

**LEARNING AS BECOMING:  
THE SUBJECT, BODY AND KNOWING IN LEARNING**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
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# Certificate of authorship

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I certify that the work presented in this dissertation has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged in the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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**Date:** 4 December 2015



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# Abstract

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This thesis offers a conceptualisation of how individuals learn in experience in their everyday lives by locating learning in individual accounts of personal change. Framed by Karen Barad's concept of intra-action grounded in onto-epistemology, the inquiry understands learning as a continuous process that shapes us towards becoming who we are and what we do in our everyday lives. The thesis locates learning in interactions in the immediate world as an ongoing process of becoming in life. The fluid nature of interactions means that objects and subjects do not exist prior to engagement but emerge as a result of it. By giving ontological privilege to relations instead of forms of being, this approach disrupts notions of the stable subject, the essential body and reified knowledge in learning.

The research employs a post qualitative approach, applying diffractive analysis to read the life experiences of change of eight female participants from different parts of Nepal. In asking 'How does learning work?' in the participants' narratives, the thesis argues for and explicates the nature of three interconnected dimensions of learning: the subject, the body and the process of knowing.

Drawing on ideas from Deleuze and Guattari and Spinoza, the thesis argues that the subject in learning can be explicated as a nomadic multiplicity, consistently in motion and constituted through material discursive intra-actions. The body is conceptualised as a desiring assemblage of material and discursive elements that constantly shift by affecting others and by being affected. Knowing is an emergent process of coming to matter in the world through becoming. Knowing is becoming.

Through four linked propositions the thesis presents an account of learning as becoming as an emergent ongoing phenomenon characterised by expansion in the complexity of the bodily composition. Bodily complexity changes through shifts in the relational composition with respect to the immediate milieu in which it is situated. In the process of this bodily becoming, the context in which it is situated also emerges.

The significance of this study lies in its theoretical contribution to reconceptualising the notion of learning as a process of becoming in ways that allow us to better understand the processes of learning in everyday life and the possibilities of personal change. ■

