly park where I would be able to spend time close to butterflies. I spent intensive days in a butterfly garden in Costa del Sol, in Benalmadena, where I was able share time and space with the butterflies and dance with them. Emmanuel Rios photographed and filmed me being present with the butterflies, allowing them to

land on my hair or dress, as well as my dancing with them. I also photographed the butterflies. I performed various small dance improvisations in the butterfly garden and various natural areas in Spain after being inspired by the butterflies, attempting to adopt some of their qualities of movement into my dance. After dancing in the park with butterflies or in nature, I always wrote autoethnographic fieldnotes of these experiences². I asked permission from the personnel of the butterfly park to take photos, although all the other visitors to the park were taking photos as well. I told the staff that I was completing an artistic research project and article, which I intended to publish in the Nordic Journal of Dance. The personnel of the park welcomed me.

I have been trained as an ethnographic researcher during my PhD research (Hannus 2018a), and during that time, I learned to write specific sensor-information-based ethnographic fieldnotes (see Emerson, Fretz and

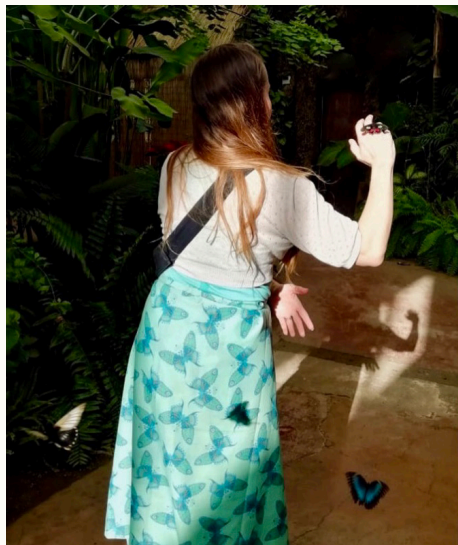


Photo 4. and 5. *Dancing with butterflies in a butterfly garden in Costa del Sol, in Spain, 2021. Photography: Emmanuel Rios.*

Shaw 1995; Gordon, Holland and Lahelma 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Later, I focused on artistic research and writing autoethnographic fieldnotes (Hannus 2018b; 2019). I have been inspired by Carolyn Ellis's (1999) HeARTful autoethnography, in which the researcher's feelings, poetic journaling of fieldnotes and emphatic attunement to the research subject are important. When I wrote these fieldnotes, I allowed the words to come as a spontaneous flow onto the paper, without censoring myself.

Touch of a butterfly, butterflies as choreographers and cellular-level presence

"We go to a tropical butterfly garden in Benalmadena, Costa del Sol, in Spain. When I step into the tropical garden and I feel the humidity on my skin and see the green radiance of the tropical plants, I feel at home. After just a moment, a blue morpho butterfly lands on my head. The touch of her small legs feels ticklish and sweet on my skin. Energy begins to flow in my body like pearl necklace opening and moving softly, lightly, energisingly, like a waterfall of pearls flowing,

falling and arising in my body. My fingers want to make small dances, subtle movements. I feel like painting the air around me softly with the big blue butterflies. Suddenly, another big butterfly touches my hand. I feel a slap of her wings. It feels as if I am awaking from a dream. I feel so alive and happy, sharing this moment with these special creatures, these masters of metamorphosis and beauty. My dance continues. The touch of the butterflies makes me feel very connected with this garden. My feet feel rooted to the ground and my hands intertwined with the tropical trees and plants. I move, dance like an ice skater gliding on the surface of the ice, but in the jungle. // Blue butterflies fly and dance with me. Every now and then, they land on my turquoise dress. I become even more conscious of the small and ticklish movements my fingers want to make and how my spine would like to move me (Observational fieldnotes 7.12.2021.)

After this experience in the butterfly park, I recalled Deborah Hay's ideas about the incorporatedness of body

and mind and cellular-level presence (e.g., Hay 2016). Jenni-Elina von Bagh has described Hay's approach as 'practicing the cellular awareness of the body' because Hay likes to reconfigure the body into over billion cells while practicing with dancers (von Bagh 2018, 24). Deborah Hay has asked the following question of her dancers: *'What if my whole body as over million cells had a potential to perceive each moment equally unique?'* (von Bagh 2018, 24.) Hay's perspective on bodymind emphasises freedom; the body is not constrained by embodied patterns and bodily histories (cf. Bourdieu 1998; 2000; 2002a), nor does it not need to re-habitualise itself (Deleuze 2013) to be transformed. Instead, it appears that, for Hay (see, e.g., 2000; 2016), in every moment, there is a new possibility.

In my interpretation, Hay's concepts could be utilised to bring the dancers to this kind of space within themselves, where they could transcend learned patterns and connect to cellular-level awareness. In this way, the dancers could be more present for the possibilities of each moment and the newness of the moment and, perhaps, perceive something new within themselves or in relation to the space, timing or other performers.

This reminds me of what happened with the butterflies. The butterflies were like my choreographers, who brought me into a new space with their touch, presence and timing. I felt sensations inside me that I had not felt before. It was almost as if I could feel the energies changing on a cellular level in my body. It reminded me of sensations I had felt during an osteopathy treatment. However, this was different. I felt a new kind of micro-movements in my body, and these movements continued into a small dance, one that felt different than before. In my field notes, I describe the feeling of energies changing in my body 'like a pearl necklace opening and moving softly'. Here, I am attempting to describe the small circular or spiraling movements that I sensed at various times in flowing sequences in my body. They started in my chest area

and the areas around my backbone. The small circular movement that my creative imagination multiplied moved towards my hands and legs and flowed back towards the centre of my body.

Observing this circular kind of micro-movement in my body made me recall Hay's concept of cellular-level consciousness. These circular, flowing movements in my body made me feel deeply connected to the place and the space I was in. They made me feel very present in that exact moment because I was starting my dance from a new space within me. These observations make me wonder whether the presence of other species could invite us to a new kind of improvisation or choreographic process, challenging some of our habits and bodily patterns. I wonder whether we could become more sensitive and come closer to what Hay called cellular-level awareness, and in this way, find new movement qualities, small dances as well as somatic ideas and methods that could be valuable for ecosomatic practice and ecological art.

In addition, I saw the butterflies as choreographers. They could be seen as fellow dancers who can invite us to a kind of contact improvisation (Mäkelä 2018), in which the touch of the other species initiated a chain of sensations and small movements in my body. Riikka Hohti and Tuure Tammi (2020, 20-21), who investigated human and animal interactions, interpreted these encounters as a form of dance, a contact-improvisation dance that includes sequences of micro-movements. What is interesting is that this kind of contact improvisation with butterflies can be very light. While working with other human dancers, one has to be ready to receive a great deal of bodyweight many times. For persons who have had injuries, disc prolapses in their spine, for example, the possibility of contact improvisation with light contact and light touch can be inspiring. Butterflies can teach lightness of movement and lightness of touch. Just meeting them, witnessing their dancing can feel emotionally lightening, as I experienced as well.

Nomadic dances with the wind

In 2021, I explored the influence of butterflies on my dance and dancing with the wind in South Spain, in a place called Tarifa, just above the African continent. It may be a place where migrating butterflies cross from Europe to the African continent. For example, the painted lady butterfly is known from her special travel from Spain to African tropical areas, crossing the Sahara desert. In Mexico, in 2019, I visited a monarch butterfly sanctuary in Valle de Bravo. Monarch butterflies travel all the way from Canada and cross the North American continent to warm Mexico to spend the winter and give life to the next generation. These migrating butterflies are resilient nomads that have amazing skill in navigation, as shown in their dance of crossing continents.

In the photopainting below (Photo 6), I have incorporated photography of monarch butterflies in Mexico with photography of my dance improvisations in Tarifa, which were inspired by butterflies. In my dance

photos, one can see various practices of dancing with the wind and exploring balance, directions, openings and 'a feeling of almost flying' in the wind and with the wind. This collage was made just after the Russian invasion to Ukraine, at the end of February 2022. For this reason, a dove, the bird of peace, became part of this photopainting as a symbol, a wish and a dance for peace and wise collaboration between nations in order to stop the war. In the middle of the photopainting, I am dancing in front of a monument in Tarifa made by sculptor Alejandro Pedrajas. The monument represents solidarity between communities and nations. This monument was built to honour the memory of children and migrants coming from the African continent to Europe. It was touching for me, dancing there. At the same time, there was the history of migration, flows of generations in time and space, human and non-human

Photo 6. Photopainting Nomadic Dancers with the Wind. Photos: Emmanuel Rios. Photopainting: Susanna Hannus.





Photo 7. Feeling like a butterfly while dancing with the wind in a place where two continents meet. Photo: Emmanuel Rios.

generations (multispecies), and dances with the wind inspired by butterflies. Palokangas (2022) notes that ecosomatics is about “rewilding”, restoring our natural resources and historical and social aspects are present in this process as well. This photopainting (Photos 7 and 8) shows how historical, sociological and ecological phenomena can co-exist with dance practice while practicing ecosomatics (with butterflies).

Today, I have arrived at a bridge where the Mediterranean Ocean and Atlantic Ocean meet, a place where butterflies cross to another continent, a place where children from another continent come to Europe. This is a place of wind, wind so strong that it almost makes one fly like a butterfly. I have been dancing in the wind, trying to take the position of a butterfly when they fly over the whole continent, navigating towards the right place to stay// I have been feeling how it feels to be in the wind, dance in the wind, allowing the wind to lead you. Dancing is hard. One needs to work a great deal with balance// One needs to have a strong core so that the wind does not change your direction (Observational fieldnotes 13.12.2021).

I have enjoyed dancing in nature, specifically in places with warm or temperate wind, and it always felt refreshing, rejuvenating and liberating. Warm, soft wind relieves stress and eases pain in the body. Soft wind helps to change the energy or emotion in the body. It feels as if light wind gives a certain lightness to the dance, although when the wind is strong, one may actually need to use more profound deep muscles in order to control one's movement and balance.

Steve Paxton's small dance is aimed to relax all muscular tension by bending the knees, which alters the dancer's balance. While the dancer is focussed on sensing this alteration in balance, it allows her to move and float freely (Mäkinen 2018; Hannus 2018b, 42–43), dancing in the wind is as well as investigating the alteration of balance. If the wind is strong, one needs the tensioning of the muscles and the activating of the correct muscular chains in order to have strong feet, a strong core and support in the wind. In this way, one can find freedom for the upper body and hands to float freely, like wings in the air.

I would like to ask whether dancing in soft wind could be one modality that could be used in ecosomatic practices and somatic therapies in order to work with the inner balance of the body at the level of muscles, emotions and subtle sensations while, at the same time, connecting with the planet and nature.

Later in 2022, my ecosomatic practice with the wind, which was inspired by butterflies, continued in the Pyrenees area in Spain, in a natural park called Parque Nacional Ordesa. Entering the national park, I met a flock of sail swallowtail butterflies dancing above a field in front of the mountains, which led me to dance. On a large, flat surface that had open views of the mountains I engaged in an ecosomatic practice, a small dance with the wind. Down by a river, I met large flock of blue wing butterflies, and they guided me to a very subtle and slow-moving dance. The next photopainting (Photo 9) shows these dances with butterflies and the wind in this mountainous Pyrenees area. The dance of this photopainting connects the earth, mountains, water and wind through butterflies while involving sensitive

bodily presence in the search for planetary feeling (see details of the photopainting, Photos 10 and 11).

Conclusions: Teachings of the butterflies

I am inspired by the concept of planetary feeling, created by Koistinen and Karkulehto (2021). It emphasises the co-existence of art and science, as well as human, 'non-human' and 'more-than-human,' in making new alternative worlds possible. Planetary feeling places the planet as a whole, the living ecosystem and the biodiversity of the planet into the center of research and art (see Koistinen and Karkulehto 2021, 65). In a different way than science, art or, in this case, dance can help in gaining planetary feeling, emotional intelligence and embodied knowledge in the search for solutions for our planet through creative imagination, embodied experiences and inquiries.

*Photos 8 Photopainting Butterflies of the Mountains.
Photography: Susanna Hannus and Emmanuel Rios.
Photopainting: Susanna Hannus.*





Photos 9 and 10. Photopainting Butterflies of the Mountains. Photography: Susanna Hannus and Emmanuel Rios. Photopainting: Susanna Hannus.

In this research project, time shared with the butterflies has generated new embodied knowledge of the sensations within the body. Being in respectful interaction with other species as a part of small shared dances can generate new bodily presence and a subtler consciousness of the sensations in the body. Time shared with butterflies in a butterfly garden reconnected me with Deborah Hay's (e.g., 2016) concepts of the 'cellular body', 'cellular level consciousness' and 'cellular knowledge' (see von Bagh 2018). I felt a new kind of micro-movement inside my body. These kinds of embodied experiences could be important to research in more detail, especially regarding ecosomatics and its conceptual framework.

Embodied experiences with butterflies or other species or wildlife, as well as witnessing the small dances of other species, can create a feeling of emotional and bodily lightening. Sharing spaces with butterflies or other species in a respectful manner or just being in nature can be therapeutic and healing. Butterflies guided me to reconnect with dancing with the wind. Dancing with the soft, warm wind can be applied in ecotherapies and ecosomatics to help in relieving stress and pain and working with inner

balance at the muscular and emotional levels, as well as feeling oneself to be part of the living planet Earth. Nature-immersion therapies has been noticed to reduce stress and recovering from burn out (Kjellgren and Burghall 2010). Nature can offer a feeling of home or community with nature, and it is important for wellbeing (Mayer and Frantz 2004). Sharing time and space with other species and dancing with the wind and water could help in finding a new kind of artistic repertoire and movement language, as well as practicing planetary feeling.

When planning to share spaces with non-human others for research, art, education or therapeutic purposes, it is very important to reflect on the ethical side of this situation. It is important to think, for example, about what kind of spaces the animals are living in, whether it is possible to meet them in freedom in their own living world and what time would be appropriate. It is important to reflect on the distance from the non-human other, whether it is acceptable to touch them and whether it is better to let the animal



*Photo 11. Photopainting Planetary Feeling.
Photography: Susanna Hannus and Emmanuel Rios.
Photopainting: Susanna Hannus.*

choose the distance, as I preferred to do in this research project. This research was carried out in nature and in a butterfly park. To investigate human-butterfly relationships, especially embodied experiences and movement, it was important to be able to continue the research after authentic nature, in a large butterfly park, where I could spend more time with butterflies. I tried to do this as respectfully I could, and I waited for the butterflies to come share their movement with me. I think that if one wants to connect with other species as part of research or art, one should also promote good for them as a means of ensuring reciprocity.

In my previous article published in the *Nordic Journal of Dance* (Hannus 2018b), I analysed dance in and with water and environmental justice issues via embodied inquiry. According to Anja Nygren (2013), an environmental justice perspective has become an important framework for scholars who are interested in climate change, the deterioration of ecosystems, rights concerning natural resources and local ecological-knowledge systems (see Hannus 2018b, 40). Now, I would like to suggest that multispecies perspectives and the protection of living conditions for species such as butterflies should be incorporated into these environmental-justice discussions. Elaborating

on ecological artistic research and the ecosomatic framework and conceptualisations could provide important information about how to “feel the planet” in terms of creating emotional and embodied caring about the future of our biodiverse planet and, at same time, taking good care of our own balance and wellbeing. Sharing spaces respectfully with other species could make us more sensitive and stimulate, in this way, something similar to what Hay called ‘cellular-level awareness.’ This cellular level and structure—although it is different in different species—connects all forms of life. An important research topic would be investigating how children could develop their planetary feeling through movement and other creative methods in relation to other species and the more-than-human world.

Endnotes

1 In Finland, Kati Raatikainen and Gabriela Aldana-Kekoni are working with an ecosomatic approach as well.

2 In total, I have taken 448 photos in this butterfly garden. My butterfly data also include 27 small videoclips (from 10 s to 1 min and 50 s) filmed in the butterfly garden. I performed various small dance improvisations (17 improvisations lasting from 40 s to 6 min) in various natural areas in Spain after being inspired by the butterflies and attempting to adopt some of their qualities of movement into my dance. Emmanuel took dance photography (158 photos) of my dance improvisations in nature in 2021 as well.

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BIOGRAPHY

Susanna Hannus finalized her PhD in educational sciences in the University of Helsinki in 2018. Her research explored hierarchies and possibilities to unravel hierarchies in schools through everyday creative practices, artistic practices such as dance and visual arts, positive emotional dynamics and pedagogy. In 2012 she was a visiting scholar and artist in Brooklyn College, New York. She has presented her dance-based performances and visual art exhibitions in New York and Finland. Lately, Hannus's dance and visual arts, research and pedagogy have been focusing on planetary phenomena such as recuperating in natural crisis, meanings of water, multispecies and planetary well-being.

Susanna Hannus viimeisteli kasvatustieteiden väitöskirjansa Helsingin yliopistolla vuonna 2018. Hänen tutkimuksensa analysoi hierarkioiden rakentumista ja hierarkioiden purkamisen mahdollisuuksia kouluilla jokapäiväisen luovuuden, taiteellisten käytäntöjen, kuten tanssin ja kuvataiteiden sekä positiivisen tunteidynamiikan ja pedagogiikan avulla. Vuonna 2012 Hannus oli vierailevana tutkijana ja taiteilijana Brooklyn Collegessa New Yorkissa. Hän on esittänyt tanssiperustaisia esityksiään ja kuvataidenäyttelyitä New Yorkissa ja Suomessa. Viime aikoina Hannuksen tutkimus, tanssi ja kuvataide sekä pedagogiikka ovat keskittyneet planetaariisiin ilmiöihin, kuten palautumiseen luonnon kriiseistä, veden merkitykseen sekä monilajiseen ja planetaariseen hyvinvointiin.