



**When I go for a walk**, I don't just move my body, my physical form, on the outside, but channels open inside me. And then I discover that my body has more spaces in it than I would have thought sitting still, and new connections are made. That's why I like to walk. To explore those spaces, to experience my body in different states. To give my ideas the space in which to grow. When I walk, another reality unfolds itself.

That's why I'm inviting you to walk with me. Here. Now. To explore those spaces that will open out for us.

What do you see? What do you hear?  
What are you thinking? And are brave enough to express it out loud?

I'll be the one to start.

When I began to think about the State of Dutch Dance, I decided first of all that this state had to be a place to express ideas. And that this place had to reflect more ideas than just my own. Because ideas only become interesting when they emerge from exchange. Just like art is all about an exchange, I think that an idea develops in the same way.

I would like to take you back to an essay that I wrote in 2017 in connection with the project Pivot Dance. The project was about the need for change and created space for rising choreographers and creative producers to explore working together. How this generation could make itself stronger and develop together an independent way of doing things. In the essay, I wrote that we were at a tipping point, but I also reflected on my own generation working in the field. I asked questions about the human dimension and malleability in our industry, in our policy and in our world.

I asked myself how we want to work, under what conditions and how we want to be connected with each other. I discussed structures and systems that are hopelessly outdated that stand in the way of the work we want to make. The framing we have to break out of. The discussion between generations, where we emphatically do not oppose each other, but recognise and understand that we come from different places and that perhaps what we want is different as well.

Of course, I could have just decided to use this State to repeat everything that has happened in this strange year again. I won't be doing that. What I do want to talk about, I realise now, is what I tried to investigate in 2017: how is our faith? Our faith in our field of work, in our industry, in each other. Faith, or trust and confidence in each other, percolates everything. It has an enormous effect on what we do and how we do it, but also how we treat each other.

The fact that I am giving the State of Dutch Dance online provides me with the opportunity to do it in another way. The form that I have chosen is a walk where I invite people to share ideas. This walk and the ideas collected on it form the content.

It reflects how I work: research while in conversation with people, not knowing where it will lead, simply having faith that these conversations will challenge and hone my ideas.

I had a walk with Selm Wenselaers, dramaturg, programmer and curator. With Jette Schneider, founder and process facilitator of Time Window, a self-managing platform of 50 performance artists for management innovation and empowerment. And with choreographer, movement curator and artist Katja Heitmann, who has been developing her Museum Motus Mori for some time now, an archive of human movement threatened with extinction.

I walked, in particular, with Nienke Rooijackers, dramaturg, director and writer to focus my, very many, ideas, with Ronald Wintjens, who had invited me to give the State, and, of course, with DansBrabant, for whom I work.

I also invited other people, but they told me that they didn't feel safe enough to express themselves in this context the way things are. I do understand their reasons, but it still had an enormous effect on me, because that is precisely what it is all about.

The field doesn't seem to have much room for trust.

I am demanding the space with this State to think about that trust, to meander, to not have to arrive at an answer or solution. Let's explore the spaces together that open up to us.

#### ➤ SELM

*Hey, you know it, actually it's something that you only know once it isn't there. Yes, once it's gone, you think, "Ah, yes. A lack of trust". Yes, it's a sort of lubrication. It's a sort of basic... confidence. Have faith, yes. Hang on, how do you use that word? Yes, you have faith in the future and then you say that you're optimistic, that you – don't you? – that you think it'll turn out all right. That it's actually ok. Hmm.*

So, a simple detail, but with an enormous impact. A word that is so easy to say, 'faith in the future'. Strange, actually.

So, a logical question is, what's the limit? Where does that faith, or trust or confidence in each other, stop? My answer now would be, that faith stops outside of your own bubble, when the rules start. And that makes you think, because Selm and I know each other well, so we're actually one of those many bubbles.

I can hear you thinking, “How bad is it to be in a bubble?”

Well, we do need bubbles. We need them to feel safe, to have the space to explore and discover, to grow.

An example where this happens very well, in my opinion, is the TimeWindow in Rotterdam.

➤ **JETTE**

*I think trust is a very good subject to explain the way we work, because, whatever you think, it's also about something essential in some way, which is more important now than ever before. So, let's take a good look at the real state of that trust instead of just thinking that it's ok.*

➤ **JETTE**

*So, if you create a safe environment, then you have the confidence to express things with each other in an open and honest way, but you can't take that for granted and it demands real, conscious awareness to keep making sure that it happens. How do I give form to a conversation, how do I deal with conflicts, how do I get people involved in processes, and... Yeah?*

And then there's another question, how do we transcend our bubbles? Because that's where the problem is, I think. It's a question that my organisation Dans Brabant is thinking about. How do you create the space so that people can listen to each other? We talk a lot in the field, we're 'in a dialogue' they say, but that dialogue lacks a safe environment, what Jette was talking about. How do you give people the space to turn a dialogue into a conversation?

Selm gave me a good example. A conversation that started with the question, how much protection does the conversation need?

➤ **SELM**

*One of the better professional conversations that I had recently was during Beyond the Blackbox and that was a project from Salomé Mooij, and she took a group of culture professionals and makers with her into town, and we took material, building materials, with us and we started building a shelter in the city. Aaaaand, we forgot to start by introducing ourselves, we just started. We just started building. And we built a shelter to engage in a conversation inside and... The conversation arose out of action, out of construction, and, consequently, was the best conversation by a long way, and once we were in the shelter, someone did ask, “Hey, shouldn't we introduce ourselves? Shouldn't we hear who everyone is here?” And luckily, someone said, “Nah”. No, it wasn't necessary, because it might have only got in the way of the conversation. Yes, that was great, it was really good. Yes, you were there as well, Lisa, weren't you? It was really nice. There were no pretensions, there was a lot of faith that it would all turn out all right. Ah, yes, but the biggest lack of trust came from outside, didn't it?*

*The way it always is: the police. I think we hadn't been building for half an hour and that it, that you could hardly call it a shelter, and it was already regarded with suspicion. We were simply suddenly mistrusted. We were all law-abiding citizens... I never get stopped by the police, and suddenly... You're somewhere in Amsterdam in an alley working with building materials and then there's suspicion. Yes, it was peculiar, it was really strange. So, we wanted a structure. Wait! Wow! We wanted to build a structure to engage in conversation and we were mistrusted. By authority. Oh, yeah, so what does that mean then? Yeah, what does that all mean? Shit!*

Selm makes a very good observation about authority, about rules and who decides how we move, irrespective of what is needed.

Katja also picked up on the rules that hold us prisoner. How criteria established beforehand determine what the work must look like and judges how good it is before it has even been made. Don't we trust our artists? One of those criteria is: target groups and audience development.

#### **➤ KATJA**

*Yes, it's just a sort of theft, alienation. I think an alienation from, from what art says and tries to say, and the system that we've all built together asks that we're able to measure whether we're going to make good art. And I realise that I now do want to be more consistent in that, am more consistent, but you then get a point deducted for audience development, because you haven't named any concrete target groups. But I can't... How? What's the target audience if it's... a university professor, a homeless person, a child, a nineteen-year-old woman and a social worker? What is the target audience? ...And that's all the people who were moved by the work, for example, now. They're not all university professors, they're also not all homeless people. They're just people, and if they happen to be homeless, it's just a side issue. And that person, he was touched.*

And it's not just about subsidy conditions.

#### **➤ KATJA**

*I realised then, that if they, very early on... They already want to know where you are going to perform, how long it will last, tut-tut-tut, then you go back to the traditional forms, because lots and lots of things emerge, only become clear, later, that "Oh, it might go on for five hours", or "Oh, maybe it shouldn't be performed in a black box theatre", or "Maybe it should..."*

Selm compares our field to the museum world. The formality is even more interwoven in the sector there.

➤ **SELM**

*We've already gone a long way in the performing arts, but you also have other creative sectors, of course, like the museum world, and that's still very hierarchical... I've never heard anyone talk about trust there. I have heard them talk about protocol, I'm familiar with that word... Preliminary memorandum, that's another one... Yes, because you're not sharing things with each other with trust. No, you put it down on paper and you make sure that it fits and then it's forced into a structure.*

And Jette says:

➤ **JETTE**

*We're stuck between a rock and a hard place. And there's less and less money. And how does the industry react to that? By exercising more control. While, actually, what you have to do is precisely the opposite... Yes, it's just, it's just a, it's just a mechanism.*

What is apparent in all the conversations is that we have to act. Not wait around, we have to develop ourselves, not allow ourselves to be led by those structures. And that's the paradox. We need the structures, but we're also imprisoned by them.

➤ **SELM**

*The organisation doesn't allow it, the structure doesn't allow it... The structure wants, yes, a sort of fixity, doesn't it? A certain sort of fixity of thinking and acting. Ah, precisely! A structure develops... No, it definitely has a purpose, but it has to keep on developing, moving and searching... Yes, and that is precisely what a structure doesn't like.*

Jette, who managed to win the confidence of the municipality of Rotterdam with TimeWindow, even if their idea didn't satisfy the established structures, and Katja, who builds her own structure in order to make the work she wants to, demonstrate that we can abandon the beaten track and escape the paradox.

➤ **JETTE**

*Just start, because you have to, eh? Then it's about the conventional ideas again that start working on you, so that you finally, because of an interview, get the green light to address the hard criterium of artistic quality by means of a method, which is the most important criterium. Now I thought that was really, I thought it was really, yeah, really terrific, because we had won their confidence to approach it in that way. And because of our description, the commission had confidence that we would live up to expectations. Well, I thought that that was really a terrific, terrific start, yes... A good example of trust.*

➤ **KATJA**

*How can you always create the conditions for yourself that they are right for the work? And also, what do you have to demand? And what not?*

We talked about her longing to create a place where her work can grow, where people can come together to work, as a sort of monastery.

➤ **KATJA**

*No, that was more like, that in the long term, I want to find my own sort of place... But also an idea of a place where you, as well as working in different towns and cities, that you can always have a place to return to, where you can also maintain and keep everything, all the movements that you have collected. Because, actually, if you really want to make that a way of doing things, or what we're doing now, then you can't just keep asking people to give you their movements, etc. Because, and if you can't process them and maintain them, then it's pointless. And so, and we did that [maintained them, tr] in the corona period, it was just coincidental that we were able to keep working. Or that I just wanted to keep working. And that we just started researching, how, what does it mean to maintain it?*

It is not new what we are doing, these ways of working, but the conditions are different. Trust is, in my opinion, a new condition and we have to think about that. The self-management of TimeWindow and Katja's idea to create her own place remind me of ways of working that have already been in existence for a long time. But these ways have disappeared in the course of time or have conformed to the rules. My point is, is that it's not about whether these methods are innovative or not, but whether it's about change, and movement, because that which moves cannot be captured easily in structures and conditions and mistrust.

So, what I want to ask you is: How do we organise trust?

This walk ends here, but let's keep walking, let's keep walking with each other.

**Lisa Reinheimer**

The State of Dutch Dance

Dutch Dance Festival

Maastricht, Sunday October 4 2020, 16:00