

# Tango in the Netherlands

This document invites you to embark on a transformative journey that encourages self-awareness, open-mindedness, and personal responsibility in your relationship with tango. Whether you are a dancer, teacher, organizer, or community member.

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## 1. Introduction to Tango Research: Transforming the Scene

This research began with a simple question posed to the tango community on Facebook: What is needed and wanted in our tango scene? The responses revealed three core desires:

- i. A continuous influx of beginners, particularly young people.
- ii. A community with a deeper understanding of tango culture, encompassing knowledge of music, history, etiquette, and more.
- iii. A strong sense of community and inclusivity, where people feel a familial bond.

With these needs and desires in mind, I reached out to the community to ask if they were willing to transform these needs. Those who responded affirmatively were invited to participate in a series of video call interviews.

Over the course of this research, I conducted over one hundred interviews with individuals from cities across the Netherlands, including Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Groningen, and many others. Participants were asked to envision a national tango event in December 2027, where our community had achieved its aspirations—abundant beginners, live orchestras, schools collaborating seamlessly, and a deeply interconnected community. From this place of fulfilment, they shared their reflections on how these goals were realized, what obstacles had stood in the way, and what actions could contribute to creating that future. Additionally, they were invited to reflect on their own role in this transformative process.

The data from these interviews was then analyzed through the lens of Werner Erhard's transformative framework. Erhard, a leading thinker in fields as diverse as business, philosophy, and community building, has spent over four decades developing models that drive change in both individuals and organizations. By applying his insights to the tango community, this research aims to explore not only what is needed to achieve the envisioned future, but also how we can collectively transform the scene to align with these shared goals.

Yerpun Castro

*“It is important that you get clear for yourself that your only access to impacting life is action. The world does not care what you intend, how committed you are, how you feel or what you think, and certainly it has no interest in what you want and don't want. Take a look at life as it is lived and see for yourself that the world only moves for you when you act.”*

— Werner Erhard

## **2. The desired future of the participants**

### **December 2027: The Transformation of the Tango Community in the Netherlands: A Journey of Growth and Connection.**

The tango community in the Netherlands has undergone a remarkable transformation, blossoming into a vibrant and inclusive social dance scene. Over the years, a growing number of events—such as *prácticas*, weekend marathons, and social gatherings—have successfully attracted newcomers, fostering a sense of belonging and participation across various age groups. The infusion of young leaders has invigorated the community, leading to a thriving international reputation as a key hub for tango in Europe. This enhanced visibility has opened doors for connections with dancers from other countries, further enriching the local scene.

Accessibility is a cornerstone of this growth, particularly within universities, where tango has become an appealing option for students. Teachers have shifted their focus toward creating a joyful and self-expressive environment, emphasizing enjoyment over technical perfection. Classes are designed to cater to both beginners and more experienced dancers, allowing everyone to find their own rhythm and voice within the dance.

The spirit of collaboration among organizers, teachers, and dancers has fostered a lively atmosphere filled with social events that feature live music and quality dining options. This emphasis on community has made *milongas* feel warm and welcoming, inviting people to come together and celebrate their shared love for tango. The breaking down of traditional gender roles has encouraged a more open social dynamic, making it easier for participants to connect and interact.

As the community continues to evolve, there is a strong focus on education that supports both beginners and advanced dancers alike. Ongoing workshops and events have led to a rise in the visibility of tango, with festivals and media coverage attracting the attention of younger generations. This growing interest showcases tango not just as a dance, but as an integral part of cultural life in the Netherlands.

Ultimately, the tango community has successfully woven itself into the fabric of Dutch society, maintaining its rich history while embracing modern influences. The journey has transformed tango from a niche activity into a lively, social pursuit that enriches lives and fosters a sense of belonging, making it a cherished tradition for all involved.

### 3. Creation of a new Context

To have an adequate understanding of this document, we must introduce ourselves to Werner Erhard's concepts.

In Erhard's work, "context" refers to the bigger picture or the environment that shapes how we understand and experience things. It's not just about the specific actions or details (what's happening), but about the larger framework that influences how we interpret those actions and what they mean. When we change the context, it can completely shift how we experience the situation or how we respond to it.

Let's use the tango community as an example to explain this idea:

#### The Current Context of Tango:

Imagine the context of the tango community today. In many places, tango can sometimes feel like a competitive, fragmented experience. Dancers might focus on impressing others, teachers may be working alone without collaborating, and beginners may feel intimidated by more experienced dancers. The community might seem divided by different styles or approaches to teaching and dancing.

In this context, people may approach tango with the idea of "performing well," which can lead to pressure, competition, or disconnection between dancers. Beginners might feel discouraged, and the energy in the room could feel tense or divided. This context can limit the experience of tango, making it feel less about enjoyment and connection, and more about proving something or fitting into a specific role.

#### Shifting to a new Context:

Now, let's imagine shifting the context of the tango community. What if the larger framework shifted from competition to collaboration? Instead of seeing tango as a space where everyone is trying to outperform each other, imagine it as a space where everyone is working together to grow and enjoy the dance.

In this new context:

**Dancers** would focus on connection, not competition. They would enjoy the dance for the shared experience it creates, supporting each other on the floor.

**Teachers** would collaborate and share knowledge, creating a learning environment that encourages growth for dancers at all levels. Instead of isolated teaching styles, they could work together to raise the overall standard of tango in the community.

**Beginners** would feel more welcome and less intimidated because the context would be one of mutual support and encouragement, rather than pressure or exclusivity.

**Organizers** could work together to create events that are inclusive and welcoming, fostering a sense of unity and community rather than creating competition between different schools or styles.

## How It Works:

Switching the context works by shifting the way people see and experience tango. When the context moves from competition and division to cooperation and inclusion, everyone's experience transforms. Tango becomes more enjoyable and accessible for everyone, and people are able to connect more deeply, whether they are dancing, teaching, or organizing.

In simple terms, context is the "lens" through which we view the world. If the lens is one of competition, the experience of tango feels stressful. But if the lens is one of connection and collaboration, the dance becomes a joyful, shared experience. Switching the context in the tango community can transform the way everyone relates to each other, creating a stronger, more vibrant tango scene.

## Change vs. Transformation:

In Werner Erhard's work, **change** refers to making improvements or modifications within the existing framework or context. It's about adjusting or tweaking something to make it better, but it doesn't alter the fundamental structure or the way you view things.

**Transformation**, on the other hand, is a deeper, more profound shift. It's about completely shifting the context or the way you perceive and experience the world. Transformation changes the underlying assumptions and the way you relate to things, leading to a new way of being and interacting, rather than just adjusting what already exists.

In short, **change** is about doing things differently within the same context, while **transformation** is about seeing the world differently, which leads to new possibilities and ways of doing things.

Transformation involves shifting from an old paradigm to a new one, where individuals and groups see themselves in a new light and act from a new set of possibilities. The following ideas can be viewed through the lens of transforming the tango community, moving from a fragmented and siloed culture to an integrated, inclusive, and thriving community that embodies the transformational aspects of tango.

## Netherlands, July 2024

### 4. Cultural and Mindset Barriers

#### Individualism vs. Collectivism:

A strong emphasis on individualism, competition, and isolation is seen as a barrier to creating a supportive and open tango community. There is a consistent pattern of people focusing on their personal goals or egos rather than working together to build a collective vision.

#### Questions to reflect on:

- What would be possible for the tango community if we all chose to prioritize the success of the group over our own personal achievements?
- How could we transform the way we think about tango by asking: *How does this benefit the collective, not just me?*

#### Transformation Objective:

Shift from individualism to a collective mindset that values collaboration, inclusivity, and community growth over personal ego or competition.

#### Transformative Actions:

**Reframe Competition as Collaboration:** Create a community-wide initiative where competition is reframed as mutual learning and growth. This could be done by emphasizing a culture where sharing knowledge, providing feedback, and offering support become the central values. Workshops, mentorship programs, and group performances can become the norm rather than isolated solo achievements. This shifts from seeing others as competitors to seeing them as collaborators in the tango journey.

**Lead by Example:** Encourage teachers and experienced dancers to lead by example, demonstrating vulnerability, openness, and a commitment to collaboration. Transformational leaders create an environment where others feel safe to take risks and innovate. Teachers can model humility, showing that mistakes are part of the learning process, which helps reduce the fear and arrogance that currently inhibits growth.

**New Language and Shared Vision:** Create a common language around collaboration, inclusivity, and participation. Through group discussions, social events, and workshops, ensure that everyone in the community understands and feels aligned with the collective vision. Create breakthroughs by transforming language, so using a new vocabulary that includes words like "together," "we," and "support" will help shift the mindset towards community ownership.

### **Specific Action:**

Launch a "Tango Together" campaign, which includes regular collaborative performances, co-teaching events, and the creation of a shared online platform where dancers can exchange ideas and work on projects together.

### **Fear, Arrogance, and Ego:**

Fear of competition, fear of change, and general arrogance, both in terms of teachers and organisers, prevents collaboration and openness to new ideas. This leads to fragmentation and lack of willingness to innovate or take risks.

### **Questions to reflect on:**

- What would happen if we dropped our egos and embraced vulnerability, knowing that every one of us has something valuable to offer?
- What if, instead of defending our beliefs, we embraced new ideas and experimented with them in a spirit of growth, not fear?

### **Transformation Objective:**

Shift from fear, arrogance, and ego to openness, humility, and a willingness to embrace change and innovation.

### **Transformative Actions:**

**Introduce Vulnerability as Strength:** Create spaces where dancers, teacher and organisers can share their fears, insecurities, and struggles with the community. This could be through storytelling workshops or open dialogues in which people discuss their personal tango journeys, including the challenges they face with ego and fear. By confronting these barriers openly, they lose their power. These sessions can be structured to encourage active listening and empathy, helping participants realize that fear and ego are shared experiences, not isolating factors.

**Radical Ownership and Accountability:** Create an environment where everyone is responsible for maintaining a supportive atmosphere. This can be done by incorporating a peer accountability structure, where community members hold each other accountable for the collective growth. Through this, participants move beyond focusing on personal gain to realizing that their actions affect the entire community. For example, regular check-ins, feedback loops, and responsibility sharing can ensure that the community is collectively progressing.

**Training in Emotional Intelligence:** Offer workshops focused on emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and conflict resolution for all teachers, organisers, dancers and students. This will address the underlying fears that fuel arrogance and ego, allowing members of the

community to move forward with greater self-awareness and less defensiveness. Creating a safe space for growth will help reduce the fear of failure and encourage more participation in the collaborative process.

### **Specific Action:**

Implement a "Fearless Tango" series where participants come together to share their fears and successes in a safe, open environment. Include skill-building exercises that focus on emotional intelligence, leadership, and the joy of collective growth.

### **Lack of Responsibility and Accountability:**

A lack of ownership over the broader community's growth and development, especially among teachers and organizers, leads to stagnation. Many participants note that individuals often don't take responsibility for the community's well-being, and don't leave it to others to push forward change.

### **Questions to reflect on:**

- What would it look like if every member of this community took full responsibility for the well-being and growth of the entire tango scene?
- What would change if, instead of waiting for others to lead, we each asked: What can I do to move this community forward today?

### **Transformation Objective:**

Encourage individuals to take full ownership of the community's growth and development, fostering a sense of shared responsibility.

### **Transformative Actions:**

**Empower the Community with Ownership:** Develop a community governance model where everyone has a voice in decisions (\*holacracy), and responsibility is shared. This could include a community board or task force with rotating members from all levels of the tango community (teachers, students, event organizers). By giving everyone a stake in the community's direction, you'll create a sense of ownership and accountability.

*\* Holacracy is a system of organizational governance that distributes decision-making authority across the organization, rather than relying on a traditional hierarchical structure. It aims to create a more agile, transparent, and decentralized approach to management, where roles and responsibilities are clearly defined but also adaptable as the needs of the organization evolve.*

**Create Collective Accountability Systems:** Introduce mechanisms of accountability such as community-led reviews or feedback circles, where individuals can evaluate both personal and collective actions towards community goals. These can be regular check-ins where participants reflect on how they are contributing to the community's vision and goals.



**Public Commitments to Collective Goals:** Encourage individuals to publicly commit to actions that contribute to the community's well-being. This could be done through declarations, written pledges, or creative public commitments at events. Public commitment creates both personal accountability and collective buy-in.

**Specific Action:**

Establish a "Tango Holacratic organization" where dancers, teachers, and organizers take on rotating roles of responsibility within the community. For example, creating a promotion and marketing organization to promote the tango on a national level, an academy from teachers to create new teachers, mentorship programs where experienced dancers coach newcomers in prácticas, hosting teams to organise events and connect schools, and helping to grow the collective.

## **5. Structural and Organizational Issues**

**Fragmentation and Competition:**

Tango communities are highly fragmented, with competition between schools, teachers, and organizers. This makes it difficult to create a unified, supportive network and often leads to a lack of collaboration or sharing of resources. The fragmented nature of tango in the Netherlands, where different groups operate in silos, prevents a cohesive growth of the scene.

**Questions to reflect on:**

- What would happen if we stopped seeing other tango schools, teachers, and organizers as competitors, and instead began seeing them as potential partners in creating a united and vibrant community?
- What if the success of the tango scene as a whole was more important than the success of individual schools or teachers? How would our actions change?

**Transformation Objective:**

Move from fragmented, competitive silos to a unified, collaborative tango community that shares resources, knowledge, and opportunities.

**Transformative Actions:**

**Create a Shared Vision for the Community:** Unify the tango community under a shared vision that prioritizes collaboration over competition. This vision should include values of mutual support, collective growth, and community-building. Bringing together teachers, organizers, and dancers from different schools and regions to create a manifesto or charter could be a concrete step in aligning the community toward a common goal.

**Facilitate Cross-School Collaboration:** Encourage tango schools and organizers to share resources and collaborate rather than compete. This could be facilitated by creating “joint events” such as open milongas, inter-school showcases, or community workshops where teachers from different schools co-teach or perform. These events can create opportunities for schools to share resources like marketing efforts, advertising, and venues, helping reduce the isolation felt between them.

**Develop a Community Hub:** Create a central organizing body or platform (Holland Embraces) that serves as a space for different schools, teachers, and dancers to connect, share ideas, and coordinate activities. This could be an online community or an annual tango summit where the various fragmented elements of the community come together to discuss their shared needs, challenges, and opportunities. A strong hub can create a sense of collective ownership and shared resources.

### **Specific Action:**

Launch a "Tango Unity" initiative, where a group of diverse tango schools, dancers and organizers commit to hosting monthly or quarterly events that feature multiple schools working together in an organized way. This could include workshops, performances, and community meetings with open discussions to strategize on how to share resources.

### **Lack of Communication and Coordination:**

There is a recurring issue with poor communication between teachers, schools, and organizers. This lack of collaboration leads to missed opportunities for cross-pollination, shared events, or collective marketing efforts.

### **Questions to reflect on:**

- What would it take for us to stop missing opportunities and start creating events that benefit everyone, by coordinating and communicating more effectively with each other?
- How would the community shift if we each asked ourselves: *How can I contribute to better communication today?*

### **Transformation Objective:**

Shift from poor communication and missed opportunities to a highly coordinated and well-connected network of teachers, organizers, and venues that work together transparently and effectively.

### **Transformative Actions:**

**Establish Regular Communication Channels:** Implement a regular and structured communication system between schools, teachers, and organizers. This could include a

monthly newsletter or a central online platform that updates everyone on upcoming events, workshops, and collaborative opportunities. By creating a consistent flow of information, all parties are kept in the loop and can better plan joint efforts, reducing miscommunication and missed opportunities.

**Create a Coordination Task Force:** Form a community task force or coordination team made up of representatives from different schools, teachers, and venues. This team can meet regularly to discuss ongoing and upcoming activities, challenges, and collaborations. By having a dedicated group focused on ensuring smooth communication, coordination can be more intentional and less fragmented.

**Promote Shared Calendars and Event Platforms:** Use shared calendars or event platforms (such as a dedicated tango community website or social media group) where upcoming tango events—classes, workshops, and milongas—are posted and accessible to everyone. This centralized calendar allows the community to avoid scheduling conflicts, increase attendance at events, and ensure greater collaboration among the schools and organizers.

### **Specific Action:**

Implement a "Tango Network" app or website that centralizes event listings, class schedules, and resource sharing for teachers and organizers, with a system for booking venues and posting announcements. This app could also allow users to post questions, ideas, or resources, fostering a collaborative approach to problem-solving and event planning.

### **Limited Venues and Resources:**

The availability of venues and economic constraints (expensive locations, limited parking, etc.) pose significant barriers to organizing events and activities. Many are also concerned about the lack of proper facilities for tango, such as good floors, sound systems, or affordable spaces.

### **Questions to reflect on:**

- What would be possible if we looked at our limited venues and resources not as obstacles but as an invitation to get creative and find new solutions?
- What would it take for us to approach the challenge of limited resources as a shared responsibility, where each person plays a part in finding solutions?

### **Transformation Objective:**

Move from a scarcity mindset regarding venues and resources to an abundant, resource-sharing culture where spaces and materials are accessed collaboratively.

## **Transformative Actions:**

**Develop Venue Partnerships:** Tango schools and organizers can work together to negotiate better access to venues by pooling resources. This could involve negotiating discounts with venue owners in exchange for group bookings or shared events. A collective approach to venue rental can lower individual costs and allow for better utilization of available spaces. This will address both the limited availability of affordable spaces and the challenge of high costs.

**Create Temporary or Shared Spaces:** Explore opportunities to use non-traditional spaces (such as community centers, dance halls, or outdoor venues in good weather) for tango events. By thinking creatively and in a collective spirit, the community can open up new venues without the need for expensive leases. Additionally, schools can share their existing spaces during off-peak hours, making venues more available for the community as a whole.

**Develop a Resource Pool:** Establish a shared resource pool where schools and event organizers can contribute and borrow materials like sound systems, lighting, flooring, and other necessary items. By creating a cooperative approach to resources, the community can overcome the limitations posed by expensive equipment, ensuring that events and classes can go forward without financial strain.

**Crowdsource or Fundraise for Venue Solutions:** If the community faces consistent challenges in securing appropriate venues, consider organizing crowdfunding campaigns or community fundraising events to secure funding for long-term venue solutions. This could involve the creation of a "community tango center" that serves as a permanent or semi-permanent space for the tango community. The act of collectively raising funds can also strengthen the sense of ownership and responsibility for the community.

## **Specific Action:**

Form a "Venue Collective" where organizers and schools collaborate on finding and securing affordable venues, as well as sharing costs and resources (like sound systems and flooring). Additionally, organize a community fundraising gala or crowd-funded campaign to secure funding for a permanent venue or collective access to better facilities.

## **6. Educational and Instructional Barriers**

### **Superficial Teaching and Lack of Depth:**

Many participants express concern that teaching in the community often focuses too much on sequences and steps, neglecting the deeper aspects of tango such as musicality, connection, and the cultural/social dimensions of the dance. This results in students who don't fully understand the art form.

### **Questions to reflect on:**

- What would be possible if we shifted our focus from teaching steps and sequences to nurturing a deeper understanding of the musicality, connection, and cultural richness of tango?
- How could we cultivate a community where every student not only learns the movements but also learns to feel and express the soul of tango?

**Create a Declaration of Values:** The community can create a powerful statement or declaration about the essence of tango, prioritizing its cultural, social, and musical depth, not just the technical movements. This could include the shared values of connection, musicality, and cultural understanding as core components of tango, not just steps or sequences.

**Shift in the Purpose of Teaching:** Rather than focusing on "how to teach steps," teachers can embrace their role as facilitators of self-discovery and emotional connection. This transforms the act of teaching into an exploration of the dance as a living, evolving art form. Teachers should be trained to guide students in understanding the cultural and emotional dimensions of tango, incorporating these into every class and event.

**Mentorship and Lifelong Learning:** Establish a mentorship model in the community where experienced teachers actively engage with younger or less experienced teachers to share their wisdom, knowledge, and personal experiences. This shifts the teaching paradigm from simply transmitting information to a collaborative, community-based model of growth and learning.

### **Specific Action:**

#### **"Tango Immersion Workshops"**

Organize periodic Tango Immersion Workshops where the focus is on deepening students' understanding of tango beyond just the steps. These workshops would be designed around themes like musicality, connection, cultural history, and emotional expression. They could include interactive elements like live music sessions, cultural talks, or improvisational exercises that encourage participants to explore the emotional and cultural dimensions of tango. These workshops could be led by experienced dancers, musicians, or cultural experts, and they would provide opportunities for all participants (from beginners to advanced dancers) to learn together, fostering a collaborative and inclusive atmosphere.

### **Inexperienced or Unqualified Teachers:**

Several respondents pointed out that many teachers lack the necessary experience, knowledge, or teaching ability to truly guide students. There is also a concern that the bar for

becoming a teacher is too low, and that those who are not lifelong learners themselves shouldn't be teaching.

**Questions to reflect on:**

- How could we create a culture where every teacher sees themselves as a student first, constantly growing and expanding their knowledge of tango to provide the best possible experience for their students?
- How might the community change if teachers were supported to continually improve their skills and knowledge, so they could better inspire and guide their students?

**Create a Clear Pathway for Teacher Development:** Instead of just allowing anyone to teach, develop a clearly defined pathway for teachers that involves certifications, ongoing education, and community-based assessments. This ensures teachers are not only technically proficient but also have a deep understanding of the social and cultural aspects of tango.

**Incorporate a Feedback System:** Build a feedback loop into the community where students are encouraged to give constructive feedback, and teachers actively seek continuous improvement. This creates a culture where teachers are seen as lifelong learners and allows them to adjust their approach based on real-time community needs.

**Cultural and Emotional Competency Training:** Teachers should receive training in emotional intelligence, social dynamics, and cultural history to ensure they create a safe and inclusive space for all dancers. This can be part of an accredited teacher-training program that fosters not just technical but also social and cultural mastery.

**Specific Action:**

**"Teacher Observation and Peer Review Program"**

Establish a system where teachers can observe each other's classes and provide constructive, peer-to-peer feedback. This can include a formal process where a more experienced or accredited teacher observes a less experienced teacher and offers guidance on teaching methods, communication, and cultural integration within the lessons. To ensure quality and continuous growth, these peer reviews could be tied to the teacher's development pathway, helping them identify areas of improvement and gain fresh perspectives from colleagues. This not only enhances the overall quality of teaching but also fosters a sense of community and mutual support among teachers, ensuring that they evolve together as lifelong learners.

## The Gap Between Classes and Social Dancing:

A significant concern is the disconnect between classroom learning and actual social dancing (milongas). Students often struggle to apply what they learn in class when they go to a milonga, as the expectations and environments are vastly different.

### Questions to reflect on:

- How could the tango community bridge the gap between classroom learning and social dancing, so students feel more confident, relaxed, and capable when they go to a milonga?
- What if we helped students see that tango is not about perfection, but about connection and expression in the moment, whether on the dance floor in class or at a milonga?

**Integrate Social Dance into Class Structure:** Reframe the purpose of classes so they mirror the real-world dance environment of milongas. For instance, classes could include dedicated segments on social dancing, with specific skills taught on navigating crowded floors, reading the energy of the room, and the unspoken rules of milongas.

**Community-Supported Prácticas:** Foster regular prácticas that are framed as learning spaces, not just social events. Create an open dialogue between dancers and teachers during prácticas where students can reflect on their experiences and receive guidance.

**Collaborative Class Designs:** Create collaborative partnerships between teachers and social dancers to co-design the curriculum. For example, experienced social dancers can collaborate with teachers to identify gaps between class learning and social dance realities, shaping future lessons around real-life application. This creates a deeper connection between the classroom and social dancing.

### Specific Action: "Milonga Simulations in Classes"

Introduce Milonga Simulations as part of the class structure. These would be structured practice sessions within classes where students are encouraged to apply what they've learned in a social dance setting, with teachers acting as facilitators rather than instructors. During these simulations, students would practice their connection, navigation, and floorcraft in a controlled environment that mimics a real milonga, including interacting with multiple partners, responding to varying energy levels, and following the unspoken rules of the social dance floor. Teachers could provide real-time feedback and guidance, helping students build confidence and ease in transitioning from class to social dance. This action bridges the gap between formal learning and real-world application, offering students a space to experiment and learn in the context of the milonga.

## **Building an Inclusive and Collaborative Community:**

**Declare Inclusivity as a Core Value:** Adopt inclusivity as a core principle of the tango community by ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, identity, or experience level, feels welcome. This includes adopting specific actions such as reducing barriers to participation, offering diverse opportunities for engagement, and actively fighting exclusionary practices.

**Transformational Leadership Development:** Develop a leadership program focused on cultivating leadership from within the community. This includes identifying leaders who can champion inclusivity, support collaboration, and promote social justice. This ensures the leadership model is not top-down but emergent from the community.

**Community Conversations and Shared Vision:** Hold regular open forums or "community conversations" where dancers, teachers, and organizers can discuss challenges, share stories, and co-create solutions. This shifts the community's dynamic from transactional to transformational, where everyone is empowered to co-create the future of the tango scene.

### **Specific Action:**

#### **"Inclusive Dance Events with Open Dialogues"**

Organize regular "Inclusive Milongas" or social dance events that are specifically designed to foster a welcoming atmosphere for all dancers, regardless of their experience or background. These events could feature intentional ice-breaker activities or partner rotations to encourage interactions across different levels of experience and cultural backgrounds. During the event, dedicated moments for open dialogue could be included, where participants can share their thoughts on inclusivity, offer feedback, and suggest improvements for the community. These events would actively promote collaboration, making inclusivity a tangible, lived experience. Additionally, the community can have a "Diversity and Inclusion Task Force" to monitor and ensure these events are always accessible and truly reflective of the community's values.

## **Creating a Vibrant and Supportive Environment:**

**Host Intergenerational Dance Events:** Create spaces where dancers of all levels and ages can interact, learn, and dance together. By fostering intergenerational exchanges, you create a supportive environment where the wisdom of more experienced dancers is passed down to newcomers.

**Nurturing a Supportive Culture of Feedback:** Encourage a culture of radical support, where feedback is given with care, and everyone – regardless of their skill level – is encouraged to grow. Workshops on giving and receiving feedback can support this, ensuring that it becomes part of the community's DNA.

**Foster Collaborative Art Forms:** Tango is an art form that can be expanded by inviting cross-collaboration with other art forms. Organize interdisciplinary events that blend tango



with live music, theater, or visual arts. This creates a vibrant cultural atmosphere, inviting innovation and creativity, and attracting people from various artistic backgrounds to join the community.

### **Specific Action:**

#### **"Mentorship and Dance Buddy Programs"**

Launch a "Mentorship and Dance Buddy Program" that pairs more experienced dancers with newcomers or less experienced dancers for regular practice and social dancing. This program would focus on creating a supportive learning environment where mentorship goes beyond just technical instruction. Mentors would offer guidance on navigating milongas, understanding the cultural context of tango, and providing emotional and social support. By fostering one-on-one relationships, this program would build deeper connections between dancers of different levels, promoting a sense of belonging and community. Additionally, the program could host special events, such as mentorship showcases or social gatherings, where dancers can celebrate their growth together and encourage a culture of mutual support.

## **7. Cultural and Social Factors**

### **Perceptions of Tango as "Old" or "Exclusive":**

Tango is often viewed as a dance for older generations, particularly with the prevalence of older music and social spaces dominated by older dancers. This creates a barrier for younger people who don't feel connected to the culture or the aesthetic of tango. There's also the challenge of tango being seen as difficult to learn or exclusive in nature.

### **Questions to reflect on:**

- How could we change the perception of tango if we focused on its timeless relevance and the universal themes of connection, expression, and joy that speak to everyone, regardless of age?
- How would the community transform if we stopped seeing tango as difficult or exclusive, and instead worked to make it accessible and welcoming for everyone, no matter their experience level?

**Reframe Tango as a Living, Evolving Art Form:** Rather than presenting tango as a relic of the past, the community can embrace tango as a dynamic, evolving dance that welcomes all ages and backgrounds. This could involve highlighting the ways in which younger dancers contribute to the dance and how tango is continuously being reinvented through modern music, choreography, and interpretations.

**Create Generational Integration:** Introduce intergenerational events where older and younger dancers share their perspectives on tango, creating opportunities for cross-generational learning and mutual respect. By highlighting the shared values and experiences of tango across generations, younger dancers can see tango not as an “old” or “exclusive” dance but as one with a rich, inclusive legacy.

**Launch Youth-Focused Tango Programs:** Organize tango programs specifically designed for younger people, incorporating contemporary music, more relaxed environments, and a focus on the joy and creativity of the dance. By creating spaces where young people feel they belong, the community can shift the perception of tango as being “old” or “out of touch.”

**Social Media Campaigns and Modern Aesthetic:** Use social media and digital platforms to promote tango as a vibrant and modern dance. Create campaigns showcasing young dancers and their innovative approaches to tango, blending tradition with modern expressions. This repositions tango as a dance for people of all ages and backgrounds.

### **Specific Action:**

#### **“Fusion Tango Nights”**

Host “Fusion Tango Nights,” where traditional tango is blended with modern music genres such as electronic, jazz, or contemporary pop. These events would feature younger dancers and musicians who reinterpret tango in a more contemporary and accessible way, attracting a younger crowd while keeping the essence of the dance intact. These fusion events could include live performances, DJ sets, and collaborations with other art forms, allowing for creative freedom and a fresh, exciting approach to tango. This would help reposition tango as a dance that evolves with the times, showcasing its versatility and appeal to new generations while maintaining its cultural and social richness.

### **Exclusivity and Elitism:**

There is a strong sense of exclusion, especially for newcomers or people of different ages. Many people feel marginalized because of their age, appearance, or dance level. This is compounded by the elitist attitude of certain sectors of the community, including teachers and organizers.

### **Questions to reflect on:**

- How could the community transform if we deliberately created spaces that welcome and embrace diversity, not just in skill, but in who we are as individuals—celebrating our differences rather than excluding them?
- What would happen if we chose to create an environment where no one feels like an outsider, and where everyone feels like they belong, no matter how they look or how long they've been dancing tango?

**Create a Culture of Radical Inclusion:** One of the most transformative actions the community can take is to **declare** inclusivity as a foundational value. This could involve adopting a "no one is excluded" ethos where dancers of all ages, body types, and skill levels are welcomed, celebrated, and encouraged to participate. Organizers can actively create environments where social hierarchies are minimized, and every participant feels valued.

**Open and Accessible Social Spaces:** Organize events and milongas where the primary focus is social connection and inclusivity, rather than technical skill or elitism. These events could feature a more relaxed, welcoming atmosphere that is specifically designed to avoid exclusive behavior, where newcomers are paired with experienced dancers to help bridge the gap.

**Community Education on Elitism and Exclusivity:** Hold workshops and discussions on the damaging effects of elitism and exclusivity in the tango community. This could include the creation of "inclusive ambassador" roles for those who model inclusive behavior and help create safe spaces for newcomers.

**Introduce Sliding-Scale Classes and Events:** Offer classes and events on a sliding scale, where people can pay what they can afford, allowing individuals from all economic backgrounds to participate without feeling financially excluded. This democratizes access to tango and allows people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to join without barriers.

#### **Specific Action:**

##### **"Buddy System for Newcomers at Milongas"**

Implement a "Buddy System" at milongas, where experienced dancers volunteer to be paired with newcomers for the evening. This system would ensure that every new participant has a friendly, supportive partner who helps guide them through the milonga experience. The buddy could introduce the newcomer to others, explain the social codes of the milonga, and ensure they feel included in the community. This reduces the intimidation factor for beginners and fosters a welcoming environment where connection and fun are prioritized over skill level. Additionally, the buddy system can encourage social mixing, helping newcomers feel comfortable and part of the community from the moment they arrive.

#### **Gender Issues and Role Expectations:**

Gender roles and expectations in tango are seen as limiting, especially with the traditional division between leader and follower. Women in particular feel the pressure of being "followers" and are sometimes discouraged from taking on a more active, creative role in the dance. There are also concerns about sexism in tango spaces, particularly regarding physical contact and the way women are treated in certain milongas.

### Questions to reflect on:

- How would the tango community shift if we let go of rigid gender roles and allowed everyone, regardless of gender, to experience tango as a fluid, dynamic dance that welcomes creativity and leadership from all sides?
- How might the experience of women in tango change if we empowered them to take on more active, creative roles in the dance, allowing them to feel fully expressed and respected, without fear of being marginalized or objectified?

**Reframe Gender Roles in Tango:** Move beyond the traditional leader/follower roles and encourage a shift in perspective. Tango can be reframed as a partnership based on equality, where both dancers have the freedom to lead, follow, and be creative in their own way. Workshops and discussions can challenge traditional gender roles and highlight the value of both partners' contributions to the dance.

**Gender Neutral Teaching Models:** Encourage teachers to create gender-neutral teaching models that focus on leading and following as interchangeable, skill-based roles. This could include classes where students of all genders are invited to learn both roles, and where gender-specific assumptions are actively questioned. Over time, this practice can break down rigid role expectations and encourage more flexible, inclusive approaches to tango.

**Create Safe Spaces for Women and Marginalized Groups:** Organize women-only or gender-inclusive classes, milongas, and events where women and other marginalized gender identities can explore tango without fear of sexism or discomfort. These spaces can foster a sense of safety and empowerment while encouraging participants to challenge traditional roles.

**Facilitate Conversations on Gender and Respect:** Hold regular forums where dancers can engage in open conversations about gender dynamics, physical contact, and respectful behavior within the tango community. This helps shift the community towards a culture of mutual respect and shared responsibility in creating safe spaces for everyone, regardless of gender.

**Develop Mentorship Programs for Female Dancers:** Encourage mentorship for women and marginalized groups in tango, where experienced dancers support and guide those looking to expand their role within the dance. This could help women feel more empowered to step into leadership roles and contribute more creatively within the tango community.

### Specific Action:

#### "Role-Exchange Milongas"

Organize regular "Role-Exchange Milongas" where participants are encouraged to switch roles during the event, allowing both leaders and followers to experience and practice the opposite role. These events would create a space where dancers can explore tango beyond traditional gender norms, fostering a deeper understanding of the partnership and promoting equality on the dance floor. To support this, there could be specific guidance or short warm-

up sessions on role-switching techniques, helping participants feel comfortable and confident in both roles. This action would challenge the traditional leader/follower divide, empowering dancers to express themselves more freely and creatively, and breaking down the barriers of gender-based expectations in tango.

## 8. Community Engagement and Visibility

### Lack of Connection to Younger Generations:

There is a noticeable disconnection from younger people, and many respondents note that young people don't feel represented or comfortable in the current tango spaces. This is partly due to the older culture of tango and its lack of adaptation to more modern sensibilities.

#### Questions to reflect on:

- What would happen if we actively sought to understand what younger people value in dance and culture, and adapted our approach to make them feel more represented and comfortable in tango spaces?
- What if we created spaces and events that specifically catered to the interests of younger dancers, without compromising the essence of tango, so that they could see themselves as part of this rich cultural art form?

**Reframe Tango as a Contemporary Dance Form:** Position tango as a living, evolving dance that can be interpreted in modern ways. Emphasize how younger dancers can bring fresh ideas, musical choices, and movement styles to the dance, integrating contemporary culture without losing the core essence of tango. This reframing allows young people to see tango as something they can shape and call their own, rather than a dated or exclusive tradition.

**Create a Youth-Centric Tango Experience:** Develop events, workshops, and performances specifically targeted toward younger audiences. These spaces can integrate modern music genres (such as electronic tango or tango with a modern twist) and create an atmosphere where younger dancers feel comfortable. These events should be playful, informal, and creative—avoiding the traditional formality and elitism often associated with tango.

**Youth Tango Ambassadors:** Identify young, passionate dancers to act as ambassadors for tango in their communities. These ambassadors can help bridge the gap between older and younger generations by hosting classes, social events, and outreach programs specifically designed to attract younger people. By giving younger dancers a voice and visibility, the tango community can start to see a more balanced representation.

**Educational Partnerships:** Form partnerships with schools, universities, and youth organizations to introduce tango to younger people. This could include offering dance courses or providing free performances that showcase the vibrant, creative side of tango. By embedding tango within educational and youth spaces, you build long-term connections with younger generations.

## **Specific Action:**

### **"Tango Fusion Workshops for Youth"**

Create "Tango Fusion Workshops" that blend traditional tango with modern dance styles and music genres, such as hip-hop, contemporary, or electronic music. These workshops would be specifically designed for younger audiences and emphasize creativity, self-expression, and fun. The fusion approach can help break down the barriers that younger generations may feel toward traditional tango, allowing them to engage with the dance in a way that feels current and relevant to their interests. These workshops can also include social dance events afterward, where participants can showcase their new interpretations of tango, creating a more relaxed and inclusive space for young people to connect, learn, and feel empowered within the tango community.

## **Tango's Lack of Public Visibility:**

Tango is often invisible to the broader public. It's seen as a niche activity for a specific demographic, and many participants suggest that tango needs to be better marketed to reach a wider audience and show its relevance to people beyond the existing community.

### **Questions to reflect on:**

- How could we change the public perception of tango if we worked together to increase its visibility through modern marketing, creative events, and outreach that showcases its relevance to today's society?
- How might the tango community change if we embraced new ways to connect with potential dancers—inviting curiosity, exploration, and inclusivity rather than keeping tango confined to a specific demographic?

**Position Tango as a Global, Relevant Dance:** Market tango as an art form that is globally recognized and relevant to people of all ages and backgrounds. This can involve focusing on the diversity and adaptability of tango, showcasing how it is practiced and loved worldwide. The community can use digital tools like social media, YouTube, or podcasts to spread the message that tango is not just for an exclusive group but an inclusive art form.

**Community Engagement Campaigns:** Develop public-facing campaigns that show the joy, creativity, and inclusivity of tango. This can include videos, testimonials, and community-driven stories showcasing how people of different ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds connect through tango. The campaign should feature a diverse range of people—ensuring it doesn't just represent one demographic—and highlight tango as a dance that welcomes all.

**Public Performances and Flash Mobs:** Organize public tango performances in accessible, high-traffic locations like parks, public squares, or even shopping centers. These performances can showcase the beauty of tango, drawing attention from the general public and showing that it is alive, relevant, and exciting. Flash mobs or impromptu tango events can be fun and engaging ways to make tango visible to a wider audience.

**Collaborations with Non-Dance Communities:** Partner with other creative communities such as musicians, visual artists, or filmmakers to make tango a part of wider cultural conversations. These collaborations can include festivals, exhibitions, and performances that showcase tango in innovative ways—bringing tango into spaces where it has not been present before. By expanding tango's reach beyond the dance community, it can gain visibility in diverse cultural contexts.

### **Specific Action:**

#### **"Tango Pop-Up Events and Collaborations"**

Host "Tango Pop-Up Events" in non-traditional spaces such as art galleries, coffee shops, local festivals, or street corners. These events could feature impromptu tango performances, mini-workshops, or interactive social dancing, engaging the public and inviting them to experience tango in a relaxed, accessible way. Collaborating with local artists, musicians, or even food vendors to create a vibrant, multi-sensory experience would also draw in a diverse crowd. By taking tango to unexpected, everyday spaces, the community can demystify the dance, break down preconceived notions, and make tango more visible and appealing to people who may have never considered it before.

These pop-up events would help position tango as a dynamic and inclusive cultural experience for everyone.

### **Exclusivity of Milongas:**

Many beginners feel that milongas are intimidating, unwelcoming, and exclusive. The social dynamics at milongas, such as cliques and unspoken codes, discourage newcomers and create an atmosphere of elitism. Additionally, some dancers believe that certain milongas cater only to specific tastes or levels, leaving others feeling excluded.

### **Questions to reflect on:**

- What would happen if we consciously created milongas where everyone, regardless of their skill level or background, felt invited, comfortable, and included from the moment they arrived?
- How could the tango community transform if we intentionally eliminated elitism in milongas and created environments where the joy of dancing and connection was more important than who is "in" or "out"?

**Reframe Milongas as Inclusive, Welcoming Spaces:** Milongas should be re-envisioned as social gatherings centered around fun, connection, and community rather than a venue for showcasing technical skill. This shift can include providing more opportunities for beginners to attend, such as "beginner-friendly" milongas where expectations are lower, the environment is relaxed, and there is less emphasis on performance. These milongas should encourage social connection over perfection in dancing.

**Introduce "Mix & Mingle" Milongas:** Organize "mix & mingle" milongas where everyone is encouraged to dance with different people, breaking up cliques and making the atmosphere more inclusive. This could involve rotating partners regularly during the event or setting up spaces where newcomers can easily find partners to dance with, reducing intimidation and social pressure. This fosters community spirit and inclusion.

**Inclusive Community Codes and Mentoring:** Develop community-driven codes of conduct that emphasize respect, kindness, and inclusivity. Create mentorship programs where experienced dancers volunteer to guide newcomers through the milonga environment, helping them understand the social dynamics, including unspoken rules and etiquette. By ensuring newcomers have a positive experience and feel supported, the community will gradually shift from elitism to openness.

**Welcome "Tango for All" Events:** Hold events that celebrate the social and cultural aspects of tango, where the primary focus is building community rather than showcasing expertise. These events can include tango mixers, group discussions, or cultural exchange nights that allow people to experience the full range of tango's social possibilities. Having an explicitly welcoming atmosphere will ensure that no one feels excluded, regardless of their skill level or experience.

### **Specific Action:**

#### **"Buddy System for Newcomers at Milongas"**

Implement a "Buddy System" at milongas, where experienced dancers volunteer to be paired with newcomers for the evening. This system would ensure that every new participant has a friendly, supportive partner who helps guide them through the milonga experience. The buddy could introduce the newcomer to others, explain the social codes of the milonga, and ensure they feel included in the community. This reduces the intimidation factor for beginners and fosters a welcoming environment where connection and fun are prioritized over skill level. Additionally, the buddy system can encourage social mixing, helping newcomers feel comfortable and part of the community from the moment they arrive.



## 9. Economic and Practical Challenges

### Money and Financial Constraints

Financial challenges were mentioned frequently, from the high costs of classes and events to the difficulty in generating enough demand to sustain a living from tango. Several respondents also highlighted the lack of accessible venues (parking costs) and funding for tango events, especially in the context of a small market.

#### Questions to reflect on:

- What would be possible if we viewed financial challenges not as roadblocks, but as opportunities to innovate and find creative solutions for funding tango classes, events, and venues?
- How could we transform the way we approach financial constraints by collaborating with local businesses, community groups, or sponsors to create mutually beneficial partnerships that support the tango community?

**Reframe Tango as a Community Investment:** Instead of seeing tango as a financial burden, the community can shift the narrative to view it as a collective investment in cultural and social enrichment. This reframing can help people see the value of spending money on tango as an investment in the community's well-being and long-term vitality. By emphasizing the social, creative, and personal growth benefits of tango, it becomes easier to justify the financial costs.

**Create Sliding-Scale and Affordable Classes:** Introduce sliding-scale pricing for classes, where individuals can pay based on their financial capacity. This ensures that tango is accessible to people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, community-supported classes can be organized where experienced dancers volunteer to teach, reducing costs for students while fostering a culture of mutual support and learning.

**Crowdfunding and Sponsorships for Events:** Use crowdfunding platforms to raise money for special events, performances, or festivals. The community can also approach local businesses, cultural organizations, and governments for sponsorships and grants to help fund events. With a clear plan and visibility, the community can show potential sponsors how their involvement supports local culture and the arts, thus encouraging financial backing.

**Host Low-Cost Milongas:** Organize milongas at community venues with minimal overhead costs. These events can be designed to be affordable, including BYO food or drinks, and perhaps free entry with a suggested donation. The community can work together to keep costs low, making it easier for everyone to attend, regardless of their financial situation.

**Creative Venue Partnerships:** Partner with non-traditional venues, such as public spaces, community centers, or other arts organizations, that might be willing to offer discounted or pro bono space in exchange for exposure or community engagement. This reduces the financial burden of renting expensive venues and brings tango to new, unexpected places.

## **Specific Action:**

### **"Community Tango Fund"**

Create a "Community Tango Fund" where members of the tango community can contribute on a voluntary basis, either through monthly donations or one-time contributions. This fund can be used to subsidize classes, milongas, or workshops for people facing financial constraints. It can also be used to support emerging dancers, teachers, and events. To encourage participation, the fund could be promoted as a collective effort to ensure tango remains accessible to all, regardless of financial situation. Additionally, transparency in how the funds are used would foster a sense of shared responsibility and solidarity within the community, making tango a more inclusive and sustainable practice for everyone.

## **Work-Life Balance and Time Constraints:**

The busy lifestyles of many dancers and organizers leave little time for tango, making it difficult to create the necessary space for deep learning or regular social interaction. People are often caught up in other priorities and don't dedicate enough time to their tango development or community-building efforts.

### **Questions to reflect on:**

- How could we support one another in creating the time and space needed for deep learning and community-building, rather than allowing other priorities to take precedence over our passion for tango?
- What would happen if we made a conscious decision to prioritize tango as a central part of our lives, finding ways to incorporate it into our daily or weekly routines, even amidst busy schedules?

**Create Flexible, Modular Learning Options:** Recognizing that many dancers have busy schedules, the community can offer modular or drop-in classes that allow participants to join sessions on a more flexible basis. These classes could be shorter or more focused, allowing dancers to fit them into their busy lives without committing to long-term programs.

**Virtual and Hybrid Classes:** Implement virtual or hybrid learning options that allow students to participate from home or remotely. This flexibility can make it easier for people with tight schedules to continue their tango education without the need to travel to physical locations, thus lowering barriers to consistent participation.

**Organize Tango "Pop-Up" Events:** Hold spontaneous, short-duration events that don't require long-term commitments, like "Tango Tuesdays" or "Weekend Milongas." These events can be scheduled on a regular basis but kept short and accessible, allowing people to engage without it requiring a significant time investment. This approach allows the tango community to stay engaged even when time is limited.

**Dedicated "Tango Time" for Busy People:** Develop a series of events or classes aimed at people with full schedules, such as "lunch-time tango" or "after-work milongas." These are

time-sensitive opportunities where busy professionals can join in during breaks or after work, allowing them to balance their work commitments with their passion for tango.

**Time Management for Organizers and Teachers:** Help community organizers and teachers implement more efficient time-management strategies, such as delegating responsibilities or collaborating on events, so that no one person is overburdened. This also allows organizers to dedicate their time to community-building efforts without burning out. By creating a more balanced workload, the community can sustain itself long-term without exhausting its leaders.

### **Specific Action:**

#### **Create a “Tango Time Exchange” Platform:**

This platform would allow community members to trade time or skills related to tango in exchange for other forms of support or time. For example, a dancer could offer a free class or practice session in exchange for help organizing an event or for someone to watch their children while they attend a tango class. The exchange platform helps members find ways to overcome time constraints by leveraging the strengths of others in the community. It encourages a spirit of mutual support, reduces the pressure on individual organizers, and ensures that no one has to choose between tango and other responsibilities. This initiative also fosters inclusivity, collaboration, and a sense of shared commitment to maintaining a vibrant tango community.

This action will create more opportunities for people to engage in tango while balancing their time effectively, ultimately strengthening the community.

## **10. Attitudes Toward Change and Innovation**

### **Resistance to Change**

Many individuals are reluctant to move away from traditional norms or embrace new ways of doing things. There's a fear of losing what's been established or a lack of belief that change is necessary. This resistance to innovation is a barrier to growing the tango community in new, inclusive, and engaging ways.

#### **Questions to reflect on:**

- What would happen if we let go of the fear of losing what's familiar and embraced the idea that change could make our tango community even richer and more inclusive?
- What if we viewed innovation as a way to honor the core of tango, keeping its soul alive while adapting it to the needs and desires of today's dancers and community members?

## Lack of Creativity and Risk-Taking

People tend to play it safe, sticking to what they know and what has worked in the past. This is particularly true for organizers, who fear taking risks or trying out new formats, venues, or activities. Without creative approaches, the tango community struggles to evolve.

### Questions to reflect on:

- What would be possible if we allowed ourselves to take risks and experiment with new formats, venues, and activities—knowing that failure is just part of the creative process and a step toward greater success?
- How might the community transform if we shifted our mindset from playing it safe to actively seeking out new, creative opportunities to engage with tango in fresh ways?

### Step 1: Recognizing the Current Reality

The first step in transformation is for the community to **acknowledge** and **accept** the current state, especially the challenges it faces in terms of resistance to change and lack of creativity. This involves the community coming together and sharing a collective understanding of how these attitudes are limiting their growth and inclusivity.

#### Transformative Action 1: *Community-wide reflection and dialogue*

Organize community conversations where individuals are invited to share their perceptions and experiences of change resistance. This could include asking questions like, "What do you fear about changing traditional tango norms?" and "What new possibilities do you see if we embraced creativity?"

Make these conversations open, honest, and non-judgmental. This helps create a safe space where the community can collectively see that their mindset is contributing to stagnation.

### Step 2: Shift in Mindset and Identity

The tango community needs to collectively shift from seeing themselves as guardians of tradition to active participants in **co-creating** the future of tango.

#### Transformative Action 2: *Reframe the identity of tango in the Netherlands*

Encourage the community to see themselves not just as dancers or organizers, but as **creators of culture**. This could involve reframing the role of each participant from being a passive recipient of tradition to an active innovator.

Develop a new community narrative that values **collaboration, creativity, and inclusivity**. This could be achieved through stories, social media posts, or public events where the community shares examples of how creativity and inclusivity have already taken place within tango, even if on a small scale.

### Step 3: Accessing New Possibilities through Action

Once a shift in mindset happens, the next step is to **empower** individuals and groups to act in new ways. This requires creating an environment where taking risks, experimenting, and trying new things is encouraged.

### **Transformative Action 3:** *Create experimental spaces for innovation*

Introduce "**innovation sessions**" where tango participants can pitch and experiment with new ideas (e.g., new class formats, social dance events, or fusion tango styles). These sessions should have low-stakes environments where failure is seen as an opportunity for learning.

**Collaborate with external partners** from other dance communities, art forms, or even completely different sectors (like tech or social activism) to cross-pollinate new ideas and inspire novel approaches to tango.

### **Transformative Action 4:** *Facilitate a "culture of risk-taking"*

Create structured **support systems** for those who take risks, such as mentorship or feedback loops. The goal is to reduce the fear of failure by reinforcing that the community supports those willing to take new approaches.

Celebrate **small wins** and experiments. Even if some changes don't succeed as expected, recognizing the courage of participants to innovate and try something new will help build a culture of risk-taking.

### **Step 4: Reaffirming Collective Ownership**

One of the key tenets of transformation is the **empowerment** of individuals to realize their ability to influence change. The community must feel a sense of collective ownership and responsibility for the direction of the tango culture in the Netherlands.

### **Transformative Action 5:** *Encourage leadership at all levels*

Build leadership programs that provide **tools and skills** to people at all levels of the community, whether they are beginners or experienced dancers, teachers, or organizers. This ensures everyone feels empowered to lead and contribute to community decisions. Introduce **participative decision-making** processes in event planning, venue selection, or even the programming of classes. Allow community members to shape what they want to see in their local tango scene, encouraging collaboration and input at all stages.

### **Step 5: Shifting Collective Behaviors**

Finally, transformation at the community level requires changes in **behavioral norms**. This involves not just an individual shift in mindset but a collective transformation of how people interact, engage, and collaborate within the tango community.

### **Transformative Action 6:** *Instill inclusive practices*

Introduce **inclusive tango principles** that focus on accessibility for all people, regardless of gender, experience level, or background. This could include the development of mixed-gender or gender-neutral roles in tango, as well as events that cater to a broad spectrum of the community (e.g., affordable classes, beginner-friendly events).

Foster a **sense of belonging** by promoting an inclusive atmosphere at events. This means addressing exclusivity in tango social dynamics and ensuring that newcomers and less experienced dancers feel welcomed, not judged.

### **Step 6: Sustain and Integrate Transformation**

Transformation is not a one-time event; it requires ongoing commitment. The community must ensure that these new ways of thinking and acting become **sustainable** and **integrated** into the culture over time.

#### **Transformative Action 7: *Develop a long-term vision and commitment***

Create a **visionary roadmap** for the future of tango in the Netherlands, emphasizing creativity, inclusivity, and innovation as core values. This vision should be developed collaboratively and be used as a compass for future community decisions.

Ensure that the community has **systems of accountability** in place. These could include regular reflections on progress, feedback loops, and recognition of those contributing to transformative efforts.

By following these transformative actions, the tango community in the Netherlands can move towards a future that is inclusive, collaborative, participative, supportive, and vibrant—embracing both tradition and innovation while fostering a thriving, diverse culture of dance.

### **Conclusion**

The obstacles to building a more vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable tango community in the Netherlands (and potentially beyond) are multifaceted. At the core, there are issues related to individualism, competition, and a lack of collaboration, which prevent the community from working together toward a common vision. There are also significant educational and cultural gaps, including superficial teaching, elitism, and the exclusion of younger generations, as well as practical barriers such as limited venues and financial constraints. To overcome these challenges, there needs to be a shift in mindset—from individual competition to collective growth—along with a commitment to better communication, inclusivity, and a focus on the deeper, social aspects of tango.

## 11. Rules for a Tango Community That Works for Everyone

### 1. Integrity in Dance and Relationships

**Honor your commitments:** Whether you're a dancer, teacher, or organizer, follow through on your commitments, be reliable, and create trust within the community.

**Be authentic and honest:** In your dancing and interactions, bring your true self, and communicate openly and honestly. This builds trust and creates a safe space for everyone.

### 2. Honoring the Dignity of All Dancers

**Respect all participants:** Whether beginner or expert, every dancer deserves respect. Value each individual's journey and potential, acknowledging their unique contribution to the community.

**Celebrate diversity:** Embrace the variety of dancers, styles, and experiences in the tango community. Whether in age, background, or skill level, the diversity of members enriches the dance.

### 3. Collaboration Over Competition

**Support each other's growth:** Tango is about partnership and connection. Support your fellow dancers in their journey, offering encouragement rather than competition.

**Work together for collective success:** As a community, prioritize collaboration—sharing knowledge, opportunities, and resources to lift each other up and help the community grow.

### 4. Generosity and Contribution

**Give freely without expectation:** Offer your time, energy, and expertise to others in the community, whether it's mentoring a beginner or volunteering at an event, without expecting anything in return.

**Create space for others to contribute:** Make room for new teachers, dancers, and organizers to share their talents. Everyone has something valuable to offer.

### 5. Responsibility for the Community

**Take ownership of your role in the community:** Whether you're a dancer, teacher, or organizer, take responsibility for your actions, ensuring that you contribute positively to the environment.

**Foster inclusivity:** Ensure that no one feels excluded or marginalized. Work to create a welcoming space for everyone, regardless of background, skill, or financial situation.

### 6. Creating a Culture of Openness and Trust

**Be open and vulnerable:** In tango, as in life, being open to learning and growth—both personally and as a community—creates trust and fosters deeper connections on and off the dance floor.

**Listen and communicate:** Encourage open dialogue among dancers, teachers, and organizers. Listening to others' perspectives and responding with respect strengthens the entire community.

## 7. Empathy and Compassion

**Be compassionate toward others' learning journeys:** Tango is a lifelong journey, and each person is at a different point. Approach each other with kindness, patience, and understanding.

**Support those who need it most:** Look out for newcomers, those facing challenges, and anyone in need of encouragement. A compassionate community grows stronger together.

## 8. Mindset of Possibility and Transformation

**Approach challenges as opportunities:** Instead of focusing on obstacles, see challenges as opportunities for growth—whether it's improving your dance, resolving conflicts, or developing the community.

**Celebrate breakthroughs:** Acknowledge moments of personal or collective transformation. This could be mastering a new step or breaking through communication barriers—these moments strengthen the community.

## 9. Freedom Through Responsibility

**Take responsibility for your dancing and your community:** Embrace the freedom that comes with being responsible—both for your own learning and for creating a supportive environment for others.

**Foster self-expression:** Encourage freedom of expression within tango, allowing dancers to bring their own unique flair while respecting the traditions of the dance.

## 10. Communication with Respect and Clarity

**Respectful communication:** Whether in teaching, social dancing, or community organizing, communicate with respect, clarity, and kindness. Misunderstandings are inevitable, but how we communicate will determine how we overcome them.

**Create clear spaces for feedback:** Encourage constructive feedback in a way that helps dancers grow, not discourage them. Creating an environment of mutual respect and continuous learning is essential.

## 11. A World Where Everyone Contributes

**Everyone has something to offer:** Whether you're a beginner or an expert, a teacher or a dancer, your contribution matters. Share your passion for tango, your skills, and your ideas to strengthen the community.

**Make everyone feel valued:** Ensure that every member feels that their presence and participation are important, whether in the classroom or at milongas. This fosters inclusion and mutual respect.



## 12. Creating a Sustainable Tango Community

**Support long-term sustainability:** As a community, work towards sustainable practices—whether it's financially, socially, or environmentally—to ensure that tango remains accessible to everyone for generations to come.

**Promote social connection beyond the dance floor:** Tango is not just about the steps; it's about building relationships and community. Foster social activities that extend beyond the dance floor, making tango a part of everyday life.

In Summary, the rules for a **tango community that works for everyone** are grounded in integrity, responsibility, collaboration, empathy, and inclusivity. By focusing on the collective success of the community, embracing everyone's potential, and creating a culture of trust and support, the tango community can be transformed into a space where every participant can thrive and contribute to the dance. These rules empower individuals to step forward and contribute to a shared vision, ensuring that tango remains an accessible and enriching experience for all.