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Fit for the Future



Dance Mobility in Times of Fracture

Experiencing the Framework of Fragility

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Dance Mobility in Times of Fracture

FOREWORD

The mobility of European artists and culture professionals is a topic that has been written about and investigated for many years. As a result, it has long been known that information can be difficult to access, and that support schemes and opportunities are unevenly distributed within our sector at both European and international levels. Covid-19 and the lockdowns, curfews and closed borders that have come with it have deeply impacted international cultural mobility, with most on-site cultural activities shut down. New forms of transnational cultural project have taken place online but offer only a very partial replacement for what existed before the pandemic. Nonetheless, we have seen many forms of virtual cultural mobility arise, and felt the need to study more precisely the changing nature of working practices and mobility flows in the European dance field.

In the last year, most dance artists and professionals haven't been able to train, get inspiration, work, study or be mobile. The impact on their careers has been unprecedented. Most transnational projects have been cancelled or postponed, contributing to a general disruption of the value chain.

Within and beyond the European Dance Network (EDN) membership, there have been many debates on the value of international mobility and physical encounters, as well as on digital practices – their limitations and challenges alongside their joys and opportunities. Several artistic statements and policy papers have insisted on a more value-driven cultural mobility that takes into account ethics, environmental sustainability, and inclusion. While acknowledging that cultural mobility has suffered from a wide range of problems in the past – ranging from unequal access to funding to unnecessary administrative burdens – several voices have observed that 'virtual mobility' could open new pathways and answer pressing needs in relation to issues such as diversity, inclusion, access, and the need for more balanced power relations. Is the digital shift providing all that it seems to promise?

As part of its 'Fit for the Future' series of publications, EDN commissioned this piece from the cultural mobility information network On the Move and its team of researchers Milica Ilic, Marie Le Sourd and John Ellingsworth. The aim has been to collect some of the existing evidence, giving an overview of European dance mobility before the crisis, as well as to investigate the latest trends and needs through an analysis of current activity. This initial research then allows us to formulate recommendations for decision makers and dance stakeholders.

We hope you enjoy reading!

Yohann Floch, Secretary General (Feb - July 2021)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about a radical break for the dance sector, particularly regarding mobility. It has accelerated processes of transformation that had already been set in motion by ecological, political, technological and social changes. It has raised awareness of a number of burning issues, such as the shift to digital work, our relationship to the environment, and the ecological crisis. It put a stop to many of the usual working methods of those in the dance sector, urging rethinking and transformation. It has deepened the precarity of artists, adding more urgency to questions of fair practice, solidarity, and the status of artists.

Written at a time when the crisis is still obstructing professional dance practice in Europe as well as globally, this study looks at dance mobility from two perspectives, putting side by side the state of play of dance mobility before and after this radical break. It sums up where mobility has led the dance sector prior to the Covid-19 crisis and tries to put forward some first ideas and trends emerging from this singular moment.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, mobility was essential for much of the dance sector: it was a method by which networks were built and reinforced on a long-term basis, and by which opportunities for co-production and touring were discovered. It provided opportunities for artists and professionals to access further resources, extend the reach of their work, and build new skills.

Underlying this, however, were a number of problems. For those artists and professionals with access to opportunities, there was a pressure to be mobile (or 'hypermobile') to an extent that could have a negative impact on their quality of life. For others, based in areas with fewer support schemes or with limited access to information, there was an isolation that stemmed from being locked out of this system for making work and finding connections. Adding to these individual concerns, the ethics and legitimacy of frequent mobility as a mode of work was increasingly being called into question by ecological, political and social concerns.

Since the pandemic, much has changed and yet much has stayed the same.

On the one hand, the crisis has accelerated a large-scale shift towards digital work. Familiar programmes such as residencies and training schemes have in large part gone online, and artists have experimented with new ways to collaborate at distance. Some organisations have also started to work with hybrid approaches, combining online and on-site activities as a way of keeping their activities adaptable. Frequently changing regulations, and an uncertain outlook, have forced

organisers to be flexible – both for their own benefit and for the freelancers they work with.

On the other hand, old inequalities remain. Opportunities in the dance field, as in the art world more generally, continue to be heavily slanted towards Western and Northern Europe, still address individuals over groups and collectives, and give little real consideration of either hypermobility or the isolation of dance actors.

Taking this situation into account, this paper concludes with a set of recommendations. In brief, these recommendations are:

- **Formulate positive policies to support and diversify mobility, responding both to the growing needs of artists and to the sector's economic model.** These policies should work on both national/regional and EU levels.
- **In forming policy, recognise the growing precarity of artists under current systems.** Fair working conditions and fair remuneration practices are essential to a truly positive impact.
- **Nurture a culture and policy of solidarity, based on shared responsibility for the sector at large, not just for one's own immediate environment.** Solidarity, as a concept infused not only in support schemes but also in organisational practices, is an essential element to overcoming radical inequalities in access to mobility.
- **Develop appropriate and realistic support schemes that are aware of regional/local economic, social and political characteristics, and that bear in mind the precarious working conditions of artists.** To be socially responsible, support schemes need to take into account their impact on local communities, the environment, and quality of life.
- **Involve artists in rethinking and reimagining models, methods and schemes.** Artists have personal experience and knowledge, and the capacity for creative thinking. They are the experts on innovation and the sector can benefit from this.
- **Encourage and support further experimentation with alternative organisational and financial models.** Organisations that have aligned their organisational practices and methods with their ethos and values are precious examples that should be followed, documented and made visible.

- **Give artists and art workers opportunities to engage in self-initiated mobility of the 'go and see' variety** – opportunities to follow specific interests, curiosities and intuitions.
- **Support ongoing experiments around new, alternative, hybrid and blended schemes and models.** Support is particularly needed to ensure that these schemes embrace sustainability and green policy measures.
- **Support further research to better understand the specific mobility needs and challenges of the dance field.**

We hope that these recommendations can lay the groundwork for a more inclusive approach to policymaking in which the new forms that have emerged during the pandemic – on the initiative of both policymakers/funders and artists themselves – can be further explored. The result will be a stronger dance sector for everyone.

INTRODUCTION

“It would have been nice to look for a nobler meaning in such a moment. Perhaps an enlightened precedent would have been created, perhaps caring for oneself and others would have truly occupied the centre of the world for some time. [...] We would have all experienced the framework of fragility and we, who have always known fragility, I swear we would have taken care of you.”

– Chiara Bersani, ‘On Covid and Disability’¹

Mobility has defined the practices of the dance sector in Europe. It has profoundly influenced the content and the form of artistic work, shaped the methods and models of how we make, distribute and experience art, and had a positive impact on artists and art workers as well as more broadly on citizens and society.

Although an essential element of the practice of dance, mobility has always been a multifaceted endeavour, marked by radical imbalances amongst Europe’s countries and regions, burdened by a variety of impediments, carrying economic and political challenges, causing problems for the working conditions and quality of life of the mobile art workers, and in friction with wider social changes. If mobility is one of the key components of today’s professional dance practice, we need to better understand its nature and the specific, evolving needs of dance professionals in order to conceive of a support system that takes into account both its importance and its complexities, inequalities and challenges.

The crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has brought a radical break for the dance sector, particularly regarding mobility. It has accelerated processes of transformation that had already been set in motion by ecological, political, technological and social changes. It has raised awareness of a number of burning issues, such as the shift to digital work, our relationship to the environment, and the ecological crisis. At the same time it has put a stop to many of the usual working practices of those in the dance sector, urging them to rethink and transform what they do. It has further deepened the precarity of artists, bringing greater urgency to the question of fair practice, solidarity, and the status of the artist.

Written at a time when the crisis is still obstructing professional dance practice in Europe, as well as globally, this study looks at dance mobility from two perspectives, comparing the state of play of dance mobility before and after this radical break. It sums up where mobility has led the dance sector prior to the Covid-19 crisis and tries to outline some of the new ideas and trends emerging from these unprecedented circumstances.

What can we learn from how the mobility of yesterday influenced and shaped the sector? What will tomorrow’s mobility look like for dance professionals? How can we best prepare today for these new practices and make sure that they serve the positive development of dance professionals and the sector as a whole?

Methodology

This publication is based on two main lines of research:

– Desk research which looked at a few recent studies in the field of cultural mobility, concentrating particularly on On the Move’s Operational study: Mobility Scheme for Artists and Culture Professionals in Creative Europe Countries. This study was commissioned by the Goethe-Institut Brussels and a consortium of organisations that included the Institut français (France), Nida Art Colony (Lithuania), and Izolyatsia (Ukraine), and was instrumental in constructing the pilot of the i-Portunus mobility scheme.² The study provided a lot of relevant data and information for this paper, particularly in the chapter ‘Dance mobility: the landscape before the pandemic’.

– Data collected by On the Move through its website and wider efforts to monitor information in the mobility sector. The data covers recent open calls related to mobility in the field of dance and performing arts, giving a broad sense of movements in the field, as well as specific examples of new projects and approaches. This data is used particularly in the chapter ‘Dance mobility: the post-Covid era’.

These elements come together to inform the recommendations given in the final chapter.

This paper does not provide a complete and comprehensive analysis on its subject, due to the short timeframe in which it was produced and the relative lack of precise data on dance and mobility. Nonetheless, it aims to provide interested parties with a snapshot on dance and mobility prior to and during the Covid crisis, and to pave the way towards more effective policies and support schemes for and with the dance sector.

Context and scope

The intention of this study is to look at mobility in the field of dance across Europe. It concentrates on countries participating in the Creative Europe programme, as most of the available information refers to this geographic area.³

This study will rely on a definition of cultural mobility first put forward by On the Move for the i-Portunus Operational Study:

“Mobility is a central component of the professional trajectory of artists and culture professionals. Involving a temporary cross-border movement, often for educational, capacity-building, networking, or working purposes, it may have tangible or intangible outputs in the short term, and/or be part of a long-term professional development process. Mobility is a conscious process, and those involved in it, whether by directly engaging in it or by supporting it, should take into consideration its cultural, social, political, environmental, ethical and economic implications.”⁴

This study has been written in the middle of the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic, a crisis on an unprecedented scale that has led to a radical shift in the practices of dance artists and art workers globally. The entire system on which dance as a sector relies has been shaken. Venues have been forced to close, artistic projects have been cancelled or left unrepresented, and transnational mobility has been brought to almost a complete halt, burdened by complex health and administrative processes. Many artists and art workers have found themselves sinking deeper into precarity, and some have been brought to the very edge.

The crisis has also accelerated a massive shift towards digital work: many venues and artists broadcast digital versions of existing pieces, and lots of digitally native work was produced. The audience for digital content has grown and diversified to include people and communities who previously were not regular dance audiences.⁵ New artistic research and different types of online collaborative activity, initiated under the constraints of lockdown and reduced mobility, have led to a concentration of interest in a variety of digital formats for creation and distribution. Digital forms of dance have been growing ever since the technology was there for easy access to online content sharing, but the pandemic crisis has accelerated this process tremendously.

At the time of publication for this study, it seems that the global Covid-19 crisis is yet to reach its full peak. Any predictions regarding the evolution of the crisis or its impact on the sector run the risk of being premature. And yet some trends do seem to emerge. This study bases its analysis on two central observations:

- **The pandemic crisis is a radical break.** More than a passing phase, this crisis is likely to influence practices, methods and models in the coming years in ways that are yet to be fully understood. Regular ways of working will be reconsidered and adapted to fit the new reality.
- **The break is radical, but it also stems from existing models and practices.** The crisis may be bringing about new, alternative ways of working, but it is also accelerating and reinforcing processes that were already in motion. Understanding the dance sector and its mobility before the crisis is therefore crucial for understanding its future evolution as shaped by the crisis.

Even prior to the Covid-19 crisis, the dance sector was being influenced by societal developments that tested its current models and required a rethinking of practices. The challenges of the ecological transition have also affected the dance field, with an increasing number of artists bringing this topic into the content of their work or experimenting with new working methods and formats. More broadly, there has been an increased understanding of the place dance occupies in relation to the environment and non-human forms of life. Mobility is a central issue in relation to ecology, with a number of artists actively seeking to reflect on their environmental impact, or to develop a more sustainable practice by reducing – or stopping – their own mobility.⁶

Finally, political shifts throughout the European continent, with Brexit a recent crisis point, have led to a feeling of insecurity and instability in the European and UK dance fields. Brexit has had immediate effects on current and future collaborations, effectively making mobility more complicated and costly as well as dealing a considerable blow to the notions of intercultural and transnational collaboration that lie at the heart of the dance sector.⁷

All these developments have contributed to a sense of insecurity in the field. At the same time they have also led to valuable experiments and new research in alternative practices, including projects such as RESHAPE – Reflect, Share, Practice, Experiment,⁸ Big Pulse Dance Alliance,⁹ ACT Art Climate Transition,¹⁰ and Flanders Arts Institute’s programme A Fair New World,¹¹ to name only a few. The results of these experiments, and their impact on the sector’s development, will only become clear in the coming years.

I. DANCE MOBILITY: THE LANDSCAPE BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

This chapter looks at the models, practices and needs that defined the dance sector before the Covid-19 pandemic. It describes a few key trends in the performing arts sector, and in dance in particular, regarding the practices of mobility, the policies that guided dance mobility, the opportunities available, and the specific needs of the sector.

1.1. Mobility and dance: key trends

Dance: a mobile sector

Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, the dance sector's activities were deeply entrenched in the idea that the success of a performance can be measured by how mobile it is. In this way of thinking, mobility doesn't only bring opportunities to further enhance one's practice but is often the condition of the practice itself. As Yassen Vasilev puts it in his article 'Circulating artists, defunded infrastructures': "For quite some time already, the question in the field – at least for those lucky enough to be residents in Europe – has been not who can afford to travel, but on the contrary, who can afford not to travel and still work?"¹²

Like other performing arts professionals, dance artists and workers need mobility to stimulate their creativity, find inspiration, get a better understanding of the context of their field, open new collaboration opportunities, get information... Mobility is crucial to their lifelong learning and capacity building.

Moreover, mobility is an essential element of the dominant business model in the dance sector: it is a method by which networks are built and reinforced on a long-term basis, and by which opportunities for co-production and touring are discovered; it provides opportunities to access further resources and extend the reach of one's work.

The dance sector, much like other performing arts sub-sectors, is structured predominantly around individuals/freelancers whose professional circumstances are marked by precarity and unstable financial circumstances. It is also true that the sector's practices require collaboration and collective action.

These circumstances, which are rooted in the structure and inherited reality of the dance sector, define its specific needs in relation to mobility.¹³

The economic challenges

In the landscape described above, mobility seems to have multiple benefits for mobile professionals. However, On the Move's Operational study: Mobility Scheme for Artists and Culture Professionals in Creative Europe Countries has shown that the economic impact of mobility is valued higher than its artistic impact. Skills development and capacity building are seen in relation to increasing the employability of the individual and the potential of their local environment.

Similarly, a lack of consistent, flexible mobility support can have a direct economic impact. Funding cuts tend to directly impact mobility, putting greater emphasis on shorter and more frequent stays. An additional challenge is forced mobility, with some dance professionals being forced (rather than choosing) to engage in mobility in order to work. This in turn increases the risk of individuals losing connections with their own communities.¹⁴

With cross-border mobility, questions such as social security, taxation and insurance for artists and art workers, or legal requirements (such as contracting), are made even more challenging.¹⁵

Hypermobility vs isolation

Looking at mobility in the dance field, there is significant tension between two radically different tendencies within the sector, both of which define and emphasise the needs of the field: the growing pressure to be mobile,¹⁶ and the isolation stemming from a lack of mobility.

In many countries, the pressure to engage in a form of mobility that is frequent and short-term is a particularly heavy burden: "hypermobility, where the art worker jumps from residency to presentation venue, never really touching ground and taking this mobility itself as a measure of success. This often comes with the risk of exhaustion and burnout."¹⁷

The sector seems to be caught between the necessity of mobility and its negative personal, social and environmental impacts: "There is a clear need for research/study trips, to get to know a scene and/or a context, forge first contacts, renew one's network, get to discover new venues, and get to know potential coproduction and/or project partners." And yet: "Many stakeholders stressed the nomadic lifestyle of professionals in the performing arts sector, who are permanently on the move to engage in the different stages of the value chain. This situation can create stress, lack [of] work-life balance, administrative burdens (with contracts in multiple countries etc.)."¹⁸

On the other hand, as proven by the already well documented inequalities in mobility, many dance professionals have little access to mobility. “For many other artists, from around the entire globe, the reality is very different. Access to that ‘transnational space’ for production and presentation in the arts is extremely unequal. Artists do not have equal access to mobility, and this is certainly not only a question of artistic talent. Where someone comes from plays a decisive role.”¹⁹ As the curator Marta Keil put it in a recent interview:

“Visa regulations, the complicated procedures to obtain them, the recurring uncertainty each time you apply, unexplained refusals to give the visa, cancelled performances, courses, artistic and educational projects, no access to the diversity of perspectives, interrupted flow of thoughts and inspirations, economic discrepancies limiting travel, isolation. These are real obstacles that one will encounter sooner or later while working in the international field.”²⁰

1.2. Policy in the field of dance mobility

The positive impact of mobility

As On the Move’s Operational Study has shown, mobility has a direct and undeniably positive impact on artists and art workers. This positive impact includes professional development (gaining new skills, connecting to other artists), economic development (work presentation, accessing co-production resources), opportunities for reflection, exploration and risk, and an increase in visibility and recognition that leads to greater self-esteem. In addition, this impact goes beyond the arts sector and has a positive influence on citizens (through access to a diverse array of artistic experiences), on organisational practices, and on the visibility of countries, making a contribution to global social change and broader political aims.²¹

Impediments to mobility

The mobility of artists and arts professionals is burdened with a variety of obstacles which, unfortunately, even with the increasing importance of mobility in cultural policy, have remained largely untackled. Research – such as Ricard Polacek’s Study on Impediments to Mobility – shows that these are mostly problems to be tackled at EU level: a strategic EU approach is necessary to remove obstacles and move towards more accessible and adaptable mobility policies.²² This is recommended in many advocacy papers and given as a key recommendation in KEA’s Research for CULT Committee – Mobility of artists and culture professionals: towards a European policy framework.²³

There are various difficulties, stemming from a variety of domains:

- Legal and administrative obstacles such as visas, social security regulations, taxation, lack of harmonised legal frameworks, etc.²⁴
- A fragmented and unreliable financial framework: the need for mobility to be widespread is not acknowledged in all relevant departments. Other financial obstacles include budget cuts either concentrating on mobility or more generally on arts and culture (which then affect mobility indirectly).²⁵
- Artistic and cultural mobility is unpredictable and has intangible goals that are hard to quantify: the artistic workforce is atypical, precarious, and often works within the framework of research. These specificities are often not acknowledged, and new policies can include unsuitable or burdensome measures.²⁶
- As already mentioned in this paper, there are striking geographic imbalances in the practice of mobility. Mobility resources and opportunities are concentrated in a few Western European countries, thus contributing to the isolation of those in Eastern and Southern Europe.²⁷ Geographic context can also limit access to information and funding, increase the impact of budget cuts, and influence the cost of living – all factors that reinforce existing inequalities.²⁸

Among these obstacles, perhaps the greatest progress has been made in relation to access to mobility information. It has been addressed in recent years through a variety of resources and actions (such as new online information platforms, the Mobility Information Points or MIPs, and online resources including those co-produced by Pearle*, the European Festival Association, or EuroFIA Dance Passport).²⁹

Mobility: both an EU and a national concern

Led by the demands of the arts sector, and following the emergence and rise of the issue in EU policies in culture and other areas, mobility has been on the EU's agenda for the past two decades.³⁰ The EU Work Plan for Culture acknowledges mobility as a fundamental part of an artist or art worker's career, and as a key area of support for the arts ecosystem:

"The mobility of artists and cultural and creative professionals, the circulation and translation of European content [...] are issues of specific interest for research and exchange at European level."³¹

The positive evolution of the arts ecosystem, and the dance sector within it, therefore depends on mobility, which in turn depends on a sustainable framework – something which remains the responsibility of both EU and national/regional governments. Moreover, this framework needs to be supported across all relevant governmental departments, including foreign affairs, social security, taxation and employment. Regular consultations with the sector through relevant representative bodies are also necessary.

1.3. Mobility opportunities

In the pre-Covid context, what kind of mobility opportunities were available to dance professionals and how did they reinforce or counterbalance the reality of working in the field?

In 2019, On the Move identified 298 mobility schemes open for performing arts professionals in the 41 countries participating in the Creative Europe programme. An additional 188 schemes were open to cross-disciplinary arts and therefore potentially to dance professionals.³²

Types and Formats

Formats for dance mobility are many and diverse and concern a number of activities ranging from co-productions through networking, showcasing, residencies and workshops, to capacity building and staff exchange. The choice of format is led by the priorities of associated projects and the added value that mobility can bring to them. This is the case whether the mobility is demand-led (initiated by artists / art workers) or offer-led (initiated by external bodies / organisations / projects).

In the dance field, mobility experiences predominantly cover projects or productions, participation in events, markets or networks, as well as residencies. The 'go and see' grants that allow participants to visit and explore a place or context are the least common.

Partial coverage

The most common costs to be covered by mobility opportunities are travel, subsistence and accommodation. The least common is visa costs. When engaging with mobility, dance professionals usually carry at least some of the costs themselves (On the Move's Operational Study shows that programme cover an average of 54% of travel costs, throughout all artistic disciplines).

Frequency

Roughly half of the grant schemes are organised with two or more calls a year. However, these are mostly schemes related to participation in events, touring and market development. 40% of grant schemes have only one call per year.³³

Individuals vs groups

Available mobility schemes mostly support individual mobility, even though in the field of performing arts (including dance) more are open to collective applications, most likely due to the collective nature of the practice.

Mobility schemes: a national concern?

Analysis of the grant schemes available in 2019 shows that mobility is primarily led by public bodies on a national level (64% of all schemes analysed, throughout all sectors) with a lot of emphasis placed on outward mobility. This confirms that mobility is still predominantly supported on a national level, as opposed to regional, city, or transnational scales.

Imbalances and concentrations

When looking at sources of mobility funding, it is clear that they are extremely concentrated in a few countries. Out of the 298 mobility schemes dedicated to performing arts and open to dance, 48% come from 5 countries (France, Spain, Sweden, Germany and Czech Republic).

At the same time, for countries in the Balkans and the Caucasus, as well as Tunisia (the only MENA country participating in Creative Europe), the mobility schemes are extremely limited: “The data or information we could collect for Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Tunisia, Armenia and Kosovo, is that national and/or local funds for mobility (as based on regular open calls) are often non-existent or inconsistent.”³⁴

Taking a closer look at the few mobility schemes that exist reveals that these are very often initiated by European national cultural institutes, EU-funded programmes, development agencies, or intermediary organisations. The lack of internal – national or regional – schemes is striking. The fact that mobility depends largely on organisations that work in the realm of soft power or aid and development shapes the mobility that takes place. The needs and ambitions of professionals are expected to fit into agendas outside the arts and culture field.

One-off schemes

Other mobility schemes stem from EU-funded projects or are led by international networks within a limited timeframe. This lack of continuity is especially problematic for the arts sectors in the Balkans, Caucasus and MENA regions, which are more reliant on EU schemes.

A number of mobility schemes are organised as one-off opportunities, because they address a particular topic, take place within a particular event, or are part of an EU-funded project (within a variety of EU programmes) where residences and participation in events seem to be the main forms of mobility. These are to a large extent led by the theme and priorities of the project/programme and only a few allow for self-initiated mobility.

1.4. Specific needs of the dance sector

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the dance sector had a number of specific needs in relation to mobility. These stem both from the individual tensions and pressures experienced by professionals and from wider social shifts that were underway before the pandemic.

Before Covid-19, dance professionals needed mobility support that was:

- Accessible and flexible, across geographies and political contexts.
- Organised in a timeframe that respects the need for flexibility and complementary short-term work.
- Appropriate and realistic (covering a greater diversity of expenses and by a larger percentage).
- Open to collective mobility.
- Open to repeated mobility, to grow deeper and more sustainable connections.
- Self-initiated, not only following on from projects.
- Able to create new collaborations outside of well-identified hubs/centres.
- Socially responsible.³⁵

It is also useful to note that those in the sector who work closer to cross-disciplinary or interdisciplinary practices – and are less strictly identified with the dance field – had more difficulty accessing mobility opportunities and funding, as their practices were less easy to identify with a specific sector. This is a significant obstacle given the increasing tendency of artistic practices to blur disciplines or work in an interdisciplinary way.

II. DANCE MOBILITY: THE POST-COVID ERA

2.1. Exploring shifts and trends

Confronted with the crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic, mobility opportunities have shifted and adapted. On the Move's website and work gathering mobility news and calls can offer valuable insights to help identify trends. In this section, we look at calls published on the On the Move website from January 2020 through to the end of February 2021.

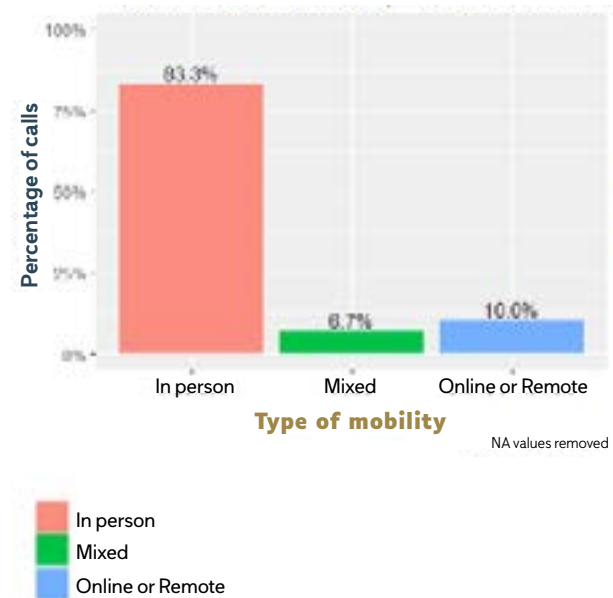
Online vs on-site

Looking at the mobility calls that have emerged since the beginning of the crisis, the most notable (albeit not surprising) trend is the shift towards online and remote formats – initially in an ad hoc way (in the first months of the pandemic), but gradually tending towards more structured programmes.

A similar trend can be observed when it comes to presenting work: initially, opportunities concentrated on recordings of existing productions (such as Pépinières Européennes de Création's *Nola – No Lockdown Art*³⁶ in April 2020), but slowly moved towards natively digital formats or livestreamed productions (in February 2021, for example, TANZAHOi International Dance and Dance Film Festival³⁷ offered a grant to support livestreaming of dance work) and invitations to rethink touring practices (LIFT's 'Concept Touring' commissioned installations and performance projects "where the idea, process, work, travels but the artist does not").³⁸

Throughout the period under review, the majority of calls in the performing arts were for on-site, rather than online activities. This was particularly striking when it comes to calls focused on the dance sector:

In person and online mobility – dance focused (n=30)



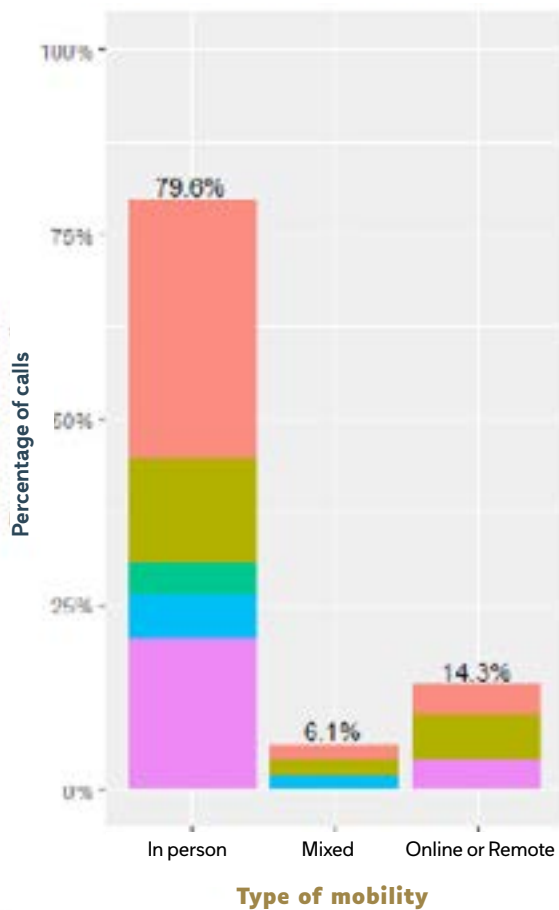
(It's worth noting, however, that calls for funded programmes aren't necessarily a good indicator for the sector's activity as a whole. At the start of the pandemic, many dance artists took their work online by offering activities like paid online courses and classes.)

The main players

Governmental agencies and national cultural export bodies, such as the British Council or the Goethe-Institut, played a significant role not only in providing opportunities but in supporting new formats. Just over half of all their calls were for online or mixed activities. Their initiatives count for 8.5% of all performing arts / cross disciplinary calls (and for the 3 most active organisations by call volume: Goethe-Institut (16), British Council (9), and Institut français (9)), and for 12% of all online/mixed calls.

Similarly, EU programmes made a large contribution to overall mobility activities (11.7%) but were predominantly travel-focused. Networks funded under Creative Europe were much more likely to organise online activities than cooperation projects.

In person and online mobility - EU programmes (n=49)

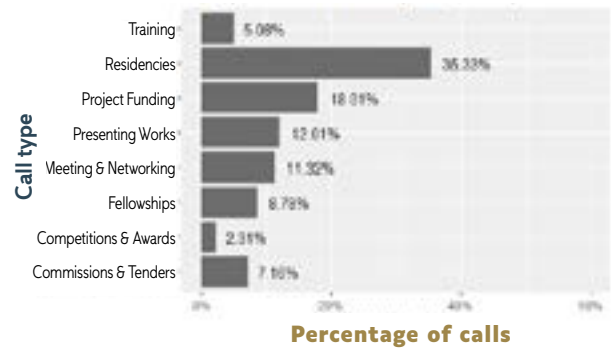


- Creative Europe - Cooperation projects
- Creative Europe - Networks
- Erasmus+
- Horizon 2020
- Other EU Programmes

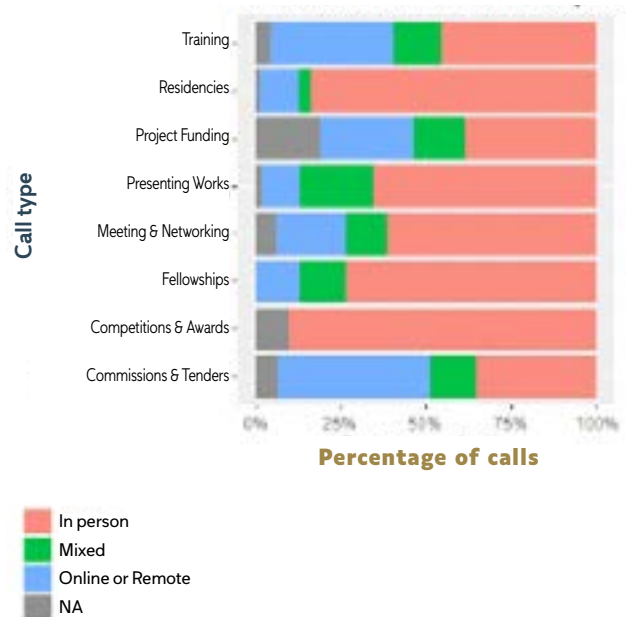
A shift in call types

During the Covid crisis, residencies were the most common type of call, but the second least likely to take an online/remote or hybrid format. Online work favoured training, networking, and various forms of commission or project funding.

Call types - all dance friendly calls (n=436)



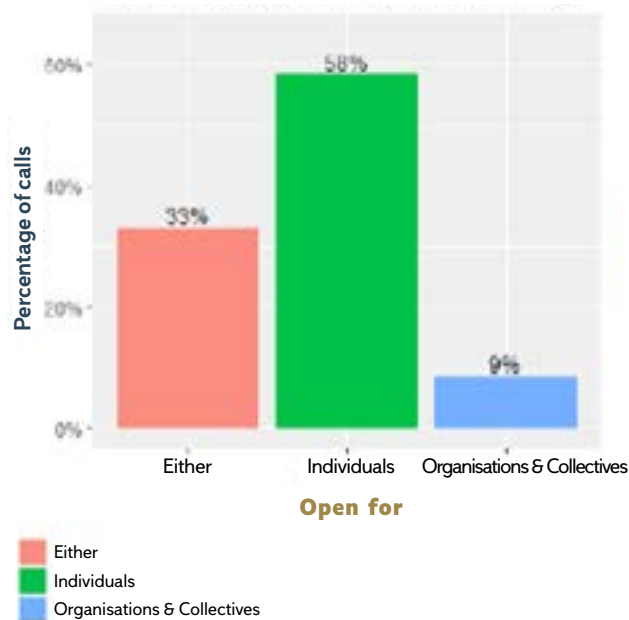
Online / offline - all dance friendly calls (n=436)



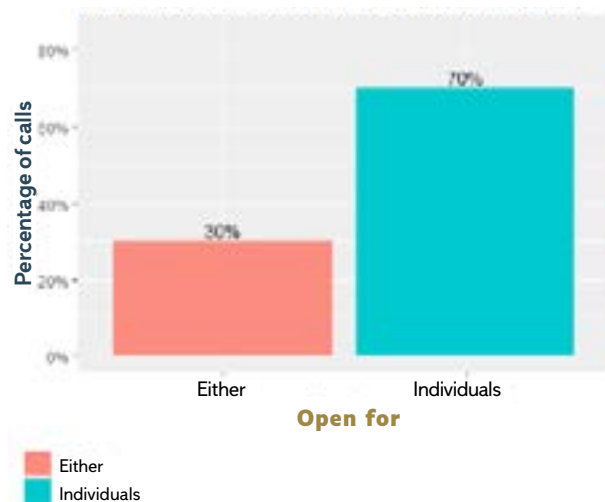
Individual or collective

As was the case before the Covid-19 crisis, most calls were addressed to individuals, although some were also open to both individuals and collectives.

Individual or collective - all calls (n=418)



Individual or collective - dance focused calls (n=30)

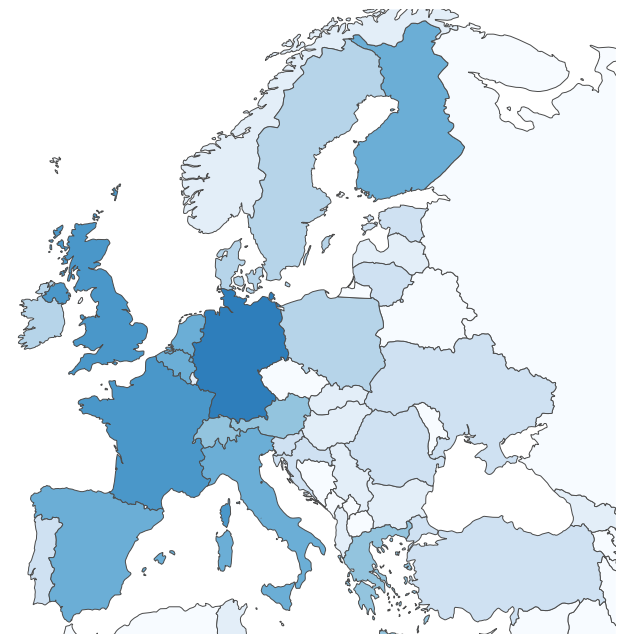


Geography: still unequal

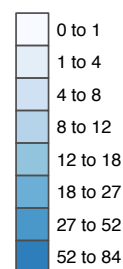
In regard to the geographic spread of calls, there are a few interesting trends which reinforce existing inequalities and imbalances in access to mobility.

Unsurprisingly, calls originated mostly from Western Europe, with Germany, France and the UK being the most active.

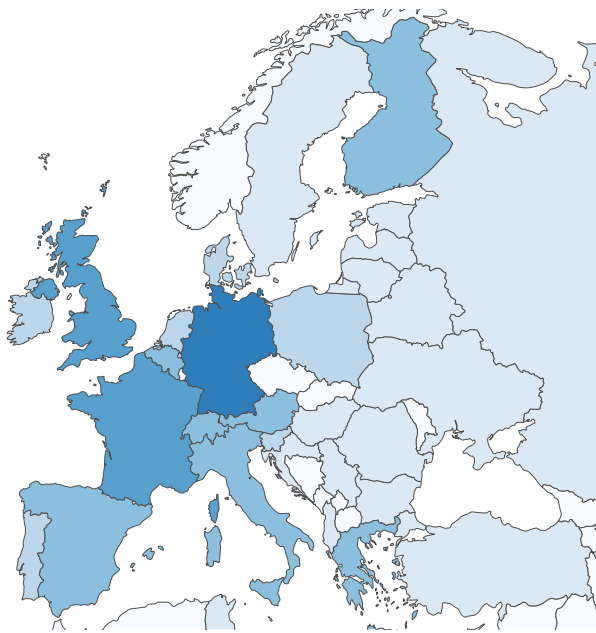
When looking at the European continent, the majority of calls originate in Western Europe and only a few in Eastern Europe. As before the pandemic crisis, mobility opportunities originating in the countries of the Balkans and the Caucasus are scarce, or non-existent.



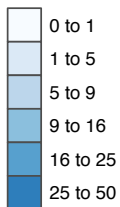
No. of calls – by origin



Looking at the destination of the calls, the pattern is similar, with Germany, France and the UK being the countries most represented, with radically fewer opportunities for mobility towards Eastern Europe and none, or next to none, towards the Balkans and the Caucasus.



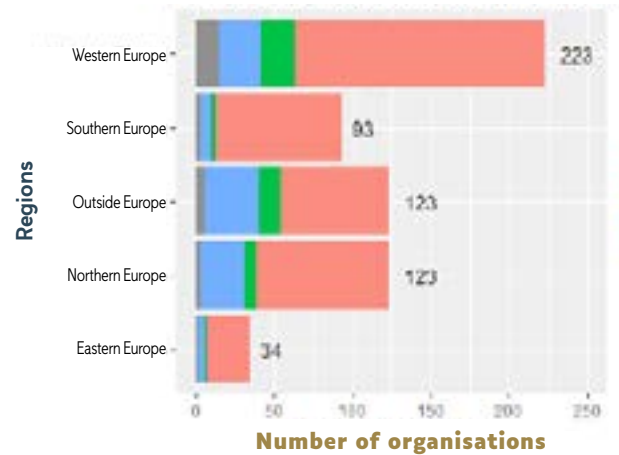
No. of calls – destination



When looking at calls focused only on dance, the list of countries varies somewhat (whilst keeping the same East/West and North/South divide), with Germany being the most represented in both origin and destination, and other countries being mostly Northern and Western European. German-based organisations are behind almost a third of all the dance-focused calls.

Looking at the geographic spread of the call organisers, here again it is clear that they are predominantly Western European, and that Southern Europe and in particular Eastern Europe are underrepresented.

Number of call organisers by region - all calls



Further evolutions emerging in the pandemic-crisis period

Around 1 in 10 calls were mixed/hybrid – involving both online and in-person activities. Some were mixed calls by design: they deliberately chose to have an online segment and a live segment (usually with the live segment acting as a final capstone for the project). For others the online portion was a contingency plan: live activity was the goal, but would be replaced by online activity if needed.

A few examples of this:

- o The Dancing on the Edge³⁹ training programme was planned offline in 2020, but was forced online. The 2021 edition was hybrid, with a confirmed online version, complemented with an on-site one that would go ahead if possible.
- o In some cases, the mixed aspect was a choice for the applicant, who would be given the option of applying either for the online activity or the in-person programme (e.g. the Artreach⁴⁰ commissions for Liberty UK in November 2020).

Alongside programmes moving online there were also some that chose to recentre from an international to a national focus (particularly at the start of the pandemic when a quick reaction was needed), or to restrict participation to neighbouring/nearby countries.

- o In January 2021, Soundance Festival Berlin⁴¹ prioritised national applications for in-person projects. Digital or hybrid formats could be international.

The notion of a 'corona proof' performance entered the vocabulary, with some calls requiring distanced, adaptable and sometimes outdoor performances.

- o In May 2020, LOCALIZE's Center Shock⁴² sought 'corona-compatible formats' for an in-person residency – the artist would come to the city and then create site-specific outdoor works.

Calls focused on online collaboration/exchange started to emerge, in different formats.

- o Matchmaking was one common approach: in December 2020, Baltan Laboratories⁴³ / Arts Initiative Tokyo's online residency programme⁴⁴ paired artists/designers from Netherlands and Japan to conduct collaborative research.

A number of initiatives used new formats to make a statement about working models and practices, seeing it as not just a temporary problem but a fundamental challenge, and something to embrace rather than push away.

- o In Germany, zeitraumexit's 'Care City' call⁴⁵ for the Festival Wunder der Prärie circled around Mierle Laderman Ukeles' Maintenance Art manifesto (January 2021).
- o HIAP's Long-distance & Land-Based Trans-Siberian Railway Trip⁴⁶ (October 2020) put emphasis on journey over destination (analogous to the shift from product to process in art in general).
- o Mophradat's At Home with the Kids Residency for Caregivers⁴⁷ conceptualised a family residency (February 2021).
- o No work programmes like Culture Zone Wrocław's Overdue Time Off / Zaległy Urlop for Foreign Artists Living in Poland⁴⁸ (June 2020) gave artists a much-needed break.

Training adapted fairly easily to online formats.

- o One of only a few European cooperation projects to take some of its activity online, in August 2020, Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe⁴⁹ organised three workshops with European playwrights.
- o In May 2020, Council's AFIELD mentorship programme⁵⁰ supported participants to work remotely in their local community.

Recognising an increased need, some programmes chose to award more smaller grants, or to adopt flatter distribution schemes (especially in the earlier period of the pandemic in the form of programme funds as relief grants).

Further notes on dance-focused calls during the same period

There were two Creative Europe projects: Big Pulse Dance Alliance⁵¹ and PUSH+⁵² (not exclusively dance, but with dance partners).

All calls were focused on artists/creators, with the exception of Centre national de la danse's Dance(s) and Ritual(s) symposium⁵³, which was open to applicants from all backgrounds.

Some regular programmes proposed altered formats:

- o The Pina Bausch scholarship was cancelled in 2020 and then adopted an online format for 2021.
- o As noted above, Dancing on the Edge took on a mixed format in 2021 after going online in 2020; TANZAHOi offered a grant for livestreaming; and Soundance Festival mixed online and live activity.

Looking at the overall picture, there is not much obvious adaptation in mobility support for the dance field, with schemes predominantly addressing individuals, activities mostly based in Western or Northern Europe, and little real consideration of either hypermobility or the isolation of dance actors.

However, there are a few encouraging signs of progress being accelerated by the Covid-19 crisis: the coronavirus has prompted some organisations to rethink and reset working practices and organisational models on a level that is deeper and more fundamental than a mere crisis response. This in turn could help the sector transition towards models that are more in tune with contemporary artistic practices and societal changes. The number of residencies and training programmes, and the appearance of some experimental models, is interesting as a possible shift towards practices that are more focused on research and capacity building, and less driven by the market. A lot of potential still lies in the EU programmes, which present an important complement to existing, more structured mobility schemes, but which so far have not adapted to more flexible or less agenda-driven formats. The readiness of some large support organisations to multiply and diversify their support schemes, and make them more flexible, is also a positive development.

2.2. Dance policy under Covid

Just as the Covid-19 crisis has concentrated attention on the climate catastrophe and ecological breakdown, it has also underlined the necessity of taking a holistic approach to mobility that brings together cultural, ecological and social priorities.

At the EU level, the largest and most ambitious initiative to date has been New European Bauhaus, the EU's new strategic project placing a 'Green Deal' and issues of sustainability at the heart of Europe's cultural vision:

"The New European Bauhaus is a creative and interdisciplinary initiative, convening a space of encounter to design future ways of living, situated at the crossroads between art, culture, social inclusion, science and technology. It brings the Green Deal to our living places and calls for a collective effort to imagine and build a future that is sustainable, inclusive and beautiful for our minds and for our souls."⁵⁴

Moreover, the European Parliament is seeking to readjust European Commission programmes such as Erasmus+ and Creative Europe to push for more sustainable practices while bearing in mind the unique circumstances of different regions and their infrastructures.⁵⁵

A few publications that have emerged during the crisis call for culture to be placed at the heart of the post-crisis rebuilding efforts. These include Rebuilding Europe: The cultural and creative economy before and after the COVID-19 crisis⁵⁶ as well as the campaign led by Culture Action Europe, the European Cultural Foundation, and Europa Nostra, 'A Cultural Deal for Europe: A central place for culture in the EU's post-pandemic future'.⁵⁷

Due to its harmful effect on the working conditions of artists and art workers, the Covid-19 crisis has also put the precarity of the arts (and dance) sectors under the spotlight, with the 'Status and Working Conditions of Artists and Cultural and Creative Professionals' one of the topics for the EU consultations held under the civil society initiative Voices of Culture 2019–2021.⁵⁸

2.3. Evolving needs: the influence of the crisis

Under the Covid crisis, and the challenges it creates and accentuates, the needs of dance professionals are continuing to evolve. Analysis of the calls published on the On the Move website points to a more complex array of needs among artists and art workers:

- The need to survive – artists need to find a solution for replacing income from work that was postponed or cancelled due to the Covid crisis and the ensuing closure of arts venues.
- The need to adapt to radically changing circumstances. This adaptation is difficult and depends on both tangible and intangible resources: on the capacity to develop new skills, on time, and sometimes on equipment, Internet access, etc.
 - o A few calls address this explicitly. In June 2020, the Institute for Creative Arts' Online Fellowship Programme⁵⁹ focused on supporting artists to adapt existing work for online formats.
 - o Also in June 2020, Warehouse421's Homebound Residency Programme⁶⁰ provided a production budget for equipment and materials.
- The need for working space is a crucial issue at a time when arts venues are temporarily closing their doors en masse. This encompasses two dimensions of space: physical space within which to work, and collaboration space in which conversation/ideas can happen. From an international perspective, the second dimension is easier to address in the current circumstances and with the available technology. Physical space to work in is a harder problem, especially for dance and performing arts.
 - o Most opportunities/calls in this area were for meetings, rehearsals and performances that would take place on online conferencing platforms. There were however a few experiments with more complex platforms – e.g. Kara Agora's Speculative Playrooms project⁶¹ (October 2020) taking place inside Mozilla Hubs. In this case, the space of collaboration was also the space of presentation.

- The need for advocacy – not only at the level of the sector, but also for artists who need to share their individual experiences.

o In April 2020, Heart of Glass⁶² With For About conference paid artists to contribute their experiences of lockdown and the pandemic.

- The need to imagine new ways of meeting old needs – the need to exchange, to network, to access professional development, etc. The almost complete absence of mobility has forced dance actors to rethink how their needs can be met by other means.

- The need for flexibility – both from participants and organisers. It has become common for calls to give provisional plans/timetables that are subject to change.

Finally, many artists and professionals have experienced their needs merging together and their boundaries blurring. Arguably, professional needs are never separate from personal ones (care, family, health) or social ones (environment, community, equity, etc.), but these ‘other’ needs have nonetheless become more immediate. This is particularly so in the case of disabled artists, whose achievements in terms of visibility and greater recognition of their needs seem to have suffered a major set back. “All the agency and empowerment we’ve fought for lost in that simple sweeping gesture,” as the artist Claire Cunningham eloquently put it.⁶³

It seems that the Covid 19-crisis has further complexified a mobility landscape that was already highly segregated and imbalanced. The needs of the sector have become at once more basic (such as needing working or meeting space) and more sophisticated (the need to adapt, acquire new skills, imagine new models and methods of work).

Striking the right balance between fulfilling the evolving needs for mobility, acknowledging mobility’s public and social values (and not just its individual relevance), and reducing its negative impact will be crucial challenges for the dance sector in the coming years.

As a side note, the evolving needs of dance professionals would benefit from a more thorough investigation: the data used in this paper, related to the impact of the Covid-19 crisis, is taken from existing calls, rather than from direct consultation of dance professionals. It would certainly be interesting to gather direct accounts of how needs are evolving and thus anticipate future changes, better to imagine the mobility support of tomorrow.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mobility remains the driving force of the sector. The economic model that defines how dance is being created, distributed and accessed still relies very much on mobility and touring, with all the ecological, economic, societal and political inequalities that this may reinforce. The Covid-19 crisis has inspired an important push towards experimenting with various digital distribution models, but the effect on the dance sector in terms of digital mobility has been slight. The digital shift has not fully affected the dance sector yet, and although many attempts have been made to create and distribute content online, mobility-related programmes are still mostly happening on-site. Furthermore, even though environmental concerns have entered artistic discourse and shaped the content of much artistic work, organisational models that are respectful of the environment are yet to become widespread.

Moreover, the economic model that dance is based on has a profound effect on artists' quality of life and conditions of work. Artists are often trapped between the necessity of mobility (which allows them to produce and show their work to larger audiences but also reinforces a sense of disconnection from their own environment) and fear of immobility (which usually means lack of visibility and opportunities to work).

Where an artist is based geographically is of crucial importance to their visibility and, consequently, their capacity to create and show work. Inequalities in access to mobility, and therefore access to work, have remained and have even been accentuated by Covid-19, with most activities and support schemes concentrated in a few countries. Likewise, some countries, particularly those in the Balkans, suffer from a serious lack of support, with very few schemes that are not connected to political agendas.

The Covid-19 crisis has brought transnational cooperation almost to a halt, with the production and distribution of many performances postponed or cancelled. Bearing in mind that the dance sector works over relatively long timeframes in terms of its creation processes and in terms of fitting with venue programmes, this disruption is bound to have consequences that will mark the sector for years to come. With little or no international travel, programmers are turning to artists in their local environments, further changing the landscape for transnational work, and accelerating a trend which in some countries was already in motion due to political shifts or ecological concerns. The full effects of these changes are yet to be understood, but could potentially have lasting consequences on a generation of artists, in particular those from less privileged environments.

The needs of artists have broadened and intensified. They have become more complex and more radical, expanding to include the need to acquire new skills in order to navigate this period of uncertainty, or the need to imagine new ways of doing fundamental work.

On the other hand, the crisis has deepened reflection on the necessity of transforming the sector. More open, more flexible schemes are being set up, with an awareness of the ethical and ecological conditions they propose. The apparent rise of residencies and other non-product or non-result oriented opportunities is highly encouraging, as it brings opportunities to remove economic pressure and allow artists to concentrate on research, development and experimentation. New, experimental ideas are bringing about hybrid formats that investigate not only the content of the work but also the models in which the work is supported, making it more equal and open. Some organisations have also proposed new schemes and programmes as a way of promoting or researching ideas for alternative organisational practices that are more in tune with a changing society.

Following on from these conclusions, a few recommendations can be addressed both to policymakers concerned with the field of dance, and to the professional dance sector:

On overall policy framework:

- Formulate positive policies to support and diversify mobility, responding both to the growing needs of artists and to the sector's economic model. In order to circumvent existing obstacles, it is essential that these policies should work on both national/regional and EU levels.
- In forming policy, recognise the growing precarity of artists under current systems. Fair working conditions and fair remuneration practices are essential to a truly positive impact.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On solidarity:

- Nurture a culture and policy of solidarity, based on shared responsibility for the sector at large, not just for one's own immediate environment. The radical imbalances that already existed in mobility flows, as well as access to mobility between various countries, has worsened, leading to a 'brain drain' from the peripheries towards (perceived) centres, a weaker position for artists and art workers from some countries, and less diverse proposals for some audiences. To counterbalance this, a culture and a policy of solidarity is needed. Ultimately, when Balkan or Eastern European artists cannot travel, it is Western Europe audiences that are deprived of an artistic vision. Solidarity, as a concept infused not only in support schemes but also in organisational practices, is an essential element to overcoming these difficulties.

On fairer and socially engaged support schemes:

- Develop appropriate and realistic support schemes that are aware of regional/local economic, social and political characteristics, and that bear in mind the precarious working conditions of artists. To be socially responsible, support schemes need to take into account their impact on local communities, the environment, and quality of life. Schemes should cover more expenses, and a larger percentage of overall expenditure, including visas and other inevitable costs. Schemes that are accessible for collectives as well as schemes that allow repeated mobility are also needed. Finally, support schemes for mobility in the field of dance need to take into account the limited duration of dancers' professional careers.

On a more inclusive policymaking process with and for the sector:

- Involve artists in rethinking and reimagining models, methods and schemes. This is potentially hugely beneficial. They have personal experience and knowledge of specific conditions and needs, as well as the capacity for the kind of creative thinking that this research requires. They are the experts on innovation and the sector can benefit from this.
- Encourage and support further experimentation with alternative organisational and financial models. Organisations that have aligned their organisational practices and methods with their ethos and values are precious examples that should be followed, documented and made visible.
- Give artists and art workers opportunities to engage in self-initiated mobility of the 'go and see' variety – opportunities to follow specific interests, curiosities and intuitions.
- Support ongoing experiments around new, alternative, hybrid and blended schemes and models. Support is particularly needed to ensure that these schemes embrace sustainability and green policy measures.

At a research level and in strong connection with the sector:

- Support further research to better understand the specific mobility needs and challenges of the dance field.

As this study is being finalised, the global Covid-19 crisis is still in full swing, and in these shifting and insecure conditions, it is difficult to draw conclusions. The full extent of these upheavals is yet to be understood. However, it is clear that the dance sector is in transition and that it is rethinking its own mobility practices. The Covid-19 crisis has complicated and intensified this process. How the dance sector solves the contradictions and tensions between its need for mobility and the very limits of that mobility will be the key to a positive future.

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