

**Social Dimensions of Choreography,  
Exploring Choreography  
as a Multidirectional Process**

**Kathinka Julia Walter**

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School of Performance and Cultural Industries**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Abstract

The research contributes to the possibilities of challenging and expanding what a choreographer might be when he/she plays an interactive role in the performance event, investigating the artistic and social potentials of structured improvisation in relation to instant composition. It shifts the control between choreographer and dancers, addressing the traditional hierarchy within aspects of conditions of authority (Martin, 1985) and trust and power (Foucault, 1995). The choreographer is confronted with losing and gaining control, which can provoke vulnerability not usually visible in the performance context (Stuart, 2010). Dealing with participation, reflection and process challenges not only the identity of the role of the choreographer, but has consequences for the identity of the whole work. It raises questions of responsibility and ownership, questioning the choreographer's single authorship for the work, offering opportunities to let the work grow by sharing authorship between all performers (Laermans, 2008, 2015). The unexpected energies of more people involved and the use of improvisation with its changeability allow choreography to be experienced as an open work (Margolis/1981, Rubidge/2000). Agreeing that dance is a social practice (Klien, 2008a), choreography can be seen as an illustration of the functioning (Lehmen, 2004) of the group of performers as a social system, with one element affecting the other, which makes the system constantly evolve (Luhmann, 1995). The interrelationships between all participants, including the audience that shape and form a system with significant features, become visible throughout the performance duration. Considering social interaction more broadly and with relevance beyond dance, choreography performs social norm and structures (Klein, 2013) and can illustrate changes within society to make them more apparent, proposing a springboard for debate. The research offers findings in terms of learning gained through working in groups; working with multi directional processes and the use of reflection provides a democratic, open and liberating space to all participants.

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**Devising is a mechanism for losing things and moving things and  
Shifting things and killing things;  
For forgetting things and finding things and  
Loving things and choosing things and  
Showing things.**

(Harradine, 2011, p.190)

## Chapter One

### Introduction

The mission of the research is to investigate the identifying features of the role of the choreographer when evident as an active participant in the performance event. As part of my practice-led research I use the term 'visible choreographer' to explore how a choreographer's labour can be presented within the performance process, providing opportunities for an audience to witness the process of making and the artistic and social influences that are usually not highlighted in the work. The research explores ways that this internal operation can be shared as a feature and content of a work and if the term 'visible choreographer' is still useful to describe these internal operations. Throughout this thesis I refer to a range of definitions of choreography, investigating the internal working of the dance beyond the material content. My investigation acknowledges the influence of the choreographer Michael Klien who describes choreography as the social interrelations of all participants and the possibilities of observing dynamic constellations, the exchange of forces and the negotiation within the embodied order (Klien, 2008a). There are many other definitions, but I chose this one, as it is key for the research with its sociological approach for viewing choreography and choreographic practice.

In this thesis I use the identifier her when referring to a choreographer.

#### 1.1 Starting points and influences for studio practice and theoretical discourse

The research started from a developing interest in a range of ideas and materials that I had started to question in my practice as well as behaviours I observed in performance and studio practice. There appeared to be value in challenging the role of the choreographer and the possibilities it would offer for viewing dance beyond its context.

Following the lead of practitioners and theorists Vida Midgelow and Jane Bacon where they state that, "...there are fundamental epistemological issues that can only be addressed in and through practice" (Midgelow and Bacon, 2011, pp.6-7), I embarked upon a journey, broadening performance practice that incorporates choreography, improvisation and performance theory. The research evolves from my practice and further identifies it, investigating what might be often unconscious decisions made throughout creative processes, highlighting and analysing these epistemological issues. The researcher and practitioner Kim Vincs, whose work is referenced throughout this thesis, explores how practice can grow out of ideas that cannot always be explained in the moment of making. She argues, "There is nothing prior to the dances that the dances articulate or communicate, which means that there can be nothing for the exegesis to summarise" (Vincs, 2007, p.105). When I began the work I did not know what I wanted to express or communicate. I had a physical idea of how it might feel to do it, an artistic vision of how it might look and a feel of how it would be to perceive the work. I remember already having an interest in audience engagement with the thinking processes of a choreographer, and even though I thought it valuable to share I did not know at that point what the content would be. I wanted the audience to be able to witness decision making, to get an insight into the making process and the interconnectivity of ideas that are sometimes not available without further knowledge of the work. At this point in time however and part of the unexpected outcomes of research, I did not imagine that they would come to be actively engaged in the form of the work by participating in the material as well as directing the performers.

Being a performer and director within the work has offered me new views of myself as a choreographer, giving me tools within live direction to make thinking visible and connect it to sociological and philosophical discourses. My interest and focus as a choreographer is to explore the artistic and social potentials of structured improvisation in relation to instant composition, investigating a range of positions of the roles of the

choreographer by provoking shifts of social dynamics between all performers. These shifts of dynamics make the company's relations visible and can show aspects of vulnerability of all performers. As the choreographer's vulnerability is usually not visible in the performance process, it presents the choreographer as a social subject within choreographic negotiating processes (Siegmond, 2012). The intention is to explore different layers of visibility and transparency and link different artists to theorists within dance, sociology and philosophy. The artists considered here include for example Thomas Lehmen for his focus on communication between all performers in *Funktionen* (2004) and Michael Klien who makes the claim for dance to be a notion that physicalises ideas that can be applied to all systems as shown in *Choreography for Blackboards* (2006). Further artists are Jérôme Bel with his work on absence (1994), William Forsythe's work with improvisation/choreography (2012), Yvonne Rainer's approach to instant composition and making dance visible (1999) and Meg Stuart for her work on vulnerability (2010). The theorists are for example Randy Martin's writing on conditions of authority (1985), Nikki Pollard and Rosemary Lee's work on reflecting within practice (2010), Tim Ingold for his writing on following the material (2008), Rudi Laermans with his writing on collaborative settings (2008, 2015), Gabriele Klein with her writing on choreography as a performance of social norm and structures and Michel Foucault's writing on power relations (1995). This on-going research into artistic potential offers new performance possibilities for the choreographer and audience in terms of how they might read the various roles and identities. Through the research I am challenging traditions of choreographic practice in relation to the open access approach and the expectations of performance and roles for improvisation as a mode of performance for audiences. This includes the location of dance events and the context of where it gets curated and programmed.

## 1.2 Research Questions

When I started my PhD in 2009 I saw it as something separate from the range of my experience as a choreographer, performer, researcher, lecturer and yoga practitioner/teacher. I have come to appreciate the ways in which they influence each other in my work and how they have become parts of my signature; they are part of my self and therefore my research. I am now placing them more formally in connection through intensive research. Looking at the core elements of my practice/research I now better understand how they link to my sense of self - a German choreographer, who started dancing in the traditions of 'Ausdruckstanz' (expressionist dance), who trained as a professional dancer at conservatoire level in the UK and experienced the work of Northern European artists in the late 1990s in Berlin - a lecturer in choreography, a yoga practitioner and teacher who lived in the UK throughout her research.

Recurring questions have emerged that have become the cornerstones of my research. The questions are offered here on equal terms each interrelating with the others. They include:

1. In what ways does being 'active' as the choreographer in the performance change the identity of the choreographer, company, work and audience?
2. How does the use of improvisation provide ways to experience choreography as an open work?
3. What contributions to the emerging discussions of the nature of the 'social' in the dance field become available through this practice?

Reflecting on the changing nature of my practice has become vital for the research development and analysis, giving insight and knowledge that only arises within the practical engagement. There is a clear notion of interaction and social dimension within my form of practice/research; the research is fed by these interactions and collaborative ways of working. My role within this setting has a multiple sense of being the director/choreographer, performer and researcher. Experience as a professional choreographer has helped me to place my research in the professional setting, including working with professional and well-experienced improvisers and performing the work at established performance venues. This has supported my research and has shifted the work to new and unexpected places. My theoretical research places the work in a wider research context, highlighting, but also challenging ideas by connecting them to other theorists and artists. It has offered me the possibility to articulate my findings outside the performance event and enter different discourses challenging conventional viewpoints of the choreographer's role.

### 1.3 Structure of thesis and the use of documentation

Throughout this thesis I investigate features of my research, intertwining within the structure of the thesis features of theoretical discourse and studio practice. The thesis is divided into eight chapters followed by the archive that offers further samples of my practice in the Appendix. Whereas this chapter introduces the interrelatedness of research/practice, Chapter Two provides an overview of the work and the context of live direction. In order to do this I place it in relation to works for example by Yvonne Rainer, William Forsythe, Jérôme Bel, Thomas Lehmen, Michael Klien, Ana Vujanovic, Bojana Cvejić, Isabelle Schad, Dragana Bulut and Yvonne Meier. Chapter Three explains the applied research methodology and highlights the significance of practice-led research for this investigation, relating it to writings for example by Kim Vincs

(2007), Tim Ingold (2000) Barbara Bolt (2007) and Laurel Richardson (1994) and giving examples of reflection as a research method in and outside the studio. Chapter Four explores the work of the 'visible choreographer' where the work is conceived as an 'open work' (Margolis, 1981) and how the notions of choreography and improvisation work together, allowing both disciplines to intertwine and affect each other. Through the choreographer's instructions and interactions with the dancers a range of her choreographic negotiating-processes become visible. The multi directional focus of the work allows all performers with their choices and responses to become visible as social subjects (Siegmund, 2012).

Not being in full control of the performance process and being confronted with unexpected responses by the dancers that are also creators/contributors and have been selected for their experience in improvisation and the ability to question and challenge my decision-making, leads to Chapter Five. Here, investigations of trust and power within the practice are explored, linking it to writings by Michel Foucault (1995), Tim Ingold (2008) and Rosemary Lee (2010). Considering the meaning of trust and what role it might play when making work, the shift of power within the performance can only take place in an environment with a sense of trust. The chapter further includes the documentation of all three case studies with a short introduction and the DVDs, documenting the performances, rehearsals, discussions, interviews of the performers and my Talking diaries. Further examining the dynamic shifts between all performers, Chapter Six observes the group of performers as a social system, examining it as a system of communication and exploring conditions of authority in relation to writings/works by Randy Martin (1985), Gregory Bateson (2000), Erin Manning (2013), Thomas Lehmen (2004), Bojana Cvejić (2005, 2012, 2013, 2015), Gabriele Klein (2013) and Rudi Laermans (2008, 2012, 2015). Chapter Seven refines the exploration of the choreographer as a social subject (Siegmund, 2012) and links visibility to characteristics of vulnerability. In relation to writing by Kent de Spain (2011)

and works by Meg Stuart and her idea of the “total performer” (Stuart, 2010, p.29), the discussion investigates underlying motivations for the practice/research and how expectance of failure becomes a necessary aspect of the work. To conclude, Chapter Eight outlines the research findings, future research avenues in regard to creative and critical practice within conservatoire dance training and the impact on the dance community and the contribution towards sociological and philosophical discourses. The structure of the thesis is designed to guide the reader from the outside in. Starting with the context and the theoretical discourses linked to the practice, the investigation moves on to consider the notions of improvisation and choreography as the tools within the practice, describing the multi directional interaction of all performers. It concludes with explaining the motivations and consequences when working as a ‘visible choreographer’.

Throughout the period of research I have worked with different forms of documentations (e.g. videos, notebooks, dancers’ journals<sup>1</sup>, questionnaires, knitting) and there are examples of multiple methods of reflective documentation. I have worked to find ways that they might interconnect, influence, even merge in order to make evident the interacting forces in practice. For the purpose of the submission I have chosen to share a selected range of representative resources. I have placed the documentation of practice alongside the appropriate discussions where ever feasible, selecting specific DVDs and photos of the case studies, extracts from journal writings and transcripts from discussions.

To better connect the various forms of working and illustrate the non-linear process of findings as well as illustrate what constitutes the practice as part of the research,

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<sup>1</sup> As part of the research it was agreed at the beginning of the process that I could keep the dancers’ journals after the project was finished and use them for my on-going research.

examples are interwoven within the writing. I refer to specific footage in the case studies, forging connectivity between the different elements of the explorations and offering the reader a different sense of understanding and illustration of the ideas and modes of thinking evident through the practical exploration. The DVDs of all three case studies can be found at the end of Chapter Five. The flow of photos has been selected to illustrate the writing and give a first impression of the work, whereas the footage offers further insight to different attitudes explained in the writing. The cross-referencing between different sources will hopefully not stop the flow of reading, but instead will join together the whole practice so that they can be seen and experienced as connected. Vincs describes this interconnectivity of theoretical research and practice when she describes how, "Ideas from diverse and heterogeneous fields of reference function with one another, without explaining or representing one another (Vincs, 2007, p.2003). When discussing the individual case studies I will refer to the title of the work, which will be introduced in Chapter Two. Throughout the period of research I also maintained a regular blog as a different form of documentation and as an opportunity to communicate to other artists/theorists outside the studio. I refer to these blog posts throughout the thesis and they can be found on my website (<http://www.kathinkawalter.com/category/practice-led-research/>).

## Chapter Two

### The 'visible choreographer'

The research challenges attitudes towards practice through continued exploration undertaken with professional dance practitioners and theorists who work in performance and in other fields. These practitioners/theorists challenge the identity of works in performance and the processes through which they might come into existence. In this chapter I use a range of examples taken from the work of Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, William Forsythe, Jérôme Bel, Thomas Lehmen, Michael Klien, Ana Vujanovic, Isabelle Schad, Dragana Bulut and Yvonne Meier, in order to critically investigate the context of my research/practice by drawing a web of practitioners and theorists. In the second part of the chapter I explain the identifying features of the 'visible choreographer', exploring the use of the term 'visibility' and how the work of the 'visible choreographer' challenges traditional views of choreography. Furthermore, I give an overview of all three case studies.

#### 2.1 Live direction - context of the work

Michael Klien and Steve Valk (2008a) question the frameworks in which dance is happening and if greater connections can be found not only to the physical body, but to other systems outside its traditional cultural frameworks. Klien refers to the anthropologist and sociologist Gregory Bateson's cybernetic program, "...where the constellations are loose enough to actually reach a state of excitement or play without falling apart, without losing identity" (Klien, 2008a, p.84). He suggests that the frameworks within dance have to become less tight and constraining to allow this sense of play to arise. Citing the philosopher Alan Badiou who describes, "Dance as a metaphor for thought" (Badiou, 2005, p.57), Klien portrays dance as a notion that can

be applied to all systems rather than just the physical body (Klien, 2008a). These systems can be choreographic systems, social systems or philosophical concepts. By physicalising these ideas they become tangible, offering a greater range of engagement and the opportunity to gain findings through the unfolding and structuring of movement ideas. They can become the very material of performance work, for example in *Choreography for Blackboards* (Klien, 2006), where the moving body is one part of a greater range of material being used to communicate creative thinking.

The philosopher and dance theorist André Lepecki discusses the position of the exhaustion of dance when introducing different Northern European artists from the 1990s (Lepecki, 2006). His notion of exhaustion in 2006 refers to the increasing divisions or absence of movement from dance especially when viewing dance within theatrical dance. Ideas do not only get communicated through movement in flow anymore and at times there is no movement visible at all. Theorist and critic Gerald Siegmund explains how notions of absence become present in works by Jérôme Bel, Meg Stuart, William Forsythe and Xavier Le Roy (Siegmund, 2006). He describes how in *Self-Unfinished* (1998) Xavier Le Roy fragments the body and reduces it to its components, challenging the viewer's perception and awareness of the body (Siegmund, 2006). Viewing dance outside the exploration of movement in flow connects Lepecki and Siegmund to Klein as they seem to challenge key features of identity within dance.

Challenging key features of identity within dance can be already found in the experiments undertaken by Judson Dance Theatre and The Grand Union in the 1960s in New York, for example within the work of Yvonne Rainer and Trisha Brown, as well as British New Dance Movement through the 1970-80s, for example within the work of Jacky Lansley and Fergus Early. Here the focus lies on the identity of movement itself and how it could be defined outside the languages formed by ballet choreographers

such as George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins and modern or contemporary artists such as Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham. Choreographers worked with untrained dancers as well as trained dancers and explored collective decision making processes. They challenged the use of the body, time and space, worked with silence, structural devices in choreography and task-orientated movement (Adair, 1992). Different motivations for moving were explored such as pedestrian movement, for example in *Walking on the wall* (1971) by Trisha Brown. Traditional forms of presentation were questioned including the performers' presence in works by Yvonne Rainer through the use of the neutral gaze when performing, for example shown in *Trio A* (1966).

As mentioned above the work in Northern Europe since the 1990s, mainly in Germany, Belgium and France undertaken by practitioners such as Xavier Le Roy, Thomas Lehmen, William Forsythe, Jérôme Bel, Meg Stuart and Maria La Ribot, expanded the questioning of identity of movement, challenging concepts of dance and choreography, the role of the audience and the theatre as the place of presentation. Not only the identity of the movement itself, but the institutions and traditions of dance production were questioned. In *Funktionen* (2004) Lehmen works with game structures for a group of dancers with no director, in *Xavier le Roy* (2000) Bel uses the ironic play upon the notion of authorship and in *Synchronous objects* (2000) Forsythe materialises choreography, collaborating with specialists from other fields to blend ideas and draw on techniques from a variety of disciplines, including computer science, architecture and geography.

These questions are still present, but over the last 20 years it seems that they have further expanded to viewing dance in a broader sense. As stated earlier, Klien proposes setting the frameworks for dance less tightly to allow greater connections to be made and challenging socio-political aspects within dance. This is in reference to

themes and structures of dance being appropriate places to explore socio-political structures within the making of work. The revelation of the making and the insight of process become more evident with less emphasis on a division between process and product, which in turn forms a new view of identifying work. It may be that choreography is not 'exhausted' as Lepecki claimed (Lepecki, 2006), but the identifying features can be challenged and further explored. The term 'exhausted' is trapped within older language frames that do not presume continuous change as a feature of the system; change that unfolds through the interaction of systems and the blending of ideas.

The term 'social choreography' is a useful way to identify changes and to illustrate socio-political aspects within dance. Linked to works by artists such as Klien, Ana Vujanovic and theorist Andrew Hewitt, who claims that, "Choreography designates a sliding or grey zone where discourse meets practice" (2005, p.15), social choreography defines dance as a form of interdisciplinary thinking where different theoretical discourses interconnect within performance making (Klien, nd). The interaction for example between the audience members in the work *On trial together (Berlin episode, 2012)* by Vujanovic, becomes the choreography, encouraging the participants to critically view sociological structures within Western societies. In *Spatial Confessions* (2014) Ana Vujanovic together with Bojana Cvejić, Christine De Smedt and Marta Popivoda addresses the question of community through a series of experiments staged within the performance space. The performance presents a close up view of social choreography in an enclosed room by engaging the audience in a choreographic activity of reorganising themselves in response to personal and political questions about their private living space (BMW Tate Live, 2014). In her work *Collective Jumps* (2014), Isabelle Schad deals with creating a community in dance. In collaboration with the artist Laurent Goldring, the choreographer examines with a group of sixteen dancers what possibilities arise in the relationship between form and freedom. Closely

linked to social choreography are questions of authorship and the expectation of value within choreography, for example choreographic crafting skills. *Pass it on* (2011) by the choreographer Dragana Bulut is a performance realised as an auction, which deals with questions of authorship, relations between the material and the immaterial and the value of the artistic object. Chapter Six explores how the work of the 'visible choreographer' challenges single authorship by working with multi directional processes and how the performers' responsibilities start to blend and new questions need to be asked in regard to the identity of the work. The work reinforces how far this experiment might have gone in terms of becoming acceptable to the field of experimental specialists whilst still challenging the role of the audiences and choreographers.

It is the experimental work of these artists and their link to sociological discourses that informs my research in association with ideas considered in the 1990s, many of which remain evident today. The 'visible choreographer' challenges identities within dance and choreography when investigating the role of the choreographer and its identifying features. However, the implications tackle a broader field, including sociological aspects when viewing the group of performers as a social system (Luhmann, 1995), aspects of authorship (Laermans, 2012 and Martin, 1985) and autobiographical solo work (Heddon, 2008) within the notion of live directing.

The choreographer's role has been and continues to be investigated. Through the instigation of the work of the 'visible choreographer' – being in the performance space, creating in time - that crosses improvisation and choreography, I have found ways to continue to investigate what it means to choreograph. My research aligns closely with the work of the German choreographer Thomas Lehmen. In his performance work *Funktionen* (2004) he explores the organisation that can come to exist between the performers within a set of different functions and tasks, seeking to establish a group of

changeable interactive structures, based on communication between the constituting factors. He works with what he considers to be democratic structures and the transparency of the performers' adjustment to change. Lehmen developed a resource called 'the toolbox' (Lehmen, 2004a); a collection of cards that he suggests, "... allows one to lay out scores, tasks, systems or just to become inspired" (Lehmen, 2004b, p.1). Each card can be set in relation to others and can be complemented with the performers' own ideas. Together they describe the performers' behaviour when interacting throughout the performance process. *Funktionen* (2004) explores the organisation between the performers within these different functions and tasks, and their adaptation to changes. Even though Lehmen claims that the work allows a democratic structure between all performers, there has been critique that he does not let go and allow the functions to morph or alter by the way a group works, that he "...has not let go of his control over his toolbox" and that it needs more experimentation with the kit (Husemann, 2005, p.35).

At the outset of my own investigations the 'visible choreographer' does not work with a democratic structure, but with a clear hierarchy between choreographer and dancers. However, placing choreographic decision-making within the setting of improvisation irritates the hierarchy. The individual and unpredictable responses of the dancers influence the performance process, confronting the choreographer with the possibility of losing and gaining control, having to constantly reassess the direction of the performance process and resulting work. The nature of the work begins to question layers of power between work, dancers and controller/choreographer. My own experience of working with Lehmen<sup>2</sup> offered a positive opportunity to discuss approaches to choreographic and collaborative practice in art making. Apart from the similar approach of working with task cards, Lehmen introduced me to drawing

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<sup>2</sup> In March 2010 Thomas Lehmen visited the University of Leeds and taught a two-day workshop.

connections between my practice and sociological system theories. Looking at the group of performers and their interaction as an illustration of sociological system theories, by for example Niklas Luhmann (1995) and cybernetic theories by Heinz von Foerster (2003), offered not only an artistic, but also a sociological view on my research. This will be further explored in Chapter Six (see 6.1, pp.101).

Further connections between my research/practice and other artists are evident when viewing approaches towards 'visibility' and transparency of performance processes by William Forsythe, Jérôme Bel and Yvonne Rainer. All three artists work with the visibility of choreographic direction processes, playing with different devising methods and different levels of authorship of the performers. In *Endless House* (1999), Forsythe investigates visibility and absence of traditional theatre concepts and theatrical frameworks and how the immersive experience of the audience offers a more individual experience for each audience member. The work exists in two parts. In *Endless House* Forsythe is visible on stage, but the dance is absent. In *Endless House II* the theatre framework is absent, it happens in an old storage place for trams, but the dance is present with the choreographer overlooking the performance process. When discussing Forsythe's use of absence, Siegmund quotes the theorist Heidi Gilpin who explains, "In relation to movement performance (...) the performance of absence enables us to recognise the performance of presence" (Gilpin in Siegmund, 2006, p.315).

Here the use of absence highlights traditional cultural frameworks and allows other elements to become visible. In correspondence to my use of the 'visible choreographer', Forsythe directs the performers within the performance process. In *Alie/na@tion* (1993) and *Eidos:Telos* (1996) monitors face the performers, showing either clips of the Sci-Fi movie series *Alien* (1979) or displaying tasks referring to Forsythe's improvisation technique (using the alphabet, allotting letters to specific

movements). However, Forsythe is not physically present in the performance process, the monitors are facing away from the audience so that they are unable to witness the directing process, the direction itself stays invisible (Boenisch, 2006). Furthermore, he works with more developed phrases of material that are learned and re-presented by the company, emphasising their consistent improvisation and investigation as a company.

Similar to Forsythe, Jérôme Bel worked with absence in his work *Nom donné par l'auteur* (1994). In this particular example, he works with the absence of historical and traditional references of dance and its narrative; the consequence of his decision is that the choreographic structures are made visible. In reference to *Writing Degree Zero* by literary theorist/philosopher Roland Barthes (1953) he neglects the subject and creates an objective presentation of rules. In this way the choreography as the structure and organisation becomes visible (Siegmond, 2006). In the investigation of the 'visible choreographer' it is my intention to explore the opposite. The presence of the choreographer in the performance event makes the features of her role visible. Whereas Bel neglects the subject, the 'visible choreographer' plays with notions of subjectivity and the interrelationships between all performers (including the choreographer). There is a pre-decision to work with improvisational structures in the creation of these works and it is this decision that provides the complex interrelationship between choreographer, work and dancers. If the 'visible choreographer' would work with 'pre-set' or learned material and the choreographic process was about forming material alone it would be very different, more like a choreographic master class or exhibition. In terms of traditions of making dance, the visible material manipulator would become a pre-choreographic state.

In *Room Service* (1964) Yvonne Rainer worked with different aspects of creative processes during the performance by combining pre-choreographed movement

material, task based work and free exploration with given objects. Even though she was not visible in the work, the performance focused on a generating process with direction given through the use of pre-prepared task cards (Barnes, 1987), which is similar to the task cards I use throughout the performance event. Over the years I expanded this idea to writing tasks in the moment, which offers a greater responsiveness to the dancers' exploration.

Working with task cards and scores leads to the French choreographer Alice Chauchat (2010), who describes the use of scores in performance and its effect on how it presents the performer's creative and conceptual work as well as her interpretation of it. My research shows that the use of scores or other instruction devices gives an opportunity to watch all performers as artists and presents their personalities and how they respond to unexpected or difficult tasks (please see the variety of scores used in *Before I decide* (2011) DVD 1: 'Talking diary', entry: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2011). The instructions range from whispering tasks into the dancer's ear, giving them written task cards or verbal instructions amplified by the microphone. What has become evident in my practice-led research is that making the visibility/audibility of these processes evident to the audience changes the state of vulnerability of the dancers; aspects of judgment and expectations are made evident that change the reception of the work.

The music theorist and practitioner Jo Ellen Jacobs explores this process of bringing scores/instructions alive and how the score itself is incomplete, how it needs the performers to realise the instructions. In a discussion within music relating to the identity of a work in relation to scores and instructions, Jacobs argues that:

The score should be seen for what it is, an incomplete set of instructions for producing something important: the work of art that is heard. We do not place as much emphasis on the blueprints of a work of architecture, for example (Jacobs, 1990, p.76).

In terms of choreographic practice it can be argued that if the creation of a score is a blue print for the work of art, the more of the life of the work comes into existence through the people involved in actualising the blue print, the performance. This "...reveals a flexible relationship between score and performance" (Jacobs, 1990, p.77). Jacobs' argument links to the distribution of power, of relations and delegation inherent in the form of work where ultimately it is others who make the performance. The resulting work is different each time because it can never be the same, it happens as an instant that cannot be repeated.

When working on *Before I decide* (2011-13) I confronted myself with the potential work by seeing and forming a score, but as the instructions work with improvisation there were more parameters at play. With a score in my mind I effectively built on what had happened in the past whilst the company moved the work, ideas and experience forward, allowing it to change in fluid process. The dancers in the act of doing could not help, but carry the improvisation forward and with it the potential nature of the work. In this process there were ever increasing details of the work that I did not know as I attempted to form and make decisions about a future iteration. In regard to Jacobs, the 'visible choreographer' with her 'double-role' as choreographer and performer creates a score, but also plays with it. She is involved in the unfolding of processes and then again stops the unfolding by referring to previous places, trying to capture moments that she wants to harvest, instigating an unfolding and re-folding of time of the material that was first performed in another time.

For *Before I decide* (New York, 2013) I had the opportunity to work with a range of artists in New York working with live direction. Some of the artists were also working with Yvonne Meier and this experience supported our working/research process, challenging my instructions and offering more possibilities for the work to grow. Yvonne Meier, a Swiss dance artist based in New York, developed the 'score technique' within

live direction, which provides dancers with a frame for experiencing and expressing physical urges from the body in relationship to a given task or situation (New York Live Arts, 2014). In an interview with the writer Suzanne Snider she explains, “I was always in conflict that I was thinking too much and being too critical of myself while I was improvising, and I always would try to define what I was doing even though there was no time to define anything; there was only time to be in the moment” (Snider, 2012). Meier highlights how the use of scores channels ideas and focuses on the doing as well as the decisions for it. It underlines Jacobs’ argument emphasising how, “The resulting (...) work will be a product of both the structure of the score and the creative input of the performer(s)” (Jacobs, 1990, p.77). This is in direct relation to live direction and how thinking and decision-making processes become visible, the creative input of the dancers as well as my responses to it.

Reflecting on my experience of the work there seems to be a twist within my intention and responsibility. At the same time as I am creating a work for the audience with a choreographic logic I am also challenging the dancers to make their thinking and struggle visible to the audience. Both activities do not always coincide – on the contrary, my decisions of not following the choreographic logic often challenge the dancers the most. At times this can mean that we end up working at cross-purposes. I create a past work on the present whilst the dancers are already working on material that has moved on, become different. This happens before I necessarily process and decide – *Before I decide*. This twist within my intentions and responsibility, between presenting a choreographic logic to the audience and challenging the dancers’ responses to my instructions, initiates a potential solo within this thread where a dance

work that is all about detail and the revealing of structure becomes visible<sup>3</sup>.

## 2.2 The identifying features of the 'visible choreographer'

After introducing the context of my practice/research I will now outline the identifying features of the 'visible choreographer'. I coined the term 'visible choreographer' and it captures the visible presence of the choreographer in the performance event. The consequences of this visibility will be further explored in the following chapters, but should help to introduce my ideas and the range of avenues of exploration it offers.

My idea of the 'visible choreographer' is to place the choreographer as an active and interactive role within the performance event, both as a conductor of the unfolding work and as a mediator of her choreographic thinking and decision-making processes. I am curious how this could offer ways to challenge the choreographer's role and if it could propose different prospects for performance practice. In relation to Heidi Gilpin (Gilpin in Siegmund, 2006) and her view on absence as a means to allow other elements to become visible, the 'visible choreographer' offers with her presence a greater visibility of other constituting factors of performance. Throughout the thesis I discuss my experience within the role of the 'visible choreographer' and how my understanding of it has developed over the seven research years.

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<sup>3</sup> When performing *Before I decide* (When 2011, Leeds) I created a 'final score' made of all of my 'favourite' moments of the performance process to be performed at the end of the performance. The dancers had two minutes to remember their responses to the given instructions and learn to physicalise the score. Their exchange whilst learning the score and making decisions together was amplified for the audience to hear. Whereas I very much enjoyed listening to their joined process of making decisions, I found the actual performance of the score had less interest as it focussed on product or a fixed script, a notion I had intended to move away from. What I see now is that, having had the final score as part of the performance at the early stages of the research/practice shows that an evident twist had taken place in my intention. Over the period of the research/practice my intentions have changed, I have found ways to 'let go' of what might be seen as choreographic tradition and to explore ways to reveal progression forward rather than notional fixity.

The term 'visible choreographer' expands theorist Susan Melrose' idea of the visible choreographic signature (Melrose, 2009) one might witness when watching a performance. Melrose explains, "Signature practice, [as] (...) a way of working that is specific to a particular artist" (Melrose, 2009, npn). The 'visible choreographer' develops this idea by taking on a participant/performer role that fundamentally identifies the nature of the work. The term visibility is here used to highlight that the audience can see the choreographer interacting with the other performers and experience her reactions to their responses. These social interactions, usually only witnessed in the studio, are now acknowledged as part of the performance, visible through her body language, through her way of observing the material unfold and her waiting before giving the next instruction.

In 'A Quasi Survey of Some "Minimalist" Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A' (1968) Yvonne Rainer explains how she wanted to make dance visible. She states:

Dance is hard to see. It must either be made less fancy, or the fact of that intrinsic difficulty must be emphasized to the point that it becomes almost impossible to see (Rainer, 1999, p.35).

Rainer's statement refers to making dance more visible, making it seeable, which is similar to my use of the term 'visibility' as an expression to make something present, making it apparent. However, as mentioned above Rainer refers here to the form of presentation and her neutralising of the dancers' performance is contrary to the work of the 'visible choreographer' with its focus on the individual within the role and the vulnerability that comes with its transparency. Whereas Rainer reduces the subjective elements to clarify the audience's perception of the dance, the work of the 'visible choreographer' presents the richness of all elements involved, the decision-making of each performer, the change of dynamics within the group of performers, the different

ideas and influences of the 'visible choreographer' when conducting the performers.

For the purpose of this research aspect I define choreography as a devising process and a codified structuring of materials. This is informed by theorising events in the work of Erin Manning in relation to Forsythe's choreographic work. Manning states:

Choreography sets the stage for an ecology of movement events. It delimits the infinity of movement, subtracting from the realm of opportunity to create a singular vocabulary for change (Manning, 2009, p.2).

I will now outline aspects of how choreography has been defined in North America by artists from the 1930s to Postmodernism in the 1970s in order to show how the work of the 'visible choreographer' challenges traditional views of choreography. Giving an entire overview of the history of choreography would go beyond the scope of this research, here I will refer to North American artists, such as Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey and Merce Cunningham, as their viewpoints have informed my starting points for research as part of my conservatoire dance training. In Chapter Five I will explain how in return my research has shifted my teaching of choreography within the conservatoire and the influence that this offers.

A considerable amount of American choreographic tradition is modernist in terms of structure and form. The choreographer Doris Humphrey highlights the components of structure within choreography when she explains, "...it must be clearly understood that dance is an art in which design has two aspects: time and space" (Humphrey, 1959, p.49). In addition to the structural viewpoints of choreography, the dance historian and dance critic Jack Anderson divides choreographic approaches into two positions, the idealist and the materialist. He explains, "Idealist dancegoers regard a dance as the incarnation in movement of ideas or effects (...) the materialist regard a dance as an assemblage of specific steps from which ideas or effects may be derived" (Anderson,

1983, p.410-411). Whereas Anderson applies these two positions to the viewing of dance, these positions can be seen within dance makers and their intentions when creating work. Within the early North American contemporary choreography these two view points can be seen in Martha Graham (idealist) who declared, "...out of emotion comes form" (Graham in Reynolds and McCormick, 2003, p.145) and Merce Cunningham (materialist) who stated that, "...dancing is a spiritual exercise in physical form and that what is seen, is what it is" (Cunningham, 1952, p.39).

Apart from Cunningham's focus on form and structure he is known for his use of chance, both in the structuring of work and in his collaboration with the composer John Cage. Interesting here is that his use of chance stays within the process of making and the interrelationship with the music, whereas the work of the 'visible choreographer' and other practices that play with improvisation within performance use the element of chance within performance. Choreography was seen as an approach that creates a work that is generally repeatable, and captures the dance within the ephemerality of performance. There was, and still often is, a clear division between the notion of choreography and improvisation.

Within Postmodernism in North America and the development of improvisation as a practice for performance, several artists broke away from this division, such as Robert Dunn and his use of scores for *A Concert of Dance #1* (1962) or Yvonne Rainer's *Three Satie Spoons* (1961), where she threw a dice to decide the structural timing of the work. Later artists within Postmodernism, for example Lucinda Childs and Twyla Tharp, returned to more choreographed structures and worked with minimalistic choreographic shapes and relationships, for example *Transverse Exchanges* by Childs (1976), or the relationship and active engagement of the audience, for example *Group Activities* by Tharp (1969). These ideas formed viewpoints in Europe, for example in Britain Richard Alston or artists of the alternative dance movement New Dance as

mentioned earlier in this chapter. Throughout the thesis I refer to artists of current practices, for example William Forsythe, Jérôme Bel, Meg Stuart, Thomas Lehmen, Michael Klien, Jonathan Burrows, Vida Midgelow, Ana Vujanovic, Isabelle Schad, Charlotte Spencer and Charles Lineham, to highlight how my research contributes to the present field and developments moving forward.

By placing the choreographer in the performance event, identifying features of her role become visible. Working with improvised structures as a feature of a choreographic event irritates the nature of her working - the pre-planning, the being 'ahead' of her dancers - and confronts her with moments of uncertainty and vulnerability in front of an audience. Improvised structures are used here, not to explore improvisation as such, but as a tool to provoke these moments of uncertainty. On average the events ran over a four-hour duration and throughout the performance process the 'visible choreographer' describes her thinking and moments of not knowing by either talking into the microphone or writing into her notebook. This becomes visible to the audience by a live camera pointing at the notebook and projecting the writing for the audience to read. It can be a description of her seeing, connections she makes to her reading or other thoughts coming through her mind whilst observing the dancers' responses to her instructions. This expands my earlier description of the term 'visibility' by adding the transparency of the choreographer's thought processes and decision-making processes. My intention is to blend the different approaches to the creation of work and the ambiguity it creates has offered a route to exploring process, authority and identity.

At this point I would like to outline the three case studies. Through my research I have worked on a number of performance projects, which informed my investigation. Three clear examples of practice are used for the submission that make evident significant shifts in my practice as the period of research progressed. All three case studies, *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds), the *Research and Development Weekend* (2012,

Leeds) and *Before I decide* (2013, New York), are a continuation of the research. Each time the work of the 'visible choreographer' has been further developed, exploring the artistic and social potentials of participation in performance events. Prior the first case study, *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds), I worked on a pilot project *Physical chain* (2010, Leeds). It was an opportunity to work with Verve10, the postgraduate company of the Northern School of Contemporary Dance (Leeds) that would tour the work nationally and internationally. For this pilot project I chose to work with the method of task cards, investigating ways that the work of the 'visible choreographer' might function in a more 'traditional' stage version. Two company members took the role of visible directors, giving instructions and selecting the material for a final score. One director read out the task cards to the dancers with the speaking being picked up by a microphone and therefore clearly audible to the audience. This creates an audible/visible direction process with the audience hearing the instructions by the director and witnessing the dancers' responses (further information can be found in Appendix 1, pp.176). Making the instructions audible for the audience adds an element of judgement and vulnerability for the dancers and the director. The director is forced to react in the moment, change track and respond to the dancer's ideas. It influences the interplay between all performers and there is a clear shift of dynamics within the group of performers, which is different to the making process in the studio or the performance of a set piece. However, the traditional stage setting as well as the duration of 20 minutes is limiting the possibilities of explorations. I realised that I had to experiment with these parameters and perform within my role of choreographer to make the social interrelations between choreographer and dancers even more visible/audible. It was during the evaluation process of this project that the potential ambition of the research gained clarity, helping me to identify the 'visible choreographer's' vulnerability and the group of performers as a social system as important aspects for further research.

A year later, after reflecting on the work in performance and continued consideration of what questions I wanted to address, I was able to conduct and complete the first case study, *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds); it proved to be a very different experience. The theorist John Freeman addresses this when he suggests, research is, "...a step in the unknown, but we need to know a great deal more than the direction in which we are stepping if the journey is to have any research-worth" (Freeman, 2010, p.81). The experience of the studio work from the pilot project as well as substantial literature review supported my preparation for the first case study. My view of the working process was changing and in many ways being challenged by extending my horizons in terms of researching artistic process. Compared to *Physical chain* (2010, Leeds) where two company members would direct the dancers (see Appendix 1, pp.176), I was now playing an active part within the performance process, which gave me the opportunity to further explore the complexity of the work of the 'visible choreographer'. Being in the role of the 'visible choreographer', I could explore how the shift of dynamics between dancers and choreographer during the performance event would challenge the conventional view of the role of the choreographer, challenging aspects of control and authorship. The documentation of Case Study One can be found at the end of Chapter Five (see 5.4, pp.94).

A year later, during the second case study, a *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds), I explored my role further by working with different spatial relations in order to allow a greater play between all performers. This led to the introduction of different forms of mediation to make my thinking visible/audible, allowing the audience to witness the interconnectivity of ideas, moments of doubts and not knowing. Whereas in *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds), many audience members saw me as a performer who seemed to have an organising role, these forms of mediation helped to make my role as a choreographer more apparent. The documentation of Case Study Two can be found at the end of Chapter Five (see 5.4, pp.95).

For *Before I decide* (2013, New York), I worked with a group of five dancers as part of the Brooklyn International Performance Art Festival. The invitation by Lindsey Drury, a choreographer and performer based in New York, had grown from our on-going dialogue after meeting at the PSI conference in Leeds (2012). The festival organisation selected a particular group of dancers for me to work with, identified as like-minded at the point of the invitation. Working with a group of different dancers shifted the work in unexpected directions and offered new and diverse findings, presenting me with a range of new conundrums to address that I thought I had settled during *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds). The documentation of Case Study Three can be found at the end of Chapter Five (see 5.4, pp.97).

During each rehearsal process it became clear that practice-led research was a useful way to unfold and address the thread of these investigations. Freeman describes practice-led research as, "...neither doing what it is told nor going meekly in the direction one might expect" (Freeman, 2010, p.81). This resonates well with my experience of working on *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds). Whilst it was at times frustrating, it did open up opportunities that could only become available through the practical exploration. Assumptions I made prior to the rehearsal proved later to be wrong.

In the following chapter I further describe the nature of my practice-led research.

## Chapter Three

### Returning to the studio to think

This practice-led research is driven by work in the studio as well as during performance events, with theory and practice working closely together. They are equivalent and intertwined, developing a narrative that reinforces the inseparability of practice-led research. The interconnectivity of thinking and practice links to philosopher Gilles Deleuze and his theorising of philosophy as practice and the connectivity of mind and body, where mental events can be seen as physical actions and physical events as mental actions (Deleuze, 1970/2001). Deleuze explains, "...what is an action in the mind is necessarily an action in the body as well, and what is a passion in the body is necessarily a passion in the mind" (Deleuze, 2001, p.18). In this chapter I capture the connectivity of mind and body within this practice-led research, exploring the nature of exploration and methods of engagement. Reflection becomes an important research method and the reflective processes are part of the 'theory building'. To further illustrate the role and purpose of reflection, I give examples of reflective processes in and outside the studio used within this research.

#### 3.1 Nature of exploration, methods of engagement

Kim Vincs refers to Deleuze within her research where she investigates in dancing as a process of thinking rather than a product of thinking done previously. She started with the practice where returning to the studio to think became of key importance as part of the whole practice, allowing the questions to be formed through the doing and issues to be identified through working in the studio (Vincs, 2007). To promote a wider understanding of the value of practice as research, in 'Rhizome/Myzone: a case study in studio-based dance research' (Vincs, 2007) she explains:

When I looked at my dances, however, I quickly began to appreciate that there was no single concern, or even a related set of concerns within them that I could articulate as the results of research. (...) Rather, there were multiple effects and concerns embodied within the work and these elements were not ideologically, philosophically or even aesthetically consistent (Vincs, 2007, p.102).

The statement above highlights the multiple trajectories when working in the studio, where knowledge generation is complex and potentially an interweaving of all strands. As the researcher/artist is practically involved in the research, he/she becomes part of the research so that knowledge and subjectivity are closely interconnected. Vincs refers to Deleuze and psychotherapist and political activist Felix Guattari, when she explains how knowledge and subjectivity expand in all different directions like a rhizomic structure and so, "...it changes its nature as it expands its connections" (Vincs, 2007, p.103). Deleuze and Guattari call the rhizome "...an acentred, non-hierarchical, non-signifying system without a General", describing its growth in all directions without a hierarchical order, without a linear development (Deleuze and Guattari, 2014, p.22). When applied to the rhizomic structure of knowledge within dance, there are multiple potential connections and the researcher needs to identify what is seen as pertinent for the questions to be explored in order to offer avenues that might help change practice.

Similar to the image of the rhizomic structure, the sociologist Laurel Richardson uses the term crystallisation to describe the deepened and complex approach of understanding within qualitative research. The variety of shapes within a crystal, depending on the different perspectives it can be viewed from, relate to the interconnectivity of findings within the rhizomic structure and its non-linear progression of knowledge. This approach originates from the view of postmodernist deconstruction of triangulation (Richardson, 1994). It moves past the tradition of dualism of art and science by blending the two, seeing multiple possibilities without hierarchic structures. Richardson explains that within qualitative research the research methodology needs

to allow for the possibility of this complexity and interconnectivity to arise and the approaches need to blend multiple forms of analysis and genres that best represent the research findings. I have become aware of this patterning in my work and Chapter Five is an opportunity to explore the nature of my investigation and how it affected my process of reflection, how it enabled all participants of the research to feed into my reflection.

Richardson highlights the connection of knowledge and subjectivity and stresses the importance of including the researcher's voice within the research, offering reflection within the research process. Starting from an acknowledgement that we continue to be encouraged to take on the omniscient voice of science, she asks:

How do we put ourselves in our own texts, and with what consequences? How do we nurture our own individuality and at the same time lay claim to 'knowing' something (Richardson, 1994, p.517)?

As the researcher is an active participant within the practice-led research process, subjectivity and individuality are present within the process of reflection. Within dance the artistic engagement is inseparable from the artist's subjectivity, they are part of the rhizomic structure of knowledge. It is therefore important to reflect on the artistic choices and decisions made throughout the research process, the recurring questions and challenges that are being faced. Critical reflection becomes an integral part of the research design and analysis and is vital for the future evaluation and validity of the research.

Acknowledging Donald A. Schon (1984) and his idea of reflecting in action (1984), I identify with the term 'Reflecting-with-Practice' as a way to highlight how thoughts and reflections can be captured within the process of their coming to existence. They do not only happen retrospectively to the practice, but within the process of making, and each

step of the process offers new angles to view the research and the researcher's role within the process. The researcher can respond to the information gained from the reflection and the research progression can be led according to it. Psychologist Clark Moustakas expands Schon's idea of reflecting in action (1984), by allowing the research to speak directly to the researcher, to let new knowledge arise out of this dialogue. He defines heuristic research, where, "One may enter into dialogue with the phenomenon allowing the phenomenon to speak directly to one's own experience, to be questioned by it" (Moustakas, 1990, p.16). A greater depth of understanding can be found and as the responding happens within the practice, in dialogue with the practice, the research can move in unexpected directions.

Here, I recognise links to the exploration of 'dwelling' by anthropologist Tim Ingold (Ingold, 2000). 'Dwelling' as a form of sitting with an idea without rushing to a conclusion, allowing the spaces between thoughts and the time to observe and letting the research unfold. The comments are similar to those made by Vincs and how she explains that questions arise in the doing, that only in the practical engagement, and I would add by 'Reflecting-with-Practice', new knowledge can be made and connections be found. Discussing the term 'material thinking' (Carter, 2004) by theorist/practitioner Paul Carter that illustrates the collaboration between artists, the theorist/practitioner Barbara Bolt uses the term 'material productivity' to describe this practical engagement with the materials and processes of practice (Bolt, 2007). She refers to philosopher Martin Heidegger who claims that we come to know the world through handling it (Heidegger, 1966). In *Being and Time* (1966), he argues that the new can only emerge through the practical involvement with materials, tools and ideas (Heidegger, 1966). Bolt explains how understanding is realised "...through our dealings with the tools and materials of production and in our handling of ideas, rather than a self-conscious attempt at transgression" (Bolt, 2007, p.31). Knowledge cannot be known in advance, but arises through the engagement with the material. Referring to the

phenomenological view of “Being in the World” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.385), Ingold explains how the environment is never complete, but constantly under construction. He states:

What it means is that the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings (Ingold, 2000, p.186).

Both, Bolt and Ingold, stress the importance of practical involvement in the research and how these subjective views and relations to the research are part of it, how it is crucial for knowledge to arise that cannot be known otherwise. This subjective knowledge therefore enables the researcher, as Richardson states, to “lay claim to ‘knowing’” (Richardson, 1994, p.517).

Being part of the research has meant that certain aspects of my own reception of ideas was informed by the particular experience of the work, my experience of the work as choreographer, performer and researcher. Understanding the impact of it, my reflection needed different forms of documentation (e.g. audio, video, writing, drawing) to catch the often so fragile findings. Audio recordings of my reflection seemed at times better in terms of catching the space between thoughts, capturing moments of uncertainty. At times I caught myself rushing to a conclusion, not allowing time for ideas to unfold. Throughout the research I have learnt to work with more uncertainty and possibilities, understanding that it is here where the complexity and intricacy gets revealed. It forged links to explore ideas in greater depth, generating new understandings of creative methods and the application of these practices. In Chapter Five these applications are further explored in relation to mapping process when working on *Before I decide* (Leeds, 2011).

In regard to writing as a form of reflection and contribution to theoretical discourses, Bolt highlights the importance of the exegesis as a vehicle for the work of art to be recognised as a way to challenge theoretical positions (Bolt, 2007). She explains that the writing should not be about contextualising the artwork, but that it should produce “movement in thought itself” (Bolt, 2007, p.33). The writing emerges out of the practice as a continuum of the engagement, evolving potentially as a complex mapping exercise of varied ideas and forms of material. Vincs highlights how the writing should not explain the practice, but both should interact through a series of rhizomic connections. In her work there seems to be no single concern within the richness of creative processes, but a collection of thoughts in no hierarchical order, some of them related to each other some of them not. Within the writing it is therefore important to find the right form, or a selection of forms to illustrate this richness of creative processes.

This form of writing, as Nikki Pollard explains, can therefore allow the dance practitioner to contribute to the current dance practice, and not just report back on what happened in the past (Pollard, Garrett, Lee and Voris, 2010). Letting the writing emerge out of the practice can bring up questions as they arise and give the possibility for debates outside the studio, allowing the research to stay in direct contact with the current artistic work and debates. It allows time for the writing to become practice as it develops alongside the studio work and benefits from debates with other artists/theorists.

Feeling more comfortable in one form of communication than the other will always be visible in my writing, finding a way to approach my writing like I approach the making of choreographic work has helped to create a similar flow of ideas. As a choreographer I communicate with the dancers in the studio, the exchange of thoughts and ideas are part of my way of understanding processes. By assembling the different

documentations of reflection processes I continue with the process of exchanging ideas with the dancers when writing the thesis and the forms of language and debate when discussing the work with the dancers in the studio can be shown within the writing. Reading the dancers' journals brought their thinking and reflecting into my writing process, allowing the research to be continued in collaboration with the dancers. The energetic flow of the studio practice and the unpredictable timing of the unfolding of ideas became tangible, showing the on-going questioning and reflection of all participants. Below is an extract from a dancer's journal, reflecting on decision-making processes and "...the balance between the desire for control and wanting to let go" (dancer's journal, 2011).

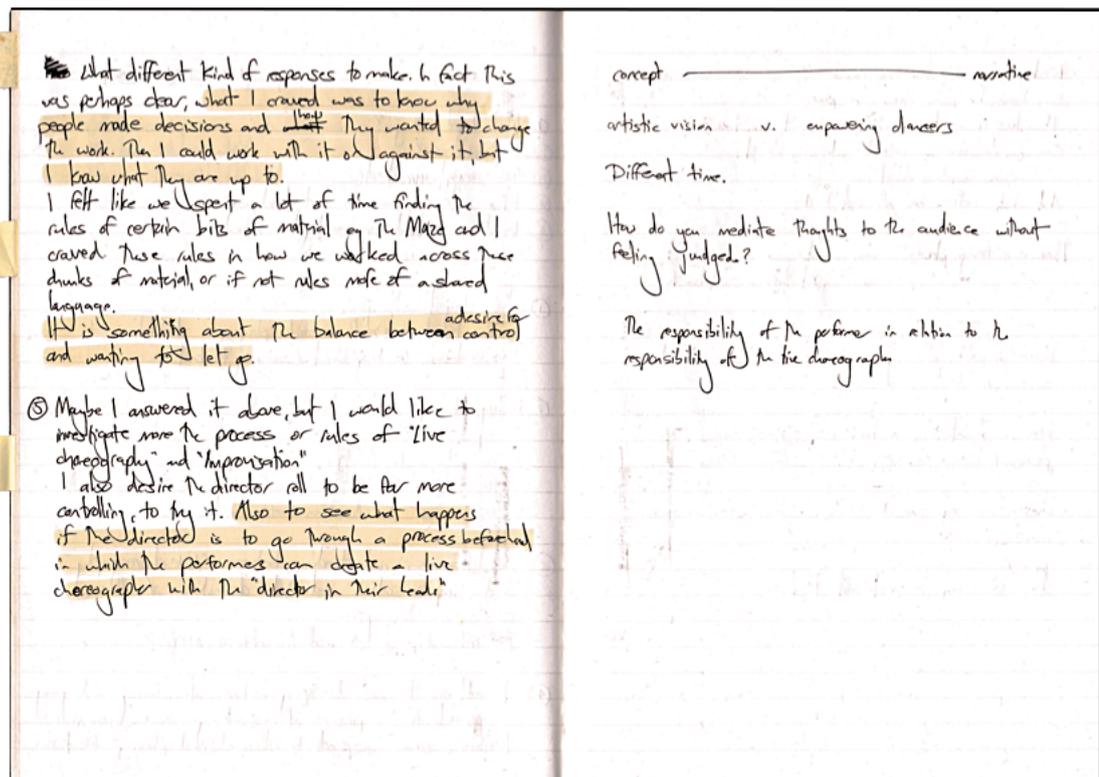


Figure 1: Extract from a dancer's journal (2011)

However, I struggled with allowing this process to be part of the thesis. I have mountains of reflections, but needed to be pushed to let it into the work. I was challenged by my own ideas of what research is, to own my ideas and to feel change

happening. Similar to the practical work in the studio I struggled with not being able to control the progression of research, to let emerge how research has, similar to choreography, an identity of flux.

### 3.2 'Reflection – with – Practice' in the studio

Apart from the dancers' journals, the debates with the dancers during rehearsals were fruitful and essential for the future research of the whole group. It allowed viewing the research from different perspectives with the dancers' reflection enriching subsequent cycles of research analysis. The following transcript from a discussion on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2011 during rehearsals of *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) in relation to the shift of control between all performers during the performance process, illustrates this well. It shows the debate we had with defining the role of the 'visible choreographer'; it exemplifies the power struggles, moments of disagreement, labour and trust.

I selected a part of the conversation, where we discussed a run where the dancers could enter the space whenever they wanted to, as opposed to only being able to enter the space when they would receive an instruction from the 'visible choreographer'. The aim was to allow the possibility of the dancers changing and shifting the progression of the work, challenging my ideas and interrupting my plans for the development of the work. It brought up questions about the relationship between choreographer and dancers and how the dancers felt at times judged by my instructions and felt that they wanted to please me. Throughout the discussion it brought to the foreground that an agreed artistic framework would make the dancers feel more empowered.

I had to edit the discussion, but I kept four short parts as it shows how the discussion progressed, how each dancer offered different perspectives and how we as a group

responded to each other. The transcript should speak for itself and I only comment and reflect briefly in between the different parts of the discussion and signpost where in the thesis I explore these aspects in greater depth. Some phrases/words are in bold or capital letters as they resonate with me as key points of the discussion.

Kathinka: Ok, I'm less stressed now.

[Everyone laughs.] For me it works at the moment with me giving instructions and you choosing as well. (...) So I am quite fine to keep it like this and then make a decision at the end of this week. (...) I would like you to observe when you are waiting for an instruction and when you make your own decisions as I think there are shifts happening. (...) We constantly go between both and I would like you to be very aware of that. (...)

Dancer 3: (...) Getting the balance between giving instructions and waiting, and deciding. It was really difficult to stay in that in between space, to not sit back and say actually no I'm just going to wait for something... because you know, it might just be an easy way to think I now don't know what to do, so I'm just going to wait, and maybe give that responsibility over to you now, or I'm going to take that responsibility back again. (...) I find it interesting to almost think am I *allowed* to do that right now, you know, so I think I am *allowed* to introduce my sequence even though... sorry, it was strange, but it would kind of work and that led me to think that I like the **balance between individual freedom and instruction**, because it means that I have to be more attentive, I cannot just sit back and wait for you to tell me what to do. (...) Which means that you are just another member, which puts you at a more equal level to us.

Kathinka: Hmm

Dancer 3: Because if I were doing a duet with Vanessa and you would come in there to interfere physically, that would be just like you telling us to stop, as if somebody would come in and kind of stop me. (...) So in a way it kind of satisfies my ego. I'm more empowered because it means that I can treat your instructions just like somebody suddenly coming into the space and changing my intention, without being to arrgh this is really...

Kathinka: yeah, yeah

Dancer 3: I mean that's the whole struggle, that's what Fiona and me were talking about, because this is the kind of umm, you know the Thomas Lehmen *Funktionen* (2004), we worked with...

Kathinka: We did an Improvisation Exchange<sup>4</sup> based on Thomas Lehmen's idea where he wants a complete democracy between all performers with no hierarchy at all. I kind of play with the hierarchy (...) I can't decide for just that (*one hand one up and other down*).... and I can't just decide for that one (*level/plateau*), the in between is interesting. (...) And I can shout and say that wasn't fast enough guys, and then I very clearly make it into this (*hand demonstration up/down*), or I kind of disappear and it becomes more this (*hand demonstration again – plateau/level*) (...) With this run we just did I think the play with both worked well.

Dancer 3: Yeah and to trust that if you come in it's because you're doing it for... It's kind of really hard to tell, but you know things kind of stick in my head like you are going to say something when it's boring. That really makes me think, oh shit it's been boring. (...) I think I struggle with that thought...

Dancer 2: YOU SEE, IT'S BECAUSE THEN IT IS GIVING ALL THE RESPONSIBILITY TO US, AND SHE IS INTERVENING...

Dancer 3: Yeah exactly, it's like I am going to let you do stuff, but if I think it is crap then I'm going to come in. And I think it's an interesting conflict, because **I feel like I am there to please**, and I don't want to please you, I want to please this.

Dancer 2: MAKES HER/US NOT ON AN EQUAL LEVEL, IT'S NOT JUST THAT YOU ARE THE SUPPORTER, JUST THE ONE THAT HAS TO SAVE THE THING. LIKE YOU SAY YOU CAN INTERVENE AT ANYTIME, EVEN...JUST....

Dancer 3: But I know that you are kind of working on that control thing, and I think you know you can turn on the volume if you want to and you can turn it down. (...) It's a human quality trying to please, and I don't want that quality when I'm moving, when I'm improvising. I want it to be like I have to switch off that thing and think it has to be, I have to kind of remove myself from making it a human thing, because it is and it isn't, haha. I don't know how to make it clear. So, umm, that's why it's nice to level your instructions, and how I respond.

Kathinka: (...) I feel like this is something we are all working on together and we all really care about it, but that's just not in my nature to sit there and say: Dahlia that's boring. (...) But it's a lie to say I am one of you guys, you know that sounds really horrible, but it would be a lie if I said that I am one of you guys. There is a hierarchy, this is my project. (...) We are working together, and this is not because I'm so special.... It's because umm, (...) there is a whole discourse about power and (...) I find this shift fascinating. If I would say: oh yes, of course we are working together, and making this thing together and this is all you, contributing (...) I feel like this would be false, because it is not, I am the one who selected you guys because of your qualities. (...) I'm shaping this through all of this. So in a way, umm...but of course I don't want you to please...

Dancer 3: No, no, no I'm not disputing the whole set up I just think I understand my role as a dancer. I think it's about understanding it when I'm in the space...

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<sup>4</sup> The Improvisation Exchange is a Leeds-based collective where we meet monthly and share ideas of our practice. In 2010 I was leading one session based on *Funktionen* by Thomas Lehmen to see how other dancers would interact with his ideas and how they reflected on the process.

Dancer 2: HOW TO INTERPRET THE HIERARCHY THAT'S THE THING.

The transcript of the discussion documents how at this point of the research I was still holding on to the idea of single authorship. It also illustrates how the dancers in Case Study One, possibly in response to my struggle with multi directional interaction, were more uncertain about their role within the work than the dancers in Case Study Three (see Chapter Five). I will further explore the difference of working with both groups in Chapter Five, but the transcript makes evident how the research progressed over the entire research period.

The discussion then moves on to the shift of control between all performers, what it means for each performer and what parameters are necessary to enable these shifts to happen.

Dancer 3: It is how you said you're working with the whole thing of **control**, and control is such a hard word. So that's why I'm trying to justify and understand what this control thing is...

Kathinka: Yeah

Dancer 3: Like how much do you take control, and is it that I am taking control and when am I giving it back.

Dancer 1: Yeah and this is maybe the same for all of us, but also your role is the kind of hierarchical one. It was interesting in that improvisation, I felt like I was kind of playing with you in terms of hierarchy and our relationship. And I think that's...I think now is the time to kind of do that....

Kathinka: Yes.

Dancer 1: It's kind of like how much is it that you keep control and how much are you trying to reign it back in and keep control, or how much do you instigate and only allow what you want to happen... So for me that was the kind of interesting line that was used...

Kathinka: I would like us to play with that. I would like you to challenge me in a way, yeah.

Dancer 4: This is what I'm saying, because actually there is **POWER** within us, and that idea about you knowing we could. We do have the power to spin this thing out of control huh actually well, I mean I know you don't want that... [Laughter] ...umm but you know, us playing with Kathinka and that sort of control was something that I was thinking throughout.

Chapter Five explores the practical investigation of control and power and how we found different methods to enable the shift of control within the group of performers. During the rehearsals we played with clearly defined frameworks for the dancers to work within and how differently tight or open frameworks would affect the dancers decision-making. To our surprise a clearly defined framework made the dancers feel more empowered to shift the control during the performance process. In Chapter Six I further explore this idea asking how these questions of empowerment were more evident in *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) than in *Before I decide* (2013, New York), how my understanding of my role as the 'visible choreographer' changed as the research progressed.

Dancer 2: SOMETHING THAT IS STUCK IN MY MIND IS THE FACT WHAT SHE [Dancer 3] WAS SAYING ABOUT THE FEELING OF ASKING AND PLEASING RELATES TO THE FACT THAT THERE IS A SPECIFIC AESTHETIC TO THE WORK. AND ACTUALLY THERE IS SUCH SPECIFIC THING OF WHAT YOU DON'T WANT OR YOU WANT. AND MAYBE IT IS ALSO THAT WE ARE STILL TRYING TO UNDERSTAND...

Kathinka: Trying to understand what it is...

Dancer 2: ...TO UNDERSTAND EXACTLY, AND THAT **TRYING TO UNDERSTAND** MAYBE MAKES US, MAKES ME FEEL LIKE WE ARE TRYING TO PLEASE. (...) SO THERE IS THAT KIND OF SHIFT OF, YES WE HAVE THAT FREEDOM OF REALLY BEING TRUE TO THE WORK ...BUT ALSO TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE AESTHETIC. I GUESS MY QUESTION IS...WHAT IS ACTUALLY RIGHT OR WRONG?

Kathinka: I think that will always stay there, that question will never be answered fully, but I think the more we do it the more I can say the type of things I would like to see.

Interestingly, at this point I still believed that it could only be me deciding what the artistic framework should be like. Chapter Six highlights the debates concerning collaborative practice and explores the opportunity for multi directional interaction if all performers decide for an agreed artistic framework without any preplanning by the 'visible choreographer' prior to the rehearsal start (Cvejić, 2005).

Dancer 3: At some point you said "Neil leave the space" and I was wondering what would happen if you just said "leave the space" whether Neil would

leave the space, I would leave the space or whether something else would happen. So it's that halfway between you decide something has to leave the space, but it is up to us to decide who leaves the space. If you say do your duet, and so then it leaves up to...umm I don't know, I just thought...if it were...

Kathinka: I mean this whole project is about making choreography visible, yeah so it's about having one choreographer and her compositional decisions. So my compositional decision was at that point to just focus on Vanessa, I think it was Vanessa and Ollie and you.

Dancer 1: Yeah yeah yeah

Kathinka: So, I felt like I wanted to zoom in, because you know how they say the choreographer is leading the audiences' eye. So of course, yes, sometimes I can leave tasks more open and then it would be maybe be a bit more about making things more 'democratic' in a way. But sometimes it is more of a **compositional decision** for me. It's that whole idea that it is me doing this job, it is not you who are doing this job. (...) So yeah, it has got this element of physical choreography.

Dancer 1: For me that was, when you said "Neil leave the space", I was really grateful that you said that because at that point I kind of wanted to leave anyway, but I sort of felt like we were kind of doing something together, but I was thinking oh no umm I don't know what this is any more. (...)

Dancer 2: THAT'S INTERESTING ALSO BECAUSE... IT GOES BACK TO WHAT WE WERE SAYING ABOUT AT WHAT POINT DO WE ACTUALLY TAKE RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE THE TASK SOMEWHERE ELSE. I THINK THAT IS WHAT WAS HAPPENING, BUT THEN YOU BROUGHT IT BACK AGAIN. IT KIND OF PLAYS WITH OUR MINDS THAT SENSE OF WE ARE DOING WHERE IT TAKES US SO - AH NO WE CAN'T. IT'S INTERESTING, I FEEL LIKE WE HAVE TO GET USED TO PLAYING WITH THAT.

(Extract from a discussion on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2011 during rehearsals of *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds))

In the conversation it becomes clear how I struggled with letting go of control, but at the same time could feel that the work was leading us to multi directional interaction. Reading it now shows that we were touching on the question if single authorship was still applicable to this work, but at that point there seemed to be no possibility to place the role of the 'visible choreographer' within the multi directional interaction. In my responses it shows how I was clear about my role and my responsibilities and at times I had the need to justify it, but I drew the false conclusion that this would imply my single authorship.

Following, is an extract from a discussion two days later on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2011. What becomes evident here is how the work shifted within these two days and how decisions were made whilst 'Reflecting-with-Practice'. This in turn allowed the research to move in unexpected directions.

Dancer 1: That run we just did, where Kathinka gave all the instructions [and the dancers only entered the space when receiving an instruction], felt more empowering. (...) If we have free will then all six of us are thinking about what is going on in the space and how we can contribute to that. But in this version there is only one person, Kathinka, doing that, and there was a lot of **freedom** of getting a task and having certain choices on how to complete it.

Dancer 2: Having the opportunity to contribute to the space, in theory, should make you feel more empowered. But at the same time (...) you, Kathinka, are still there, controlling it. So we are doing our own thing, but we know that you still have the eye to check it out and if it fits into your choreography. Then I wonder if what I do is the right thing or not.

Dancer 3: IF YOU ARE WORKING WITH NO HIERARCHY THERE IS A COLLECTIVE AESTHETIC. WHEREAS HERE, THAT DOESN'T EXIST DUE TO KATHINKA'S PRESENCE (extract from *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) DVD 1: 'Discussions', entry 25<sup>th</sup> February 2011).

Here, the struggle of working with multi directional interaction is still visible, but there seems to be more clarity in the articulation of ideas and thoughts. The transcript of the discussion shows how the dancers' ability to reflect on their work in the studio allowed the research to unfold and how the shared reflection on our handling with material enabled, as Carter explains, 'material thinking' (Carter, 2004). Nevertheless, all extracts from the discussions show that there is a sense of divide - that I was multiple - that I was divided between roles.

Whereas the transcript illustrates how we used 'reflection-with-practice' to challenge the research in the studio, following is an example how I used the method of 'reflection-with-practice' outside the studio when evaluating the work and writing the thesis.

### 3.3 'Reflection – with – Practice' outside the studio

In 'Reflections on the making processes, 2001-2002' (Butcher and Pollard, 2005), Nikki Pollard, Rosemary Butcher and Susan Melrose attempt to document findings through writing. In the chapter, they are using different fonts to highlight thoughts by different people involved in the creative process or thoughts at different times to create a work that exhibits the non-linearity of thinking within creative processes. Susan Melrose explains:

Wherever the font changes (...), so too did the time of reflection, the observer, as well as the position from which the observation is made. (...) We seek to articulate something of the weave of thought-as-choreographic-action (Melrose in Pollard and Butcher, 2005, p.67).

Inspired by Pollard, Butcher and Melrose, I chose specific topics of my interest from the documentation of *Before I decide* (2013, New York) and selected comments, statements and questions from the dancers' journals, the recording of our discussions during the rehearsals as well as my 'Talking diaries' (documented on film). Unlike the one by Pollard, Butcher and Melrose, I arranged them into a conversation between all participants, applying the methodology of using different fonts to highlight each participant's voice. Reading the dancers' journals and re-living the conversations from the studio allowed incorporating the different perspectives of all research participants into the research outside the studio. The process of collecting and placing it in one document helped to generate further reflection on the discussions; continuing the exchange with the dancers and re-living these moments from the studio in Brooklyn made me reflect from within. It offered the opportunity to observe myself and my way of working and ask questions about my approach.

The collection and my responses to it, some of them at the time of the discussions, some of them after the case study was finished, highlights different aspects of my

research that are further explored in this thesis. The intention here is to give further space for each participant's voice and to illustrate incorporation into the overall research through the use of the writing methodology. The signposting to different sections within the thesis connects the conversation to the overall writing.



Figure 2: *Reflecting from within* © Bartczak, L. (2013), Performer: Paige Jane Hunter

**Dancer 1:** I feel really comfortable in Kathinka's created world. Safe, not in a simple way, in a pleasurable way. Safe to play.

**Kathinka:** Building an atmosphere of trust is part of the identity of the work, 'feeling safe to play' allows the work to constantly unfold and challenge its boundaries. [Chapter Five further explores the importance of trust within this research (see pp.71).] Working in New York has shown me that my responsibility is to create an atmosphere that in the first instance allows permission for playfulness and fearlessness that settles in to a gradual familiarity with resources, thoughts and ideas so that the work can be taken to places and through intersections that may not have occurred otherwise.

Dancer 1: I really appreciate the hat - it gives me a way to engage more, pick it up! (...) With the hats I feel a little like I'm losing touch with the composition, the through line. Before, I knew I was here to take part in Kathinka's creation. With the hats I feel more vague. I can do anything. What holds it together if I can do anything?

Kathinka: Is this referring to choreographic signature (Melrose, 2006)? What is the difference between 'taking part' and 'being a part of'? Who defines the through line? And what is a through line?

Dancer 1: When no leadership is given, there is a moment of hysteria when leadership is taken.

[Chapter Six further explores these ideas of multiple authorship (see pp.99).]

Dancer 2: I think this work shows a fearless faith that if you are practicing being in the moment, there is no lack of new meaningful experience. (...) It's that moment of excitement when the choreographer makes a choice and the dancer finds something and everyone in the room witnesses the birth - and that's the work! (Instead of re-creating the same moment.)  
Kathinka came in and put herself in the front of the flocking - a different form of direction.

**Kathinka:** This form of direction is something I explored in New York for the first time. It gets me out of my controlling editing head and into my more fluid experimenting/suspending head/self and makes me follow my intuition more. It makes me feel closer to the dancers when sharing the same medium and working on embodying ideas.

**Dancer 2:** It was kind of a slow way of transition of taking it back because you [Kathinka] were still following Paige's direction to do your solo, but you've prepared - you thought ahead - you went back into the preparing mood, which I thought was beautiful because it was combined with the willingness to follow Paige's direction, but you were interested in the thinking. And by adding the audio you've affected our way of flocking, but it was so softly and in relation to the direction you've received (please see: *Before I decide* (2013, New York) DVD 3: 'Being in and out of control', 0:23-0:55 min).

**Kathinka:** Being in and out of control, being in and out of focus. The smooth transitions please me, but the jerky ones, the juxtaposition of different ideas make the work exciting. It fascinates me how this struggle, my struggle, becomes visible in each performance.

[Chapter Seven further explores aspects of control and failure within this research (see pp.124).]

**Dancer 3:** I like the instruction to memorise someone else's movement and perform it later. It gives me freedom to put something into a new context and composition. (...) Did we bully Kathinka? She said it was weird.

**Kathinka:** With 'weird' I meant that I was pushed into an unknown place – a place where I didn't know the outcome. 'Weird' in form of being unfamiliar, unknown, but exciting as it offers possibilities I had not thought of.

**Dancer 3:** She danced, we flocked. We all touched her, a sign of support – apology?

**Kathinka:** It didn't feel like that to me. It felt more like we met on a different ground – similar to what I said before - we met through touch, sharing the moment of being in our bodies. And I enjoyed your support; it made me trust you, made me feel 'safe to play'.

**Dancer 3:** I could sense the pre-run energy would encourage us to get more experimental, freer, to enact choices that were maybe stuck like lumps in our throats before.

**Kathinka:** I really wanted to try and see where we could take it. I wanted to see where [you] would take it. It was really exciting and at the same time it was scary because there were times where I completely lost control. Kaia at one point asked me to close my eyes and I danced with her, [you] got very wild with all the props in the space and we listened to Janet Jackson. So [you] did all the things I would never do. And I had this voice inside my head saying: 'NO, don't do this, this is wrong!' but it was great to go with it. And I really felt that it added a very playful atmosphere, I felt that for the first time the shift of power got realised (please see: *Before I decide* (New York, 2013) DVD 3: Talking diary: 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2013).

**Dancer 3:** She is toying to do something in a situation where she can't do it.

[Chapter Five further explores aspects of power within this research (see pp.71).]

**Dancer 4:** I felt most present as a knitter and as a ‘teammate’ in this run.

I woke up this morning and remembered to play it simple, don’t overthink. Kathinka, we have been pushed and now we are pushing you. We will expose your weaknesses and test your boundaries. We want you to show us your limits. We want your strength and your weak spots because we share them with you. (...) Power is embedded in these deep systems that we obey to and coexist with. We need to push you, how much will you trust yourself outside your plan – how much will you trust us – how much can you give to the mass – if something threatens your true, non-negotiable values you can react, resist, fight, leave.

**Kathinka:** I’ve enjoyed that the feeling of being judged was not present in this run, that you’ve made choices, which challenged me and my artistic choices, but also my position of being in control. However, I hesitated to resist and fight. Could I fight and still keep an atmosphere of trust?

**Dancer 4:** That was fun (Kathinka).

**Kathinka:** See – fun and weird.

**Dancer 3:** The wood [the studio in Brooklyn we worked in] has a soft light filtering through sunlight. It is still grey outside. There are birds, trains. We all sit with our yarns and needles and notebooks. We have danced together for years.

[Chapter Five outlines the importance of the dancers knowing and trusting each other (see pp.71).]

In the following chapter the focus of the investigation moves to the concept of open works and ways in which it relates to notions of improvisation and choreography; where a performance work comes into existence within its ontology of flux.

## Chapter Four

### The concept of choreography within an improvisational setting

By placing the choreographer in the performance event and blending the different approaches of improvisation and choreography the conventional division between both approaches becomes less apparent and it offers different ways to view choreography and its possibilities for performance. The choreographer Mette Ingvarsten highlights the need to question conventional viewpoints when she states, “If we do not keep searching for what choreography can become the pre-existing frames and conventions will decide it for us” (Ingvarsten, 2010, npn). Questioning the inheritance of practice within choreography is, as Ingvarsten argues, important for the art form to continue to evolve and sustain relevance in changing cultural contexts.

In this chapter I explain how the work of the ‘visible choreographer’ brings the notion of choreography and improvisation together and how both multiple forms affect each other, allowing choreography to be experienced as an open work (Margolis/1981, Rubidge/2000). Within this setting, the visibility of the choreographer presents the choreographer as a social subject (Siegmond, 2012), extending the choreographer’s role and identity (Lepecki, 2006). My intention is to investigate how my practice/research could offer forms of active observing for the audience within the web of interrelationships of choreographer, dancers and work (Rancière, 2010).

#### 4.1 Choreography as an open work

What have become evident are the complex interrelations of features that contribute to open works. In the 1970s and 1980s, philosophers, such as Henry Nelson Goodman (1976), Richard Arthur Wollheim (1980) and Joseph Margolis (1977, 1981), analysed

the implications of ontology and the individuation of the work of art and if there were generalised criteria that could be used for all kinds of works of art. They distinguished in particular between works that took the form of performances, and works that took the form of objects. Margolis addressed these theories to dance directly and although many of the others did not, the debates did influence ideas within dance theory, especially within the work of the dance theorists Adina Armelagos and Mary Sirridge (1978).

Both, Margolis (1981) and Wollheim (1980), define the work of art as a product of human invention that is not identical with the object it results from, even though it needs the embodiment or materialisation. They use the type-token theory of identity (Margolis, 1981) to differentiate between the two. The type is the intentional object or the artwork, and the token is the material object that exhibits the artwork. Margolis highlights this difference when he refers to the philosopher Jack Glickman stating, "Particulars are made, types are created" (Glickman, 1978, p.155). The philosophers agree that the identity of performance work is based on scores, which are performance directives and can vary from loose instructions to detailed notations. The collection of performance works, contributing to this thesis therefore become tokens of a type based on the idea of the 'visible choreographer'. As I worked with improvisation the movement material created in each performance was different. This was emphasised by the fact that I worked with different groups of performers and their interpretation of the loose instructions was unlike as well as the audience perception of it. Furthermore, each context of the performance and the layout of the performance space were different. Nevertheless, all performances were based on the same type, the idea of the 'visible choreographer'.

The occurrence of the artwork can therefore differ as well as the perception of it as both depend on individual interpretation. Philosophers like Michel Foucault (1995) and

Roland Barthes (Barthes, 1977a, 1977b) broaden the discussion by arguing that there is no single interpretation of a source as they are influenced by conditions of history as well as themes of interest (Foucault, 1995), and that each work constructed by the author only creates a network of interpretations (Barthes, 1977a, 1977b). This focus on multiplicity replaces the view of the work as a unified totality.

For the development of theories of identity in dance in the 1970s, Goodman's work "The Languages of Art" (1966/1976) proved to be significant on the theories of identity in dance. He distinguishes between autographic and allographic work, depending on the visibility of the author's input and stylistic preference. With autographic work the author's mark needs to be visible, for example in paintings and sculptures, and with allographic work the reproduction is not dependent of the intervention of the author, which can be seen in performing arts. However, as currently so many studies and reproductions within visual art can be made for the next buyer, it might not be seen necessarily as singular anymore or the means of production are so varied that the artist's hand is not as evident.

Jack Anderson, who has been mentioned in Chapter Two in relation to his traditional notions of division in dance practice between the materialist and idealist (see p.22), explains that it is not important to present the material, but that the style of the choreographer needs to be replicated (1975/1983). This is in line with Armelagos and Sirridge (1978) who recommend that the choreographer's movement style is a central condition of the identity of a dance work. Interestingly here is that the discussions refer to American mainstream dance from the 1970s and 1980s. A considerable amount of work post 1980 has evolved as a deliberate stance against this position. Within the current dance practice many choreographers create works through a range of mechanisms where their own movement may not be present; it might now be the choreographer's compositional style that is evident not the movement material itself.

Current questions of the nature of a work by artists and theorists within Central Europe reveal that the focus lies less on the presentation of a specific movement style, and more on ideas of participation and social engagement. The choreographer Michael Klien is an example of such an approach where he refers to the philosopher Martin Heidegger (1986/1936), who defines art as an ontological question that deals with the disclosure of truth of being. Klien explains how art becomes less about the presentation of an aesthetic object or an aesthetic experience, but "...it offers for the community of peoples a possibility to participate in the unconcealedness of being and disclosure of the world, which is taking place in the art work" (Klien, 2008a, pp.38).

He continues to emphasise the importance of participation and interconnectivity between all participants within a performance event when he states:

Social choreography has opened an arena of cultural interplay between artists and audience, a lived and interconnected world of relationships, pattern and dynamics, a region of new and subtle observational capacities in which a deeper level of interdependence, an implicate order of mind and nature, has emerged as a model for a new and regenerative social reality (Klien, 2008a, p.147).

Here, a performance becomes more about a social event with the focus on the relational and social aspect than the aesthetic experience. Performance art becomes a mirror for social order, a way to observe and comment as well as experience different dynamics within social realities. In her recent book "Choreographing Problems, Expressive Concepts in European Dance and Performance" (2015), Bojana Cvejić highlights these social interconnections between all participants and the importance of communication within a performance event. She explains, how within a theatrical representation all activities or faculties of making, performing and spectating deploy mechanisms that are unified by the act of communication (Cvejić, 2015). Here, she refers to works by artists such as Xavier Le Roy, Jonathan Burrows, Boris Charmatz, Eszter Salamon, Mette Ingvartsen and Jan Ritsema.

In earlier work by choreographer and researcher Sarah Rubidge she applies Margolis type-token theory to identify authored performance-directive (tokens) within the open work (type), understanding an identifiable work (token) within a field, collection and style (type). Rubidge began her research on the nature of open works in 1994 when working on *Intimate Memories* (1994), a work composed of several units, which could be altered for each new version, but were set for each performance. Over the period of four years the work had been developed and directed by different directors. Each director applied the openness for multiplicity (Barthes, 1977a, 1977b) differently and the work shifted and progressed, revealing itself as an “open-form work” (Rubidge, 2000, p.116). The first two directors played with the movement style and spatial orientation of the dancers, which in regard to Armelagos and Sirridge (1978) would define the work as a different work. Rubidge, however, saw it as simply another form of expression of the same work (Rubidge, 2000). The third and fourth director challenged the openness even further by choosing not to work with all compositional units, changing the structure of each unit as well as the overall layout to create a new expressive arrangement. Viewing these changes under the auspices of ontology of flux shows the potential of a work to unfold and grow in its expressive form. Rubidge explains:

It would appear from the transformations, which had taken place in *Intimate Memories* that, as a work, it is potentially so unstable that, eventually, it might not count as a work at all. I would argue, however, that it *is* a work, but that the 'work of the work' is embodied in that very fluidity of form and structuration, which is implicated in its performance directives (Rubidge, 2000, p.120).

In regard to Foucault and Barthes and the idea of multiplicity, Rubidge allows a multiplicity not only within the viewer's perception, but also in the form of expression and how the work continuously changes with its fluidity of form. She refers to Yvonne Rainer and her work *Trio A* (1966) where she remained control over the general structure of the work, but the kinetic content was variable (Rubidge, 2000). With the example of *Trio A* (1966), Rubidge describes the tension of authorial control and

interpretative freedom within open works and how Rainer, when working on *Continuous Project - Altered Daily* (1970) was "...clearly torn between wanting to maintain and release her authorial control on the work she had set in motion" (Rubidge, 2000, p.50). Interestingly here is that in the 1990s Rainer trained disciples who are allowed to teach *Trio A* (1966).

This could raise questions of identity and losing control. However, viewing the work through the type-token theory in relation to open works, the different directors of *Intimate Memories* (1994) created a number of tokens, but the overarching creative intention, the type, stayed the same. Reading her work, there is an interesting ambiguity in terms of her irritation with change taking place whilst allowing others to take on roles designed to generate difference. Her unease reminds me of my difficulties when working on *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds). On the one hand I wanted to give the company more space to interpret my instructions more freely so that the work could unfold in unexpected directions, but I am aware that I resisted the disappearance of my single authorship. I will further explore the struggle between choreographic intent and improvisational exploration in Chapter Five.

Framing the work as an open work identifies it as the articulation and re-articulation of a process of thought in action, which does not come to a closure with the performance event. Its ontology of flux emphasises its identity of change and its mode of being/becoming. Viewing the work with its fluidity of form, Rubidge describes, "...the open dance work, as a work [that] is designed as an open-ended system and thus has, in the long-term, no point of closure" (Rubidge, 2002, p.135).

The work of the 'visible choreographer' sits within Rubidge's idea of the open work, highlighting its identity and ontology of flux. Since starting to work with the idea of the 'visible choreographer' in 2007 each project has explored different aspects of its

intentional logic. It was liberating to stay with one idea for longer and allow the work with each performance to unfold, be open-ended. Viewing the work of the 'visible choreographer' as an open work highlights the continuous development and change of ideas and the importance to follow them, be lead by them, fully reveal the potential of the work without the pressure to produce something 'new' each time. The material itself, or referring to Margolis the token, changed depending on the performers and the changing interrelationship between all performers as well as the site in which it was performed, the sound used, the number of performers and the nature of the audience. However, unlike Rubidge, I have so far always been part of the performance, it has always been me in the role of the 'visible choreographer'. Although when working on *Before I decide* (2013, New York) I was aware that there was a lead, but I began to wonder who was taking the lead. It would be interesting to see how the material, the token, could change with another choreographer in the role, how the type can be further explored to set the work in motion. Nevertheless, as explained earlier, I could feel a resistance to that happening due to a feeling of loss of authorship. Throughout the work so far I had the ultimate control with the improvising always being contained within my filter system. I will further explore these aspects of control and authorship in Chapter Six (especially within 6.3) and Chapter Seven and explain how a sociological tool-kit could enable the work to unfold as an open-ended system, challenging aspects of ownership and scoring even further.

Compared to Rubidge's work, the work of the 'visible choreographer' explores the notion of choreography within an improvisational setting. This adds another layer of identity of flux within each project, letting both concepts coalesce and bringing the very issue to the foreground where the two distinct modes of behaviour might grapple with each other. Having the choreographer as an active participant within the performance event highlights the distinction between both modes, and how they operate differently. Not only does it offer a new and adaptable role of the choreographer and questions

concepts of authorship, it also merges the two modes without losing their distinct features. Throughout the research I played with different relationships between the two, trying to keep both modes equally present, still allowing an identity of flux throughout the performance duration. Whereas *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) had a clear artistic framework and a clear division of me directing and the dancers responding, in 2012 I played with my spatial positioning to end this division and we added the narrative (see Chapter 7.2) as a pool of ideas available for all performers. For *Before I decide* (2013, New York) the division disappeared at times with me moving with the dancers or the dancers directing me. Each project offers an identity of flux within the performance and challenges notions of identity and control. Compared to Rubidge, the token with its improvisational setting is less authored performance-directive (Rubidge, 2000) and its identity shifts and changes. The changing relationship between 'visible choreographer' and dancers and the contribution that dancers are often asked to make to the work can be a potential liberation for the 'visible choreographer' as not all responsibility lies with her. It marries ideas from the different approaches together with a view to making a performance 'now'. Working with the same cast might therefore be important so that it fixes a variable and the focus can remain on the development of the full potential of the work. However, it can also be seen as an exploitation of the dancers' vulnerability unless the ownership gets shared between all performers and, as Barthes calls it, the multiplicity of the work can become visible (Barthes, 1977a, 1977b).

At the beginning of my research I saw the use of improvisation as a tool to provoke unpredictability within the company's responses to my instruction and to allow shifts of social dynamics between all performers to arise. Seven years later I understand the complexity of bringing notions of choreography and improvisation together and how both multiple forms affect each other as well as the identity of the three participants: choreographer, dancers and work. British choreographers such as Charles Lineham and Charlotte Spencer play with these different notions within their work, blending them

so that the difference becomes hardly recognisable for the viewer. Structures for improvisations are linked with choreographed elements and as the performance presence of the dancers does not change the difference between both notions becomes hardly recognisable for the audience. *Cascade* (2011) by Charles Lineham is created of different compositional patterns, which are intertwined, but leave space for the dancers to play with moments of improvisation. The dancers have to carefully listen to each other and respond to unexpected changes. In *Embodied Drawing* (since 2012), a dance performance and collection of drawings, Charlotte Spencer plays with a constant flux between process and product; the dancers leave traces on white paper, which not only function as documentation, but also as inspiration for future dances. The work intends to combine and explore dance and drawing in mutual cross-fertilisation, finding possibilities for dance as a medium to be used in exploring drawing as an interactive and physical process, to then again become the document/trace of the dance to happen (Spencer, 2012).

Viewing their work I feel part of a community of practice where people are exploring aspects of performance, dance making and social practice. With a sense of focus and attention given to these shifts new questions about identity arise and I am curious how much the identity of one element can be challenged before it becomes recognised as something different. In my earlier work I assumed that choreographic processes were to an extent constant or stable, that even though the dancers contribute to the creative process the control retains with the choreographer who directs the process of generating material and structuring it. Having trained at a conservatoire (BPA and MA) and having taught in a conservatoire environment throughout this research has influenced my thinking and I now understand that it has been less about questioning, but more about maintaining or sustaining tradition. Through my current research my approach to teaching has changed. Now by understanding choreography with its identity of flux, as an open work, I see my role as a lecturer more in raising questions

than having to give answers. I now engage with an investigative process that unravels what choreographic processes might mean, how all participants might interact and how an identity of flux is present within what can be understood to be a social practice. Compared to my previous choreographic work, the interaction of all participants within the performance event requires and facilitates the experience of the social. Viewing the work as an open work with its identity of flux allows, not only, as Cvejić claims, that the social order can be aesthetically produced and instilled choreographically (Cvejić, 2012a), but experienced in its multiplicity.

#### 4.2 The choreographer as a social subject

Having the 'visible choreographer' as an active member of the performance process enabled me to integrate negotiating processes for both, the dancers and the choreographer, usually only visible during the rehearsal process. In 'Negotiating choreography, letter and law in William Forsythe' (2012), Gerald Siegmund refers to choreography as "...an abstract sign-based order and choreographic text as its being negotiated by a body" (Siegmund, 2012, p.212). He highlights the absence between the body/movement and the law/choreography and the dancer's struggle to connect these opposing poles. By negotiating these two poles, the dancer connects to a system of signifiers, the choreography, and by presenting it in front of an audience, or as Siegmund calls it "...the symbolic body of a community-to-be" (Siegmund, 2012, p.212), the dancer becomes a social subject. The audience becomes an observer and witness of the decisions made by the dancer. One could argue that the dancer is holistically part of the signifier and not outside it, but the negotiating process is still present. The process of negotiating between these two poles starts in the studio and continues as part of the on-going work. The dancer learns the choreographic text or realises/authors it and negotiates both poles of body/movement and law/choreography,

even though Siegmund argues that there is a constant gap between these oppositions. The performance presents the audience one possible result of the negotiating process, but through the engagement in the work, the audience will interpret it in their individual ways.

When working with the 'visible choreographer' these negotiating processes become more apparent. Listening to the choreographer's tasks/instructions to the dancer and therefore being aware of the range of possible responses, the audience can witness the dancer's decision making between the different possible responses. By witnessing the individual decision-making process, the subjectivity/individuality of each dancer becomes visible; visibility here is used as a felt sense as well as visible in that the audience watches with all of their senses.



Figure 3: *The visible choreographer* © Heuer, U. (2011)  
Performer: Kathinka Walter

Having the choreographer as an active member of the performance process and working with improvisation means that the choreographic text is not set, but unfolds

throughout the performance. Whilst the dancer negotiates between body and law, the 'visible choreographer' negotiates between law and body by selecting, rearranging and structuring the dancers' responses and translating it into choreographic text, to become again realised by the dancers. It challenges what might be thought of as the nature of performance, revealing structural components, turning the inside out. Siegmund emphasises that the negotiating does not only apply to law and body, but also includes gaining an image of oneself, the social subject. As the work of the 'visible choreographer' plays with shifting social dynamics within the groups of performers and therefore with identities in flux, the constant adjustment to these changes and the process of identifying 'me' (social subject) and the 'other' becomes even more visible to the audience. It captures my attention as a maker, but also as a viewer as I have to adjust to changes and therefore be alert within the performance process. In these moments the performers cannot hide within a well-rehearsed movement sequence and their personalities, how they react to the others as well as moments of uncertainty, becomes visible. It highlights how all performers as a company have to work together and listen to each other, which refers to my earlier writing about Charles Lineham's work. As the choreographer, I become part of this group, having to listen to the dancers whilst negotiating between my ideas and their responses. However, there is an extensive range of other elements that I have to consider in terms of environment, design, audience location etc. My focus is therefore multiple, whilst the dancers' is on their given tasks.

Here the negotiating between body and law becomes visible as an opposite process described by Siegmund, and it raises questions about how to write a choreographic text in response to the dancers' movement, entering the absence between these poles. By negotiating between them my identity of choreographer/researcher becomes visible. I would argue not only is this process in front of an audience a process of becoming a social subject, it also challenges what might be thought of as the conventional identities

of choreographer and dancer in terms of ownership. With the audience in the space, it enables 'me' to not only imagine 'myself' with a view toward the 'other', but also with a view to the expected role of the choreographer and her responsibilities.

Even though I am interested in making the decision process of all performers visible I have in the process of the research become interested in making my vulnerability visible. This includes allowing the audience to witness moments of me not knowing what to do next, or, by working with 'stream of consciousness' as defined by the philosopher and psychologist William James (James, 1961/2001), articulating my thoughts when watching the dancers' responses to my instructions. Whereas in previous works, for example *Physical chain* (2010, Leeds), I was interested in the shift of power between company and director and the struggle within it, these shifts of dynamics are still present, but I am more interested in the subtle changes and the complexity of influences when I direct the performers within the performance process. How do I view their responses to my instructions? What influences interfere with my negotiating process and how do they portray my identity of choreographer and researcher? This will be further explored in Chapter Seven, when I investigate my role as the "total performer" (Stuart, 2010, p.29).

These questions about my identity of choreographer and researcher link well to the identity of researcher and research, an idea explored with dance practitioner/theorist Louise McDowall during shared research presentations in 2014 (Research Seminar Series, 2014). Using an improvisation-based style in the actual delivery we invited the audience to sit with us around a big table, share food and discuss our practice/research. Our intention was to explore where researcher and research are interconnected and influence each other – acknowledging that the complexity of my life and identity is reflected in my research, akin to the rhizomic body of researcher and research in relation to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), Tim Ingold (2011) and

Kim Vincs (2007). Deleuze and Guattari describe the rhizome in that "...it has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2014, p.22).

Jérôme Bel refers to Deleuze and Guattari when he questions ways of representation and the concepts of presence, body and being here, considering multiple versions of ourselves not fixed by an identifiable form. In regard to choreography he challenges the conditions of choreography and how it can reveal its participation in the production of subjectivity; how choreography can offer a transparency of these multi-layered subjectivities (Lepecki, 2006). When writing the text for the Ballet International yearbook (1999, p.36), Bel lists all the thirty-three bodies that he was, ranging:

From Gilles Deleuze to Myriam van Imschoot, from Samuel Beckett to 'unknown individuals in the megalopolis where I live', from Peggy Phelan to 'Claude Ramet (an invented name, maybe real)', from Hegel to Xavier Le Roy (Bel cited in Lepecki, 2006, p.50).

The complexity of Bel's idea of the subject and a rhizomic body, after Deleuze and Guattari, becomes present in the work of the 'visible choreographer'; her 'visibility' gives a glimpse of the "...continuous processes of unfolding multiplicities" (Lepecki, 2006, p.50). Understanding this interconnectivity and that not only the complexity of my life shapes my decision making as the visible choreographer, but also everyone I meet, books I read even encounters with others on the street, I have reached the position that the 'visible choreographer' reveals the 'inside out', that she as a social subject becomes visible. Each decision I make throughout the performance process is not only influenced by my research/practice and artistic preferences, but is also shaped by the complexity of my life. Throughout the performance process the 'visible choreographer' describes her thinking and reveals aspects of change, decision and indecision, refers to her reading and other influences of her decision-making, the rhizomic body of

different ideas, people, concepts and places. In response to Bel, questions arise in terms of the bodies I carry with me when being the 'visible choreographer' in the performance event and how the 'visible choreographer' can communicate this net of influences to the audience whilst directing the performers, illustrating her identity in flux (Walter, 2014). Acknowledging this multi-layered identity of the 'visible choreographer' and that there is no separation between performing this role and being myself, that as I am changing the role is changing with me, I understand the humanity within this work and that it is less about fulfilling roles, but being oneself and to draw from one's multiplicities. The work of the 'visible choreographer' offers, as Klien claims, "a work practice that allows me to be human" (Klien, 2008a, p.13).

Linking Bel's idea of the subject to the way that Rubidge interprets what for her identifies an 'open work' (Rubidge, 2000/2002) shows the interconnectivity of the subject not only within its rhizomic structure, but the shifting viewpoints of the subject in relation to the other constituent features, choreographer, dancers, sound, movement and environment. By shifting each identity another viewpoint of the rhizomic structure comes into focus. Whilst this revisits Lepecki's questioning of singular choreographic authorship (Lepecki, 2006) I am interested in the complexity it allows by not only presenting the chosen ideas, but also mapping out the rejected ones, the failed attempts, the dead ends, or as Siegmund calls it, the negotiation between both opponent poles of body/movement and law/choreography (Siegmund, 2012). Audience members have described the work as a presentation of the making as part of the performance so that the audience can get a better understanding of choreographic processes. Acknowledging Lepecki revealing attitudes and ways of thinking with these ideas in regard to Bel has helped me to understand that it is this in terms of an unravelling of highlighting the complexity of the subject and the interconnectivity of the subject. The artist and curator Davide Terlingo (2008) captures the ideas succinctly

when he recognises this as, “a choreography that reveals the continuity between thoughts, our actions and the world around us” (Terlingo in Klien, 2008a, p.17).

#### 4.3 Directing the viewing

Within the exploration of the nexus of work (Sanchez-Colberg and Preston-Dunlop, 2002) as a web of interrelationships of choreographer, dancers and movement I would like to extend this interrelationship by including the audience. By changing one element within the relationships that exist between choreographer, dancers and movement/material the other elements will inevitably be changed as well. No one element can be looked at in isolation; they are co-dependent within the identity of the work, they are the work. How does this effect and affect the role of the audience? French philosopher Jacques Rancière claims to let go of the link of seeing and passivity, and that audiences need to participate in more active forms of engagement. They are part of the identity of the work and their singular mass and individual energy has an impact on the performance process (Rancière, 2010). The theatre theorist Helen Freshwater states:

It is important to remember that each audience is made up of individuals who bring their own culture reference points [...] and immediate preoccupations to their interpretation of production (Freshwater, 2009, pp.5-6).

This individual response shapes the relationship between performer and audience, which impacts on the unfolding of the performance. In the following section the discussion moves on to consider the choreographer-audience relationship within *Before I decide* (2011-13), the immersive element of the work and its potential for greater interplay between all four elements, choreographer, dancers, material and audience.

The audience experience of the performance is partly dependent on how the choreographer directs the viewing and the clarity of the given instructions. Choreographer Jonathan Burrows refers to the choreographer's influence when he states, "Let's be honest, when we talk about audience we talk about ourselves. Thinking about how you want to look and be looked at can help clarify why you might want to perform in the first place" (Burrows, 2010, p.159-160). Understanding that I, as an audience member, get excited when I can engage in the conceptual ideas underlying a work helps me to understand the audience's role in *Before I decide* (2011-13). My aim is to give an insight into the ideas and concepts by making my thought processes and the concepts underlying the work visible/audible. As the audience hears my instructions or reads the task cards given to the dancers, they can get a sense of my negotiating processes and how I envision the performance to unfold, how I envision the unfolding of meaning. Furthermore, my description of my thoughts when watching the dancers respond to my tasks gives an insight into the interconnectivity of ideas and concepts of the work. This refers to Forsythe's work and how "...the audience becomes engaged in an active process, an interactive dialogue of meaning-making" (Boenisch, 2003, npn). The spectator becomes interactively engaged by navigating networks of information instead of only consuming them, gaining a more active part in performance making. Jonathan Burrows explains:

The relation with the audience is a circular thing: I give the audience clues as to how they might sit and they, in turn, give me permission to relax and do best what I've come to do (Burrows, 2010, p.159-160).

My identity within the performance event is therefore not only dependent on my relationship with the dancers and the material (Ingold, 2008), but how the audience perceives and engages with the performance, how clearly communicated the instructions are on how to view the work so that the audience understands their role within the performance. Reflecting on this work, I acknowledge how it influenced the

design of the performance space for *Before I decide* (2013, New York); in acknowledging the engagement with the audience the aim was to create a more immersive experience.

Ingold refers to immersive performances as something that should rub at the diversity within it, something that unravels diversity rather than giving the illusion of something that washes over you (Ingold, 2014<sup>5</sup>). This unravelling of diversity and complexity equates with my developing ideas concerning audience engagement. The design of the performance space and the welcoming and instructions giving by an usher how to view the work offers the audience the opportunity to be differently engaged, supporting the idea that each audience is made up of individuals. By giving an outline to the audience what they can and cannot do, they can choose how to interact with the performance. Similar to how it empowers the dancers to work within a set framework, which I will discuss in Chapter Five, this given outline empowers the audience in their individual way of interacting with the performance. Each audience member can decide how long to stay, where to sit, if they want to read the dancers' journals or view films of my 'Talking diaries' (please see: *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) DVD 1: 'Talking diary'). At times I would speak to them directly or might even give them specific tasks, like for example in *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) at the Howard Assembly Room, where I asked all audience members to walk as a group slowly from one corner of the room to the other whilst a dancer was moving in front of them in reaction to their movement and another given task.

In audience feedback after *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) at stage@leeds a range of responses seem to support and raise further questions about the relationship between performer and audience. Theatre director and performer Bryan Brown states:

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<sup>5</sup> On the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014 I took part in a discussion workshop for practice-based postgraduate students led by Tim Ingold and organised by CePRA (Centre for Practice-Led Research in the Arts, University of Leeds).

I'd like to see you and the performers challenge yourselves to continue with the really excellent and deep work happening between you to also extend a bit more to the audience – to make eye contact with them, maybe speak to them, to really invite them somewhere – make spaces for them more in tune to the spaces the performers have (Bryan Brown, 2011).

Reflecting on Brown's feedback influenced the creation of a space for the audience in *Before I decide* (2013, New York), the aim being to find different ways of engaging with the work, to be immersed within it, and referring to Burrows, to allow myself being more relaxed within my performance.

Comparing *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) to *Before I decide* (2013, New York), a shift in how an audience could engage with the work became a key avenue of exploration. In 2011 the instructions given to audience members by the usher did not invite the audience to be involved. It was very dark, the resting corners of the dancers were intimate and the intense whispered and organised conversation within the company did not provide spaces for the audience to feel at ease in considering contribution. The audience was more inclined to observe a whole range of ideas and scenarios being played out in the space. One audience member compares her perceiving of the space to "watching a dream unfold, while being awake, but with a director to change where it's going" (2011). The very nature of the internal focus of the company, including myself, seemed to form an environment to observe not to be immersed in.

For *Before I decide* (2013, New York) the lay out of the performance space encouraged a more immersive space for the audience. The work was presented at the Grace Exhibition Space, a venue used exclusively for performance art with all events presented on the floor, not on a stage, something that dissolves the boundary between artist and viewer. The space was well suited to the themes being explored in the work. It was effectively a gallery space with light grey painted floor and walls, well lit and no fixed seating. The division of the space into a main performance area and a bar in the

opposite corner offered the audience not only to watch the work, but also change their focus, talk to friends and have a drink and then return to the work. According to the dance theorist Valerie Preston-Dunlop, design is one sub-strand of the nexus of the work (Preston Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002) and this is an example of the ways environment influences the work and the audience's engagement. There was a significant change in my control of the surroundings, familiarity with the dancers and how the whole environment worked. It jolted me into new areas to consider, offering an exploration of the unexpected, creating an environment that unravelled diversity (Ingold, 2014).

Whereas I tried in previous performances to invite the audience to return to the work to see how the work progresses over the four-hour duration, here the audience stayed for the entire duration of the work and witnessed the overall dramaturgy unfold. It created a relaxed, informal atmosphere for the audience as well as the performers. The audience read the dancers' journals, watched the interviews with the dancers on the flip cameras – some people used the flip cameras to film the work – they fully engaged with my notebook, sat down at my desk, played with the radio and the juke box. At one point it was getting too much for me and I felt that I had to regain space again. The game started to belong to more people and reflecting back on it; this unnerved me in terms of how I would continue to be in charge, it made me nervous of dealing with too many uncontrollable components. In reflection, it shows how I have allowed with each work a greater amount of uncertainty and flexibility, but how I struggle to fully embrace it, how I avoid the full potential of improvisation to evolve. Throughout the performance I started to realise the fuller extent of the work and the possibilities of what I had the capacity to deal with in process. My performance became more at ease and I experimented with different ways to communicate with the audience, mediating my thinking and decision-making processes.

The more informal atmosphere - the chatter in the background, the audience drifting in and out of focus - offered me as a maker of work and as a performer to be more in the present moment and follow the flow of the work more. I had the benefit of not being the centre of everyone's attention and I noticed myself being braver in my decision making, more playful and more open to the audience, talking to them about my artistic/research ideas and letting them start to be involved in the interactions with the dancers. I read abstracts from Klien's *Framemakers, Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change* (2008a) and quotes by Gregory Bateson (Bateson 1970, cited in Klien, 2008a, p.20). At one point I referred back to an audience member wanting to play with the radio and I gave him the task to find a tune for the dancers. As mentioned earlier, it became evident that the audience was part of the interrelationship of choreographer, dancers and material. They became delegated performers and the 'doers' and the 'lookers' formed, as the French performance artist Jean-Jacques Lebel calls it, "A truly collective enterprise in political and artistic research" (Lebel in Sandford, 1995, p.283).

Referring to Burrows, the arrangement of the space gave the audience indications how to be in the performance space and watch the work, which allowed the performers and myself to perform to our best ability - it felt liberating and joyful. The audience became part of the interaction between choreographer, dancers and material as another strand within the nexus of the 'open work' (Rubidge, 2000/2002). At points the deviation between audience and performers became blurry. Sanchez-Colberg and Preston-Dunlop explain:

It is the manner in which the choreographer, the performers and the spectators enter into negotiations/economies/tactical interactivity/transactions, which give 'identity' to the dance event (Sanchez-Colberg and Preston-Dunlop, 2002, pp.34-35).

What appears to be apparent is that the work offers interplay between all four elements with less focus about who the work is for and more about sharing it with all participants.

Perhaps not all audience members feel comfortable with a more active engagement and no one should feel forced to do so. *Before I decide* (2013, New York) has shown that an audience's engagement can enrich a work. The audience's openness made me feel more relaxed and less nervous, which affected my ability to be transparent in my thought processes and decision-making. And not only could I share my ideas more, it also offered the audience to experience different levels of visibility themselves. The audience could not only understand my ideas through my expression, but also through the different visible levels of engagement. For example, in finding a tune on the radio for the dancer, the audience member showed his decision-making process not only to the dancers, but also to the other audience members.

As explained by Ingold (2014), the audience's involvement should enhance the diversity within the work, should highlight the changes throughout. Interacting with the audience made all of us in the space the observer and the observed and by working within a place of trust, respect and adaptability the act of observing and being observed could be freed from assumption, allowing the work to take the lead. An environment of trust is necessary for all participants/observers to follow the work and let go of control. At times, I found myself struggle with the ability and openness to deal with an event in flux, the lack of control was now even greater by inviting the audience into this interplay between choreographer, dancers and material. In the following chapter I further explore the interrelationship of trust and power within my practice/research and the challenges we faced in the studio as well as during performance processes.

## Chapter Five

### Trust and Power

What has become evident during this research is that both, trust and power are closely interlinked within the working process. The play of different power structures relies on an environment of trust, not only between all performers, but also in relation to the work itself. The discussion in this chapter considers the importance of trust and the different aspects that influence creative processes, starting from writing the first ideas that frame the potential work until the completion of the performance event. Considering the idea of power in relation to the 'visible choreographer', a clear link to Michel Foucault can be established and his writing on Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. Foucault states:

The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen. It is an important mechanism, for it automatises and disindividualises power (Foucault, 1995, p.198).<sup>6</sup>

The architecture of the Panopticon allowed "a single watchman to observe (-opticon) all (pan-) inmates of an institution without them being able to tell whether they are being watched or not" (Semple, 1993, p.152). It is about the visibility of the one to be controlled and the invisibility of the one in power. Power gets disindividualised, as Foucault calls it, and the increase of power relies on the invisibility of the one in control (Foucault, 1995), turning it in on the individual and operating as a virtual and immanent self-circulation of thoughts. Viewing the Panopticon as self-surveillance shows, that it potentially has more to do with being controlled from within ourselves, reinforced by external social and power structures. The sociologists Martin Fuglsang and Bent Meier

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<sup>6</sup> Foucault's early work examines the relationship between power and knowledge as well as the problem of institutional relationships to "the political and economic structures of society" (Bernauer and Rasmussen, 1994, p.161). In *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1995) Foucault criticises institutions, which are normalised through the political economic subjects of capitalism (Chaput, 2009). The Panopticon for him is not about the execution of power itself, but "to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality" (Foucault, 1995, p. 201). It is a form of controlling society and its morality and believes systems.

Sørensen refer to Foucault when they state that contemporary social analysis is still concerned about “disciplinary societies” (Fuglsang and Meier Sørensen, 2006, p.5).

They explain that within contemporary social analysis:

They focus on binary segmentations of the social field (as for instance in dualism of dominant and dominated) even though the flow of capital and the fluidity of its organisational principles is guided by quite different kinds of power relations: those of biopolitical production and of the re-production of life itself (Fuglsang and Meier Sørensen, 2006, p.5).

Fuglsang and Meier Sørensen refer to the current impact of technology and how it affects, among others, genomics and reproductive choices, representing profound biopolitical efforts to exercise power over every day modes of practice. As the sociologist Thomas Lemke indicates, the inconsistency with which the concept of biopolitics has recently been implemented shows how life is seen either as the determining basis of politics, or that the object of politics is life (Lehmke, 2011). This refers back to Fuglsang and Meier Sørensen, continuing that it is power that does not only produce segmentation of the one in control and the one being controlled, but that “under the auspices of humanistic ‘freedom’ (...) [the] external disciplinary authority has become an internal principle of regulation and control” (Fuglsang and Meier Sørensen, 2006, p.5). Referring these ideas to the work of the ‘visible choreographer’ highlights the complexity of power relations between all performers and the impact of outside influences on each performer as an additional invisible/visible control.

One might say that the work of the ‘visible choreographer’ could be read through the ideas generated by Foucault, particularly as I am questioning authority and ownership (see Chapter Six). However, when I first read *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Foucault, 1995) I started with comparing the architecture of the Panopticon to the work of the ‘visible choreographer’ and could see a clear difference to power and the individual. Whereas the Panopticon works with the visibility of the one to be

controlled and the invisibility of the one in power so that it is not about the individual in control as he/she is replaceable, the idea of the 'visible choreographer' focuses on the individual in control and making the sharing of structure, role and endeavour visible. Being visible therefore weakens her power and highlights aspects of vulnerability and doubt (please see: *Before I decide* (2013, New York) DVD 3: Rehearsals/discussions: Vulnerability, 0.10-0.33 min). Foucault's writing emphasises that not only the unpredictable aspect of working with improvisation weakens my position of power, but also the 'individualisation' of it. The 'visible choreographer' exposes to the viewer moments of uncertainty, doubt or change of direction, aspects that are part during the rehearsal process and visible to the dancers, but usually invisible to the audience. It accentuates to the viewer the subjectivity of the creative process, which is never linear and made of personal decisions, social interactions and the unpredictability of potentiality.

The comparison to the Panopticon therefore acts in two ways; firstly it illustrates the power relationship between 'visible choreographer' and dancers and secondly between the 'visible choreographer' and the audience/observer. Similar to the Panopticon, the dancers, as the one being controlled, are visible. When given a specific task their thought processes and their ways of dealing with the tasks become visible to the audience, which can make the dancers feel vulnerable. This varies depending on the instruction method I use, ranging from verbal instructions amplified by the microphone, for example 'Restrict another dancer's movement whilst copying a third dancer's movement', which makes the thinking most visible/audible, to the whispering into the performers' ears as the least visible/audible instruction method. The difference here is that by working with improvisation the dancers' position can change to being in control. They can change the direction of the creative process, they can interrupt how I

envisaged the performance process to unfold and lead it to a different direction, take control over the performance process.

Over the duration of my research there has been a change from focusing on the shift of control between choreographer and dancer, as seen in *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds), to the visibility of the choreographer's vulnerability, as seen in the work of the *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds) and *Before I decide* (2013, New York). It has become more about the visibility of MY seeing, MY operating, MY dealing with changes in role, with objections, emotion, manipulation, surprise, with traditional notions of what it is to choreograph and to see 'my work' performed. I am being watched and I am trained to control myself. In regard to the Panopticon I therefore become an 'inmate', the one being controlled.

This chapter explains how we explored the shift of control between all performers and the challenges we faced to allow these shifts between all performers and the work to happen. It explores ideas and reflection in relation to the three phases of the creative process - preparing the rehearsals, the rehearsal process and the performances, focussing on *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) with some references to the other case studies, due to its longer rehearsal process and its key findings in relation to trust and power. Within the chapter I refer to different extracts of the DVD documentations to illustrate my writing and allow the reader to experience the work through different media. The documentation of all three case studies including the DVDs can be found at the end of this chapter.

### 5.1 When preparing the work: Perception and the anticipated

The beginnings of projects fascinate me – there is a freedom of letting ideas

wander in all directions, making connections between different inspirations, trying not to select, but allowing ideas to float and unfold in unexpected ways. I always start writing in my notebook, capturing ideas as they come, having the notebook laid out open on my kitchen table so that my eyes can catch it when I walk past – the notebook always is A4 so that I can see different ideas next to each other, making connections as the ideas laid out. Ideas get added as they appear without any order or hierarchy (Notebook entry, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011).

The choreographer Rosemary Lee describes this early part of the creative process as, “...letting my imagination roam for what I might call a ‘dream’ image of the piece” (Lee and Pollard, 2010, p.26). She highlights the importance of not fixing ideas too early so that ideas can unfold without too much control and given direction. Reading my notebook entries they have a sense of letting questions and ideas and images float without selecting or setting them in some kind of order, for examples with Alvin Lucier’s *I’m sitting in the room* (1969) and Pauline Oliveros *Tuning meditation* (1971) in regard to the interaction with sound/musicians for *Before I decide* (Leeds, 2011). Reflecting on how the work unfolded, these notes were not directly visible in the performance, but influenced how I worked with live recordings during the performance process, using loop stations to layer sounds as the performance progressed. During the performance event I tried to keep this sense of letting ideas float and not fixing them too early. This sense of being in the presence and not jumping ahead to rushed conclusions is core within the yoga practice and my regular practice of asanas and meditation helps me with it.

The early stages of the creative process include working with, as Nikki Pollard suggests dealing with, “...modulating between the present perception and the anticipated” (Lee and Pollard, 2010, p.32). The going back and forth between both modes of perceiving and anticipating needs to be a constant flow and one should not dominate the other during the creative as well as the performance process. As I experience everyday life and take in different inspirations, an idea slowly takes form. Trying to form early ideas to the anticipated can make oblivious to the range of

influence of the “present perception” (Lee and Pollard, 2010, p.32).

Once I had established a pattern of working with notebooks I introduced a second level of personal documentation using a flip camera. I started a video diary three weeks prior to the start of the rehearsals, which I called ‘Talking diary’ (please see: *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) DVD 1: ‘Talking diaries’). I set myself a task of talking into the camera at a specific time at least twice a week. This would continue as the rehearsal process started, documenting the findings or questions at different phases of the creative process. There was a clear ritual and rigor in having set times for the filming independently of having new and fully developed ideas. It was a similar experience to long improvisations where I could discover the ‘hidden’ thoughts/movements, the silence, the not knowing, the wandering of the mind and the wandering off track. Listening back to the clips, there is a sense of changes in the voice, gaps between sentences, eyes wandering around the room, leaving sentences unfinished. However, there is also a clear evidence of feeling of relief when something more concrete came up, an idea that could anchor thoughts, an evidence of structure. These ‘Talking diaries’ of the early stages of the creative process document the working alone before forming a group, the being in an unknown and hesitant place or as Lee calls it, “...the ‘roaming’ of my imagination” (Lee and Pollard, 2010, p.26). There is an aspect of listening to my ideas and sitting with them without fixing them too early, a sense of trusting these ideas to unfold and trusting myself without the reassurance or interference of the other company members.

Both forms of documentation were vital in their different characteristics, the open notebook – always present and ready for notes to be added – and the set out dates for the ‘Talking diary’, giving structure to my thinking process. Early entries in the notebook include Yoko Ono’s Fluxus instruction *Snow piece* (Ono, 1963), referring to some work I did in Berlin in 2000, and it later appeared in the work, giving it a more sensual feel

due to its narrative instruction.

Think that snow is falling. Think that snow is falling everywhere all the time. When you talk with a person, think that snow is falling between you and on the person. Stop conversing when you think the person is covered by snow (Yoko Ono, 1963, npn).

Having traces of earlier works in the present one, suggests an overall timeline with each performance being referential to the previous one, as introduced by the choreographer Ana Sanchez-Colberg (Sanchez-Colberg, 2002) in her work *Future/Perfekt* (1998) where different objects from previous works appear in the present ones, influencing the present performance process. She describes how they act "...as a collected memory of previous events that [would] trigger the event's present stage (Sanchez-Colberg, 2002, p.185). This refers to Sarah Rubidge's idea of 'open works' (Rubidge, 2000/2002), as explained in Chapter Four, where a thought is articulated and re-articulated over a period of different productions. In one 'Talking diary' entry (please see: *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) DVD 1: 'Talking diaries': 3rd February 2011) I question when a creative process starts and if *Before I decide* (Leeds, 2011) actually started in 2000 when I worked on *Augenblicke* (2000, Berlin), referring to Kim Vincs' idea from Deleuze and Guattari of a rhizomic structure in relation to the interconnectivity of ideas within practice-led research as explained in Chapter Three (Vincs, 2007).

Bringing these 'Talking diaries' into the performance by exhibiting them in the foyer of the performance space, but also playing them through an amplified Dictaphone during the performance as a score for the dancers' movement exploration, presented the 'visible choreographer' within all stages of the creative process including the early stage when working alone before forming a group. Making all stages of the creative process visible/audible including the ones not realised, refers to Bock and Vincenzi and their work *Invisible dances* (2004), a dance performance that could be heard on the

telephone, but would never be seen so that the performance depended on the narrator as well as the performers. Listening to the 'Talking diaries' the audience imagined what happened before the performance started, introducing them to all ideas and thoughts throughout the creative process, the ones realised and the ones not-realised in the performance event. The writing in my notebook continued throughout the performance event and was visible to the audience by a live camera pointing at the notebook and projecting my writing for the audience to read. Apart from the audio memories of the early stages of the creative process, the notebook kept its focus on the present moment of my decision-making – *Before I decide*. When we performed *Before I decide* (Leeds, 2011) at the Howard Assembly Room we could not, due to technical difficulties, set up the live stream for the notebook. This made me realise how important they were as the writing of my thoughts and comments about the performance process was subtler and had less of an element of judgment to it than the talking into the microphone.

## 5.2 When creating the work: Nurturing/empowering the work

Once the rehearsal process of *Before I decide* (Leeds, 2011) started this modulating between perceptions and the anticipated (Lee and Pollard, 2010) continued, but the influence and interrelationship with the dancers, their ideas and contributions strongly influenced my thinking. They might have reacted differently to given tasks than expected and therefore triggered off new pathways and connections. In *Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials* (2008), Tim Ingold stresses the importance that, "material needs to be followed" (Ingold, 2008, p.14). He explains that practitioners such as the cook, the alchemist or the painter bring together diverse materials and combine or redirect their flow in the anticipation of what might

emerge rather than imposing form on matter (Ingold, 2008). Referring to Ingold, Pollard describes the choreographic process as “grown”; the choreographer therefore provides an environment for the work to grow rather than building it (Lee and Pollard, 2010, p.34). Lee highlights the importance of the relational practice with her dancers and how she as the choreographer “...nurtures the growth of the piece” (Lee and Pollard, 2010, p.34).

Within the creative process of *Before I decide* (2011-13) this idea of nurturing implies two strands for me. Firstly, facilitating an environment of trust so that as a company we can explore ideas without fear of failing and secondly, there is the nurturing of the work, letting it grow without too much control. In regard to nurturing an environment of trust I sometimes found that what I perceive as my ‘over’-sensitive way of caring about the atmosphere between all participants would stand in the way, especially with the work and its shift of control between all performers and the possible disagreement and insecurity it can cause. I consciously choose independent practitioners who are experienced in improvisation for performance and are like-minded and not afraid of questioning aspects of the process with a focus and attention on the detail and consequences of a work. Viewing all three case studies and the group of performers I have worked with, each group was more experienced with improvisation in performance and live direction than the previous one and I observed that the more experienced the dancers were the more confident they were with being in unknown places, trusting themselves and the work.

An on-going topic during the work on *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) was the need for an artistic vision to provide a framework for the dancers to work within. They were concerned that they would not work within my artistic vision and that their responses to my tasks were not within the style I wanted the work to be in (see transcript of discussion, pp.36). This reminded me of the discussions I had with the dancers from

Verve when working on *Physical chain* (Leeds, 2010), and their worry of ‘doing it wrong’. One dancer described how the work challenged the dancers to make quick decisions and due to the audibility of the instructions for the audience the dancer deals with an “amount of pressure (...) to produce movement that’s ‘worthy’ of performance” (see p.184, for the full record of the questionnaire please see Appendix 2, pp.179).



Figure 4: *Physical chain* © Barker, L. (2010)  
Performers: Elisabeth Connor, Joelle Green, Letty Mitchell

Whereas the discussion within the work of *Physical chain* (Leeds, 2010) was about the vulnerability in front of the audience, with *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) it was about empowering the dancers in regard to the dancer-choreographer relationship and if it was at all possible. What I find interesting here is that the dancers from *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) were concerned about working within the frame I was envisaging, whereas the dancers from *Physical chain* (2010, Leeds) were concerned about assessment in the setting when asked to deal with quite different type of work. This leads to my questioning dance training and if the current conservatoire training is preparing dancers to take initiative and propose ideas outside the expected, if the

training of technique and crafting skills forms an idea of the expected and not the ability to work within places of not knowing.

Rudi Laermans, who teaches at P.A.R.T.S., the dance conservatoire in Brussels, explains the importance of nurturing the state of not knowing for changes to arise, by defining the "...deconstructive moment of not-knowing as the proverbial truth of every quest for knowledge" (Laermans, 2011, p.161). He explains how P.A.R.T.S.' approach to pedagogy offers the paradox of questioning what contemporary dance can be and offering building blocks for its possible definition. The curriculum reflects this as it is divided into two years of 'training cycle' and two years of 'research cycle' with the teaching theory, or what he calls 'doing theory' (Laermans, 2011, p.158), including sociology (social system theory), philosophy and art history. The experience of constant questioning and criticality prepares the students to trust and view it as possible beginnings. It prepares dancers to offer ideas outside the expected, which is crucial for work like *Before I decide* (2011-2013) that questions identities and works within unknown places.

I mentioned earlier that the visibility of the choreographer effectively changes her power. Discussions throughout the rehearsal period of *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) focused on the conditions that were necessary for the dancers so that their manner of engagement could change. How much of a free and broad range of choices did they need when generating material and ideas? Or did a clear structure with fewer choices allow them greater freedom? One dancer commented in his journal, "The freedom is dizzying sometimes and overwhelming. (...) At times I strive to be told off" (extract from the dancer's journal, March 2011).

As much as I wanted the dancers to feel confident I did not want to fix the parameters for an agreed framework to work within too much to make sure that a shift of control

would occur. If the dancers' way of interpreting my tasks would always be how I envisioned it their responses would never irritate my planning ahead. Nevertheless, throughout the rehearsal process we realised that a clear framework made the dancers feel more empowered. The sociologist Rudi Laermans explains:

External directivity does in fact stimulate 'internal' decision-making: in the semi-directive mode of making dance together, a performer's autonomy is partly effectuated through relational heteronomy (Laermans, 2015, p.347).

This surprised me, as I did not expect that less freedom of choice would allow a sense of feeling more empowered (please see: *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) DVD 1: 'Talking diaries': 26<sup>th</sup> February 2011). However, one dancer pointed out that the dancers' 'freedom' to generate ideas was only pretence as in my designated role I could always interfere and interrupt their input. The shift of control could only happen as long as it would suit me, at the end I would always have the 'super-power', I could super-impose (Klien, 2008a), to direct the work. This made me think about the manner of my role and if I was open to them as partners or if they were only supposed to serve my plan. As mentioned in Chapter Four this shows that not only the dancers were influenced by their training within the conservatoire, but that also my history of having trained and taught within the conservatoire influenced my decision making and understanding of the practice. It highlights the need for explicit dialogue within such situations so that assumptions are not left to form the work.

These discussions were fruitful and crucial for the work. Answers could not always be found and the shared being in an unknown and hesitant place was at times difficult for all participants. Not being ahead of the dancers in my decision-making made me feel vulnerable and from more traditional rehearsal settings I was not used to my decision-making being questioned. Sharing this unknown place with the dancers as well as the fact that we knew each other very well from previous projects gave the dancers

boundaries to kick against and a sense of identity in knowing what I wanted, even if what I had started to say was different from earlier projects. In reflection, I question if this was an issue of us knowing each other very well and how I perceived them individually, but also how they were suited to what I wanted to investigate, how well I understood myself at that point and what I wanted to explore.

To give space for the unexpected, we invented the 'wild cards' - similar to the American avant-garde composer/arranger John Zorn's use of the headband (Zorn, 1984) every performer had a hat and whoever wore the hat could do what he/she liked. This created a change of dynamic, especially evident during the performance of *Before I decide* (Leeds, 2011) at stage@leeds with the dancers cycling around the stage or staggering on high heels whilst being blindfolded with the visual artist's masking tape (please see: *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) DVD 1: Play Performance: 2.21-2.50 min.). In reflection the dancers from *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) and from *Before I decide* (2013, New York) used the wild cards very differently. The dancers from *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) used them when they saw me struggling with the directing of the performance process, when they could feel that I did not know where to take it next. It gave me time to think and observe, letting ideas appear without forcing them. In comparison, the dancers from *Before I decide* (2013, New York) used the wild cards to challenge my directing, to take control over the performance process, to generate unexpected shifts within the performance process. There were moments when the dancers took complete control and for example were leading me whilst I was dancing with eyes closed.

In regard to the second strand of nurturing trust and Ingold's idea of following the material, I would like to highlight the importance of the choreographer to trust the material and provide an environment for the material to grow. I sometimes felt that I could step back and see where it 'wanted' to go, that it developed best when I did not

control it, trusting that it would unfold in a generative way and “nurturing its growth” as Lee describes it (Lee and Pollard, 2010, p.34). Being ‘in it’ was as important as being ‘outside’ the material. There was a constant shift between my proximity to the material, seeing it as an object and being within it or being the material. The timing of when and what to do became significant, when to follow the flow of the material and when to bring it to a resolution or suspension. Discussions within the company played a significant part and it was important that everyone was fully involved in the conceptual ideas underlining the work. Each dancer had a journal he/she would write notes in throughout the day, which would be shared at the end of each rehearsal day. However, at times it was important to follow the material without interrupting it. I used different methods of working I learnt when working with the musicians for *Noises for the leg* (2006, Leeds). One example was the ‘Island’<sup>7</sup> idea by the musician Christophe de Bezenac, which plays with morphing of sounds and movement qualities. Another example was John Zorn’s conduction method and how to use specific gestures to direct seize or timing of sounds and movement.

There was a playfulness and light-hearted approach when working on these ideas, which led to further development of the starting points. The same happened when we tried Vida Midgelow’s task cards (2007) with their imaginative approach, for example, “Exploring different body palettes – your skin changes from water to sand to stone” (Midgelow, 2007). The material started to move somewhere without us or me needing to control it; by exploring the tasks it was ‘leading’ us, or referring to Ingold we followed the material (2008). To get an insight into these working methods, please see *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) DVD 1: ‘Rehearsal’: 13.08-1505 min.

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<sup>7</sup> Christophe De Bezenac is a Leeds-based musician. He introduced his ‘Island’ idea when I was collaborating with him in 2006 (*Noises for the Leg* performed in London, Leeds and Hull). <http://www.rhythmchanges.net/the-team/christophe-de-bezenac/>



Figure 5: *Conducting the performers* © Heuer, U. (2011)  
 Performers: Neil Callaghan, Oliver Dover, Vanessa Grasse,  
 Yvonna Magda, Bryony Pritchard, Daliah Touré

What interests me here is that both ways of paying attention are strongly linked to the performers. The subject of this work is its participants and their interaction, which makes the distinction between performer, the material and myself at times quite blurry – makes the relationship between all three constantly shift. This echoes the work by Lehmen in *Funktionen* (2004) where he argues that, “People do not make communication. Communication makes people” (Lehmen, 2004, npn). Within the interrelationship between performer and material, the material, similar to Lehmen’s idea of communication, influences the performers and their interactions and vice versa. When following the material there was a clear sense of all of us working together, a democratic process in the discovering of ideas. Matthew Goulsh, one of the performers of the company Goat Island, describes the importance of listening to the work and how it already exists within the group, how it is shaped by the dynamics within the group, when he states:

We do not need to find a way into a work, since the work is already inside.

Instead we realise a work and its harmony with our point of view. Then it and we begin to work, and the play of works begins (Goulish, 2000, p.102).

However, even though there were these moments of all of us working together when following the material, I was still striving to maintain demarcation and keep authority. In reflection, I do not know if I was holding on to it because of the influences of my own conservatoire training and teaching or if I thought that these set structures had to be established first so that it would become visible how they would get shaken by the notion of the practice. This highlights my responsibility and feeling invested in the work in a slightly different way because I was present as a researcher. My experience of *Before I decide* (2013, New York) and my on-going reflection has changed my view of my role within the group of performers and my thinking in regard to authorship. I now wonder if my struggle throughout the creative process in 2011 was the tussle about trying to get the conservatoire to relinquish authority and how the whole raft of improvisation and associated difference entered the work and entered my practice<sup>8</sup>.

This shift of social dynamics was similar during the performance event of *Before I decide* (Leeds, 2011) even though the performance had a more defined framework. There was still a shift happening between different modes, but the relationship changed from the dancers and I in relation to the material, to myself in relation to the dancers and the material. During the *Research and Development Weekend* (Leeds, 2012) we played with different options where to place myself in the performance space.

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<sup>8</sup> In Chapter Six I will explore how this practice emphasise the social aspect within dance and how it questions ideas of collaboration and authorship.



Figure 6: *Where to place myself* © Hawkins, J. (2012)  
 Performer: Neil Callaghan, Marie Hallager Andersen, Kathinka Walter

Until then I would sit at a desk on the edge of the performance space and at times I would come up to the dancers, giving them task cards or whispering instructions in their ears. I saw the shift of power and control between the dancers and me as “binary segmentations of the social field (as for instance in dualism of dominant and dominated)”, as Fuglsang and Meier Sørensen describe it (Fuglsang and Meier Sørensen, 2006, p.5). Sometimes it made me feel like a schoolteacher, made me aware of the superior position, aware of the space – this big desk – I placed between the dancers, the work and myself. This can lead to the work being ‘super-imposed’ as Klien describes it (Klien, 2008a), hindering the shift of control between the company and myself.

I realised that there are many more facets of power than the two. Depending on where I place myself in the space and how much vulnerability I show there are moments where the dancers and I have equal power, where the power shifts between different company members or where the shift of control is not the main focus of the performance. For the work to happen around me and for my observations to become an active participant, I decided to dismiss the desk and sit centre stage on the floor. Even though my separate role was still evident, stepping into the space was easier and

the transition between the different modes of working became smoother (please see: *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds) DVD 2: 'Performance', 'Full length performance': 29.32-32.23 min). The relationship between all performers would change depending on where I would place myself and there was a clear shift of power towards the dancers the more I moved into the centre of the performance space, allowing a constant flux of the relationship between the dancers, the material and me. This illustrates the instability of power between all elements involved when working with improvisation and instant composition. Danielle Goldman highlights this mobility of power when she links the later Foucault to the practice of improvisation by stating:

Foucault argued that power relations are 'mobile, reversible, and unstable'. This glimpse of mobility is where Foucault's thinking applies to improvised dance (Goldman, 2010, p.143).

When working on *Before I decide* (2013, New York) and discussing the work with Lindsey Drury we discovered a main difference between our works. Drury stays on the outside of the performance space and sits in the dark and only her 'demanding' instructions are audible to the dancers and the audience. The frame of her work is constant; all the focus is on the dancers and their vulnerability when responding to the tasks, but she stays invisible, retaining control. She becomes this disembodied voice that places the dancer in a vulnerable position of generating material and embodying ideas, usually only visible in the rehearsal process. The difference in our practice highlights well the play with different facets of power within the work of the 'visible choreographer' and how all performers share moments of vulnerability within the performance process (Please see the discussions with Drury's dancers in *Before I decide* (2013, New York) DVD 3: Rehearsals/discussions: Vulnerability, 1.39-2.10 min).

In July 2013 I was working with dancers in New York as part of the Brooklyn International Performance Art Festival, wondering how the work and research would

develop by working with a new group of dancers. This group of dancers were more familiar with the concept of live direction than the dancers from *Before decide* (2011, Leeds) and it seems that this approach to practice is currently more evident in the New York dance and performance community, for example in works by artists Yvonne Meier or Lindsey Drury. The weeklong rehearsal followed by the performance at the Grace Exhibition Space pushed the work in new directions, raised new questions and challenges for my research/practice. Key findings were based around ideas of working with trust and how too much familiarity between all performers can restrict the openness of approach within the creative processes.

Before I started with *Before I decide* (2013, New York) I was worried that working with new dancers for only one week would not allow the transparency and openness needed to show the vulnerability within each performer. Building trust was always an important factor of the preparation for my performances and having worked with the same group of performers over a long period of time allowed the trust to build gradually. However, this week surprised me with new and unexpected findings. There was a liberating feeling to work with a group of new dancers I did not know, it introduced a new level of investigation into the experience where I was learning to recognise boundaries and how to let go of preconceived ideas. It made me realise how familiarity between all performers and the overall inter-relational effect it can have on the group can restrict the exploration of ideas; how predictable dynamics within the group can influence the willingness to take risks and challenge each other. It felt refreshing to work in a new space, to have a different route to the studio, see different faces, and hear different accents and sounds. I found I was receptive to new suggestions and able to trust the work to take on the lead.



Figure 7: *Working in New York* © Vartanian, H. (2013)  
 Performer: Laura Bartczak, Lorene Bouboushian,  
 Kaia Gilje, Katelyn Hales, Kathinka Walter

Looking back it seems that the unfamiliarity with the dancers and the whole environment helped me to approach the work with greater openness and flexibility towards change. This shared experience highlights the interrelationship between the choreographer with the work and how being open and in flow with changes allows the work to unfold. This openness was already something I had noted when working on *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds), but now it became even more current and surprisingly easier to achieve. It does raise the question how one can keep this openness to new ideas, but also the playfulness with different dynamic relationships between all performers when working with a company over a longer period, for example the Chicago-based collaborative performance group Goat Island who have worked together from 1987-2009. The scholar Sara Jane Bailes explains how the company had long phases of not working with each other to allow other ideas to emerge, and how each project was directed by another company member so that the roles within the group would constantly change (Bailes 2001). The company highlights the

importance of long-term working relationships when they write in the *Letter to a young practitioner* (2000), “Pay no attention to those who will tell you not to work with your friends. (...) The bonding that happens between artists working together produces an integrity that reads into the work, is visible in the work, communicates to the audience and viewer” (Goat Island 2000).

I do realise that an important element for the success of the work and the playful approach we took was the dancers’ experience with live direction and that they knew each other well. Their evident comfort with each other gave me a greater security to take risks and be more adventurous, and at the same time it helped them to take greater risks<sup>9</sup>. They were much bolder and less hesitant and had a more carefree approach of ‘she will just tell us if this is too much’. As a group of five dancers they were aware of the power they had and they found more opportunities to challenge my role as the ‘visible choreographer’ by taking on the lead; at times they were even concerned if they were bullying me (please see: *Before I decide* (2013, New York) DVD 3: Rehearsals/discussions: Are we bullying you? 2.41-3.20 min). As they took on my role I was introduced to new forms of decision-making, which were different in style to mine. It was refreshing to witness someone else in my role and it offered me the chance to reflect on the choices I make when giving instructions (please see: *Before I decide* (2013, New York) DVD 3: Talking diaries: 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2013, 1.18- 4.28). My greater openness to the development of the material and my trust in its unfolding made us work more as a group with less concern about the divisions between the roles of choreographer and dancers. Whereas the work of *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) was about confronting and being caught between choreography and improvisation, *Before I decide* (2013, New York) developed into an open score improvisation, with a greater sense of play and exploration. It highlighted even more the social aspect within the

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<sup>9</sup> The importance of the dancers knowing and trusting each other was highlighted later on in the year when I was teaching a workshop at the University of Lincoln (MA Choreography, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2013) to students who did not know each other very well.

practice and how all individuals influenced its progression with less concern of the expected.

### 5.3 When performing the work: State of flux/open work

The four-hour performance duration of the work gives time for the work to unfold, change directions, stay still or recall earlier ideas. The audience therefore gains an insight into the choreographer's interpretation of the performance process, but also the conceptual undercurrent of the work. They can stay as long as they wish and re-enter the performance space at different times to see the performance progress, observing the 'visible choreographer' instructing the performers, making physical changes to the environment, altering sound and creating visual scores that inform the overall structure and content of the performance. Reflections on the performance of *Before I decide* (2013, New York) and how the performance space impacted on the audience's engagement have been further explored in Chapter Four. The following writing will focus on the performances of *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds).

Reading through my notes written straight after the performance there is one moment I remember vividly. I was reading out Yoko Ono's instruction *Snow piece* (Ono, 1970) whilst two dancers were dancing a contact duet, and then - as snow was falling - the visual artist was letting balloons tied to strings fall down from the balcony, 'keeping' them in the moment of falling, creating a magical atmosphere. At another point one dancer was lying underneath a pile of silver foil with just his face visible, holding the Dictaphone playing my 'Talking diary' quoting Alice Chauchat on working with scores, and the visual artist was placing a view-foil and sketching the features of his face, which when placed on the overhead projector, became a score for the

dancers/musicians to work with. In these moments there was a sense of engagement and listening of all performers, which not only enabled these layers of meaning to unfold, but also created a great engagement and focus within the audience. The feedback of one audience member supports this:

There was so much going on and a great ownership of the space. I loved the balance of perceptions happening, the balance of power and of interchange between the performers (2011).

Another highlight of the performance of *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) was the moment when I did not know what instruction to give next, where to lead the performers. Instead of reaching out for the first idea, I expressed this verbally through the microphone. I felt vulnerable, but admitting it also felt like a relief. Similar to my early notebook entries I was not jumping ahead to rushed conclusions, but rather, in reference to the title of the work, extended the moment of *Before I decide*. One of the dancers commented in his feedback after the performance, “Your microphone approach during the performance was bold and vulnerable at the same time” (2011). The articulation of my vulnerability of not knowing made my personality more visible and created a greater balance between all performers, the fear of being judged as mentioned earlier included me as well. An audience member who had been working in my earlier work (*Gleichzeitig 2*, 2008) commented:

Compared to previous pieces, it seems like there is a greater balance between the personalities of the performers and Kathinka’s direction. There seems to be great relaxation and commitment, and the mix of artists is excellent (2011).

Looking at the role of power within the Panopticon and the work of the ‘visible choreographer’ shows that for both it is not about the execution of power itself. However, whereas the aim of the Panopticon is to increase production within economy, the ‘visible choreographer’ highlights the cracks, the not so smooth and functional

process when being in the position of power. It offers a view inside the choreographer and dancers' mind and illustrates the non-linearity of creative thinking, the moments of not knowing before we make a decision and how this affects the interrelationship between all performers.

Following is the documentation of Case Study One, Case Study Two and Case Study Three, including the DVDs, documenting the performances, rehearsals, discussions and interviews with the artists and talking diaries.

#### 5.4 Documentation of all three case studies

##### **Case Study One: *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds)**



Figure 8: *Before I decide* 2011 © Wood, A. (2011, Leeds)  
Performer: Vanessa Grasse, Bryony Pritchard, Kathinka Walter

*Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) is a four-hour long interdisciplinary performance installation that continues and develops further findings from the pilot project, *Physical chain* (2010, Leeds). I was working with a group of six performers drawn from various art forms (dance, music, visual art and live art) for two weeks in February 2011. The rehearsal period was followed by a performance on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2011 at stage@leeds (Leeds) and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2011 at the Howard Assembly Room (Leeds).

Please see the DVD marked with '*Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) DVD 1' at the beginning of the thesis. A short clip can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiGzxpolfY>.

### **Case Study Two: *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds)**



Figure 9: *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds) © Hawkins, J. (2012)  
Performer: Neil Callaghan, Marie Hallager Andersen, Daliah Touré, Kathinka Walter

For the *Research and Development Weekend* on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July 2012, I introduced working with a narrative theme based around home and identity to provide a

shared framework for all participants to work with. Furthermore, I decided to only work with dancers, as I wanted to focus more on my choreographic crafting skills and methods and its development as part of defining my role as the 'visible choreographer'.

Overall the *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds) focused especially on the role of the 'visible choreographer' within the work and how to develop her visibility even further. Apart from playing with different spacing of myself in relation to the other performers and the material, I played with commenting on and describing the performance process by using 'stream of consciousness talking' (James, 1961/2001) whilst observing the performers. Amplified by the microphone this was audible to the audience, giving further insight into my thinking as well as the connections and links made to the overall research. The two days gave time for further experimentation and reflection/evaluation within the group of performers on the shared work since we started with *Before I decide* (Leeds, 2010).

Please see the DVD marked with '*Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds) DVD 2' at the beginning of the thesis. A short clip can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8lqxiy47cA>.

### Documentation of Case Study Three: *Before I decide* (2013, New York)



Figure 10: *Before I decide* (2013, New York) © Vartanian, H. (2013)  
Performer: Laura Bartczak, Paige Jane Hunter, Kaia Gilje, Kathinka Walter

*Before I decide* (New York, 2013) happened in New York as part of the Brooklyn International Performance Art Festival. For four days I worked with five dancers from the New York-base choreographer, Lindsey Drury, followed by the performance at Grace Exhibition Space on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2013. Furthermore, I attended discussions with other artists and curators of the festival and performances of other artists, for example the Los Angeles-based company La Pocha Nostra and the Berlin-based artist Dovrat Meron.

The overall layout of the work was similar to *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) and I incorporated the findings from the *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds). Working with a group of new dancers with a different dance training and from a different cultural context proved to be more enriching and exciting than expected. The work was pushed in new directions, raised new questions and challenges, fully enriching my research/practice. Key findings were based around ideas of working with

trust and the influences of the history of my professional training as well as all performers' dance background and personal context.

Please see the DVD marked with '*Before I decide* (2013, New York) DVD 3' at the end of the thesis. A short clip can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZZ-7ZtgM9s>.

Chapter Six further explores how the work of the 'visible choreographer' with its shifts of social dynamics between all performers highlights how dance is a social practice, how all members of the performance can be viewed as a social system and as an illustration of a social discourse.

## Chapter Six

### Within, beside and outside

Part of the journey of the research has been to investigate and come to appreciate the political identity within the sociological construct of the performance works. In using the term political I refer to the theorist and artist Ana Vujanovic<sup>10</sup> (2013) who describes every performance as political due to it being “a social event that is practiced in public” (Vujanovic, 2013, p.181). The representational aspect of dance makes it political, even though there are different political aspects within it. Vujanovic divides these aspects into three different modalities. The first modality refers to “dance as art [as] a specific type of social discourse” (Vujanovic, 2013, p.186), the second focuses on the materiality and form of dance or, as Gerald Siegmund explains, being “engaged in the practice of criticality” (Siegmund, 2013, p.11) and the third questions modes of art production, its infrastructure and the positioning of performance in the exchange economy and market (Vujanovic, 2013). Reflecting on experiences gained during the period of research I see alignments with the first and second modality. These include analysing dance as a social system to illustrate its functioning and internal interaction, and reflecting “...upon the roles of choreographer, dancers, bodies, audiences and producers and their traditional hierarchical relationships towards each other” (Siegmund, 2013, p.1).

The main avenues of discussion explored in the following chapter address the first and second modality in relation to *Before I decide* (2011-13), considering how the practice can be viewed as an illustration of a social discourse. It takes the idea of choreography as a social practice that unfolds through the experience with all participants and links it to sociological discourses, becoming a sociological discourse itself by providing

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<sup>10</sup> In 2012 I worked with Ana Vujanovic and Sasa Asentic as part of the dance festival ‘Tanz in August’ in Berlin. The workshop was based on their performance *On trial together (Berlin episode)*, which was performed at the festival.

findings through the shared experience. In response to Hewitt's definition of social choreography mentioned in Chapter Two (p.12), theorist Gabriele Klein claims, "Choreographies do not exist separate from social norm and structures, but instead perform them" (Klein, 2013, p.198). She continues:

Accordingly, the concept of social choreography has two perspectives: from the perspective of dance studies, it investigates the performativity of the social in choreography and from a sociological point of view, it examines how the political and the social is inscribed and can be generated in performative practice (Klein, 2013, p.199).

This highlights how the work of the 'visible choreographer' can be viewed from two perspectives, the choreographic and the sociological, understanding that analysing participation in choreography is part of the analysis of political movement, both becoming two sides of one coin (Klein, 2013).

I was first introduced to the idea of viewing choreography from a sociological perspective by Thomas Lehmen who links his work to Niklas Luhmann's social system theory (1995, 2000) and to cybernetic theories. Luhmann defines system theory as "a theory of self-referential systems (...) that have the ability to establish relations within themselves and to differentiate these relations from relations with their environment" (Luhmann, 1995/2000, p.13). He continues, "Every social contact is understood as a system, up to and including society as the inclusion of all possible contacts" (Luhmann, 1995/2000, p.15). Cybernetic theories developed by, among others, the scientist Heinz von Foerster (Foerster, 2003) are the study of control within systems, practiced in the fields of biology, engineering, mathematics, psychology and sociology. It describes how actions by a system in an environment cause change in the environment. This change is manifested to the system via information or feedback and causes the system to adapt to new conditions, which means that the system changes its behaviour. Cybernetic theories define the functions and processes of these systems within causal chains that move from action to sensing, to comparison with desired goal and again to

action. Social system theory explores the link between individual and society, bridging the micro-macro gap, analysing the group's interaction (Segal, 2001).

These ideas influenced and impacted on my explorations as I drew on the work of other theorists within dance including Randy Martin (1985), Gregory Bateson (2000), Erin Manning (2013), Rudi Laermans (2008, 2012, 2015), Gabriele Klein (2013) and Bojana Cvejić (2005, 2012, 2013, 2015). Working with a group of professional artists and sharing the knowledge and experiences within the group facilitated explorations of the work from different perspectives. The aim is to realise the possible correlations between practice-led explorations and the sociological viewpoints by the theorists mentioned above and consider how practice can be seen to illuminate theory. In this chapter I explore these correlations, focussing on systems of communication, conditions of authority and questions of authorship/ownership, providing insight into processes involving choreographic and improvisatory practices through a social/sociological lens.

### 6.1 System of communication

In order to highlight the operations within the social system, Thomas Lehmen in his work *Funktionen* (2004) identifies and works with five different functions, which are:

- *Material* (offered artistic work),
- *Mediation* (mediating between performers or performers and audience, possibly with the use of voice),
- *Observation* (being on stage and observing the other performers' actions),
- *Manipulation* (manipulating another performer's action) and

- *Interpretation* (interpreting another performer's action).

(Lehmen, 2004a)

As mentioned above, working with all five functions within one system is crucial for processes within causal chains, as defined in cybernetic theories that move from action to sensing to comparison with desired goal, and again to action (Segal, 2001). I affirm the observation that the instructions provided by the 'visible choreographer' could be defined within these five functions as well as the dancers' responses to them. I, as the 'visible choreographer', might introduce a new idea, or as Lehmen calls it 'material', by asking one dancer to perform a solo and then give other dancers the task to either manipulate or interpret it. We worked with pre-choreographed solo material, which I could use as a building block to set up more complex chains of interactions. Whereas previously this solo material was choreographed with a formal interest in movement itself, in 2012 the solo material was based on a shared narrative and the potential for interaction became richer, giving greater access for all participants to be involved, making the social interactions within the group more visible. The potential differentiation between the five functions when viewing all performers' actions highlights the different decision-making processes within these chains of action and makes the social dynamics within the group transparent.

Throughout the research process I have been interested in the ways that 'mediation' can be experienced and seen to operate within performance. One of the forms of mediation developed as part of the *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds) is the use of a microphone. My task is to provide descriptions of my thoughts and ideas through the use of a 'stream of consciousness' (James, 1961/2001) whilst observing and interacting with the company, but also being mindful of the overall shape of the work. The use of technology to assist in the projection of my voice and thoughts plays a key role in the expanded system of communication between the 'visible

choreographer', the dancers and the audience. Furthermore, it helps to emphasise the role of the 'visible choreographer', aiding the ways in which structural aspects of the creation of a work can be made visible. Here, when compared to Lehmen, mediation is not only a function that could describe other performer's actions, it makes the thinking of the 'visible choreographer' audible and available whilst directing the group of performers, highlighting the selection process as material becomes available to unfold. In regard to power there is a difference when I use the microphone to give instructions to the dancers or when I use it for the 'stream of consciousness talking'. When giving instructions it removes the sounds from my body and by taking it through a speaker it amplifies my voice compared to that of the dancers, giving more power to my voice. When using it for 'stream of consciousness talking' it offers points of hesitancy, breathing, not speaking and not knowing what to say. Making the mediation audible to the audience illustrates the many influences and site lines of my decision-making process. During discussions at the *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds) one dancer emphasises this when she commented:

Your instructions became more intuitive because you talked about what you experienced inside as you observed and did not just rely on the external. The talking became an indirect instruction, less 'do this, do that' - much more organic and more because you had done some research in your head, which we were part of (2012, please see: *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds) DVD 2: Discussions and Evaluations, Evaluation of the final rehearsal and the overall outcome of the R&D Weekend, 2.45-3.30 min).

Arguably the use of stream of consciousness can be a successful way of mediating thought processes, offering an additional layer of visibility for the directing within the interconnectivity of offered material, new ideas and theoretical discourses.

In *Funktionen* (2004) the dancers can choose a function depending on how they want to interact and communicate with the other dancers, which makes Lehmen see his work as an illustration of interactive structures. He states:

The system aims towards a kind of work that understands itself as a group of changeable interactive structures, which are based on communications between the constituting factors. Basically, it is possible to show the human being within, in friction with, using, or beyond a system of structures, thereby making either the constituting factors transparent or placing results in the foreground (Lehmen, 2010, npn).

The emphasis on communication refers to Luhmann who defines communication “...as a kind of self-excitation that inundates the system with meaning” (Luhmann, 1995, p.171). For Luhmann social systems are systems that “...use communication to process meaning” (Luhmann in Fuchs, 1988, p.21). Making these processes of meaning visible in performance involves the analysis of communication within the dynamic shifts caused by democratic structures. Analysing communication, Gregory Bateson highlights two aspects, the content as well as the relational aspect (Bateson, 2000). The relational processes become visible throughout the performances of *Before I decide* (2011-13), and as they unfold and develop not only aspects of the individual within become visible, but also the interrelationships between all participants that shape and form a system with significant features. Revealing these features is an important aspect of the identity of the work. However, the role of the ‘visible choreographer’ offers a selection of alternatives that make the whole system more complex, adds another layer of complication, which can highlight moments of disagreement, uncertainty and/or vulnerability. During investigations of what I call ‘visible choreography’ this attitude to interactive functioning can be seen to be made evident, highlighting not only the interactions between the performers, but also their personalities when dealing with these moments of disagreement, uncertainty and/or vulnerability. Compared to Lehmen (2004), this interactive functioning offers a form of analysis of the social system. *Before I decide* (2011-2013) not only describes the functioning of a social system, but provides a way to understand the many influences for each performer’s decision making, offering a way to analyse the functioning of a social system.

The importance of working in and through time allows these processes to unfold. It is reflected in the four-hour duration of the work with some instructions/task cards working with short-term and others with long-term selection processes where the response by the dancer can be in the not-yet delay or suspension of improvising. One instruction for a long-term selection process is for example the task card: 'Memorise a movement performed by someone else and repeat it later'. The performer receiving this task can decide which movement he/she will memorise and when to perform it. This allows a layering of different instructions throughout the performance, a layering of different communications that are gathered over an extended period of time and explored for the potential interactions that they might generate. Here, the relational aspect (Bateson, 2000) includes the temporal aspect of the dancers' responses within the overall duration of the performance event and how each response relates to the overall dramaturgy of the work. Furthermore, it offers the dancers the possibility to change the direction of the work by highlighting previous ideas and placing them in a new context. One dancer explains in her journal, "I like the instruction to memorise someone else's movement. It gives me freedom to put something into a new context, a new composition" (extract from the dancer's journal, July 2013).

As discussed in Chapter Five, the experimentation with the proximity to the material and the dancers changed my view on Niklas Luhmann's idea of the social system and its environment. Previously I was thinking that the dancers form a group and I stand on the edge, not being part of it. Experimenting with my own spatial positions in the performance space in *Before I decide* (2012-2013) has changed my view, I now acknowledge I am always part of the group, only my proximity to the dancers and the material changes. By enhancing my understanding of the potential interrelationships between choreographer, dancers and material, I recognise the 'visible choreographer' as part of the system, in a contributing role that presents the selection process, the 'complexity differential' (Luhmann, 1995). Being within, beside and outside the group of

performers makes the choreographer part of the social system, its operations and functions. The change of proximity to the dancers and to the material allows scope within the role of the choreographer, offering different levels of interaction with the dancers and the material, and at times a direction from within, or a performer with a specific role. In reference to Bateson, the proximity becomes part of the relational aspect of communication and the change of my spatial positioning influences the interaction with the dancers and the material. William Forsythe experimented with the idea of directing from within when he writes in regard to movement organisation, "You cannot organise these things from outside. You have to be inside the event" (Forsythe in Figgis, 2007, npn). This relates back to Heidegger, as mentioned in Chapter Three, who argues that the new can only emerge through the practical involvement with materials, tools and ideas (Heidegger, 1966). Choreographic understanding therefore arises through the interaction with the dancers and the material, not from a distance, or with an 'outside eye', but from inside the event.

When working on *Before I decide* (2013, New York) at times I would try the movement first before giving instructions, letting the material lead me. By exploring the movement my instruction would become more specific in how it would look like or how it could feel to do the movement. Directing from within offers not only a different relationship to the dancers with the opportunity of them reshaping and reforming my ideas, but also a different proximity to the material, expanding the possibility of exploration. At one point during the performance in New York (2013) I placed myself in front of the dancers and was leading the flocking. In the discussion afterwards, one dancer explained that it allowed a different form of directing and that she had to listen/watch more carefully and respond within the moment. Transitions between different states were also more fluent. The dancer continued:

It was kind of a slow way of transition of taking it back because you [Kathinka] were still following Paige's direction to do your solo, but you've prepared - you thought ahead - you went back into the preparing mood, which I thought was beautiful because it was combined with the willingness to follow Paige's direction, but you were interested in the thinking. And by adding the audio you've affected our way of flocking, but it was so softly and in relation to the direction you've received (2013, please see: *Before I decide* (2013, New York) DVD3: 'Being in and out of control', 0:23-0:55 min).

For the audience, this direction offers, in addition to the visual and audible, a kinaesthetic experience of my directing, as the practitioner and theorist Natalie Garrett Brown explains in regard to the audience's experience within somatic-informed dance (Garrett Brown, 2011).

Each performance event forms a new social system and the elements within change according to the manner of operations. Strands of the performance like the design of the performance space and the context of audience and performers influence the communication within and the definition of the system. Each performance of *Before I decide* (2011-13) has been an individual social system with specific features. Having worked with the dancers from *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) over an extended period of time (with some of the dancers since 2007), the familiarity between all participants made the system become more recognisable in its features, but depending on the environment it constantly evolved and offered possibilities for change<sup>11</sup>. *Before I decide* (2013, New York) confronted me with unexpected levels of change, where I came to understand how the interaction and communication within the group of performers can vary and how the characteristics of each social system impacts on the performance process. This refers back to viewing choreography as an 'open work' and the understanding that each work with its identity of flux is constantly evolving. It further

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<sup>11</sup> The two performances in Leeds in 2011 at stage@leeds and the Howard Assembly Room were different in the challenges they offered due to the designs of the venues and although the performances were less than four months apart and worked with the same group of performers each specific performance context influenced the performance event (please see: *Research and Development Weekend* (2012) DVD 2: *Evaluation of rehearsal and performances* in 2011).

supports that there is no single authorship, but a web of multi-directional interactions between the performers as well as the environment and the work.



Figure 11: *Interaction within* © Heuer, U. (2011)  
Performer: Oliver Dover, Vanessa Grasse, Yvonna Magda, Bryony Pritchard

## 6.2 Conditions of authority

The theorist Randy Martin calls dance and its making a social situation where the company could stand for any community obligated by some form of authority. In the following discussion I will focus on his sociological viewpoint when analysing the relationship between choreographer and dancers and how conditions of authority shift from one to the other throughout the rehearsal process (Martin, 1985). Observing the work in the studio and the relationship between choreographer and dancers, Martin argues that the dancers form a community, responding to conditions of authority that are emphasised through the ways that the group functions. He explains, during the creative process a shift happens from the choreographer's ideas being embodied by

the dancers and external impulses being internalised by the dancers refining the movement and making it more and more theirs. This process accumulates over the rehearsal duration and concludes with the performance where “the dancers shift from input to output and their relation to the choreographer changes from leader to audience” (Martin, 1985, p.16). For the choreographer, this implies a transition from being in control to losing control and becoming less authoritative as the work moves closer to performance. The authority shifts from choreographer to dancers and whilst the choreographer is still visible in the choreographic signature of the work (Melrose, 2006), the dancers bring the work alive, revealing themselves in the work. Once the performance starts “the choreographer's loss is almost as sudden as the audience's surprise” (Martin, 1985, p.17), the choreographer loses all control over the performance process and becomes an audience member.

In this conventional relationship between choreographer and dancers, the choreographer is not visible in the social system once the performance starts and Martin suggests an additional and different hierarchy comes into existence. In contrast, the ‘visible choreographer’ plays an active part within the performance event, remaining within the social system and the flow from input to output can go in both directions. The ‘visible choreographer’ instructs the company with ideas, but also perceives ideas and adjusts plans according to it, making the work improvisational in action. However, in terms of authority the positioning of the choreographer can shift throughout the performance event and there can still be times when her authority can be suddenly at lost. This might happen during the rehearsal process, but is usually not visible to the audience. The presence of the audience informs and arguably generates these power dynamics. It can place the ‘visible choreographer’ in a vulnerable position when for example being watched during moments of not knowing where to take the work next, or having to adjust to the work unfolding in unexpected directions. The ‘visible choreographer’s’ proximity to the dancers and the material, influenced by its

unfolding and permission in regard to interfering, constantly changes as the performance progresses; the order within the social systems is in flux.

Whereas Lehmen plays with ideas of demonstrating Luhmann's social system theory and illustrating the communication between all performers to describe choreography, Michael Klien uses the term 'order' and the change within. Klien identifies choreography as an:

Order observed, an exchange of forces; a process that has an observable or observed embodied order. [To choreograph therefore means to] recognise such an order, [which makes choreography an] act of interfering with or negotiating such an order (Klien, 2008a, p.1).

In *Before I decide* (2011-13) the layer of observation becomes visible and embodied by the audience witnessing the 'visible choreographer' observing the performance process, directing and manipulating its progression and teaching and improving the score of the work. *Before I decide* (2011-13) strives to make the order transparent, playing with different dynamic constellations between 'visible choreographer', dancers and material, and highlighting the relational shifts within the system. The balancing of these relational shifts refers to Gregory Bateson and his cybernetic program and how systems manage to balance chance and stability. In a conversation about how Bateson's cybernetic program links to the performance of everyday life, the communication theorists Frederick Steier and Daniel Blaeuer state:

Bateson's concern is significant not only in the way that it affords an approach to understanding and being, but also in its very formulation as a question that resists an either/or response, settling instead on a both/and approach. Change requires stability and stability requires change (Steier and Blaeuer in Klien, 2008a, p.154).

In terms of control and power this suggests a more fluent approach to the role of the 'visible choreographer' to allow unexpected changes to happen, to shift between stability and instability and to allow different elements of the system to take the lead. In

regard to Martin (Martin, 1985), the distinction between choreographer and dancers is therefore more fluent with all performers forming a community, responding to the aspects of content and relation within communication (Bateson, 2000). Changing my proximity to the dancers, for example, can support this and when sitting in the centre of the space the work happens around me, my observation becomes an active participation and my instructions more intuitive, influenced by, as Forsythe calls it, “being inside the event” (Forsythe in Manning, 2009, p.22). The use of the ‘wild card’, as explained in Chapter Five (pp.83), also offers a more fluent change of dynamics within the group of performers. One dancer writes in his journal:

I want an invisible hat I can whip out at any moment. When I feel most potential for autonomy is when I’m hot and when I’m in. To shake or change something that is there. When I’m out, resting/knitting/cold, it feels harder to enter and do whatever I want, but I need to challenge myself (extract from dancer’s journal, July 2010).

Interesting here is how the proximity plays an important part for the dancers, too. As agreed, the ‘wild card’ could only be used by a dancer entering the space. The comment highlights that the limitation was effectively hindering the use of autonomy. It would be interesting to see if the dynamic within the group could shift even more if the ‘wild card’ could be used at any time, if the distinction between choreographer and dancers would become even more fluent.

The philosopher Erin Manning refers to ‘mobile architecture’ when she explores the ‘more than that’ effect of choreography on its environment and its inter-relational structures (Manning, 2013). She explains:

The question of what makes a work a work, it seems to me, is the question of how an artwork evolves to exceed its form, to create from its force-on-form a more-than that can be felt, if not easily described. With the concept of mobile architecture, I am suggesting that a choreographic work ‘stands up’ when human movement evolves to include its associate milieu’s ecologies such

that the milieu's ecologies of relation themselves can be felt (Manning, 2013, npn).

Manning highlights the importance of the shift between change and stability (Bateson, 2000) and that this fluidity is important so that the artwork can exceed its form. Breaking away from the distinction between choreographer and dancers allows the work to unfold beyond what is known as choreographic form. Here, choreography can emerge through the interrelations between all performers, through the fluent change of dynamics within the group of performers. As Manning suggests that, "choreographic work 'stands up' when (...) the milieu's ecologies of relation themselves can be felt" (Manning, 2013, npn), in *Before I decide* (2011-2013) the relation between all performers can be felt as they are interacting with each other as the performance unfolds. Furthermore, the kinaesthetic experience not only happens within the observing, but also, as experienced with *Before I decide* (2013, New York), in the active involvement in the system's interaction, with the audience becoming 'emancipated' in their experience of spectatorship (Rancière, 2010). When for example giving a task to a dancer or playing music for the performance on a small music box, they take part within the performance progression. The work becomes a choreographic participation project as all participants influence and shape the work. Klein defines choreographic participation projects as "politics of the kinaesthetic" or "kinaesthetic policy" (Klein, 2013, p.2017), highlighting how within the kinaesthetic engagement politics can be experienced. As choreography moves beyond its form the inter-relational structures and the social relations become tangible, offering the kinaesthetic experience of sociological and political discourses. These felt milieu's ecologies of relation are what fascinated me when working on *Before I decide* (2011-13). My research over the years has focussed more on the interactions between all performers, especially in relation to the visible direction from within.

### 6.3 Messy collective

There are a number of repeating themes that have been clarified throughout discussions that centre on ownership and authorship, questioning if I can call the work 'my work' or if the notion of authorship and ownership shifts due to the underlying principles of the work. By defining the work as an 'open work' (Margolis/1981, Barthes/1977a/1977b, Rubidge/2002) and relating to the idea of work being the nexus of all strands involved, which are performer, movement, sound and space, (Sanchez-Colberg and Preston-Dunlop, 2002), the 'visible choreographer' becomes one strand of the work, along with the dancers and the material. Similar to Martin's exploration of the making of a dance, *Before I decide* (2011-13) has a clear artistic direction throughout the rehearsal process, which influences the performance process. However, it also has a strong collaborative element throughout the rehearsals and the performance process and I therefore question if it remains important to identify myself as the author of the work and how I define authorship in this context. Rudi Laermans refers to André Lepecki's use of the term 'leadingfollowing' (Lepecki in Laermans, 2015) to describe the process within a dance rehearsal where "...a genuine inter-action unfolds in which the operations of leading and following are constantly re-distributed" (Laermans, 2015, p.380). I recognise this way of interacting and responding to each other in the rehearsal and performance process of *Before I decide* (2011-2013) where I set an opening, and from there the process unfolds with all dancers responding to given ideas, proposing new ideas, reflecting and discussing, always keeping the direct focus on the work. Laermans explains that in this mode of working together:

Subjectivity has to be bent or curved, away from the personal self and in the direction of the anonymous one-ness underlying the singularization of any potential whatsoever: 'one acts', 'one moves', 'one experiences', 'one speaks', 'one judges' (Laermans, 2015, p.381).

Reading Laermans makes me question if the focus on the 'visible choreographer', and therefore the focus on 'singularization' is still appropriate for this work, if the work has moved beyond my initial quests, inviting me to view it with the focus on collaboration and 'one-ness'.

Since I started working as a professional choreographer in 2001 I have worked in different collaborative settings either with other dance artists or with artists from other art forms (music, theatre, poetry, visual arts). Each collaborative setting has been different in the way we worked together, shared responsibilities and defined authorship. Laermans highlights the current product orientation within collaborative work in contemporary dance and the difficulty for collaborative work as it forces decisions onto a process, which needs time to unfold. He refers to the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy by quoting:

How can we think about society, government, law, not with the aim of achieving (...) the common, but only in the hope of letting it come and taking its own chance, its own possibility of making sense? (Nancy 2010, cited in Laermans, 2012, p.102).

Having learnt from previous collaborative processes where the collaboration lost parts of its value due to the aim of producing a product, I have taken care at the beginning of each project to clearly outline my definition of collaboration in relation to authorship/ownership, responsibilities and leadership. At times, when I have been able to offer professional employment for all performers, there has also been a range of influences on the sense of authorship/ownership framing more management responsibilities to my role and in return a higher expectation for what the dancers could deliver in terms of their expertise and skills, their engagement in the conceptual ideas of the work and the ability to challenge my ideas. Looking at current professional dance development shows that more creative input is required from the dancers and the number of choreographers who prescribe each step is relatively small. At times it is

mentioned in programme notes that the work had been created in collaboration with the dancers, but this does not seem to affect the choreographer being perceived as the author of the work.

Adding improvisation to the performance process increases the creative input of the dancers as they generate ideas and can lead the direction of the performance process, taking greater responsibility for the work and its unfolding. Improvisation collectives such as 'Mathilde', a Leeds-based collective of five improvisers who integrate movement and sound (Mathilde, 2011), work on the basis of equal authorship and artistic direction. One could argue that there should be a similar agreement for *Before I decide* (2011-13), but the addition of power adds a layer of artistic direction of the 'visible choreographer'. This raises the question of the difference between artistic direction and authorship and how I define artistic direction. I initiate the work, set the framework for it. I am the one who connects all ideas and elements, for example the conceptual ideas, the selection of performers and the performance venue.

Bojana Cvejić questions:

Is authorship always already assigned to the one who initiates a project? How can an initiative to invite authors for research reassure an egalitarian basis of collaboration, a frame of collectivity without central leadership (Cvejić, 2005, npn)?

In regard to Cvejić my own role includes more than inviting other performers. There is a clear outline and direction for the rehearsal process and a decision of approach. When working on *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) the dancers requested a clearer artistic direction to provide a framework to work within. We discussed the definition of the artistic framework in relation to the range of unexpected responses by the dancers. As described in Chapter Five the dancers felt more empowered by knowing the framework whereas I was afraid that this would limit the range of possibilities the dancers could

offer. Reflecting on how they used the 'wild cards' I wonder if needing a clearer framework to work within was also important as they were trying to make it work for me, partially second guessing what I wanted, starting to fulfil a contract due to the familiarity between all performers and our long-term working relationship. Referring to Cvejić (Cvejić, 2005), I wonder if my preparation before the rehearsal process, as mentioned above, set up a framework that they had to work within. My preparation therefore established the relation to the dancers and gave them the need of an artistic framework, the need to know my artistic framework. On the other hand, as described by one of the dancers, a framework was important so that decisions were easier to read and responses were made clearer in terms of going with or against the suggested idea. The dancer explains in his journal:

I could see the work developing in terms of refining a language or approach to the process of working. So when Kathinka says 'respond to Ollie's clarinet playing' we know what different kinds of responses to make. In fact this was perhaps clear, what I craved for was to know why people made decisions and how they wanted to change the work. Then I could work with it or against it, but I would know what they were up to (extract from the dancer's journal, June 2012).

Taking a similar stance to Cvejić (Cvejić, 2005), I am now curious how the relation between choreographer and dancers in terms of conditions of authority (Martin, 1985) could be different if there would be no preparation by the choreographer before the rehearsal start. The framework would be developed together within the group of performers and further defined as the work progressed. It would still allow a refinement of a shared language, as mentioned by the dancer above, but it would be developed together with a shared authorship.

Comparing *Before I decide* (2011-13) to Martin's investigation of the conditions of authority, I am not in control of the unfolding of the material throughout the performance process. Does this give me authorship of the performance work? Or is my

authorship too dependent on the dancers' contribution? Comparing this idea to Forsythe's *White Bouncy Castle* (1997) and his work with choreographic objects his authorship lies in the selection of the object and the set up he creates. Forsythe explains, "The choreographic object [is] a model of potential transition from one state to another in any space imaginable" (Forsythe in Manning, 2009, npn). The interaction of the audience with the objects, described as "the potential transition from one state to another" (Forsythe in Manning, 2009, npn), becomes the material, which is not in his control. Klein develops this idea further when she highlights how the audience actively shapes the choreographic structures, describing each performance of *White Bouncy Castle* (1997) as, "the production of a community, which is open, unassuming in its identity and continuously redefining its *we*" (Klein, 2013, p.201). I would argue that this applies to *Before I decide* (2011-2013) with all performers shaping the work and exploring and redefining, as Laermans calls it, 'one-ness' (Laermans, 2015). However, I wonder if the potential for the work as a 'production of community' could be further developed if, as mentioned above, the artistic direction or shared language of *Before I decide* would not be decided by myself, but developed within the group of performers. Furthermore, if the fluidity of change and stability (Bateson, 2000) would be kept as an essential part of the rehearsals and the performances instead of focussing on product orientation within collaborative work (Laermans, 2012), the ecology within the group of performers could be explored further, moving the work beyond its form (Manning, 2013).

I am starting to question if the term 'visible choreographer' is still appropriate for my role within this work. As mentioned above, if we as a group set the framework for the material together during the rehearsal process I could trust this set up more and share the authorship with all performers to allow the work to unfold in unexpected directions. I would therefore argue that I become a performer within the collective of performers with a slightly different set of rules and directive responsibilities, that the 'visible

choreographer' becomes the 'choreoformer'<sup>12</sup>. Letting go of the term 'visible choreographer' would liberate me of the responsibilities of singular authorship and would, referring to Laermans' use of the term 'Choreography in general', offer the possibility of viewing choreography as a performative network without the focus on singular authorship (Laermans, 2008, p.13). Laermans explains:

'Choreography in general' is the art of making and modulating – of governing – heterogeneous assemblages. If the assembling is successful, the outcome is a non-hierarchical performative network that is the actual medium of the performance, even its main performer. This performer has neither a name nor a face: it is because it happens – 'it' performs (Laermans, 2008, p.13).

Reflecting back on the undercurrent themes of collectivity and authorship in all three case studies (2011-2013) throughout my research there is clear evidence of the changes in my facility and agility to experiment and articulate ideas. In *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) I took the role of the 'visible choreographer' and the shift of me becoming a performer, changed aspects of collectivity and authorship. There was a clear sense of exploring the work together; discussions at the end of each rehearsal were important parts of the process and the performers' journals with their notes and comments fed into the work. Disagreements were part of the discussions and at times I felt vulnerable and in a minority compared to the group of six performers. I wanted to push the work to more drastic shifts of power, but reflecting back I realise that I controlled the work too much for this to happen. I was holding on to a specific artistic vision and the dancers could sense that their announced freedom of choice was not genuine.

As mentioned earlier these discussions were less current in *Before I decide* (2013, New York). In reflection, I understand that it was due to us not being as familiar and the dancers feeling no need to fulfil a contract, but also my experience from *Before I*

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<sup>12</sup> The term 'choreoformer' is not a convinced term. I use it here as a wordplay, illustrating the role of the 'visible choreographer' as a performer within the production of community and without single authorship.

*decide* (2011, Leeds), which better prepared me for this aspect of the work.<sup>13</sup> Compared to 2011 it felt less like a collective as it was a togetherness for a short period of time, or as Laermans describes it as “a collaboration ‘yet to come’”, where the limited shared time offers prospective possibilities for collaborative work (Laermans, 2012, p.94). I was in New York for one week and our shared interest and experience in live direction was the common ground that connected us. However, a great realisation for me was that this lack of knowing or trust was actually liberating, I was able to control less and it offered the work to take greater changes. The dynamic shifts happened more easily and the group took more initiative to direct me. I was braver to articulate my vulnerability and be more playful in following the work’s lead. Reading a dancer’s journal, however, I realise that there is more potential to follow the work and share authorship with all performers. During the rehearsal the dancer wrote:

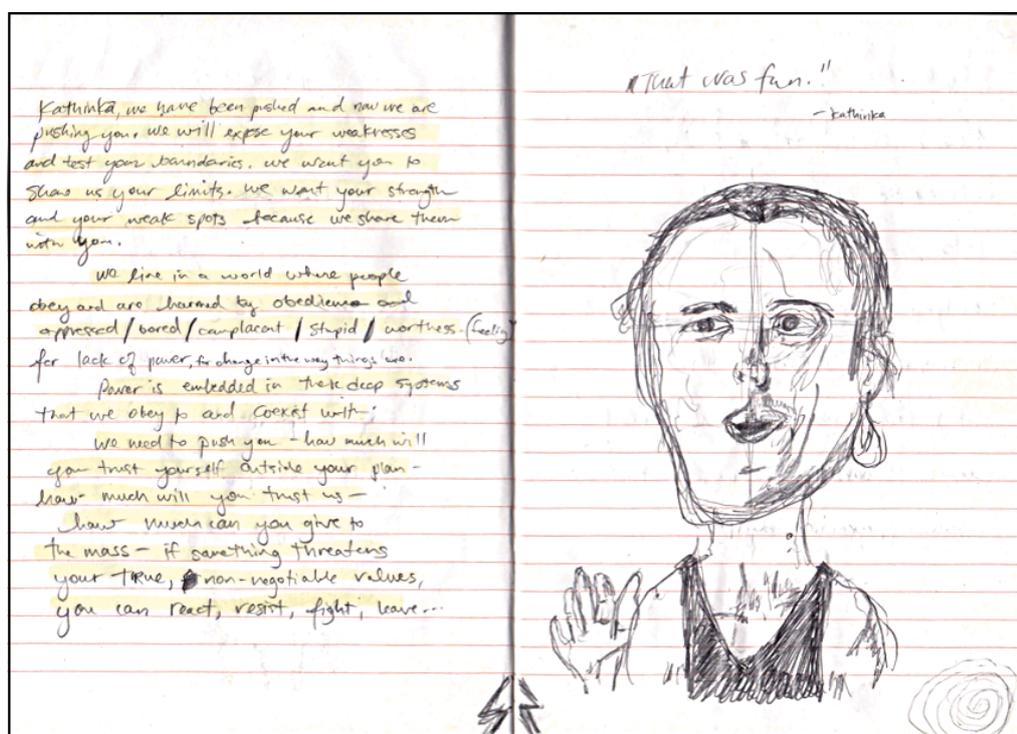


Figure 12: Extract from a dancer's journal (2013)

<sup>13</sup> I taught an improvisation class at the beginning of each rehearsal and it set, combined with the rehearsal feedback, a framework for the material, introducing the artistic direction in a more subtle way and leaving space for a greater range of unexpected responses to my instructions. One of the dancers explains how it introduced my interest in movement studies, which gave her a frame to work within (please see: *Before I decide* (2013, New York) DVD 3: 'Rehearsals/Discussions', Learning how to knit: 1-1.53min).

Kathinka, we need to push you, how much will you trust yourself outside your plan? How much will you trust us, how much can you give to the mass? If something threatens your true, non-negotiable values you can react, resist, fight, and leave (Extract from the dancer's journal, 2013).

The dancer touches something important here, the trust to the company and my fear of becoming so visible that I become invisible within 'my' authorship. Sharing authorship with 'the mass' (dancer's journal, 2013) would allow the work to be influenced by all participants and I would lose the control over its development. However, these internal frictions between artistic direction, or singularity, and collaborative processes are part of the work. The philosopher Jean-Paul Nancy compares communities to lovers that consist of singularities, inclining toward each other, but never collapsing into each other (Nancy, 1991). The scholar Jenn Joy refers to Nancy and his attempt to re-define the conception of communities when she explains how our singularity and the conflicts that can arise are an important part of "communicability" (Joy, 2014, p.124). She claims that:

Community must be re-choreographed, experienced as sensual, relation flux, a joining not of discrete individuals but of singularities. (...) These singularities or singular beings (...) create community as a leaning toward or into each other, not a collapse, but a coming together, a spatial join (Joy, 2014, p.124).

It refers to Laermans' idea of 'one-ness' (Laermans, 2015) and the bending and curving of subjectivity, where it is not about neglecting the personal self, but creating a sense of fluent togetherness within the group, re-defining its *we* (Klein, 2013).

Throughout the research process I struggled with my role and what it demanded of me – the lack of control, the disappearance of my authorship and the vulnerability of transparency/visibility to the audience. It made me question the sense of tradition and legacy of choreographic practice and challenge the values I would apply when watching work as an audience member. In Chapter Seven I will further explore aspects of control and failure, but at this point I would like to question if the audience is ready to let go of subjectivity, if we as audience members are ready to view work with the lens

of 'one-ness', that includes us as observers or possible participants. It challenges us to connect with the work on a more human level, as a community that observes people interacting, failing, laughing, leaning towards each other, coming together. Referring to the comment shared in the dancer's journal, this 'leaning toward each other' allows the singularity of each performer and the multiplicity of ideas with the internal friction as part of re-choreographing community (Joy, 2014). For the audience it means connecting with the performer and viewing the dancer's performance less as a representation of the choreographer's/dancer's subjectivity, or as Melrose calls it a 'choreographer's signature' (Melrose, 2009), but as a participant of re-choreographing community.

Challenging this idea of community and shared authorship within the group of performers even further, I would like to present a toolbox as a prototype that could be shown and shared so that other choreographers or dance practitioners interested in the idea can access it and work with it. So far it is in development to be published on my website with a feedback loop, offering choreographers to comment on their experience of working with the toolbox and allowing these comments to feed into my on going research. Similar to Lehmen's toolbox (2004a) and his aim to illustrate the communication between all performers, this toolbox demonstrates the social interactions between all performers and the form of collectivity, or referring to Laermans' term 'Choreography in general' that arises in these inter-relational interplays (Laermans, 2008, p.13). The toolbox can be easily performed by others, using the principles of the 'visible choreographer' to initiate causal chains within the social system, the group of performers (Segal, 2001). The instructions by the 'visible choreographer', or 'choreoformer', start these processes, the wild cards can be used to shift power structures and the automatic speaking mediates ideas, thoughts and observations. Following, is a list of the key features of the toolbox. They are brief and not explained further as I would like to give enough space for individual interpretations

and not influence the reader too much with how I work with it. The toolbox is a starting point and can be developed further within each group of performers or adjusted to each specific setting.

Toolbox for an Incorporate Practice:

- Duration: 4 hours to allow processes to unfold
- Task cards, prepared or written in the moment (choreoformer)
- Verbal instructions with the microphone or whispered in the performers' ears (choreoformer)
- Wild cards (dancers)
- Automatic speaking as a form of mediation and visibility (choreoformer)
- Chosen narrative as an overarching theme, interviews as possible soundtracks

Working with the toolbox could allow a collectivity without, as Cvejić claims, central leadership (Cvejić, 2005). The first rehearsal could start with everyone reading the instructions so that an artistic framework could unfold within the group of performers. This process of unfolding would allow the possibility of viewing choreography as a 'performative network' (Laermans, 2008), presenting the group of performers as a social system that fluctuates between change and stability (Bateson, 2000). The process of unfolding would start from the first rehearsal day and the group of performers would experiment with different ideas, each within their designated role of dancer or 'choreoformer', focussing on the social interrelations within the social system. Furthermore, the 'Toolbox for an Incorporate Practice' could support the idea of *Before I decide*, exhibiting features of an open work following the explorations of Margolis and Rubidge (Margolis/1981, Barthes/1977a/1977b, Rubidge/2002). It would allow its identity of flux to unfold and to be experienced differently in its multiplicity with each new group of performers.

In the following chapter the discussion moves forward towards the end of the research where I explore ways of making the vulnerability of my role more visible, presenting the 'visible choreographer' – or 'choreoformer' - as a "total person" (Stuart, 2010, p.29).

## Chapter Seven

### Visibility – vulnerability

When evaluating *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) it was the autobiographical aspect of the 'visible choreographer' that became evident and key for further investigation. The performance theorist Deidre Heddon acknowledges the autobiographical nature of performance work and the complex layering of the 'I' that performs and is performed, when she states, "Creative practices are always informed by who we are, as subjects embodied in time and space, with our own cultures and histories" (Heddon, 2008, p.7). Sharing these histories and the complexity of personal and social relations with the audience, and how the audience could join the world of the performer, to feel with them and enter a dialogue with them, became areas for further exploration. For the choreographer Meg Stuart, her interests lie in exploring these histories and hidden secrets, for example *Visitors only* (2003) where she uncovers the dancers' memories and dreams. She calls these personal histories "the internal noise" (Stuart, 2010, p.15), explaining in her terms how she wants to turn up the volume, to let it leak out in ways that might expose the interior. Referring to the performance artist and regular collaborator Vera Mantero, Stuart continues:

I am not so much interested in the total performer as in the 'total person', including their hidden self. How does the person rub up against the performer? (Stuart, 2010, p.29)

Stuart's idea of the "total person" (ibid) corresponds with the work of the 'visible choreographer' and the attempt of making aspects of the human side of the choreographer visible with the potential of exposing vulnerability. In relation to Heddon it is the inevitable connection between the two, the self and the performer, and how one can reveal the other that connects my approach to visibility to Stuart's work. I understand the use of the word 'total' here as the presentation of the whole person, the

whole identity or self, including the sense of constant change; 'total' becomes an elusive unreachable imagination in a constancy of change.

In this chapter, explorations of the role of the 'visible choreographer' extend beyond the role of managing the space and the performers by investigating aspects of solo work. It brings myself and my struggle with letting go of control to the foreground, achieving a greater sense of visibility of the choreographer as a "total person" (Stuart, 2010, p.29) and allowing a more fallible human aspect to a work that stretches limits.

### 7.1 The choreographer as a total person

The 'visible choreographer' can be seen as a solo performance within the overall performance event. Her role as the 'visible choreographer' or 'choreoformer', as explored in Chapter Six, requires different proximities to the work throughout the performance event. The dual role allows her to become a narrator of the interaction between all performers and the social dynamic shifts within the group. She makes connections not only between all performers and the material, but also to ideas in relation to the work, offering insights into her thinking as well as her feelings of uncertainty and her 'dreaming' of where the work could go. The theorist and writer Jeffrey Gormly describes the potential of solo work as, "The use of self as a prism. A body dreaming in public. Her body. Social body. Making connections. Computing connections" (Gormly, 2010, npn). As a dispersive prism can be used to break up light into its constituent spectral colours, one could view the 'visible choreographer', being a person who dances, as an autobiographical performance within the setting of a choreographic process. Here, the different features are made visible, like the direction and instruction processes, but also the changing identities of the choreographer, which cannot be separated from the 'self'. During the *Research and Development Weekend*

(2012, Leeds), I explored ideas of becoming present as “a body dreaming in public” (Gormly, 2010). With the use of the microphone I started to describe to the audience my observations of the performance process. I would explain what it reminded me of in terms of my theoretical research or the discussions I had with the dancers throughout the rehearsals, the question and doubts I would have that were emerging and that I needed to address as the work unfolded. Sharing these different ideas but also the thoughts of not knowing made me feel more connected to the audience. William Forsythe explains the importance of staying in the moment of not knowing and how it offers the work to unfold in unexpected ways, when he states:

Don't be afraid of being afraid. (...) You want to be in a conversation. (...) Allow yourself to not know. (...) Doubt, it's a valuable skill. (...) Don't try to look for your idea. It's not there in the room. See the people and try to be articulate about what you see. What is an honest description of the room that works on a human level (Forsythe, 2005, npn).

I experienced a different vulnerability where not knowing what to do next allowed insight into my personality, to the coping mechanisms I had constructed through time spent teaching and choreographing. As the investigation progressed, I was surprised that revealing more felt less frightening than I had expected. What I needed to start to address was my wish to control the material and my struggle of not being able to contain and control it. Being in the present moment and not jumping ahead is crucial for these dialogues with oneself to arise, only then can it feel and illustrate the ‘liveliness’ of my immediate interaction with the performance process. This includes the changing idea of what it is to choreograph ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ and how it allows a change in the sense of responsibility as a practitioner.

As explained in Chapter Six (see 6.3, pp.112), it suggests a shared responsibility within the interplay between all performers and how it can create a sense of intimacy when working with improvisation. Practitioner and theorist Kent De Spain highlights its demand of staying in the present moment when describing, “...the interplay of what I

want and what is wanted of me” (De Spain, 2011, p.29). He defines being intimate as “...becoming so close to something or someone that the subject/objectness we usually feel dissipates (at least for a while)” (De Spain, 2011, p.27). This subject/objectness is evident in the traditional relationship between choreographer and audience as it is common to have no direct contact between both. The choreographer mostly communicates to the audience by having her ideas embodied by the dancers and the full work. Where the ‘visible choreographer’ is an active member of the performance event, the subject/objectness of the relationship disperses and the choreographer is engaged with a different place of intimacy and vulnerability, the choreographer as a “total person” (Stuart, 2010, p.29) becomes visible to the audience. Similar to the thoughts from De Spain, this visibility and intimacy relies on the ability of staying in the present moment. Stuart captures its challenge and the internal insight it offers - the apprehension, the sense before action, the affect of living - when asking, “Is it possible to track the sensation before speaking, the movement not chosen, the spaces we travel to when we are daydreaming, the memories and projections that cloud our awareness of the present?” (Stuart, 2010, p.15)

The title of the works *Before I decide* captures these moments described by Stuart. I have remained interested in finding ways to translate to the audience this crystallising of more than a fixed product. It includes the sensations and inner monologues that go through my mind during the time of the evolving performance, the different pulls of expectations, my struggles, but also moments of joy and the interconnections to other material, anecdotes from rehearsals, memories or readings. As discussed earlier, one main ‘inner monologue’ that becomes visible in performances is my urge to control something, which is uncontrollable, to control the performance process and the struggle to follow its flow. In the process of learning to recognise a more holistic understanding of my research and movement practice, I have come to realise that the management and structuring of material has become part of my identity.

Acknowledging this has helped me to understand why I have found interest in investigating states of control and vulnerability.

Learning to not be in control has benefited my practice, which is a curious outcome in terms of the investigations that have taken place over the past seven years. Having started with the intention to reveal what goes on for the choreographer during the process of making a work and to show the complex nature of the process, what I have found is an all together more human aspect of art making. It has opened up unexpected possibilities or turning points for the performance process and has in turn offered a greater range of ideas for direction methods or interpretations of forming works for performance. A good example of letting go of control was a point during the performance of *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) when I did not know which instruction to give and therefore asked the performers to use their 'wild cards' and take the lead (pp.83). As a result, the performance moved to what I recognised as a more playful place. The performers started to interact more with the props and material of the visual artist and the combination of different ideas and styles gave it a 'wilder' and slightly messier quality (please see: *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) DVD 1: 'Play Performance': 2.16-2.52min). In return this surge in energy and diversity offered me a range of ideas for further directions of the work. However, even though I can see the potential of not being in control, losing it can make me feel insecure and vulnerable. Reading about Stuart's approaches when working in the studio has helped me to understand why I intended to place myself in this vulnerable position. She explains that her work concerns:

Turning weaknesses into strategies. How to use your own history, your own physical problems or inhibitions, your own kicks and obsessions? (...) I seek out the gap in that composite of the performer and the person; it fascinates me (Stuart, 2010, p.29).

My own difficulty in terms of letting go of the control and the vulnerable place it can take me within the performance process has in effect become a potential, or strategy for the evolving work. There is a considerable amount of work still to be done in terms of fully embracing this approach, but I can see how such autobiographical insight can provide more choices in terms of material, how my own history and 'obsessions' can offer greater visibility to the choreographer. Stuart highlights the opportunities it could offer when she describes:

The internal friction and rubbing creates unexpected relations and by-products, revealing and concealing, expressing how people tend to control their mind and reactions most of the time (Stuart, 2010, p.21).

Again there is something here about the choreographer in traditional work being the instigator of choreography, but not being present. It opens up more discussion of the signature argument in terms of its reliance on material and form, or how Susan Melrose calls it the "...traits or qualities that recur in the making processes" (Melrose, 2009, npn). This research is dealing far more with the psychophysical markers, "the internal friction" (ibid), and how the work becomes recognisable through these.

In relation to my urge to control the performance process in a setting where both concepts of improvisation and live direction/choreography rub against each other, I effectively set myself up to fail. Controlling these unexpected decisions within the group of performers is not possible and if I were to succeed, it would be a failure in itself. I remain eager to 'succeed' and enjoy moments when the direction runs smoothly and the dancers' responses happen how I had envisioned it. However, I have come to understand that the form of the work, including the choice of performers, the design of the space and the possibilities for an active engagement for the audience, needs to prevent this and that all elements need to find a meeting point. As I mentioned in Chapter Five, the work of the 'visible choreographer' highlights and 'needs' the cracks,

the not so smooth and functional processes (see 5.3, pp.92). It then can begin to illustrate the non-linearity of creative thinking and the complex internal workings of the whole work where the performers with their ideas, questions and doubts become visible. It is worth retaining the comment from Stuart, reminding us that, “If everything goes smoothly, then it’s not interesting” (Stuart, 2010, p.45).

## 7.2 Exposing the interior

When further developing *Before I decide* during the *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds), I introduced the theme ‘home’<sup>14</sup> to the company to offer a different lens of vulnerability, in order to explore less of the struggle to control and more about accessing insight into the performers’ history. Working with a company of four dancers from Denmark, Austria, Italy and England, these starting points proved to be inspirational for all performers and presented a range of interesting experiences to draw upon, for example living on a boat, being in between two homes, growing up being mix-race in a conservative village in Austria in the 1980s<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> During the summer 2011 after the completion of *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) I created a solo work with myself as performer, *Momentary Distraction* (2011, Leeds). The work explores ideas concerning ‘home’, what home means to me and how having lived in England for 12 years has shaped notions of identity and belonging (please see: *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds) DVD 2: Footage from solo 2011, *Momentary Distraction* 2011). Home is a theme that has occurred in my choreographic work since 2004 and it was time to revisit the ideas, exploring how my perspective had changed.

<sup>15</sup> To add a more conceptual layer to our own experiences around ‘home’, I worked on ideas inspired by Sophie Ernst’s exhibition *HOME: Architecture of memory* at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park (May 2012), as well as writings by the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) and Tim Ingold (2011) in relation to space, place and room. Ernst works with interviews of people in exile. Home becomes a memory, a memory of space, a way of looking – for her home becomes a non-place (Ernst, 2012). In contrast Tuan states, “Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other” (Tuan, 1977, p. 3). With space allowing movement, place becomes the pause and Tuan continues that “each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (Tuan, 1977, p. 6). Ingold expands this idea by referring to the philosopher Martin Heidegger’s notion of ‘the room’ as a distinction between space and place, drawing from the experience of “lives that are not exclusively here or there (...), but always on the way from one place to another” (Ingold, 2011, p.147).

Adding a narrative suggested an identity that seemed to be independent of its performers or at least an amalgam of the whole. The subject of the work was now about its participants and their interaction and communication (Lehmen, 2004b), with an additional and clear identity of its own. It provided a shared narrative for all participants to work with and allowed me to be in the work more, being led by it and following its flow. In reflection, the work on *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) seemed at times stiff and forced, like I was squeezing the work into a preconceived concept, not allowing it to unfold in its own way. During this period of investigation, there was less stepping out of the work, and more involvement where I was able to observe and allow myself to be led. Furthermore, it offered the possibility of making my 'self' visible. My notion of home and the importance it plays in my life, offering more personal insight and presenting a different facet of vulnerability.

For *Before I decide* (2013, New York) I continued working with this narrative and we interviewed each other about our individual notion of home and played it back during the performance in counterpoint to the movement material (please see: *Before I decide* (2013, New York) DVD 3: 'Performance', 53.44-54.50min). This adds another emotional layer and its use of recorded speech seems to be more direct in its emotional connectivity than when I work with the 'stream of consciousness talking' as explained in Chapter Five (see 5.1, pp.101). At times, whilst listening to the recordings, I would start embodying thoughts and I would dance and try out ideas, either in response to what I was seeing/hearing or in preparation for further instructions. I would explore tasks first before I would give them to the dancers, which expanded my role as a performer, gave me different pathways to follow ideas, made me be more within the material, offering another layer of vulnerability and offering the audience a different engagement with my decision-making process (please see: *Before I decide* (2013, New York) DVD 3: Performance, 41.30-42.09min).

The possibility for each dancer to connect individually with an added narrative gave them another source to develop the material independently from my directing, offering the possibility for self-reflection and empowerment<sup>16</sup>. In reference to the proposals made by Randy Martin (Martin, 1985) in regard to conditions of authority (see 5.2, page 72), it provided another opportunity for external impulses to be internalised, external impulses that could be independent from the choreographer's intentions. Linking these ideas to my writing on singular authorship in Chapter Six, the work with narrative offers the possibility to share authorship within the group of performers as it affords each performer the possibility of contributing their ideas. With the direction being less centralised and the responsibilities shared, the pressure of the performance being 'successful' weighed less on my shoulders. Sharing personal insights allows for more relation as a group of performers, highlighting the social aspect within the practice and the potential it offers. I now realise that I started to work 'with' the people rather than learned structures of choreographic form, the people were the work and I was part of it. In regard to my earlier writing about social systems (see 6.1, pp.101) I came to recognise my drive as a choreographer and started to trust the agile use of skills to make work from being with people, allowing choreography become social comment (Klein, 2013). This in turn moved me to thinking about revealing complexity and interrelationships, how we each might deal with our being in time and space and in dialogue with each other. Here the richness of improvisation as a choreographic form allows new or different insights into what it is to be in communication with others.

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<sup>16</sup> When presenting her paper about her documentation of Anne Theresa De Keersmaeker's choreographic work at the symposium *Performing Process: Sharing Practice* (Coventry, 2014), Bojana Cvejić describes how Keersmaeker uses narratives to empower the dancers (Cvejić, 2012b) as they could embody it individually.



Figure 13: *Choreography as a social practice* © Hawkins, J. (2012)  
 Performer: Neil Callaghan, Marie Hallager Andersen, Daliah Touré, Kathinka Walter

With this understanding I aim to continue to explore being more playful with the shift of direction a work might take. Is it possible to relax more and accept the possibility and necessity of 'failure', as highlighted by Stuart, where failure is seen as an opportunity for liveliness and the identity in flux of the practice to become visible? When introducing the work with the narrative during the *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds), one dancer commented that I seemed to stay longer with one idea, giving it more time to let it unfold, which in turn offered opportunity for the dancers to explore it physically. The waiting became part of the directing (please see: *Research and Development Weekend* (2012, Leeds) DVD 2: 'Discussions and Evaluations', Evaluation of the final rehearsal and the overall outcome of the R&D Weekend, 0.20-2.44). The work with a narrative eventually enabled me to stay with/in moments. For my future practice I am curious how the understanding of shared responsibility as well as the acceptance of failure could offer scope for further enhancement of process and outcomes. I have come to understand that these aspects are key factors in exploring visibility. It allows the work to constantly change and evolve, offering a view of

choreography not as a display of preconceived ideas, but as an ever-changing identity in flux.

In the final concluding section of this thesis, I present key findings and crystallise moments from the research, considering how this supports a view of choreography as a lived art form. I outline avenues for further exploration as a continuum of this practice-led research; drawing from my experience within conservatoire training I consider ways that choreographic training can meet improvisational experiment. To conclude, I highlight the potential research impact on the dance community and the contribution towards sociological and philosophical discourses.

## Chapter Eight

### Conclusion

What started in 2009 as a desire to investigate the choreographer's role turned into a landscape of different fields and perspectives, offering a range of previously unexplored avenues and further research journeys to follow. Throughout the seven research years, including three case studies and other performance projects alongside the work as a lecturer for choreography and improvisation, what has become clear that within practice-led research one cannot separate the researcher from the research, that both are interconnected (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This journey has not only given me greater understanding of what it is to research practice, but also reinforced an appreciation for the relevance of research/practice relationships. It has facilitated my ability to reason with the experience of change through time, to refine research/practice and generate new ideas for further research. Throughout the period of research, I have come to understand that research is about generating and refining questions as it proceeds, being able to clarify ideas and establish a sense of context for the research within the field. Having worked within the tradition of 20th century dance iconoclasts, my approach has become less dualistic, teaching me to be more capable of leaving questions unanswered. I now find it possible to work with uncertainty and possibilities and not forcefully rush or conclude ideas, engaging in ways to question experience. This was evident both in my writing and the work in the studio, where learning to follow the material (Ingold, 2008) and not to force it into preconceived ideas allowed the research/practice to reveal ideas in unexpected ways. Different forms of documenting process supported this, two key examples being the immediacy of the 'Talking diaries', both before and during the rehearsal process, and the discussions with the artists at the end of each rehearsal day. Both of these approaches allowed important space for reflection and the emergence of new ideas that I had to learn to recognise.

This conclusion outlines a range of key findings that can effectively contribute to on-going research and consolidation of practice as research in the field. It highlights the potential research impact for the dance community, the contribution for sociological and philosophical discourses and trajectories for future avenues of research as a continuum of my research/practice.

### 8.1 Key findings and crystallise moments

In reference to Mette Ingvarsten's comments outlining an urge to keep searching for what choreography can become (Ingvarsten, 2010, npn), this research contributes to the possibilities of challenging and expanding what a choreographer might be. An evident consequence of this is the further impact on the identity of all participants and of the whole work. This includes the performance venue and what contexts are needed to best present improvisation in performance. The performance of *Before I decide* (2013, New York) showed that the performance art context might be a more suitable context to make improvisation more available for audiences. The Grace Exhibition Space, a gallery space in Brooklyn/New York, allowed an active engagement with the work, allowing multiple engagements without a fixed outcome. Focussing on the multiple engagements of all participants, the research provides interdisciplinary insight into processes involving choreographic and improvisatory practice through a social/sociological lens. The key findings listed below are written in response to the key research questions and the subsequent areas of investigation that they generated. Research question one refers to changes in understandings of the identity of choreographer, audience and work. Research question two challenges the use of improvisation to provide new ways to experience choreography as an open work, and research question three examines the contribution of this practice to the discussion of the nature of the 'social' in the dance field. The outcomes of the practice-led

methodology, in relation to the research's contribution to existing knowledge and transferability, relate to illumination of the following subjects:

1. The 'visible choreographer' reveals the 'inside out' where he/she as a social subject (Siegmond, 2012) becomes visible as part of the live event, unravelling the multi-layered complexity and the interconnectivity of the subject. The identifying idea of the 'visible choreographer' offers an opportunity to understand aspects that contribute to the identity of a work. It is specific to a type of experiential work that crosses previously established boundaries (Chapter Four, Research question one).
2. Most evident in *Before I decide* (2013, New York), the audience are invited into improvisation rather than being observers of outcomes (Rancière, 2010). This is perhaps more evident where the work crosses into performance art. It shows that there is an opportunity for a distinct consideration of where performance takes place as well as its design as a key feature of performance. It offers the audience ways of active engagement, forming interplay between all four elements with less focus on performing it to the audience, but sharing it with all participants, allowing multiple engagements without a fixed outcome. There is a ground to explore practices or participation as seen in the expanding range of exploration of active audience engagement. The unexpected energies of more people involved and the use of improvisation with its changeability allow the performances to be different, allow choreography to be experienced as an open work. It is a blurring of boundaries where maturing dance practices challenge what questions dance can ask (Chapter Four, Research question one and two).
3. Trust within the group of performers can be both nurturing and restricting, it can provide a generative and fertile environment to take risks whilst delimiting the very possibility of exploration. The research contributes to the debates concerning collaborative practice (Laermans, 2012/2015), to the identity of a

work and to the democratisation of acknowledged contributions in the creation of a work (Chapter Five, Research question one and three).

4. Choreographic and improvisatory structures offer insight into ways in which power can define relations between all performers (Foucault, 1995). Traditional hierarchical relations between choreographer and dancers can change into dynamic shifts between all performers where all performers contribute to the progression of the work and everyone is 'leadingfollowing' (Lepecki in Laermans, 2015). This means that the dancers can lead the choreographer, leaving the choreographer without control over the performance process. It changes the priority of the choreographer and offers an active space for all participants, including the audience. The research has provided a window onto the internal power structures that circulate in the social engagement of choreography. It is an opportunity to investigate a range of ideas hidden in plain sight; it becomes a challenge to the power relations and a revealing of practice as a production of community (Chapter Five, Research question three).
5. Working with improvised structures within a choreographic event can make the social interactions between all performers visible. In this way, the work can illustrate dance as a form of social practice (Klien, 2008a), offering the possibility of viewing choreography as a performative network (Laermans, 2008) without the need to focus on singular authorship (Chapter Six, Research question two and three).
6. Choreography has the potential to become less about supposed fixity and the manipulation of form, and more about the social interactions between all performers during the performance, including the visibility of the choreographer's uncertainty (Stuart, 2010), criticality and engagement with choreographic traditions. Future research could look at the increasing diversity of dances recorded and documented. What has been thought to be important,

what changes have taken place and what is lost in the process (Chapter Seven, Research question three).

What appears evident is that we are at a time of asking new questions about role and identity of choreography. There is a groundswell of interest within Europe, for example Ana Vujanovic and Saša Asentic (*On trial together*, 2012), Dragana Bulut (*Pass it on*, 2011) or Isabelle Schad (*Collective Jumps*, 2014), in using choreography to reveal ideas about situation and interaction that does not become visible through the work of a fixed script. It does not show the multi-layered complexity and interconnectivity of the performers and the potential wealth of the liveliness and identity in flux of the practice, illustrating dance as a form of social practice. There are possibilities for a changing culture of thinking and revealing social interaction, about being with people and reacting to what is a co-created work. The challenge of investigating the 'visible choreographer' has been to make these interactions visible. It challenges the traditional hierarchical relationship between choreographer and dancer (Martin, 1985) and the opportunities that arise when the choreographer becomes a performer within his/her role. Here, choreography becomes a multi directional process and an illustration of the social dimension that contributes to its identity. It challenges the need for a choreographer in a power role and with single authorship. Moving away from specific roles, especially the one of the 'visible choreographer', focuses on the community of all participants involved in the performance that interact and influence the performance progression. It links to Joy and the bending of subjectivity and leaning towards each other as a way of 're-choreographing community' (Joy, 2014). Furthermore, it offers greater immersion with audience engagement and broadens the sense of spectacle beyond the nature of a passive audience, viewing the audience as active participants that shape and influence the work. These explorations could transfer across other arts and making processes and the ideas could be used in different disciplines, like theatre and music or in interdisciplinary work.

The research offers the possibility of practicing the role of the 'visible choreographer' with all of the difficulties of interaction; seeing the potential of the work evolve, but also, at times, feeling irritated or frustrated, particularly where the work does not follow pre-planned ideas, sneaks out of control. The struggle with letting go of control is also apparent in the critique of Thomas Lehmen, by Husemann, who claims, that he does not let go and allow the functions, designed as part of his toolkit, to morph or alter by the way a group works (Husemann, 2005). It shows that more work needs to be done to find an approach that might be egalitarian in an art form that works with groups of people following the identity in flux of the practice. The possibilities available through all participants changing the progression of the work, refers to Rubidge's explorations of the theories of 'open works' (Rubidge, 2002, p.17) and how, applying Barthe's idea of multiplicity (1977a and 1977b) to the process of making, it creates a conflict between authorial control and interpretative freedom. Reflecting on the experience of this research, it has shown how working with the idea of open works facilitates the possibility of learning to allow a greater amount of uncertainty and flexibility, but also to fully embrace it, letting the fuller potential of improvisation evolve. The choreographic role is sometimes casting people in the role of decision maker, which can empower, but at times also needs facilitation and negotiation. This fuller potential of improvisation could be a wilder place that asks new challenging questions of human interrelationships. What for example would happen if the choreographer were to add a 'glitch'? If he/she, like Goat Island in *Can't Take Johnny to the Funeral* (1991) would disrupt the flow, give an instruction impossible to complete, act out of role? Viewing the group of performers as a community that can offer the possibility of more solutions, maybe even sabotage or undermine the work, and understanding that this 'social interplay' presents the opportunity of letting go of single authorship (Laermans, 2015), can make it easier to let go of the need to control. It releases the choreographer of single responsibility for the performance, even towards accepting the possibilities offered by failure. This, in return, can allow for a greater playfulness with the shift of

direction and an opportunity for liveliness as Stuart (2010) suggests, and the yet unknown places the work might move to in the future.

What is of interest here is the connection of feeling vulnerable when letting go of the need to control and being in this un-known place. Reflecting on the 'Learning Methods' by David Gorman and his writing on value systems in relation to performance anxiety (Gorman, 2009), I realise that vulnerability can be linked to apprehensions about the audience's value system. This includes the choreographer's navigating of the creative process and the knowledge of its direction, his/her well-considered and informed decision-making and the high level of innovation and original approach within each performance. However, what is interesting is that according to Gorman it is a projection of my own value system, it is my expectations of the choreographer's role. The contradiction here surprises me and links back to the self-surveillance aspect of the Panopticon (Fuglsang and Meier Sorensen, 2006). Within my research/practice, I have intentionally investigated and challenged the role of the choreographer, but at the same time I find myself caught in my own expectations based on conventional viewpoints of a traditional hierarchy that itself does not 'let go'. This research/practice has brought to the foreground a tussle with tradition and expectations, reinforced by the tradition of choreography, like for example the value of the craft of choreographing based on sculpturing movement in time and space (Humphrey, 1959). If all participants contribute to the work and share authorship for the work, the need for choreographic crafting skills could be questioned as well as the need to teach it within professional training. Viewing choreography as a 'performative network' (Laermans, 2008), the performers' responsibilities start to blend and new questions need to be asked in regard to the identity of the work and how to trust improvisation. In choosing to explore the role of the 'visible choreographer' I embarked on a journey to change the identity and experience of a work, and in the process have found a fallible human aspect to a

work that allows self-reflection through social relations in the process of creating a work.

## 8.2 On-going research and future research avenues

Working with the methodology of practice-led research has resulted in the unfolding of multiple processes and led to a number of unexpected findings in the studio. What gradually emerged was a range of different forms of presentation of improvisation based performance practice. As a key feature of the individual performances each performance was in a differently designed performance space. These were, among others, stage@leeds, a black box theatre, the Howard Assembly Room, an empty music venue from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Grace Exhibition Space in Brooklyn, a gallery for visual as well as performance art exhibitions. The design of the performance space highlighted and supported different aspects of the work, like for example the choreographer's mediation process or the active engagement of the audience. In future research it would be interesting to experiment by siting work in different designed spaces to observe how further influences can shape the work.

Inspired by the impact on my research/practice when working with a new group of performers (2013, New York), I started working with different groups of performers with different training as well as various cultural backgrounds. Working for example in Hamburg/Germany with students from professional dance training (Contemporary Dance School Hamburg) that is different to the conservatoire training in the UK, offered another dialogue between choreographer and dancers with the dancers questioning my decisions more and giving unexpected responses to my instructions. Although, it is difficult to know if the reason for their different response was due to their different training or their different cultural background. However, I am curious how working with

groups from different cultural contexts further challenges the identity of the 'visible choreographer' by receiving different responses to my instructions and having different social interactions within the group of performers, being able to provide a context that is open for all to explore. I am beginning to explore ways that the approach might translate as practice. The meeting of different artistic traditions and forms might allow exploration of different modes of thinking in terms of improvisation. It might offer ideas to emerge that challenge different traditions within dance, including the possibility to view dance training from various perspectives.



Figure 14: *Practice-led Research* © Wood, A. (2011), Performer: Daliah Touré

Coming from a conservatoire training where the main focus is often on the practical exploration in the studio and the performance as a form of presentation, this research has opened up possibilities to express and articulate ideas through a practice that now includes writing articles, presenting seminars and scholarly papers. In future research, I aim to continue to intertwine practical and theoretical exploration and further enhance the ways in which I work with different forms of knowledge. I am interested in the ways that these different formats can become more closely interlinked in their presentation, reflecting my practice-led research and giving insights into different modes of working

and different forms of findings. Performances could include presentations of in depth theoretical explorations intertwined with embodied ideas, letting the distinction between both forms be further blurred, enabling the investigation of dance to be shared in various ways.

One example of the intertwining of different modes of presentation could be a solo work based on the idea of the 'visible choreographer. As a continuing development of this research I have been collating material for solo work, an idea I have thought and talked about during this process and have waited to explore. Inspired by Jérôme Bel's neglect of the subject in *Nom donné par l'auteur* (1994) where he favours the creation of an objective presentation of rules in order to make the structure and organisation of the choreography visible, I aim to challenge the visibility of the choreographer's role and identity by neglecting the presence of the dancers. I could perform a solo in the role as choreographer working in the absence of a company, exploring how this could challenge the view of the choreographer's role even further by removing the group of dancers and the possibility of interaction, instructing and directing. I am curious how other aspects of the choreographer's identity would become visible in absence of the dancers. It could include playing with the audience's imagination, as explored in *Invisible dances* (2004) by Bock and Vincenzi, or intertwining practical exploration with theoretical discourses, as seen in Liz Aggiss' solo *Survival tactics* (2010).

Working with Rubidge's exploration of 'open works' (Rubidge, 2000/2002) and her definition of work as less production orientated and more as an articulating and re-articulating of a process of thought, makes me view my research/practice as an on-going process, which started before this research and will continue in new directions. In 2009 I began working with the notion of the 'visible choreographer' not knowing the extent of the research potential it would offer. Throughout this research period I have gained a broad range of reflective and contextual insight that now offers a greater

understanding of my practice and potential avenues for further research. I am ready to see how the on-going exchange of ideas with different groups of researchers and practitioners in and outside the studio will continue the journey to new places. My current work as a research assistant of the Cologne based choreographer Silke Z and our regular research laboratories with a group of international artists/researchers already shows how my research can be applied to different research aspects within dance, so far for example within the research of 'presence' and 'immediacy'.

What becomes evident is that personal histories have on-going impact on the research development and progression. Throughout the process of research I have realised how my personal history of training and teaching within the conservatoire sector, which continued throughout this research, influences my decision-making, my view of what choreography can be and my understanding of what it is to 'practice'. Whilst this in itself may appear straight forward as we are all creatures of our context, it now raises questions with regard to conservatoire dance training and how to best find the balance between the students' understanding and learning the skills and techniques within dance without forming an idea of what is expected or allowed. In the UK, and my knowledge is mainly influenced by my experience of working at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance, there is, on the one side, a strange hold of tradition especially within the nurture of crafting skills, but, on the other side, a sense of satisfaction when an art form that speaks of its time needs to be able to change.

As Laermans explains, it is important within dance conservatoire training to view the "...deconstructive moment of not-knowing as the proverbial truth of every quest for knowledge" (Laermans, 2011, p.161). The experience of continuous questioning and criticality makes the students trust and view it as possible beginnings rather than fearing the un-known and feeling restricted by it. This has been partially present in my experience, but I would argue that the conservatoire might need to further ask

questions of the role it fulfils in the maturation of the form and how culture communication will be required within society as an important social skill. In a time where uncertainty and overload of information, for example within social media, influences the day-to-day life the experience of continuous questioning and criticality is an approach needed beyond the academy to embrace the un-known instead of feeling restricted by it.

I have in response to my research experience continued to experiment with my approach to teaching choreography and see my role as a lecturer to be more concerned in raising questions, and nurturing the state of not-knowing than providing answers. Instilled in this approach is a quest to prepare the student dancers to take initiative, propose ideas outside of what might traditionally be expected and challenge themselves and the institution as a result. These points become vital when trying to think about improvisational experiments, where the subservient recipient who is told what to think and do does not fit into improvisational contexts with any ease. Teaching creative and critical practice needs to facilitate greater interplay of ideas and an openness of approach to working with material and within the group of performers. However, the idea that choreography and improvisation work with different parameters restricts growth within the art form. The tradition of a division between choreography and improvisation delivered as separate modules creates these segregating ways of prescribing activity. Creative and critical practice needs to be reviewed in terms of what it contains and if the dance training in the UK, especially with the authority of technique training, sets its framework too narrow.

The debate about UK based dance training with Akram Khan Company, DV8 Physical Theatre and Hofesh Shechter Company (Smith, 2015) strikes me that their call for fitness is misguided and that fitness in process in terms of democracy is a more appropriate call for the dance industry. They are criticising the main three

dance conservatoires in the UK (London Contemporary Dance School, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Dance and Music and Northern School of Contemporary Dance) for the lack of rigour, technique, and discipline in their training. What appears evident here is that they are missing something more vital that is the democratisation of the social within dance practice (Klien, 2008a). Instead of emphasising on the rigour of technique training, the focus should be on investigating the sociological aspect within dance and what dance can do for society, exploring the social, anthropological and political value dance could have for society (Klein, 2013). At the Belgium dance conservatoire P.A.R.T.S. the teaching of sociology, for example social system theory, feeds into the creative and critical practice (see 4.2, pp.81). It provides dance artists with a sociological understanding of the internal workings of the making process, the different roles, responsibilities, effect and affect on people and the work. This includes viewing the interaction of all participants as multi directional processes (Laermans, 2015) and the politics embedded in collaborative making processes in dance (Cvejic, 2015). It questions the ownership of work and contribution and challenges power and authority to be assumed by the choreographer. Furthermore, it offers tools to work with an openness of approach that does not only apply to the 'choreographers', but to all performers within the group and their openness to play with ideas without responding to an expected ideal, indeed without any expectations at all.

When working on *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds) the dancers were struggling with wanting to please me, trying to make it work for me (see transcript of discussion, pp.36). With the familiarity between the performers and our long-term working relationships they were used to the ways I work and I too had expectations of their responses, as they started to fulfil 'a contract'. Adding a narrative in 2012 and playing with my positioning in the performance space, allowed a greater flow of ideas within the group of performers, but there was still a need for a defined artistic framework to work within. From these experiences I realise that we need to empower dancers and

systems to let improvisation evolve and the practice of choreography to change. Developing the artistic framework together with all performers or presenting the work within galleries and non-theatre spaces could be one approach of many and within dance practice there needs to be a continuous questioning of the parameters so that they support the work rather than restrict it. Only here we can bring it to the forefront of professional practice and let new questions to be asked. Understanding the liberating experience of being in a new place without the past relations when working on *Before I decide* (2013, New York), and how it helped that I could control less and let the work and therefore myself embrace greater challenges, shows the range of possibilities to be explored when working outside these framed contracts. I was more at ease with unexpected changes, took time to observe, allowing things to emerge and trusting the company, the material that was generated and myself. I aim to continue research that addresses how viewing choreography as an 'open work' (Rubidge, 2000/2002) affects the teaching of choreography, how it can show students the process of learning to think in movement whilst learning the skills inherent in critical argument and uncertainty. I would argue that the field is changing in certain communities, but the debates need to move beyond the academy, viewing uncertainty as possible beginnings rather than fearing the un-known and feeling restricted by it.

### 8.3 Impact on the dance community and beyond the dance context

My research/practice not only offers the dance community the opportunity to review the choreographer's role and question forms of performance, but also helps dance practitioners to find a language to articulate their ideas. I would argue that this is essential for change within the art form to happen, finding a voice and articulating ideas supports the interaction between practitioners outside the studio and forms a stronger

alliance to contribute to interdisciplinary debates. This research/practice can facilitate these discussions and debates and therefore promotes change and progression.

Exploring the choreographer's role challenges the understanding of choreography as a supposed fixity and manipulation of form. Viewing choreography as an open work allows its potential to unfold by recognising its multiplicity in the form of expression. In addition to the theoretical discourses on 'open works' by philosophers such as Margolis (1977), Foucault (1977/1995) and Barthes (1977a and 1977b), the research has shown that letting go of singular authorship helps to fully explore and set the work in motion. It supports the deconstruction of previous power relations with regard to form and structure, allowing a more fallible human aspect to a work that draws on multi directional processes. It also changes what can be shown within the framework of a theatrical event and to some extent it could change the nature of a dance performance. Making improvisation more available to audiences within the performance art context and finding performance spaces within galleries and non-theatre spaces provides a democratic, open and liberating space to all who come to the work. *Before I decide* (2013, New York) has shown how the performance space and context allowed the identity of the work to unfold and the possibility for new questions to be asked. Exploring the multiplicity of viewing the work and the network of interpretations can move dance out of proscenium spaces and find alternatives forms of engagement. These could be for example in form of computer games where the player practices the role of the virtual 'visible choreographer' with all of the difficulties of interaction based on multi directional processes. Even though the experience of real/non-virtual social interaction and the democratisation of the social would suffer here. Considering social interaction more broadly and with relevance beyond dance, the research/practice offers findings in terms of learning gained through working in groups. Working with multi directional processes and the use of reflection offers a democratic, open and liberating space to all participants.

The original approach within the research/practice and its interconnection to theoretical discourses promotes, as Klien claims, the finding of greater connections outside the traditional cultural frameworks for dance (Klien, 2008a). By bringing choreography and improvisation together and placing the choreographer in the performance context the research challenges viewpoints not only within dance, but contributes towards philosophical and sociological discourses, highlighting the social dynamics within a group with its identity in flux (Luhmann, 1995). The interrelationship between all performers describe the internal power structures that circulate in social engagement and the decision-making process of each performer as an illustration of the functioning of a social system (Lehmen, 2004). The research contributes to our need to continue to reflect on and discuss the nature of the 'social' in the dance field, an area often assumed, but little debated. However, the discussion and practice should not be trapped within academic discourses, but could transfer to participatory practice and community dance. As an art form that involves people and their interactions it offers staying in response to changes happening in society, using the resource of choreography and the contribution that this type of social movement can make in terms of our appreciation of understanding each other (Klein, 2013). Both might work as a form of reflection for each other, or in other words dance practice can illustrate changes within society to make them more apparent, to raise questions and offer a springboard for debate. Possibilities arise that the new knowledge might cross over to other fields in terms of social living and interaction, especially in times where our understanding and value of social living and interaction becomes more important. Applications beyond the profession could be questioning power roles and viewing communities as the possibility of more solutions.

However, the experiences to be found dancing need to be more openly shared if dance is to contribute its vitality to future cultural change, including the audience as part of the open work by offering different forms of active engagement. As all four elements of

choreographer, dancers, material and audience contribute to and share the work each part can within the constant change and flux gain findings and understandings beyond the work and its context. These findings and forms of self-reflection through social relations in the process of creating the work has implications for what dance-based learning might claim to achieve in terms of education and art.

**At the end of the project, when everyone has left, when a space is quiet, when a landscape of light is overgrown by darkness, what remains?**

(Harradine, 2011, p.182)

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## 11. Appendix

### Appendix 1 Documentation of *Physical chain* (2010, Leeds) Pilot project



Figure 15: *Physical chain* (2010, Leeds) © Barker, L. (2010)  
Performers: Elisabeth Connor, Letty Mitchell

*Physical chain* (2010, Leeds) was a commission for Verve 10, the postgraduate company of the Northern School of Contemporary Dance. I worked with the dancers for three weeks in October and November 2009 and the piece was premiered . +on the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2010 at the Riley Theatre (Leeds) and toured nationally and internationally until July 2010.

For this investigation I identified one idea of the ‘visible’ direction from my usual work, investigating ways that the role of director/choreographer and structure might function

in a more 'traditional' stage version. The work develops ideas from the performance installation series, *Gleichzeitig* (2007-09). Both pieces focus on process rather than the product, they work with structured improvisation, aiming to the direction visible within the performance process. There are two main differences between *Gleichzeitig* (2007-09) and *Physical chain* (2010, Leeds). *Gleichzeitig* (2007-09) is a performance installation performed at non-stage performance spaces, such as studios, gallery spaces or other site-specific spaces. It has a duration of four hours and works interdisciplinary with artists from different art forms with myself being an active participant as the 'visible choreographer'. *Physical chain* (2010, Leeds) is a fifteen-minute stage performance and only works with dancers using movement and speech. However, *Physical chain* (2010, Leeds) develops some major ideas from *Gleichzeitig* (2007-09), like for example the visible direction within the performance process with the use of task cards. The condensed format of a fifteen-minute piece offered the opportunity to explore these ideas more rigorously and in greater depth.

The main idea I continue to explore is how to make process visible. This includes choreographic processes, thinking processes and decision-making processes. Whereas usually in contemporary or classical dance the audience is presented with a finished product, here they can witness both: the 'making process' and the 'final product', or 'final piece'. The 'making process' is all about generating and exploring movement material and experimenting with different interaction possibilities between the dancers. The movement is partly improvised and pre-choreographed. Improvisation is crucial for this work and stimulates the thinking and decision making process. Having choreographed movement material defines the movement vocabulary of the work and gives the performers a reference to draw from. The 'making process' is followed by the 'final piece', where material is selected and put into a timeline with clear definitions for timing and spacing. This real-time organisation includes the use of new tasks for each

performance and a new order for the 'final piece', which makes each performance unique.

*Physical chain* (2010, Leeds) is for two directors and six dancers. One director gives verbal instructions to the dancers and the other one selects the outcome and structures it by creating a score for the 'final piece'. The role of the two directors in *Physical chain* is the role of the 'visible choreographer' I adopted in *Gleichzeitig* (2007-09). Having two directors has made the two different parts of the choreographic process clearer and more transparent. These parts are generating movement material, either by the choreographer herself or through facilitating the dancers, and structuring the movement material on a timeline. In *Gleichzeitig* (2007-09) I use various methods to direct the process of generating movement material. For *Physical chain* (2010, Leeds) I wanted to focus on one method to make the call and response process between the director and the dancers clearer for the audience. I chose to work with the method of task cards, which are tasks written on A4 cards. The director reads out the task cards, which are either pre-prepared or written in the moment, to the dancers. The speaking is picked up by a microphone and is therefore clearly audible to the audience. This creates a visible direction process with the audience hearing the instructions by the director and witnessing the dancers' responses.

Please see the DVD marked with '*Physical chain* (2010, Leeds), DVD 4' at the end of the thesis. A short clip can be seen here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPBI1AhhsLs>.

The work highlighted key aspects of my research and prepared the first case study, *Before I decide* (2011, Leeds).

## Appendix 2

**Questionnaire for the dancers of *Physical chain* (2010, Leeds)**

At the end of the rehearsal period of *Physical chain* (Leeds, 2010) I asked the dancers to fill out a questionnaire to get a greater insight into their reflection of the rehearsal process. This served as an addition to the on-going discussions throughout the rehearsal period.

Dear Verve dancers,

I would very much appreciate if you could fill out this questionnaire. Your feedback will be of great help and inspiration for my future choreographic work and will also feed into my writing for my PhD. Please answer the questions below. You are welcome to add any additional ideas and thoughts.

What are the challenges for you when performing *Physical chain*?

Did you benefit from direction within the performance process?

How did you experience dealing with ownership within the performance process?

Did you have any experiences of a 'control-battle' between performer (either you or another dancer) and director?

Anything else you want to add?

Thank you very much! Kathinka

**QUESTIONNAIRE (dancer 1)****1. What were the challenges for you when performing *Physical chain*?**

As one of the directors I find being out of my comfort zone (not dancing) the most difficult challenge. Especially as I am not experienced in choreography, so staying calm and connected is something I struggle with, but enjoy the journey it is taking me on.

**2. Did you benefit from direction within the performance process?**

Yes, when doing the dancer's role, I feel the direction given almost offers the suggestion of a structured improvisation as opposed to having no formality in the creative process.

**3. How did you experience dealing with ownership within the performance process**

I felt at first that this put some pressure and strain on me whilst dancing as it took me into the territory of 'is what I'm doing good' and 'I wonder if it's right'. But as the process developed it became easier to disregard these initial feelings and concentrate on how it feels for me.

- 4. Did you have any experiences of a 'control-battle' between performer (either you or another dancer) and director?**

No, I didn't feel that this was ever an issue.

**QUESTIONNAIRE (dancer 2)**

- 1. What were the challenges for you when performing *Physical chain*?**

Aside from the challenges of pushing my physicality and exploring new movement possibilities, I am finding that improvising within a highly structured piece is a challenging experience. To find the freedom to make fast decisions within the parameters of the 'game', relating to others and maintaining an awareness of space, time, and music while trying to make inquisitive and witty decisions.

- 2. Did you benefit from direction within the performance process?**

In a way I feel that the responsibility of my action is shared whereas in an open improvisation I would feel wholly responsible for my choices. It's helpful to know that we have others overseeing the improvisation and that they can make changes according to what is seen on the outside rather than sensing it from inside. However, I feel less in control of changing the piece.

**3. How did you experience dealing with ownership within the performance process**

As I said in the last answer the ownership and responsibility is shared, which is the same as in an open improvisation. As a dancer I feel I have the power to play with the rules of the piece. I can be as imaginative with my interpretation as I want. The audience does hear the instructions though, so I need to respond to this so that they can follow the process of the piece.

**4. Did you have any experiences of a 'control-battle' between performer (either you or another dancer) and director?**

In our case not particularly. I do feel sometimes that we (dancers) don't have control over how long we explore one idea and there can be the difficulty between the point that we are given the instruction and moving away from what we have done.

**QUESTIONNAIRE (dancer 3)**

**1. What were the challenges for you when performing *Physical chain*?**

Reacting fast, quick choices. If you just improvise in a studio there's no pressure to look good all the time because you can try again, edit and change things later. On stage you can't do that. Another challenge is using focus, looking out and seeing what

happens around you. All this is much easier with set material.

**2. Did you benefit from direction within the performance process?**

It is helpful and relieving to get instructions during the performance. In a free improvisation you make all the choices and all the responsibility is yours. In *Physical chain*, even though there is a lot of responsibility, the dancers are still told what to do.

**3. How did you experience dealing with ownership within the performance process**

First I tried to make the tasks very strictly how I thought the directors wanted. That made it hard and I sometimes got stuck. Now I am trying to give myself a bit more freedom in interpreting the tasks. I think it is important to find something in the task that stimulates you. It is not so severe if the outcome is not exactly how the director intended - on the contrary, it can actually make it more interesting.

**4. Did you have any experiences of a 'control-battle' between performer (either you or another dancer) and director?**

What I saw was mostly silent negotiation. Although sometimes when the dancers are given an unpleasant or difficult task it looks a bit like the director is a dictator and the dancers just have to do what they are told. But I don't necessarily see this as a negative thing; it just gives the piece some nice edge...

**5. Anything else you want to add?**

I have learned a lot during this process and I am expecting to learn more once I start performing this piece. THANKS KATHINKA!

**QUESTIONNAIRE (dancer 4)****1. What were the challenges for you when performing *Physical chain*?**

Challenges... I guess the biggest challenge would be to feel comfortable and confident in performing an improvisational piece on stage, comfortable and confident in the movement I produce. I feel that there is a certain amount of pressure in this; to produce movement that's 'worthy' of performance and how to do that when you don't know what it's going to be and have never felt the movement before.

**2. Did you benefit from direction within the performance process?**

Benefits... I'm not sure if I understand the question correctly, sorry! Here's a thought anyway! It was great that you could direct the directors; I mean that I feel we had a lot to learn from each other. You had previously been in their 'director' position before so that you had a large amount of experience and came with a well-

developed idea. However, there were new elements for you, too, for example a different time scale, performance setting etc. so that the Verve 'directors' had a lot of experience to share with you, too. So how did this benefit me as performer in the piece? I suppose what I'm getting at is that with the shared knowledge between all the directors and discussions that occurred, there were effective shifts within the structure of the piece (mostly to do with the cards, the information given) which helped me relax as a performer as all changes made were to make all the tasks absolutely clear to us, the dancers, as performers.

**3. How did you experience dealing with ownership within the performance process**

I have the feeling that the directors have more 'right' to ownership than the dancers. I guess I can't shake that choreographer-dancer relationship, it's not MY piece, but I know I have MY part in it. Maybe in this piece I feel I have more ownership than in other pieces, because it is an improvisation I feel I have more control, but I don't know if it necessarily means more ownership?

**4. Did you have any experiences of a 'control-battle' between performer (either you or another dancer) and director?**

So this question touches upon my last answer...I didn't feel any control battle at all, it felt more that we were always searching for an agreement. I think we had quite a harmonious relationship.

**5. Anything else you want to add?**

What I feel I got out of this piece is a real sense of process; it's astonishing to think how much every aspect of the piece developed. If anything doesn't make sense, or you want to elaborate more then just come find me or email me back, I'm happy to help if you've got more questions.