

# Empowerment & Environment

## Belonging through Performance

Vulnerability and the disabled body,  
getting a sense of belonging through  
the other

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# Outline and Aims

- Dutch government deprive people in need of care from their sense of belonging
- Getting a sense of belonging through the other
  - Disability: physical impairment
  - Vulnerability: dependency on the other
  - The other: the caregiver / self
  - Belonging: a sense of belonging to yourself
- Self-sufficiency / Individualism / Responsibility / Health care system of the Netherlands / PGB

# The dance of day

As you turn the lights on in the morning  
and whisper gently in my ear  
While removing the blankets with a warning  
I can smell you're near

You touch my legs that spent the night in stiff position  
And I feel your fingers on my knee  
Every muscle changes in transition  
It's this move that sets them free

When you hold my glass and fill the dryness of my mouth  
Wipe the water drops that go down my neck  
You wait patiently as I swallow loud  
My body doesn't feel like such a wreck

You put me down on the toilet and give me time to pee  
You wash my hands, my face, my shoulder  
And gently kneel beside me

I know you are the beholder

Through you  
I still belong to me

# Self, other and government

- PGB (Persoonsgebonden budget)
  - Personal budget to hire your own caregivers
  - Developed by VVD (1995)
- From a welfare state towards a 'participatory society'
- Same amount of care needed
  - Less money from the government
  - More dependent on volunteer aid

# The not (yet) existing image

New definitions of self-sufficiency & individualism

- *Responsible for your own health and care*

- *The body is still owned by the government*

- *A body that “fails” to live up to the expectancies of society gets the full responsibility: if that’s not the ultimate idea of individualism*

# Belonging through the other

- Belonging through performance instead of identity (there is no identification needed)
- We are tied
- ‘Although we struggle for rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite even only our own. The body has its invariably public dimension. Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine. Given over from the start to the world of others, it bears their imprint.’ (Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*, 2004, 26)

# Belonging through the other (2)

- *The tie*: Vulnerability is part of all bodies instead of only an element of the other.
- ‘to reconfigure vulnerability, not as a term of weakness, but as the very possibility of becoming.’ (Margrit Shildrick, “Becoming Vulnerable: Contagious Encounters and the Ethics of Risk”, 2000, 215).

# Belonging through the other (3)

There is no distinction between the self and the other

Therefore,

*Belonging through the other as the dance of day*