

## Chapter 9

# Confronting Environmental Care and Social Progress in Academic Journeys: Duoethnography

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### The Story Behind

This chapter discusses the potential of academics to mobilise in addressing the (im)possibility of connecting environmental care and social progress in governance and education through reflections on experiences from the academic and professional journeys of two university professors. It is also part of the dialogical process between two scholars from Tallinn University (Estonia) and Tampere University (Finland).

We have long-term professional and academic experience and have collaborated for over 20 years. We are both women, speaking Estonian and Finnish, which have many similarities and belong to the Finno-Ugric language group (Photo 1).



**Photo 1:** Larissa and Anja. Doctoral seminar 5/2018, University of Tampere.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> All photos in the chapter by Larissa Jõgi and Anja Heikkinen.

Our educational background is different, but we have several similarities in professional values, beliefs and scholarly interests. We value the learning and teaching process at the university and have paid attention to joint teaching practice, especially in co-supervising our doctoral students and in co-teaching international courses, such as ‘Foundations and International Development of Adult Education and Learning’ in the MA programme ‘Adult Education’, as well as in the Erasmus Mundus programme ‘International Master in Adult Education for Social Change/IMAESC’ (Photo 2).



**Photo 2:** Larissa and Anja. With some IMAESC students 11/2018, Tallinn University.

During the years, from time to time, we have had different and triggered discussions related to our professional activities, the role of academia in society, teaching and researching, the identity of academics, health and climate crises and the Russian–Ukrainian war. We have felt a need to reflect on our experience as scholars and university professors through past, present and future times.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>386</sup>Lauristin, M., Vihalemm, P., Kalmus, V., Keller, M., Kiisel, M., Masso, A., Opermann, S., Seppel, K., Vihalemm, T. (2017). MeeMa 2014 lähtekohad ja

When searching for a way to explore and reflect on our collaborative and learning experiences, we wanted to experiment with duoethnography as a method. Autoethnography is known for its potential to deepen understanding of lived experience and facilitate critical insights into beliefs and assumptions individuals hold about their academic selves and others with whom they interact.<sup>387</sup> Therefore, we found duoethnography suitable for organising, reflecting, and analysing our experiences and thoughts in a dialogue. In this chapter, we provide examples from our stories with some photos to contextualise our experiences of professional journeys.

Our aim is to reflect on and explore the common meanings of our academic journey and academic and personal experiences in their social and historical context. Below, we give an overview of duoethnography as a mode of multi-dialogic enquiry. Then, we present selected parts from our dialogical process of writing about teaching and researching in academia. After this, we discuss and reflect on our dialogical conversation by thematising key issues and meanings of our experiences. We conclude with some critical thoughts and perspectives about academic journeys and the meaning of embedding activities such as environmental care and social progress into our everyday academic work, as well as about the potential of the duoethnographic approach for critical reflection and analysis of academic work.

### **Duoethnography as a Multi-dialogic Enquiry Process**

Duoethnography is an open, collaborative phenomenological and dialogical method and multi-dialogic enquiry process that allows two or more researchers to strive to excavate and analyse different dimensions of their personal and professional lives.<sup>388</sup> Researchers create dialogical transactions (between and within themselves), as they seek critical tensions, insights and new perspectives.<sup>389</sup> Our academic journey,

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ühiskondlikkontekst. In P. Vihalemm, M. Lauristin, V. Kalmus, T. Vihalemm (Eds). *Eesti ühiskondkiirenevas ajas. Uuringu "Mina. Maailm. Meedia" 2002-2014tulemused*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.

<sup>387</sup> Pillay, D., Naicker, I. & Pithouse-Morgan, K. (2016, 14) (Eds.). *Academic Autoethnographies Inside Teaching in Higher Education*. Rotterdam, Boston, Taiwan: Sense Publishers.

<sup>388</sup> Sawyer, R. D. (2016, 447). Duoethnography: A collaborative (beside) and transtemporal (before and beyond) methodology for postcolonialism. In R. Evans (Ed.). *Before, beside and after (beyond) the biographical narrative*, 443–458. Duisburg: Nisaba Verlag.

<sup>389</sup> Sawyer, R. D. & Norris, J. (2009). Duoethnography. Articulations/(Re)Creation of Meaning in the Making. In W. S. Gershon (Ed.). *The Collaborative Turn*.

experiences and values, perceptions, and attitudes are the object of reflection in our duoethnography. We started by looking back and considering our present time and experience and having a look at the future. Duoethnography aims at giving the possibility to tell and share stories, explore, reflect and interpret the meanings of experiences using dialogue and personal narratives, and see issues, new insights and perspectives.<sup>390</sup> Dialogue requires a common space, even if only temporarily, a shared reality or framework on which to negotiate and construct new meaning.<sup>391</sup> Thus, we found duoethnography as a method and also a suitable methodological framework that enables (re)storying the narrative perception of our experience in the context of a particular topic or theme, i.e. embedding the workshop 'Environmental Care and Social Progress' into our regular academic work as university teachers.<sup>392</sup> Through ethnographic enquiry, we promote self-reflexivity, more complex social constructions and conceptualisation of our experiences.<sup>393</sup> The dialogical approach builds on the notion that all developments, all creations of the new, occur through dialogues, dialectical synthesis and dialogicality. It requires noticing similarities and differences in understanding, which we should notice in our writing and analysis processes.<sup>394</sup>

While duoethnography has not been very actively used by researchers, there are several interesting analyses and analytical overviews.<sup>395</sup> For instance, Italian scholars Laura Formenti, Silvia Luraschi and Gaia Del Negro have used a cooperative method of duoethnographic writing-as-

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*Working Together in Qualitative Research* (pp. 127-140). The Netherlands: Brill; Sawyer, R. D. & Norris, J. (2013). *Understanding qualitative research: duoethnography*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>390</sup> Lund, D. & Nabavi, M. (2008). A duo-ethnographic conversation on social justice activism: exploring issues of identities, racism, and activism with young people. *Multicultural Education*, 15(4), 27–32.

<sup>391</sup> Valsiner, J. (1998). *The guided mind. A sociogenetic approach to personality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>392</sup> Sawyer & Norris (2013).

<sup>393</sup> Sawyer (2016, 446).

<sup>394</sup> Raudsepp, M. (2007, 2). Dialogipsühholoogiast. *Akadeemia*, 19(10), 2216–2235.

<sup>395</sup> Formenti, L. Luraschi, S., Del Negro, G. (2019). Relational aesthetics: A duoethnographic research on feminism. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* 10(2), 123–141. <https://doi.org/10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela9144>; Lund & Nabavi (2008); Pillay et al (2016); Sawyer & Norris (2013); Shelton, N. R., & McDermott, M. (2015). Duoethnography on Friendship: Continue to Breathe Normally. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 8(1), 68–89. <https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2015.8.1.68>

enquiry to reflect on the role of aesthetics in the development of critical pedagogy for social justice in adult education. They developed multiple conversations around their pedagogy at the university by sharing biographic and ethnographic narratives, artworks, poems and readings. They visited exhibitions, read poetry and watched movies, among themselves and with others, as ways to develop their theories and practices of adult education.<sup>396</sup> According to their assumptions, ‘duoethnography is based on the principle that the differences between participants will illuminate their cultural contexts, thanks to the experience of otherness and critical friendship, the struggles and conflicts that may arise in interpretation, and the necessity of composition to achieve an agreed version of a final but open text which celebrates those differences. Dialogue is not only between researchers, but with theories, books, objects, and artefacts, such as photographs, music, fiction, poetry, etc.’<sup>397</sup>

The dialogical process is one of the main aspects of duoethnography.<sup>398</sup> The dialogical approach offers a space for multi-voiced reflection and critical analysis on aspects of academic life that are usually silent, not discussed and non-reflected. Narration is one of our starting points and one of the steps that supports dialogue and co-writing.<sup>399</sup> We rely on narrative<sup>400</sup> and autoethnographic approach<sup>401</sup> and employ self-reflective writing about our personal journey, professional experiences and challenges as scholars, educators and university teachers.

### **Dialogue on Our Academic Journeys**

**Larissa:** Starting this paper, we decided to reflect and explore the common meanings of our academic journey and academic and personal experience in the social and historical context.

**Anja:** Perhaps here lies one difference based on our backgrounds and conceptions about (adult) education as science, research and academic subject: since my first encounters with educational sciences, I was struck

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<sup>396</sup>Formenti et al (2019, 124).

<sup>397</sup>Formenti et al. (2019, 127).

<sup>398</sup> Sawyer & Norris (2013).

<sup>399</sup>Luraschi, S. (2016). Traversing a story. A reflexive exploration of the role of a researcher. In R. Evans (Ed.), *Before, beside and after (beyond) the biographical narrative*, 491–504. Duisburg: Nisaba Verlag.

<sup>400</sup> Horsdal, M. (2011). *Telling Lives: Exploring dimensions of narratives*. Routledge.

<sup>401</sup> Adams, T., & Herrmann, A. (2020). Expanding our autoethnographic future. *Journal of Autoethnography*, 1(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1525/joae.2020.1.1.1>; Andersson, L. (2006). Analytic Autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35(4), 373–395. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241605280>

by their ‘methodism’ (‘didacticism’?). I assume it relates to their historical formation and positioning in the academy, a continuing struggle for recognition and justification as distinctive academic enterprises, and not just fields of study, applying certain ‘foundations disciplines’ to study educational issues. This is especially true for the academic position of adult and vocational education.<sup>402</sup> Instead of elaborating on the conceptual foundation, academics of education justify the scientific status of their activities by a commitment to certain methodical approaches – commonly adopted from more prestigious disciplines. Though the idea of duoethnography is interesting, I find it more important to determine how the method relates to the specific issues and aims of our pedagogical reflections.

**Larissa:** Teaching, researching and development activities are related to historically developed missions of the university embedded in values like academic freedom and professional autonomy.<sup>403</sup> As I learn from our many discussions, these values are constant for both of us, but we did not have a chance before to reflect on the meanings of academic and professional autonomy. Would this duoethnographic writing and dialogical process be supportive of this reflection?

**Anja:** I completely agree: the joint writing process could and should be an opportunity for mutual reflection on more in-depth meanings and values for academic work or working and existing in an academic environment. During the years, I remember using the phrase ‘intellectual hugging’ for sharing and caring for each other with colleagues, especially when we feel vulnerable and challenged in the current academic settings due to provisory and open ways of argumentation.

**Anja:** To start the exercise, I feel a need for a preliminary explication of the phenomenon in which we dialogue with each other. Would it be about the possibility of a university teacher–researcher addressing the challenge of environmental care and social progress in her work and position? And is it primarily about the educational or pedagogical aspects of her work and relations with others?

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<sup>402</sup> Heikkinen, A., Pätäri, J., Teräsahde, S. (2019). Disciplinary struggles in and between adult, vocational and general education. In A. Heikkinen, J. Pätäri & G. Molzberger (Eds). *Disciplinary Struggles in Education*. Tampere University Press. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-359-002-1>

<sup>403</sup> Elmgren, M., Forsberg, E. & Geschwind, L. (2016). Life and work in academia. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy* 2016(2–3). <https://doi.org/10.3402/nstep.v2.34001>

Taking this as a starting point, I would say that both environmental care and social progress, as well as their relation, have been crucial for my university work and life in general, though external and circumstantial factors have affected where the emphasis has been. In my childhood, 'environment' or 'environmental care' meant being embedded or immersed in 'nature', and like many others, I was concerned with the protection of nature. Through studies in biology, chemistry and physics, I started to understand 'nature' rather than as a multi-layered and complex material reality, including 'humans', 'society' and 'culture'. Yet, being exposed to violence and experiencing mistreatment as a girl aroused proto-feminist anger and sensitised to injuries and inequalities in any setting. Again, encounters with social maladies and learning from social, political and economic studies led to participation in diverse radical movements and activities, whose aims might be labelled as 'social progress'.

Feeling thin-skinned, shy and uncertain, the search for my own interpretations and position in academia has always taken a lot of effort from me. Being assertive, authority or a teacher in public requires courage and energy. Besides these largely inherited dispositions, my family background and earlier life experiences were not most beneficial for playing the academic game.

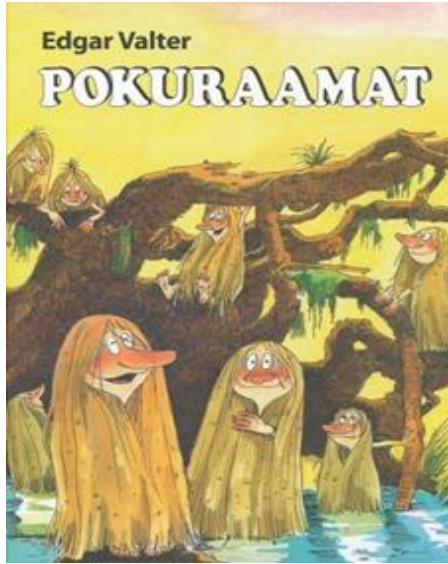
While I am not going to go through my story in the academy, some notions about its embeddedness in the life course may shed light on the meanings of educational/pedagogical aspects of this exercise.

**Larissa:** We have known each other for a long time in the academic context, particularly through joint teaching and supervision. How would you contextualise your participation in the 'Environmental Care and Social Progress' workshop as part of our joint 'Foundations and International Development of Adult Education' course?

**Anja:** Wearing such a 'heavy' rucksack, it is hard to separate certain issues as critical for participation in this very workshop or this course from a wider context of the life course and academic experience.

**Larissa:** First, I need to start from the very beginning. My professional journey at the university began at a groundbreaking time. It was time from a socialist social order to a social order based on a liberal market economy in Estonia when there were a lot of confusions, dedication and changes. People experienced that they were responsible for themselves and for others and that they could stand up for their own freedoms. In the 1990s, with the restoration of independence in Estonian society, systemic changes began, including in the field of education, which lasted for decades and resulted in social, cultural and economic changes and a change in the type of society.

Before that time, it was nature that offered choices. In other parts of society, there were no choices, or they were imposed. My daughter was small at this time, and we read together a book written by Estonian children's book author Edgar Valter, titled 'Pokuraamat',<sup>404</sup> a book that influenced both my young daughter and me.



**Figure 1:** Edgar Valter: Pokuraamat.

Edgar Valter, as a writer, was a great nature educator. He was able to describe and draw in a childlike way. It influenced my perceptions and values about nature. Edgar Valter was able to express a fundamental value: everyone has a place in nature, and everyone has a right to life. Perhaps it was through reading together that I slowly came to a clearer understanding of the ecological links between nature and life. This is one of the fundamental values that is also linked to my understanding of the adult learner and of being a learner.

**Anja:** It seems to me that the issue of 'social progress' may have been more important to you, thinking about your research and teaching topics, for example, in the international MA in adult education for social change project. My own relation to the concept is contradictory: during the radical student, youth and cultural movement, my vague belief in progress vanished, and the more I have observed and learned about what goes on our planet, the more I have become depressed, angry and hopeless. Living

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<sup>404</sup> Valter, E. (1994). "The Pokubook"



a simple and ascetic life, with retreats to nonhuman nature with minor human impact, has provided some relief from an often deeply depressive mental state. Perhaps this has also influenced my assumption that this might be the ‘optimistic’ future for humans more generally as well.

However, in practice, I have continued to react towards social injustice as if the world could become a better place. I mean rationally I don’t believe in (social) progress, but emotionally still react differently. For a long time, I have proposed that the only positive future for communities and humankind may be deliberate terminal care, i.e. peaceful and mild preparation for the gradual retreat of humans from the earth system. However, the opposite seems to happen. As the late philosopher Georg Henrik von Wright wrote,<sup>405</sup> humankind – primarily those who have economic and political power – is rushing with accelerating speed towards an abyss and when trying to halt at the edge finds it to be too late. It may be the emotional side of me that has motivated me to try (though knowing it is futile) to influence through education. While it is a bold comparison, it may remind Gramsci’s famous slogan about the ‘pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will’.<sup>406</sup>

**Larissa:** I have often felt confused and frustrated because, when meeting international students from different countries, cultures, and learning cultures, I have to be prepared to be socially and emotionally neutral, to behave and make choices in a way that is understandable to all students. It has been a long learning journey and coming to terms with the fact that I will not learn and will not fully understand the learning cultures of students from 18 different countries.

It has been a great joy to work with such international groups, as we have been able to discuss together and in dialogue the meaning of social justice in adult education in different educational paradigms. Over the years, I have become more aware of the epistemological and social positions that students in international learning groups carry and how this group and cultural diversity supports both learning and developing the meanings of social justice.

Anja, you have experience in organising the ‘Environmental Care and Social Progress’ workshop and have brought your understanding and values from this experience to our students during recent years as our visiting professor and in teaching our international groups. It was always

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<sup>405</sup> Von Wright, G. (1987). *Tiede ja ihmisjärki*. (Science and human reason) Helsinki: Otava.

<sup>406</sup> Gramsci, A. (2011). *“Letters from Prison”*. Columbia University Press.

visible how you brought to the conversations with the students the critical issues of environmental care, power and democratic changes in adult and higher education. I think that these themes are the most meaningful themes in the adult education field as research and practice.

*Anja:* Why did I end up organising the ‘Environmental Care and Social Progress’ workshop as part of a university study programme? I often jest with colleagues and students about my role as an academic secretary (or, more accurately, an event organiser and travel guide). –Perhaps this inclination traces back to my upbringing as the only daughter with four brothers, alongside my wonderfully impractical mother, where I assumed the role of supporting and caring for the household and family. It could be linked to a lack of confidence in being a prominent academic. Nevertheless, I find myself overseeing numerous networks and research associations, coordinating countless workshops, conferences, seminars and academic mobilities. Not solely because of this, but due to my understanding of academic adult and vocational education, research and teaching, I have consistently aimed to intertwine teaching with experiences in the ‘field’ – the social, economic and pedagogical realities that we contemplate and conceptualize with students.



**Photo 4:** Larissa, Anja and pop-up research seminar 11/2019, Tallinn University.

The rationale and ambition build on the self-critical interpretation of knowledge creation in adult and vocational education, at the same time learning and trying to make sense of current, historically formed concepts,

theories and models and problematising their emergence as co-constitutors of educational reality. This reflects my bias towards materialist, enactivist and contextually embedded ontological, epistemological and ethical beliefs. Therefore, also with academic and non-academic colleagues, I have felt it indispensable – though not too often successfully – the mutual sharing and exposure in research and teaching. This means a constant mixing of teaching, scientific events and diverse encounters with ‘the field’ of adult and vocational education. Due to previous reasons, it was quite natural to integrate the ‘Environmental Care and Social Progress’ workshop into the study programme.

However, the integration of this workshop into the course had more substantial reasons. Despite emphasising difficulties and struggling, I write too little about the ‘richness’ of experiences when encountering diverse, connected inequalities, injustices and environmental maladies in so many different places. I have also been privileged to learn to know scholars, students and local people in diverse places and conditions, sharing their experiences, conditions, wisdom and tenderness. In fact, the reason for choosing a certain direction in life cannot only be attributed to tackling injustices, etc., but also to being meaningful for something and someone, feeling friendship, ethical and intellectual satisfaction.

However, I have been quite frustrated with reactions and responses, especially to attempts to confront everyday life in academia with local and planetary economic, social and political realities, lately in collaboration with colleagues in the so-called Global South and when addressing the European ‘refugee crisis’ since 2015. While I feel disappointed with this banal observation, the rhetoric masks covering the marriage between global capitalism and academia have concretely slipped off in concrete everyday practices. Perhaps, unfortunately, instead of retreating to intellectual reflections, I continued to struggle more explicitly in everyday practices of teaching, supervision and collaboration with non-university actors. With considerable effort, I endeavoured to incorporate issues, controversies and perspectives from outside the Global North and academia into our daily practices. Unfortunately, my attempts received minimal recognition or understanding. On the contrary, I increasingly felt that I might be doing harm, or at least not contributing constructively, to my colleagues, students and excluded individuals. This exposure seemed to subject them to the arrogance, disregard and hostility within my academic ‘home’.

Though this is a very simplistic view, I believe there is not a significant difference in the way I have conducted myself in various courses, seminars or supervisory activities compared to my motivation in organising the

‘Environmental Care and Social Progress’ workshop. I find it meaningful to include it in the Foundations of Adult Education and Learning course that we were running together.

As I said, this is what I have always been doing, integrating any activities I feel are important and relevant with each other instead of organising separate courses, seminars, research projects, collaboration with non-university actors, etc. I am not saying it is too wise and productive, nor easy and comfortable for others, and I have also constantly been self-critical and even feeling guilty about behaving like this, especially when collaborating with asylum seekers and refugees or colleagues from the Global South. Not to mention that I have experienced almost official complaints and warnings from the side of university governance due to unconventional ways to carry out my work, despite the teachers’ legal freedom of research and teaching in the academy.<sup>407</sup>



**Photo 5:** Anja with members of EquJust research group, 10/2017, ESREA ReNadET conference, Tallinn University.

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<sup>407</sup> Heikkinen, A., Peltonen, S. (2018). Liikkuvuuden ja superdiversiteetin paradoksit - yliopiston reaktioita pakolaiskriisiin. (Paradoxes of mobility and superdiversity - reactions of university towards refugee crisis). In R. Rinne, N. Haltia, S. Lempinen, T. Kaunisto (Eds). *Eriarvoistuva maailma - tasa-arvoistava koulu?* Turku: Suomen kasvatustieteellinen seura.

**Larissa:** It was very meaningful reading about your experience related to the ‘Environmental Care and Social Progress’ workshop and the reasons for integrating the workshop into the university study programme. Reading your reflections, it seems to me that in academia and the university context, there is not very much space for really open discussions and dialogues. Why? Do we not have enough time for really open dialogues? Or do we have different social and professional positions? There are many studies that confirm that dialogue and interactions have a healing effect, and a dialogue state of mind (openness, acceptance of differences, friendliness towards others) has a positive effect on a person’s well-being.<sup>408</sup>

**Anja:** I understand from what I have written that you empathise with my motivation. However, since the course and the inclusion of the workshop were joint endeavours, I would still like to learn more about your motivation for organising the Foundations course (and all the so many joint seminars, courses, supervisions, etc.) in the collaborative manner that we did. In addition, I am curious about why you were willing to include the ‘Environmental Care and Social Progress’ workshop in the course. I wouldn’t rush to explore the potential therapeutic or other functions of duoethnography just yet.

**Larissa:** Yes, I agree, Anja. As duoethnography as an enquiry mode and approach for reflection have several tenets, we always can choose and follow what tenet(s) are important in the reflection and dialogical process: this methodology is open; each voice is explicit, new highlights, perspectives, meanings are central<sup>409</sup> – we had followed all of them and really avoided the therapeutic path.

### **Reflection and Thematisation of the Process**

This part of our duoethnography was written based on the tradition of the phenomenological interview. A phenomenological lifeworld exercise or study tries to distinguish what is unique.<sup>410</sup> It also provides two things: concrete portrayals of lived experience and insightful reflection on the meanings of the experience.<sup>411</sup> Here, we are asking each other the question: what does your academic experience mean to you? Finally, we add some thoughts on how (and why) duoethnography can be used in academia or in collaborative work between academics.

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<sup>408</sup>Raudsepp (2007).

<sup>409</sup>Sawyer and Norris (2013).

<sup>410</sup> Van Manen, M. (2005, 85). *Writing in the dark*. The Althouse Press.

<sup>411</sup> Van Manen (2005, 49).

**Larissa:** What does your academic experience mean to you?

**Anja:** I wouldn't like to jump out of the context of our course/joint activities and the inclusion of the workshop into this longer-term process between us, which is part or rather embedded into the wider framework of 'academic experience'. Our joint activities and companionship have been and still constitute the academic experience; I cannot separate them from each other. Even if there may be differences between life and experiences in academia and outside, I assume the basic intellectual, ethical and emotional concerns and passions relate and overlap. Yet, until now, academic encounters – satisfying and frustrating – may be most critical for my existence and selfhood.

Sorry if I am again a bit unconstructive, but I would like to link the question to the context of this book, our joint course (and other activities), and the integration of the workshop into the course. Could you say what organising this course and workshop means to you as part of your academic experience?

**Larissa:** Creating and organising the course has been a process of learning and development, involving doubt, sometimes uncertainty, much joy and understanding that students have different expectations about the content of the learning and how the course is organised. The main thing I have learned from you, Anja, is the importance of dialogue and how to maintain and develop dialogue in international groups. One of the challenges I have also experienced is what knowledge and approaches to share with international students so as not to remain focused only on the European educational paradigms. Learning is also about understanding what is of value and what is of no value. Finally, one of the important meanings is how to create an environment in which we have the curiosity and pleasure to meet as people, not just as university teachers and students.

Relinquishing the role of the teacher, being open and giving variation of choices give space for learning and opportunities for the student to be an independent and autonomous learner, but it can also be confusing for the students, especially for those who need a more didactic approach and instruction. For me, an important experience was also how we together cope with frustration and resistance from students.

**Anja:** You just posed a most critical topic: how do our experiences about the meaning of work and life in the academy relate to students at different phases of their academic journeys, perhaps also junior researchers in the current academic staff hierarchies? My experience is that teacher–student, senior–junior relations are increasingly commodified and alienated, where the calculative mindset dominates both parties. As teachers or seniors, we

are cautious about being responsive to the needs of our customers and co-workers, however, satisfying the academic performance indicators and ranking lists. Similarly, students and juniors are increasingly invited to generate a combination of performative and customer identities. It feels the rhetorical ideal of an academic community where staff and students of diverse seniority and backgrounds could engage in mutual intellectual endeavours has become so illusory, or scarce, and yet in my mind fundamental for the meaningfulness of academic work and professions.<sup>412</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

**Anja:** Duoethnography is an interesting approach and exercise to study experiences, but perhaps the topic ‘academic experience’ is quite demanding – general and abstract – for immersive dialogue in this format. My impression is that we have been too busy and multitasking to concentrate on reading and thinking about each other’s writing. I would say this also indicates our (academic) lives more generally: difficulties in focusing our attention and thinking due to constant acceleration, fragmentation and mediation of information flows. We are no longer able to have genuine correspondence. Might oral exercise force us into more dialogical encounters? I assume that we could make some critical and contextualising notions about studies about duoethnography.

**Larissa:** Indeed, Anja! You posed new perspectives and highlighted critical questions. Academic life is characterised by many ‘traps’: one is the identity trap. The need to be a scholar is a pressure from the system, so teaching and collegial meetings and dialogues often take second place.<sup>413</sup> The academic workload *trap*. We have a lot of varied work and academic tasks that divide and create interruptions in academic activities. Certainly, written duoethnography can be complemented by dialogues in presence. I believe based on previous literature and my experience that duoethnography creates the possibility for communication, interaction and dialogues. As collaborative writing and an open interactive process, it supports the construction or reconstruction of our beliefs and supports the

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<sup>412</sup> Heikkinen, A., Lilja, N. & Metteri, A. (2018). Yliopiston eetosta etsimässä - Kokeiluja ja kokemuksia monitieteisestä altistumisesta aikakauden polttaville kysymyksille. (In search of the ethos of university - experiments and experiences from multidisciplinary exposure to burning issues of the era). *Aikuiskasvatus*, 38(4), 320–325. <https://doi.org/10.33336/aik.88389>

<sup>413</sup> Macfarlane, B. (2011). The morphing of academic practice: Unbundling and the rise of the para-academic. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 65(1), 59–73. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2273.2010.00467.x>

development of a professional identity and knowledge creation about ourselves and the world around us.

It also has the potential as a space in which learning and knowledge-sharing can be questioned, transformed and theorised. It might strengthen, in the long run, the relationships between academics as professionals and scholars and support the development of trust, values and readiness for the dialogues. Trust in your partner and colleague, along with respect, forms a systemic field that has brought us together in this dialogue, implying the ability to see and understand the different experiences, which, in turn, suggests the ability to understand and accept our controversial academic and social realities. It represents a form of self-understanding in relation to others and more diverse representations of the world.<sup>414</sup>

**Larissa and Anja:** Below is the festive photo that reflects our long-term collaboration, academic journey and the honour of being co-supervisor for a talented young colleague: commitment, effort and joy (Photo 6).



**Photo 6:** Larissa, Kristel and Anja after the successful defence of Kristel's Ph.D. dissertation. Six years of joint supervision have come to fruition, reaching the goal. 9/2022, Tallinn University.

Based on the content analysis of our dialogue, what are the common meanings of our academic journey, academic and personal experience?

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<sup>414</sup> Sawyer (2016).



Being an academic is not only a structural position but also involves values, beliefs and continuous sense-making of experience. Our dialogue shows that meanings are not only related to the traditional view on academic experience and roles such as researching, teaching and commitment to society and to the specific field. We found several non-traditional meanings that related to our academic experience based on selfhoods and values, joint activities and companionship, and the importance of dialogue. Our experiences are satisfying and, at the same time, frustrating, continuous learning and development involving doubt and uncertainty. Our academic journeys and experiences are intertwined with our personal lives, values and continuously changing social environments and relationships, containing a myriad of identity traps.

Since academia is an essential part of the capitalist world system, where work is increasingly complex, our academic experiences, intellectual, ethical and emotional concerns, and passions are part of our experiences about living in such a system. The competitive, individualist and calculative ethos of academia narrows the space – time, encounters across different social and professional positions – for collective discussion on the aims and meanings of academia. Companionship and engagement in joint activities are critical for developing ways of navigating and coping in academia according to ethical principles that integrate intellectual, political, individual and social aims. We face the performative and sometimes customer identities of students while learning about their experiences and co-creating an environment for the development of curiosity and human encounters. By providing choices and space for mutual learning between academic staff and students with diverse seniority and backgrounds, we can engage in intellectual endeavours. Though it might remain wishful or scarce, it is fundamental to the meaningfulness of academic work. Sharing everyday academic work, such as the workshop and writing process around ‘Environmental Care and Social Progress’, may support ‘anti-hegemonic’ action and change in academia.

Duoethnography and co-authorship as a dialogical process can create a dialectical synthesis of ideas and transform meanings, clarifying and revealing the positions of the partners in the dialogue. However, it is demanding to create an immersive dialogue among academics, who are too busy and multitasking to read and think about each other’s writing due to the constant acceleration, fragmentation and mediatisation of information flows in academic life. However, as Maris Raudsepp stated, the world is dialogical – living – in its structure and functioning, indeterminate, mutable and ambiguous. Human consciousness also

functions dialogically. Dialogue is necessary for the development of the self-consciousness of each subject and for the realisation of his or her potential. It is an approach for generating novelty and also a catalyst for creativity.<sup>415</sup> Using such a methodological frame requires trustworthiness. We share the assumption of Richard Sawyer (2016, 446) that duoethnographic research and writing becomes trustworthy when researchers' reflexivity becomes apparent, and research is explicitly tied to his or her life and experience. Consequently, we invite readers to follow our reflection process and consider their positions and experiences in the academy.

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<sup>415</sup> Raudsepp (2007).