

EDN Conference: How Can We Move? Ecological Perspectives on Contemporary Dance

summary written by Carmen Amme

As part of EDN's 2022 campaign, "Ecological Perspectives on Contemporary Dance: How Can We Move?", EDN hosted an online conference on 14 November 2022 that brought together artists, cultural practitioners, academics and local and global decision-makers. This final event summarized conversations, thoughts and actions from all the activities of the past year on how the performing arts can address the pressing issues around sustainability and ecology.

In addition, the EDN published 'Environmental Sustainability in Contemporary Dance: Emerging Issues, Practices and Recommendations', a document that shows where dance and environmental sustainability intersect and what effective measures could be taken (available [here](#)). **Jordi Baltà Portolés**, consultant and researcher at Trànsit Projects and author of the publication, introduced the six main themes that are discussed in the publication where contemporary dance and environmental sustainability meet. The publication is action and future oriented, meaning that each theme addresses the question of how to move beyond consciousness to action.

Invited guest speakers also reported on how their organisations intend to move towards more environmentally sustainable action. **Barbara Gessler**, Head of [Creative Europe](#), shared how to reduce environmental impact while addressing the interconnected issues of inclusion and gender equity. Creative Europe has launched the [Culture Moves Europe](#) programme with a budget of 21 million euros for the next three years to promote the mobility of artists and creative professionals. This approach is based on ecological thinking, as it encourages applicants to use more sustainable means of transport by increasing funding. "Dancers and arts professionals have been the driving force behind this development because they've called for more practical support," Barbara Gessler concluded.

Eduardo Bonito from [Big Pulse Dance](#) showed how his organisation has moved from awareness to action by launching an open call for sustainable projects that don't travel too much, involve a maximum of six people traveling and involve local people. Another organisation that wants to support a move towards more sustainable action is [On The Move](#), a mobility information network for artists and cultural professionals.



Marie Le Sourd presented the example of the "[Green Mobility Guide](#)", which aims to support environmentally sustainable mobility in the performing arts sector (shared resource is also available [here](#)). Their novel project is the [SHIFT Eco-Guidelines for Networks](#), which will soon award certificates to organisations that follow the guidelines to implement a call to action.

While it's important for organisations and policy-makers to establish guidelines for environmentally sustainable action, it's also up to individual artists and companies to bring about change. Touring is an essential but often unsustainable part of an artist's work. **Yvona Kreuzmannová**, Director at [Tanec Praha](#) in the Czech Republic, shared how they practice regional touring with 25 regional partners. When an artist comes from abroad, they try to keep him/her in the country longer and connect the artist with local partners.

[Sasha Waltz](#), choreographer, dancer and founder of the company Sasha Waltz & Guests, presented another example of sustainable touring. For the production "In C", she developed a system in which figures that are part of the choreography can be learned individually and then performed together. The choreography can be easily shared through tutorials and the level of complicity can be easily adapted so that projects with amateurs and people of all ages can use this resource. This is a piece that travels further without the company having to travel.

In order to act and tackle pressing issues such as climate change, skills such as creativity, adaptability and dealing with uncertainty are currently in high demand in society. "Dancing with others in a collaborative environment fosters these skills," says **Monica Gillette**, dance dramaturg and choreographer. She's been involved in the EU-funded [Empowering Dance](#) project, which explores how soft skills can be developed and transferred in dance practise. [Robbie Synge](#), an artist living in the Scottish Highlands, sees the great potential of the dance community to bring people together to promote self-awareness and to connect with nature to raise awareness. Reconnecting with nature through artistic interventions creates a self-awareness that leads to more environmentally sustainable actions (e.g. <https://www.ordemdoo.com>, <https://www.labea.net/materiabosque>).

[Martha Hincapié Charry](#), a Berlin-based dancer and choreographer who was born and raised in an indigenous community in Colombia, talked about her approach to climate change and sustainability. "We only think that we're disconnected from nature, but that can't be because we're nature. But thinking that we're not connected to nature makes it possible for us to destroy nature and the Earth."

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Through her work, Martha Hincapié Charry shares indigenous technologies and tools that allow us to reconnect with nature and be more mindful of our work and everyday life. "This is also the moment to bring into focus the discourse of BIPOC people who're struggling the most with the consequences of climate change, including their backgrounds and approaches," she concluded.



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