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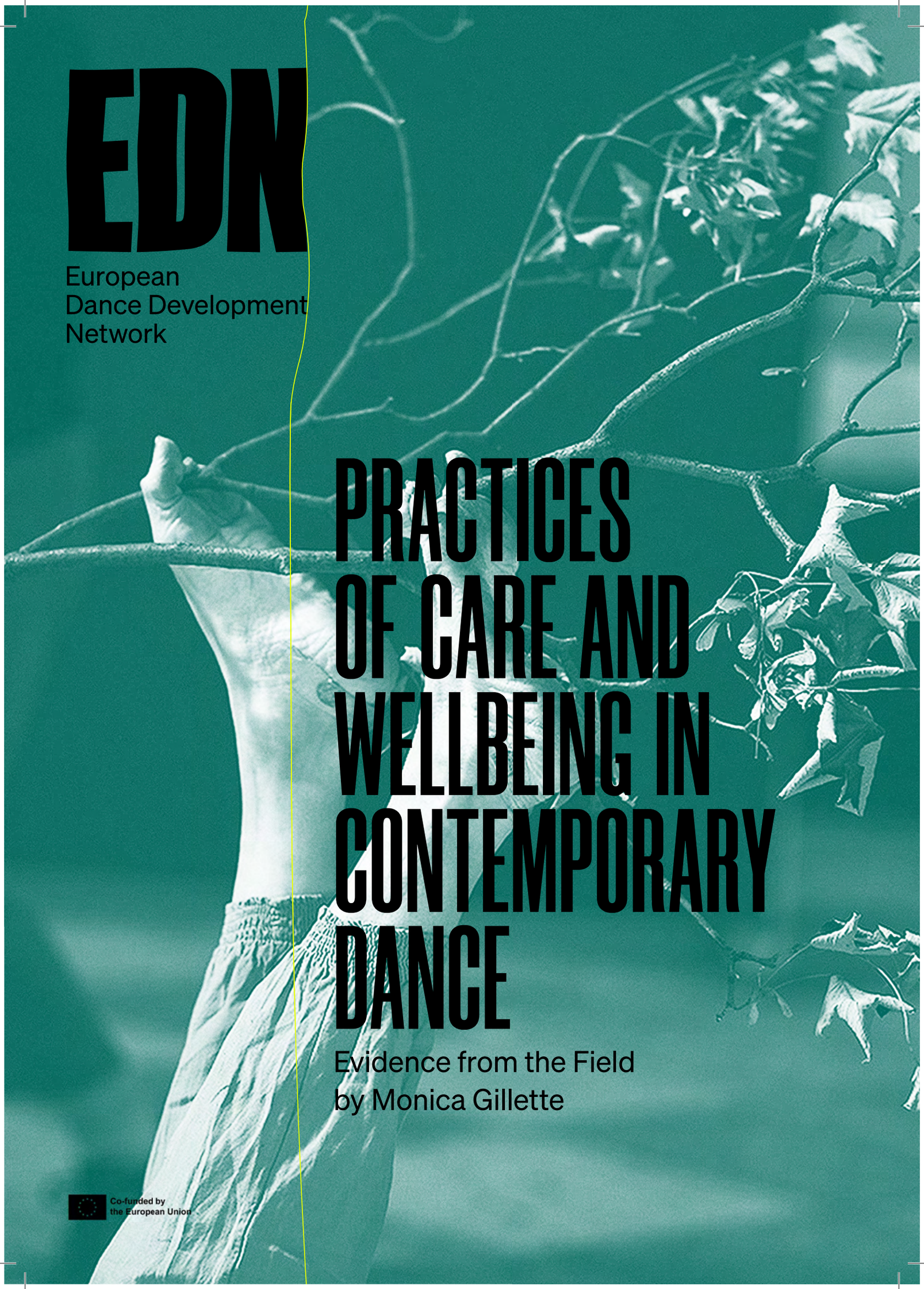

PRACTICES OF CARE AND WELLBEING IN CONTEMPORARY DANCE

Evidence from the Field
by Monica Gillette

Co-funded by
the European Union

EDN Atelier_ Dansateliers_Laurent Meheust

FOREWORD

The art form of dance is a cultural practice that embodies the movement and transformation of our societies today. Dance is increasingly recognised for contributing to wellbeing, societal healing and social cohesion. However, the sector's sustainability depends on our ability to create environments that nurture both the societal impact of dance, and the wellbeing of those who sustain it.

This report highlights multiple ways dance contributes to societal wellbeing. It addresses tensions that respond to the strained working conditions in the dance sector and offers recommendations for maintaining a pluralistic and thriving contemporary dance culture.

Our heartfelt thanks to all who contributed their insights and experiences during the mapping for this report. With a special thank you to Monica Gillette for your generosity, knowledge, care, and dedication.

Enjoy the read!

Eva Broberg
Network manager
European Dance Development Network

Monica Gillette_photo by Romain Paquet

About the author

Monica Gillette is a dance dramaturg and facilitator. After dancing professionally she now guides multiple projects with dance as a pathway for social engagement and multigenerational cultural exchange.

As a dramaturg she accompanied several European funded projects: Migrant Bodies - Moving Borders (2017-2019), Empowering Dance (2018-2023) and Dancing Museums - The Democracy of Beings (2020-2021) and continues to accompany Dance Well (2022-2025) and Moving Borders (2023-2025). For each of those projects she authors and edits digital publications for the dissemination of the knowledge and skills developed in the project.

For the writing of this report, Monica Gillette draws from the experiences of facilitating embodied sessions and the transformation process with the team at Tanzhaus Zürich. Together with Gwen Hsin-Yi Chang she is newly appointed as the Artistic Direction team for the Tanztriennale, taking place in Hamburg in 2026.

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FOCUS OF THE REPORT

The relationship between dance, wellbeing and society has become increasingly more visible, explored, studied and written about. This report describes multiple approaches for how dance is being engaged with as an applied art form for improved wellbeing.

It also underscores the gaps between how dance is celebrated for its ability to enhance people's wellbeing and various working methods within the dance field that do the opposite. Meaning, work practices that go against or have a negative impact on the wellbeing of dance professionals.

Additionally, the report addresses the various tensions and concerns about the instrumentalization of the artform. It offers recommendations and insights to counter those concerns and to support the work of numerous dance professionals who have chosen to expand their practice to include more inclusive and healthier approaches to the way they work.

Performance Grand Jeté by Silvia Gribaudi_photo by Rosaliina Elgland

CONTEXT AND MOTIVATING FACTORS

Background

In 2021 EDN issued a report entitled Dance and Wellbeing - Review of evidence and policy perspectives, focusing on how dance can contribute to healthy lives and promote wellbeing at all ages. The report describes the increased awareness and evidence in how cultural participation improves the health and wellbeing of society, presenting such findings as from The New European Agenda for Culture: “cultural access is the second most important determinant of psychological well-being, preceded only by the absence of disease.”[1]

In 2022 Culture for Health released a scoping report, synthesising hundreds of studies and their findings regarding the role culture plays in improving wellbeing on a personal and collective level. The report puts in perspective the findings by the World Health Organization in 2019, which demonstrate how the arts can address disease prevention and the improvement of mental and physical health by highlighting how the arts can generate initiatives that are adaptive and responsive to a wide range of audiences with individual needs. The report also underscores how the arts should not be considered only as an add-on to existing medical treatment, but that arts-based methods can be effective as healthcare responses in their own right. An important aspect they also identify is that by focusing on more holistic approaches offered through cultural activities, the attention shifts away from specific illnesses and more towards a broader understanding of health.

This broader understanding of health and the multifaceted ways in which dance, dance practitioners and dance organisations contribute to individual and collective wellbeing is an essential aspect when considering the future of the dance field. Also essential is enlarging the understanding of how dance contributes to wellbeing beyond only looking through the lens of disease prevention or physical health to also include mental health, social cohesion and civic engagement.


Dance Well

Throughout the research for this report, it became apparent that it is not only the act of dancing that can enhance wellbeing, but also the numerous practices and approaches dance artists and organisations have cultivated to create an environment of care as a key ingredient for more fair and just co-existence. This applies not only to the activities offered to the public, but also what has driven shifts in practice within the dance field itself.

Since 2021, the role dance can play in society, especially in regards to wellbeing, has become both increasingly more visible and needed. Triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and crisis of mental and physical health, recent social justice movements, expanded conflict and war zones and growing awareness and actions for equity and fairness,[2] the role dance plays in society in regards to health, wellbeing, healing and social cohesion has become more pronounced and implemented across several dance organisations.

In September 2024 Culture Action Europe published a position paper on Culture Health and Wellbeing, underscoring the multiple factors that made the recent mental health crises and vulnerability of the healthcare systems palpable to everyone, generating momentum and a sense of urgency for a systemic change.[3]

Additionally, artists have increasingly embraced more socially engaged work alongside or within their creative processes, including working with people from surrounding and underserved communities, participatory research and implementing inclusive and accessible practices, which has shaped their professional and artistic development. All of these factors combined are shaping the landscape of the dance field.

A key interest for this report is to not only continue to highlight the strategies and skills dance practice can bring to society in regards to health and wellbeing, but to also look at how those same strategies and skills can inform our work environments and the actions and measures needed to improve the working conditions for dance professionals.

This expansion of perspective means removing the separation between dance professionals and society, or the public, and recognizing that we are all a part of the society we often speak of changing or improving through dance. It is time to take a fresh look at the knowledge and practices developed by dance artists and organisations as guidance to enhance our own wellbeing on a personal, collective, systemic and policy level.

It is acknowledging that as dance professionals, we need to continue to celebrate and advocate for what specifically about dance enhances wellbeing, while also looking at the structures, habits, conditions and policies in place that work against the health and wellbeing of the dance field and all that pursue it.

Defining wellbeing

Wellbeing has become a topic across many areas, such as public policy, physical and mental health, work environments, economy and societal welfare. It does not always have an agreed upon definition, though, partly because it is often subjectively and personally measured and interpreted differently in varying disciplines, cultures and generations. For example, the medical field primarily defines wellbeing in relation to an absence of illness, or from a psychological perspective as "a state of happiness and contentment, with low levels of distress, overall good physical and mental health and outlook, or good quality of life".[4]

To demonstrate varying entry points to wellbeing on a socio-cultural level, in a research conducted with Chinese students, emphasis was placed on optimism and contentment, while in a European context, more focus tends to be given to mental health.[5] To further blur the interpretation of the term, commercial and monetisation of 'wellness' and 'well-being-related' products and corporate initiatives has contributed to what some call 'wellbeing washing', implying only a superficial interest in the care of employees.[6] This adds to the oversimplification of the term in a way that overlooks the complex causes that may contribute to a person's or community's wellbeing.

For you

Take a moment

With this in mind, take a moment to think about what you personally need to feel well.

Is what you need to feel well in your sole control?
Or does it rely on conditions in your work environment or living space or perhaps the results of your latest application for funding?

Is your sense of wellbeing enhanced through social connection or reduced due to lack of access? Is your personal entry to the topic different or similar to how you experience it professionally?

Through these questions, perhaps you could already feel the gradient of factors that shape your wellbeing and begin to sense what might feel in your own control and what might not.

Depending on from what context and perspective you enter the reading of this report, scanning your own connotations and definitions of wellbeing might also trigger your thinking in the direction of topics of fairness, personal, environmental and institutional sustainability and equity.

The World Health Organisation defines wellbeing as:

> "a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions. Well-being encompasses quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose. Focusing on well-being supports the tracking of the equitable distribution of resources, overall thriving and sustainability. A society's well-being can be determined by the extent to which it is resilient, builds capacity for action, and is prepared to transcend challenges."[7]

This definition resonates with many personal descriptions of wellbeing that were offered by dance professionals interviewed throughout the research for this report. One dance practitioner described wellbeing as a combination of a physical, mental, emotional and spiritual state that is cultivated and a choice, while another dance artist described it as fully inhabiting one's conscious body in an environment. Several others interviewed connected wellbeing to the freedom to make choices for oneself, or the ability to accept and be accepted, to feel respected, to be able to feel possibilities and potentials. Further descriptions valued long-term and high-quality personal, social and professional relationships, a sense of growth and the ability to manage and digest hard experiences, as well as the need to feel touch, trust, connection, awareness and the sense of being understood.

This initial collection of definitions illustrate a range of ways wellbeing is processed and felt: on a sensorial and bodily level, through relationships and in a wider context of being recognized and respected and having the opportunity to contribute to society with a self-defined sense of meaning and purpose.

The New Economics Foundation is a British think-tank founded in 1986 that promotes social, economic and environmental justice and has published numerous reports on wellbeing through the lens of working towards a new model of wealth creation that is based on equality, diversity and economic stability. In 2012 they published a guide for practitioners to measure wellbeing, which defines wellbeing as:

> "how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole. To break this down, how people feel refers to emotions such as happiness or anxiety. How people function refers to things such as their sense of competence or their sense of being connected to those around them."[8]

Wellbeing for whom?

To further link the notion of wellbeing to social justice awareness, dancer and choreographer Tommy Noonan asks the question, “wellbeing for whom?”. Through this question his interest is to challenge the perception of wellbeing as a type of fixed ideal and to rather consider it as a fluid concept to be understood in relation to different needs – needs that are “different for every person, relationship and community, depending on history, context and moment.”[9] In January 2024 he shared this approach in a webinar, entering the topic of wellbeing through the viewpoint of safety. In his presentation he used a series of maps and images as a way to demonstrate multiple narratives and feelings around safety in the town where he lives in a rural area of North Carolina in the Southern United States, called Saxapahaw. A key example he gave was how more police presence in his area may simultaneously make some people feel more safe and others less safe due to racial bias or unfair abuse of power.

EXAMPLE OF SOMATIC PRACTICE IN RELATION TO LEADERSHIP AND BEING WELL

Noonan, together with dancer and choreographer Murielle Elizéon, lead a non-profit performing arts organisation called Culture Mill. They have chosen to design their programming and policies from a central question: “How do we create a culture of care that is attentive to what is needed, and for whom?”[10] To do this they consciously incorporate the use of Somatic Practice into their administrative and decision making processes, which Noonan also weaves through the Webinar to shift people’s perception of time and awareness of their bodies in relation to their own needs and the topic of wellbeing. He underscores that Somatic Practices are the primary tools for contemporary dancers, albeit utilised in a variety of ways for numerous outcomes. He offers a definition of Somatic Practice as follows: Soma, coming from the Greek and meaning ‘body’, engages with the body as a resource for wisdom and a way of knowing that is distinct from the mind, but in collaboration with generating thought and awareness. Informed by a lineage of Generative Somatics, he defines Practice as things one chooses to do regularly, organised around one’s commitment to change how they show up in the world.[11]

Together as arts administrators, Noonan and Elizéon engage with Somatic Practice as a way to source and capture the wisdom of the body, producing insights that can not be accessed through the intellect alone and also informed by a political analysis of what they are experiencing in the context they live in.

Noonan describes this as a way to design their performances and programming through wisdom resourced through bodily awareness and movement and from a place of curiosity, searching to create a culture of care that can be reflected outward towards the public, rather than orienting from an intellectual concept alone.

Playing with the word wellbeing, he describes this as an embodied commitment to Being Well, because for them, being well is related more to a ongoing practice rather than something applied only strategically through programming and policy.[12]

This expanded understanding of wellbeing, ranging in definitions coming from government organisations to artists and arts administrators is partly what makes the topic of wellbeing within the European contemporary dance landscape so relevant to the wider society.

A key aspect of this relevancy has to do with how many layers come together in analysing and addressing wellbeing through dance in wide-ranging contexts. It is the culmination of multiple practices - practices that are physical, embodied, political, theoretical and ethical - situated in relation to larger societal needs, that pushes our understanding of wellbeing to a new realm and will be further addressed in the following paragraphs.

Care as a pathway for system change

The word care is used often and widely throughout the dance field. It can refer to self-care, especially in regards to how dancers take care of their bodies and mental state or how dance professionals run organisations under pressures of overproduction and limited resources, often on the edge of burn out. In Jordi Baltà Portolés' EDN report about Dance and Wellbeing, he describes care as referring to "how members of a community are concerned with one another, as well as how humans relate to and look after the planet".[13]

Practices of care show up across many artistic approaches. This can include on an aesthetic or thematic level within a performance, as well as how a choreographer or dance artist may design a project or the way rehearsals are run, where a human-centred approach is playing a role in how choices are made. Practices of care are often described as incorporating active listening, consensual agreements to touch and responding to needs from multiple perspectives, especially those that historically have not been heard or included.

Performer and multi-disciplinary performance maker Claire Cunningham describes how as a disabled person, the word care comes with much problematic language and connotations. She describes how care "feels like something that has historically been done to disabled people."[14] She continues, "I've begun to think it's part of the canon of knowledge of certain communities. That perhaps those who are the subject (or victims) of something often actually become the real experts in it."[15] Over the course of several projects, Cunningham and her collaborators began to centre care as an ethos for working, as well as artistic inquiry and aesthetic, eventually naming the approach as "choreography of care". She describes the concept of the 'choreography of care' [16] as attending to care "in all aspects of creating a work – from (pre) production/ fundraising, to studio work, staging, touring, marketing, audience experience and access, and so on. We began to think about it within the following frames: Time as care, Communication as care, Design as care, Performance as care, The complexity of care".[17] Cunningham expands on these descriptions with an example of finding the right stage designer for her work. She describes what is most important for her is that the person needs to care about the people who will be using their design first and foremost, above the design itself. Cunninngham's long time collaborator and dramaturg Luke Pell states "we need to care harder to shift things...Criticality can also be care."[18] This insistence on practices of care from disabled artists has been a driving force in enacting change throughout the dance field.

Dancer and choreographer Monique Smith-McDowell underscores learning about care and wellbeing through the practices she experienced while collaborating with disabled artists, such as Michael Turinsky. For a discussion during the German Dance Platform in February 2024, hosted by EDN on the topic of Health and Wellbeing, Smith-McDowell stated, "if you want to know how to have a healthy work environment, work with a disabled person."[19] She continued by offering the term "room culture" as a conscious facilitation of work spaces where everyone can contribute their best quality in a way that does not overly demand or push people beyond their borders and boundaries.

To collectively cultivate healthy room cultures, days start and end with check-ins and check-outs so everyone has the opportunity to describe where they are in relation to the process or within the state of their bodies, minds and emotions on any given day. It provides an open space for communication for everyone to assess the day's goals and people's capacities, allowing for adjustments to be made so each person can continue to contribute their best quality to the process. In addition to generating a healthy work environment, it also allows colleagues to meet as people, supporting an environment of mutual care and responsibility for everyone to feel well. In addition to the way Smith-McDowell facilitates a rehearsal room, she also incorporates the development of audio description for Blind and visually impaired audiences from the beginning of the conceptualisation process, integrating aesthetics of access into the overall experience of her work, rather than something added after the show is made.

Smith-McDowell also highlights how very often people coming from marginalised communities are usually the most disadvantaged in the work spaces. She affirms that much can be learned from marginalised communities and how by integrating the tools they have developed, work environments can break outdated work habits and allow the dance scene to grow for everyone's benefit.

It is important to learn from and recognise the knowledge practised by underrepresented and marginalised communities – knowledge developed often in reaction and resistance to dominant working methods and discourse[20] – and to integrate that knowledge, especially into higher levels of leadership, so that healthier work environments can be cultivated for everyone.

Access as a key driver for enhanced wellbeing

The COVID-19 Pandemic brought a new awareness of mental and physical fragility for many parts of the population. Many people experienced new levels of concern and vulnerability to illness, as well as a variety of mental health issues, such as loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Simultaneously, while people were sheltered and isolated in their homes, unable to proceed with life's daily rhythms and habits or to ignore acts of violence and police brutality, triggering a surge in social justice movements that had worldwide rever-

berations, what it means to be well and for whom took on new meaning and perspectives. In some places, these conditions brought more willingness to listen to the voices of those who have lived in such vulnerability and violence much longer than the start of the pandemic, namely disabled people and people who have experienced racialized and gendered discrimination and violence.

Many people in those communities have developed survival and resilience skills over years to take care of their own personal wellbeing as well as those in their communities. The pandemic provided, arguably even demanded, a greater awareness of the fragility, imbalance and injustices permeating through society, and as people dealt with their own health and economic fragilities, space was opened to listen, learn and shift practices for improved access and new approaches to wellbeing.

Throughout the course of this research, when dance organisations were asked about where the topic of wellbeing shows up in their work or in what way they may have made changes for improved wellbeing, very often they began to describe the actions and activities they offered for greater accessibility for their audiences. This would include providing audio description or sign language for performances, haptic meetings before shows and relaxed performances. Also described were participatory dance offers for older populations or people living with Parkinson's Disease, cancer diagnoses or Alzheimer's, as well as dance for young audiences or in collaboration with educators or other inclusive formats.

The reason for this appears to have two layers. For some dance organisations, these actions occur because it is required for their funding or by municipal or governmental structures. The requirement did not indicate that they did not want to do those actions, but to the contrary - they appreciated the clear mandates in place as it made it easier and more direct to implement. For others, the offers were created from a place of personal or organisational commitment to engage with dance as a way to create more inclusive societies, as well as to address social injustices that were felt on a more urgent level during the pandemic.

Although there has been a recent increase in inclusive offers for the public, participatory dance projects have been steadily increasing for some years. This has been driven by artists and institutions alike and a greater awareness and interest to engage with dance as a medium for connection and creativity and to address a variety of societal needs.

It is important to stress that simultaneous to acknowledging, involving and incorporating the knowledge and expertise cultivated by disabled and marginalised communities in regards to healthier work environments and inclusive and fairer practices, it can not come at the expense of recognising their artistry and supporting their autonomy to make work. Meaning, the labour and advocacy done by people in these communities has too often limited how and in what way they are seen for their artistic creations and aesthetics. The important contributions made by disabled and marginalised dance professionals to the debate about healthy working environments sits alongside (and not instead of) their demand for equal access to the sector as artists and cultural workers. The pioneering project Europe Beyond Access, now in its second edition, brings together ten European arts organisations to mainstream disability on and off stage and to provide new pathways for the diversifying of the dance field, serving as a reference point and catalyst for removing barriers and dismantling ableism.

DANCE AND WELLBEING IN A SOCIETAL CONTEXT

To bring the understanding of wellbeing more directly in relation to dance, there can be several entry points, starting from the primary location for dance – the body – where wellbeing is felt and evaluated.[21] Dance engages the entirety of a person, including their physical, creative, expressive and emotional selves,[22] making it an experiential and embodied art form to meet oneself and others. Due to the capacity dance has to engage people on so many layers, it makes sense that it is increasingly being applied and researched to address a wide variety of complex challenges and contexts in society.

The following section will delve more deeply into practices related to dance in health and medical contexts, as well as touch on the benefits of dance in early education settings and a range of other contexts.

Dance Well_LSIC_photo by Gintare Zaltauskaite

Dance Well_Mia Habib_How to. A score. Bassano_photo by Anna Kushnirenko

For you

Take a moment

But first take a moment to scan your dance memories.

When was the first time you felt free to dance?

Was it in your early childhood or did it come later in life?

Is it something you can easily access now or do you need specific conditions or a special environment?

Have you had moments where you wanted to dance, but felt blocked?

Was it a physical condition that stopped you or rather an emotional one?

What brings you into movement? What holds you back?

These questions consciously or unconsciously lie inside all of us, but are especially processed by dance artists and dance makers when they are devising dance activities for the local community, meaning for those who do not consider dance as their profession.

Dance and health

There has not been much research into how dance plays a role in one's health and wellbeing in a broad sense, since it plays out differently in various contexts. There has been much research, though, in specialised applications and interventions because it allows for more specific and tailored studies – something that is urgently important when trying to prove and persuade policy and health care to include dance and artistic practices in medical settings or as preventative actions against illness.

Dance looked at through a medical lens spans a wide range of physical and mental health conditions, offering innovative approaches to improving quality of life on emotional, social, cognitive, and physical levels.

There are numerous examples of how dance meets a diagnosis, such as Parkinson's Disease, Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, Alzheimer's, depression, cognitive disability and mental illness, among many others. Depending on the main symptoms experienced in relation to those diagnoses, dance practice can support improved motoric abilities, pain management, cardiovascular fitness, memory loss and a reduction of anxiety, depression and trauma responses, through bringing focus to bodily and emotional awareness.

In recent years, the intersection of dance and neuroscience has become a fertile ground for research, revealing significant insights into the impact of movement on brain health and overall wellbeing. While anecdotal evidence has long suggested the benefits of dance, emerging scientific studies are increasingly providing empirical support for these claims, painting a compelling picture of dance as a powerful tool for neurological health.

Dr. Ramune Dirvanskiene, a neurologist and Associate Professor at Vilnius University in Lithuania, describes one of the key mechanisms through which dance affects the brain, which is neuroplasticity. While being interviewed[23] in the context of the European funded Dance Well project, which involves dance practice designed, but not limited to people with Parkinson's, Dr. Dirvanskiene explains that physical exercise, particularly dance, helps boost neuroplasticity, enabling the brain to create new neural pathways that can compensate for losses in cognitive or physical functions and help people adapt to new circumstances. This process is crucial not only for maintaining brain health, but also for recovery and adaptation in the face of neurological challenges. According to Dr. Dirvanskiene, several factors make dance particularly effective at stimulating neuroplasticity, including how the spontaneous and non-repetitive nature of improvised dance movements provides a rich and varied stimulus for the brain. Moreover, the process of learning dance steps, making mistakes, and correcting them, actively engages the brain in ways that significantly boost neuroplasticity. She further describes how when one initiates movements in dance, rather than simply copying movements from others, our brains become much more active, further enhancing the neurological benefits.

During a separate interview[24] in the context of Dance Well, Dr. Bas Bloem, a neurologist and Professor of Neurological Movement Disorders at the Radboud University Center in The Netherlands, describes how one of the most compelling aspects of dance is the immediacy of its effects. Unlike many medical interventions that may take months to show results, the benefits of a dance class, ranging from overcoming motoric blocks or finding new pathways for movement, can often be felt immediately.[25] This immediate feedback loop not only provides motivation for continued participation, but also offers a powerful means of combating symptoms of depression and anxiety in the short term.

Dr. Bloem is an advocate for non-pharmaceutical approaches to health and wellbeing, recognizing the holistic nature of human health. He recently published "If Art Were a Drug: Implications for Parkinson's Disease" where it was concluded that a variety of artistic interventions, including dance, "show potential in enhancing both motor and non-motor symptoms, contributing to emotional, cognitive well-being, and overall quality of life. A unique feature of arts-based interventions is their adaptability to individuals' specific needs, including existential aspects, fostering empowerment in dealing with Parkinson's Disease."[26]

The idea of prescribing dance classes as a form of therapy is gaining traction. In the Netherlands, some health insurers have already started to reimburse dance classes, recognizing their potential to keep people out of hospitals and improve overall quality of life. However, for dance to be fully embraced as a medical intervention,

more research is needed. Dr. Bloem emphasises the importance of collaboration between dancers and scientists to provide the robust evidence necessary for widespread acceptance by health insurers and government bodies. This collaboration would help bridge the gap between anecdotal knowledge and scientific validation, potentially revolutionising the approach to neurological health and wellbeing.

Dance for Health is a program at Cambridge University Hospital begun in 2014 and specialising in participatory dance within acute hospital settings. Weekly sessions are facilitated by professional dance artist Filipa Pereira-Stubbs, currently delivered on elderly, stroke rehabilitation, paediatrics and diabetes and endocrinology wards. The aim of the program is "to improve the hospital experience for inpatients so that they can regain their confidence, overall wellbeing and physical strength, and avoid readmission to hospital".[27] In a recent webinar series to celebrate the ten year anniversary of the program, Pereira-Stubbs described her hospital dance sessions as bringing the studio space to the bedside to engage people in the present moment and to provide dance practice as a way to open the door back to themselves again. Instead of asking them 'what is the matter?,' she asks 'what matters to you?,' yielding to what needs to come out in each encounter. She shapes her language and dance proposals in a way that lifts, opens and welcomes whoever she meets so they can come out of the 'box of illness'. She describes herself as a 'listening vessel' and how she trusts in the listening space and her anatomical and somatic movement training as a professional dancer to devise her workshops. Pereira-Stubbs has also recently begun offering dance sessions for the staff of the hospital, giving them a chance to self-regulate and bring feeling back into their bodies.[28] The aim of the Dance for Health program for the staff at the hospital is to encourage a creative health work culture, enabling self-care through connection to oneself and colleagues.

In addition to medical settings, there are also numerous other examples where contemporary dance has been engaged as an applied artform, either directly or indirectly enhancing wellbeing and social cohesion.

Dance in school settings

Another important and formative area is integrating dance into school settings, starting at a young age. Access to dance in the early years enhances communication, motoric and cognitive skills, nurtures essential social skills and encourages collaboration and emotional expression.

Dance is also a full-bodied pathway for developing creativity, exercising embodied imagination and reducing stress and anxiety. As children grow older, dance can provide an important outlet for increasing body awareness and self confidence, empowering them to connect with themselves and others in meaningful ways.

Dance can facilitate greater social cohesion, notably combating isolation and loneliness in teenage years. Dance in school settings can also provide an added benefit to participating school teachers, who are often up against the challenges of shifting demographics, increased workload and low pay.

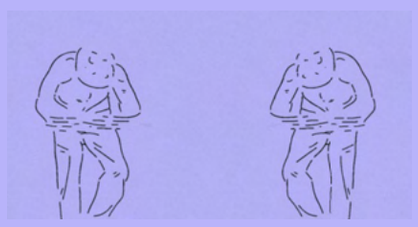
Dansens Hus Oslo_Tale Hendnes

EXAMPLES OF DANCE IN EDUCATION:

Early Years
dance program by
People Dancing

Explore Dance
Network for young
audiences

Early Years
dance program
by Northern Ballet



LOOP network
for dance and young
audiences

Dance in
education by
Mercat de les Flors

KORA by
Dansehallerne for
children in schools

Dance and
education program
by Dance East

Dance in community settings and in response to societal urgenices

Additional areas in which dance can improve wellbeing include people dealing with forced displacement, contexts of trauma, conflict and grief, as well as a variety of intercultural and intergenerational projects, to name a few. While each requires their own specific adaptations and considerations, very often common outcomes occur, such as improved self-confidence, body awareness and positive emotions, and a stronger sense of connection, belonging and empowerment.

Each of those contexts have numerous examples of dance professionals who have developed and cultivated their artistic practices to the needs of those situations and they deserve recognition, research and visibility on their own terms.

Dance Well_Jaro Viňarský_Elevated_photo by Adela_Vosickova

FOLLOWING IS A SMALL SELECTION OF PROJECTS SPECIALISING IN SEVERAL OF THE AREAS MENTIONED ABOVE:

Moving Borders

approaches to dance from the Ukrainian diaspora across Europe

Performing Gender- Dancing in Your Shoes

Migrant Bodies - Moving Borders

dance initiatives for people dealing with forced migration

Undercurrent and Luminelle

performance and co-creation on a stroke ward

Kantradi

empathy based social transformation

Rosetta Life

dance for carers, neuro-rehabilitations, hospice and palliative care

Move Dance Feel

dance in cancer care

In Sincro - Dance in prisons

Hands are for Holding

youth-centred dance programs to engage in conversations about healthy relationships

Samkome - Mia Habib Productions

grieving together

Move To Move Beyond

movement for survivors of gender-based violence and their families

Na'ot مع بعض (Moving Together)

workshops for Arab and Jewish women

Dance and soft skills

One way to speak about what is happening in many of those settings, which can also provide language for important types of skills being developed in dance, is to speak about soft skills.

Soft skills are patterns of thoughts, behaviours and communication that support people in navigating emotions and interpersonal relations.

As the project Empowering Dance - Developing Soft Skills (2018-2020) identified, there are several ways in which contemporary dance could support the development of resilience and resist increasing levels of uncertainty and stress, as well as reinforce the ability to deal with complexity, critically reflect and make decisions.[29]

Dance practice was also found to be "instrumental in developing social awareness, which is the ability to take the perspective of and empathise with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Dance can also be relevant in making people take care, not only of themselves, but also of the people and environment around them, fostering a cooperative sense of belonging and responsibility."[30]

The follow-up project Empowering Dance - The Soft Skills Teaching and Learning Approach (2020-2023) further identified how dancing with others plays an important role in "developing soft skills, because the body plays a central role in how we navigate our emotions, responses and actions: soft skills grow through, with and embed in the body and by encountering other bodies in space."[31]

Examples of some of the soft skills developed in the dance practices include active listening, dealing with uncertainty and complexity, empathy, understanding and appreciating differences and self-efficacy, which is the belief in one's ability to accomplish a specific task or goal.

Both Empowering Dance projects focused their research on case studies in primarily participatory dance settings in several different contexts. They identified some specific factors that helped foster the growth of soft skills, such as the attitudes, behaviours and actions of the dance professionals who led the dance practices or provided the interface with the dance organisations.

This included creating welcoming and non-judgmental environments, the cultivation of trust and building up of a safe space through clear communication and active listening. Also identified was a high level of adapting to the needs of the group.

EDN Atelier_la briqueterie_Joseph Banderet

PRACTISING WHAT IS PREACHED – WELLBEING FOR DANCE PROFESSIONALS

Learning from community engaged projects

There is much that can be learned about the cultivation of wellbeing in community engaged projects, such as demonstrating that personal growth and individual welfare should be integral to the process rather than separate from project goals.

These initiatives emphasise the importance of building strong foundations with non-professional community members, which requires time and care. Key elements include ensuring clear communication, establishing mutual trust, recognizing diverse perspectives and attentively addressing concerns and questions. By prioritising these aspects, such projects create an environment that values participants' development on both personal and social levels, intertwining individual wellbeing with collective aims. This approach not only enhances a project's outcomes, but also leads to more meaningful and transformative experiences for all involved.

The process of collaborating with non-professionals in dance projects requires a heightened level of care and attention, largely due to the diverse backgrounds and experiences participants bring.

One can not take for granted that the people participating know the codes or ways to work together in the context of a dance project. The way to work has to be established and built up together and very often the backgrounds coming together are so diverse, assumptions need to be constantly examined and a greater amount of attention needs to be put into communicating and listening to people's borders, needs and expectations within a process.

This way of working with non-professionals, when applied within the dance field amongst professional dancemakers, producers and dance organisations, could support a reset of habits and trigger a transformative process across the field.

Dance Well

For you

Take a moment

When have you felt at your limits?

Was it triggered by work load or the behaviour of leadership or funding bodies?

Did stress arise from a lack of acknowledgment or power dynamics? Or working methods you had to engage with that went against your values system?

Have you already had an experience of dancing or witnessing a dance activity with members of the public or local community?

What moved in you?
Did it provide a moment of connection that may have softened your emotions or triggered you to rethink your work environment? Or did it feel foreign and belonging to an artistic practice rather than production methods and administrative habits?

Have you experienced a work environment or encounter with the public that prioritised human-centred connection over production targets? If yes, what did it reveal to you about how you are working?

Dance as a catalyst for institutional transformation

In addition to the approach of embodied and somatic practice that is woven through the administrative and curatorial process described earlier at Culture Mill, another example of how dance practice has been integrated into the administrative workings of a dance organisation has been in ongoing development at Tanzhaus Zürich since 2020.

Over the past four years there have been regular sessions where the entire administrative and production team, as well as technicians and dramaturgs, meet in the studio for embodied sessions with a facilitator.[32] Catja Loepfe, the Artistic and Managing Director of Tanzhaus Zürich, has been curious to discover in a collaborative way **how dance could not only enhance the wellbeing of the team, but also trigger structural transformation**. She holds the deep belief that the time spent in the studio on an embodied level, pushing the bodies to be open and present, has been crucial for the development of the organisation.

From 2022-23 Tanzhaus Zürich collaborated with an external team to support the transformation of the organisation, which included formulating a new vision, articulating the values and implementing a new approach to working with associate artists. Loepfe describes **how the embodied sessions helped them open to new perspectives and topics, build trust and find the courage together as a team to go on a new path in the transformation process.** She also credits the embodied movement sessions for bringing the values they speak of into their own bodies and into action, or to 'walk the talk'. She describes it as a type of showing up and being awake to connecting to the people they are working with and the environmental context they are situated in in a new way.

In fall of 2023 Tanzhaus Zürich began to implement a new model for collaboration with associate artists, called accomplices.

The new model values longer term collaborations as well as process-based support in discovering the interests of the artists beyond typical production cycles, as well as facilitated moments to redefine power imbalances between the institution and independent artists and to come together in a more human centred approach.

Since fall of 2024 the accomplice artists have been leading the regular embodied sessions with the team, providing opportunity to meet through the practices of the artists, rather than only reading their dossiers or supporting their productions towards a premiere.

It has also provided the chance for the physical and artistic practices to infiltrate the many layers of running the dance house, including enhancing the wellbeing of the individuals and institution as a whole.

It does not mean that there are no longer challenges or conflicts, but rather that the transformative process they have gone through has put new actions in place, such as written guidelines for how to deal with conflict, check-ins and new pathways for communication.

Another example of incorporating movement and body work in the running and development of an organisation can be found in Nomad Dance Academy, which was founded in 2005 by dance artists, theorists and producers from Bulgaria and former Yugoslavia.

Since 2008 they have been engaging in movement practices before board meetings, enabling softer communication and smoother and more gentle approaches to problem solving, discord and negotiation.

Nomad Dance Academy effectively applies dance practice in the network's advocacy events in Skopje, Belgrade, Sofia, Ljubljana and Zagreb, which gather artists, city administrators, ministry representatives, and other decision makers to meet and exchange on contemporary dance and public policy.

Dance in society and the impact on organisations

Continuing down the path of ways dance practice has impacted organisations on the topic of wellbeing, the next example is not of the staff of an organisation themselves dancing, but rather the influences the participatory projects have had on organisations.

As described in the report about the EDN Atelier at Le Gymnase in Roubaix, France, titled “Dance in Society”, the artists and members of the team involved in the Dance Well project shared how their views of wellbeing shifted over the course of the project.

This included not only shifts in their practice to adapt to the individualised needs of the participants, but also how the project triggered them to think more about their own wellbeing, especially in managing and protecting one’s own emotions and personal borders so as not to be pulled into nonstop working, meeting everyone else’s needs while forgetting one’s own. Alejandro Russo, a teaching artist in the Dance Well project, also described how he consciously weaves through the dance classes various ways the participants can exercise awareness that they have choice and agency in their actions – aspects of autonomy he missed in his own professional dance training.

At the same Atelier, choreographer, performer and massage therapist Massimo Fusco who makes work under the company name Corps Magnetiques (Magnetic Body) focuses on projects connecting art, society and care. As he delved deeper into the creation of this type of work, it became necessary to also shift how he runs the company. This manifests in pay structures within the team as well as providing pay and travel costs for people travelling to audition for the company. It also affects where and how he chooses to rehearse and make the work, more recently tending to look for social centres and care homes to be creating the work in. **Fusco underscores how making work in relation to society changed his perception of fairness and wellbeing for all aspects of his company.**

Wellbeing in the case of the dance field is often about repairing old wounds and structures. The notion of repair and healing as a motivating factor driving the change for improved wellbeing was a thread running through many of the conversations and interviews for this report. It involves a need for increased recognition, visibility and a rebalancing of power, especially between institution and artist. Sometimes the repair work to be done is from a lineage one did not directly contribute to, but this is also frequently the case for

community engaged projects. Those projects are often providing healing spaces for challenges that the leading artists do not have a personal connection with, but who do have tools, resources and experiences that can support an enhanced quality of life through dance.

Wellbeing of artists

There are two key aspects in regards to improving the wellbeing of dance artists. One pathway lies in the relations between arts organisations, funders and independent artists and the other lies in financial stability and fair pay. Depending on the funding structures in various contexts, these areas can overlap in a way that arts organisations can get involved in providing more secure income sources and long term relations, but this varies drastically from region to region.

In most cases, freelance artists exist in the unpredictable landscape of having to continuously apply for funding, auditioning or searching for co-producing partners to fund their work. This means that many live project to project and supplement their income through different means, either through other roles within the arts, such as teaching or producing, or doing jobs outside of the arts field.

This can only change if policy and funding structures change, either through experimenting with forms of universal basic income or providing longer term support that also values outcomes of artistic process and not only productions.

It should be noted that most dance artists and organisations also have to continuously apply or lobby for financial stability, which is often extra and unpaid work. In regards to wellbeing, being in a state of continuous concern for stability is taxing and time consuming, to say the least.

In regards to relations, meaning the way communication and awareness is handled with artists, a lot can be set in motion without needing major policy change and much of it resonates with the same principles laid out earlier in regards to relations with the local

community. In this case it is not only about creating a welcoming and thoughtful environment, but also about preventing unnecessary work, most likely unpaid, and being aware of power dynamics.

- **Provide clear and transparent communication.** This means not withholding information that would affect an artist's decision making processes, as well as considering how the information is delivered. Some examples include, already giving financial details in open calls, including how many positions are open, providing the criteria that selections will be based on and if more fundraising needs to happen before the project can take place.

- **Discuss needs openly and in both directions.** What type of communication or information will you be needing during the collaborative process? Provide a timeline of expectations, if there are any, such as when the communication department will need material for press and when the technical department will need a list of material or a timeline. Find out what the artists might need to support their process and clearly communicate what is or is not possible.

- **Ask everyone about access needs**, without prejudice of people's visible or invisible (dis)abilities.

- **Agree upon check-ins.** Some artists may want to be left alone to make their work, others may benefit from a few check-in moments in their process to clarify needs as they arise.

- **Ask before giving feedback.** If feedback is desired, ask what type of feedback would be useful to them.

- **Provide awareness guidelines**, especially if there are certain conditions they should be aware of when entering an organisation, such as what is or is not possible in regards to access, technical support or availability of the staff. Unfortunately, in interviews made for this report, several reported abuse and misuse of technical staff by guest artists. Providing respect and awareness guidelines could help reduce this, or at least open a dialog.

- Clearly communicate who the artists should **contact** according to what they may **need**.

- Provide information for whom they can **contact** if they experience **harassment or discrimination**.

USEFUL RESOURCES:

Safe to Create - promoting dignity at work

Guide to making an access document

In October 2024 On the Move published a detailed report on mental health, well-being and cultural mobility.

On the Move's report similarly pointed at the numerous studies and initiatives on local, national and European levels in which arts and culture positively contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of the population, while at the same time, cultural workers often battle poor mental health, work conditions and job security.

The report references the 2022 Arts and Culture Barometer, which indicated that "over half the responding artists were concerned about their mental well-being. 40%, particularly performing artists, have considered or already changed professions in the past year, with younger artists feeling the pressure the most.[33]

The report continues by describing the stressors that negatively impact the wellbeing of artists, such as irregular working conditions, lack of long term contracts, the ongoing competition for grants, without recognition or feedback. Most artists aso lack occupational health care, need to work while sick to avoid a loss of income and rarely have the chance to recover from work-induced stress.[34]

For you

Take a moment

As you have been reading the report, notice what internal concerns might be speaking to you.

Do you have concern or frustration over a lack of recognition or funding after so many reports have proven the value of dance and culture in society?

Or do you have discomfort with how much focus is given to the way dance can enhance the wellbeing of society because you are concerned it will take away from funding other creative processes?

Or do you have excitement to engage in socially engaged dance projects, but feel you lack the skills needed for some of the more specialised work and do not have access to the training or funding that would support your work in that direction?

All of these concerns, and more, are continuously running through the artistic and policy discourse of dance and wellbeing on a societal level.

Dance Well_Jaro Viňarský_Elevated_photo by Adela_Vosickova

THE TENSION BETWEEN THE ARTFORM AND THE CAUSE

Autonomy and instrumentalization

Engaging with dance for the improved wellbeing of society has sparked several concerns and scepticisms within the cultural field, particularly regarding the potential instrumentalization of the art form and a loss of artistic autonomy. These apprehensions stem from a complex interplay of artistic, financial, political and professional considerations.

Culture Action Europe's State of Culture report, released in October 2024, criticises the demand on cultural organisations to chase after 'keywords' designated by policy regulators in order to gain recognition and receive funding. This chase, or altering and devising of projects to fit the goals of the policy makers, can lead to the instrumentalization of the field, rather than recognising and funding dance as an autonomous art form. Culture Action Europe argues that "the celebration of culture for its intrinsic value and unique merits is largely missing from the cultural policy discourse in European countries and the EU. Instead, culture is increasingly viewed as a tool, product or resource for achieving external goals. This trend of hyper-instrumentalizing cultural policy has not improved the sector's situation – neither in terms of public investment nor in its integration into key policy agendas."[35]

Artistic integrity

Numerous dance professionals interviewed for this report and who are deeply invested in access driven transformation and socially inclusive dance activities, root their efforts in artistic development. Many are motivated by the simultaneous discoveries of artistic practice and aesthetics in relation to the desire to have more meaningful contact with the local public. Sometimes this type of work has been less recognized for its artistic integrity due to fears that the artistic quality or autonomy of the art form may be compro-

mised when working with non-professionals. This concern seems more related to contexts where making socially engaged work is mandated or misdirected in its motivations, either by funding bodies or institutions, rather than when it is initiated by the artist themselves or extended as an invitation from an organisation as an opportunity for an artist to explore in relation to their artistic process.

Politically motivated funding

The concern is also closely tied to anxieties about funding. Some fear that as more resources are directed towards improving societal health and wellbeing, there may be a corresponding decrease in support for artistic endeavours not openly or primarily focusing on health and community projects.

The problem here is that artists and their varying projects are then pitted against each other. In some countries governments prioritise supporting professional arts and a more narrow definition of artistic excellence, while others favour artistic endeavours that centralise socially engaged work. These politically defined viewpoints affect the landscape of dance funding, leaving artists and organisations having to adapt to what an application wants to hear, rather than being led by their artistic process or values.

Therapy and community service

Another significant concern is the blurring of lines between art and social work. There is a fear that dance, as an art form, may become merely a tool for addressing social issues. The concern is that this could lead to a fundamental shift in how dance is perceived and valued, potentially moving it away from its status as an autonomous art form and closer to being seen as a form of therapy or community service.

Related to this is the apprehension that dancers and choreographers might find themselves cast in roles they are not trained for, such as therapists or social workers. This role confusion could not only impact the artists' professional identities but also raise ethical

questions about the boundaries of their responsibilities and competencies.

These fears reflect a broader tension in the arts between maintaining artistic integrity and embracing social engagement. While community engaged dance projects offer numerous benefits, addressing these concerns is crucial for maintaining a cohesive and thriving dance ecosystem that values both artistic excellence and social impact.

Dance Well_LSIC_photo by Gintare Zaltauskaite

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Freedom to decide

Some proposals to counter those concerns entail how artists are involved in designing their artistic research and production pathways and how funding requirements are defined.

In recent years there has been an increase in artists choosing to work with non-professionals in a variety of ways. For some it means offering workshops in relation to their artistic enquiry, providing a mutual benefit both for the participants and the artistic process. Other artists are specifically interested in working with non-professionals in the creation of works and as performers on stage, providing an empowering experience for participants as well as diversifying the type of people seen on stage and who is given a platform. An added benefit is that dancemakers are exposed to more viewpoints through the contact with the participants, expanding their research process and an understanding of how their work is perceived.

What is key to making sure an artist's practice is not instrumentalized is making sure they maintain the freedom to decide how and with whom they work and that choosing to work, or not to work, with the community is not a factor in their receiving of funding.

Establishing long term residency programs in community settings

Establishing and funding long-term artist residency programs in community settings can provide a platform for deeper engagement and artistic development. This approach allows artists to immerse themselves in a community, developing work that is both artistically rigorous and socially relevant.

Separate and complementary funding streams

Also important is that neither production nor cultural funding should carry the financial burden alone for socially engaged work, especially in regards to making work more accessible, or in relation to the health and medical field. There needs to be additional and complementary funding streams that do not take away from funding artistic process and production.

More funded artistic research

There also needs to be funding for various forms of research and other process-based work that is not necessarily tied to a production and does not require the outcome of a performance. This will allow dance artists to explore their skills and knowledge in a self-defined way, ideally with the support and collaboration of arts institutions, which can also enhance their professional development.

Cross-disciplinary partnerships

The development of cross-disciplinary funding models is needed to support the cooperation of dance professionals, experts from other fields and members of society in collaborative research. This will allow for new discoveries to emerge and for artists to have the time and space to develop their artistry in these new contexts, which will also strengthen the quality of their proposals.

Documentation, data collection and analysis

Additionally, it is important to collect data and fund the documentation of such research and artistic processes to support and make visible the shifts in the field and to situate dance artists as experts with the skills and knowledge they bring to enhance the wellbeing of society.

More support for increased workload

Finally, with the expanded desire to reach more people through dance, comes an increase in needs and communication and thus, an increase in workload.

All too often dance professionals are extended beyond their limits, no matter how meaningful the work may be. As the work culture in the performing arts spans day and night, boundaries can erode quite quickly and the effects of that are not evenly felt due to limited resources.

For dance professionals working in organisations it is necessary to have checks and measures in place to prevent behaviours that are detrimental to worker's wellbeing. It is also essential to provide more continuous funding streams for the sustainability of projects

and to reduce the endless number of applications dance professionals need to apply for just to keep a venue, project or community engaged initiative running. The care work comes down to individuals, but for real change it needs to happen on a systemic level.

Flexible and more sustainable funding models

A shift towards more flexible funding models that allow for longer-term, process-oriented work is crucial for meaningful community engagement and artistic development.

Funding streams that encourage partnerships between arts organisations and community groups can also foster more integrated and sustainable projects. Additionally, allocating resources for research into the long-term impacts of community engaged dance projects, can build an evidence base to inform future policy and funding decisions.

Recognition of value

Cultural policies need to explicitly recognize the value of community engaged practices as an integral part of artistic co-creation. This recognition ensures equal status and support, legitimising these practices within the broader dance ecosystem.

We need to work together to create an environment where dance artists can maintain their artistic autonomy while meaningfully engaging with communities. This integrated approach can lead to rich, innovative work that strengthens both the art form and its connection to society, ultimately expanding the reach and impact of dance while preserving its artistic integrity.

Artist Exchange_CSC Bassano_Anna Kushnirenko

TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT IN THE DANCE FIELD

An important and under-discussed aspect of the many ways dance can positively impact the wellbeing of society is how such practices and endeavours nurture artistic development, progress the artform and shape the way dance organisations are run.

The artistic activities and encounters between dance professionals and the community are often deeply transformative on a personal and professional level, but still missing acknowledgment and visibility on a systemic level.

Over the course of the research for this report, numerous dance artists described how dancing with people from the local community shifted how they create and make work, as well as how they move about their daily lives with greater awareness for more vulnerable parts of society. They described giving more attention to bringing different bodies, ages and cultural backgrounds on stage, improving often missing diversity in representation. Some also described a reconnection to their own emotions and pleasure to move that had been trained out of them during their dance education. Several dance professionals also recounted how the socially engaged work illuminated new pathways for co-creation and less hierarchical ways of working, altering the way organisations and artists collaborate.

Breaking the bubble

Numerous dance professionals and non-professionals alike also spoke about the immense value of meeting people that are far away from their own lived experiences. They described how the encounters in community projects allowed them to meet people they would not otherwise, providing a vital opportunity to learn how to live with differences and in more diverse contexts. Not only do these encounters provide more meaningful relations and connec-

tions in life, they also open the door for more conversations and exchanges about dance and the creative process.

These intimate and personal conversations with people who's worldviews and cultural backgrounds may be quite different from one's own, breaks a bubble for whom work is being made for. It provides more information to the artists regarding the thematics they focus on and how their work is being perceived, cracking open the way in which artistry is developed.

For you

Take a moment

As this report comes to end, you have the opportunity to now check in with your internal compass.

What role does wellbeing play in how you are shaping your artistic practice or organisation? Does the desire for wellbeing and practices of care, both on a personal and societal level, represent a change in how you do your work?

Does it guide how you allocate resources or lobby for visibility? Or do you find it distracting or irrelevant to the way you produce dance?

In whatever way your internal compass directs you, considering the fast-paced, deep budgets cuts to the arts that are spreading across Europe, a more united and cohesive dance community that recognises the value of all artistically driven practices, no matter if they are community engaged and socially driven or not, will be crucial for the visibility and progression of the art form of dance and society as a whole.

EDN Atelier_Dance Gate Lefkosia_Ioli Kaskani

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Coventry University - Freelance Dance Artists' Working Ecology

Safe To Create

METHODOLOGY

The research for this report was conducted through several interviews with dance artists and dance organisations throughout Europe. Information was also collected through a round table discussion hosted by EDN during the German Dance Platform, a series of Ateliers for dance professionals, and a Think-In consultation with EDN member organisations. The research included a wide range of literature on relevant topics.

Artist Exchange_CSC Bassano_photo by Anna Kushnirenko

ANNEX

About EDNext

Each year, the EDNext project investigates important thematic topics relevant to the contemporary dance sector and disseminates the findings. In 2024, the project facilitated a platform to discuss and map the practices of care and wellbeing in the development of contemporary dance. EDNext was brought to you with the support of the Creative Europe funding.

EDNext Activities

What follows is a list of EDN activities that contributed to the mapping for this report. Between January and November 2024, EDN presented and produced a series of online and onsite events together with members and partners: Tanzplattform (Germany), ICE HOT Nordic Dance Platform (Norway), Le Gymnase CDCN (France), Tanec Praha (Czechia), Dance Gate Lefkosia (Cyprus), Dance House Lefkosia (Cyprus), Korzo (The Netherlands), and Dansehallerne (Denmark).

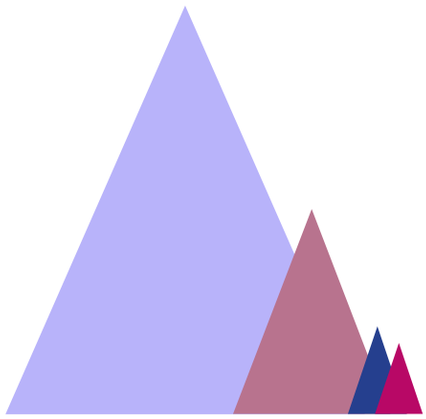
The workshops and meetings were attended by 398 participants who came from diverse contexts, backgrounds, and professions within the contemporary dance field and beyond.

EDN's central mission is to discuss, implement and promote sustainable ways of working in and with the contemporary dance sector by facilitating cooperation, exchange of knowledge and practices between dance professionals, organisations, publics and partners. To this end, EDN co-creates a space for exchange to address current themes and challenges collectively and promote the relevance of contemporary dance in societies. The EDNext 2022 - 2024 programme is co-funded by the European Union under the Creative Europe networks strand.

INFOGRAPHICS

Participants by Profession

Directors / Managers



Dance artists / choreographers

Presenters / producers / curators

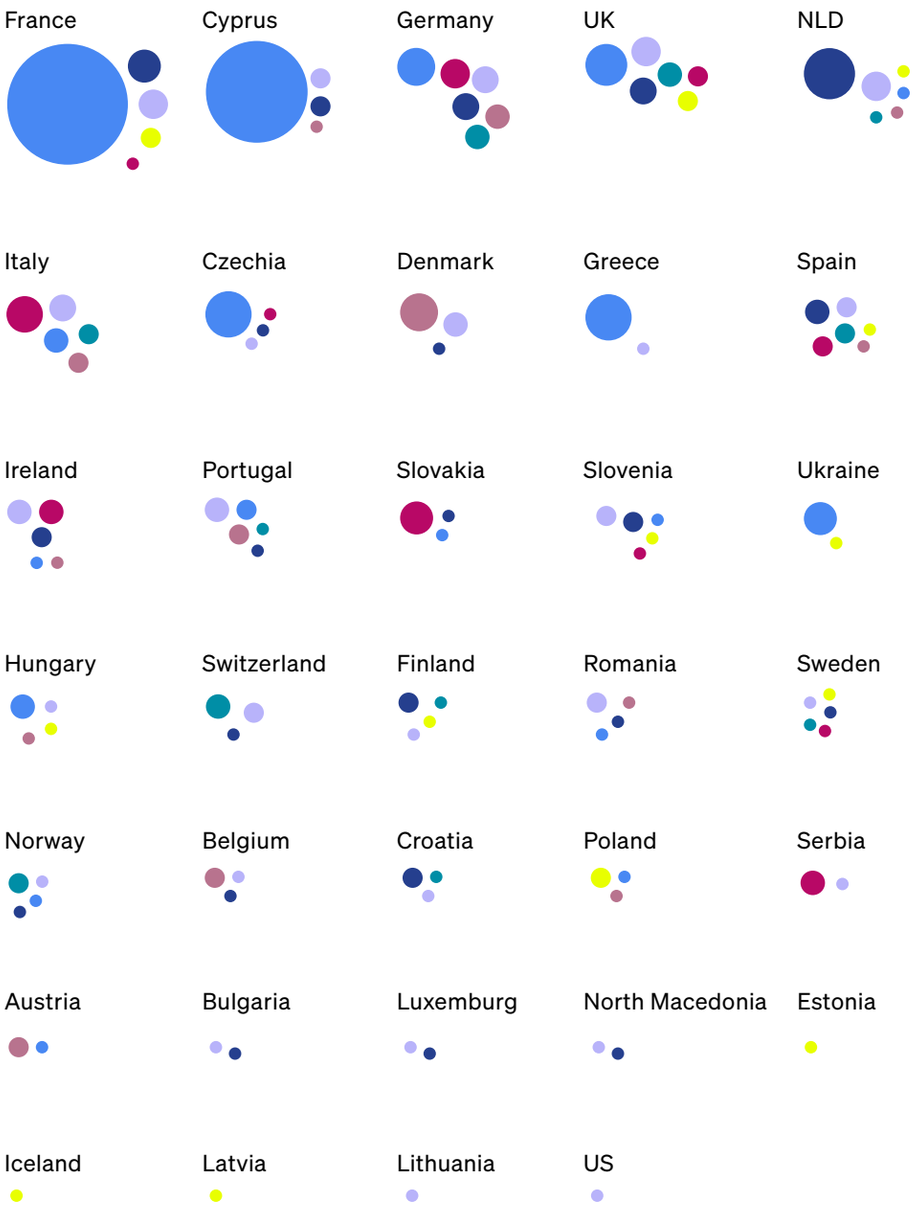
Communication / audience development / mediation / outreach

Researchers / dramaturgs / educators

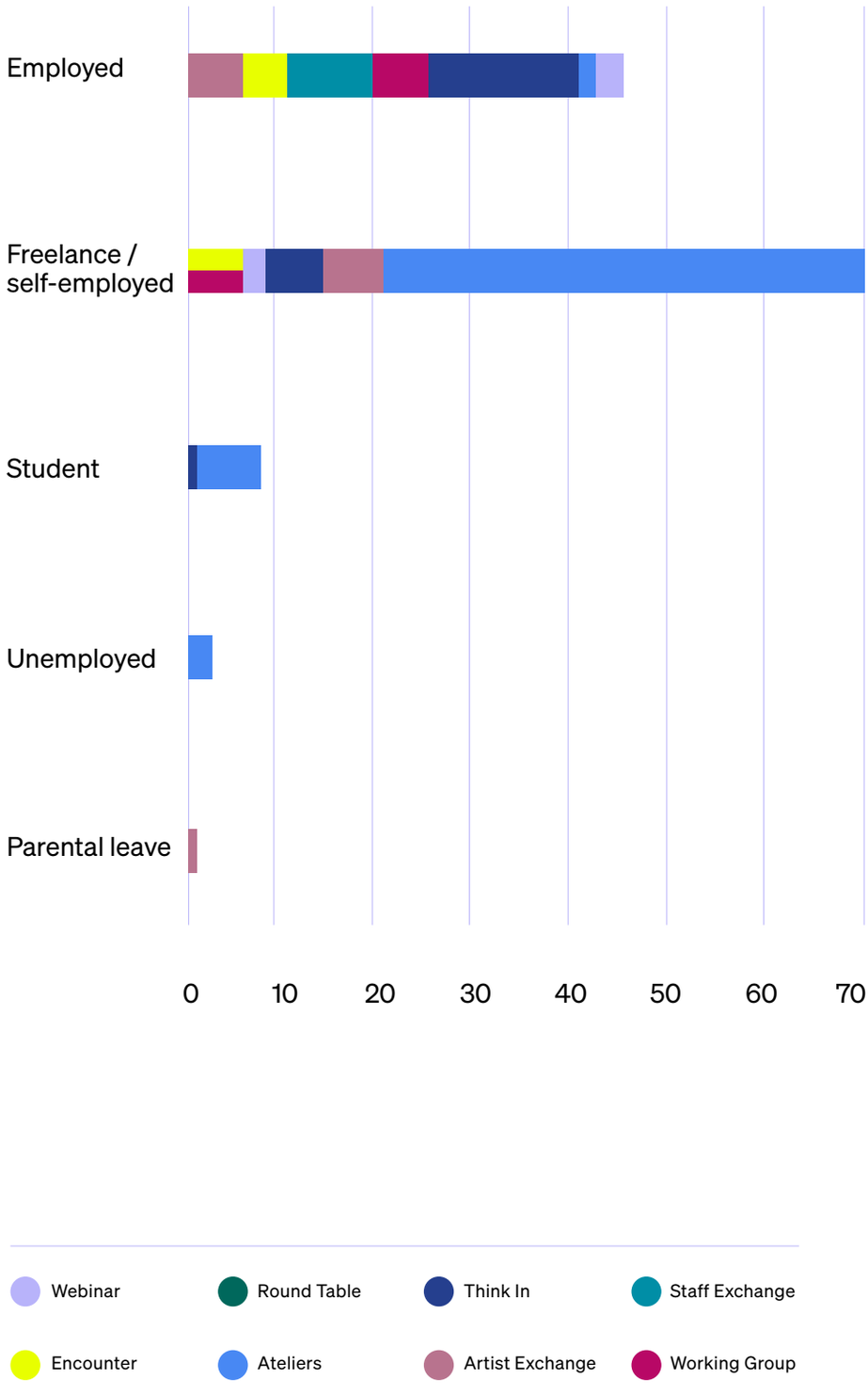
Experts from fields other than performing arts

Webinar
Round Table
Think In
Staff Exchange
Encounter
Ateliers
Artist Exchange
Working Group

Participants by Country of Residence



Participants by Work Status



EVENTS

EDN Webinar: 24 is for Care and Wellbeing

Introduction to EDN's inquiry into practices of care and wellbeing in contemporary dance.

The online network meeting was the occasion for EDN members to regroup, present the upcoming activities, meet the researcher Monica Gillette and take part in Tommy Noonan's keynote address and presentation.

EDN Roundtable Discussion: Dance, Health and Wellbeing

As part of the German Dance Platform's professional programme, EDN hosted a round table discussion on Dance, Health & Wellbeing on 22 February 2024, hosted by Theater Freiburg in Freiburg, Germany.

EDN Encounter

EDN Encounter is a xvisitors programme for representatives of regional dance development organisations that are not yet members of EDN. The Encounter guests were invited to attend the Ice Hot Nordic Dance Platform, hosted by Dansens Hus Oslo, between 14 and 17 February 2024.

EDN Atelier: Dance and Society

What can dance do for the wellbeing of citizens? How do practices of care inform our own working conditions in dance?

The Atelier was hosted and co-organised by Le Gymnase CDCN and took place from 28 to 29 March 2024 in Roubaix, France.

EDN Atelier: Dance & Resilience

Presentation of regional dance initiatives responding to the war in Ukraine.

The Atelier was hosted by Tanec Praha and took place from 10 to 12 April 2024 in Prague, Czechia, following the Czech Dance Platform.

EDN Atelier: Processes of Healing: Becoming Well Again

A program inspired by the three stages of trauma recovery.

The Atelier was hosted by Dance Gate Lefkosia in collaboration with Dance House Lefkosia and leading up to the On Bodies Dance and Performance Festival. It took place from 16 to 17 May 2024 in Nicosia, Cyprus.

EDN Carte Blanche Artist Exchange

A practical reflection on how artistic practice and childcare could reorganise each other.

Dansehallerne hosted a 4-day exchange of artistic practices for dance artists, their children and fellow carers, led by a collective of dance artists in Copenhagen, Denmark, from 7 to 10 November 2024.

EDN Think-In

EDN members, partners & guests gathered at Korzo in The Hague on 3-4 July 2024 for a sector consultation on practices of care and wellbeing in contemporary dance.

EDN Carte Blanche Staff Exchange

EDN members took part in the network's staff exchange programme throughout the year; for a change of scene, peer-to-peer learning, an informal insight into production and artistic processes, a new know-how and knowledge.

Working Group Meetings

For EDN's research into dance and wellbeing, EDN members were invited to a series of Zoom discussions with researcher Monica Gillette. These informal discussions were open to all staff members of EDN organisations and their associated artists. The sessions were responsive to the aspects of wellbeing participants were interested in discussing.

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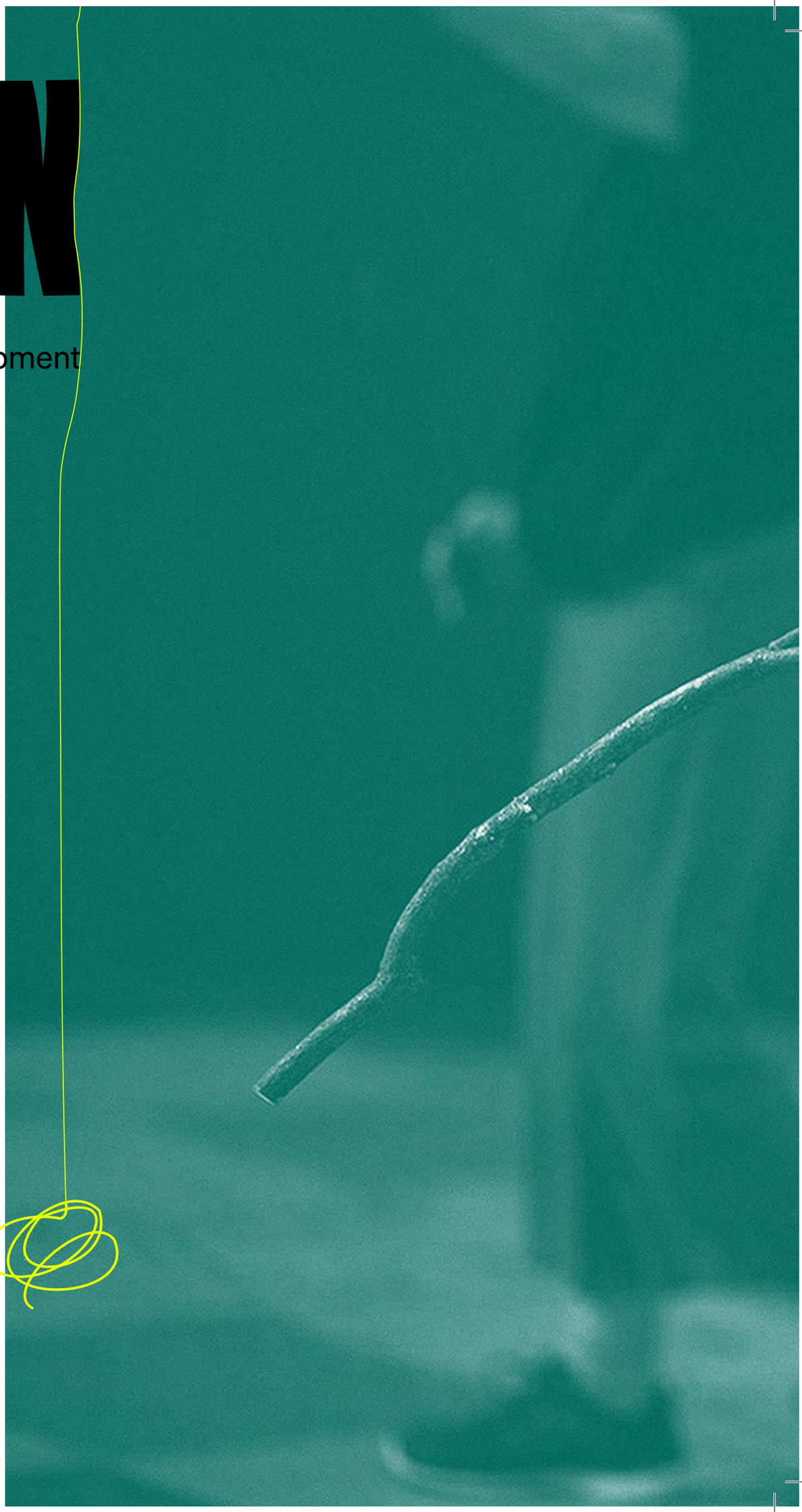

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