

# SLIPPAGE BETWEEN

## A COMMON VOID

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<p>In this written part of my MA thesis, I analyse the artistic process of the performance “I wish I was on planet earth”, premiered on 11.06.2021 at The Theatre Academy in studio 4. I’ve traced a map of sources in relation to it, presented to the reader in a nomadic manner. Through this nomadic movement of associations and transforming from one theme to the other, I question the linear thinking of my writing. Nomadism for me is directly linked with thinking and creating from a place of “in-between”. Rosi Braidotti speaks of nomadism as a state of constant becoming “without becoming anything in particular”. I attempted to write from that space as I have been choreographing from the same in “I wish I was on planet earth”.</p> <p>After the “introduction as a prologue” chapter, I depart from describing the performance to the reader scene by scene. Then I trace back to a personal experience in New York (2015) and I ponder on how I noticed neoliberalist systems around and “in” me. I wonder how these structures affect me, my way of choreographing and the dance field in which I operate. In this specific context, I approach neoliberalism from the point of view of André Lepecki. In his book “Singularities”, Lepecki proposes to resist neoliberalism in the dance field using the concept of singularities. He suggests multiple approaches, and I chose the one of limitrophies. I link this to Rosi Braidotti’s view of liminality and nomadism.</p> <p>During the artistic process of “I wish I was on planet earth”, I wanted to apply these mentioned concepts in the structure of the choreography and in the approach to the collaboration between the dancer, light designer, sound designer, scenographer, and myself. I thought of the space in-between the mediums of dance, sound, light, and scenography. What kind of limitrophe area that place could be, how to inhabit and mostly, how to choreograph it. I found that, to inhabit a space in-between, for me there is a need of constant transformation and adapting, a liminal nomadism. The moment things stopped transforming, they stopped being undefined. I sought for that ambiguity.</p> <p>Needing to find my own “concrete” link between the mediums of dance, light, sound, and scenography, I chose the route of thinking of electricity and energy being the common denominator between them. Electricity is present in the atoms of my body and electricity can be turned into light and sound. From the point of view of physics, energy continuously transforms. I enter a realm of speculation. I link this idea of electricity/energy to Braidotti’s liminal nomadic, constant becoming “without becoming anything in particular”.</p> <p>After this section, I dive into the genre of 80s/90s cyberpunk. This being a place of imagination and a genre that speculates on a dystopian future through anarchist approaches. This circles back to my thoughts on how to resist neoliberalism in choreography. I conclude this section by pointing out some critics led by Braidotti regarding the cyberpunk genre, as it does have some negative aspects to mention, such as how the female body is portrayed.</p> <p>I’ve then decided to present my choreographic methods towards the end of this written thesis, as I wanted the reader to have a certain context prior to that. These methods are directly linked to the topics mentioned and through the work with the performer and working group, I describe how I’ve aimed to choreograph in an in-between, limitrophe and liminal nomadic way.</p> <p>Finally, I present my concept of <i>common void</i>, which puts a name to the way I have approached choreography in “I wish I was on planet earth” and a manner of thinking that I seek to develop in the future.</p>			
<b>ENTER KEYWORDS HERE</b> Becoming, nomadism, in-between, liminality, neoliberalism, limitrophe, energy, choreography, sound, <i>common void</i> .			

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24.02.2022

Standing against war and violence.

With hopes to find unity and peace.



## INTRODUCTION AS PROLOGUE

Am I a void space, with no gravity inside  
 Bits and pieces of multi-layers flying around  
 Atoms of my being spread and scattered between  
 I slip further into its darkness  
 A place unknown  
 I aim to carve its invisible tunnels.

For how much I try to comprehend certain complexities, parts of them still escape me. My awareness can't hold or contain them all in one place. I need to move my perception in different directions in order to navigate through them – within them. With one foot in front of the other, I choose a pathway of understanding and untangling the ramifications. During this journey, I become and transform, absorbing new information. From this multi-layered space, I speak from a place of multiplicity, and it's hard for my words not to fall in-between.

The in-between is a word in which this written part of my MA thesis is dipped in. These spaces can be seemingly tight, but by inhabiting them they expand. I'm thinking of what is pressing in my chest as a choreographer, what drives me to do what I do. What pulls me in so much that doing it creates a momentum loop of creation. This is when I manage to hack a lateral diversion of my brain patterns, reaching towards that void space between one thing and the other.

### Multiple places in one body

I am a person that has traveled since the day I was born and come from a family that has done the same. We speak four to five different languages at my parents' home in Firenze, and my life has been filled with Italian, Canadian, Polish, Venezuelan, and Moroccan influences. This is the outcome of a series of travels sparked by my



grandparents on both sides of the family after WWII. My parents continued this journey, and as did I – traveling from Italy to New York, Brussels, and Helsinki.

It hasn't been a linear journey. I hopped back and forth “in-between” as *home* was scattered in different places. Because I've never stopped doing that, things got mixed for me. This can bring feelings of alienation and of not belonging to any defined place, however, things became interestingly ambiguous. I flow between different languages and countries, and, therefore, between different behavioral modalities – constantly switching and transforming. Nomadism is connected to my personal and family history of migration. It is a background braided in my actions, permeating my behavior – the way I approach things and, in this case, how I approach choreography.

## Nomadic approach and structure

In this written part of my MA thesis, I speak from the point of view of a choreographer, but I can't help but to also speak through a nomad's lens. I will attempt to bring the reader with me, navigating through how I chose to explore concepts and in-between areas in the performance “I wish I was on planet earth”. The structure of this text aims to have a similar logic to the one of the performance: a nomadic movement of associations and transforming from one thing to another.

When reading, hang in there with me, I carry you along to different places. For how much it is possible to do in this setup, I attempt to question linear understanding of my writing. I would invite the reader to speculate on this structure as a map, which is also a choreographic tool I used for the making of IWIWOPE (I wish I was on planet earth). The writing operates as if speaking through processes, trying to figure something out rather than constructing an idea.

After this introduction, in Chapter 2, I will depart from laying out chosen practical aspects of the piece “I wish I was on planet earth” such as the working group, the audience seating, and the title's story. Furthermore, I talk through the performance scenes along with some photos. These photos are rather dark as the piece and its video

are as well. This quality was intentional and in line with the idea of in-between as an ambiguous, dark void space.

In Chapter 3, I present how the creative process started. Beginning with New York in 2015, I describe my experience of how neoliberalism sneaked into my body and how I observed it has done the same in the dance field around me. The chapter invites the reader to a certain kind of detour where I describe my stay in New York as the seed for the making of “I wish I was on planet earth”. Within this, I present how I’ve processed my thoughts on neoliberalism through the lens of Robert Wise’s film “The Day The Earth Stood Still”.

In Chapter 4, I draw on different concepts to resist neoliberal modalities through André Lepecki’s notions of singularities and limitrophies and I explain how I applied Rosi Braidotti’s nomadic liminality to this concept. This section ends with some speculations on how singularities, limitrophies and nomadic liminality could link to electricity and energy.

In Chapter 5, I switch tone and present how the genre cyberpunk has influenced the performance and where that inspiration comes from. It links to yet another science fiction film “Tetsuo: The Iron Man” by Shinya Tsukamoto. I compare what the protagonist of the movie goes through to how the performer of IWIWOPE transforms in the performance. I comment on how cyberpunk viewed future technology being bulky and anarchic and how that actually turned out to be different nowadays. I conclude this section with Braidotti’s criticism towards cyberpunk, particularly the problematic male-centered view of the movement and how we approached, from that point of view, the body with the performer.

In Chapter 6, I discuss how I accessed these thematics with the working group and my choreographic methods in relation to the movement generating tool “Maps” by choreographer Salva Sanchis. I combined this method with a writing technique learned during an Authentic Movement workshop led by Gestalt therapist Kirsi Törmi at The Theatre Academy in 2019. I describe how the performer and I created movement material through this and how these methods were brought up to the designers. Finally,

I briefly speak of how I approached the dramaturgical structure, inspired by a conversation with Professor of Choreography Kirsi Monni.

In the conclusion, I speak of the installation by Tim Etchells “Qu’y a-t-il entre nous?” (What is there between us, 2021). Pondering on his view of what an in-between space can mean versus mine. I link this to a conversation I had with composer Andrea Mancianti, where I asked him questions on how he views choreography in sound. I reference Professor of Sound Salomé Voegelin’s words on “sonic flesh”. Finally, through this, I introduce my concept of *common void*.

## The place of other choreographers

In this written part of my MA thesis, I speak of one side of my choreographic work. Apart from mentioning choreographer Salva Sanchis, I have decided to not link my topics or the performance to other choreographers. I wanted to concentrate on writing about what was really part of the process in the studio with the working group. I mainly discuss artists’ works from fields other than choreography because these were the references relevant to the artistic process. However, I want to briefly acknowledge some other choreographers that could be highlighted for a hypothetical future text about “I wish I was on planet earth”.

As mentioned earlier, in Chapter 6 I chose to speak about Spanish dancer, choreographer and teacher Salva Sanchis and his method of creating movement material “Maps”. He designed this method through the making of the performance “Previous” (2002), continuing to apply it in his later performances. He has also shared this method with choreographers such as Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker in the collaborative performance “A love supreme” (2005). It was important for me to speak about a method that has inspired me and that has directly influenced an established choreographer - in this case De Keersmaeker, whom I have studied with.

If I had to write another text in relation to IWIWOPE and consider which choreographers it could be in dialogue with, I would choose to link the performance to Xavier Le Roy’s “Self Unfinished” (1998). In this solo, with very few stage elements,

Le Roy continuously transforms his body from human to machine and to animal. I admire the clarity of his piece and I could dare say that to me, it could be seen as a sort of boiled down version of IWIWOPE. Furthermore, I would speak of Anne Teresa De Keersmaker's undeniable influence in my work in relation to her way of translating musical scores to choreography. This would be in dialogue as well with Thomas Hauert, with whom she has further developed her technique. I approach sound in a different way, and it would be interesting to compare my way to theirs. I could also see a link and difference between how Meg Stuart approaches physical states in, and how I think of these in relation to the way I treat movement material connected to personal experiences and memories.

# ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

HELSINKI, TEAK, STUDIO 4, 2021

## The working group

In alphabetical order:

Sanni Häkkinen - Scenographer

Antti Kainulainen - Sound designer

Karoliina Loimaala – Dancer/Performer

Maya Oliva - Choreographer

Alina Pajula - Light designer

The idea was that it wouldn't be a solo but a quartet between a dancer, light, sound, and scenography. One of the reasons I chose to work with Karoliina Loimaala in this performance, apart from the fact that I admire the way she performs, was that we have known each other since 2013 and have collaborated since 2014. I knew that I could trust her as a performer and that we wouldn't spend a lot of time getting to know each other or tuning in and that we could focus directly on the work. This was because I was attempting to choreograph not only her performance but also elements that I was less familiar with, such as sound, light, and scenography. The trust I had in Karoliina as a performer allowed me to focus as well on mediums that required much knowledge which I didn't have. I was lucky enough to collaborate with designers such as Antti Kainulainen, Alina Pajula and Sanni Häkkinen, who were willing to talk and experiment about movement and choreography in what they do. They brought in so much more than I could expect, and I've learned enormously from working with them.

## The audience seating – COVID19

This performance has been created keeping in mind the coronavirus safety rules. We didn't know what the regulations for the audience would be during the performances in June 2021, but we knew that we had to keep a two-meter distance between each seat.

This was taking a huge amount of space away so I proposed to the designers that we could build a two-meter high metal audience platform. In this way, the audience could sit right above each other, creating the necessary two-meter distance both horizontally and vertically, and fitting more audience in the room safely. This was made possible by Alina, Antti and Sanni, who all share the same architectural background and by the openness of Marja Zilcher, the stage manager, who allowed us to think beyond what has been previously done at The Theatre Academy. I appreciate how Marja worked with us and this performance would have not been what it was without her.

COVID-19 was also part of this working process. The regulations to safely invite the audience dictated how we could organize the space. If the pandemic wasn't part of the equation, we wouldn't have thought of elevating the audience two meters above the ground. As a group, we managed to turn a limitation into an artistic decision that added to the piece.

The audience platform structure was placed alongside three of the four studio walls, creating an almost full circle of pit-like seating. It reminded me of the Colosseum in Rome. Even though the vantage points weren't 100% democratic, each seat had a special point of view that was carefully analyzed by everyone in the working group. We all have seen the piece at least once from each seat. I like that it added a 360° awareness to Karoliina's movements by also taking into consideration high and low levels. It was important for me that her body was constantly rotating or changing placement, so that details could be visible from all angles.

## Space-time shift to 2015, away from Helsinki 2021

The title for this performance came from 2015, when listening to an album by Mort Garson, "Mother Earth's Plantasia" (1976). Mort Garson is a Canadian composer and a pioneer of electronic music. "Mother Earth's Plantasia" is an electronic album made of synthetic sounds for plants to listen to.

I was listening to the album on YouTube and scrolling through the comment section, when I saw that one person simply wrote "I wish I was on planet earth". I cannot find

this comment anymore and I am not able to quote the person from whom I blatantly stole the title that has since followed me for the next six years. I am grateful for what they felt while listening to this album since it inspired the feelings in this performance. Reading the comment “I wish I was on planet earth” made me think of a human being on Earth who felt so detached from it, or who was going through such a journey that they would wonder about what Planet Earth *is*.

The sentence “I wish I was on planet earth” remained an open question throughout the working period and, throughout the process we pondered what it meant. For me, it’s an ambiguous sentence that creates tension because of its contradictions. I don’t think it needs an absolute answer beyond the questions it provokes.

## Back in Helsinki 2021: Performance scenes + photos

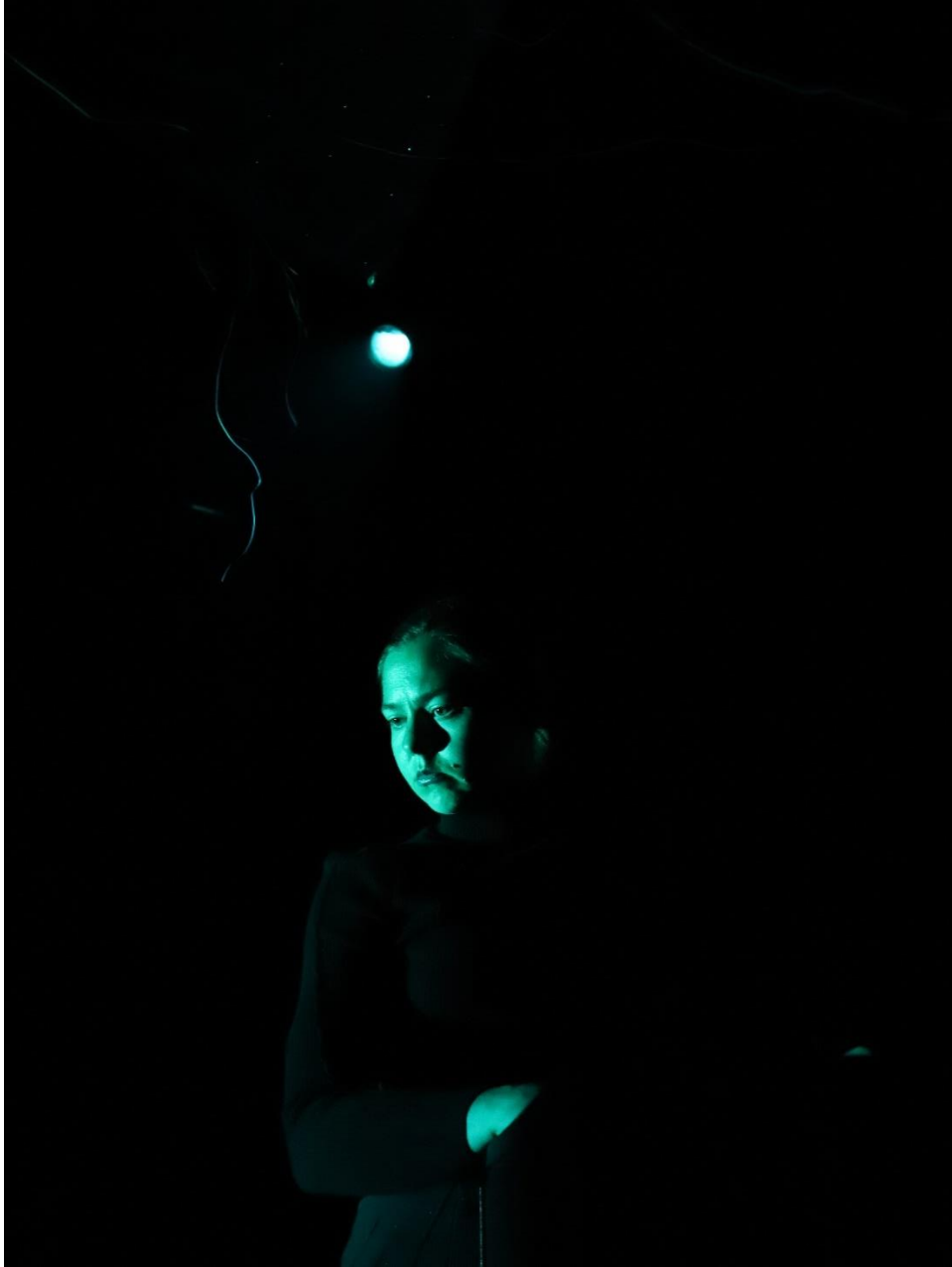
The performance “I wish I was on planet earth” is divided into 7 scenes:

- 1) Radio
- 2) Theremin antenna
- 3) Abjection solo
- 4) Cable monster
- 5) Big cable monster
- 6) Plastic dark blob entity
- 7) Transcending: performance space taking over

### Radio

The performance space is dark and cyan colored. On stage, almost at the center, light designer Alina Pajula and sound designer Antti Kainulainen, are sitting with their light and sound desks on the floor. They are visible, taking space; they are part of the performance. Between them, Karoliina Loimaala is seated with her back against a pillar,

and she is holding an exciter. An exciter is a speaker that can make surfaces vibrate if placed against them. We can hear a radio playing from it - more precisely a collage of approximately eight different podcasts in different languages. The podcasts speak about aliens and possible contacts between them and humans.



Karoliina Loimaala, ph. Aapo Juusti



This scene is a prelude, a preparation for what comes after. As choreographer and dancer Pietari Kärki observed, it is a section where the audience has the time to sink into the atmosphere of the performance while listening to texts from the radio.

One of the texts in English:

*“There’s something about nuclear, atomic energy and, ehm, UFOs (...) They don’t want us to blow ourselves up, they’re not gonna save us, it’s just my opinion (...) The ones that are maybe looking out for us don’t want you to have this planet blown up, that’s why we’ve come close to whatever was, you know, because when you see a phenomena, or UFOs, it is traumatizing (...) for some people it can be awakening, but its traumatizing because there is another field of energy (...)”*

*(Alan Steinfeld, 2021)*

This text sets a tone and gives a general context for the audience to interpret as they wish. The theme of aliens and possibly contacting them is present but loose.

At some point, Karoliina stands up and starts walking around, carrying the exciter speaker with her. The sound coming out from it is low. However, as Karoliina presses it against different surfaces, it uses that surface to spread the sound, turning the floor, the pillar, or the audience platform structure into speakers.

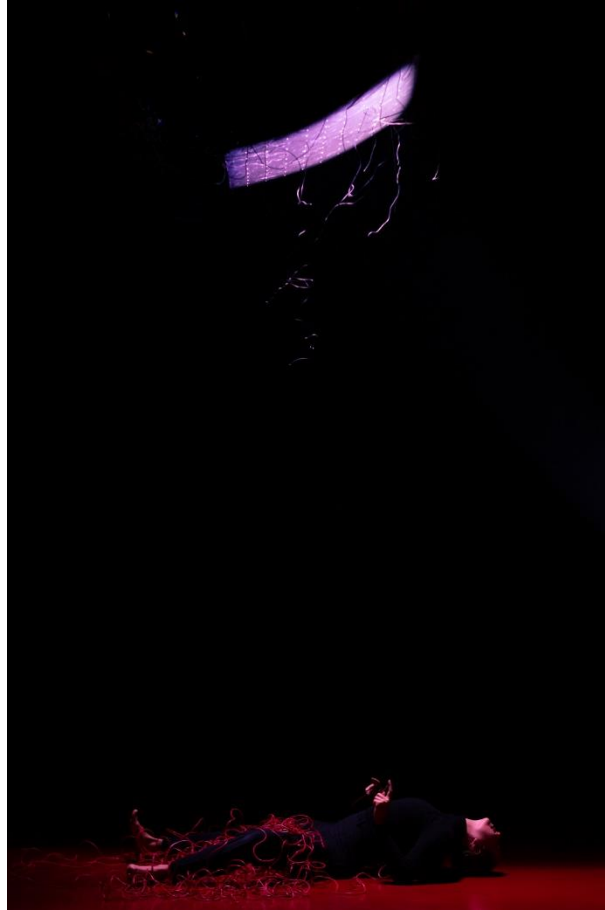
## Theremin antenna

Karoliina leaves the exciter and places herself on the floor, next to Antti. There are two long theremin cable antennas there, and she lays them on her body. The cyan light in the room fades away; a spotlight on the performer slowly reveals the actual color of the cables and the floor. The antennas are red, and the floor under her is as well<sup>1</sup>. While this is happening, we begin to hear the sound coming from another exciter speaker

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<sup>1</sup> The cyan light filter is green-ish and it cancels the color red, turning it into black. In this scene the audience slowly sees the transition between the color black to red.

placed on one of the four aluminum plates hanging flat from the roof right above her. The sound heard from this exciter is generated from the theremin antennas Karoliina is holding.



Karoliina Loimaala, theremin antenna and one of the four aluminium plates, ph. Iida Liina Linnea

Karoliina begins to move, and the antennas on her affect the sound as she does so. She is also creating contact between two ends of the cable antennas, which generates more sudden sounds and vibrations.



The two ends of the theremin antenna, ph. Iida Liina Linnea

As Karoliina moves through the performance space with the antennas on her, the sound travels from one aluminum plate to the other (there are four hanging on the roof). The sound is provoked by both the antenna's position and by the relation between that antenna and the metal structures, aluminum plates and other elements in the room. In this scene, Karoliina is creating the sounds we hear in direct dialogue with Antti.

## Abjection solo



ph. Iida Liina Linnea

After a light and sound transition, Karoliina stands up center stage, performing one of the first movement materials we created during the first part of the rehearsal period. The audience is all around and she is constantly keeping a 360° awareness of her body. She arches back multiple times and she includes her facial expressions in her movements. The mouth opens wide while she feels a nauseous connection to her stomach. She smiles at times as she feels detachment from what she is feeling, but then her state takes over and she drops to the floor. The movements suggest a body mutation and through certain gestures she is exploring how strange it is to be 'in' her body. Her movements become more and more heavy, until she lies flat, facing down on the floor.

## Cable monster, big cable monster and plastic dark blob entity

These scenes are extremely connected to each other. Karoliina crawls and after switching direction, Antti's sound stops. In silence, she enters a big pile of cables. The space fills up with red light. We enter, together with her into a new dimension.



From left to right: Alina Pajula, Karoliina Loimaala, Antti Kainulainen, ph. Iida Liina Linnea

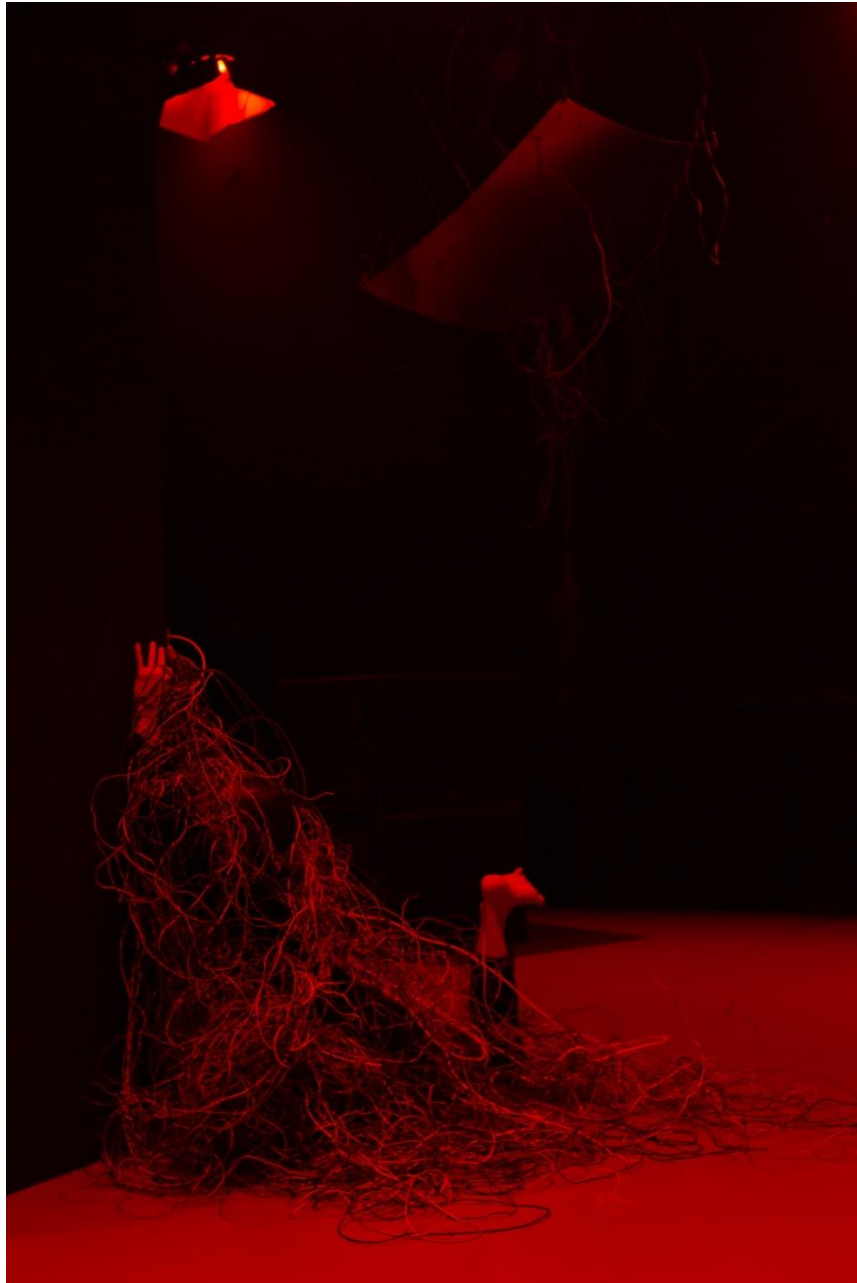
The audience slowly begins to hear her breathing through the microphone placed on her cheek. When she begins to move, we hear the breathing melting with the sound of the cables around her rubbing against each other and with surrounding surfaces. Antti adds echo to that sound. The space is filled with red smoke and there is a feeling of suspension.

She lifts her waist, becoming the cable monster. Wrapped in cables, we only see her legs and feet.



Ph. Iida Liina Linnea

Moving through space, she melts with them, carrying them around on her, becoming an extended part of her body. She is transforming into a monster.



Ph. Iida Liina Linnea

At some point, together with all the cables wrapped around her, she dives under a 2m x 2m sheet of dark plastic. Finally, she stands up as a bigger cable monster covered by the dark plastic sheet making her body look more monstrous and bigger than it is.



Ph. Iida Liina Linnea

At some point, the big cable monster falls down and, while holding that plastic sheet on top of her, Karoliina gets out of the cables and crawls away from them, leaving them behind. As if she changed skin and shape, she is now only under the dark plastic sheet

and looks like a dark blob moving on the floor. Through the change of light, her body is barely visible and what becomes the center of attention is the light reflecting on the plastic.

She has found yet another new physical form.



Ph. Antti Kainulainen

## Transcending: performance space taking over

Karoliina is under the plastic sheet; Her body is barely visible, she moves very little and the light on her is dim. The sound switches into a romantic and emotionally charged music. We are entering the final scene, where the choreography of light and sound takes over the performance space. There has been tension throughout the whole performance thus far, one thing constantly transforming into another. This music allows the space to switch into a different tone, another parallel reality or planet.

A circle of light appears on the one wall without the audience seating. It's a light circle that intentionally looks like the first pictures of black hole M87 taken in 2019 by a team of scientists with the Event Horizon Telescope. The light circle, accompanied by the music, brushes through the wall approaching the audience. When it does so, thanks to the smoke present in the space, it starts to reveal a light tunnel. The light tunnel slowly incorporates the first audience members, disclosing a space inside for them to be



suspended in. It is a passage to outside of the performance space. It brings the people in the audience inside of it, someplace else, reaching and being pulled towards the liminal. The tunnel slowly moves from right to left, brushing through the audience. Each audience member is inside of it for about fifteen seconds. This happens twice. After that, the sound changes again into Karoliina's microphone, and we hear distorted sounds from her mouth and the plastic she's under. The light tunnel begins to turn quickly three or four times until it shuts off into a sudden black out – or black hole? The sound cuts abruptly as well. It is the end of the performance.



In the picture: we can see one of the metal plates hanging from the ceiling, and some cables intertwined. Behind, the source for the light tunnel reaching through. This view is from the audience's perspective on top of the audience platform 2-meters above ground. The light tunnel was large enough to include the audience at the ground level at the same time. Ph. Iida Liina Linnea

# HOW IT ALL STARTED

NEW YORK, 2015

## Feeling neoliberalism<sup>2</sup>

The process of “I wish I was on planet earth” began in 2015 when I spent two months in New York - a place where I've been living and traveling sporadically since the age of 16. At that moment I had some time to myself, and I decided to research a solo piece without knowing when or where I could have worked on it. Feeling like I was bathing in one of the world's epicenters of neoliberalism, I decided to spend some time sitting in Times Square. As I was sitting there, I could not help but notice the large number of tourists ecstatically taking selfies with this giant monument consisting of screens with commercials selling products. Such observation sparked a certain type of change of perception towards my environment, towards a city that I loved.

As I noticed a shift in how I looked at things around me, I started sensing that I couldn't see the horizon because the city's skyscrapers blocked it. Living between high buildings made my body feel caged, and I became aware of how the city was designed. The streets are all straight lines, either vertical or horizontal, with a large flow of people walking in them. I felt like my body was being directed to move in a certain way. All this gave me a subtle feeling: I was experiencing a certain kind of violence hiding behind beauty, and I was trying to decipher why I felt this way.

## Robert Wise

As I allowed myself to fully absorb this feeling and understand what it meant to me, I could not help but fall into a *science fiction* way of thinking. I had to digest this

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<sup>2</sup> I am referring to neoliberalism from the point of view of André Lepecki: “The current metamorphosis of the colonialist-capitalist assemblage of power has received the name “neoliberalism.” Contrary to what its ideologues and defenders claim, neoliberal capitalism needs not democracy to exist.” (Lepecki, 2016, 4)

situation through the lens of imagination which stimulated me. It was then that I became interested in the 1951 North American science fiction film "The Day the Earth Stood Still" by Robert Wise. The story is about a mysterious spaceship that lands on Earth, bringing a humanoid alien, Klaatu, and a robot, Gort, to deliver an important message to the world. The story wonders how an outside-of-Earth eye, in this case an alien species, would perceive the violence perpetrated by humans on our planet. The context of the film is the Cold War, but it still appealed to me and connected to what I was experiencing for reasons I'll explain in a moment. The message is delivered in the form of a monologue in the very last scene of the film by actor Michael Rennie (Klaatu):

*"I am leaving soon, and you will forgive me if I speak bluntly. The universe grows smaller every day, and the threat of aggression by any group, anywhere, can no longer be tolerated. There must be security for all, or no one is secure. Now, this does not mean giving up any freedom except the freedom to act irresponsibly (...) We have an organization for the mutual protection of all planets, and for the complete elimination of aggression (...) we created a race of robots. Their function is to patrol the planets- in spaceships like this one- and preserve the peace. In matters of aggression, we have given them absolute power over us; this power can not be revoked. At the first sign of violence, they act automatically against the aggressor. The penalty for provoking their action is too terrible to risk. The result is that we live in peace, without arms or armies, secure in the knowledge that we are free from aggression and war-free to pursue more profitable enterprises. Now, we do not pretend to have achieved perfection, but we do have a system, and it works. I came here to give you these facts. It is no concern of ours how you run your own planet. But if you threaten to extend your violence, this Earth of yours will be reduced to a burned-out cinder. Your choice is simple: join us and live in peace, or pursue your present course and face obliteration. We shall be waiting for your answer; the decision rests with you."*

*(North, 1951, <https://www.imdb.com>)*

The whole movie boils down to this final speech, which is powerful and calls for a certain change of attitude. It is addressed in a way that it inspired me, and I also partly disagreed with. As I stated earlier, "The Day the Earth Stood Still" was made during the

Cold War, focusing on critiquing violence during that time. Wise envisioned that the only solution to violence would have to be an outsider from Earth, a type of god-like figure coming from the sky. Only through this wake-up call would humanity understand that it needs alien police robots to eliminate whoever commits an act of violence. This decision should be irreversible because, for Wise, I'm assuming human intentions are not to be trusted. Human intentions are probably indeed not to be trusted, but I do not think that that type of control is a sustainable solution.

Besides my disagreements regarding the content of the speech, I still felt like that kind of direct call stimulated me not to be passive about my experience of my stay in New York. Obviously, it is not easy to find big solutions to big world problems, but I was interested in this very effect I felt when I saw the film and what it provoked in me. I wondered what kind of change I could think of for my direct surroundings regarding my feelings on neoliberal systems. I concluded that if I felt like something was wrong around me, I wanted to seek understanding through what I had as tools in my hands. My tools and starting points were choreography.

"I wish I was on planet earth " does not explicitly call for a political change. However, the piece wonders about an emotional or spiritual desire for that change to take place. This process is explored through the performer *seeking* something without necessarily knowing what the end point is - following a lead, directed by a feeling or an intuition. This hunch brings the performer to undergo a transformation, hunting for a solution. By doing so, the performance space around her transforms as well.

During the artistic process of "I wish I was on planet earth", the working group and I explored how to seek this transformation through the notions of liminality (Braidotti), singularities/limitrophies (Lepecki), and abjection (Kristeva). By wondering what that desire for mutation was and while thinking of these concepts, we ended up creating a performance that is in a constant place of changing and becoming. There is an ever-going metamorphosis in the choreography and in the mediums of light, sound and scenography.

How can choreography partake in modes of resistance against the constant boundary-stretching of neoliberalism?

## CONCEPTUAL PLACES

### André Lepecki's thoughts as means against neoliberalism

*"In permeating our actions, neoliberal conditioning shows how it has already captured subjectivity. Having captured subjectivity, it permeates the making of art and the making of discourses about art. The conditioning becomes our shared nervous system" (Lepecki, 2016, 3).*

In "I wish I was on planet earth" I wanted to seek a sense of freedom within neoliberal conditioning. To do so, I needed to think about how neoliberal conditioning captured my own subjectivity and how it permeated the way I was choreographing.

Lepecki says that dance can resist *"neoliberal rationality, corporeality and subjectivity"* (Lepecki, 2016, 8) by approaching what it does through the notion of *singularity*. For him, in the dance field, the singular is a *"debunking of the figure of artist as unique and original source of the new"* (Lepecki, 2016, 6), which are notions that promote neoliberal modalities. He then refers to *"Didi-Huberman's notion of singularity as a complex multiplicity generator of 'strangeness'"* (Didi-Huberman for Lepecki, 2016, 6).

To my understanding, the *singular* is what escapes definition; by doing so, it makes the person witnessing or experiencing it tilt their head and wonder *what is that?*

As I realized that I couldn't grasp entirely how neoliberal conditioning affected my subjectivity, I decided to attach myself to Didi-Huberman's notion of multiplicity and strangeness. I wanted to seek that singular and complex quality between the cracks of my layered self. This powerful, full of potential and undefined quality doesn't fit predefined systems; it is fluid and nomadic. To find that place and expand it, I concluded that I had to trick myself into creating from my multiple, and strange self through choreographic methods. Then if I were to approach choreography from that state, I could, together with the performer and the designers, generate in-between spaces that the performance could inhabit.

## Lepecki's limitrophies

In “I wish I was on planet earth”, my starting point to seek and provoke in-between states and spaces was through Lepecki's notion of limitrophy (mentioned in the chapter “Limitrophies of the human”). It is one of the five types of *singularities* he explores in the book and the one that fits what I was seeking the most.

Limitrophe is the area on a border or frontier between one thing and another (e.g. the area limitrophe to the river) ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)). With Limitrophy, “*Lepecki foregrounds dance's capacity to display the slippage between humanity, animality, machines, and inorganic matter*” (Lepecki for Hetty Blades, 2020, 247). Limitrophy is an approach to question “*the anthropo-logo-carnivore-phallo-centric*” (Lepecki, 2016, 20). It suggests that moving “*beyond the limits of the human becomes the necessary operation for the advent of a mode of living, away from the imperatives of normative performances of subjectivity*” (Lepecki, 2016, 21).

While composing the choreography in “I wish I was on planet earth”, as I mentioned earlier, I sought a choreographic method that would bring myself, the performer and the performance space (the designers operating it) in a state of in-betweenness. In order to do that, I wanted to create *between* one movement material and the other, *between* one scene and the other, or *between* the performer, sounding machines, and light machines. This would facilitate the slippage between what could be recognized as human, animal, and machinic and question the anthropo-logo-carnivore-phallo-centric.

However, the essential factor for me was that these elements wouldn't blend together. If they blended, they would become something fixed, and the motion of remaining in-between would cease. I wanted to choreograph that motion, therefore I had to not only find the limitrophe areas but also allow them to expand.

In the studio, I often used the word *monstrosity*, which is one of the terms that Lepecki employs to define a quality of limitrophy (Lepecki, 2016, 99). I wished for that ambiguity and multiplicity to exist powerfully – an in-between place, stretching wide, stomping its foot down, becoming almost scary. I wanted that limitrophe to look and

feel *monstrous*. It took a great deal of effort, focus, and precision from the performer to maintain that state during the 55-minute piece.



Karoliina Loimaala with theremin antenna, ph. Aapo Juusti

## Rosi Braidotti's liminal nomadic

Liminality has played a big role in this piece as I sought a concept that would help me support the notions of singularity, limitrophy, and in-betweenness. It is hard to tell where one of these concepts ends and the other one begins. I feel like they all approach the same thing from slightly different angles, adding new details and layers.

To my understanding, the liminal is a transition space or state, a “not here - not there” area widely explored in the arts. It is a familiar concept that helped us create a conversation in the working group where we could all share different interpretations and points of view. Every time we approached a new material, we always asked how it relates to liminality. This question stayed as an anchor throughout the working process.



Our main point of entrance was through Rosi Braidotti's perspective, noticing how she speaks of the "nomadic existence".

*"Braidotti considers liminality as a process at the heart of "nomadic" existence. (...) Braidotti's nomadic does not stand for complete detachment from all roots, but, rather, for a subjectivity that has renounced desire for determinacy and rigidity, and that has embraced a constant state of "in-process" or "becoming". The nomad becomes without becoming anything in particular."*

*(Braidotti for GR on Voyage For Collective Mobilizing, 2017, 3)*

Similar to how Lepecki seeks to bring subjectivity closer to limitrophy and strangeness, Braidotti introduces the notion of indeterminate subjectivity – a nomadic existence in constant becoming without becoming anything in particular. Through this notion, I realized that my desire to escape neoliberal conditioning was linked to my nomadic past and present.

The conversation about nomadism emerged within the working group, and we shared stories about our experiences of traveling between different countries. I shared at that point a feeling I've been experiencing: even when I don't physically change places, my body still does so in my memories and imagination. So when I process my everyday surroundings, I feel a motion in my body of perception switching between languages and memories linked to different locations.

Braidotti's view on liminality, made me think of my body being an indeterminate area between these spaces. This modality contaminates an approach towards my surroundings and how I interpret them. The working group could relate to this feeling in different ways, therefore we spoke about how the performance and the performer could remain in the same geographical place but have a liminal nomadic approach to its limitrophies.

The liminal nomadic approach to limitrophies allowed these areas to move and expand in space and time. It wasn't enough for me to find the in-between areas, I needed to know how these places and states would move. The moment a movement material, or any other performance element, stopped transforming, it became fixed – it turned into

something definable. To maintain the indeterminate strangeness, for me, it had to keep a motion of nomadic becoming as much as possible. Becoming without becoming anything in particular became the motor of the performance and since the piece had to end at some point the inevitable question of how to conclude it came about.

## Speculations about becoming until dissolving into energy

In my imagination, Karoliina shapeshifts throughout the duration of the performance. At the end of the piece, I wanted her to find a point of transformation where she would seemingly dissolve her material body closer to what light and sound are. Could the nomadic liminal take so much over her that she *had* to *dissolve*? Could she transform into energy beyond her flesh?

These are questions related to speculation and imagination. When seeking for limitrophe between her body, light and sound, I fantasized about how their matters could meet.

Our physical bodies are tied to gravity, and it's not possible to dissolve a body in a performance. However, I wanted, apart from exploring this idea with the body, to enter carefully into a realm of illusion - a speculation, or a suggestion of something supernatural taking place. I wanted Karoliina's transformation to continue beyond the performance space, escaping like light and sound. This was for me the only possible "conclusion" to "I wish I was on planet earth".

## Link to electricity and energy

My desire to find a point of contact between body, sound, and light made me think about the common denominator between these elements. This link was electricity. The atoms in our bodies contain a certain type of electricity and electricity can be transformed into light and sound. When it comes to the objects and scenography, the relation with electricity is a bit more complex, but in a stimulating way. It wasn't until we began experimenting on how to activate the matter of certain objects through

electricity that I thought of electricity being a form of energy. In the performance, the scenographer Sanni Häkkinen chose objects that were mostly all possible conductors of electricity, like cables and metal sheets hanging from the ceiling. These were used as conductors and transmitters. However, when experimenting with this relation with body, light and sound, it became more abstract. Still, thinking of electricity being energy sparked something:

*“The first law of thermodynamics, also known as Law of Conservation of Energy, states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed; energy can only be transferred or changed from one form to another. For example, turning on a light would seem to produce energy; however, it is electrical energy that is converted”*  
([www.courses.lumenlearning.com](http://www.courses.lumenlearning.com))

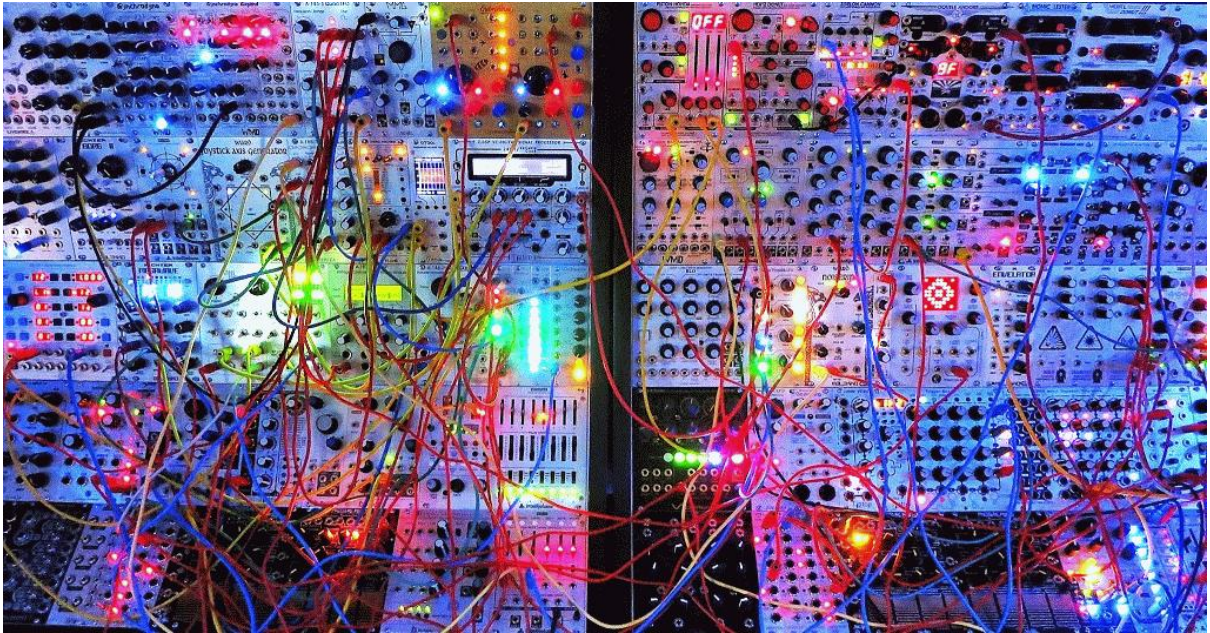
I relate this to Braidotti’s view on becoming without becoming anything in particular. A way of being that is not rigid, but fluid and shape-shifting. This notion added yet a new layer to the singular limitrophy, in-between and liminal nomadic. Energy, as I understand it, is not created and doesn’t die, it is converted and it transforms into something else.

When I look at it now, I feel like throughout the whole performance, Karoliina was coming closer and closer to what the liminal and the in-between light, sound, body and scenography could be. I believe that she and the performance could achieve that by speculatively converting into something else, as energy does - dissolving, transforming into energy, transferring and converting.

# CYBERPUNK

## Modular synthesis

In “I wish I was on planet earth”, Antti and I wanted to work with modular synthesis.



Modular synthesizer, © Richard Devine

This type of synthesizer consists of different parts that perform different functions. Some parts can be connected to others to interact through an electric exchange in voltage. The aesthetics of this machine and how it functions inspired the way I sought to unveil the technical aspect of the performance. Just as the modular synthesizer exposes all its connections, wires, and functions, "I wish I was on planet earth" exposes as much as possible the relations between the elements used in the performance: light, sound, scenography, and body. As I already mentioned, to choreograph limitrophies between light, body, sound, and scenography, the main lead was to think of what they can have in common, in this case electricity.

This particular musical instrument embodied how I looked at the performance structure of IWIWOPE - how I thought to link the different elements.

The cables in the synthesizer are connecting different modules transferring voltage from one to the other. When one module receives voltage from another, it becomes a pit-stop where the signals are interacting – and as the connections become more complex, the modules cross-modulate, affecting each other.

I tried to imagine how to provoke an interaction, a cross-modulation between body, light, sound, and scenography just like the modular synthesizer does. Furthermore, I wanted to find a way how that could also occur between the different movement materials and the physical states that Karoliina was performing. We wondered how much of that could be exposed, perceivable to the audience.

## Modular synthesizer and cyberpunk

Coming back to the aesthetic side of the modular synthesizer, I wanted to address the "raw" look that this instrument had to my eyes. This stimulated my imagination and inspired me to think of a subgenre of science fiction called cyberpunk. After the 2015 inspiration from "The Day The Earth Stood Still", science fiction made its way once again into the working process.

The movement of cyberpunk originally emerged between the 1960s and 1970s. It is characterized by a dystopian view of how multinational corporations annihilate humans through power and technology by creating an oppressive society in a "near possible future" (Trench, *Cyberpunk, Film Documentary*, 1990). Cyberpunk portrayed technology as massive and bulky during this time, taking over daily life. The genre reached a peak in the 1980s, and it was during this time that Shinya Tsukamoto created what became one of the genre's most defining films, "Tetsuo: The Iron Man" (1989).



“Tetsuo: The Iron Man”, Shinya Tsukamoto 1989 – unknown internet source, from article of Tomàs Avila, 2016 (<http://scheggedivetro.org/parte-3-tetsuo-the-iron-man/>)

## “Tetsuo: The Iron Man” and nomadic liminality

In the film, a businessman viscerally transforms into a monster made of metal after a strange encounter with a metal fetishist and a woman who tries to kill him (ZettaiJapan!, [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)). After fusing his metallic body with the metal fetishist, he decides to turn the world into iron.

*“The imagery of the typical salaryman being twisted into a metal abomination is a pretty on the nose representation of industry literally twisting a man into an unrecognizable state (...). The metal fetishist is a character that destroys and transforms the salaryman into something new, it’s when they combine and transform that they set out to destroy the old Tokyo making it into the new world (..) This is a perfect metaphor for Tsukamoto’s frustration at the societal infrastructure” (ZettaiJapan!, [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com))*

As already mentioned, in "I wish I was on planet earth", Karoliina transforms from scene to scene. She creates transmissions through her body by interacting with technology (eg. radio signals, antenna). With each scene, her body becomes more and more alienated from the physical situation of the theater/studio. Our speculation that Karoliina’s body transforms into a new energetic physical form is akin to Tetsuo’s transformation into an animated pile of metal throughout the movie. Starting as a

salaryman, he becomes a monster capable of destroying Tokyo in order to create a new world. An open question remains: is Karoliina also finding a new physical form as a response to a frustration at our societal infrastructure?

## More about cyberpunk and its impact on the piece – circling back to thoughts on neoliberalism

Karoliina made a comment during one of our guided improvisations with cables for "I wish I was on planet earth" that she felt the need at the end to stop moving and 'decay'. She shared that she felt like the technology around her would outlive her mortal body and live beyond her. Before beginning the creation, I knew that I wanted a part of the choreography not to include a human body but only light and sound. Thinking of cyberpunk's bulky technology, together with the designers, helped us to achieve this. This type of technology would take so much space that there would be a question about what happens to Karoliina's body. I was happy to hear that the feeling came organically to her, and it was a sign for me that we had to continue on that path. This was also why I spatially placed Antti and Alina almost center stage so that what they were doing was as visible as possible. The more light and sound technology was in the way, the more I could include it into the choreography.

80's cyberpunk imagined how technology would look in the future, which is now actually our present. I couldn't help but notice significant gaps between how monstrous technology was imagined to be and how clean and proper it turned out to be today.

In my view, technology nowadays has become significantly cleaner and more proper, and I feel like it has a noteworthy influence on how we perceive it and use it. However, the cleaner, prettier, and smoother it gets, the more out of touch I am from it. I feel like I can't tell where it starts and where it ends. The monstrous side of the past cyberpunk vision made technology *look* more recognizingly dangerous. Cyberpunk imagined a dystopian future of oppression and control, but it still fantasized about anarchist ways of getting around it. It seems like its edges were clearer; therefore, little pockets of unlooked areas could be inhabited. In "I wish I was on planet earth" I was interested in

that edge and the imperfections that allowed these little pockets of freedom from neoliberalism to exist – through them a possibility of action to resist it.

I think of Apple Stores where things feel extremely welcoming and luminous and all the surfaces are unwrinkled, comfortable, ready to be touched but not *really*. It's as if I am being welcomed in a utopic/dystopic way by a smiling young beautiful person dressed in white promising me nothing but symmetry. The cleaner, prettier, and smoother it gets, the more out of touch I am, and the more I feel I am giving a certain something away.

The writer Jonas Čeika talks about how *“our dystopia (today) is accompanied by the boring clean blue and white interface of Facebook”* (Jonas Čeika, [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)). He wonders if *“perhaps the utopian impulses in critical reflection present in cyberpunk was possible because for a short while in the 90s, cyberspace (or the new technology of that time), a newly public internet, was such an enclave to criticize the system from. Today it too has been completely dominated”* (Jonas Čeika, [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)).

## Braidotti's critic on cyberpunk

Gender studies scholar Rosi Braidotti is critical of cyberpunk. She writes:

*“From the 1980s onwards, a generation of cyberpunk writers, notably William Gibson (1984) made the switch from the postmodern flair for the artificial to the posthuman synthetic. In no time, they confined the enfleshed human body to the rubbish heap of history, and synthetic biology and information technology carried the day.”* (Braidotti, 2021, 43/68)

I can understand Braidotti's point of view, and in “I wish I was on planet earth” I don't intend to put the human body in the bin. In my view, apart from the negative sides of cyberpunk that Braidotti is pointing out, I see in the movement a need of taking an active stance against a corporation-dominated society. Cyberpunks are underdogs trying to make their way between the cracks of societal structures. I am interested in the movement's punk attitude.



*‘This attitude is culturally and socially aware (...). They question everything and anyone and decide for themselves what they believe is true. This path to understanding yields different world views and opinions, but diversity is key to a successful population. A cyberpunk knows that the system isn’t in your favor, and the deck is stacked against you. A cyberpunk knows how to hack the system.’*  
([www.neondystopia.com](http://www.neondystopia.com))

I like the bold and anarchist approach of cyberpunk, the loss of trust in “the system” and a desire of taking things into one's own hands. I believe that by associating this to Lepecki's limitrophies and the view on “*dance's capacity to display the slippage between humanity, animality, machines, and inorganic matter*”, I attempt to reach a place of a spiritual becoming - becoming something that escapes definitions, a monstrously layered becoming, difficult to tame.

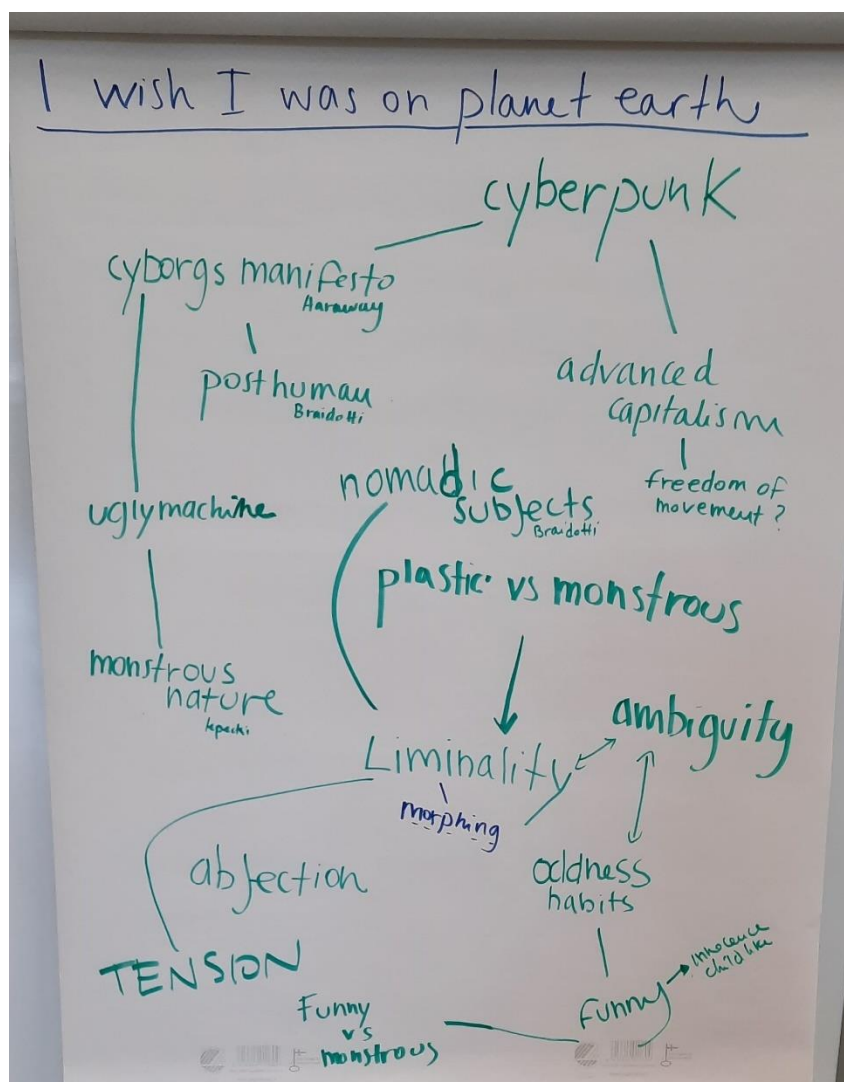
In “Posthuman Feminism”, Braidotti quotes Kathrine Hayles' cyberpunks' male-centered and body-denying positions of hyper-humanism (Braidotti, 2021, 43/68). I agree with Braidotti, in that cyberpunk female bodies are highly objectified. This is something that I find to be a problematic aspect of the genre.

In “I wish I was on planet earth” I attempted to work against that, exploring a female body that would seek for its multiplicities and layered being. Talking now with Karoliina, she shared with me that in the performance, she explored as she said “*many different ways of being, without the femininity there being cute and beautiful but quite visceral, radically changing*”. She mentioned that she was “*rigorously following what is going on in the body and letting that manifest and come out*” (Loimaala, 2022).

## CHOREOGRAPHIC METHODS

### Helsinki 2021: in the studio of “I wish I was on planet earth”

I presented the themes related to “I wish I was on planet earth” to the working group in various ways. These ways changed shape throughout the process. Some elements of the piece are clearer to me today, but at the time I was defining and searching together with the group. At the beginning of the artistic process, in April 2021, I departed from a pool of concepts, creating a flexible, rich visual map while knowing that some things would naturally fall out through time.



The first map of concepts, 2021, ph. Maya Oliva

Some interests were present from the start. From my perspective, we had a very fruitful working process as a team that allowed a fluid and organic flow of themes that could leave or be kept. I felt very comfortable sharing my ideas. I was encouraged to open up about personal connections to the topics, and this is how I was able to trace back to where my interests for the making of this piece started in New York in 2015.

The personal connections were crucial for the working group to find common ground on which the people involved could relate in their own way. However, even more important was how we translated these personal connections to what became the final product.

## Inspiration from Salva Sanchis' "Maps"

The method I used is a revisitation of a tool created by Spanish choreographer and dancer Salva Sanchis called "Maps". "Maps" is a method that Salva invented while creating "Previous" (2002), a performance that is a mix between fixed and improvised movement material. Salva wondered how to create a method that allowed a dancer to generate 20 to 50 movement materials that they could go back to. The method has a protocol, and it begins with directly filming up to but no longer than one minute of improvised dance. It is important to *not* prepare and just *do*. The next step is to look at the one-minute video and pick one movement or seed that pulls the attention. It can't be an organized movement and it needs to be something very simple, such as a loss of balance or something that provokes the question *what is that?* This movement needs to be explored and expanded from a seed to a movement material. Salva mentions that "*it needs transformation to become something else. The material does not need to look like the movement as a tree doesn't look like its seed*" (Sanchis, 2021). The "Maps" method continues from this place with more one minute videos that film the found movement materials. From each one-minute video there can be always new seeds, elements, and moments that escape the definition of the material. These can be extracted, explored and developed.

I combined “Maps” with a technique of writing I encountered with the expressive improvisational movement practice Authentic Movement, which I discovered through a workshop led by Gestalt therapist Kirsi Törmä. In the workshop we were asked to improvise and share that experience with a peer in the present tense. I realized that by doing this I remembered my experience more vividly. I combined this writing technique with Sanchis's method by adding a text written in the present tense for the movement materials. By doing so, when the performer would go back to the material created, she could also have a text that helped her remember the experience. When I spoke with Salva Sanchis via a Skype call about this (December 2021), he mentioned the importance of not only being able to dance a material but also to verbally explain it and share it with peers. In “I wish I was on planet earth” these texts helped a lot with the communication and collaboration between the performer and I.

In this creation, I applied the “Maps” method freely, because the clarity of the practice allowed that to happen. The performer and I used it to create a map of movement materials in order to work with layering them. We reached extremely complex and layered combinations and the result was physically and mentally demanding.

I think that the method I’ve used for this creation is relatable to Braidotti’s liminality. One movement seed transform into many others in a constant *becoming*. By doing so, I believe I included the process of *becoming* at the root of the choreography of “I wish I was on planet earth”.

## How I revisited “Maps” + Abjection

In “I wish I was on planet earth” we didn’t use videos as “Maps” suggests, although I still filmed all the movement materials for archiving purposes. Text substituted for the video. In “Maps”, Sanchis already suggests to not look too much at the videos and to use them only to extract new seeds. The movement materials in “Maps” are named and should have some keywords. These should quickly already evoke in the dancer what the material is. I agreed with that but I wanted more text. I wanted the body of the dancer to enter the process of remembering through reading their own words in the present tense.

The first step of our process wasn't the one-minute improvisation. Instead, it was me presenting the concepts mentioned earlier along with the concept of abjection (Kristeva, 1982). The notions of limitrophy and liminality rotate around each other and have found their way in the choreography, light, sound, scenography and the overall dramaturgy of the performance. Abjection is a concept that attempts to describe a feeling in relation to these concepts.

*"When I experience abjection, I am encountering the other, it is (a feeling) in between me and the other. It provokes a complex relationship where the borders between the subject and the other become blurred." (Oliva, 2020, 2)*

The "other" can be mold, death, or disturbing textures for example. Kristeva says that when it occurs abjection *"lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects"* (Kristeva, 1982, 10)

Normally abjection is when I am both rejecting that "other" and being fascinated by it. I wanted to explore the way this ambiguous feeling could be connected to how coming in contact with liminality and limitrophy can feel.

In "I wish I was on planet earth", Karoliina had a lot of layered movement materials and I wanted her to feel abjection towards some of them. In other words, being between rejection and fascination, and constantly shifting being inside and outside what she was doing. I needed her to explore this feeling from the start, so I asked Karoliina to think of an experience related to abjection and write about it. In that moment, she was recovering from a stomach flu:

*"Becoming the right hand. Sweat of palm ache of foot pain ripped torn. Lines of foot, long achilles (...). Eyes in the stomach. Curling boiling purring of belly. An inner roller coaster. Vomit, sweat all around. Upside down despair. Momentary relief. Warm water on this stain. Becoming liquid. Dry raisin let me out on these knees on cold bathroom floor. Laying all night, becoming yellow jumpy sparkles. Sweet and sticky. Too sweet tear drops in the shape of me. Exhausted. Sweat and gasps all over this back. Soles of feet rolling in private puddles. Pile of waste. Mountain of flesh. Garbage hand detoxing, leaking out all unwanted that which*

*are weighing this all down. Pile of germs respirating through a shivering body. Cold hot hot cold buffet of a virus taking over its kingdom, a battlefield. Where organisms clash. Defeat coming its way. Virus, the sleeping beauty. Monstrous who? (...) A state of mind of inhabiting momentary experiencing, being, not owning. Supported by this floor. Glued to it. Prey of magnetism.” (Loimaala, 2021).*

From this text I asked her to do a 30-minute improvisation that dealt with the memories of what she just wrote without any direction on what to do but to just pay attention to what emerged.

After that improvisation, she was instructed to write another text where she wrote down the movement seeds that she found, naming them and briefly describing them, using the first person form in the present tense. We then selected a couple of movements that stood out and she improvised them alone, 20-30 minutes each. By doing so, she expanded them into movement materials. She then wrote other texts that gave more information about the states and movements she was exploring.

The writing process was necessary to go deeper into the material, to be shared with me but also to document, name and save for later. In this manner, we created a map of movement materials, all of them having a description that she could go back to when needed. I also filmed most of the improvisations but I found these videos more useful for sharing what we had done with the designers or remembering a detail that one of us liked.

The process of choosing the seeds to develop was the result of what both Karoliina and I found interesting in relation to how it felt and what it conveyed to my outside eye. For my choreographic thinking, they were the ‘ingredients’ that gave me something to work with. The more I observed her exploring the materials, the more I would direct her towards suggesting how to expand a certain detail or remove another one.

## Combining – layering

After creating this map, I asked her to work on combining different movement materials. We played on combining opposite and similar materials. The most important task was that if she was exploring the combination of, per example, material “A” and material “B”, she could not blend them together, but had to find the transitions between them. By doing so, she was floating in a space of constant bouncing between chosen materials and this created what I was seeking - the tension between materials which provoked a third element in-between - the liminal stage, the limitrophy and towards this, the feeling of abjection.

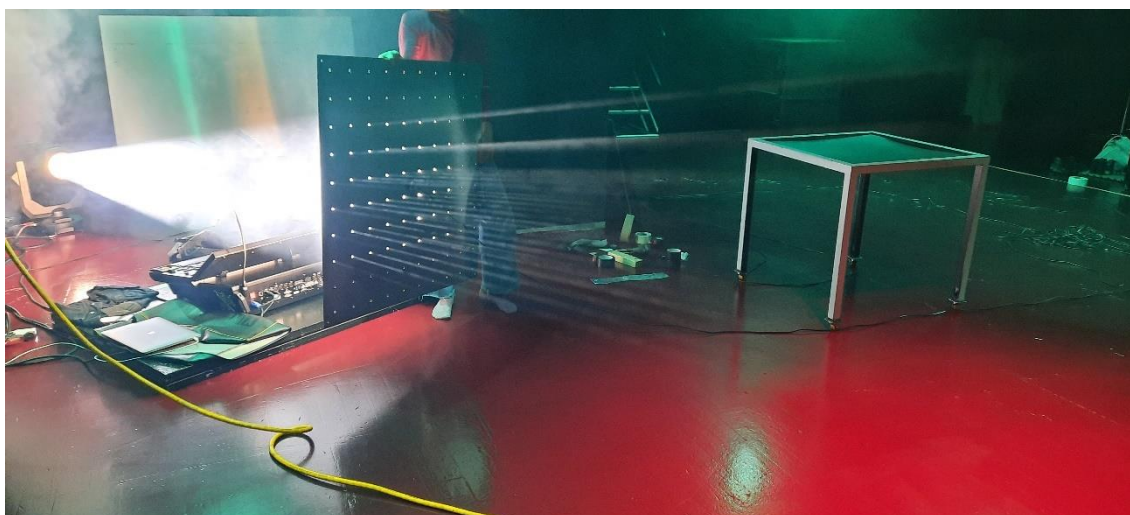
This was just a first step. I later asked her to be in-between more than two elements at once. The choreography was built by picking out the materials that she had created together with me and by associating them and placing them into space and time. This process required her to invest mentally and creatively a lot into the process. However, she had shared that she needed that in order to stay invested and that she enjoyed having a creative input in what she did while trusting that I would lead the way. On my side, I did my best to treat what she was giving respectfully while carefully deciding the right moments to give her tasks, arrange and organize what she was proposing.

This dialogue and trust was crucial as the choreography became more complex. Through time, I asked her to combine more and more layers. I also added details of seeds I had seen before, such as the muscle quality of material “A”, the movement pattern of material “B” with the way the eyes move in “C”, among others. This complexity was only possible to achieve through time and practice. The first layers needed to be digested, practiced, and embodied before adding new elements that convoluted the situation.

## Integrating the designers into the working process

After having some talks with the designers about the pool of concepts related to this piece, I found that they already had some ideas they wanted to explore. Together with these ideas and the concepts, I asked them to think of the choreographic method I was working on with Karoliina. I proposed a couple of improvisation/research moments in the theatre space, and I asked them to combine these notions using intuition. The method couldn't be applied in that moment to what they were doing in the same way, but I asked them to find their own interpretation of it. By having this pool of concepts and the method, there was a direction but also the chance for each designer to practice their own singular artistic authorship in dialogue with others and myself. I can say without a doubt that we experimented a lot during the process and that there were countless ideas. Some of them didn't make their way to the performance but stayed as important steps and memories of the piece.

## The experiments



From rehearsal - light beams through the aluminium plates. Sanni Häkkinen hanged 4 of these on the ceiling and Alina Pajula beamed light through them. Ph. Maya Oliva

We had some absurd and funny moments such as when we tried to see if light could be beamed through the thickest parts of Karoliina's body, which was not possible. We also attempted to make piles of cables or other materials vibrate through low frequencies of sound. Everything that we tried was an attempt of putting elements in relation to each



other. We were once again experimenting and seeking for that connection between sound, light, body and scenography through the concepts of liminality, limitrophy, abjection and my choreographic method. We thought of applying these notions, thinking of the common denominator between sound, light, body and scenography - electricity/energy.

An interesting scene that didn't make the cut was the table scene because the sound of it became unbearable. I think it gives a good example of what our experiments were like:

Karoliina was wearing a microphone and interacting with a metal table that had an exciter speaker tightly screwed in under the main flat surface of the table (the table can be seen in picture above).



Exciter, ph. Maya Oliva

As Karoliina came closer or further away from the exciter and the table, her microphone provoked a sound in relation to it, a feedback loop. The sound came out of the exciter, making the table that it was in contact with vibrate and move. The motor of this scene was this sound and the feedback loop between Karoliina's microphone and the exciter speaker.

Antti could alter the pitch of that sound, adding delay and some effects to the microphone. The more he altered the pitch to a lower frequency, the more it created

vibration, therefore movement of the table. What we could hear at that point was the vibration of that sound in the table and the objects it was coming in contact with, such as a metal bowl Sanni placed on top of it. The sound created by the vibrating contact between the exciter, the table, and the metal plate was being picked up by Karoliina's microphone, coming back as a loop to the exciter speaker.

What was interesting was that we could hear this feedback loop layering and that it was altered by the distance and body placement Karoliina had in relation to the table. This was provoking movement in the body of Karoliina that was directly generated and linked with the sounds and objects.

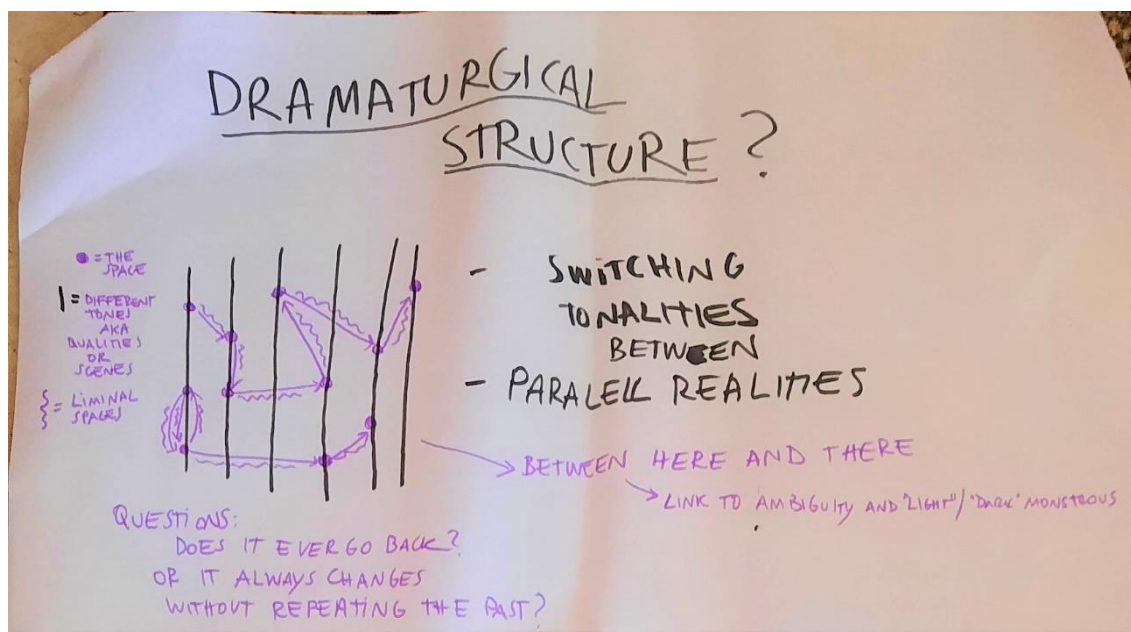
This loop of events was creating the type of complex and layered situation I was looking for. However, when we later added other elements of the scenography, such as the aluminum plates on the ceiling and the metal audience structure, it completely affected how the feedback loop sounded. The result was that the transmissions between the microphone and the exciter was bouncing off these other metallic objects, changing the nature of the sound we had first experienced. It ended up sounding very loud and metallic, so we had to remove the scene.

Through the experience of the feedback loop where sound became so complex and messy that we couldn't follow what was happening, I realized that I needed the relationship between sound, light, body, and scenography to be understandable from an *outside eye*. I was interested in layering but if it became too layered, I couldn't see the relationship, the dialogue, or choreography happening between the elements. I therefore had to learn how to find the *sweet spot* between complex and, to my view in that moment, messy.

## Composition method: change between tones

After seeing OMBRA, my ACO performance made in the autumn of 2020, Kirsi Monni, Professor of Choreography, observed that it seemed that I was trying to work with a kind of dramaturgy that switched between scenes as music can switch tonalities—an idea likely inspired by the interest I had shown in music and sound during the course of my studies at The Theatre Academy. I agreed with her, and that thought inspired me to explore this quality further in "I wish I was on planet earth."

I presented the idea to Alina, Sanni, Karoliina, and Antti and explained that I would like to have different scenes in the performance and treat them as tones. After talking about it as a group, we wondered how we would switch from tone to tone. We asked if the piece should then focus on the liminal transition between them or if we would have sudden switches. We decided to keep different possibilities open to this question depending on the quality of each scene. Some scenes required a sudden cut between them and others needed a slower transition.



Graph of tones structure - vertical lines different tones (or scenes)

I enjoyed being the outside eye that looked at the whole dramaturgical structure and I tweaked these transitions. Composing the rhythm of the changes between the scenes/tones felt like I found something characteristic of my work. It was a type of dramaturgical structure, that I also aimed to apply to this written part of my thesis that nomadically switches scenes as one could switch from one country to another. In my personal experience, this feels like switching between parallel realities. In the picture above, it is possible to see black lines that represent the scenes, the purple dots that are the performance, and the connecting lines that are the choreography.

## A COMMON VOID

“Qu’y a-t-il entre nous ?” (2021) is an installation by performance maker and writer Tim Etchells commissioned by the Centre Pompidou in Paris. It is a 42-meter long red neon installation asking, “What is there between us?” installed on the outside of the Centre Pompidou’s building itself. It is a query he claims that could be interpreted by people openly. He says: *“It’s a very social question, a very political one in the broadest sense. At the same time I am intrigued by the idea that this question also raises the idea of division – in English ‘between’ is also about what might be a barrier or obstacle between things or people. So what is between us also starts to open questions about division – what are the things, the forces, the narratives, the conditions that divide us?”* (www.timetchells.com).

He sees the between as a possibility for a division. If that between remains unexplored and uninhabited, I do agree that it could be one way to see it. I think of this in relation to the topics treated in this written thesis and in the stage piece. For me it is part of my choreographic work to know how to facilitate intersections between the body and itself, between myself and a concept, and what interests me now at this point between a body, light, sound and scenography. What kind of tools and approach do I have towards that in-between space? The way I access that interaction defines what that interaction will give. This in-between space contains voids and differences. It could be seen as a space for a *common void* between one element and another.

When I began writing this written part of my MA thesis, I interviewed composer and sonic artist Andrea Mancianti. I asked him questions about how he thinks about choreography in his work. It is fascinating to hear an artist from a different field talk about how they interpret a word that I am so familiar with. It is looking at the same thing but with different eyes, from a different background and angle. He speaks of choreography of sonic matter moving in space and time. He choreographs the positions of musicians in a space in relation to how the sound will then move throughout a given performance (Mancianti, 2021).

This makes me think of artist and writer engaged in listening as a sociopolitical practice Salomé Voegelin, when she describes sound as being *“the invisible layer of the world that shows its relationships, actions, dynamics”* (Voegelin, 2014, 3). Stating that *“in its*

*invisible mobility, in its sticky and grasping liquidity there is something that augments, expands, and critically evaluates how we see the world and how we arrange ourselves to live in it*" (Voegelin, 2014, 3). She talks about sound as "*sonic flesh*" (Voegelin, 2014, 105).

This notion activates my imagination towards speculating on what this "sonic flesh" does — how does it move in a space? But mostly how can I think of this in relation to my knowledge in choreography. The kind of universe that opens up excites me.

This is important because "I wish I was on planet earth" was a collaboration *between* a dancer, a sound designer, a light designer, a scenographer and myself. How do we communicate and collaborate when we are working on layers of the same thing — sharing terminologies but having inevitable gaps and voids we share in relation to each other's knowledge. These questions are key to me when thinking of choreography and movement expanding from the body to the performance space in other media. Our in-betweens are divisions only if we don't find a way to inhabit them, accepting, trusting, and entering the void of the unknown together.

*Common void* is the name of an event that took place between 2015 and 2019 in Brussels that was organized by Venezuelan circus artist Carlos Alberto Landaeta Meneses, French actor Thomas Durcudoy and myself. We came up with the name together. The event took place in a new venue each time. We wanted to define a nomadic space where artists from different fields could come, share, and inhabit the *common void* space between them. This linked artistic bubbles that didn't normally connect, and participants often would find common similarities and differences from which to begin an artistic dialogue.

In this written part of my thesis, I would like to expand *common void* to my practice and way of approaching choreography. The thought of sharing this with a person or between me and a concept, puts me outside of myself, in a space of dialogue and possibilities of multiplicities emerging.

When I speak of limitrophe interactions between an element or another (in this case sound, light, scenography, and performance space), I seek to leave behind traditional relations, such as the relation between musician and a dancer for example. A musician

being on one side of a performance stage playing music and a dancer being on the other side, dancing. The same could be applied to the music playing in a performance space and a dancer dancing to it – it can be happening together but still for me in a very disconnected way. There are so many elements present in the *common void* between these two and I believe that if that interaction remains as it is, then it has the division that Tim Etchells speaks about.

For me, the *common void* approach spills over boundaries of what it is expected to do or be in a specific artistic field. To bridge mental creative divisions, present in different artistic bubbles is to allow creativity to flood outside of blinders. It is spilling, slipping in-between, pushing boundaries maybe not forward but between the cracks, between the unseen areas.

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**Cover-page picture:** “I wish I was on planet earth”. Perf. Karoliina Loimaala. Chor. Maya Oliva. Picture Aapo Juusti