

47

A reflection

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A reflection

On how to do a project at Oslo National Academy of the Arts in a pandemic.

About developing the idea

My interests have been and continue to be to explore:

Individual expressions in singular bodies

Group collaboration and togetherness

Tools, categorization and systems

Dialogue, listening and interpretation

The master's project evolved from the idea of working with different people with different movement backgrounds and varying ages. The people could be anyone: trained dancers, someone trained in another physical movement system, or someone not used to move other than everyday movements.

I'm very interested in working with many people because I'm curious about how different people understand movement and the tasks I create and how we can be in a dialogue about the expression and meaning of the tasks. Every person is a valuable interpretation, and many people can be divided into groups of people. It's interesting for me to have several groups of people working at the same time in the space.

In the master's project, I defined a set of words describing physical, mechanical forces related to gravity unfolding in time. They are variations of pushing, dragging, acceleration and deformation. The set of words I have worked with are:

jump, drag, push, lift, turn, let go, sink, gather, tilt, fall, rise, lean, twist, squeeze, roll, collapse, throw, cast, stretch, swing, spread and sway.

I chose the set of words describing physical forces as an entry point because that is something every human is experiencing. We feel the effects of gravity on the body we have every day. It's possible to work with the physical forces in one way or another, no matter where one comes from, how one's body is and what physical training one has experienced, and how one interprets the tasks. It's interesting how different people understand the words and the physical forces in their individual bodies and how they work with the words and physical forces together in groups, working in different ways and in different proximity.

I created a lot of tasks based on the set of words. I have tried working with the tasks in different ways, in dialogue with the participants, working individually and in groups. The tasks concern how the physical forces appear in one body, in two bodies, and in several bodies and how they relate to each other. I was curious about how the physical forces impact the bodies and how the bodies impact the physical forces. The individual interpretation of the words, together with the participants' movement training and habits, gives the differences a physical expression. One body working with a force is different from two bodies working with the same force, which is different from three bodies working with the same force and so on. It's interesting how groups of people work with the words in tasks through their bodies and how the group can work with the different participants' strengths and weaknesses.

About the process

The process started with developing the idea, thinking about how to get in touch with people, how to work together, and making a draft on how to explore the physical forces in individual bodies and in groups.

I made a group on Facebook, inviting people that I had danced with before or people that I had met briefly on different occasions related to art, dance, or movement, to explore with me. Some of us met for sessions in December 2019, just trying out different ways of working with words. Turn and jump together as a group is an example of one of the first tasks.

I continued to work with some of the people from the group on Facebook, and I got in touch with new people that joined the project. I was also thinking about how to get in touch with a diverse group of people with different movement backgrounds. I posted in a movement group on Facebook, wrote to a prison, and eventually put posters in a couple of public libraries in Oslo without many people joining. I was thinking about contacting the elderly, refugees, and people doing traditional dance styles but was hindered by the Covid-19 pandemic.

I had a clear idea about what to work with in the second semester of the first year of my master's studies, and by then, I had established a group of movers. I got in touch with the KHiO choir led by a student at the Academy of Fine Art at Oslo National Academy of the Arts. The group of movers and the choir collaborated for some time, exploring words with movement and sounds. The collaboration became a performance at Oslo National Academy of the Arts on the 20th of January 2020 and a performance at the student-led art gallery at The Oslo School of Architecture and Design on the 10th of March 2020. Oslo went into lockdown a couple of days after, and it ended the collaboration with the choir. We tried to meet several times after, but Covid-19 restrictions and shutdowns made it too difficult.

People entered and left the project throughout the process. Some of the external participants in the project heard about what I was doing and contacted me, or I heard about them from friends or acquaintances, and I contacted them. I worked with several of the participants for a longer time, both in groups and individually. In the spring semester of 2021, up to the performances, most of the sessions became individual sessions because of strict restrictions and changing knowledge about contamination and the possible side effects of Covid-19. When the restrictions were extensive, we met individually on Zoom.

In total, I worked, explored, and played with 47 people, with six external participants joining the seven students at first-year bachelor's contemporary dance for the performances in May 2021.

About the method

It's interesting for me to work with and from a set of words describing physical, mechanical forces. The set of words I defined was: jump, drag, push, lift, turn, let go, sink, gather, tilt, fall, rise, lean, twist, squeeze, roll, collapse, throw, cast, stretch, swing, spread and sway.

I think the set of words together form a whole, and the words function as a tool for dialogue, a tool to see and listen with, and something that can generate physical material. The words can be used alone or put together in pairs or sequences, in individual bodies, and together in groups. I made tasks as a manual for how to use the words in individual bodies and in groups, but the specific way the participants solve the tasks is open for interpretation. I made many tasks in advance before actually working with someone physically, and a lot of the tasks evolved while working together. New tasks were created in the studio based on what happened when we worked together. The physical material was accumulated through the process, working with the participants individually and in groups.

About creating the movement system

Because of the Covid-19 restrictions still lasting into the spring semester of 2021, I decided to meet people individually until it was possible to meet in groups. We met for 90 min sessions in a studio at school, sometimes we met for 60 or 75 min, and at times we met on zoom.

Usually, the participants had already warmed up by themselves before we met, but if not, we did some simple exercises together to connect to the body. Some breathing exercises to connect the breathing to the movement, a bit of movement of the joints, some exercises to activate the larger muscles in the body to create heat, some easy exercises to connect to the core, some focus on lengthening the spine and finishing with a bit of shaking for the circulation. I also asked them to take five minutes to do whatever they needed to do.

I organized the set of words into groups. Three words for one session was adequate, and I tried to combine three words that had the possibility of activating all of the body. The last example of a group is a combination I think is beneficial for nuance and detail in the body.

Some examples of groups of words:

Drag, push, let go

Gather, sink, lift

Squeeze, stretch, swing

Tilt, swing, cast

Working together, we started with one of the words, and I asked the participants to explore this singular word for some time: «How can you work with gather in your body?». After they had tried out different ways of working with the word, we talked about how they had understood the word and how they had worked with it in their body, and in what way. We did this with all three words. Then, I chose one of their tryouts to work further with from each word, and we talked after every new task.

How to work further with the words was depending upon how the participants explored each word. But the crucial point was that it should be dragging if it was dragging and pushing if it was pushing. I tried to see and listen to how they related to the words, and I preferred to use the words to see and to listen and to be in dialogue. Two examples of working with singular words is tilt as slow as possible or lean on things in the space.

After some sessions exploring the individual words from the groups of three words, I tried to put the words together based on what I saw with the words as a tool when the participants worked with the singular words. The aim was to either strengthen or challenge the way the participants were working. I think the purpose of strengthening was to have a clear place to work from, but as a part of a task in a system, it could also enhance beneficial patterns in itself or be something to build upon.

It was easy to work with pair of words when combining the words, and all of the words could be combined, producing different variations in the different bodies. One example of working with a pair of words is squeeze and let go, but it could still be squeeze and let go in specific individual ways. Another example of working with a pair of words is rise to maximum in one position, then sink to neutral, then rise to maximum in another position. Later this turned into a sequence of rise, sink, rise, sink.

I chose to focus on exploring the groups of three singular words and the pair of words the most because of the limited time available and the difficult working conditions with the restrictions. With the singular words, the importance became on how the participants interpreted the words. With the pair of words, the importance became on what combinations of words would strengthen and what combination of words would challenge the participants. How the participants specifically in their body used the words in different combinations and different sequences, where they put the weight, got importance. For example, if one worked with a pair of words, let go of the squeeze, how big the let go was and how big the squeeze was would produce different results. There was a difference in how the participants used the words also. For example, some participants did sinking AND lifting, it happened at the same time in the body, while others did lift TO sink, one lifted something to let it sink.

With some participants, we explored three or four words together at the same time. One example is the singular word squeeze, interpreted as squeeze in pathways through the body. This turned into squeeze-stretch-twist by adding one more word in each new round based on what I perceived. Another example is the singular word gather, interpreted as gather in a circle. After the tryout, we specified it as gather in a circle, in the joints. This turned into gather-sink-twist-lift by adding one more word in each new round based on what I perceived. I also did some explorations of one word that turned into three or four words, much the same way as above. But then I asked the participants to make a new combination out of the same three or four words.

The ways of relating to the words are very diverse. Some of the words were interpreted in very different ways, others not so much. Some examples of individual interpretations by the first-year students is spin in circles with different body parts, spread texture, or rise in tempo. Squeeze around one's own body is interpretations by many of the external participants as a first impulse.

An interesting question is what the difference between the words is? Is it a difference in the words themselves, that the different words have different amounts of possibilities, or is it that the difference is in the personal interpretations only, or is it that some physical forces are visible only under certain conditions? It's possible to drag another body, and one can drag one's hands or feet along something, and this happened a lot, but if one was dragging inside one's body, the question became more about interpretation and personal experience than if it relates or not to what the words describe. My preference for seeing would also affect what I perceive, but still, we could be in a dialogue about it through the words we shared.

The set of words can be used as warm-up exercises. We used the words to tune in to each other, to connect to each other, and to share focus in the room. One example is to walk around in space and spread as much as possible. Another example is to gather in two circles, in one of the circles stand facing each other, in the other circle stand with the back towards each other.

The set of words can be used as group exercises. Earlier in the project, when it was possible, I worked with the words also in contact. Each person had a set of words, and they were in dialogue with the others moving from and with the words in contact. Together they looked for the possibilities of movement with their words meeting the others words. The words shaped the premises for how to meet and move with the others in the physical space. One example of a group exercise with the words in contact is with two participants that each has a group of words to work with. The task is to choose a word each and to move with them for a time. If one of the participants change their word, then both changes to another word. A variation of this task is if one of the participants change their word, then both changes to the same word. Another variation is that they could change the words whenever they want. To work in contact with the words is something to explore further.

In the last weeks up to the performances, we worked with other group exercises without contact, still with base in the set of words. One example with a pair of words working individually is doing the same thing together or doing different things at the same time: squeeze at the same time and let go at the same time, or squeeze when the other person lets go and let go when the other person squeezes. Another example is doing one thing in the body and another thing in the room together as a group: spread in the room and gather in the body at the same time, or spread in the body and gather in the room at the same time. Some examples from the performances are leaning together as a group, twisting together as a group, and jumping and swinging at the same time as a group. Working with the words in groups, it could be more combinations of words than only pairs of words, and it could be different combinations of words, pairs or more, at the same time in the space.

The set of words can be used as a tool to work with the structure in a performance. I tried out different ways of composing with the words. One example from the performance is gathering in the space closest to the audience, with Covid-19 distance, to support each other. Another example from the performance is to swing or jump to build to maximum intensity together.

The set of words can be used as a tool to work with bodily instincts. Together in the groups, we explored when to go with the group, when to go against the group, and what to choose for how long and where in space.

The brains plasticity connected to the system

After my process of developing 47, I think it's possible to create a movement system based on the set of words that can be beneficial for brain development and recovery. I think working with the words in all the different ways, in the body, in the room, and in different groups, can create new neural cells and networks and

create and strengthen connections in the networks of the brain. I think the movement system can have a more set form around this. A strength of this movement system can be that it's a system that also works with individual differences.

During my work process, I have noted that it's useful and also a precondition perhaps to work from the point of slowness. One recurring feedback from me to the participants while working was to slow down and to do it softer and with less force. I think it's something valuable in slowness that makes a difference both in the listening (for me) and in being open to new experiences (for the participants). The connection of slowness to the creation and strengthening of the networks in the brain is something to explore further.

So far, I have mostly worked with creating patterns. How the patterns stick, the time length of each task, and how many times to repeat something in what order, for it to last or for change is also something to explore further.

About the performances

All of the participants met for the first time on Saturday 1st of May 2021, before the premiere on Thursday 6th of May 2021, and we only had two run-throughs before the dress rehearsal. Every run-through was different. Finally, on the performance on Friday 7th of May 2021, it came together, and I experienced all of the participants as one group. They gave me this feedback, too, that they felt like a group in the performance.

I mainly worked with the first-year students as one group, having individual sessions together with group sessions. I met with the external participants individually until we could meet in pairs. We met in pairs for some time, and in the last session before Easter, we met as a small group. While working with the first-year students in the time set aside in the schedule after Easter, I met the external participants as one group in the evenings. If it had been possible, I would have let both of the groups meet as one group from Easter.

I worked with trying out different set structures in the performance based on the words. In the end, I chose to let the performance be a dialogue and a meeting on stage, with some set structural elements and two parts improvisation. I found the set structural elements necessary to make sure everybody could participate and for everybody to keep track of time throughout the duration of the performance.

The first part of the performance is a group task, where leaning together as a group transitions into twisting together as a group. When it happens is for the group to decide. The leaning continues together with the twisting until the end of the first improvisation. The first set element is when two of the first-year students start with one of their individual material, and then everybody can improvise in space with their individual material focusing on the possible connections that can happen in the space. We had already worked in the rehearsals with being together in the room, giving and taking space, and relating the material to each other.

When the first improvisation starts, everybody can also sit at any moment. This first improvisation ends with the part where five of the first-year students perform their individual let go material with sound, an individual breath sequence that they work with rhythmically as a group.

After a time of this, the other participants can join either by swinging or jumping. At one point, the instruction is that everybody participates in the jumping, focusing on building intensity together. They can sit down after they have reached maximum intensity as a group, but the instruction is to keep the intensity up, so they need to make sure that they do not all sit at the same time.

Then the second improvisation starts, and the participants with specific words can improvise on the floor. When the intensity has calmed down almost completely, it transitions into the last part, where everybody is stretching together as a group. When they want to, they can do a movement with an added sound from a set of movements with added sounds, or they can do a set movement with an improvised sound or their own individual movement with an individual sound. It's for the group to decide when it happens, for how long, and the rhythm. This turns into the stretching together as a group until the stretching is unnoticeable, and the participants are facing the audience.

I'm sorry to say that the three last performances were cancelled due to a Covid-19 outbreak in the production at the stage next to us. Fortunately, none in my production got infected. We got a new performance to document ten days later. I was curious about how it would be to have the performance again with time apart and if the physical material was still in the bodies. The material was still there, and I think it had landed a bit more. I added an additional task on the run-through the day before the last performance on Thursday 20th of May 2021, and that clarified the first improvisation a bit more but still keeping it alive. The physical movement material stayed in the bodies, and I think that points to it being a movement system.

About the place

I chose Stage 5 as the venue for the performances. I have never worked with a production in a black box before, so it was interesting to work in that type of space.

I was interested in working with a scenographic element that made the space into a place, and I chose to work with a second roof made of fabric. It could have a size and a shape that interfered with the lights. I had the idea of a quilt, something made with care and tradition and the passing of time connected to it. The fabric could also function as something that divided the space.

The scenographer, who is also an architecture student, developed the idea further with me. She found the type of fabric and how to use it, and she designed the way it was constructed and how we could hang it in the space. She tried out different designs for the quilt, and we chose to make a collage with different layers of beige cotton fabric to filter the lights. Each piece of the fabric has its own individual design, and the whole fabric with all the pieces is also one design.

In the end, I decided to have the fabric as the light source in the room. It was lit from above, hung from ropes connected high up, in waves making gravity visible.

Working in the black box, I discovered that every room has its particular sounds, and that was prominent in Stage 5. I chose to work with a professional singer and composer to explore breathing together with the physical material generated from the words. This was an interest I took with me from working with the KHiO choir. We decided to have workshops for the participants. The focus was on what the different ways of breathing could give to the physical material, if it would go with or give resistance to it, and we tried out different things. It was interesting to work with the breathing rhythmically in a group, and it became a part of the performance in the end.

I also collaborated with a student from the Norwegian Academy of Music. We recorded sound from different physical material working in the studio, and the student modified some of the recordings. I planned to use a recording of a participant who left the project before the final performances, but I'm sorry to say that I didn't have enough time. So to work with these recordings with the physical material is something to explore for later.

In the staging of the performance, I enjoyed the possibility of placing the audience anywhere in the space, in whatever way I could think about. With the restrictions, it was appropriate with few chairs with two meters distance spread out in the part of the room where the roof is low. Together with the scenography, it could create an enclosed feeling for the audience. The chairs are particular places in the space connected in their specific way to the area where the performers are.

I thought about doing the project outside in a public space. It could benefit the idea of working with different and many people. But with the extensive restrictions, I decided to be inside with a limited audience, not to capture peoples attention and gather spectators, also since we have been very careful in the group along the process. To work with this project in public space and to involve the public by working with tasks based on the set of words, and use the tasks to be in dialogue in public space, can be another way of many to work further with it.

About the people

I think a common thing for the external participants is that they like to dance and that they want to perform on stage. It has been so nice to meet and collaborate with different people with different movement backgrounds.

My impression of the first-year students is that they are skilled and open and that they included the external participants as much as they could within the frame I set. They were brave to participate in the process of exploring together, especially with the uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic. I felt a mutual trust.

I have learned a lot by connecting to the participants, communicating with them, and trying to be open, to be in dialogue, to listen, and to see them. I think that I met them in a personal way with room for their individuality while working with the words and the system.

I worked with the two groups a bit differently. The external participants I worked with for shorter sessions over a longer period of time. The first-year students I mostly worked with as a group for longer sessions, with individual sessions in addition to the group sessions. I guess the main difference I experienced was that it was easier for the first-year students to find other alternatives in the tasks when I did not give enough instructions.

The participants have different combinations of words as physical material according to how we worked with the words together in the performance. There are differences in the amount of combinations that each person has, this is based on the fact that I did not get an equal amount of time with everybody, though it was offered. I registered that not all of the material sticks equally well, and with more time, I could explore this assumption more. I also kept it as a task for me to explore what I needed, but not to be obliged to keep it in the performance. But in the structure of the performance, there is a possibility for everybody to move on

stage in the same amount of time. The main task was to facilitate dialogue and to be in dialogue based on the system.

I am very thankful for the time and effort each and every one of the participants has given to the project.

About the dialogue

The process was based on being in dialogue. To see each other, to listen to each other, and to work together. The structure of the performance was also one where the dialogue was important. I think the performance opened up for a dialogue with the audience in the end, and if not for the restrictions, I could have opened up for more.

The pleasures and challenges of being in dialogue with someone are that one can connect to others and be open for others experiences that can differ from one's own. One can practice seeing and listening to the other person, respecting someone for who they are, what they have experienced, and what they believe in, and one can create something together in the meeting. I think you can agree and also disagree, and that both are valuable. And I think all of these things can be hard, and that one needs to practice them.

The literature I have found is about dialogue and communication, and I connect them to different aspects of my project. I also connect the literature to my artistic context, the question of how to positively contribute to society, and how to connect to the rest of society as an artist.

I did look at some artistic references writing the project description, but the material and the structure of the performance itself came from the work with the participants. One of the references I looked into for the project description was Mia Habib's «A song to...». Here she's working with many people in a black box, and they are all naked. From my point of view, I think that is the main theme for her performance, and I have been working in a different way with my system.

There are many ways of communicating

In one of the books I read, Helge Svare writes about different ways of communicating. It's possible to speak without letting others express themselves or have objections to what is said. The monologue is a one-way speech from somebody who has found their position and does not want to alter it (Svare, 2006, p. 11).

In a debate, one is at war defending one's position, attacking and undermining others opinions (Svare, 2006, p. 12). Like in the monologue, the person debating wants to get the others to accept what is said. In a debate, several persons can participate, and the word can tour, but the word needs to be conquered (Svare, 2006, p. 13).

A dialogue is a conversation between two or more persons characterized by mutual goodwill, openness, and collaboration. It's a conversation where one reaches towards a common goal (Svare, 2006, p. 7). It was important in my master's project to collaborate about a common project and to create something together, and that is why the dialogue is so important for the project.

Working with different people, I wanted everybody to participate and that the dialogue could strengthen the participants: positivity in the dialogue means having a responsibility to find and feature the good (Svare, 2006, p. 107).

I think working with improvisation was one way of working with openness and uncertainty: one needs to be open for something new to happen (Svare, 2006, p. 15). In the dialogue, uncertainty is also a part of the process (Svare, 2006, p. 15).

There exist unwritten rules of being in dialogue, rules learned by living in a society (Svare, 2006, p. 22). These rules do not have to decide every detail of the conversation, one should look at them as open guidelines to get a good result

(Svare, 2006, p. 23). I relate this to the system and working with it as guidelines for being in dialogue.

To be in dialogue is to be open for communication

Martin Buber writes about the perspective of having an inner openness and a willingness to be touched by each other: «If I face a human being as my Thou, and say the primary word I-Thou to him, he is not a thing among things, and does not consist of things.» (Buber, 1937, p. 8). It's a presence and attention: «I do not experience the man to whom I say Thou. But I take my stand in relation to him, in the sanctity of the primary word» (Buber, 1937, p. 11). To relate to someone as you and not it is directly, intuitively, and unmediated (Svare, 2006, p. 46). It was important for the project and the dialogue that we could be open to each other.

Hans Skjervheim writes about the relation between you and me and being participants in the exploration of a common theme: «There are then two fundamentally different attitudes that it's possible for me to take to what he says. First of all, together with him, I can turn my attention to the case [...] That is, I participate, I get involved in his problem» (Skjervheim, 1996, p. 71). To consider another person's opinion is to take the person seriously: «Taking the other person seriously is the same as being willing to take his opinions into consideration, possibly up for discussion» (Skjervheim, 1996, p. 74). By exploring the words and improvising together, we got involved with each other.

Language as the frame of understanding

Hans-Georg Gadamer writes about the nature of human understanding, and that language is the frame of our understanding. A person's hermeneutic horizon of experiences, beliefs, and prejudices shapes the way one interprets others (Svare, 2006, p. 76). There is no neutral standpoint: «The prejudices and fore-meanings in the mind of the interpreter are not at his free disposal. He is not able

to separate in advance the productive prejudices that make understanding possible from the prejudices that hinder understanding and lead to misunderstandings» (Gadamer, 1975, p. 263). I think working with the words together meant to also look at our prejudices.

What a language is for a human being is very interesting. The principle of linguistic relativity claims that the language a person grew up with decides how one experiences the fundamental structure of reality (Svare, 2006, p. 29). Noam Chomsky writes about the principle of universal grammar and that all languages have a common basic structure: «Let us define «universal grammar» (UG) as the system of principles, conditions, and rules that are elements or properties of all human languages not merely by accident but by necessity-of course, I mean biological, not logical, necessity. Thus UG can be taken as expressing «the essence of human language» (Chomsky, 1975, p. 29). A middle position is that our language does not absolutely condition our understanding, but it is not independent of it either (Svare, 2006, p. 30). Ruth Vatvedt Fjeld writes about how languages reflect one's perception of reality, and at the same time, it shapes it (Johnsen og Sveen, 1998, p. 130).

If you compare different languages, a lot of the words we use are arbitrary in the sense that different sound compositions can express the same content of meaning. But compositions and diversions are motivated by the expressions that denote the phenomena they are a diversion from (Johnsen og Sveen, 1998, p. 127). The set of words I chose can function this way. Working with them, we can look at how the words reflect and shape our own and others realities.

Language and interpretation

I think it's great that the defined words can contain diversity when different people interpret them from their point of view. As Yasmina Resa writes, if you think about the concept of white and take a closer look at what we know is white, it's

something diverse rich in nuances (Johnsen og Sveen, 1998, p. 57). I connect this to how it's possible to interpret the words in different ways in the tasks we have been working with.

Martha Nussbaum writes that we need to be able to communicate despite our differences: «Under the label «multiculturalism» - that can point to an acceptance of human diversity and cultural complexity - an anti-humanist view has occasionally emerged that uncritically praises differences and denies that there are any common interests and mutual understandings, yes, not even dialogue and debate is possible outside ones own group» (Nussbaum, 2016, p. 54).

I connect this to my artistic context of how to connect to the rest of society as an artist: «In the world citizen's view, it's emphasized that all citizens in a society must understand the differences they must live with; a citizen is one who thinks about and tries to understand others across the differences. This, in turn, is associated with an idea of democratic debate as to the exchange of ideas about what is best for the community» (Nussbaum, 2016, p. 55).

To play together from and with the words can open up for empathy and respect: «Exercise in empathy and assumptions about the minds of others leads to a certain form of participation in community and a certain form of community: It fosters a sympathetic receptivity to the needs of others and an understanding of how circumstances shape the needs, without losing respect for separation and privacy» (Nussbaum, 2016, p. 31).

Truth and interpretation in a dialogue

In the group, we experienced that we could work with the words by meeting the others in dialogue. It was possible to become conscious about and expand the content and meaning of the words we worked with by our different interpretations and working together with them: a dialogical truth can be found in the interaction

between different understandings, and everybody needs to have a say (Svare, 2006, p. 38). We got to know ourselves and the others by working with the words together: a human being is not something one is but something one becomes by being in a dialogical relation to other people (Svare, 2006, p. 42). Therefore, as Francis Sejersted writes, one needs areas for communication where one can meet in real life and develop common notions (Johnsen og Sveen, 1998, p. 24). Thomas Krogh writes about the public space as a place for debate about what it is to be a human being and to be around other human beings (Johnsen og Sveen, 1998, p. 30). But I would rather say that we need places for dialogue because I think there is more room for listening and empathy in a dialogue than in a debate.

Listening

To be able to listen is an essential part of being in dialogue. David Bohm writes about this with his thoughts on inner openness: «The sharing is not merely the explicit communication and the body language and all that, but there is also a deeper tacit process which is common» (Bohm, 1996, p. 14). One needs to be patient and delay one's own reactions: «This is part of what I consider dialogue - for people to realize what is on each other's minds without coming to any conclusions or judgements. Assumptions will come up. And if you hear somebody else who has an assumption that seem outrageous to you, the natural response might be to get angry, or get excited, or to react in some other way. But suppose you suspend that activity. You may not even have known that you had an assumption. It was only because he came up with the opposite one that you find out that you have one. You may uncover other assumptions, but we are all suspending them and looking at them all, seeing what they mean» (Bohm, 1996, p. 20).

A dialogue can be a third way of living together where one emphasizes both the individual and the collective. People both need to be respected for who they are, and they need to interact. It's interesting to work from the starting point of the

words and the movements. We relate to something common, still keeping and creating space for the individual interpretations and the meetings to happen.

I think the dialogue evolved further along the process. In the last week up to the performances, when we were all working together, we talked a lot more about what was happening in the room. What possibilities we had, and thoughts, associations, and values that people had around specific tasks or about group tasks or how to be in the space together. It came more naturally at the end of the process. I didn't have to take all the responsibility for the conversations by asking questions and saying everything I was thinking of. The flow of the conversation was more fluid, and many of the participants contributed a lot. Almost after every new task or tryout, the participants spoke about something. It also helped that the supervisors, the scenographer, and the people working with sound came by to rehearsals and participated in the dialogue.

I communicated with the supervisors mostly by email, Zoom, telephone, or meeting outside of school. They could not come to many rehearsals because of the restrictions, but I got valuable insights from another point of view when they came by. The external supervisor I met regularly for coffee and talking outside school throughout the two years. I appreciate that he could follow the process and that we could talk about everything related to the project and the process of making it in an open and relaxed way.

From two of the participants

From Angela about the performances: «What touched me was that every performance we had was so unique, the «material» was there, but the concept consisted of improvisation and very few cues in the structure».

From Justina about a highlight in the project: «Having developed a friendship. The moments on stage where you came in a magical flow and connection with the other dancers. For me, it was in two duets that I was a part of».

About the pandemic

I have mentioned the impact of working with a social project where people meet in a pandemic, but I will add some more thoughts about how it influenced the project.

What I think was the most challenging with the Covid-19 pandemic was the uncertainty. The situation of the world, the rules and the regulations in Norway, and the knowledge about the virus changed rapidly. New knowledge about how the virus is transmitted and new rules and regulations to relate to altered the process of working together and the terms for doing it. And it was necessary to adjust to the changes, what was ok to do one week, was not ok the next, and things were forbidden.

I planned to be well underway with group rehearsals by the end of January 2021. But because of the restrictions in the spring semester of 2021, I had to find another way of working with my master's project.

I decided to work with the system individually instead of in a group until we could meet in groups. Several participants wanted to meet in a group rather than individually because many joined the project as a social activity. One participant did leave the project during the process because it was not so interesting for her to work individually. It was tempting to meet in groups, and a lot of the restrictions from the government were recommendations and not commands. As the leader of the project, I felt responsible for the group and the consequences of the group's interactions. I felt the need to be careful and considerate, and it was challenging to balance doing the master's project with being considerate when it was a pandemic.

I thought a lot about the different outcomes of the Covid-19 pandemic and how it could affect my master's project. Suppose the pandemic would last for a very long time, say five to ten years. In that case, it might be unthinkable not to meet in

person because that is also a basic need for humans. Then the regulations might be softer than if one had the guarantee that in one year, everything would be back to normal. In that case, it might be more bearable to go into total lockdown. Some people might need to meet more than others because of circumstances in their life, and maybe it's beneficial for people to meet as part of building the defence against sickness and to fully heal from the after-effects of Covid-19.

If I was going to do something differently, it would have been that all the participants met together from Easter instead of five days before the premiere, but it did not feel right to do it with the restrictions, so I think I made the right decision. If not for the Covid-19 pandemic, I would have worked a lot more with the movement system, both individually and in different groups, with longer sessions, more sessions, and more people working together.

Another consideration in the project was to work with professional dancers without paying them a reasonable salary. I had some participants who were professional dancers interested in participating without payment. In the end, I decided not to work with professional dancers in the master's project, although it originally was a project for everyone who wanted to join. I think this was a tough decision because I could not know their reasons for participating, maybe they had a serious need for social contact because of the restrictions.

The last consideration in the project was when we finally met, after several months of meeting individually and in pairs, if we should work with face masks and keep two meters distance. The first-year students already worked together in a distance closer than two meters without face masks. When we tried to work with two meters distance between everyone, the stage was too small to perform a lot of the tasks. Also, while working together with the physical material, the group continuously pulled closer together than two meters.

After discussing it in the group, I decided that the rule for our interactions on Stage 5 was to keep one meter distance and work without face masks. That was

how it was possible to do my master's project with the time, place, people, and external restrictions that affected the terms for the project. Thinking about what the right thing to do was led me to think about the relation between truth and interpretation and the relation between the singular point of view and the order of the system.

From the level of the individual, you can have thoughts, experiences, and opinions about what the truth is for oneself and others. As individuals, we are embedded in different systems, and each system has its truths. They are a result of agreements and decisions being made together, or they stem from authoritative sources. As an individual, your opinions and personal truths can be consistent or not with the truths of the systems. If they are, your way of being in the world agrees with the way the system is. If not, your way of being in the world disagrees with the way the system is.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, I got an insight into the different truths of systems around the world and also the different ways the individuals relate to the truths. A dialogue has room for our personal preferences but is not only about them, and I value the dialogue as a way of interacting, especially when I have experienced a time when it has been challenging to meet, and both have influenced my project to a large degree.

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