In contemporary academic debate, ‘posthumanism’ has become a key term signposting the urgency for re-grounding concepts and practices of subjectivity according to an ‘ethico-onto-epistemology’ as well as twentieth and twenty-first century scientific and bio-technological developments. This debate challenges the presumed separability of subject and object, nature and culture, human and non-human, organic and inorganic, epistemology and ontology, materiality and discursivity (Barad, 2007).

Posthuman feminism, as we understand it in this chapter, includes feminist posthumanism, feminist new materialisms, and feminist affect theories (Nicolini & Ringrose, 2020; Ringrose et al., 2018). It challenges the humanist ideal of ‘Man’ as the alleged measure of all things, uniquely sovereign over the world and over reason. This ‘Man’, presumed to be white, European, head of a heterosexual family, and abled-bodied, is the hero of Enlightenment-based humanism. With posthuman feminism, neither ‘Man’ nor anthropos as the emblem of an exceptional species can claim a central position in knowledge production practices (Braidotti, 2013b, 2016). Although posthuman feminism shares a political critique of issues of power, domination and exclusion with other emancipatory feminisms, it does not adhere to a ‘notion of equality that assumes an unproblematic belonging to the same category of humanity’ (Braidotti, 2017, p. 21). This can also be considered as a specific difference from other posthuman and new materialist theorisations that de-centre the human subject without stressing its sexualised, racialised, and naturalised location in the Anthropocene (Grusin, 2017). Another specificity can be individuated in its construction of a positive and ethical subjectivity grounded in the body, its materiality and trans-corporeality (Alaimo, 2010). A corporeal ethics has been elaborated as a pre-reflexive openness and generosity towards all ‘Others’ by feminist philosophers (Gatens, 1996; Grosz, 2004; Diprose, 2002) and has strongly influenced how organisation ethics emerge inter-corporeally and materialise in political, organisational and interpersonal projects, thus forming an alternative foundation of ethics that is not based on a disembodied set of normative values (Pullen & Rhodes, 2021). One feminist posthuman epistemology has been named ‘ethico-onto-epistemology’, which recognises that as knowing subjects we are becoming with the world and ‘the becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter’ (Barad, 2007, p. 185). This is an epistemology that favours transdisciplinarity, situatedness, accountability, and an immanent ethics. Thinking is a worldly practice and thinking along the lines of feminist posthumanities is centred on a feminist ethic of relationality, care, and difference (Åsberg & Braidotti, 2018).

Posthuman feminism, understood as a politics of knowledge, fosters a transversal conversation on knowledge production practices that does not distinguish between theory as the realm of abstract thought and method as the application of principles. This implies a significant departure from human-centred research methods since it becomes no longer acceptable to produce knowledge through interviews, observations, coding, and texts. Posthuman feminism thus argues that, since we are always already connected with our environments, methodological choices should respond in kind by fostering similar interconnections (Ulmer, 2017). Thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013) is the indication for keeping the processes of ‘knowing’, ‘being’, and ‘doing’ in a state of in-between-ness, as constant becoming. Posthumanist feminist knowledge production thus involves meeting, existing, and becoming in the company of one another; producing knowledge from ‘within’ and as part of the world (Barad, 2007).

In this chapter, inspired by the ideas of thinking with theory and using concepts as methods (Lenz Taguchi & St Pierre, 2017), we put to work four philosophical concepts—matter/mattering, decentring the subject, becoming within a research agencement, affecting/being affected—and, by disrupting each, we show how they make one another. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari wrote that a concept is an ‘act of thought’ (1994, p. 21) that orients thinking rather than answering questions with a predetermined field of possibilities.

**MATTER/MATTERING**

One key scholar for posthumanist feminist researchers, in MOS and other fields, particularly among qualitative researchers, is the feminist/physicist/philosopher Karen Barad. She clearly positions her work within a posthuman framework that ‘marks a refusal to take the distinction between “human” and “non-human” for granted’ (Barad, 2007, p. 32). Inspired by theories in quantum mechanics, Barad proposes ‘agential realism’ as an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being. In the agential realist approach, such an empirical inseparability is matched with the inseparability of ontology, epistemology, and ethics that Barad marks by using the neologism ‘ethico-onto-epistemology’ (see also Geerts & Carstens, 2019), which broadens the focus of quantum mechanics from seemingly independent (but actually entangled) sub-atomic particles to include the everyday world as well as organisations. For example, Salmela and Valtonen discuss the MOS implications of this theoretical stance in a study that highlights the importance of engaging in and with other-than-humans when managing a tourist attraction like a national park, which means ‘paying close attention to changes in the nature, listening to the inhabitants of many species living in the national park and managing the national park together with multiple others’ (2019, p. 27).

Through agential theory, materialities are re-introduced to social theory, along with discourses that marked the linguistic turn in MOS, humanities, and social sciences more generally. This new feminist materialism attempts to avoid dualisms and/or privileging discourse...
over matter, and thus interweaves materialities and discourses (Harding, Ford, & Lee, 2017). Indeed, Barad argues that matter and meaning are not separate elements but inextricably fused, leading us to say that researcher and researched are always ‘intra-acting’ in scientific practices, constituting the phenomenon at issue (including any organisational phenomena) as well as co-producing scientific knowledge. The notion of intra-action enables a radical reworking of the traditional notion of causality that largely influenced the methodological literature, even in MOS. In agential realism, no priority is given to either materiality or discursivity; neither stands outside the other, but they emerge through intra-actions.

‘Intra-action’ is a neologism—and key element in Barad’s agential realism—to signify the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. While ‘interaction’ assumes separate individual agencies that precede the interaction—say, the researcher and the researched, the observer and the observed, or the interviewer and the interviewee—the notion of intra-action recognises that no distinctive agencies precede this relationship, but they rather emerge through their intra-action—which also includes non-human beings, objects, and nature. For example, in MOS, Pecis and Panourgias refer to intra-actions in their analysis of innovation as a phenomenon that ‘can be depicted in its entirety through the highlighting of the entanglement of different types of materiality’ (2013, p. 3) such as the researcher’s body, the substances involved in the experiments conducted in the biomedical research centre they study, the research practices and techniques, and the technological instruments, *inter alia*.

Researchers working with Barad’s theory focus on data ‘hot spots’—‘those affective relations to data that both “disconcert” and create a sense of “wonder” where data “glows” for the researcher in various moments of fieldwork, analysis, and beyond’ (MacLure, 2013; Ringrose & Renold, 2014, p. 2). This is a remarkable methodological change from epistemological presumptions of universality, objectivity, and detachment that have been criticised extensively by feminist scholars (Harding, 2018) who discussed them with the notion of reflexivity (e.g. Devault, 1990; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). However, the Baradian methodological approach takes feminist reflexivity to a new level by introducing ‘diffraction’.

Barad builds on Haraway’s (1997) suggestion of a ‘diffractive methodology’ as an alternative useful counterpoint to reflection: ‘both are optical phenomena, but whereas reflection is about mirroring and sameness, diffraction attends to patterns of difference’ (Barad, 2007, p. 29). Yet, Barad explains that

> diffraction does not fix what is the object and what is the subject in advance, and so, unlike methods of reading one text or set of ideas against another where one set serves as a fixed frame of reference, diffraction involves reading insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge. (p. 30; see also Barad, 2014)

From this post-representational methodological perspective, ‘we should not rush for solid meaning and definitive interpretation of data’ (Ringrose & Renold, 2014, p. 2). To put it differently,

matter is not a passive object or ground that is ‘made to mean’ by social discourses that simply ‘interpret’ it—to think so would be to return epistemologically to ideas about the primacy of nature and its separation from the human. The agential realist point … is that what comes to matter as reality can only be apprehended as a material-discursive nondualistic whole in which differential patterns of mattering emerge and come into being. (Fairchild & Taylor, 2019, pp. 3–4)
Hence, there is no neutral and universal scientific truth that we can produce because we—as researchers, viewers, and knowers—are part of the measuring apparatus: we are implicated in and entangled with the intra-acting phenomena that we study or cut agentially. Accordingly, diffraction is a productivist reading rather than a critique that allows the effects of different differences to become evident (Truman, 2019). For example, in a study about practices in and around insurance company call centres, Nyberg points out the importance of identifying the agential cuts to show which alternative cuts are possible because, in this way, researchers can ‘challenge the privileged position of certain actors, for instance, the position of managers vis-à-vis workers, and, in many call centres, technology over workers’ (2009, p. 1195).

With this remark comes a responsibility—or response-ability, a capacity to respond (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1997)—that we, as researchers, have to bring or (cut) into being the world, which may give rise to conditions of possibility for some bodies or may exclude other bodies (Cozza, Bruzzone, & Crevani, 2021). These im-possibilities can be faced during the research process as well as in the texts we write. Within a diffractive reading, we cannot merely pay attention to what matters but also need to consider what is excluded from mattering because of how we design the overall research process. In this, we recognise the posthuman ethics that inform (feminist) research practices by shifting the focus away from the power of researchers-over research participants toward the ‘world-making’ powers of practices of inquiry … The object of ethical concern from a posthumanist perspective—what it regards as unethical—is research that claims to innocently represent the world ‘as it really is’. (Mauthner, 2019, p. 671)

This ethical concern is ‘not simply supplemental to the practice of science but an integral part of it’ (Barad, 2007, p. 37) because what we say about the world, through science, is not a representation of an independent reality but rather about the real consequences, interventions, creative possibilities, and responsibilities of intra-acting within and as part of the world.

In this regard, a posthumanist methodology relies on a relational ontology that, grounded in dynamic agentic intra-active connections between researcher and researched, can provide a better account of the ongoing materialisation of the world and its becoming in research practice agencement (as discussed in this chapter). This relational methodological sensibility decentres human subjects and matter itself, because neither humans nor matter pre-exist their relations but rather occupy the same ontological plane.

This means that when the principles of relational materialism are enacted in the thinking and writing of the researcher, the attention necessarily shifts from matter or subjects and subjectivities in themselves, to the relations and the networks from which they emerge and within which they are constituted. (Bodén et al., 2019, p. 4)

In other words, posthumanism negates the concept of the solo researcher immersed in their data. Instead, the focus is on the encounter between researcher and researched as mutually constituted, entangled agencies, and diffractive analysis of such intra-actions makes new mappings, onto-epistemological mappings that allow something new emerge. Therefore, diffractive approaches can be described as engaged and creative, and incorporating the experiences and insights of sexualised, racialised, and naturalised researchers to specify a particular contextual cut in data production and analysis.
DECENTRING THE SUBJECT

To further delve into posthumanist feminism and its methodological enquiries, we refer to the work of feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti, who has influenced research on management and organisations (e.g. Ergene, Calás, & Smircich, 2018; Huopalainen, 2020; Valtonen, Salmela, & Rantala, 2020) by offering one of the most thoroughly developed and penetrating critiques of humanism and anthropocentrism.

Braidotti (2013a) points out that the posthuman dimension of post-anthropocentrism, as introduced earlier in this chapter, is a deconstructive move that challenges species supremacy and any lingering notion of human nature, *anthropos* and *bios*, as categorically distinct from the life of animals and non-humans, or *zoe*. What comes to the fore instead is a ‘naturecultures’ continuum (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1997, 2003), that is, new human/non-human linkages, as well as complex contemporary media-technological interfaces. Once the centrality of *anthropos* is replaced by an expanded relational self—which includes all other non-human beings and objects—numerous boundaries separating ‘Man’ from his others tumble down, creating a cascade effect that opens up unexpected perspectives with methodological implications. We could say, with Barad, that a post-anthropocentric approach urges us to *cut* otherwise (but remain aware of cutting) our research practice, to account for our positioning as researchers in doing research while decentring the human, the ‘Man’, as master of the earth, as well as recognising the agency of multiple others and multispecies encounters in their situated complexity (Valtonen et al., 2020). In other words, post-anthropocentrism requires a mutation of our shared (scholarly and disciplinary) understanding of critical thinking and research design in the era of bio-genetic and technologically mediated advanced capitalism (Braidotti, 2019). While Barad proposes diffraction to attend to details of such a complexity, Braidotti invites a cartographic method.

A cartography is a theoretically-based and politically-informed reading of the present which fulfils the function of providing both analytic and exegetical tools for critical thought as well as creative theoretical alternatives. Making cartographies entails making genealogies of theory formation according to a non-dualist approach, which does not follow the classificatory lines that first dominated modernist thought before penetrating many different parts of life. Feminist theory has contributed to highlighting how

the binary logic of identity and otherness has distributed differences along a scale of asymmetrical power relations. This had reduced the notion of ‘difference’ to pejoration: it spells inferiority and social and symbolic disqualification for those who get branded as ‘others’. (Braidotti, 2016, p. 25)

Shifting classificatory lines of thought into a cartographic mode of doing research fulfils a methodological function by assisting us researchers in learning to think differently about ourselves, in response to the complexity of our time and, accordingly, reframing our way of studying organisational phenomena.

The aim of an adequate cartography is to bring forth alternative figurations or *conceptual personae* for the kind of knowing subjects currently constructed. All figurations are localised and hence immanent to specific conditions; for example, the nomadic subjects, or the cyborg, are no mere metaphors, but material and semiotic signposts for specific geo-political and historical locations. (Braidotti, 2019, p. 34)
Haraway (1997) proposes the figuration of OncoMouse as the first patented animal in the world, a transgenic organism created for the purposes of research and that embodies the techno-body par excellence. Similarly, Braidotti (2013, p. 74) refers to Dolly the sheep, the first cloned mammal, as ‘the ideal figuration for the complex bio-mediated temporalities and forms of intimacy that represent the new post-anthropocentric human–animal interaction’.

Such a political, rather than abstract figuration helps in thinking across established binary categories (nature/culture, born/man-made) as well as to reject the semiotic method or, at least, the semiotic method present in earlier structuralist semioticians who neglected that language (for example, figurative language) is not pure sign, but also a thing. Language is tied to voice, to materiality and, thus, we read not only what language says, but also what it does—its material deployment, the social intervention it accomplishes. The methodological implications of this argument have been clear to feminist scholars, in MOS and other disciplines, insofar as researchers using a feminist approach believe research should begin from everyday experiences and that the voices of research participants should be heard (Harding, 2018; Kitzinger, 2017). However, the posthuman, post-anthropocentric approach takes ‘listening voices’ to the new level of ‘voicing living matters’ (Ergene et al., 2018, p. 232)—which invites thinking across bodies by emphasising their interconnections and accounting for this multiplicity in our research practices.

Voicing and/or listening to non-human voices means applying an affirmative approach that leads to alternative research projects and possibilities by designing research as non-representational and experimental. The post-qualitative practice of ‘writing differently’ materialises Braidotti’s cartographic approach and is an example of how some organisational scholars have recently problematised common assumptions about the primacy of the human subject. For example, building on Haraway’s work, Prasad (2016) introduces the ‘cyborg writing’ that, by allowing the emergence of a multiplicity of situated and embodied voices, displays its political roots in criticising the humanism and human exceptionalism, products of Western thinking, that are generally taken for granted in organisational studies. Sayers (2016, p. 382) argues that

the tendency of organisational studies to make humans the exclusive focus is an Achille’s heel holding it back … human self-aggrandisement is a vast problem for nonhumans, but also ultimately for humans and their organisations. By not addressing and incorporating nonhumans, organisational theory limits its potential to engage with contemporary problems.

As an alternative, Sayers offers ‘meat-writing’ as a playful, transgressive practice of thinking and writing about organisational theory while unsettling and disrupting the current management and organisational language in favour of a subtler, less assertive, and poetic language that makes room for animals as well as other non-human actors. Similarly, Huopalainen (2020, p. 14) uses ‘dog-writing’ to discuss the potential of a feminist research practice to engage with posthumanist thinking, writing, and caring in the field of organisation studies: a field that ‘has not truly found language [sic] to convey the complexity, multiplicity and affectivity of humanimal relations’.

The subjectivity emerging from texts written otherwise composes a relational community, a co-operative trans-species effort that takes place transversally, in-between nature/technology, male/female, black/white, local/global, present/past, in assemblages that flow across and displace binaries, and demand new concepts or navigational methodological tools to help us through the complexities of the present. A post-anthropocentric methodology is not without
difficulty because it implies releasing our bond to *anthropos*, on which the entire organisational infrastructure is built, thus causing also an affective difficulty (Braidotti, 2016) that depends on the terms of one’s engagement with it and, we add, on the normativity of the disciplinary identity. However, disidentification from established patterns of thought is key to a methodological qualitative leap in a new and more complex direction.

**BECOMING WITH A RESEARCH AGENCEMENT**

Through Barad’s and Braidotti’s influence, and through the concepts of matter and the de-centred subject, we have appreciated the possibilities offered by a passage from an ontology of being to one of becoming. However, in this epistemological turn, we must acknowledge the influence of Deleuze (1988) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 1994) not only on the concept of becoming-with, but also on the concept of *agencement*, which enables us to look at researchers as immersed within the material-discursive research practice they perform. The two philosophers have had a tremendous impact on the methodological reflection termed ‘post-qualitative inquiry’ (Lather, 2008; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013) and active in the debate on feminist new materialisms and posthuman feminism. Because Deleuze and Guattari’s voice in this debate is articulate and quite complex, we limit ourselves to the concepts of ‘agencement’ and ‘research agencement’, acknowledging the common translation in English as ‘assemblage’ and research assemblage. However, we retain the French term wherever possible, using assemblage only when quoting other authors.

As a philosophical term, agencement was introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) with the sense of ‘in connection with’. The French term has a processual connotation, retaining its root in agency—the idea of establishing or forming an assemblage. In Deleuze and Guattari’s vocabulary, agencement re-codes emergence and becoming (Venn, 2006). Therefore, the term agencement can recast the structure/agency division, pointing to the process of linking heterogeneous elements in an open-ended process. It recasts the very idea of agency, not as a possession of human or non-human actors, but as an emergent effect of a flow of agency in the connections of elements (Gherardi, 2016; Hultin & Mähring, 2017). Rather than beginning an empirical inquiry with what subjects think, say, or do, the focus is on the flow of agency spreading from—and circulating within—affective-material-discursive practices.

The idea of a research agencement contains important methodological principles. First, it implies that the (sexualised, racialised, naturalised) researchers are part of the same agencement that contains their methods, the other human participants, the materials, and technologies, as well as discourses that are entangled or entangled ‘in-between’ the readers and the writers of the research texts. Positioning ourselves as researchers, inside the research agencement, is an implicit acknowledgement of the situatedness of knowledge, as theorised by Haraway (1988), and of its partiality, as theorised by Strathern (1991). This feminist epistemological positioning of the knowing subject continues the tradition of post-qualitative scholars. Among them, Sedgwick (1997) theorises a ‘reparative reading’, in contrast to the more typical ‘paranoid model’ of critical theory, which is about exposing, demystifying, and situating the theorist as ‘the one who knows’, a master of revealing the false consciousness of others. Sedgwick calls for a more generous critical practice, a practice more about love than suspicion and grounded in embodied experiences, feelings, and intimacy. Lather (2008) stresses the influence of queer theory on different practices of knowing and doing. It is about difference
without opposition, differences that are expanded rather than policed or repressed or judged. In the same vein, Barad (2014) proposes that, instead of distancing, othering, or degrading others, a detailed, attentive, and careful reading of one idea through another (i.e. diffractive reading) may lead to more generative ‘inventive provocations’ (Dolphins & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 50) and creative insights. As others have stressed (Cutcher, Riach, & Tyler, 2021; Beavan, 2021), there is an urgent need in MOS for new forms of knowledge where respect and generosity are evident. Therefore, positioning the researchers within a research agencement implies the definition of their subjectivity in terms of their responsiveness towards others, their vulnerability, and their becoming with others. Moreover, the second important principle inherent in assuming a research agencement is that neither the researchers (nor the other humans) are at centre stage, nor are they separated from the other elements, but rather become together with other non-humans, more-than-humans, discourses, knowledges, and the earth.

To illustrate the potentialities of the concept of becoming-with as a method for feminist empirical research, we mention its use in the study of sexuality by Fox and Aldred (2015), in several studies on teenage sexuality mediated by social media, and in digital feminism activism. In shifting the conceptualisation of sexuality from the centrality of human bodies to sexuality-assemblage (Fox & Aldred, 2013, 2014, 2015), we move from the anthropocentric or interactive view of sexuality, as an intimate human activity, to sexualising as a social practice that is technologically mediated. Sexuality is then positioned as an impersonal affective flow within a sexuality-assemblage that keeps together the wide range of affective relations including family, friends and peers; material things such as alcohol, condoms, social events, money, cars and sex education materials; social formations such as moral standards, norms and street culture; and idiosyncratic elements such as celebrities or skateboards, though many other affects are also involved. (Fox & Bale, 2018, pp. 404–405)

In the research-activism of teenage sexuality, the terms ‘slut’ and ‘acting slaggy’, have been used as discursive and material categories with powerful affective and violent force in a wider socio-historical assemblage of classed and raced sexual meanings of femininity (Ringrose et al., 2013). The authors mapped how girls are sexually regulated (by boys and by each other) through the terms ‘slut’ or ‘acting slaggy’ and how the injurious norm of these regulations could be disrupted and possibly transformed within a feminist research assemblage.

The case of teenage sexualisation shows how technological social mediation is entangled with a digital corporeal culture. Studies of socially mediated digital images show how ‘selfies’ go beyond the representational paradigm. Selfies here are construed as networked material-discursive entanglements wherein bodies, photos, cameras, and expressed selves are always and already touching (Warfield, 2016; Warfield & Demone, 2018). Feminist materialist scholars have widely experimented with forms of research-activism in secondary school: Ringrose and Mendes (2018) analysed how teens use Twitter to oppose rape culture and create affective solidarity; Renold (2018), with a project on feminism and art-based methodologies, rethinks and reworks sexual regulation and harassment; Renold and Ringrose (2017) explore how the digital affordances of Facebook ‘tagging’ can operate in ways that support and transgress normative territories of dis/embodied gender, sexuality, and age; Ringrose and Rawlings (2015) analyse bullying practices as discursive-material performativity.

Therefore, the Deleuzian concept of agencement and its posthuman feminist appropriation have informed an apparatus for approaching relations of power that perform gendered
becomings (Coffey & Ringrose, 2016), for conceptualising a posthumanist practice theory (Gherardi, 2019a) that looks at practices as situated agencement, and for grounding social relations as always technologically mediated, i.e. socio-material (Introna, 2013). As we illustrate in the next section, the conception of affect as cutting across and connecting bodies (human and more-than-human) points to the capacity of human and more-than-human bodies to affect and be affected by one another within an agencement. In other words, agency flows within an agencement thanks to the circulation of affect.

AFFECTING/BEING AFFECTED

In MOS, the turn to affect has come about slowly and only in recent years (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011; Karppi et al., 2016; Kenny, Muhr, & Olaison, 2011; Pullen, Rhodes, & Thanem, 2017; Vachhani, 2013), whereas in other communities, including cultural studies, humanities, and psychology, discussions of the theme began much earlier. Its starting point was in the mid-1990s, when critical theorists and cultural critics proposed a substantive ontological and epistemological shift. Significant contributions to this discussion include Massumi (1995, 2002), Clough and Halley (2007), Gregg and Seigworth (2010), and Blackman and Venn (2010). The trajectories that have particularly influenced the study of work and organisation, according to Fotaki, Kenni, and Vachhani’s (2017) introduction to a special issue of Organization, are four: psychoanalysis (the main reference is Butler, 2007), non-humanist philosophical traditions (Massumi, 2002), the new vitalist strand in feminist theory (Bennett, 2010; Grosz, 2004), and politically engaged work (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010).

We recognise that it is a difficult task to draw a cartography of the turn to affect. Nevertheless, some general but fundamental points of agreement may be outlined: i) affect is two-sided and unintentional, meaning that it consists of non-conscious or not-yet conscious bodily capacities to affect and to be affected—two capacities that develop and proceed in parallel; ii) it is a flow of entangled forces, which remain (invisible) in excess of the practices of the human ‘speaking subject’ and co-emerge through autonomic responses; iii) it is an assemblage of potentialities, located outside the narrative, which augment or diminish the individual’s capacity to act or engage with other agents (human or non-human). Therefore, we can affirm—following a Deleuzian-Spinozist tradition—that a precarious consensus regarding the meaning of ‘affect’ is constructed around the idea that it lies beyond the threshold of awareness, subjective meaning, and discourse; it is processual and relational.

Following Massumi, we find that ‘affect is most often used loosely as a synonym for emotion. But … emotion and affect—if affect is intensity—follow different logics and pertain to different orders’ (1995, p. 88). In distinguishing between the two, emotion is said to pertain to biography, while affect pertains to biology (Nathanson, 1992); emotion requires a subject, while affect does not.

Within the variegated debate on the turn to affect, the concept of ordinary affect has a specific place that has been defined and illustrated by Kathleen Stewart (2007, p. 4): ‘Ordinary affects are the varied, surging capacities to affect and to be affected that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies and emergences. They’re things that happen’. Their significance lies in the way they pick up the intensities that they build, and in the thoughts and feelings they make possible, rather than in ‘meanings’ encapsulated in an order of representations. Therefore, the question is not what affect ‘is’, but rather
what affect ‘does’ and what ‘potential modes of knowing, relating and attending to things are already somehow present in them in a state of potentiality and resonance’ (Stewart, 2007, p. 6). Paying attention to the ‘vibrancy’ of matter (Bennett, 2010), and noticing ordinary affects, imply devoting analytic attention to how, in working practices, affect creates an atmosphere in a workplace and how, within a research agencement, it circulates as the power of each element to affect and be affected by all the other entangled elements. In pointing to ‘analytic attention’, we are not suggesting a search for rationalistic explanations of what escapes cognition, nor taking refuge in a mystical or ineffable reality. Rather, we suggest a search for noticing (Gherardi & Cozza, forthcoming) and writing in a non-representational (Thrift, 2008) or more-than-representational (Lorimer, 2005) language and for exploring methodologically the limits of representation (Knudsen & Stage, 2015). In organisation studies, we have seen the flourishing of inquiries focused on affect, either theoretical, in connection with a posthumanist practice theory (Gherardi, 2017a, 2017b; Gherardi et al., 2018), or empirical, in relation to the organisational identity of start-up entrepreneurs, the affecto-rhythmic order of organizational practices (Katila, Laine, & Parkkari, 2019; Katila, Kuismin, & Valtonen, 2020), and vital materiality in the practice of craft work (Bell & Vachhani, 2020). Affect from a feminist perspective has also been influential at the intersection of organisation and communication studies (Ashcraft, 2017, 2020).

An approach explicitly inspired by affect, by research agencement, and by spacing, is affective ethnography (Gherardi, 2019b). It suggests a positioning of the researchers inside the research agencement and in relation to the materiality of the fieldwork, with an active attitude towards ordinary affects in everyday organisational life. Affect is grounded within a research agencement to escape the temptation of defining affect as an it, an entity or a thing (Blackman, 2015). To escape the temptation of thingification—as Barad (2003, p. 812) terms the process of turning relations into ‘things’, ‘entities’, ‘relata’—we must consider that, so far, language has received too much power in establishing relationships between things and words in representational practices.

Affective ethnography is based on fine-grained attunement (Gherardi & Cozza, forthcoming), on relying on the researchers’ bodily resonance with the encounters in the field, on their capacity to affect and be affected, an attunement to the becoming with the place, and an attunement with their own power to act, their capacity to ‘make do’, either intentionally or unintentionally. Affective ethnography is indebted to Stewart’s understanding of worl ding, i.e. the compositional holding together of worlds in ways that are always open to the force of internal and external variation. To that end, she proposes the description of random cases of atmosphere attunement that ‘are meant to suggest something of the plasticity and density of lived compositions now proliferating in ordinary scenes of living through what is happening’ (Stewart, 2011, p. 446). Affective ethnography describes a style of fieldwork that may use affect as a resource for being in the field and for writing affectively.

There remains plenty of scope, therefore, for theorising about the affective dimensions of posthumanist empirical research that avoids both the seduction of a subject-centred humanism and the aridity of a form of realism that rejects any sense in which forces in excess of human bodies are felt in those bodies. The uncanny (Beyes & Steyaert, 2013), the ghostly (Pors, Olaison, & Otto, 2019), the not-yet data (Benozzo & Gherardi, 2020), the atmospheric (Jørgensen & Holt, 2019; Julmi, 2016), or the unspeakable (Keller, Mendes, & Ringrose, 2016) may find a way into the vitality of matter/mattering lurking in MOS.
CONCLUSION

Posthuman feminism, understood as a politics of knowledge, fosters a transversal conversation about practices of knowledge production that do not distinguish between theory as the realm of abstract thought and method as the application of principles. Practicing posthumanist knowledge is thus meeting, existing, and becoming in the company of one another; it is producing knowledge from ‘within’ and as part of the world (Barad, 2007). Guided by these principles, this chapter has explored four concepts (matter/mattering, decentring the subject, becoming within a research agencement, and affecting/being affected) grounded in posthumanism and in post-qualitative feminist research. They allow one to bring matter back into MOS, positioning sexualised, racialised, and naturalised researchers within the research agencement while enabling them to become-with in affective connection with multiple Others. In concluding the chapter, we mention how those concepts have inspired four methodologies: diffraction, cartography, research agencement, and affective ethnography.

When we pay attention to diffractive reading or diffractive methodology, the feminist knowing subject is ethically positioned as respectful of difference and generative of differences. A diffractive approach

opens an onto-epistemological space of encounter where a researcher’s task is not to tell of something that exists independently of the encounter (producing the appearance of truth), but to open up an immanent subjective truth—that which becomes true, ontologically and epistemologically, in the moment of the encounter. (Davies, 2014, p. 734)

Instead of distancing, othering, or degrading others, a detailed, attentive, and careful diffractive may lead to more generative ‘inventive provocations’ (Dolphins & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 50) and creative insights. As others have stressed (Cutcher, Riach, & Tyler, 2021), there is an urgent need in organisation studies for new forms of knowledge where respect and generosity are evident.

When we consider cartographies as a nonlinear and nomadic mapping practices, which are ‘both critical—of dominant visions of knowing subjects—and creative—by actualizing the virtual and unrealized insights and competences of marginalized subjects’ (Braidotti, 2019, p. 39), we approach knowledge production as an ethico-onto-epistemological process. Posthuman feminism has challenged the representation of Leonardo da Vinci’s famous Vitruvian Man with the Vitruvian Cat (Braidotti, 2013b), as evidence of a posthuman move that, in acknowledging our entanglement with the more-than-human, displaces the historic privilege of a white, European man as the referential point of human existence and the source of knowing methodologies. The more-than-human is open to the agentic forces of other living beings (and our response-abilities in relating to materialities other than our own) and to non-living beings.

When we consider the entanglement of human/nonhuman/more-than-human/material-discursive as an agencement of forces, we bring forward a de-individualised knowing operation in which not only has the Vitruvian Man been displaced, but the knowing subject has also been positioned inside the knowledge practices thus under construction along with their performative effects. The posthuman empirical project intends to experiment with a changed concept of agency as emergent from a research practice agencement. A reconfiguration of agency in conducting feminist posthumanist research opens to a more relational and articulated illustration
of socio-material events, encounters, and social processes, such as gendering, racialisation, sexualisation, subjectivation, and naturalisation. ‘I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess’, is how Puar (2012) states the issue of the feminist subject and situated knowledge. In fact, if researchers and their tools are considered within a research agencement, the politics of location is at stake, since knowledge is produced by an apparatus embedded within particular geographical, economic, and social positionings that affect what materialises as knowledge and what is excluded from mattering.

When we consider affect as the capacity of the elements entangled within a research agencement to affect each other and be affected by the forces circulating within it, we complete the onto-epistemological operation of producing different knowledge and producing knowledge differently (St. Pierre, 1997). We have illustrated this by presenting affective ethnography as an expression of a posthumanist politics of location in conducting fieldwork. We wish to close the argument of this chapter by returning to where it began, namely to the challenge posed by diffraction.

The lesson that posthuman feminism may offer to MOS is that knowledge can be done differently, and that critique should not necessarily be destructive. We can make Latour’s (2004, p. 246) remark our own, stating that ‘the critic is not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of naïve believers, but the one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather’. What we want to stress is the ‘reparative potential’ (Niccolini & Ringrose, 2020) of posthumanist feminist research in addressing social inequalities, environmental devastation, and historic and contemporary forms of violence, by changing the conceptual apparatus of knowledge production and thus the politics of knowledge embedded therein. When Haraway (2016) and Barad (2007) add a hyphen to responsibility, and several organisational scholars (for example, Pullen & Rhodes, 2014) pursue the link between corporeal ethics and politics, they are stressing how response-able research practices are situationally and ethically attuned to material-discursive power relations in every research context.

NOTES

1. Michela Cozza is Associate Professor and member of the New Organization and Management Practices research group at the School of Business, Society and Engineering at Mälardalen University, Sweden.
2. Silvia Gherardi is Professor II at the School of Business, Society and Engineering, Mälardalen University, Sweden.

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