

Being with care

Dance practice in times of ecosocial crisis

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ABSTRACT

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<p>This thesis aims to examine how dance practice can provide a way of <i>being with care</i>. The research methodology focuses on how one can develop a caring relationship with other worlds through dance practice. The main research question is: What does “being with care” mean in a time of ecosocial crisis, and how can it be fostered through dance practice? In this thesis, the term dance practice encompasses the act of movement, the dancing itself, and the choreographic, pedagogical, and improvisational moving-thinking one engages with others.</p> <p>The theoretical frameworks that support this thesis are from the fields of contemporary feminist, political and phenomenological studies on care ethics, embodied care, and embodiment. This research focuses on care from ecological, philosophical, and pedagogical perspectives and understands care as something that exists not only in human relations but also as a responsible and reciprocal way of living with more-than-human worlds.</p> <p>This thesis analyses the artistic process of the site-specific dance piece <i>becoming-with</i> and the dance pedagogue-researcher's embodied experience of how care was present in the artistic practice. <i>becoming-with</i> is a dance piece about the intertwined and co-evolving relationship between human and more-than-human worlds. <i>becoming-with</i> was created by choreographer Wilhelmina Ojanen, performers Hanna Kahrola, Janina Salmela, Wilma Seppälä and Kardo Shiwan, musician Tapani Rinne, lighting designer and technician Jaakko Sirainen and costume and space designer Mirei Kato, together with the more-than-human worlds involved in the piece. The work premiered 17th of December 2021 at Kenneli D.I.Y indoor skate pool in Hiedanranta, Tampere, and was presented twice more on the 18th and 19th of December 2021.</p> <p>The artistic practice of <i>becoming-with</i> unfolded over two months and encompassed spending time together in the studio reading, conversing, dancing, and working with different materials. Through improvisational dance and somatic practices that invoked the imagination and invited deeper sensing of the world around oneself, we sought to explore what <i>becoming-with</i> meant for each of us. In this thesis, the artistic practice of <i>becoming-with</i> is analysed through elements present during the process: The unknown, The senses: touch, Thinking-together to become otherwise, and Materiality and responsibility. The practice of writing poems was used as an artistic method of inquiry into the process.</p> <p>The analysis of the theoretical background and the analysis of the artistic process produced the results of this artistic research as four guiding principles of being with care. These are embodiment, imagination, attentiveness, and responsibility. The four guiding principles are intertwined and ultimately propose being with care as a way of approaching living and creating in times of ecosocial crisis. The guiding principles of being with care will be further defined and developed in my future work as a choreographer and dance educator.</p>			
ENTER KEYWORDS HERE			
Care, dance practice, dance pedagogy, dance, improvisation, somatics, embodiment, ecosocial crisis, climate crisis, environment, responsibility, more-than-human, artistic research, becoming-with, thinking-together, becoming otherwise, corporeality, imagination			

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<p>Tämä tutkielma on Taideyliopiston Teatterikorkeakoulun tanssinopettajan maisteriohjelman lopputyö. Maisterityössäni tarkastelen, kuinka huolenpito (engl. Care) on läsnä pedagogisissa ja taiteellisissa prosesseissa, ja kuinka voimme <i>olla huolenpidon kanssa</i> (engl. being with care) tanssin kautta. Tutkimusmetodologia keskittyy tarkastelemaan sitä, kuinka tanssin harjoittamisen kautta voidaan kehittää välittävää ja huolta pitävää suhdetta muihin maailmoihin. Tutkielman keskeinen tutkimuskysymys on: Mitä "huolenpidon kanssa olemisen" tarkoittaa ekososiaalisen kriisin aikoina ja miten sitä voidaan vaalia tanssin kautta? Tässä opinnäytetyössä tanssin harjoittaminen tarkoittaa sekä tanssimista että koreografista, pedagogista ja improvisaatiivista ajattelua yhdessä muiden kanssa.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyötä tukevat teoreettiset viitekehykset ovat feministisen, poliittisen ja fenomenologisen hoivan etiikan, kehollisen hoivan (engl. embodied care) ja kehollisuuden tutkimusten aloilta. Tutkielma tarkastelee huolenpitoa ekologisista, filosofisista ja pedagogisista näkökulmista ja ymmärtää huolenpidon käsitteenä, joka kattaa ihmisten välisten suhteiden lisäksi vastuullisen ja vastavuoroisen tavan elää enemmän-kuin-inhimillisten maailmojen kanssa.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyö analysoi paikkasidonnan tanssiteoksen <i>becoming-with</i> taiteellista prosessia ja tanssipedagogi-tutkijan kokemusta siitä, kuinka huolenpito oli läsnä taiteellisessa työskentelyssä. <i>becoming-with</i> on tanssiteos inhimillisten ja enemmän-kuin-inhimillisten maailmojen kietoutuvista ja yhteen punoutuvista suhteista. <i>becoming-with</i> tanssiteoksen loivat koreografi Wilhelmina Ojanen, esiintyjät Hanna Kahrola, Janina Salmela, Wilma Seppälä ja Kardo Shivan, muusikko Tapani Rinne, valosuunnittelija ja teknikko Jaakko Sirainen sekä puku- ja tilasuunnittelija Mirei Kato yhdessä teoksessa mukana olleiden enemmän-kuin-inhimillisten toimijoiden kanssa. Teos sai ensi-iltansa 17. joulukuuta 2021 Kenneli D.I.Y:n sisäskeittihallissa Tampereen Hiedanrannassa. Teosta esitettiin tämän jälkeen vielä kahdesti: 18. joulukuuta 2021 ja 19. joulukuuta 2021.</p> <p><i>becoming-with</i> teos kehkeytyi syksyllä 2021 kahden kuukauden aikana. Työryhmän taiteellinen työskentely sisälsi lukemista, keskustelemista, tanssimista ja erilaisten materiaalien kanssa työskentelemistä. Erilaisten tanssillisten improvisaatioharjoitteiden ja somaattisten aistiharjoitteiden kautta herätelimme mielikuvitustamme ja aistimme ympäröivää maailmaa. Taiteellisen työskentelyn kautta pyrimme tutkimaan, mitä muihin maailmoihin kietoutuminen ja yhteenpunoutuminen merkitsi tämän teoksen yhteydessä. Tutkielmassa tarkastelen <i>becoming-with</i> teoksen taiteellista työskentelyä prosessissa ilmenneiden käsitteiden kautta. Käsitteet liittyvät ei-tietämiseen, aistien ja kosketuksen kanssa työskentelemiseen, toiseksi tulemiseen ja yhdessä ajattelemiseen, ja materiaalisuuteen ja vastuun kantamiseen. Jäsenin prosessissa ilmenneitä kokemuksia, tilanteita ja tunteita käyttämällä taiteellisenä menetelmänä runojen kirjoittamista.</p> <p>Huolenpidon teoreettinen analyysi yhdistettynä taiteellisen prosessin analyysiin tuottivat tutkimuksen tuloksena neljä <i>huolenpidon kanssa olemisen</i> periaatetta. Nämä neljä periaatetta ovat kehollisuus, mielikuvitus, tarkkaavaisuus (engl. attentiveness) ja vastuu. Nämä neljä <i>huolenpidon kanssa olemisen</i> periaatetta kietoutuvat toisiinsa ja viime kädessä ehdottavat <i>huolenpidon kanssa olemista</i> tapana lähestyä elämistä ja taiteentekemistä ekososiaalisen kriisin aikoina. Tulen tarkentamaan ja kehittämään <i>huolenpidon kanssa olemisen</i> periaatteita tulevissa töissäni koreografina ja tanssipedagogina.</p>			
ASIASANAT			
Hoiva, huolenpito, tanssin praktiikka, tanssipedagogiikka, tanssi, improvisaatio, somatiikka, kehollisuus, ekososiaalinen kriisi, ilmastokriisi, ympäristö, vastuu, enemmän-kuin-inhimillinen, taiteellinen tutkimus, osaksi-tuleminen, yhteenpunoutuminen, yhdessä-ajatteleminen, toiseksi tuleminen, mielikuvitus			

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	8
1. INTRODUCTION	4
1.1 <i>Starting points</i>	4
1.2 <i>Personal reasons</i>	6
1.3 <i>Structure of the work</i>	7

2. DIVERSE APPROACHES TO CARE	9
2.1 <i>Care is an attempt to live as well as possible</i>	9
2.2 <i>The vital, all-encompassing nature of care</i>	13
2.3 <i>Curiosity, corporeality, and caring imagination</i>	16

3. METHODOLOGY	23
3.1 <i>Artistic research as being in the world</i>	23
3.2 <i>Subjectivity and situatedness</i>	25
3.3 <i>Ethical considerations</i>	26

4. THE PRACTICE OF BECOMING-WITH	28
4.1 <i>The unknown</i>	29
4.2 <i>The senses: touch</i>	34
4.3 <i>Thinking-together to become otherwise</i>	38
4.4 <i>Materiality and responsibility</i>	44

5. FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF <i>BEING WITH CARE</i>	52
6. CONCLUSION	56
7. LIST OF REFERENCES	59

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Starting points

Lately, the topic of care has felt urgent for me, like I must stay with care to be able to continue my work as a dance artist at this moment in time. Currently, we live in tumultuous times of ecosocial crisis, where the Anthropocentric¹, individualistic, and capitalist worldviews have led us to a situation where global warming, species' mass extinction, pollution, pandemics, wars, and worldwide hunger crises are just some of the problems the world faces today. (see also Foster, Salonen & Sutela 2022, 119.)

“Our world is one in which [human] carelessness reigns”, state The Care Collective (2020, 1), and although I do not think this to be complete truth, one must acknowledge that much of the crises the world now faces are caused by human doings. (Salonen 2014, 32). I believe that human carelessness arises from disconnection, from humans forgetting their inherent connectedness to the encompassing world. This disconnection manifests in how we treat one another and the natural world (Abram, 1996, 48). There is a care crisis: human carelessness is causing severe ecological and social problems (The Care Collective 2020, 7-9). Because of this, I believe there is also an emerging need to be with care. I view *being with care* as engaging the bodily senses and the imagination to deepen our corporeal connection to the world and, through that, feel compelled to care for the world.

Inspired by the EcoJustice education framework (Martusewicz, Edmundson & Lupinacci 2015) and the work of an artist-scholar Raisa Foster (see Foster 2012; 2016; 2019; 2021; 2022), I have chosen to use the word ecosocial in this research to underline that ecological problems are inherently entangled with social problems. The root cause of these problems are modern cultural ways of thinking and being, born from industrialised systems (Foster & Martusewicz 2019, 1).

¹ Anthropocentrism view humans as the most significant entities of the universe. An anthropocentric worldview or philosophy sees humans as separate from and superior to nature whilst regarding other entities as resources that can be exploited for human use. (Boslaugh 2016)

Dance practice and pedagogy are not separate from the world (Foster 2017, 28). This artistic-pedagogical research proposes that through dance practice, one can remember one's connection to the world and discover a way of *being with care*. Through this artistic research, I am interested in examining how working with *dance practice* can be a way of *being with care*. The research methodology is focused on how one can develop an understanding and caring relationship with other worlds through dance practice. In this thesis, I ask, *what does "being with care" mean in a time of ecosocial crisis, and how can it be fostered through dance practice?* I see the term *dance practice* as encompassing the act of movement, the dancing itself, and the choreographic, pedagogical, improvisational, and imaginative moving-thinking one engages in with others in an artistic or pedagogical process.

I propose that this artistic research about care is relevant in consideration of the current lack of care in the world, evident through the ongoing ecosocial crisis (The Care Collective 2020, 19). The research is framed by a theory many feminist researchers call Care Ethics (Gilligan 1982; Hoagland 1991; Noddings 1986; Kittay 1999; Slote 2007; Tronto 1993). This research focuses on care from ecological, philosophical, and pedagogical perspectives and understands care as something that exists not only in human relations but also as a responsible and reciprocal way of living with the *more-than-human*² worlds around us. Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's (2017) suggestion of care ethics as expanding to more-than-human worlds will be the principal proposition to frame the research.

Searching for sources from the field of dance made it clear to me that there is little discussion and artistic research conducted on care within dance. Presently, there is research on the ethics of arts-based and artistic research in care contexts (see Laukkanen, Jaakonaho, Fast, & Koivisto 2021). Furthermore, there is research on how the notion of care relates to sustainably conscious art education (see Foster, Salonen, & Sutela 2022). Previously there has been dance-pedagogical research on touch in elderly

² Although presently used by many researchers and theorists, the term *more-than-human world* is essentially coined by cultural ecologist David Abram (1996) in his book *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World*. For Abram, the more-than-human world signifies the vastness of earthly life: it includes human-kind and human cultures, but also exceeds human culture to encompass all earthly beings. (Abram 1996, 7) I will return to Abram's work in chapter 2.3.

care (Kuivalainen 2012) and space-sensitive art practices in dementia care (Jämsen 2016). Through this *dance practice*-based artistic research, I seek to further a proposition that the discourse of care that expands to encompass more-than-human worlds should also be brought to dance research and pedagogy. This research will examine the artistic process of a professional dance piece called *becoming-with* and my experience of how care was present in the artistic practice.

becoming-with is a site-specific dance performance set in a concrete skate pool. A group of eight people created the piece: choreographer Wilhelmina Ojanen, performers Hanna Kahrola, Janina Salmela, Wilma Seppälä and Kardo Shiwan, musician Tapani Rinne, lighting designer and technician Jaakko Sirainen and costume and space designer Mirei Kato. The work premiered 17th of December 2021 at Kenneli D.I.Y indoor skate pool in Hiedanranta, Tampere, and was presented twice more on the 18th and 19th of December 2021. I was the choreographer of this process, and I was responsible for the production. In this thesis, I will reflect upon the findings of the artistic process alongside the theoretical background of care to examine how the notion of *being with care* was present in this artistic process.

I am approaching the notion of care from a position of an artistic researcher. I have chosen to conduct artistic research through movement and poetic writing to examine *being with care* in an embodied way. My personal reflections and poems will function as the research tool, and therefore, the research will ultimately speak from my subjective experience. In order to analyse the research findings, I must also acknowledge that the observations of the process arise from my embodied experience, from my ways of making connections to other human and more-than-human worlds. Through this thesis, I hope to contribute to a developing field of dance pedagogical research and to create discussion around care and how one can *be with care* in different situations. I hope to provide an approach that not only cultivates and fosters care but also affirms its ever-presentness and relation to dance pedagogy.

1.2 Personal reasons

My interest in research into care arose in the spring of 2020, as I witnessed my father taking care of his parents, who were nearing the end of their lives. Witnessing his

caretaking, I wondered: How can a person involved in care also be able to take care of themselves? What is present in the act of care? What does care require? Although my initial interest in the topic of care arose from a human-centred and deeply personal perspective, from spring 2020 onwards, I have become increasingly interested in ecological questions, my understanding of responsibility and care expanding to encompass also other than human beings.

“Do my actions do good towards all life?” (in Finnish: *Ruokkiiko oma toimintani hyvää kaikkea elämää kohtaan?*) Raisa Foster (2021) asked in an online lecture at Uniarts Helsinki. At that moment, I understood this question to be the basis of how I am interested in developing my practice as a dance pedagogue and choreographer. To continue my work in the world, I must reflect upon how my actions are impacting the world around me at this moment. I see writing this thesis as a small act that aims to do good for all life and a way to hold space for my growing ecological grief and anxiety about the future (See Pihkala 2019, on climate anxiety). It is difficult not to be paralysed by the constant unfolding of disastrous events in the world, yet I find a sense of hope in the notion of care. (See Macy 2012; 2018, on active hope)

For me, a means to approach the complexity of care is through movement practice, imagining ways of being otherwise through the body. I find kin in the assemblages of worlds through choreographic practices and meaning in crafting alternative ways of living in the world through the body. Doing artistic research and writing this thesis has been a coming to terms with my relationship to care and a way of questioning how I am *being with care* in my current artistic practice.

1.3 Structure of the work

In the first part of the thesis, I will seek to understand the notion of care by analysing contemporary feminist, political and phenomenological studies on care ethics, embodied care, and embodiment, referring to the work of Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) as well as Joan C. Tronto (1993), Donna Haraway (1990, 2003, 2008, 2016), David Abram (1997), Maurice Hamington (2004), Eeva Anttila (2007), and Raisa Foster (2019; see also Foster et al. 2022). Following the presentation of the theoretical

background of this research, in chapter three, I will introduce the artistic research methodology of this work. In chapter four, the practice of *becoming-with*, I will describe the findings of the artistic process. Furthermore, in chapter five, through examining the process of *becoming-with* and relating the results to the theoretical background of this research, I aim to understand, interpret, and present how the notion of being with care was present in this research. I will conclude this work in chapter six by discussing the contributions of the *becoming-with* process to the field of dance pedagogy and how I will continue to develop the idea of being with care in my future work as a choreographer and dance pedagogue.

2. DIVERSE APPROACHES TO CARE

Care is a complex notion and is defined in many ways depending on the context. Care cannot be pinned down into one specific meaning or doing, nor can it be simplified to mean only a certain kind of moral orientation or ontological dimension. In this research, care is an approach but also a phenomenon. Care is simultaneously the starting point, prerequisite and aim of this research, which highlights the complexity of trying to define and understand different approaches to the notion of care, and the way *being with care* relates to dance practice and pedagogy.

In this chapter, the statements in bold are propositions of different approaches to care, views of what care could be or how care is seen in different theoretical contexts. These are gathered through analysis of feminist ethics (Tronto 1993), more-than-human perspectives (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017; Haraway 2003, 2008, 2016), phenomenology (Abram 1997, Hamington 2004), and embodiment (Anttila 2007; Foster 2019). These emphasised propositions are by no means conclusive or presented in hierarchical order. Instead, they aim to capture the complex notion of care from various perspectives and angles and to frame care in the context and interests of this research.

2.1 Care is an attempt to live *as well as possible*

Care does not exist in a binary. Care presents itself as concrete yet open-ended, something that can be seen as a practice, a moral obligation, a burden, or a job, among many other things (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 1). The word care originates from the Latin word *cura*, seen as meaning “care, concern, trouble,” and as a verb “to cure” or “to care, heed” (Harper n.d.). The Latin verb *curare* also meant to “take care of” (Harper n.d.). In Old English, *caru*, *cearu* meant “sorrow, anxiety, grief”, and as a verb, *care* meant “to be anxious or solicitous; grieve; feel concern or interest” (Harper n.d.). Understanding the etymological root of the word reveals the background of the connotations that care carries in current public discourse. Often in public discourse, the notion of care is viewed as a human doing, something that happens between two people and that, to some extent, involves a notion of being concerned for the other. (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 42.)

Care raises ethical and political questions about who is expected to care. Care can also perpetrate inequalities when positioned as a capitalist, colonising and moralising project. In societal, human-centred discourse, the notion of care is often associated with material, hands-on doings of carers, a “work of love” done mainly by women. (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 8.) Puig de la Bellacasa writes that “those considered as traditional carers - women generally - or typical professional carers, are constantly moralised for not caring enough, or caring “anymore” or for having “lost” some “natural” capacity to care” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 9). Feminist analysis of care exposes how in an anthropocentric and capitalist worldview, care is moralised and devalued as a doing of particular beings. Care is often taken for granted or made invisible. (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 53.) In times of crisis, outcries for care become targeted at those already often doing the work of care, as witnessed recently, for example, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the situation of nurses and doctors around the world (The Care Collective 2020, 1).

What both Joan Tronto (1993) and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) – along with many other feminist scholars such as Gilligan (1982), Hoagland (1991), Noddings (1986), Kittay (1999) and The Care Collective (2020) – aim to do through their research is to bring to light the complexities of care. They seek to trouble the preconceived notions that caregiving is limited to the hands-on doing of certain beings in particular practices and care-receiving limited to certain vulnerable others (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 2).

Care implies engagement with something, “a reaching out to something other than the self,” and in this engagement, “care implicitly suggests that it will lead to some type of action” (Tronto 1993, 102). In this view, care is a material doing involving the responsibility of another. In her book *Moral Boundaries*, feminist political theorist Joan Tronto defines care as:

...everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair “our world”, so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web. (Tronto 1993, 103.)

In Tronto's view, care is something that permeates all webs of life. Care is presented as an ontological predicament that impacts all. Care is not restricted to human relationships but encompasses everything in the world. (Tronto 1993, 103.) Tronto's vision of care seeks to redefine moral and political boundaries by proposing an "alternative view of care that integrates practical, moral and political aspects about the place of care in society" (1993, 102). Tronto defines care as "both a practice and a disposition" (1993, 104). For Tronto, what separates caring from non-caring practices is that care exists "when both the activity and the disposition of care are present"; when there is both a doing and a concern for the emotional effects of care (Tronto 1993, 105).

Tronto articulates the four interconnected phases of care: *caring about*, *taking care of*, *care giving*, and *care receiving* (Tronto 1993, 105-107). *Caring about* is defined as the recognition that care is needed. *Taking care* goes further, addressing the required care and assuming responsibility for the need. *Care giving* establishes a hands-on encounter to meet the requirements for care. *Care receiving* then goes on to recognise that the care given is also received, that care affects not only the receiver but also the giver. (Tronto 1993, 106-107.) We can care about something from a distance without actually *making an effort to care for* it through a reciprocal, hands-on engagement. Tronto proposes that at its best, care could be seen as a practice, and "to call care a practice implies that it involves both thought and action, that thought and action are interrelated, and that they are directed toward some end." (Tronto 1993, 108.)

Who or what is the "we" that Tronto (1993) mentions in her definition of care? In her book *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) examines care in feminist technoscience studies and knowledge production. Though I will not delve into these specific theories in this thesis, what inspires me in Puig de la Bellacasa's speculative writing is her suggestion that the "we" that can live in the world "as well as possible" could expand to encompass more-than-human agencies (2017, 1). Puig de la Bellacasa argues that "care is a human trouble, but this does not make care a human-only matter" (2017, 2).

Puig de la Bellacasa's argument echoes Tronto's thoughts that although caring can be a doing that encompasses humans, "not all human activity is care" (Tronto 1993, 104). Puig de la Bellacasa asks, "What is included in "our" world? And why should relations of care be articulated from there?" (2017, 4). Why should humans be at the centre of

caring relations? A more-than-human understanding of care suggests a detachment from the human-centred view of care to understand that *as well as possible* living of all beings is dependent on agencies that we might not know. (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 217.)

Care is a situated choice. Every living thing requires care in some form to exist, but it is impossible to care for everything in the same way at all times (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 55). Puig de la Bellacasa argues that:

Potentially, matters of care can be found in every context: exhibiting them appears even more necessary when caring seems to be out of place, or not there. Because care eschews easy categorisation, because a way caring here could kill over there, we will need to ask, “How to care?” in each situation. (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 55.)

Tronto’s (1993) idea of moral boundaries implies considering who cares and for what. Puig de la Bellacasa’s (2017) question of “How to care?” emphasises that the quality we think about, and practice care also matters. “How to care?” becomes the question of how we live in the world with other beings. (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 55.)

Care makes us inevitably interdependent (Kittay 1999; Kittay & Feder 2002). Understanding interdependency as an ontological predicament “in which humans and countless other beings unavoidably live” involves becoming aware of one’s human vulnerability and recognising the different situatedness of all beings (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 4). The proposition of “recognising vulnerability as an ethical stance” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2007, 81) resonates with the claims of political philosopher Judith Butler (2004, 2009); vulnerability emerges from interdependency as we are always susceptible to being affected by our relations” (Butler 2004, 29). Butler’s theory of corporeal vulnerability highlights the body as the centre of an ethics and politics of interdependency (Butler 2004, 42-43). In her book *Precarious Life*, Butler contends, “In a way, we all live with this particular vulnerability, a vulnerability to the other that is part of bodily life, a vulnerability to a sudden address from elsewhere that we cannot preempt” (Butler 2004, 29). Butler argues “that we each have the power to destroy and to be destroyed, that we are bound to one another in this power and this precariousness. In this sense, we are all precarious lives” (2009, 43). Care carries ethical importance in

that it highlights this precarity. Situated human actions are also responsible for creating or destroying as well as possible worlds. (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 83.) One's actions will always affect the world. Puig de la Bellacasa aptly reminds that, "What we do in, to, a world can come back, re-affect someone somehow." (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 115.)

Care circulates in precarious and ever-changing relations. Care could be seen as "a force that is distributed across a multiplicity of agencies and materials and supports our worlds as a thick mesh of relational obligation." (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 20.)

Understanding care as distributed force or as an entangled mesh of relational obligation suggests involvement in lives we might not even be aware of. These involvements and entanglements of care are not always positive, caring, or ethical, yet care always exists and is cultivated or fostered by something. (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 70.) Puig de la Bellacasa proposes that:

Even when caring is not assured by the people/things that are perceptibly involved in a specific form of relating, in order for them to merely subsist somebody/something has (had) to be taking care somewhere or sometime.
(Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 70.)

This proposition does not mean that care could be shared equally or that care could be present in all places at all times. Care is not universally reciprocal but rather a "collective disseminated force"; an ontological condition of all things, of all more-than-human worlds. (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 20.)

2.2 The vital, all-encompassing nature of care

Care is vital. An ethical rethinking of what care can mean in more-than-human relationships is necessary if we are to live in *as well as possible*, flourishing futures (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 70). For Puig de la Bellacasa, feminist "interventions" to the ethics of care "do not see caring as an option but as a vital necessity of all beings, that nothing holds together without relations of care." (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 67.) Care is necessary for "the continuation of life for living beings in more-than-human entanglements" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 70).

Delving into the notion of care also requires acknowledging how care has been lacking in our relations in recent times. Humans must also face that we, especially in the Western world, have not taken very good care of the world around us. If we are to continue living in this world in the future, it is necessary to understand that the well-being of all life is inherently interconnected and that actions of care or neglect affect other beings directly or indirectly. (Foster, Salonen & Sutela 2022, 119, 125-126.) Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) writes:

The care that has been “passed on” - as is neglect - continues to circulate, not necessarily morally or intentionally, in an embodied way, or simply embedded in the world, environments, infrastructures that have been marked by that care. (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 121.)

How do we foster an as well as possible living in current times, acknowledging “the uneasy inheritances of human antiecolological situatedness?” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 122) In other words, how do we live with the fact that we have consciously and unconsciously acted carelessly towards the surrounding world, and those actions continue to affect our world? How do we live with the consequences of our human activities and move towards a better future? Puig de la Bellacasa writes about speculative ethics, “an ethics that is constantly re-evaluated to align with living as-well-as possible” (2017, 7). She proposes that the ethics of care in more-than-human worlds means an “ongoing process of recreation of “as well as possible” relations” and requires speculative thought to imagine what as well as possible means in different situations (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 6). Thinking speculatively about care means asking about what is *as well as possible* in more than human worlds (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 13).

Care is an all-encompassing task, a manifold doing. Care allows us to:

...think the ethics involved in the continuation of life, of bios, not so much as a matter of individual morality but as a personal-collective mode of engagement in the everyday that is more about the transformation of ethos than about a normative morality. (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 22.)

Caring includes what we do to make living in this world better for ourselves and the worlds we are interdependently connected to. From a feminist, more-than-human perspective, Tronto's (1993) proposition of care as everything we do then "speaks of care as a manifold range of doings needed to create, hold together, and sustain life and continue its diverseness." (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 70.) In this view, care is ever-present as a notion that is both-and: a concrete, active, affective doing, an "ethico-political" or moral obligation, an ontological predicament, and an attempt to live *as well as possible* in the world with other beings (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 6).

Puig de la Bellacasa proposes a three-fold suggestion of care, the dimensions of care encompassing "labor/work, affect/affections, ethics/politics" (2017, 5). These dimensions "are not necessarily equally distributed in all relational situations, nor do they sit together without tensions and contradictions, but they are held together and sometimes challenge each other in the idea of care" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 5). In this three-fold suggestion of care, care can be viewed as a "material vital doing" of hands-on work, as an emotional or "affective engagement", and as an "ethico-political involvement" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 42). This triptych vision of care problematises a simplistic notion of care as only a certain kind of relating and expands the concept of care to be much more than a moral disposition or a hands-on doing (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 218).

From this previous understanding, caring is as much a way of being as a way of doing. Care is a way of being in relation. Care exists in "laborious and situated conditions" where material, vital, hands-on doings occur. Care also exists "in the interdependent more than human relational webs", where it is not so easily recognisable. (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, 24.) In viewing care only as a material doing or as a predetermined moral stance, we forget all the ways that caring relations engage us in our day-to-day lives, all the ways in which we are entangled with care and sustained by it, whether we notice it or not (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 219).

2.3 Curiosity, corporeality, and caring imagination

Care requires curiosity. Throughout the corpus of her work, ecofeminist scholar Donna Haraway (1990, 2003, 2008, 2016) reimagines the ways we relate with care, contending that “caring means becoming subject to the unsettling obligation of curiosity, which requires knowing more at the end of the day than at the beginning” (Haraway 2008, 36). In this context, Haraway’s famous call to *stay with the trouble* could be understood as a proposition to stay curious about the complexity of things, to question and problematise different understandings of how we should live with other more-than-human worlds in the future (Haraway 2016, 1). For Haraway, curiosity for other worlds is necessary for living with care in more-than-human - or what Haraway calls multispecies - relationships (Haraway 2008; 2016).

Joan Tronto proposes that care “is everything we do to maintain, continue and repair ‘our world’” (Tronto 1993, 103). Maria Puig de la Bellacasa adds to this, proposing that care is a way of being and doing of many different beings, constantly making and re-making the world (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 70). In Donna Haraway’s terms, this making and re-making of the world is called *sympoiesis*, *making-with* or *becoming-with*. It means that nothing in the world is created alone; everything unfolds in relationship to something else. (Haraway 2016, 58.)

Haraway’s theory of relational ontology, where “beings do not pre-exist their relatings”, proposes that every existing thing is already relating to something else within an encounter, and these meetings of things are constantly making the world as we know it (Haraway 2003, 6). For Haraway, we are always *becoming-with* the world, engaged in “a practice of becoming worldly” (2008, 35). These meetings, these *becomings* change us and make us aware of our attachments and obligations in more-than-human relations, deepening our responsibility towards one another; “Once “we” have met, we can never be “the same” again” (Haraway 2008, 287). She writes that:

When species meet, the question of how to inherit histories is pressing, and how to get on together is at stake. Because I become with dogs, I am

drawn into the multispecies knots that they are tied into and that they retie by their reciprocal action. (Haraway 2008, 35.)

The question becomes, how do we live together in these entanglements? Haraway's relational ontology allows us to rethink the ethics of care by invoking us to expand our sense of kinship to more-than-human beings, becoming curious about the multiplicity of worlds we are engaged in. (Haraway 2008, 134.)

Haraway (1990, 2003, 2008, 2016) approaches her commitment to curiosity through storytelling, her writings woven with complex meanings and intimate language. Haraway's contributions to academia remind one that writing can also be a way of practising care, gathering knowledge and weaving worlds and meanings into existence. Through her storytelling, Haraway practices what Puig de la Bellacasa (2017, 88) names as "a more than human thinking with care", that is, asking "how to care" when engaging within situated entanglements. One is embedded in the worlds one cares for, and how one thinks about and acts upon these worlds matters (Haraway 2016, 12; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 75).

Care is a corporeal matter. Care takes place in the physical realm; in this living world we can sense through our bodies. Examining the work of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, feminist ethicist Maurice Hamington proposes that care cannot exist without a body and that "the body is built for care." (2004, 121). Through his book, *Embodied Care*, Hamington (2004) comprehensively examines care as an embodied notion. Hamington suggests that care is much more than a moral theory and instead an approach to *being in the world* through our bodies: only by attending to the body and the embodied aspects of care can we fully understand how we care for ourselves and another (2004, 121). Hamington continues that: "The ability to empathise, to visualise moral contexts, and to understand and care for one's position in the environment are intertwined with one's corporeal existence" (Hamington 2004, 83).

Merleau-Ponty states that "The body is our general means of having a world" (Merleau-Ponty 2012/1945, 218), and with that, the body must be the place where care emerges from as well (Hamington 2004, 60). Building on Merleau-Ponty's body-centred

epistemology and his theories on body-subject, perception, the Flesh, focus-phenomenon, and habits, Hamington (2004) posits that knowledge of the world through our bodies – embodied knowledge – “creates the potential for care.” (Hamington 2004, 43.) We gain embodied knowledge through our bodily existence in the world, through what Merleau-Ponty defines as perception (Merleau-Ponty 2012/1945, 67). We constantly perceive the world through our senses, and perception can be seen as the continuous working together of all the senses to provide information about ourselves and our surroundings. The body is constantly changing, adapting, and adjusting to the world. The body is the medium through which one enters a dialogue with the world around oneself. (Merleau-Ponty, 2012/1945; Hamington 2004, 38-60.)

Through his implementation of phenomenology, ecological philosopher David Abram (1996) proposes an understanding of perception as a complex entanglement of our bodily existence to the more-than-human world around us (Abram, 1996). He describes Merleau-Ponty’s (2012/1945) notion of perception as:

...reciprocity, the ongoing interchange between my body and the entities that surround it. It is a sort of silent conversation that I carry on with things, a continuous dialogue that unfolds far below my verbal awareness. (Abram 1996, 52.)

For Abram, perception is reciprocal, and what one perceives is already entwined with one’s corporeal existence, “already blended with the dynamism of life and sentience” (Abram 1996, 34). From Abram’s eco-phenomenological proposition, the body is what perceives the world (Abram 1996). Abram writes:

If this body is my very presence in the world, if it is the body that alone enables me to enter into relations with other presences, if without these eyes, this voice, or these hands I would be unable to see, to taste and to touch things, or to be touched by them - if without this body, in other words, there would be no possibility of experience - then the body itself is the true subject of experience. (Abram 1996, 45).

According to Abram (1996), the event of perception is a silent conversation with the world, “an ongoing dynamic wherein the sensing body finds itself drawn into an interactive, participatory exchange - a kind of nonverbal conversation - with the things that surround” (1996, 278). To fully engage in this conversation with the world, one must become aware of the senses and the information the senses are constantly providing. Abram calls this “returning to our senses” by acknowledging “...our sensory perceptions to be simply our part of a vast, interpenetrating webwork of perceptions and sensations borne by countless other bodies.” (Abram 1996, 65.)

Humans are connected to the world through the senses, and understanding this embeddedness reminds us that there is responsibility in the ways we act in this world (Abram 1996, 284). Abram proposes:

A genuinely ecological approach does not work to attain a mentally envisioned future, but strives to enter, ever more deeply, into the sensorial present. It strives to become ever more awake to the other lives, the other forms of sentient and sensibility that surround us in the open field of the present moment. (Abram 1996, 272.)

To enter ever more deeply into the sensorial present, attending to the body and the imagination is necessary. Imagination is how our senses allow us to reach the unknown, “to make tentative contact with the other sides of things that we do not sense directly, with the hidden or invisible aspects of the sensible.” (Abram 1996, 58.) We can evoke our caring imagination by listening to the body and the senses.

Care involves imagination. The embodied knowledge necessary for care is not only comprised of direct bodily experience but also our imaginative capacities. For Hamington, imagination is essential for embodied care and caring for worlds that are not in our proximity or that we might not have experienced directly. (2004, 62.) The caring imagination allows us to “care for ‘distant’ others - those of whom we have little direct experience or knowledge” (Hamington 2004, 60). For Hamington, the caring imagination is not an intellectual aspect of the mind separate from the body. Instead, imagination calls on the depth of knowledge of the body to understand the situation of

another (Hamington 2004, 60). The imagination is an embodied aspect of our being (Hamington 2004, 64).

The caring imagination creates “the possibility for empathy” for the unknown (Hamington 2004, 68). Feminist philosopher and ethicist Debra Shogan (1988) sees imagination as necessary for empathy. However, one’s situated corporeal existence provides a limited opportunity to imagine fully and know the actual needs of another. Shogan (1998) writes:

Subjective imagination is limiting when it comes to imagining what it is like for a particular person [or being] to flourish if one does not know what counts as flourishing for that individual [being]. (Shogan 1988 in Hamington 2004, 69.)

What is necessary is attending to the imagination and our embodied experience to understand better the subjective worlds around us, entwined in our existence (Hamington 2004, 64). Attending to one’s embodied experience is an ongoing process; we will never entirely know what counts as flourishing for another. We can never fully understand the other, but our imagination and our bodily existence open the possibility to cultivate *as well as possible* ways of being in the world through attentiveness to the worlds of others. The living body is the place from which all this happens. (Hamington 2004, 72-75.)

Care requires attention. Tronto (1993) defines *attentiveness* as one of four ethical elements of care, alongside responsibility, competence, and responsiveness. (Tronto, 1993, 127). *Attentiveness*, for Tronto, consists of recognising one’s own needs for care to be able open up to the needs of others (Tronto, 1993, 131). To realise one’s own needs, one must direct attention to one’s bodily sensations and become attuned to one’s own body.

Eeva Anttila (2007) uses the concept of bodily presence to describe attuning to physical sensations. For Anttila, bodily presence is interwoven with bodily consciousness, bodily knowledge that arises from previous experiences. She asserts that bodily presence is

primarily mediated by the proprioceptive system, a part of the nervous system that regulates internal processes in conjunction with the external senses. Proprioception and the senses provide a person with information about the world. (Anttila 2007, 79-80.) In her study, Anttila (2007) argues that it is “possible to direct our attention consciously to these internal messages and develop our sensitivity to them” and that specifically somatic and dance practices can support this “awareness of our bodies” (Anttila 2007, 80). The term somatic practice is often used to describe different kinds of movement, bodywork or body-mind practices that aim to bring forth an internal sense of awareness and connectedness (Hanna 1995; Green 2002; Rouhiainen 2008; Eddy 2009). By fostering bodily presence, dance and somatic practices can open the possibility to be attentive to oneself and from this place to the world around oneself (Anttila 2007; Foster 2019, 28).

Similarly, in dance improvisation practices, one moves from the inside out, understanding the world around oneself by tuning in to the internal processes of the body and the imagination. Kent De Spain (2003) offers a robust view of dance improvisation:

Improvisation, as I understand it, is an attentional practice: the more you attend to movement and memory and sensing and intention, the more you play (improvise) with all of the elements of what we call living - and the more you come to understand that reality itself is based on the relationship between our attention and the world. You sense that your attention is both selecting and forming your attention in real time, but that what is being selected and formed is not completely of your choosing, because the world is improvising too; and that dance, your interaction with the world, forms you just as you form the world. (De Spain in Albright and Gere 2003, 37.)

Drawing from De Spain’s view, improvisation requires attention. Improvisation requires being present in the moment to make an informed choice about how one wishes to engage in that moment and the next moment (De Spain in Albright and Gere 2003, 38.) By cultivating presence, agency and imagination, dance improvisation can shape

one's experience of the world. Ann Cooper Albright suggests that dance improvisation "leads us to imagine other ways of being-with-one-another-in-the-world." (2003, 257.) Through attentive and imaginative practice, dance improvisation has the potential to allow us to imagine the world differently.

In the continuation of this thesis, I posit that through dance practice, one can practice *being with care*. In the following chapter, I will introduce the methodology used for the artistic research of the process of artistic-pedagogical work *becoming-with*.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will introduce the methodology of this research, firstly explaining my approach to artistic research. I will then continue to define the methods used to engage with this research, considerations of the nature of artistic research, and the situated and subjective position of myself as the researcher. I will also reflect on the ethical considerations of this research.

3.1 Artistic research as being in the world

For this research process, I chose to employ an artistic method to both artistically and speculatively delve into the question of how being with care can be present in an artistic-pedagogical process. According to the Vienna Declaration (2020), artistic research is practice-based or practice-led research that creates new knowledge through artistic practice.

In this artistic research process, the research into the notion of care was present in the practice of making becoming-with. In this artistic research, the dancing body is the vehicle through which I examine the complexity of care. Nelson (2013) proposes that “practice should be accepted as a methodological process of research inquiry and a mode of dissemination of research in its own right” (2013, 3). For me, artistic practice is where I can find insights into my research question.

In this research, the artistic practice was finding different ways to *become-with* through materials, sound, lighting, reading, writing, and dancing, all described further in the following chapter, *The practice of becoming-with*. The artistic practice of *becoming-with* included gathering daily over two months, delving into listening and conversing, sensing, and creating together with the working group and the more-than-human worlds that were part of the process. The practice also included delving into guided improvisational dance and somatic practices that invoked the imagination and invited deeper sensing of the world around oneself, a *being with care* through the body.

Hannula, Suoranta & Vaden (2005, 5) propose that: “Artistic research means that the artist produces an artwork and researches the creative process, thus adding to the accumulation of knowledge.” From this view, I understand the accumulation of

knowledge to be present beyond the assembly of this written reflection; it is also in the bodily knowledge that arose from the process and how the practices and methods used within the process could be shared with a broader public. Hannula, Suoranta & Vaden (2005, 116) contend that “artistic research cannot and must not give definite answers” but rather present new connections between the artistic work and how it relates to the world. In my opinion, artistic research requires fully engaging with the research topic to see how it emerges from one’s artistic practices. Artistic research also requires embracing the unknown and the inexplicable. I see artistic research as speculating on how things could be different or how we could think about things differently. In the case of the process of *becoming-with*, artistic research was a way of engaging speculatively with what it means to *be with care*.

There is a responsibility to how and why one does artistic research. In describing artistic research in practice, Hannula, Suoranta & Vaden (2005) propose that artistic research requires *being in the world*, acknowledging that one is not separate from that which one researches:

This is very strongly linked with being in the world, to the fact that the researcher is part of the researched subject. Thus, one cannot have as a starting point the need for a complete understanding of the subject, or that the research studies some subject which exists on the outside, as something separate. In other words, the research must be carried out from the viewpoint of being in the world, as a process and strategy where the subject is studied together with the different parties of the subject and with issues linked with it. In other words, not study something but rather study with something - not to talk or to read about something or look at something but always together with something, in a sharp, intense yet even beautiful, ever-continuing reciprocity. (Hannula, Suoranta & Vaden 2005, 117.)

As I understand it, *being in the world* requires one to acknowledge that one is part of the world that one researches and is constantly affected and changed by it.

The idea of artistic research as *being in the world* also relates to phenomenological research. Phenomenological research studies lived experiences to understand the

essence of a phenomenon (Qutoshi, 2018, 215). I claim that this artistic research is also phenomenological because it delves into the phenomenon of care by examining the researcher's lived experience (Qutoshi, 2018, 215). The basis of this research is my experience of the artistic process and the various conversations, encounters and insights that have shaped my lived experience. The findings from this artistic research are my interpretation of the artistic process, arising from my embodied experience.

3.2 Subjectivity and situatedness

From a phenomenological point of view, the researcher is inherently entangled with the research subject, doing the research with the surrounding worlds and subjectivities (van Manen 2007). In my mind, the aforementioned *being in the world* also relates to Puig de la Bellacasa's proposition of *thinking-with*; "a relational way of thinking", a thinking that is fostered together with other beings, that considers other possible ways to exist and create knowledge in the world (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 72). In my experience, artistic research can be a way of *being with the world*, of *thinking-with* others to develop new knowledge. To indeed be able to engage in *thinking-with*, it is necessary to acknowledge one's situated position as a researcher, to admit one's entanglement with the topic and choose to engage with it, "rather than retreating to the sheltered position of an enlightened outsider who knows better" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 10).

While I attempt to practice *thinking-with* others, I must also acknowledge that this artistic research is based on my subjective view and embodied experience of the process. The observations and reflections on the process presented in the following chapters of this research are based on my reflective working diary, which I kept throughout the process. This reflective diary contains my notes and plans, written reflections of conversations with the working group, feedback from the working group during the process and performances, and feedback from my mentor during the teaching practice period. Throughout the artistic process of *becoming-with*, I employed the practice of writing poems daily as a method of inquiry into the process. Writing poetry as a daily artistic practice was a way for me to understand the underlying and unconscious themes present in the *becoming-with* process.

3.3 Ethical considerations

This research aims to understand my relationship to care as a dance maker and pedagogue and how the notion of *being with care* is or could be present in artistic-pedagogical processes I engage in with others. Quite early on, whilst planning the process of this research, I decided that I would not interview members of the *becoming-with* working group or audience members that came to see the performance. I chose not to conduct interviews for three main reasons:

- 1) I wanted to maintain this research as a personal journey into the topic, seeing what arises when I respond to the call of care, that is, my interest to delve into this topic. I wanted to allow myself to spend time with the sometimes-uncomfortable insights into why this topic feels so challenging and personal to me.
- 2) Although I reflect on our group conversations and process in this research, I hoped to keep the *becoming-with* process as a tight-knit professional process and not require the working group members to be involved in the research outside their working hours.
- 3) Although this research delves into the artistic practice of making a new dance work and introduces the performance, this research will not further examine audience reception. I acknowledge that this artistic process and performance would have had the potential to study audience reception. Still, to focus on my insight into the notion of care in this artistic process, I chose not to conduct interviews or questionnaires from the audience. However, in the future of this work, I hope to understand the audience's experience by focusing the research on audience reception.

The working group members understood that the process of making *becoming-with* was part of my teaching practice period and my thesis work for the MA in Dance Pedagogy Programme. The working group members were informed that I would reflect on the process and our conversations as data for this written thesis. They were also informed

that any observations from our discussions would be anonymised to preserve confidentiality. I have asked permission to use the pictures visible in this thesis.

My role in the artistic process as the choreographer of the work meant that I facilitated and guided the process by sharing different starting points, propositions, and tasks. My goal was that the piece would develop in dialogue with the working group, with a feeling that everyone involved could contribute to the process. My role as the choreographer was to be the person who ensured that the process moved toward the performance. I was also the person who had a full view of the structure of the piece.

As this research delves into what care can mean in artistic and pedagogical processes in more-than-human worlds, it is essential to acknowledge the ethical considerations this brings to light. I cannot claim that this research has done neither good nor harm to more-than-human worlds, as I do not know. I can only speak from my lived experience and the certainty that throughout the process, I tried to carry along the idea of what it would be like to treat other worlds *as well as possible*. Caring and engaging with other worlds always brings forth ethical concerns. In this artistic research, I am not trying to impose care or speak for any experience other than my own.

However, I believe that this research proposes that acknowledging more-than-human worlds as active agents of an artistic practice changes the ways we approach artistic practice. In the artistic practice of *becoming-with*, I believe this consideration was apparent in many visible and not-so-visible ways. This consideration was present in how we used language to give materials agency, how we were attentive to the plants and materials in the space, and how we made choices about the work based on what would serve the *as well as possible* in each moment. Of course, it is never possible to thoroughly understand the full impact of choice and all the worlds that a choice will affect. Still, I believe that asking the questions of “*What is it to be with care in this moment?*” or “*What would further as well as possible living of all life at this moment?*” allows for making better choices.

4. THE PRACTICE OF BECOMING-WITH

In this chapter, I will describe the artistic practice of *becoming-with* and how the notion of care was present in the working process: in the actions, conversations, and choices we made with more-than-human worlds.

In the following, I will delve deeper into the artistic process of making *becoming-with*. From the outset, it was clear that *becoming-with* would be an artistic process with a performance outcome. The performance outcome of *becoming-with* became a site-specific piece set in a concrete skate pool. The performance includes performers Hanna Kahrola, Janina Salmela, Wilma Seppälä, live musician Tapani Rinne, lighting designer Jaakko Sirainen, and costume designer Mirei Kato, all on “stage” in the performance situation. On the “stage” in the performance space were also different materials, such as water, plastic, sage leaves, Palo Santo sticks, clay pots, a lighter, plants, led tubes, and masses of tulle.

I will share my written reflections gathered during the process and practice of *becoming-with*. The poems in this chapter were written during the process of *becoming-with*. Many of the poems were also published in a blog post that I wrote for Pirkanmaa Regional Dance Centre in November 2021 (Ojanen 2021). Writing poetry is a critical element of my artistic practice; through writing, I uncover hidden meanings from my practice and enter into a deeper perception of what is present in my practice (see also Hast 2020).

I will analyse the process through concepts prevalent during the making and performance of *becoming-with*: *The unknown*, *The senses: touch*, *Thinking-together to become otherwise*, and *Materiality and responsibility*.

4.1 The unknown

what can I do except care

and care and care and care

and listen

care does not always mean gentleness

sometimes it means embracing the

trouble, staying with it

summoning the wildness, holding it

firmly

throwing my limbs around, letting the space carry them

where's the catch?

(Ojanen 2021.)

I began the process of *becoming-with* by spending time alone in residency at Liikelaituri studio in August 2021. The two-month working period of this choreographic work was divided into shorter periods between August, October, November, and December. It was part of my contract as House-artist at Pirkanmaa Regional Dance Centre in Autumn 2021. During August, I was preparing for the group process, dreaming, and imagining the world of the work to come. It was vital for me to spend time alone and to take time to explore through my improvised dancing the themes of this emergent process. It was surprisingly challenging to spend two weeks in the studio, allowing different feelings, thoughts and needs to surface. In hindsight, I think starting the process without other human input was necessary. I was challenged by the notion of *becoming-with* and how it relates to care, and by being alone, I had to come to terms with the uncomfortable and challenging feelings that arose. I must recognise that I was never completely alone; the presence of more-than-human worlds was constantly there, even when I might not have realised it.

Before I go further, I hope to share a little about how I approach choreography and dance-making. Often, when I work as a choreographer, I spend time alone before starting a process with a working group. I do this to clarify the propositions, questions and tasks I have in mind that I am interested in sharing with the working group. I spend time alone trying out improvisational or somatic journeys for myself to gain embodied knowledge about what arises from a task.

When I work as a choreographer with a working group, I often stay in the outer circle (in Finnish: *ulkokehä*). In dwelling on the outer circle, I am engaged in the improvisational task by guiding or witnessing it. Still, I am not necessarily moving with the others in the space. I stay on the outer circle to be able to guide tasks and improvisational journeys through verbal cues and to see what is going on in the room and where we can begin to build the choreographic material. I believe that I can move between the inner circle (moving within the task) and the outer circle (witnessing or guiding the task) when I have taken the time to clarify movement tasks, the articulations, qualities and essence of what I am looking for myself.

Dance improvisation is a way for me to approach the unknown (see Anttila 2003). Through dance improvisation, I engage with what I know in one moment – how my feet feel against the studio floor, the feeling of the air against my skin, my thoughts, my usual patterns of movement – to open up to the encounter of the unknown. The unknown might come from new movement pathways, imagery, and thoughts that sometimes direct my attention away from the bodily experience, dreamlike imaginations, memories or questions. The unknown might also be unidentifiable, something I cannot describe in words. Often when I am improvising, I feel as if I am constantly reaching toward something that I cannot quite grasp. Nevertheless, it feels important to stay with the effort of trying to understand, to stay with the present moment of the unknown through my bodily presence.

As a choreographer and dance teacher, I feel much of what I do in practice is crafting, guiding and facilitating tasks that hold space for the performers of a piece or for the workshop participants to spend time with the unknown. Holding space for me means constantly crafting a situation's conditions or atmosphere to encourage engagement in

the present moment. Indeed, the conditions of a situation change each moment. The situation is determined by the human and more-than-human agents involved in a situation. However, I still see the role of a choreographer and facilitator as one that can subtly influence a situation. For example, when guiding an improvisational or somatic movement journey, I can invite a mover to bring their attention to a particular body part, image, or sensation by spoken reminders or questions. In this way, I can invite them to encounter the unknown. It is not my concern whether they choose to pick up on the suggestion at that moment, but rather, it is my concern that I continue to hold space, continue to guide the task in a way that allows the mover to engage with the unknown should they choose to do so.

In the *becoming-with* process, I would often propose tasks with no clear goal but tasks that instead invited the working group to engage with the unknown. Frequently, these tasks would begin with a somatic “tuning-in” practice: I would ask the working group members to close their eyes, pay attention to their breath, and how their body is in contact with the ground. From there, I would propose different “*What if...?*” questions inspired by Deborah Hay (1994) that invoked the imagination of the dancing body. For example, one task we explored during the process began with the question, “*What if, right now, you could imagine you were inside a cave?*”. This question provoked further questions such as “*How would that move you?*”, “*What would the air around you feel like, how much space would there be?*” “*What kind of sounds would there be?*” and “*What could you feel against your skin?*” It was interesting to witness the different movement qualities and approaches that arose from the imaginative “*What if..?*” question. For me, using tasks based on open propositions that a person can choose to interpret in their own way is the most exciting and fulfilling way to approach making choreography together.

Creating a choreographic work that requires the working group to be with the unknown constantly can be challenging. For me, it felt essential to vocalise amongst the working group the sometimes uncomfortable-yet-exhilarating feeling that we do not know or have control over where the artistic process will take us, but that despite that, we could engage in the process together to see what arises. As the choreographer of the *becoming-with* process, I felt I needed to remind the working group of this at various

points, especially as we got closer to the premiere week and the piece was still falling into place. It felt important to be with not-knowing, to hold space for that. I wonder if holding space for these processes of not-knowing is *being with care*.

During my solitary residency in August, I kept asking myself how I could practice care for worldly life, or better yet, practice care *with* more-than-human beings. How could I take care of myself, the people, organisms and beings around me in how I live and make art? I felt a need to articulate how care shows up in my practice, and with that need, I wrote what follows:

In my practice, the attempt to be with care is listening to the sensuous world around me. It is in tenderly working with materials to quieten down to hear what they propose. It is in carving space for being together in conversation with others. It is in constantly asking questions and working with imaginary yet palpable worlds. It is in being with not-knowing and accepting that. It is in attuning to the senses to comprehend interconnectedness in an embodied way. Giving in to the support of the earth beneath my body. Softening against the hard surfaces of the ground. Breathing. The porous borders of my body becoming porous to the space. Staying curious. Going towards the unknown. Resting. Dancing wildly. Leaving space for things to surface. (Personal notes, Ojanen 2021.)

The second week of this residency period I spent working with clay. Moulding clay was also a way for me to spend time with the unknown, as with clay, I was never quite able to know where the clay's movement and flow would take me. The clay felt porous and became a part of me; I a part of it. Working with clay felt like an intimate meeting, a tuning in to listen to where the clay wanted to move me. I wrote what follows during a previous intensive period of working with clay, and I find it still poignant to describe this experience:

As I am moulding clay, the clay is moulding me, moving our bodies into new-found shapes. As it rests to breathe, I am quiet. I sense the liveness, the coldness, the breath of its materiality, and I can no longer tell who

started this, who ended it and where our skins meet. (Personal notes, Ojanen 2020)

In working with clay, I understood the proximity of the more-than-human worlds through my physical being. When I touched clay, the elements that make up the clay came into contact with my skin. This meeting shaped both the clay and me. I felt a sense of care towards the material. I believe this care was present in the practical action of making sure the clay was wet enough to stay malleable and not break, but it was also present in the quality of working with the clay, in listening to it.

The insatiable need to dig | To uncover

something from the past or an unforeseeable future

—————*go to the dark spaces with a light and a brush*

the need to understand

dwell, sink, surrender

let the earth carry

(Personal notes, Ojanen 2021.)

4.2 The senses: touch

eyes

rest

need to close the eyes

fall towards a deeper experience

tension

|

fall

into and upon

the soft pores of my hands merge

(Personal notes, Ojanen 2021.)

During the third week of rehearsals, I guided a movement task with the idea of being supported by the ground. In this task, I suggested the working group close their eyes to notice how the body's skin is in contact with the earth's surface. I proposed that in laying there, one could explore how one could rest in support of the ground. Slowly, with every other exhale, one could change the body's position on the floor and pause. In the pause, one could take a moment to notice, and in this new position, ask oneself what has changed, what parts of the body were touching the ground? The simple question of asking where the surface of the body is touching the surface of the ground brought attention to the sense of touch.

Throughout the process of *becoming-with*, we approached activating the senses through different sensorial, somatic, and improvisational tasks. In my embodied experience, I can bring my attention to particular sensations by tuning into my bodily experience through somatic or improvised movement. I can focus on specific sensory information, such as how my hand is touching another person. In focusing on this sensory information, I also open the possibility of shifting my attention to focus on other

sensory information, such as what I hear in the studio. Through movement, I become more attuned to my senses. These processes of the senses often happen simultaneously, overlapping and enmeshed in one another, and provide me with constant information about my body. In attuning myself to listen to the messages of the senses, I increase my awareness of how I relate to the world. Anttila's (2018a) view supports mine: "At its best, dance activates all senses. It communicates through movement as a multi-sensory phenomenon, involving sensing, hearing, and seeing others" (Anttila 2018a, 70). Through improvisational and somatic dance practices, one can engage with the senses to understand one's relationship with the world.

To become attuned to our bodily experience, we often began rehearsals with *slowness practice*. What I call the *slowness practice* is a practice that I have been doing for almost eight years, inspired by and reminiscent of the Butoh practice. Butoh is a "metamorphic" dance form from Japan, founded by Tatsumi Hijikata and further developed by Kazuo Ohno (Fraleigh 2010, 1). One practice of Butoh is extremely slow movement that allows the mover to become attuned to the body, the breath, and the lapse of time (Fraleigh 2010, 53-56). The *slowness practice* I proposed to the performers of *becoming-with* is quite simple. Instructions go as follows:

Choose a point in the space where you want to move from and choose a point in space where you are aiming to end. Most of the time, you will not reach the endpoint, which is okay. After you have chosen the length and direction of your journey, decide which position you want to begin the practice, for example, standing, sitting, lying down, or arms raised towards the sky. The task is to move toward the chosen ending point as slowly as possible. The aim is to keep the continuous pace of the movement. Jolts, shakes, cramps and thumps will happen, but the practice is on how you can keep the same pace. It is essential to keep moving towards that ending point, not to stop the movement. (Personal notes, Ojanen 2021.)

In the *becoming-with* rehearsals, I often put on a timer to indicate the end of the practice. Sometimes, I put on music that either supports the movement or clashes with

the pace of the movement. In my experience, moving in slow motion is highly challenging yet intensely pleasurable. I almost feel as if moving extremely slow also slows down my thoughts and compels me to become attentive to how I am moving.

During the *becoming-with* process, we also engaged in various contact improvisation tasks with the performers. Contact improvisation is a form of dance improvisation developed by Steve Paxton in 1972 that is based on the communication of bodies moving together in physical contact. Its basic principles include working with gravity, momentum and inertia through supporting and sharing weight, falling, lifting, rolling and resisting (Koteen & Stark Smith 2008). To get prepared to work in contact with another person, we often began rehearsals by warming up by ourselves, doing whatever we needed to do that day to feel ready. To warm up further, we did various “carrying” exercises whilst walking across the space. These exercises would entail carrying the weight of another person in a piggyback position, on the sides of the body or the front of the body. In these positions, the carrier and the carried are equally active when moving across the space. This warm-up practice served to engage the muscles necessary to be able to lift or catch the weight of another, as well as to get used to feeling the total weight of another person. After warming up, we would move to duet, trio, or quartet contact improvisation tasks. We explored how one could support the other person to move upwards by acting as a base or as a platform for a lift or how one could be ready to catch another person as they fell.

One task we explored during two weeks of the process was what we named “falling upwards”; a task of one performer walking and falling, the other three walking close to be ready to catch them on their fall, to either place them back on their feet or to lift them. This task turned out to be quite challenging, as it required immense trust from the person falling that someone would be there to catch them. It also needed trusting the group, the unspoken communication of who would move where, who would be the one catching the person, and how to continue after the fall and catch. We tried out this task in various ways and intensities, changing, for example, the distance of the catchers to the person falling, shifting the quality in which the performer falls and the quality in which the performer is caught. Ultimately, focusing on the intention and the quality of touch shifted our difficulty with the task. We explored how softening into the other

person's contact, both as a supporter or as the person falling, could allow for a more flowing fall and catch, enhancing the feeling of accomplishment and cultivating more trust amongst the performers. It was interesting to notice that through the emphasis on the quality and intention of touch, the performers became more sensitive to moving together, seemingly more aware of how they came to contact with another person. We spoke about how we could extend this consideration of our touch's intention to encompass other things we came into contact with. How could we meet each other, the plants, tulle, water, the concrete, in an attentive and *care-full* way? We reflected; how does one meet the other, how does one *become-with*?

what is it to live in mutuality _____
in a state of becoming-with
understand myself not as a singular entity.
- but as a mass affecting and being affected -
I imagine rhizomes growing from my skin
being able to jump into the waterfall in Iceland
and float into that which I cannot understand

(Ojanen 2021.)

In the process of *becoming-with*, we wondered how we could corporeally understand that we are also always in a state of becoming-with within our bodies. We carry multiple worlds within our bodies; the skin, gut, and hair containing hundreds of thousands of other organisms and their DNA; "We are an ecosystem ourselves" (Fuentes 2020). All living beings are *holobionts* - meaning a gathering made up of the host's cells, as well as communities of micro-organisms (Fuentes 2019; 2020). With this recognition, we sought to question: what makes an individual being? How could we understand the composition of our bodies to be unique to ourselves yet constantly becoming with other beings?

The body is porous, "the boundaries of a living body are open and indeterminate; more like membranes than barriers, they define a surface of metamorphosis and exchange" (Abram 1996, 46). Amongst the *becoming-with* working group, we identified that

engaging with the senses, especially with touch, could be an embodied way to understand the porosity of the body. We experimented with using different scents such as essential oils, Palo Santo sticks and sage leaves to stimulate the sense of smell. We examined how different lighting states and colour temperatures affected our visual perception. We listened attentively, tuning into the sounds coming from outside, the studio floor, the pipes and the bass clarinet of musician Tapani Rinne. In one rehearsal, we used water and fabric to explore how the textures and features of materials created different sensations of touch, evoking other qualities of moving.

I am reminded of Merleau-Ponty's (1968) idea of the *chiasm*, of the reciprocity of things; "when bodies/things touch, they are also touched" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 99; Merleau-Ponty 1968, 295; Foster 2019, 28). Puig de la Bellacasa proposes that this reversibility of touch "puts the question of reciprocity at the heart of thinking and living with care" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 20). When one recognises that the boundaries one perceives between one's body and the world is, in fact, porous - constantly changing and morphing - one can become aware of the multitude of worlds within one's experience. Consequently, one might feel compelled to *care for* these worlds. *Caring for*, rather than caring about, means understanding that human life is inseparably intertwined with other life forms and that one is continually engaged in reciprocal relationships (Noddings 1986, 149).

4.3 Thinking-together to become otherwise

a space to experience oneself

widening

into

an attempt to deal with

to understand

something ungraspable, infinite

futures we cannot control

and will never know

(Ojanen 2021.)

At the beginning of the process with the working group, we spent a week delving into reading materials and conversations about *becoming-with*. We had long discussions about how, through art, we could become attuned to the multiplicity of worlds around us, *become with* the beings within and alongside us and encounter the worldly life around us in different ways. The title of this chapter, *thinking-together to become otherwise*, is inspired by what Puig de la Bellacasa (2017, 79) calls *thinking-with*, a notion mentioned in the previous *Methodology* chapter. In my opinion, making art and being in process with other beings are ways of *thinking-with*. In the practice of being, conversing and creating together, care can be present. In *thinking-together*, we are attuning ourselves to listen to others. We are engaged in processes that allow us to perceive the other beings around us, to become attuned to different ways of life, and in this way, we are also changed in the process - we are *becoming otherwise*.

On the first day of rehearsals, we dove into the work of Ursula K. Le Guin (2016), reading the foreword *Deep in Admiration* of her book *Late in the Day*. In the foreword, Le Guin (2016) proposes a way of thinking differently about the world around us through the notion of kinship. She writes:

To use the world well, to be able to stop wasting it and our time in it, we need to relearn our being in it. Skill in living, awareness of belonging to the world, delight in being part of the world, always tends to involve knowing our kinship as animals with animals. [...] our fellowship as creatures with other creatures, things with other things. [...] One way [for humans] to stop seeing trees, or rivers, or hills, only as “natural resources” is to class them as fellow beings – kinfolk. (Le Guin 2016, viii.)

This particular text by Le Guin (2016) inspired me. As a starting point for our conversations with the working group, I had the idea to study the text together and unpack its meanings and propositions. Reading together was a great way to take us directly to the values and intentions behind *becoming-with* and begin *thinking-together* about what kind of world we created by making this piece. Through our conversations

and writing tasks, we sought to understand what the notion of *becoming-with* meant to each of us individually. The aim was not necessarily to utterly analyse the idea of becoming-with, but rather to understand the views of fellow working group members to come to a common ground on what we were aiming to do together in the form of a performance. We spoke about *becoming-with* being a dance piece where all the elements (movement, material, sound, lighting) of the work evolve together, a work that potentially gives the audience the space and time to experience themselves as part of a larger whole. From what I gathered from these initial conversations, we hoped that the *becoming-with* piece and its process could be a way to dream of a better future.

Another textual starting point we explored during the first week of rehearsals was Terike Haapoja's essay *How to Become Human – From Climate Crises to Crisis of Humanity* from Terike Haapoja and Laura Gustafsson's *Bud Book: Manual for Earthly Living* (2020). The book offers an alternative view of humanity through interviews with thinkers, artists, activists, and children. Initially, I could not articulate why I wanted to share this essay with the working group. Still, I felt that there was something essential to the process of *becoming-with* in Haapoja's (2020) notion of *becoming otherwise*. Haapoja writes:

The future and the coming of another kind of human being are essentially linked with not-knowing: nobody can know for sure in what way differentness can be reached, or what it is like there. Becoming otherwise means reaching towards something whose existence you cannot yet even detect. (Haapoja 2020, 17.)

Inspired by Haapoja's essay, we spoke about how we could *live well* as humans. In my mind, the idea of *living well as humans* also relates to Tronto's (1993) proposition of *as well as possible*. We identified how the idea of *living well* or *as well as possible* could influence our artistic practices, for example, in how we engage with other beings that are part of the process. Considerateness, care, and curiosity were all words that emerged on the shared post-it board where we gathered our thoughts.

Haapoja (2020, 9) writes about a “crisis of humanity” and that it is the cause of, and therefore, the proper name for what we are now calling the “climate crisis” (2020, 9). Haapoja proposes that to continue living in this world, it is necessary to re-imagine what humanity means and “re-write the relationship with the non-human” (2020, 17). She continues that this kind of re-imagination of humanity to attend to the more-than-human, or what she calls *becoming otherwise*, requires “an openness and quiescence, as in artistic being, to experiencing different ways of being in the world” (2020, 17). Spending time together resting, reading, conversing, listening, and trying out different movements, sound, lighting, and material scores was our working group’s approach to *becoming otherwise*. Inspired by Haapoja’s thoughts, I wondered if, in spaces where artistic *thinking-together* is possible, there is an opportunity to dream about and create different kinds of futures, where we could live together with other beings *as well as possible*.

all the bodies performing with us
all that we are evoking
all that is present

(Ojanen 2021.)

During the second week of the process, I guided an improvisational journey to imagine *becoming* our creaturely ancestors. This improvisational task arose to me during the first two weeks of residency, and at that time, I undertook the improvisational journey alone. Firstly, I imagined what it would be like to dance with my grandmother, then with her grandmother, and then with her ancestral mothers. The journey went so far as imagining my ancestral mothers as different kinds of beings, plants, roots, and seeds. It was a powerful improvisational journey that evoked other states of being and different movement qualities depending on whom I was dancing with. For me, this improvisational journey was profoundly moving. It felt important also to share this improvisational task with the working group so that each person would have the opportunity to imagine and embody what *becoming otherwise* could mean for them in this task.

I guided the working group members to close their eyes and find a comfortable place and position in the studio. I asked them to tune into their breath and the feel of their body against the surface of the ground. From there, I asked speculative questions that could invoke imaginings of different kinds of creatures or beings, such as “*How would this being or creature move?*”, “*What does this creature or being taste, see, smell?*”, “*How does this creature or being become in contact with other creatures or beings?*” I decided to share these questions as, for me, it felt as though, through these questions, I could get closer to the essence of an imaginary being and understand the *creatureliness* of my own body.

After the creature journey task, our group conversation made it clear that every working group member had very different experiences with their ancestral creature or being. We discussed the particularities, qualities, and ways of moving of each creature or being and used these clarifications to develop a “creature solo” for each person. These creature solos stayed with us throughout the process of making the artistic work and are visible in different sections of the final performance. These creature solos became, in a way, the backbone of the work, as they also steered the movement material for the other sections. As I see it, in the performance, these creature solos were our attempt to represent different ways of being in the world. These creature solos were our way of imagining the histories and inheritances of these ways of being. I viewed the *creature journey* as a way to understand other worlds through movement, to *become otherwise* and see what emerges from that.



Photo 3: Creature journey rehearsals.
Photograph: Wilhelmina Ojanen

4.4 Materiality and responsibility

going to caves
weights
salt water
a deep hum soothes me
I long to feel weight, pressure
like deep underwater, I imagine
or under clay
a mass to calm me
down

(Ojanen 2021.)

During the second residency period, mid-October, I worked for a week with performer Kardo Shiwan at Liikelaituri. In preparation for the process with the whole working group, we studied working with different materials such as heavy fabrics, water, and body mass. We went floating in salt water. We worked with 20 metres of heavy cotton fabric, getting wrapped in, throwing, catching the material, and getting covered by it. We also carried one another, exploring how carrying the total weight of another being affects one's movement possibilities. We were interested in exploring how having an embodied experience of the mass and weight of different materials affected us. These initial explorations made their way into the rehearsals with the whole working group. We explored carrying one another, the other materials and objects in the space, and experimented with how things fell from the curved walls of the performance space.

Having had to give up the original idea of working with clay in the process and performance of *becoming-with*, we decided that we would experiment with masses of very light fabric. We got over 500 metres of tulle from recycling centre Nextiili and others stores in Tampere. The tulle was used as a material to further the element of creatureliness. It was used both within the choreography and as a visual element, as “clustered masses” or “beings” that grew, transformed, and moved around the space. By using masses of a very light and easily movable material, yet something also large enough to cover or hide the performers, we sought to dissolve the borders of the human

performers into the masses of fabric. In this way, we embodied the idea of different beings or creatures existing within the performance.



Photo 4: Masses of tulle in the performance space.
Photograph: Wilhelmina Ojanen

From the second week of rehearsals onwards, in November, we received the chance to practice in the performance space once a week. We instantly discovered when moving in the space that it presented many challenges. The main challenge was the material of the space, the concrete. The concrete walls presented many physical challenges for the performers. The performers had to deal with the slipperiness of the wall when trying to climb upwards, ensuring they did not slip when climbing over a surface. The performers were also challenged in carrying the materials, such as tulle and led lights, around the space without slipping.

Amongst the working group, we spent a significant amount of time trying to find out how we could take care of our bodies whilst working in such a challenging space. We found a solution to practice softening the body against the hard surface of the concrete by using the breath to let go of unnecessary tension in the body when coming into contact with the concrete. Another solution was to spend time getting used to the space by carefully trying out falling, running, and climbing in the performance space. A somewhat surprising answer we found was that it was necessary to get all the performers specific barefoot shoes which provided a firm grip against the ground. Also, the performers needed to have clothes that allowed them to slide in the space but still be able to carry one another without slipping. Our costume designer Mirei Kato solved this problem brilliantly by making costumes that had many different layers and materials in different parts of the body.

As we progressed in making the piece, the performers became more confident in moving around the space, but we still had to be careful, so no one got hurt in the process. It was interesting to be with the emotions and ethical concerns that the challenge of the performance space and its materiality brought up. As the choreographer and person responsible for the process, I had to ask myself whether it was fair of me to ask the working group to perform in the space and how I could ensure that everyone stayed safe and well during the process. At times, I felt I was going against my wishes and ideas of the becoming-with process as cultivating a sense of care. How could I claim the process was caring if I asked members of the working group to put themselves at risk of hurting themselves? How could I live with this contradiction and take responsibility for my decision to use that particular space as the performance space?

After the two first rehearsals in the performance space, I understood that even when caring is present in a process, it does not guarantee absolute safety. I could not control everything that happened in the performance space or what happened in the studio space. Despite my wishes and actions to care for the performers' safety, I understood that absolute safety is never possible as we are always vulnerable to getting hurt (Butler 2004). My view of care expanded to realise that caring could also be about engaging with challenging elements in a supportive and thoughtful atmosphere.

I believe that the people involved in a process should always have the opportunity to say no, to not take part in something they do not feel comfortable doing. I cannot decide for another person, nor should I. In my opinion, the role of a choreographer or facilitator requires assuming responsibility for what you are asking the people involved in the process to participate in. If you would not do something yourself, how can you ask someone else to do it? It was important for me to be in constant dialogue with the group. I felt it was my responsibility to encourage members of the working group to raise concerns when a movement or transition in the space felt physically too challenging or to say when they were getting too tired to concentrate fully on moving in the performance space.

For me, it was important that we could work in an atmosphere where we could be honest about how we felt. I felt that it was my responsibility as the choreographer to ensure through my actions and words that the atmosphere of the process felt secure for the working group members to share their concerns. With the working group, we spoke about how the working environment could be caring for us and what that could consist of. We identified that having enough breaks, resting when needed, adapting to schedules, having enough time to practice things, making sure everyone is fed, having conversations, and knowing when to move on were all things that created an atmosphere of care for us.

The materiality and shape of the performance space profoundly impacted the becoming-with piece. If the work had been shown elsewhere than at Kennel D.I.Y indoor skate pool, it would have been a completely different experience. Throughout the process, we

had to repetitively envision and practice the movement material to suit the performance space. The performance space demanded constant adaptation of the choreography, as we found out some of the elements we had been practising in the Liikelaituri studio did not work or were not safe enough to perform in the concrete skate pool.

The *becoming-with* choreography comprises set moments and structured improvisation, arranged in a way that journeys through states of group efforts to delicate solos, alternating between individual and collective moments. The ambient sound world by live musician Tapani Rinne carries the performers on their journey as they move through the cave-like, creature-filled world. *becoming-with* aims to create an immersive and meditative atmosphere that allows the audience to reflect on their connection to the surrounding world. In a review of *becoming-with*, writer Emma Heinonen (2021) wrote:

becoming-with is a multisensory experience of empathy

The mist of the morning haze, the sound waves vibrating in the spine, the bright neon lights and the smell of incense spreading everywhere. becoming-with is a multi-sensory experience that makes you think about what a holistic experience of empathy and connection can be in the future. [...] The performance is an interesting experience that tickles many senses. The lights illuminating the performers from the top of the ramps and the bright neon lights sparkle in the eyes. Strongly vibrating sound waves soothe and lull the viewer into the atmosphere of the performance. The incense lit in the middle of the performance fills the space with its earthy and ritual-like scent. The performance, which appeals to several senses, roots and stops the viewer in their place. becoming-with manages to offer a comprehensive and unhurried viewing experience. The piece doesn't point at anything but offers a window to experience total empathy, which can be seen between the performers and felt in the viewer's body. (Heinonen 2021.)

For me, this review encapsulates the essence of the piece. It thoughtfully articulates the aim of the work, which in my opinion, was to hold space for both the working group and the audience to experience and reflect on what *becoming-with* could mean for them. It is fulfilling to learn that an audience member experienced the performance as engaging the senses and inciting thoughts on one's empathic connection to the world. Other audience feedback I received after the *becoming-with* performances revealed that many audience members felt *becoming-with* had been a meditative, thought-provoking, engaging, sensitising and moving experience.

Throughout the process of *becoming-with*, I returned to the notion of responsibility. In the role of the choreographer and person in charge of the process, I felt I had a responsibility to care for the working group, to make sure everyone was okay. I also felt responsible for making decisions and choices that arose from comprehending or imagining what would further the *as well as possible life* for the working group and the more-than-human worlds involved. I also acknowledged that in caring for the members of the working group and the more-than-human worlds involved, I could not do much more than what was already somehow being done within the process. In caring for these things, I understood that care was not necessarily about turning the sense of responsibility into action but rather about *being with care*. I view *being with care* as becoming attentive and sensitive to the more-than-human worlds around me so I can better understand how I can be in relationship with them. My responsibility is to tune into my relation to the world through my bodily being.

I believe there is responsibility in how one chooses to work as an artist and pedagogue. As an artist-pedagogue, I have to be responsible for what I put out into the world, be it in the frame of a dance piece, a dance class or a poem. I must be aware of what I am proposing within an artistic process or a teaching situation, and critical about where ideas, images and suggestions arise from. What kind of values am I furthering? What kind of world am I co-creating? What am I representing? What am I destroying? In my opinion, artistic and pedagogical practices require asking these questions, and for me, *becoming-with* was a profound process of questioning. I continue with more questions than answers, continuously moving towards the unknown.

a seeing in between

resting into

WIDENING

be with that.

*the dark glow, shimmer
of spots I cannot reach*

unknowing

relearning

rewiring

deepening

questioning

*the valleys, caves, they cave
stillness as a state of listening
free to notice what is happening*

.....

(personal notes, Ojanen 2021.)

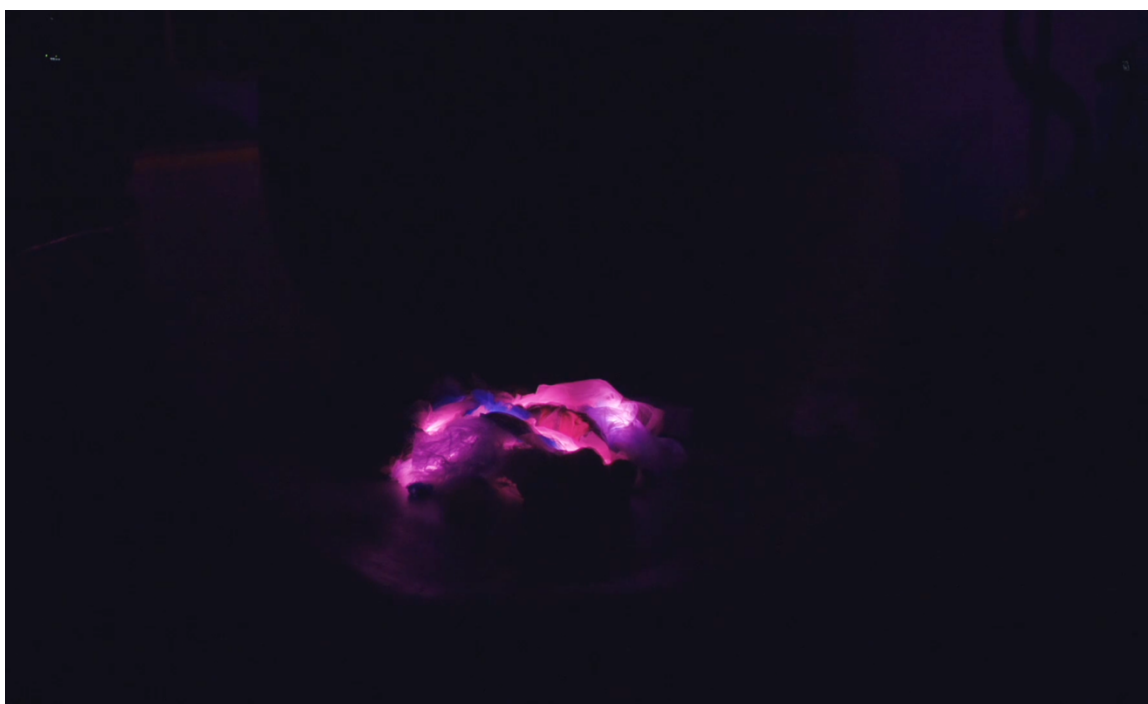


Photo 5: Screenshot from the recording of the *becoming-with* performance.
Filming: Jan Huhtanen

5. FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF *BEING WITH CARE*

This chapter will present the results of this artistic research as four guiding principles of *being with care* that propose how care can be fostered through dance practice. All of these guiding principles are intertwined and co-exist in *being with care*, therefore it is challenging to draw distinct boundaries between them.

Embodiment is the first guiding principle of *being with care*. In the context of this research, embodiment could be seen as a profound bodily understanding of one's connection to the world (Merleau-Ponty 2008; Abram 1996). The living body makes care possible, as the embodied knowledge we gain through the body allows us to care (Hamington 2004, 43). One acquires bodily information constantly, but for the information provided by the senses to become embodied knowledge, one must be attentive and sensitive, engaged in the present moment (Anttila 2018b, 5).

Embodiment can be fostered by attuning to the messages of the senses to gain embodied knowledge of how one relates to the world around oneself. By actively practising sensitising the body-mind through attentional dance improvisation and somatic practices, one can nurture a deeper connection to the world (Foster 2019, 28). One can recognise the porous borders of the body by engaging in practices that cultivate a sensitivity and intentionality of touch, such as contact improvisation or making with the hands, e.g., clay-making, knitting, and working with different materials. By engaging with practices that have a clear intention or focus on the quality of an action, one can make space to be with the question of "How to care?" in each new situation (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 55).

Truly embodying the notion of care requires bodily presence, attuning to bodily sensations to understand the ever-shifting internal processes and how these processes are impacting one's experience of the world (Anttila 2007, 79). Through embodied knowledge that arises from internal bodily processes, one can recognise that one is always in a state of *becoming-with* the world, entangled in complex webs of care. By

becoming aware of the multiplicities of worlds within one's embodied existence, one is obliged to be with care (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 218-221).

The second guiding principle of *being with care* is **imagination**. The caring imagination is necessary to envision the worlds one might be impacting with one's actions (Hamington 2004, 79-83). Conceiving the *as well as possible* option in each moment requires imagination, as one can never fully know what actually is *as well as possible* in more-than-human worlds. One can only speculate as to what could be the *as well as possible* option in each situation (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 221).

From a phenomenological perspective, imagination is our senses trying to understand what we cannot yet perceive (Abram 1996, 58). The imagination arises from embodied knowledge to embrace the unknown (Hamington 2004, 60). Embracing the unknown is spending time with practices and tasks that evoke different, often inexplicable, states of being, as well as different emotions, visualisations and thoughts. Holding space for not-knowing means engaging in artistic practices and processes in a way that allow for the messiness, complexity and difficulty of *being with care* to be visible.

In order to imagine and embody different ways of *being in the world*, one can practise *becoming otherwise*. *Becoming otherwise* suggests delving into artistic practices that cultivate an openness towards other ways of life, allowing one to imagine and embody what other, unfamiliar ways of being could mean (Haapoja 2020, 17). Through dance practice, one can imagine and embody a broad spectrum of possible ways of being. The imagination is necessary to understand what it could mean to *be with care* now and in the future.

Attentiveness is the third guiding principle of *being with care*. In order to recognise that there is a need for care, one must be attentive (Tronto 1993, 127). Attentiveness means being aware of oneself to recognise the needs of others (Tronto 1993, 131). One can become attentive to the world within and around oneself by directing one's attention to bodily sensations through dance practice.

Attentiveness means fully engaging in the present moment to choose how one wishes to act in that moment and the next moment. By cultivating conscious attention, dance practice can allow one to act in the world differently.

Attentiveness also encompasses curiosity. To be attentive to other beings, one must be curious about them. Curiosity also means letting go of judgment and being aware of one's assumptions about the other. To care in more-than-human worlds, one must be curious to understand more about the intertwined and complex ways of living in the world (Haraway 2008, 36). *Being with care* requires being curious about one's connection to the more-than-human. Working and creating with different things, materials, and spaces provides a way to become curious about other worlds.

The notion of **responsibility** is central to caring (Tronto 1993, 131). It is the fourth guiding principle of *being with care*. If care implies engagement with something or someone else, and is both a practice and a disposition, then there is responsibility in how one engages in *being with care* (Tronto 1993, 102-104). Understanding one's embeddedness in the world through the senses reminds one about the forgotten relationship to the sensuous world and the responsibility one has to live in this world *as well as possible* (Foster 2019, 34). In practice, *being with care* is assuming responsibility for one's actions and decisions by negotiating and defining boundaries with others. Responsibility also means becoming aware of situations when one is unconsciously taking away the agency of another.

There is also a responsibility in practising *thinking-together* with others. In aiming to include other beings in one's thinking practices, one must be aware of how one relates to or describes things (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 72). This awareness is attuning oneself to listen to others. *Thinking-together*, in practice, can be sharing ideas, dreams, hopes and thoughts to question what kind of world one is creating with others. *Thinking-together* requires being aware of how one is engaging with others, acknowledging and not undermining the agency of other beings when engaging in processes together.

Ultimately, to *be with care*, one must *stay with the complexity of care*. One must acknowledge that one can never completely understand the full extent of care; one can only experience it and try to foster care in one's everyday practices. *Being with care* in times of ecosocial crisis means staying with the complexities of not knowing but still trying to understand, not assuming but trying to be with things fully as they arrive at the bodily experience. Dance is a way to tune in to the complex knots and entanglements one finds oneself amid. *Being with care* requires considering the worlds one is impacting with one's practices. *Being with care* is a counterforce to carelessness.

By engaging in dance practice, one can, through one's body, experience the world around oneself in a more profound, embodied way, and thus possibly be compelled to be more sensitive about the consequences of one's actions in the world. By engaging in dance practices, one can remember one's connection to the surrounding world and renew one's sense of awe and wonder of the world around oneself.

Artistic and speculative practices of *being with care* mean resisting the paradigm of productivity (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 215). Instead, they propose being with the complexity of care and *staying with the trouble* in whatever way that might manifest materially (Haraway 2016, 1). I believe dance practices are ways to trouble and resist the constant need for progress, to make time for something else to emerge. Although I feel an urgency to be with care, I understand that *being with care* cannot be rushed.

Ultimately, this thesis does not offer a straightforward method of *being with care* but rather a set of guiding principles that exist together to propose that *being with care* can be a way of approaching living and creating in times of ecosocial crisis. *Being with care* offers a way to imagine the possibility of living in *as well as possible*, flourishing futures with more-than-human beings.

6. CONCLUSION

“The choice to love is a choice to connect – to find ourselves in the other.”

(hooks 2001, 93.)

In the process of concluding this artistic research, I have kept returning to the thought that *being with care* is also a practice of love. I do not mean this sentimentally or naively, but rather as an idea that love for the world can be a driving force of action in times of ecosocial crisis. Most commonly, love can be seen as an emotion, but I am interested in the kind of love that drives action. Love can be an action that fosters accountability and responsibility (hooks 2001, 13). In my opinion, care without this type of love is not possible because there cannot be care without some kind of engagement in the world of another being. This kind of love, for me, relates to pedagogy and why I teach, choreograph, and share dance practice and performance with others. For me, sharing methods of fostering *as well as possible* ways of being in the world through dance practice is an act of care and an act of love. What if *being with care* was also an act of loving the world? The difference between love and care is something I am interested in studying in the future.

I began this artistic research hoping to understand why I was so drawn to the topic of care and why I felt like it was necessary to examine in my artistic practice. I know now that I view *being with care* as a notion that encompasses four principles important to me as a dance maker and teacher: *embodiment* (Anttila 2018; Foster 2019), *imagination* (Abram 1996; Hamington 2004; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017), *attentiveness* (Haraway 2008; Tronto 1993) and *responsibility* (Haraway 2016; Tronto 1993). As I stated in the introduction of this thesis, in the notion of care, I find a sense of hope. I believe that if we can *be with care*, we may strive to make decisions that cultivate the flourishing of both human and more-than-human worlds. This gives me hope in times of ecosocial crisis.

In my opinion, this artistic research contributes to the field of dance pedagogy because it opens the discussion about how the consideration of care can be present in artistic and pedagogical processes. It analyses diverse approaches to care to underline the complexity of the notion of care, and it examines the artistic process of the *becoming-*

with piece to disclose the different ways the principles of *being with care* can be present in dance practice.

I feel I accomplished what I set out to do with this research, which was first to understand the notion of care in a more profound, embodied way, and secondly, to understand what *being with care* could mean in times of ecosocial crisis. *Being with care* in times of ecosocial crisis ultimately means fully engaging in the present moment and being attentive to how my thoughts and actions impact the world around me. I also hope that the artistic-pedagogical process of making the *becoming-with* piece was a moment in which members of the working group could reflect on their experience of *being with care*.

This thesis focused mainly on my embodied experience of the *becoming-with* process. Although it was a conscious choice, it is also somehow a weakness of this research. Therefore, in my future research, I plan to interview the working group members and conduct questionnaires with the audience to gain a wider pool of information about the diversity of experiences in both the process and performance situations. In the continuation of *becoming-with* and future artistic-pedagogical processes, I hope to involve the working group and the audience in the research. From understanding a broader range of experiences, I believe I could further argue for the complexity and the importance of care. Furthermore, I hope to focus the research more on audience reception in the future. Through research into the audience's experience, I hope to understand how care is or could be present in a performance situation, and how care could be aesthetically performed. What does care look like in the eyes of an audience? Can care be performed?

I plan to continue delving into the topic of care in my future work as a choreographer and pedagogue. Soon, during the autumn of 2022, I will be working on a new community dance project called *Matters of Care: (or everything we do)* at Pirkanmaa Regional Dance Centre in Tampere. The project will go on for three months and develop through weekly workshops, finally building a choreographic work as an artistic outcome of the process together with the participants. The three-month process will culminate in a performance in late November 2022 (see Ojanen 2022).

Being with care continues to reshape and reform my way of being in the world and allows me to rethink my ways of working in dance. Ultimately, I hope this thesis has provided new perspectives on care and cultivated an understanding of how we could *be with care* amidst today's crises. For me, *being with care* is about creating, in this moment, the world we want to live in the future. I end with a question that I hope will inspire you, the reader, in moving towards an *as well as possible* present moment and future:

What happens if we think about our artistic and pedagogical practices as being with care?

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List of photographs:

Cover photograph: *becoming-with* promo picture. Photo: Julius Töyrylä
Photo 2: (p.43), *Creature journey* rehearsals. Photo: Wilhelmina Ojanen
Photo 3: (p.45), Masses of tulle in the performance space. Photo: Wilhelmina Ojanen
Photo 4: (p.51), Screenshot from *becoming-with* performance recording. Filming: Jan Huhtanen

***becoming-with* website page:**

www.wilhelminaojanendance.com/works/becomingwith