



**PERFORMING  
GENDER**  
DANCING  
IN YOUR  
SHOES

---

**HANDBOOK**

*Building communities  
through artistic practices*



# PERFORMING GENDER DANCING IN YOUR SHOES

---

## HANDBOOK

*Building communities  
through artistic practices*

Author  
**Giulia Allegrini**

with the contribution of  
**Orkide Izci**

Research Team of the Department of  
the Arts, University of Bologna:

Scientific Supervision:  
**Roberta Paltrinieri**

Coordination of research activities,  
development of social impact evalua-  
tion methodology, data collection and  
analysis:  
**Giulia Allegrini**

Data collection and analysis:  
**Orkide Izci**

Scientific committee:  
**Roberta Paltrinieri, Giulia Allegrini,  
Rossella Mazzaglia, Matteo Casari,  
Elena Cervellati**

External collaboration for the develop-  
ment of social impact evaluation meth-  
odology, quantitative data analysis:  
**Giorgia Bonaga**

## Credits Partners

Gender Bender Festival  
Cassero LGBTQIA+ Center  
Bologna, Italy



**Daniele Del Pozzo**  
*Artistic Direction*

**Andrea Berna**  
*Project Management*

**Mauro Meneghelli**  
*Audience Development*

**Giulia Conforto**  
*Project Management Assistant*

**Marco Obino**  
*Communication*

Klap  
Maison pour la Danse  
Kelemenis & cie  
Marseille, France



**David Dibilio**  
**Laurent Meheust**  
*Artistic Direction*

**Lucas Foucart**  
**Dora Pentchev**  
**Pascaline Robinot**  
*Project Management*

**Mariette Travard,**  
*Audience Development*

**Benjamin Rechner**  
**Joseph de Saint Seine**  
*Administration*

**Hanna Louqaïs**  
*Communication*

Alma Mater Studiorum  
Università di Bologna  
Department of the Arts -  
DAMSLab  
Bologna, Italy



**Roberta Paltrinieri**  
*Scientific Director*

**Giulia Allegrini**  
*Senior Researcher*

**Orkide Izci**  
*Junior Researcher*

**Giorgia Bonaga and**  
**Rossella Mazzaglia**  
*Analysis and Research*

**Valeria Baruzzi**  
*Administration*

Mesto žensk  
City of Women  
Ljubljana, Slovenia



**Iva Kovač**  
*Artistic Direction*

**Urška Jež**  
*Project Management*

**Sara Šabec**  
*Audience Development*

**Amela Meštrovac**  
**Miša Miheljak**  
**Eva Prodan**  
*Administration*

**Urška Lipovž**  
*Communication*

DansBrabant  
Tilburg, The Netherlands



**Lisa Reinheimer**  
**Nienke Rooijakker**  
*Artistic Direction*

**Heleen Volman**  
*Artistic Direction and Audience Development*

**Wim van Stam**  
*Project Management and Administration*

**Leon Caarls**  
**Lotte van Oudheusden**  
*Audience Development*

**Dirk Verhoeven**  
**Eugenie Verschuren**  
*Communication*

NorrlandsOperan  
Umeå, Sweden



**Birgit Berndt**  
*Artistic Direction*

**Linda Wiklund**  
*Project Management and Audience Development*

**Hanna Kangassalo**  
*Audience Development*

**Benjamin Brodin**  
**Carina Bygdemark**  
*Communication*

**Katarina Zingmark**  
*Administration*

Paso a 2 - Plataforma  
Coreográfica A.C.  
Madrid, Spain



**Laura Kumin**  
*Artistic direction*

**Carmen Fernández**  
*Project management*

**Miren Muñoz**  
*Audience Development*

**Ana Botía**  
**Jimena Vera**  
*Administration*

**Almudena Ávila**  
**Marta Baeza**  
*Communication*

SÍN  
Arts Centre  
Budapest, Hungary



**Anikó Racz**  
*Artistic Direction*

**Luca Kövécs**  
*Project Management*

**Luca Borsos**  
*Audience Development*

**Emma Elefánti**  
**Dóra Trifonov**  
**Zsuzsa Valtinyi**  
*Administration*

Theaterfestival  
Boulevard  
's-Hertogenbosch,  
The Netherlands



**Nina Aalders**  
**Viktorien van Hulst**  
*Artistic Direction*

**Tessa Smeulers**  
*Artistic Management*

**Job Rietvelt**  
*Project Management*

**Coralie den Adel**  
*Audience Development*

**Marianne Becks**  
*Administration*

**Kitty Becht**  
**Juliette de Man**  
*Communication*

**Vincent Wijnhuizen**  
*Dramaturg*

The British Council  
London, United Kingdom



**Ben Evans**  
*Artistic Lead and Project Support*

**Steven Brett**  
*Artistic Direction*

**Sarah Bagshaw**  
**Alison Driver**  
*Project Management*

**Ruth Groth**  
*Communication*

**Laura Alos**  
*Administration*

**Nadine Patel**  
*Project Production and Consultancy*

Yorkshire Dance  
Leeds, United Kingdom



**Wieke Eringa**  
**Hannah Robertshaw**  
*Artistic Direction*

**Kirsty Redhead**  
*Project Management and Audience Development*

**Louise Allen**  
**Bhuvan Sharma**  
*Administration*

**Rachel Kingdom**  
*Communication*

## The artists involved

Gender Bender Festival  
Cassero LGBTQIA+ Center  
Bologna, Italy

**Simona Bertozzi**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**Daniele Ninarello**  
*traveling dancemaker*

**Aristide Rontini**  
*rooted dancemaker*

DansBrabant  
Tilburg,  
The Netherlands

**Nikita Maheshwary**  
*traveling dancemaker*

Klap Maison pour la Danse -  
Kelemenis & cie  
Marseille, France

**Luc Benard**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**Arthur Perole**  
*traveling dancemaker*

**Anne Rehbinder**  
*rooted dancemaker*

Mesto žensk  
City of Women  
Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Brina Klampfer**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**Vita Osojnik**  
*traveling dancemaker*

**Teja Reba**  
*rooted dancemaker*

NorrlandsOperan  
Umeå,  
Sweden

**Sindri Runudde**  
*traveling dancemaker*

**Sofia Södergård**  
*rooted dancemaker*

Paso a 2 - Plataforma  
Coreográfica A.C.  
Madrid, Spain

**Marina Santo**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**Javier Vaquero**  
*traveling dancemaker*

SÍN Arts Centre  
Budapest,  
Hungary

**Luca Borsos**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**Gergő Farkas**  
*traveling dance maker*

**Ágnes Grélinger**  
*traveling dancemaker*

Theaterfestival Boulevard  
's-Hertogenbosch, The  
Netherlands

**Jija Sohn**  
*traveling dancemaker*

Yorkshire Dance  
Leeds,  
United Kingdom

**Ijeme Aikhionbare**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**Ione Barton**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**Alexandra Bhrama**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**Izzy Brittain**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**Shirani Brooks**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**Kate Cox**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**Xolani Crabtree**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**TC Howard**  
*traveling dancemaker*

**Bakani Pickup**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**Sam Rutter**  
*rooted dancemaker*

**Yas Sheikh**  
*rooted dancemaker*



Co-funded by the  
Creative Europe Programme  
of the European Union

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

# Contents

PREFACE	6
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HANDBOOK	7
<b>SECTION 1</b>	
The project	8
<b>Chapter 1 A brief description of the project</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1. Aims and structure of the project	9
1.2. The ecosystem of the project	12
<b>SECTION 2</b>	
The research conducted by the University of Bologna	18
<b>Chapter 1 Key concepts and analytical frameworks</b>	<b>19</b>
1.1. Framing the social value of the art: well-being, sustainability, social cohesion, and democracy	19
1.2. Performing Gender: intersectional identities, performativity, and body practices	23
1.3. Dancing in your shoes: identity, belongings and community	24
1.4. Framing Audience Development: beyond the rhetoric of participation	25
<b>Chapter 2 The evaluation methodology</b>	<b>28</b>
2.1. Between action research and the Theory of Change: the role of narratives	28
2.2. An overview of phases and tools of research	29
2.3. An insight into the qualitative approach of research: the role of narratives	36
2.4. Final notes on methodology	36
<b>SECTION 3</b>	
Challenges and creative practices	38
<b>Chapter 1 Mapping the context</b>	<b>39</b>
1.1. Audience Engagement and artistic exploration of gender issues	39
1.2. Audience engagement and building communities	40
<b>Chapter 2 Engagement, community dance practices and production</b>	<b>42</b>
2.1. Aims and types of community	42
2.2. Co-design, issues and practices	54
2.3. The Performances	60
<b>SECTION 4</b>	
Collective learnings: voices of the people involved	63
<b>Chapter 1 Community dance practices and production: the lived experiences, challenges and changes</b>	<b>64</b>
1.1. The communities	64
1.2. The Dancemakers	76
1.3. The Audience Developers	80
1.4. The Artistic Directors	85
<b>SECTION 5</b>	
Final recommendations for policy makers and cultural professionals	93
<b>Chapter 1 Highlights and recommendations for cultural professionals</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Chapter 2 Policy recommendations and concluding remarks</b>	<b>98</b>
2.1. Key Policy Recommendations	98
2.2. Recommendations regarding Creative Europe Evaluation methodologies	99
2.3. Concluding Remarks	99
REFERENCES	103
VIDEOS	107

**By Daniele Del Pozzo, Gender Bender, Italy**

**Speech delivered at the European Parliament in Brussels on November 15, 2023, at the final presentation of the project results**

PG-DIYS is approaching its conclusion, scheduled for December this year.

We started a good three years ago in November 2020.

When we received a favorable response on the contribution from the European Union, it was July 2020, in the middle of the Covid lockdown.

This achievement was both joy and concern at the same time. How could we get communities dancing while everyone was living in isolation?

We met online with the partners, and I asked them all if we wanted to go ahead with the project or if we wanted to drop it. The answer was clear, courageous and urgent: we will go ahead, better times will come.

Those times came and found us ready.

The first dance workshops took place still wearing masks.

Yet, dancing together after months of isolation produced a euphoric joy and a primitive, frightening pleasure.

Over the months we naturally discovered that the apparent unproductivity of dancing was instead creating strong and happy relationships among people.

About 600 people from 9 communities in 8 countries, danced together with 21 dancemakers in Spain, France, Slovenia, Great Britain, Hungary, Sweden, the Netherlands and Italy.

Our partners are Paso a 2, SÍN, Yorkshire Dance, Klap la Maison de la Dance, Norrlandsoperan, DAMSLab of the Department of the Arts (University of Bologna), City of Women, The British Council.

With them we experienced the value of the European cooperation and we grow up together, learning from each other.

We learned to dance in other shoes, to adopt others perspectives.

Communities from 8 European countries then traveled around Europe to present their experiences to the public and other communities, organizations and stakeholders in the partner countries.

Through these joyful exchanges, we were able to bear emotional witness to how positively this project has actually impacted the lives of the people who participated.

PG-DIYS has changed together with the communities.

As an example among the many of them, initially we had planned to hold the workshops in Italy for one year only, and instead we danced freely for two years, to respond to the communities' desire.

A desire for a shared well-being.

PG-DIYS is the third European cooperation project we have leading as project leader starting from 2013.

In the last ten years we gain a lot of knowledges and skills, arriving with PG-DIYS to a Large Scale cooperation project.

This PG-DIYS is a queer project: each experience in the different countries has had different characteristics and modalities, thanks to the active participation in the process by the communities along with the artists.

Along with the communities, we have come to discover that dancing together is a fundamental need.

Now the question is: what's next?

This is a question we want to address to our local and European policy makers so that they know that dancing is a fundamental right of people and that it must be heard and recognised, so that it can be included in future policy directions.

The world has changed around us in these three years.

Dancing together, sharing a space and time with other people, learning to listen to and respect the specific needs of each body, is also a possible alternative to the logic and practice of conflict and, ultimately, a possible alternative to war.

What do we practice with PG-DIYS?

The creation of joyful communities that dance together. An apparent utopia that becomes a true, viable and attainable experience.

We have accomplished this by having a long list of public and private allies on a local, national and international scale by our side over the past three years, all of whom have believed in the project and supported it with us in a generous way.

It is both difficult and time consuming to name them all, but we would like to thank the European Union and all of them from the bottom of our hearts for helping make this magical journey possible.

It is in this spirit that we continue to dance and face the complexity of the realities in which we live, to create a time of reflection, dialogue and gratitude, having in mind that only in the future we'll be able to understand the full potential of the cultural, social and artistic transformations we have helped to bring to Europe.

Performing Gender: Dancing in Your Shoes (PG-DIYS) was a 3-year project aiming at developing and testing a replicable model of audience development for European cultural organizations dealing with contemporary dance and at creating a bond between cultural professionals and their local communities in the field of dance and performing arts throughout a discussion on gender in the European dance system. PG-DIYS had the firm beliefs that gender, sexuality, and LGBTQIA+ identities can be questioned and explored throughout the dance language and the local engagement of the community and that fostering access and participation in cultural life is one of the key instruments to promoting individual and collective empowerment, democratic consciousness, social cohesion, and fostering values such as human dignity, freedom, equality, and solidarity.

To this end, the project brought communities, cultural organizations and operators, dancemakers, policymakers, and academics - from 8 different countries- to work closer together in two main areas of investigation. The first was exploring gender from an intersectional perspective through the language of dance. The second was exploring the role of art in building communities through a co-design and co-creation approach. Indeed, PG-DIYS directly engaged people and communities in experiencing, enjoying, and valuing arts and culture through a co-doing methodology.

This handbook is created to spread the legacy of the project by sharing the experiences in terms of methods, tools, challenges, mitigations, and learnings.

It has been elaborated by the research team affiliated with the Department of the Arts of Bologna University and its cultural laboratory, DAMSLab. The research team conducted the research with two main aims: to analyze the implemented process to identify key dimensions to plan and implement an adaptive, reflexive, place-based, and intersectional methodology of audience engagement based on co-design and co-creation; to identify key challenges, learnings and changes through a quantitative and qualitative data collection, departing from the “trials and errors” and lived experiences of all the components of the project – communities, dancemakers, audience developers, and artistic directors.

The findings published under this handbook are based on a qualitative data analysis, in particular concerning the implemented process. The qualitative data in terms of learnings and changes was collected through participant observation in the initial working session with the project partners, dance makers’ diaries, focus groups, interviews, and participant observation during some community dance practices, international residencies, international gatherings of partners, both workshops and festivals. The quantitative data are gathered, analyzed, and published in the social impact report.

The research was based on a collaborative and participative approach during the entire project process. This type of research has been challenging and empowering with its transformative impacts on us researchers since it required a critical self-reflexivity on our power, positionality, socio-cultural frames within the research process and mutual recognition of the different actors’ roles. This project also introduced a new understanding of the academic research role within a collaborative and artistic-based process. This handbook couldn’t be written without engagement, mutual exchange, and the collaborative spirit of all partners and actors.

This handbook has two main **aims**.

First of all, it wants to be a **guide for those who will start a community-based art project**. The second is to provide a **framework and recommendations for social impact evaluation in the field of performing arts** for non-experts and experts (such as policymakers and cultural sector operators).

It is structured in **5 sections**:

- The **first** section is dedicated to **introducing the project**. In particular, we first present the aims, the actions, and the “ecosystem” of the project by giving key highlights about the different actors of the project.
- In the **second** section, we present the **theoretical perspectives and key concepts** that informed the PG-DIYS project and the research. Finally, we present the research methodology – informed by those concepts mentioned above, as well as the steps and tools of the research.
- The **third** section gives an account of the **context** in which the community dance practices and production were developed and experimented. In particular, we present the key **dimensions and questions** around which we, as a partnership, reflected regarding the community dance practice planning and **examples of practices** concerning different steps of artistic engagement.
- In the **fourth** section, we provide a key to understanding the lived experiences of all project actors through an analysis of challenges, **learnings, and changes** achieved throughout the PG-DIYS project.
- The **fifth** section summarizes **key insights and recommendations for cultural operators** in relation to planning and implementing community dance practices. It presents final **policy recommendations** concerning **evaluating the social impacts of the arts**.



# SECTION 1

## The project

# Chapter 1

## A brief description of the project

### 1.1.

#### AIMS AND STRUCTURE OF THE PROJECT

---

Within the general aims already presented in the introduction of this handbook, the PG-DIYS project had the following **specific objectives**.

1. Improving **access** to creative works in the field of dance, focusing on youngsters, the elderly, migrants, and underrepresented LGBTQIA+ groups through an intersectional perspective.
2. Improving the **well-being** of the underrepresented group via **cultural and creative empowerment**.
3. **Developing a co-doing and co-creation methodology**, directly engaging people and communities in experiencing, enjoying, and valuing arts and culture through co-participating audiences, artists, and cultural operators.
4. **Questioning and exploring issues around gender** as a social construction, sexuality, and LGBTQIA+ identities.
5. **Fostering a sense of belonging, solidarity, and community building** through body practices based on co-design and co-creation.
6. Involving cultural organizations, dance makers, audience communities, policy institutions, and academics to **deconstruct social and cultural dynamics, such as privilege and power**.
7. Pursuing **a capacity building of cultural organizations**, particularly about audience development and co-design and co-creation approach.
8. Promoting **awareness** of gender-related issues (such as power relations and structures) and the value of a co-creation approach **at the policy level in the field of art and culture**.

In order to achieve these objectives, the project followed these actions and steps:

#### 1. Audience engagement

In literature, “audience engagement” usually refers to a specific step in the whole audience development process. In the PG-DIYS project, the term is used as the main term to describe the process of “working with communities” through artistic practice. From this perspective, two main steps were implemented:

##### A) Community engagement

Communities represent the core of the project. It was not just a matter of finding, reaching, and engaging a community; it

was also a matter of co-design process and practice. Each partner was involved in establishing a relationship with members of their local communities in a training and production artistic process to foreground marginalized voices and share new stories on gender relevant to new dance audiences. “Dancing in your shoes” **meant** that artists came into contact with the community, and the community experienced the creative and artistic process with a social approach. It was set up as an osmotic process based on co-design, where a mutual exchange of knowledge and suggestions led communities to a new understanding of gender issues. Many different activities and methods, illustrated throughout this handbook, from April 2021 to December 2021, were implemented to inform and invite people to be part of the community and involve dancemakers to start a dialogue and co-design the process. This “outreach” step aimed at creating an adequate terrain of involvement and an “enabling environment” for the engagement through the dance practices. In this phase of the project an International meeting Lab, from 21<sup>st</sup> to 25 of April 2021, took place to plan the engagement activities, working together on three main questions: *1) How to build a meaningful co-design and co-production process with communities and artists? Which are the gender issues we would like to work on with communities, and which challenges should we consider in practice? 3) Which kind of communities would we like to build through this project?*

##### B) Community dance practices

Communities were engaged in creative workshops from January 2022 to July 2022. Regular and frequent meetings involved artists, communities, and partners with physical training sessions, theoretical practices, performances, sharing activities, and conviviality moments.

Nine different local communities were involved. Each community co-designed and became the protagonist of different activities, jointly with 12 rooted dancemakers (community dance makers with the task of stimulating the local community).

#### 2. Co-design residency

In PG-DIYS, dance makers were asked to bring their artistic and creative perspectives into the co-design process to explore and reflect on gender issues. Besides the rooted dance makers, traveling dance makers were involved from August 2022 to December 2022 to “contaminate” and mix up the reflections carried out by different local communities. After a residency

in their own country, they made a co-design residency period abroad. Traveling dance makers also had a role in developing a production in which the community participated.

The community, artistic director, and audience developer jointly selected the artist they envisaged to work with the residencies and for the final performance/workshop. At this stage, the empowerment process via audience development led the audiences to reach a higher level of awareness on contemporary dance and gender issues: they acquired skills and tools to choose the artist they wanted to work with.

### 3. Production

From January 2023 to May 2023, project actors have been involved in a production period after the end of the co-design process of creative workshops. The result was the creation of 8 performances and one workshop, which had a first moment of visibility within both festivals and events organized by the partners in the touring phase of the project. Indeed, each partner hosted the production of other communities in their festival. Other **crosscutting actions** have been implemented throughout the entire project.

### 4. Mapping and analysis

The University of Bologna was the scientific partner, contributing to building models of horizontal audience engagement together with the cultural organizations, artists, and the chosen communities. During the project, the research team prepared tools to map and plan audience engagement practices, gain insights, identify patterns, and evaluate the implemented process. The research team of the University of Bologna wrote this final handbook to analyze and publish the collected data on the entire project process within a theoretical/methodological framework and the academic evaluation of the project's impacts on the project actors.

### 5. Capacity-building

Capacity-building refers to initiatives and cultural organizations' methods prioritizing the "people factor". Empowering staff and developing their abilities, competencies, and leadership skills is crucial for achieving change in audience behavior within organizations. Thus, in this project, the capacity-building activities were crucial to implementing audience development strategies and strengthening skills and tools within the organizations' teams, jointly with stakeholders and individuals working with them. The capacity-building activities progressively opened up at a local, regional, and national level, reaching, step by step, a wider segment of stakeholders and individuals. Among others, two important joint capacity building initiatives were implemented in the project. The first during the Gender Bender International Festival, from 14 to 15 of September 2021, with workshops – conducted by Simona Bertozzi (rooted dance maker) and Daniele Ninarello (travelling dance maker) – and meetings dedicated to strengthen the relationship between partners, by sharing physical practices, exchanging experiences and viewing performances; to introduce the PG-DIYS project and partners to the city of Bologna and to meet the Italian dancemakers of PG-DIYS and the artists present at the festival.

The second, during the twentieth anniversary of Gender Bender International Festival, from 16 to 18 September 2022 with a Summer Camp, dedicated to dancing, listening and sharing practices. The meeting involved all the partners – their artistic directors, audience developers and dancemakers – and the community of Bologna, in three working sessions were organized by the lead partner to immerse in the themes of the project.

### 6. Dissemination and exploitation of the results

Dissemination activities are the methods and strategies to share project outcomes, results, and information with a broader audience. To do this, an initial public presentation of PG-DIYS project took place in Bologna, on the 15 of September 2021, during Gender Bender International Festival.

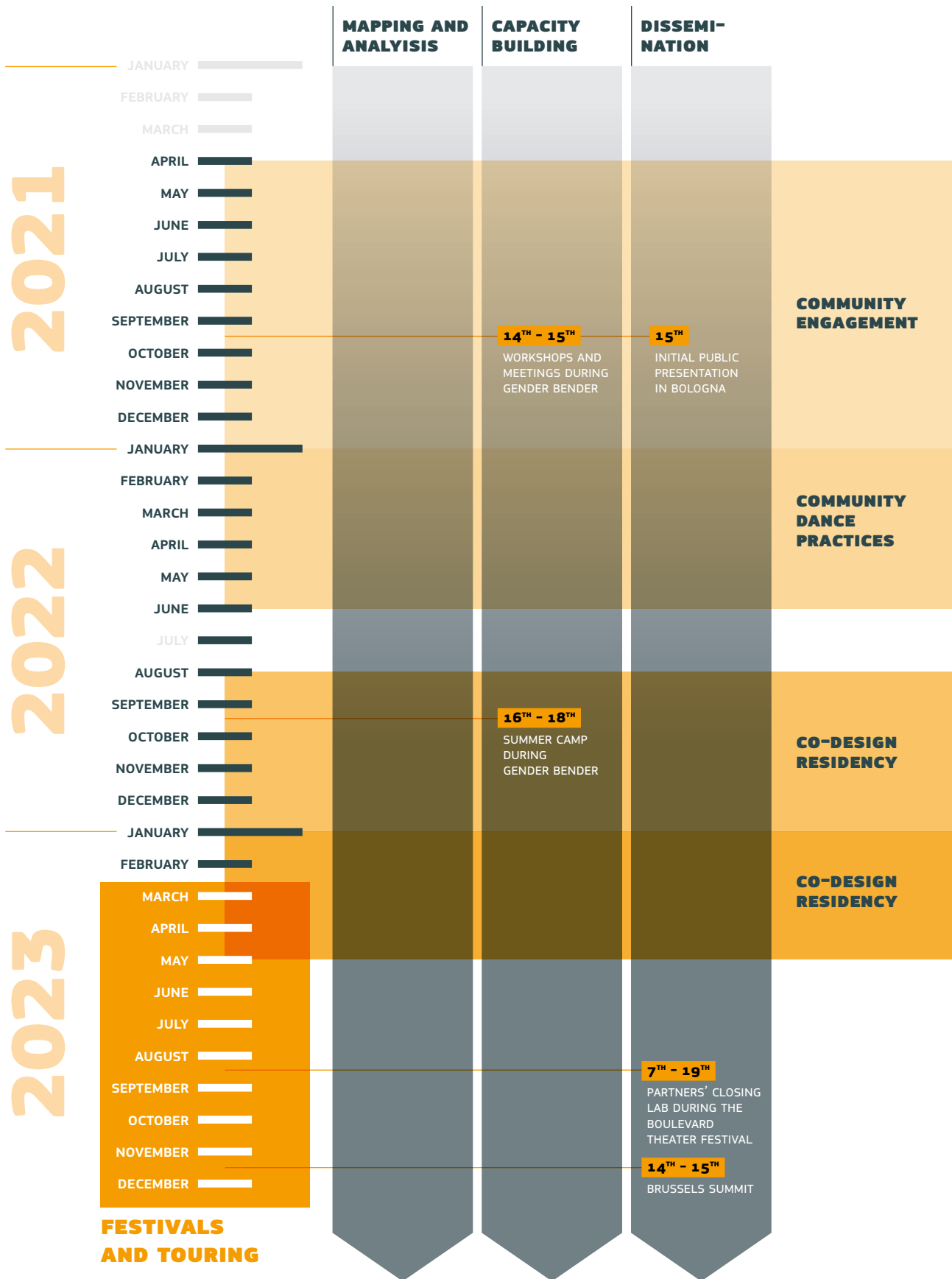
Throughout the project, storytelling was also carried out through blog articles, video interviews, diaries, and photos. The partners' festivals, where different communities had a chance to perform and dialogue with the audience, were crucial for dissemination (from March 2023 to December 2023). In addition to the storytelling, the research team's data collection on the entire process of the project and scientific analysis were gathered under this handbook and the social impact report. The research team presented an overview of the handbook at the Partners' Closing Lab during the Boulevard Theater Festival in August 2023. The PG-DIYS project was also presented from a sociological perspective at various academic conferences and seminars.

Performing Gender: Dancing in Your Shoes Brussels Summit, a pivotal moment of dissemination of the project's creative process and results, took place at the European Parliament on 14 and 15 November 2023, organized by the British Council in collaboration with the partnership. This event was part of a specific action foreseen by the project, focused on ensuring that municipal and national policymakers engaged in the topics of the project, and it gave policymakers a chance to exchange with international peers on this subject. Each partner invited local and national policymakers to join the Brussels Summit. This event allowed PG-DIYS to disseminate the project results, but was also a chance to deepen the discussion around issues such as intersections of different identities and gender in the cultural ecosystem at a European level.

During the event, different moments of dissemination took place:

- A live stream of three lecture provocations by artists exploring the intersection of dance practice and questions of gender, sexuality, and marginalized communities. Key questions that emerged during the PG-DIYS project were shared and discussed: How do artists navigate the relationship between their personal identity (and identities) and their artistic practice? Is identity-based practice necessarily an activist practice? How do artists employ, subvert, or reject the categories placed upon them by broader society, including the cultural sector?
- A working session dedicated to "re-evaluating evaluation" explored how traditional models of cultural evaluation do not adequately capture the depth of impact of projects such as PG-DIYS and the long-lasting outcomes for individuals and communities. During this session, the University of Bologna shared and discussed with partners, communities, external experts, and policymakers the evaluation process of PG-DIYS and the key challenges that emerged. The results were gathered under the policy recommendations document (See 'Section 5- Final Recommendations' in this handbook).
- Presentation of the project to policymakers at the European Parliament, coordinated by the Il Cassero LGBTQIA+ Center, the British Council, and the European Agency EACEA. During this session, community members also spoke about their own experiences in the project.
- The film project by the British Council, created through the production of six short films, was also screened during the summit as part of a dissemination campaign towards policymakers.

# Actions and steps



## 1.2.

### THE ECOSYSTEM OF THE PROJECT

The PG-DIYS project involved **several types of actors**, which together compose the “ecosystem” of the project. The project was coordinated by Gender Bender Festival- Il Cassero LGBTQIA+ Center based in Bologna (Italy), and the partnership includes **11 cultural organizations** engaged in dance festivals and production from **8 European countries** – France, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, United Kingdom. Each cultural organization involved **three main profiles**: an **artistic director**, a **project manager**, and an **audience developer**. The project engaged in total **9 communities**, **21 dancemakers (12 rooted and 9 travelling)**. Regarding reached **outputs**, there are **323 community dance workshops with the rooted dance makers**, **54 residential workshops with the traveler artists**, **199 workshops dedicated to the final production**, **8 performances**, and **one final workshop**. The project has reached out and engaged **350 community members in total**.

11 cultural organizations

8 European countries

9 communities

21 dancemakers

350 community members

323 community dance workshop

199 workshops for the final production

9 performances

## Gender Bender Il Cassero is the LGBTQIA+ Center of Bologna



Il Cassero is the LGBTQIA+ Center of Bologna, one of the most important institutions for the Italian LGBTQIA+ movement and history. Its core mission is to foster the LGBTQIA+ culture, solidarity, individual/collective civil rights, and physical/ psychological health in the LGBTQIA+ community and to prevent discrimination.

Gender Bender is an international multidisciplinary festival produced by Il Cassero. For more than 20 years, the festival has been presenting the imagery produced by contemporary international culture related to new representations and relationships generated by the expression of bodies, gender differences, and sexual orientations.

It takes place every year in Bologna and its programming spans the entire city. It has an international outlook and an

interdisciplinary vocation and each year hosts artists from all over the world. Gender Bender is a multidisciplinary festival and offers a series of events ranging from films to theatrical productions and dance performances, visual arts exhibitions, installations, round tables and conferences, live concerts and performances by musicians and DJs, and clubbing events.

It is a real model of how differences can contribute to the construction of a more welcoming society from human, social, and cultural points of view. Together with national and international partners, the Gender Bender Festival produces a series of networked projects that continue even after the end of the festival period. These activities involve artists, cultural organizations, institutions, and local communities.

[www.performinggender.eu/partner/cassero/](http://www.performinggender.eu/partner/cassero/)

---

## Norrlandsoperan



Norrlandsoperan is the leading center for innovative opera and performing arts in Sweden. Norrlandsoperan includes Norrlandsoperan Symphony Orchestra and departments for opera, music, dance and contemporary art as well as workshops and ateliers. It was founded in 1974 and is situated in the center of the city of Umeå in the county of Västerbotten in the northern part of Sweden. The opera house is a center with many visiting international singers, musicians, conductors, stage directors, choreographers, dancers, and visual artists.

Norrlandsoperan is one of Sweden's most vivid platforms for dance and performance and co-produces and presents around 25 different performance projects and hosts residencies every year. Norrlandsoperan is constantly cooperating with other Swedish, European, and International opera houses, performing arts centers, and cultural institutions.

[www.performinggender.eu/partner/norrlandsoperan/](http://www.performinggender.eu/partner/norrlandsoperan/)

## DansBrabant

**DANS  
BRABANT**

**D**ansBrabant is a stimulant and catalyst for dance and choreography, working with a diverse palette of talented choreographers. While placing the human body at the center of a world in motion, they are keen to create an inspiring dance climate in the Dutch province of Noord-Brabant.

DansBrabant explores and stimulates forms of organization in which choreographers and companies stand strong together and strive to optimally develop their own individual artistic skills. They move actively and connectively within the triangle of production, presentation, and the public.

DansBrabant is one of the partners and founders of Moving Futures, a power group combining the strengths of five Dutch talent developers who together bring out a new generation of choreographers by organizing, among other

events, the annual traveling **festival Moving Futures**. Moving Futures is carried by Dansmakers Amsterdam, Dansateliers, Random Collision, Generale Oost and DansBrabant. This collaboration promotes critical dialogue on talent development. The network and the festival feature in the list of 'Best Practices 2016' compiled by the European Dancehouse Network.

In addition, DansBrabant is a partner to Studiotrade (set up in 2010 during the Tanzmesse), an idealistic European network of companies, choreographers, producers, talent developers, agents, and festivals that make a low-profile international exchange possible based on alternative economic models in which the sharing of facilities and experience are central. In this context, it forms a platform for sharing knowledge on the position of the arts in someone's native country.

[www.performinggender.eu/partner/dansbrabant/](http://www.performinggender.eu/partner/dansbrabant/)

## KLAP Maison pour la danse

**K**LAP Maison pour la danse, inaugurated in October 2011, is a project initiated by the choreographer Michel Kelemenis. Its fundamental principle is to put creation at the center of every action. **KLAP Maison pour la danse** - Kelemenis & cie welcome emerging artists or confirmed local, European, and international companies. Together, they bring the place to life and nourish its activity with the diversity of their experiences and aesthetics. KLAP is composed by 3 dance spaces. There, the choreographic works are created from the first thought to the last touch. It's a permanent and referent place for the art of dance, a space of work, sharing, practice, and sensitization to the art. The experience of 10 years of sharing space and showcasing otherness at the Studio/Kelemenis has made it possible to clearly design an innovative facility dedicated to dance based on a founding principle: putting artistic creation at the heart of every action.

Artists, both emerging and established, local, European, and international companies, bring the place to life and nourish its activity with the diversity of their experiences and aesthetics. The program offers a wide range of ways to access art through practice or performance. In collaboration with the Centre National de la Danse and the Maison de la Danse in Lyon artistic and cultural education initiatives, grouped together under the name Éducadanse, to encourage access to culture through practice and to link the amateur world with the art of choreography, professional training for dancers, choreographers, teachers and educators.

With the **Festival + DE GENRES**, KLAP gathers artists around the questions of gender, identity, and sexuality and beyond the norms in and of society.

**KLAP** MAISON POUR  
LA DANSE  
KELEMENIS & CIE

[www.performinggender.eu/partner/klap-maison-pour-la-danse/](http://www.performinggender.eu/partner/klap-maison-pour-la-danse/)

## Yorkshire Dance

Yorkshire Dance (YD) works through dance to create happiness, health, connection, and change. They create opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to see, make, and take part in high-quality dance. They work to build community across the Yorkshire Region, across communities in Leeds, and from our 4-storey building. They also support artists who ask questions of themselves, their work, and the world, helping them research those questions and encourage local people to get involved in that process. They put at the center of their projects the sharing of the power of decision-making with people, participants, and artists, and they support dance makers to develop dance leadership in a number of ways. They are engaged in exploring how dance can speak powerfully to critical themes such as empowerment/equality, gender, anti-racism, aging, and the climate crisis. YD is a National Portfolio

Organisation of Arts Council England and celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2022.

YD also organizes **Encounters Festivals** which address some of the big questions of our age. Encounters Festival brings together inspiring dance artists and audiences to share food, conversation, participation, and performance in Leeds: "We believe dance can make the world a better place. We've tackled big subjects from climate change to gender identity exploring feminism and Dandyism. We know dancing together can create new connections with people you may not otherwise meet". They run 3 biennial Encounters: Ageless Festival, which reimagines age through dance; Children & their Grown Ups, which invites families to explore imagination and playfulness with work created for children and young people; and Gender Encounters, which explores gender and LGBTQIA+ identities through dance.

## YORKSHIRE DANCE

[www.performinggender.eu/partner/yorkshiredance/](http://www.performinggender.eu/partner/yorkshiredance/)

## City of Women

The Association for the Promotion of Women in Culture – City of Women is a non-profit organization for the realization and organization of cultural events and was founded in 1996 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The main goal of City of Women is to raise the visibility of high-quality innovative creations of women artists, theoreticians, and activists from all over the world, stimulate discussions about various artistic practices and subjects and create an overall artistic program with the aim to raise awareness of the currently disproportionate participation and representation of women in arts and culture, as well as in society as a whole.

Every October since 1995 City of Women presents the **International Festival of Contemporary Arts**, held in different venues across Ljubljana. Uniting amazing women\* and gender non-conforming people from all over the world,

the festival offers a unique experience, blending exciting art with inspiring talks and workshops.

Situated in material feminism, the City of Women festival exposes the social reality in which art is produced and in which artists live and work. It draws attention to discrimination in art and culture and aims to improve conditions for women\* in the arts and culture. The City of Women encourages social reflection, awareness, solidarity, and acceptance of diversity. Since its foundation, the City of Women festival has been nurturing an intersectional approach to feminism by looking at how gender overlaps with class, race, sexual orientation, physical ability, and other nodes of oppression. City of Women is engaged in artistic production, art education, community building, advocacy, research and publications, and in several European projects.

## MESTO ŽENSK CITY OF WOMEN

[www.performinggender.eu/partner/cityofwomen/](http://www.performinggender.eu/partner/cityofwomen/)



## Paso a 2



Paso a 2 is a cultural and educational organization based in Madrid committed to investing in creative potential in Spain, Europe and abroad through prizes, programming, residencies, networking, workshops, showcases, and mentoring. Paso a 2 organizes the **Certamen Coreográfico de Madrid**, an annual platform for new work in contemporary dance since 1987.

It also organizes another platform for emerging solos, a dance and journalism program, choreographic projects, training opportunities and mentoring. Its network of collaborators unites Spain, Europe, Asia, the United States, and Latin America. The Certamen Coreográfico de Madrid received a Max Award in 2011, one of the highest awarded in Spain in the performing arts sector.

[www.performinggender.eu/partner/pasoa2/](http://www.performinggender.eu/partner/pasoa2/)

---

## Theaterfestival Boulevard 's-Hertogenbosch



Since 1985, during the month of August, **Theaterfestival Boulevard 's-Hertogenbosch** has been a stage for passionate performances and inspiring encounters. It presents non-conformist theatre, dance, musical theatre and artistic forms at the festival's center stage and at unique locations in and around 's-Hertogenbosch.

The audience is wide and inquisitive. Boulevard is for novices and fervent fans, for young and old, for an art professional and for a family that wants to go out for the day. Boulevard combines various voices and narratives and wants to be accessible to everyone. Every year, they receive 140,000 visitors from all places, including around 450 international professionals.

[www.performinggender.eu/partner/boulevarddansbrabant/](http://www.performinggender.eu/partner/boulevarddansbrabant/)

---

## SÍN Arts Centre



Established in 2009 SÍN Arts Centre is a Budapest-based production house and one of the main hubs for contemporary dance and performance in Budapest, with studios and a very good local know-how. Beyond the infrastructure, SÍN offers a professional environment to work in production management, fundraising, help and advice in the artists' career development, assistance in finding the best possible context, and partners for their work. The mission of SÍN is to create a safe space through the operation of the production house whose basis is a creative and open mentality in which all participants can feel like equal partners. SÍN collaborates with the creators in their artistic processes, are partners in the realization of their productions and other projects, and work together to develop their careers. They work together with

local and international partners to create and share their knowledge. Through its work, SÍN plays an active role in creating and developing a critical perspective in our society.

SÍN has the aim of developing a flexible, innovative, yet strong community of artists and art professionals locally and globally and takes part in various local and international cooperation and partnerships. SÍN joined the We Are Open initiative in 2020, and its manifesto: *'Being open is a good thing. As open companies, we regard it as a fundamental corporate value that our employees and our partners are judged solely on the basis of their actions and their work performance, and without regard for their sex, age, sexual orientation, national or ethnic background, political convictions, physical abilities, or other characteristics.'*

[www.performinggender.eu/partner/sin-cultural-center/](http://www.performinggender.eu/partner/sin-cultural-center/)

---

### Department of the Arts- DAMSLab (University of Bologna)



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA  
DIPARTIMENTO DELLE ARTI



D A M S L A B

DAMSLab is a laboratory aimed at promoting culture at the urban level, designed and managed by the Department of the Arts of the **University of Bologna** to enhance projects and foster synergies that find in cultural and artistic production and participation the key factor for territorial growth. DAMSLab aims to facilitate the circulation of cultural and social capital and the development of active and creative cultural citizenship based on a shared sense of belonging to a culturally dynamic, open, and cohesive community.

By bringing different areas of knowledge into dialogue, DAMSLab activates synergies and collaborations with other departments, public institutions, the artistic field, cultural and creative industries, businesses, and civil society, favoring social outcomes in terms of participation and cultural mobilization of the urban fabric. DAMSLab adopts a collaborative and participatory method to develop original ideas and projects that enhance the whole variety of languages and cultural and artistic forms of production.

[www.performinggender.eu/partner/alma-mater-studiorum-university-of-bologna/](http://www.performinggender.eu/partner/alma-mater-studiorum-university-of-bologna/)

### The British Council



The British Council is the UK's international organization for cultural relations and educational opportunities. British Council supports peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding, and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide.

They do this through their work in arts and culture, education, and the English language. They work with people in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2021–22 we reached 650 million people.

[www.performinggender.eu/partner/the-british-council/](http://www.performinggender.eu/partner/the-british-council/)

## SECTION 2

The research  
conducted by  
the University  
of Bologna

# Chapter 1

## Key concepts and analytical frameworks

The understanding of the transformative role of a community-based artistic process is affected by **how we frame this role, through which categories and values**. Therefore, this chapter presents the **key concepts and analytical frameworks informing the project and research**. The research was action research (see the next chapter); thus, key concepts and frameworks, as well as analytical maps, presented in this chapter, particularly concerning the framing of the social value of art and audience development, were shared in different moments of the project, becoming part of an in-progress knowledge sharing process. Concerning the framing of the social value of art, it was shared at the beginning of the project, during the kick-off meeting,

and at the end of the final dissemination event at the Brussels Summit. The audience development, community-based art, and co-design were included in the “Report of the International Meeting Lab (April 2021),” where key concepts were discussed with all partners.

**These concepts and frameworks constitute key parts of an audience development model that arose during the PG-DIYS project, developed in dialogue with all the partnerships.**

In the current section, a theoretical perspective is shared. These concepts also guided the analysis of the implemented process, as it will be illustrated in the third and fourth sections of the handbook.

### 1.1.

#### **FRAMING THE SOCIAL VALUE OF THE ART: WELL-BEING, SUSTAINABILITY, SOCIAL COHESION, AND DEMOCRACY**

Our analytical framework of the social value of art (Paltrinieri 2022) focuses on these interconnected perspectives: the link between art, well-being, and sustainability and the link between art, social cohesion and democracy.

##### 1.1.1

#### **ART, WELL-BEING, AND SUSTAINABILITY**

The relationship between art and well-being has been investigated from different perspectives. In the '80s, mainly dedicated to measuring the economic impacts of the artistic and cultural sector, from the mid-90s, especially in Great Britain and the United States, an attempt was made to demonstrate cultural value by overcoming the reductionism of the single economic point of view (Matarasso 1997) towards the recognition of the role of culture in the fight against macro-social problems, such as exclusion and deviance. During that period, many experiences were promoted, such as the initiatives of the network “Arts in Health” in the United States and the program “Arts on Prescription” (1994) in the UK, which is based on the belief that participation in a creative activity can promote health and well-being and that it should be part of the broader category of social prescriptions that health workers and social workers can give to their patients. This approach to promoting well-being adopts a biopsychosocial approach. Coping and developing life skills are placed at the center of health-promoting perspective through the promo-

tion of empowerment and subjective well-being of individual social capital for combating inequalities in health and access to resources, accompanying active aging, and counteracting the psychophysical decline. It focuses on people’s resources and ability to create health.

Institutions such as the World Health Organization (WHO) have also promoted recognizing the relationship between art and well-being. In 2015, WHO launched the “Cultural Contexts of Health and Well-being Project” to contribute to creating a strategy for the European region to direct national healthcare policies towards a “Health in All Policies (HiAP)” approach. This led to a report published in November 2019 on the evidence of the role of the arts in improving well-being. Building on the WHO Report, the “Culture for Health” project curated a scoping review (2022) to map studies focusing on the links between culture and well-being; the study gives an account of many types of effects art-based methods can have both before ill health takes place (at the “prevention and promotion” stage) and after (at the “management and treatment” stage), underlying that arts and cultural approaches can have a role to play within the health and social care and policy. The “Culture for Health” project responds to the objective of the Preparatory Action – Bottom-Up Policy Development for Culture & Well-being in the EU and has the ambition to trigger a policy change at EU, regional, and local levels - bringing closer together the health, cultural and social policies. The attention to a systemic approach (Fulco 2022) in the promotion of health through arts has been significantly fostered,

also with an impact on the Italian and international debate, by the Cultural Welfare Center (CCW), born in Italy in 2020, which elaborated the concept of “cultural welfare.” Cultural welfare indicates an integrated model of promoting the well-being and health of individuals and communities through practices based on the visual, performing arts, and cultural heritage (Cicerchia, Rossi-Ghiglione and Seia 2020). A key aspect of this approach is the idea that the care of individuals depends on a systematic collaboration between professionals from different disciplines and, above all, an integration of purposes between the institutional systems of health and social policies and that of the arts and culture. We argue that the current debate on cultural welfare can be enriched by considering the well-being as the outcome of the social and cultural innovations that can promote capable territories and communities (Manzoli and Paltrinieri 2021). This understanding of well-being recognizes that many of the contradictions produced by global society have not been resolved; on the contrary, social inequalities have been reproduced and widened. Therefore, we should also interrogate the models of development as well as the concept of well-being we place at the basis of these models.

Overall, this vision of wellbeing is based on a **revisited concept of happiness** (Paltrinieri 2012; Sachs 2012), which goes beyond the idea of individual achievement of wellbeing (the outcome mostly of positional goods), towards an **intersubjective, relational foundation and collective well-being**, which puts concepts such as **relational goods** at the center, and therefore that of **community, collaboration, sharing, participation, proximity**, deriving from a shared form social responsibility (Davis 2011).

This broader understanding of well-being is tied to **social sustainability**, which recognizes **equity and social cohesion as an overall infrastructure for sustainable development**. Within this perspective, UNESCO (2019) has elaborated the “Culture 2030 indicators”, recognizing the role played by culture in the creation of this social infrastructure. By focusing on the link between culture and the SDGs, this work sheds light on three main aspects (Montalto 2021): culture as a **driver** for the construction of new imaginaries; culture as an **enabler**, accompanying change through the development of new knowledge, skills, and participation; cultural **infrastructures** and how they are distributed at territorial level.

—  
The double role  
of art and culture  
in promoting  
sustainability



Role of **culture** in  
**establishing the possibility of new and alternative meanings** and imaginaries which in turn can give rise to alternative practices: a **driver-guide for change**

On the other hand **culture** as a **field for building knowledge** and promoting greater social justice through forms of participation: **enabler**

### 1.1.2

#### ART, SOCIAL COHESION AND DEMOCRACY

In recent years, an increasing body of policy documents has underlined the link between art and social cohesion and more broadly, with democracy (Allegrini 2020, 2021, 2022). In 2018, the New European Agenda for Culture highlighted the role that cultural participation can play in fostering social cohesion by giving space to express cultural diversity and supporting the development of cultural capabilities. One of the key outcomes of the Agenda was the “Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022”, aimed at creating the opportunity to study the role of culture in citizenship and democracy. Among others, one of the topics was “Citizenship, values and democracy” (Priority B, Cohesion and Well-being), and one of the actions foreseen by the work plan has been the study requested by the EU Member States as part of the implementation of the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022. The outcome of the study is the recent Report “*Culture and Democracy: the evidence. How citizens’ participation in cultural activities enhances civic engagement, democracy, and social cohesion*”, independently commissioned by and authored for the European Commission (Hammonds, ECORYS, 2023). The report highlights how cultural participation can strengthen pro-social behaviors, civic engagement, and democracy. Summarizing the existing knowledge and the available international evidence on this topic through the review of academic and grey literature, the report contributes to examining the evidence base to help understand how and why the relationship between cultural participation and civic and democratic outcomes exists. It is important to note that this study also found that «The social and civic benefits of arts and cultural participation are not intrinsically tied to a specific

art form or practice [...]. However, stronger effects are found in more active forms of arts participation that encourage personal investment in the creative activity».

Within two main domains of civic benefits– **for individuals and communities –the report systematizes different types** of effects.

Among them, there are (Hammonds, ECORYS, 2023, p. 29-31):

#### Strong benefits for individuals

- **Cultural activities can inspire people of all ages and backgrounds.** They help widen individual perspectives and give voice to points of view and aspirations. They bring individuals into contact with various ideas and perspectives on the world around them. Such exposure offers people a greater diversity of options for social action and relationships and stimulates thinking in new ways.
- **Cultural and creative activities can support the development of personal and social skills and competencies that drive civic and democratic engagement,** such as personal awareness, confidence and self-esteem, communication skills, and social empathy, qualities that are essential for working democracies as they enable individuals to be more effective citizens. Contact with cultural heritage sites and museum items increases participants’ feelings of collective ownership of the cultural heritage and creates a feeling of belonging to a society based on common cultural legacies, historical experiences, and shared values

Community of Bologna  
dance workshop  
Ph: Bianca Chiarot



### Civic benefits for communities

- **Cultural activities deepen and broaden the social connections that underpin a resilient and cohesive society.** The strong emotional, creative, expressive, and collaborative dimensions of cultural activities create spaces for dialogue, community gathering, sharing and celebration, social interaction, and collaboration. By binding people from a wide range of backgrounds and ages together in shared experiences, cultural activities help build social capital, the glue that holds communities together; they help create trust, tolerance, and empathy for people from different backgrounds, which underpins social solidarity and cohesion. Cultural activities can also help people bridge social boundaries of race/ethnicity, religion, gender, age, nationality, and occupational status.
- **Cultural participation promotes social attachment to a group or community or a place by deepening social relationships.** For example, local cultural festivals can help to develop a sense of attachment and enhance local image and identity. Places with higher participation rates in arts activities have a stronger sense of community belonging.
- **Cultural engagement can play a key role in strategies for the inclusion of communities at risk of exclusion.** Cultural participation can combat social

alienation and segregation. Cultural activities empower individuals and communities by creating spaces and opportunities to express their personal and group identities and perspectives as a valued part of a broader and diverse cultural and social landscape that can reinforce belonging. They are a powerful means of communicating across language and cultural barriers and different social perspectives, including those of vulnerable populations such as women, refugees, migrants, ethnic and religious minorities, people with disabilities, or LGBTQIA+ communities.

- **Cultural and artistic activities can enable creative reflection about problems and fuel a broader political imagination.** Artists can help society examine itself by presenting and exploring different social perspectives, problems, and truths. Artists and creative activities can help challenge conventional wisdom, introduce different ways of thinking, and contest privileged narratives, authority, or power through different creative mediums. They can evoke reflection and enable citizens to confront different issues and concerns that might otherwise be hidden whilst also engaging people's imagination and emotions.

Those mentioned above social and civic benefits resonate a lot with the social impacts of the PG-DYIS project, as demonstrated through data presented in this handbook. From conceptual

Plenary meeting in  
Bruxelles among partners,  
November 2023



and analytical points of view, we provide insights concerning identity, sense of belonging, and community from a sociological perspective in the following paragraphs. Here, to better understand the link between art and democracy, we want to focus our attention on how we frame key related dimensions, which are the roots of many of the effects just described:

**access, cultural participation, and citizenship.**

Access and cultural participation can be ambivalent terms. Indeed, we should first make a distinction between a more passive form of “**access to cultural offer**” and “**access to cultural experience**” (Allegrini 2021, 2022). In the PG-DIYS project, this latter meaning of access has been assumed, also in line with the aim of Audience Development underlined by the EU Commission in the context of the Creative Europe program (Bollo, Da Milano, Gariboldi, Torch, 2017):

*“Audience development is a strategic, dynamic, and interactive process of making the arts widely accessible. It aims at engaging individuals and communities in experiencing, enjoying, participating in, and valuing the arts through various means available today for cultural operators, from digital tools to volunteering, from co-creation to partnerships.”*

The dimension of experience is also crucial to understanding how we frame cultural participation, an interactive meaning-making process **involving a symbolic and narrative dimension**. Possibly, at an intense level of involvement of individuals and communities, it becomes a **participation in knowledge production** (Allegrini 2020, 2022; Allegrini and Paltrinieri 2022) and in an “imaginative world picture-making” process (Papastergiadis 2012).

Cultural participation is connected with developing “**cultur-**

**al capabilities to aspire**” (Appadurai 2004; 2011). These capabilities determine the «possibility of re-appropriation of representations and the creation of alternative scenarios about how issues, categories, solutions are socially and discursively constructed. This process deeply intersects with a process of imagination that can set up a transformation of cultural and cognitive repertoires, questioning which types of representation are reproduced and opening up new meanings and actions. These capacities are not distributed evenly in the society due to social inequalities, and they are also strictly connected with the possibility of dissent» (Allegrini 2020, p. 128).

This interpretation of imagination has a profound political dimension (Rancière 2004). It is based on cosmopolitanism, «conceived not as a state that is comprised of fixed categories, but as the ongoing activity through which multiple identities communicate within an arena of mutual recognition» (Papastergiadis 2012, p.88).

This way of framing access and cultural participation also helps us reframe how we understand citizenship and the link between art and democracy.

Indeed, **citizenship**, far from a definition based on the “inclusion-exclusion” approach linked only to achieving legal status, becomes a practice enacted (Iannelli, Musarò 2017) by a collective development of cultural capabilities and imagination (Allegrini 2020, 2022). Cultural participation becomes a fundamental pillar for the construction of **cultural democracy** (Hadely 2021), which is based on the promotion of creativity (Paltrinieri Parmiggiani, Musarò, Moralli 2020) through the appropriation of the means of cultural expression and production, as well as the idea of culture as a place for the recognition of “otherness.” (Bonet, Négrier, 2011)

## 1.2.

### PERFORMING GENDER: INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES, PERFORMATIVITY, AND BODY PRACTICES

---

To raise awareness on gender issues through contemporary dance and audience engagement, convinced that culture promotes values such as human dignity, freedom, equality, and solidarity PG-DIYS refers to gender issues and contemporary dance through an intersectional perspective – focusing at the same time on more social and cultural themes such as inequality, ethnicity, class, age, disability, environment, economy. The intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991; Yuval-Davis 2006; Collins and Sirma 2018; Carastathis 2016) reveals that there are interlocking oppressions that go beyond a dichotomous understanding of the oppositional differences (Collins 1986) around different identity categories; thus, the intersectional framework provides a better understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, in human experience and especially of identities. It rejects binary thinking and introduces relationality (Collins and Sirma 2018). **Relational thinking** takes distances from dichotomies and introduces an **interconnected way of thinking**. In this sense, “relationality takes various forms within intersectionality and is found in terms such as ‘coalition,’ ‘dialog,’ ‘conversation,’ ‘interaction,’ and ‘transaction.’” This idea is central to this research, which analyzes the “coalition, dialog, interaction and transaction” intersected within the categories observed in this project: ethnicity, class, race, gender, and age. The intersectional approach helps us see some minimal particularities and characteristics of some social categories

through their intersections, which would be impossible without an intersectional analysis. As stated above in the introduction As already stated in the introduction paragraph of this section, as researchers, we propose a sociological interpretation to understand the transformative role of a community-based artistic process through a theoretical and methodological frame. In this project, as reported through narratives of project actors, the intersectional identities of dance makers and community members constitute one of the significant variables that affect the dynamics of relationships between different project actors and the working theme and methods. At the same time, the intersectional perspective offers a great opportunity to build that coalition and alliances waiting to be formed between different identity categories (Crenshaw 1991).

Strictly related to exploring gender issues from an intersectional perspective, there are two other vital concepts in the PG-DIYS project, **performativity**, and **body practices**. The performative dimension (Schechner 2002) of intersectional issues related to ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and LGBTQIA+ identities regards not only the role of the subject’s actions/interactions in determining their self-representations (Butler 1988) but also the role of the representations that a given society constructs and legitimizes in constructing the gaze on bodies and their subjectivities (D’Amico 2017), in line with identity studies (Elliot 2019). The social construction and



legitimation of bodies use norms and power, which is pervasive and operates at multiple societal levels throughout social relationships, institutions, and discourses (Foucault 1976) through performative acts (Butler 1990). In this perspective, the body is not a passive, pre-existing entity but is actively produced and constructed through various social and cultural practices. In Butler's analysis, it becomes a site where these performances take place, challenging the fixed and binary understanding of sex and gender. Body, during the process of this project and research, is considered a device of inquiry in creative practices, a "site of negotiation of meanings," and a "power generating knowledge, producing utterances, constructing subjects" (D'Amico 2019). The close link between identities, their performance, and power dynamics is demonstrated and analyzed in the section on the project actors' lived experiences.

The legitimation of identities and their performativity determine and are determined by the power that is (re)produced within the social relationships. The subjectivities that makeup part of these power dynamics embody them in an "active, circular, contended" way (Ghigi and Sassatelli, 2018). In this

process, the adjective "contended" represents the ambivalence of power, which at the same time offers a silver lining to break the silence and chain. As we will see, the community-building process through the practice of co-creation and working on themes such as community, solidarity, and intersectional identities immediately brought the reflection on the power dynamics within the community and the relations between different project actors. In this perspective, drawing out Butler's concept of performance, the challenge of dedicating specific time to activate a safe place where judgment is suspended, and community members feel free over time to express themselves freely through bodily practices and discourse becomes a performance itself. Trying to contend with the power dynamics imposed on certain identities and bodies and challenging them through bodily practices and narratives can contribute to the subversion of norms and power, empowering communities to break the silence, occupy nonwelcoming spaces, and dance without thinking of social norms that determine who/which is "normal" and not, and legitimated to be visible or not.

### 1.3.

#### DANCING IN YOUR SHOES: IDENTITY, BELONGINGS AND COMMUNITY

---

The project is composed of another part concerning "Dancing in your shoes," which recalls the **role of identities and one's placements in creating a sense of belonging, community, and spaces of solidarity**. The project departed from the idea that belonging implies a process of building a sense of identification with one's social, relational, and material environment (Miller 2003) or "of recognition-or misrecognition-of the self in the other" (Leach 2002, p. 287). It can be defined (May 2011) as a sense of ease with oneself and one's surroundings.

In this project, the notion of individual and collective identities was crucial because identity is about belonging, about what people have in common and what differentiates them from

others (Weeks 1990). From this perspective, community-building and belonging to it play a role in connecting individuals to society because identities are constructed in a relational process in interactions with other people and are about more abstract notions of collectively held social norms, values, and customs. Sense of belonging and identity are correlated and constitute an intersubjective experience that necessarily involves other people and affects community building. Being part of a group implies sharing some common traits that justify the existence of the group itself and, therefore, of its members. In this sense, what can be defined as collective identity embraces the perception of similarities and differences between one social group and another. The similarities and differences are

PG-DIYS Summer Camp  
in Bologna, 2022.  
Ph: Anna Kushnirenko



presented through functions of exchange inherent in the relationship between the members of a society. These similarities and differences become the tools for defining the “boundaries” between groups and define the basis for distinguishing them from the outside. Thus, identity is not only an individual perception or a personal matter, but it is related to an imaginary collective identity that supports protection efforts against the destruction of internal structures and organizations of the self and the community and their psychic, social, and spatial territories (Vertovec 1995; Morley 2001). The challenges posed by the project were to cross those boundaries, explore ways of building communities framed as a “singular-plural being” (Nancy 2001), and transform those boundaries into “thresholds” understood as an exploratory-creative space of encounter between inside and outside between us and the other.

From this perspective, away from “bureaucratic” interpretations (Know 2002), the community (Allegrini 2020, p.132) becomes «a political subject “that emerges through a process of dialogue and consensus formation rooted in specific historical moments and particular constellations of political and economic power” » (Kester 2004, p.150) and enhanced by different types of encounters that can develop different modalities of belonging (Allegrini and Paltrinieri 2022). We can refer to this type of community as an “interpretative community” (Walmsley, p. 236) engaged in meaning-making and imaginative processes or also as a “community of practice” (Wenger 1998). Complementary to this idea of community as a political subject is the concept of solidarity as an essential element of community building (Allegrini 2020), understood as a space of care (Chatzidakis et al. 2020) and as political solidarity (Chouliarakis 2013).

#### 1.4.

### FRAMING AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT: BEYOND THE RHETORIC OF PARTICIPATION

Audience Development is broadly seen as an approach aimed at placing the public at the center of everything the organization does and making the arts widely accessible. The European Commission has invested heavily in promoting cultural access through the Creative Europe project (2014-2020). An in-depth knowledge of audience development practices has been promoted within that framework. Several key aspects have been, therefore, systematized. First of all, different types of audiences have been categorized (Bollo, Da Milano, Gariboldi, Torch, 2017)<sup>1</sup>. These include:

- Audience **by habit**: people who habitually attend and/or participate in cultural activities. Different strategies, like audience education or taste cultivation, can increase and diversify content and attendance.
- Audience **by choice**: people who are not used to participating due to a lack of opportunities or inadequate financial resources.
- Audience **by surprise**: people who are hard to reach/indifferent/or even hostile who do not participate in any cultural activity for a complex range of reasons related to social exclusion factors, education, and accessibility.

This classification encompasses three main **aims**. The first aim is **widening**, which entails increasing audience numbers by attracting an audience with the same socio-demographic profile as the current audience and attracting new audiences. The second is **deepening**, which refers to enhancing the experience of the current audiences and/or encouraging them to discover more complex art forms. Finally, **diversifying** refers to engaging people with a different socio-demographic profile

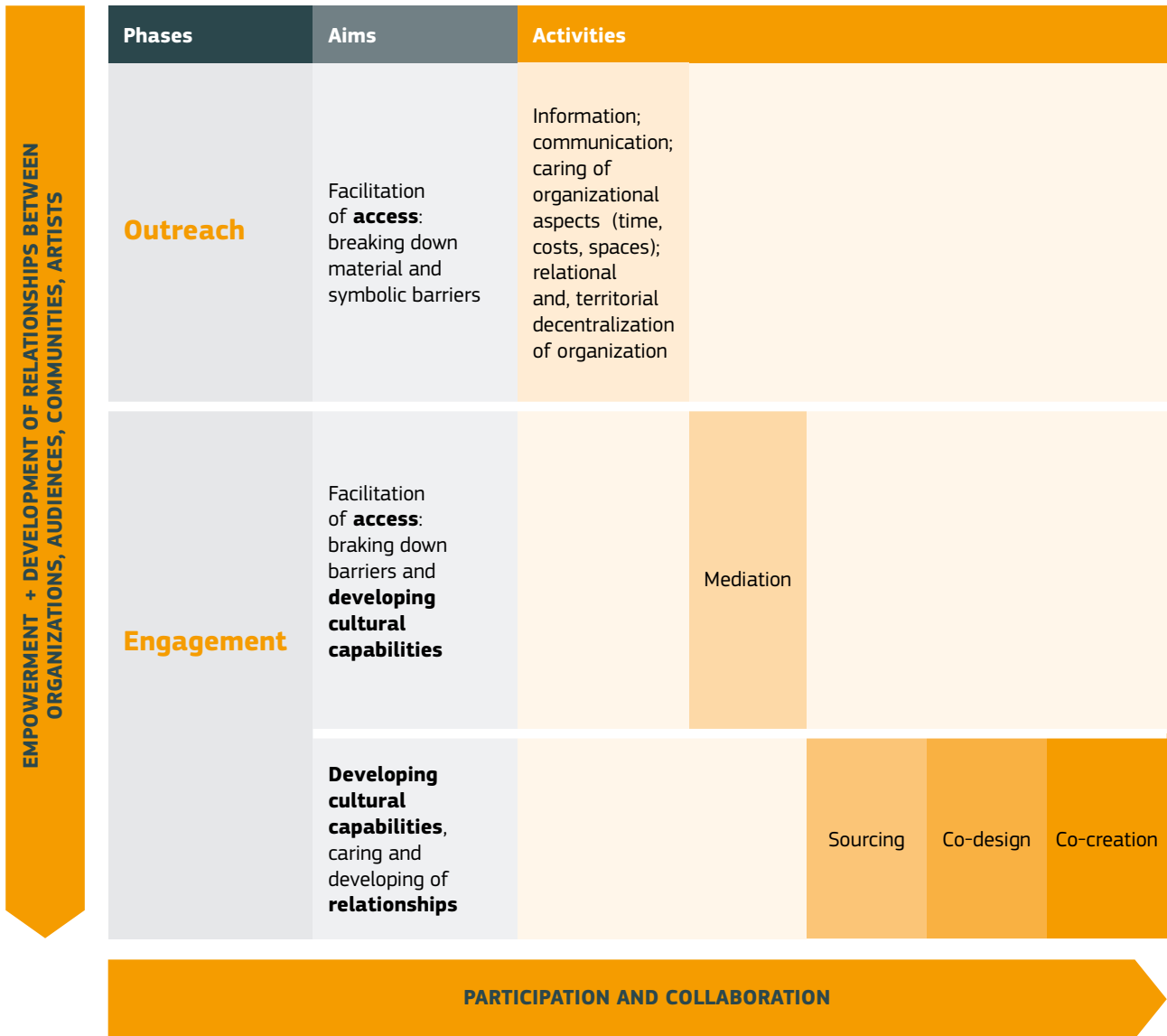
to the current audiences, including people without previous contact with the arts.

The literature widely defines audience development as constituted by two main steps (Bollo 2014). The first step is the **reach phase** (outreach), aimed at attracting existing or potential audiences, mainly through promotional activities that are designed to break down material barriers, as well as symbolic barriers, by working on the overall organization of the cultural offer, by focusing on information and communication, on times, costs, and venues of the offer. The second step is properly the **engage phase**, which aims to activate a significant context of fruition, of interaction, and of experiencing art through different activities that range from art education (e.g., encounters with the audiences before or after a performance), co-curating (e.g., boards consisting of young critics) and co-creating. Another approach to frame audience development is the **degree of involvement** of audiences<sup>2</sup>.

Based on the steps mentioned above regarding audience involvement, the literature on participation (Paltrinieri and Allegrini 2020) and taking into consideration the capability approach mentioned in the “Framing social value” paragraph, we provide the following analytical framework to map and position audience development activities. This elaboration (Allegrini 2022) looks at audience development practices as a part of a broader **“culture of engagement”** (Allegrini and Paltrinieri 2022), according to which audiences are «partners in a process of *exchange* that takes place in the cultural and artistic fields» (Walmsley 2019, p.10), informed by multiplicity of horizontal relationships – between cultural organizations, audiences, artists.

1 See also Kawashima (2000).

2 Brown and Novak-Leonard propose an audience development spectrum based on the distinction of two main phases. The first is defined as receptive and ranges from being a spectator in the strict sense of the word to creating an enabling environment for engagement through various activities, mainly in the field of art education. The second is the participative phase, which allows three different levels of “creative control”: curating, interpretative, and inventive. This idea of “laddering” the intensity of involvement is consolidated in the literature on participation. See: Arnstein (1969); Carpentier 2017; Jancovich and Bianchini (2013).



Source: Allegrini 2022, p. 73

This interpretation of the involvement of audiences intends to overcome the risk of a “paternalistic” and top down interpretation of audience development and embraces a relational interpretation, also critically addressing the issue of participation (Allegrini 2022).

**Outreach**

This step refers to a set of activities aimed at facilitating access to culture by breaking down material and symbolic barriers through, for example, communication, promotional activities, and taking care of the organization of the cultural activities considering issues such as the time, costs and spaces, and by analyzing which contexts of engagement and which networks can be promoted to facilitate the access. It includes not only information and communication activities but also activities that are functional to understand possible aims, needs, potential alliances, and partnerships.

## Engagement

This step refers to a set of practices that progressively aim to activate **relationships** while intensifying the dimension of agency and, therefore, of power. It includes the following type of activities:

### MEDIATION

An essential practice of engagement refers to *mediation*. Mediation in the art field and the context of audience engagement are usually framed as *mediation of art*. Activities of art education or co-curating activities mentioned above are part of this view. The attention is on the development of capabilities in codifying, de-codifying, and negotiating meanings and in the appropriation of aesthetic principles of artistic practice or performance.

### CROWDSOURCING

It refers to a consultation or in making a contribution as participants with ideas and creative contents to an already defined artistic product;

### CO-DESIGN

A greater intensity of the participatory dimension coincides with co-design, which implies the promotion of forms of collaboration in envisioning a project. It can be understood differently depending on the contexts in which it is promoted. If contextualized concerning the relationship between the organization and the territory, it involves work on developing networks and partnerships. We have seen in this regard how much the outreach phase can prepare the ground in this direction, also favoring a “decentralized” perspective of the cultural organization itself.

We can also place co-design within a collaborative process on the level of co-programming of artistic activities or co-curation when, unlike consultation activities, there is an upstream and not downstream involvement of the public, of communities, in artistic production processes.

Finally, it can be “episodic” or translated into a sedimented practice within cultural organizations and institutions. Co-design is a complex process based on a challenging question: how do you invest in your own projects/ideas while enhancing and investing in others? In fact, co-design should not be understood as a sum of activities/ideas but as a process of progressive integration between ideas, points of view, and visions, which allows the development of new and different

projects/solutions. Therefore, the challenge is an “integrative negotiation” which does not exclude conflict but considers it a creative resource for exploring different meanings and representations.

### CO-CREATION

The concept of co-creation, like that of participation, is actually a term used to describe different processes and, in this sense, presents a definitional complexity. Walmsley defines co-creation as:

*«a number of participatory processes and practices that open up any part of the creative process to audiences and the wider public; an umbrella term which encompasses aspects of collaboration, interaction, invention, value, meaning, and exchange between cultural producers and audiences or participants»* (Walmsley 2019, p. 170)

In this context and concerning the PG-DIYS project, we focus our attention on the processes of co-creation within artistic practices and, in particular, the performing arts, which refer to the principles of “participatory art” (Bishop 2011; Matarasso 1997, 2019), socially and also politically engaged art (Boal 1974), “relational art” (Bourriaud 1998), or art based on “dialogical aesthetics” (Kester 2005), but also “community-based” art.

Like co-design, also co-creation occurs within a set of challenges in practice. The main one regards the **relationship between the artists and the community and the power dynamics that characterizes this relationship** (Allegri 2020).

In this regard, in the literature (Gielen 2013) a distinction is proposed between an auto-relational and allo-relational community art to distinguish when the process is oriented to serve the identity of the artist or to serve the community and social change. Alternatively, there is another distinction which is about the difference between activating a context and providing content (Kester 2005).

As we will see in section 3, all of these issues were part of the partners’ reflection at the beginning of the project and were also part of the self-reflexivity of dancemakers, as our findings show, revealing a dynamic process based on negotiating and meaning-making process.

PG-DIYS Summer Camp  
in Bologna, 2022.  
Ph: Elisa D’Errico



# Chapter 2

## The evaluation methodology

### 2.1.

#### BETWEEN ACTION RESEARCH AND THE THEORY OF CHANGE: THE ROLE OF NARRATIVES

The research was based on a collaborative and participative approach to the entire research process in line with a **qualitative action research methodology**<sup>3</sup>.

This approach has been based on the following key dimensions:

1. Creating a space of reflexivity about the practices and social categories used by all the actors involved in the

project. This also includes a major awareness of the actors, such as organizations, dancemakers, communities, and researchers, about their roles in social transformation.

2. A mutual learning process that coincides with a co-production of knowledge

Action research is an **adaptive approach** that recursively combines reflection and action, as shown by the scheme below:



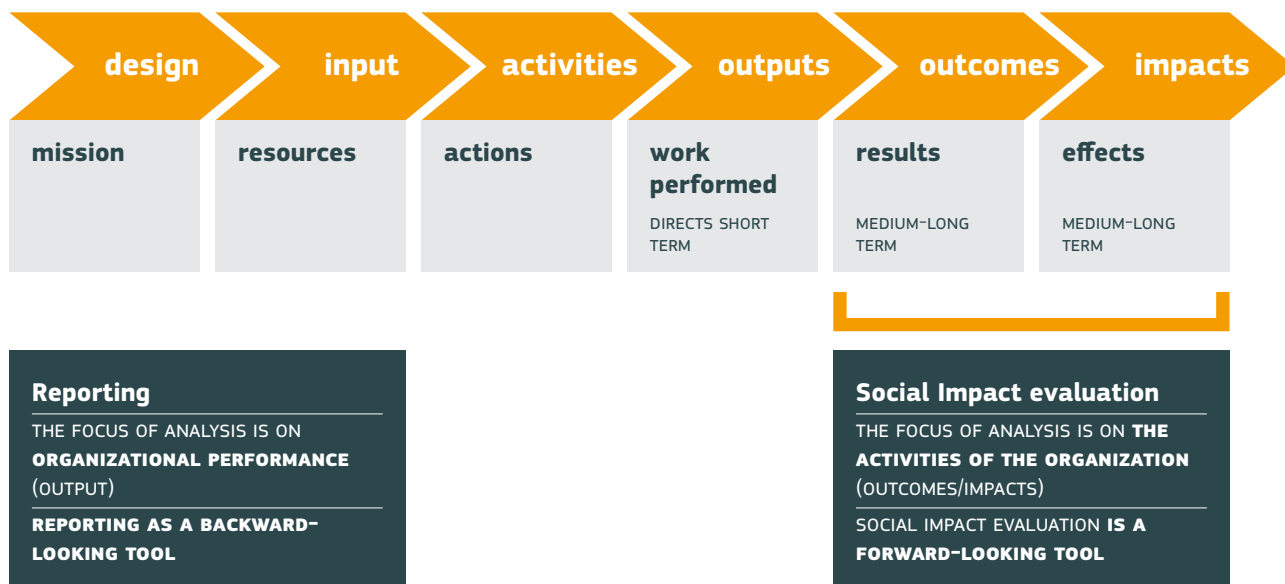
3 K. Lewin, "Action research and minority problems", *Journal of Social Issues*, 2,4, (1946): 34–46. In this context we can also refer to a Public Sociology practice: G. Allegrini, "Sociologia pubblica e democrazia partecipativa. Una proposta di analisi critica", *Quaderni di Teoria Sociale*, 1 (2019): 61–84. See also Hall (1996). For a review of action-research in the art field see Moralli (2020)

Within this framework, we implemented research on the transformative role of community-based dance practices by adopting an approach that sees impacts as the final level of a “results chain.”

Indeed, social impact can be defined as the **change** perceived by an individual or a group as a **result of experience** and **composed of the social added values (outcomes)** generated by the **implemented actions**.

More specifically, we have based our research on the “theory of change” methodology (TOC), which recognizes that impact is the result not of a linear chain but of a network of results (Bonaga 2020).

In the following paragraph, we explain the steps of research and tools we have used and the scale of changes we have adopted around some scenario of changes.



## 2.2. AN OVERVIEW OF PHASES AND TOOLS OF RESEARCH

The research, as seen in the graphic scheme below, is based on a mix of methods along different research phases and steps.

<b>Phase 1</b> Defining the context	SHARING OF INITIAL ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS (KICK OFF MEETING) INITIAL INTERVIEW: MEANINGS, PRACTICES AND AIMS OF AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT INTERNATIONAL MEETING LAB AROUND KEY ISSUES AND QUESTIONS MAPPING ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES
<b>Phase 2</b> Understanding the change	WORKING SESSIONS AROUND SCENARIOS OF CHANGES TOGETHER WITH AUDIENCE DEVELOPER OF EACH ORGANIZATION THE SCALE OF CHANGES TO COLLECT INPUT FOR THE ELABORATION OF INDICATORS
<b>Phase 3</b> Protocol construction	DEFINITION OF TOOLS, SOURCES, TIMELINE, WHO HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE DATA COLLECTION SHARING GENDER BENDER TO TEST IT, AND THEN SHARING OF GUIDELINES AND A GLOSSARY WITH ALL THE PARTNERS
<b>Phase 4</b> Collection of data	A SE OF TOOLS (LOGBOOK): PARTICIPANT REGISTER; CALENDAR AND ACTIVITY REGISTER FEEDBACK COLLECTION FOR PARTICIPANTS ABOUT; OBSERVATION GRID FOR DANCEMAKER AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPER FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEWS AROUND LIVED EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES, LEARNINGS AND CHANGES (DANCEMAKERS, COMMUNITIES; ARTISTIC DIRECTORS, AUDIENCE DEVELOPERS)
<b>Phase 5</b> Dissemination	FINAL HANDBOOK: THE PROCESS AND QUALITATIVE DATA TO INTERPRET THE PROCESS IMPLEMENTED SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT (COMPLEMENTARY QUANTITATIVE DATA)

## Phase 1: Defining the context

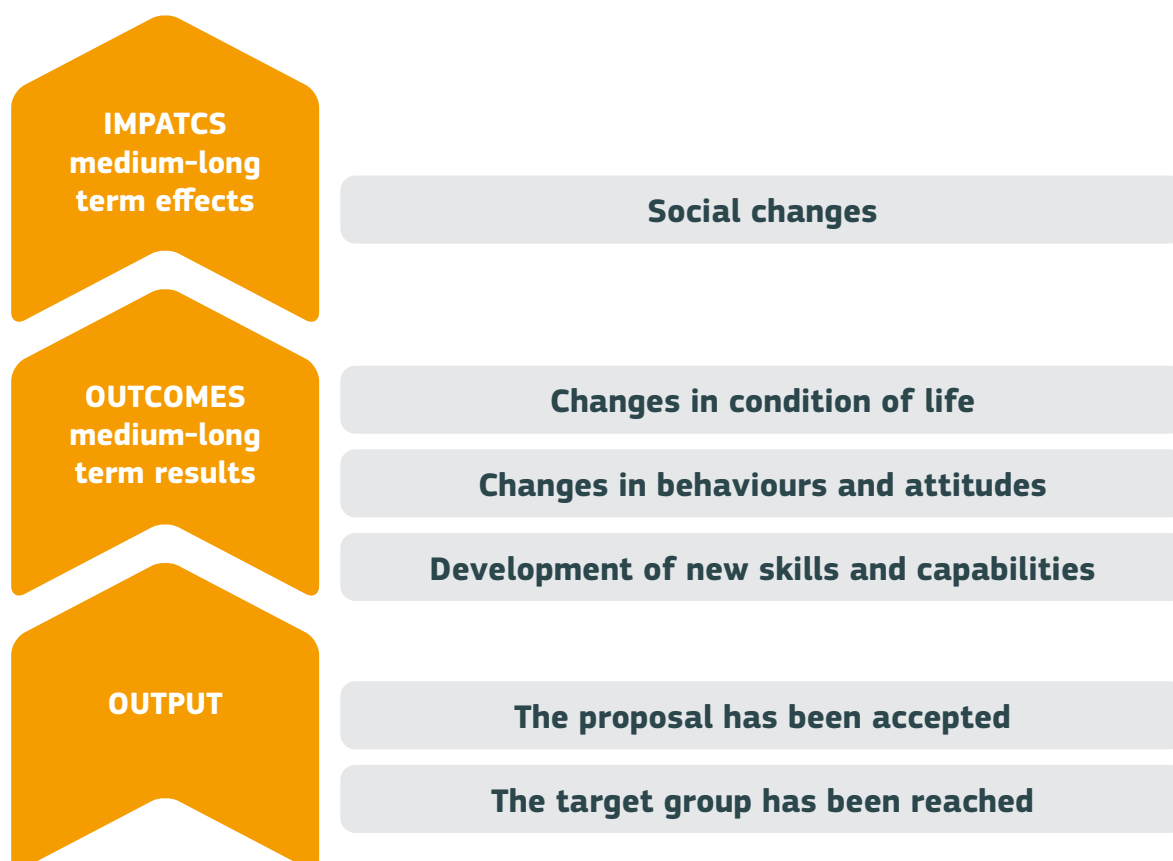
As a first step, we collected data to define the context of the project and its activities. In particular, according to the action research approach, in the first phase, we activated a space of collective reflection and sharing around ideas of audience development and practices already developed by partners, as well as questions and views around key dimensions of the project, mainly the dimension of “community” and “co-creation.” In the project’s first phase, data was collected through an online meet-and-greet session (“Niece to meet you” meetings) and interviews with each partner. We collected also materials from the organizations such as PowerPoint presentations, images, photos and videos. In April 2021, we have facilitated a session during the “International Meeting Lab” around three questions: *How to build a meaningful co-design and co-production process with communities and artists? Which are the gender issues we would like to work on with communities, and which challenges should we consider in practice? 3) Which kind of communities would we like to build through this project?* The session was conducted through a revised online version of World Café. The workshop had a double aim: to create a space for sharing experiences between the partners and to start with community engagement planning. Finally, a file with questions was sent to all partners to collect data about how each organization planned the organization and implementation of the community engagement (Mapping Engagement Activities

Sheet). Every organization supplied information regarding the communities, such as the types of communities they wanted to engage, the aim of reaching that type, the methods/tools/languages used for the engagement, the type of relationship they were considering building up within the triangle composed by the community, dance maker(s) and the audience developer; information on the (im)possibility to have dedicated spaces for the community dance practices; the organization/logistics/calendar of the planned community dance practices and eventual challenges/difficulties.

## Phase 2: Understanding the change

By mixing action research with the TOC evaluation methodology, a second step of research has been dedicated to defining scenarios of changes. The research team organized a series of online sessions using the Miro board to discuss with audience developers the scale of changes in particular regarding outputs, outcomes, and impacts- around four areas: the **communities** engaged, the **territory**, the **artists**, and the **cultural and creative production**, the **cultural organizations**.

We provide a description of each **scenario of change** that emerged<sup>4</sup>, reporting key dimensions of changes that have been recognized as crucial by the audience developer, re-worked by the researcher in relation to scale of changes. We focus particular attention on outcomes and impacts.



4 A detailed description of the changes and indicators is included in a dedicated report.





## S1 Target groups communities engaged

It refers to the whole process of empowering groups and communities engaged both at the group and personal levels.

Scale of change	Cluster	Expected change
<b>Development of new skills and capabilities</b>	Sharing	Personal identities and stories are shared
		Shared understanding and empathy between groups
		Building a safe space for the group of participants
	Awareness	Enabling gender awareness
		Participants awareness on embodied knowledge
	New skills	Learning from each other
		Learn and practice of debate
		Skills in dance language
	New links or relationships	Groups involved in the project know each other better
		Creating a new relationship between people by dancing together
		Connecting different LGBTQIA+ communities
	<b>Changes in behaviours</b>	Empowerment (individual and collective) and self confidence
Being able to present oneself as a dancer on stage		
A space of legitimacy to speak, dance and propose activities is enhanced		
Make people see everyone as a dancer even non-professional		
Empowerment and growth of self-esteem		
Get the group of participants familiar with new spaces (cultural or not)		
Self and mutual recognition		
Well-being	A broader feeling of well-being	
<b>Changes in living conditions</b>	Embedding of the experience	Generation of long-term dance practices, also in autonomy
		Making visible- participation of various gender identities in the local artistic scenes.
<b>Social change</b>	Fostering participation and citizenship	Enhance legitimacy of voices and actions at macro level -city level
		Spreading awareness about the richness of diversities
		Active role in society

## S2 Artists and creative production

Concerning the artists, it refers to developing skills in working with communities and co-creation. At a macro level, it refers to recognizing these skills (of the organization and artists) as specific and valued parts of the creative sector, thus influencing sustainability.

Concerning production, it refers to the whole process of rooting co-design and co-creation as part of creative production. At a macro level, it refers to the change in the cultural dance sector and policy level.

Scale of change	Cluster	Expected change
<b>Development of new skills and capabilities</b>	New skills	Artist are more skilled in working with different communities and gain experience in new ways of production Dance makers gained or further developed skills in co-designed process
	New links or relationships	Dance makers involved in the project know each other better New relationships between dance makers and between them and different communities has been achieved by dancing together
<b>Changes in behaviours</b>	Empowerment of dance makers	Develop confidence, awareness and motivation to engage in community-based dance practices
	Acknowledgment of community-dance practices	The dance we make represents individuals in the group Co-design and co-creation recognized as part of creative production
<b>Changes in living conditions</b>	Embedding of experience	Dance makers able to transpose co-creation capacity to their own team and/or to other contexts A deep and continuous dialogue among organizations, artists and communities is promoted
	Embedding of community-based production	New forms of participation and co-creation making production Increasing the quality of community production
<b>Social change</b>	Sustainability	Artists are recognized as specialist to work with different communities Policy makers recognize and give value the transformative role in society of co-creative practice and production Increase of awareness of cultural policy makers in relation to gender

## S3 Cultural organizations

It refers to the whole process of capacity building of the organization and artists. Concerning the organizations, it refers mainly to the sedimentation of a long-lasting approach in working with communities and in a new model of production; new ways of working together inside the organization between artistic director, audience developer, and project manager; news and embedded skills in audience development at the organizational level.

Scale of change	Cluster	Expected change
<b>Development of new skills and capabilities</b>	New skills	Audience developer has gained experience or further developed skills in working with community in the artistic field New models of productions for organizations
	New links or relationships	New relationships between dance makers and between them and different communities has been achieved by dancing together
<b>Changes in behaviours</b>	Organizational dynamics	New ways of working between artistic director, audience developer and project manager Transfer of other practices from other partners in the project to our group
<b>Changes in living conditions</b>	Embedding of experience	Sedimentation of approaches sensitive to working with communities Creation of a new and long-lasting approach to working with communities Increasing the quality of community production
<b>Social change</b>	Sustainability	Policy makers recognize and give value to the transformative role in society of co-creative practice and production Increase of awareness of cultural policy makers in relation to gender Increase of awareness of cultural policy makers in relation to gender

## S4 Territory and Local Networks

It refers to changes that happened at a broader territorial level in each organization's specific context of intervention, both in terms of relationship with audiences and other stakeholders and in terms of increasing cultural participation.

Scale of change	Cluster	Expected change
<b>Development of new skills and capabilities</b>	New skills	New learnings for audiences attending the festivals
	New links or relationships	New strategic partnerships have been developed New diverse audience are reached
		New experiences
<b>Changes in behaviours</b>	Dance spaces	New access by people in space dedicated to dance A broader understanding of art linked to society
<b>Changes in living conditions</b>	Art connected with society	New places not specifically dedicated to arts are used for dance practices
<b>Social change</b>	Fostering participation and Citizenship	Greater understanding of the value of dance and social cohesion Active participation in cultural and public life

### Phase 3: Protocol construction

The team of researchers elaborated a protocol composed of tools, sources of data, a timeline, and the definition of who is responsible for the data collection. The proposal was shared with the project coordinator to test it. The protocol was then shared through guidelines and a glossary with all the partners.

### Phase 4: Collection of data

In this phase, quantitative and qualitative data were collected for this handbook and the social impact report, which is mainly based on quantitative data. The data was collected to analyze the entire project process and to produce the impact assessment and was applied to community dance practices and the final production phase.

**Community dance practices** were those weekly community encounters during which community members had the chance to discuss the topics of the project, participate in dance workshops, and activate after-performance reflection moments. In addition to this, they spent time together and had conviviality moments. Thus, assessment of community dance practices was crucial for the research and was achieved through a logbook consisting of the toolkit for data collection and a protocol file where to upload the data collected by each organization during the workshop activities. The logbook was built following the scale of changes described above and was used to collect data on community dance practices during which the communities were consolidated (March 2022- June 2022).

The tool was composed of an attendance register, activities register, observation grid, and target group feedback form and allowed the organization to track the flow of workshop activities, participant attendance, themes and settings, and perceptions of workshop facilitators and participants. At the end of community dance practices and of the residencies, a series of focus groups were conducted: focus groups with the community members, focus groups (and interviews with those who could not take part in the focus groups) divided per role, with artistic directors, rooted and traveler dance makers, audience developers.

The focus groups and interviews have considered the scale of changes to understand the lived experiences, learnings, and changes to detect individual and collective change/transformation. The focus groups were also aimed at understanding the dynamics in the dance practices in terms of relationships and roles.

Concerning the focus groups with community members, they have been conducted by the audience developers, with the guidelines prepared by the research team. For different reasons, the research team did not conduct the focus groups with the community members: first of all, because of the trust issue, which is one of the main issues when it comes to conducting research through interviews and focus groups in the field. The trust relationship built between the audience developers and the community members was already consolidated, and the research team coming from another context could not have created that trust relationship as it was already built between community members and the audience developers. Giving audience developers the possibility to conduct focus groups is also part of the capacity-building activities to empower staff and develop their abilities. Another reason why the research team did not conduct the focus groups with the communities depended on the language barrier. The research team did not understand and speak many different languages of the project; not all the community members could speak English. The other focus groups were held online and conducted by the research team. The data collected through focus groups and interviews are presented under Section 4 of this handbook as part of the lived experiences.

### Production: Community show/ workshop production

The research team supplied an Excel file called "Production Assessment Tool" to each organization to keep track of the final production phase and to have detailed information regarding several issues such as the workshop calendar of the practices dedicated to final performance, information on the spaces and festivals where performances took place, methods used to invite community members to the final production phase, methods used for the audience and stakeholders enlargement in this phase, methods of communication, numbers of dance makers and other experts present during the production phase.

As stated in the introduction, the handbook focuses on the implemented process through qualitative data analysis, while a dedicated report on the social impact will present the elaboration of quantitative data.

The handbook provides an in-depth qualitative analysis to contribute to a "thick" description of the process experienced by different actors, able to make visible and readable dynamics, learnings, and changes. In the following paragraph, we explain why, in order to understand the transformative role of dance practices, we give space to this narrative dimension.

## 2.3.

### AN INSIGHT INTO THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH OF RESEARCH: THE ROLE OF NARRATIVES

---

In the PG: DYIS project, as already underlined, issues related to identities, roles, and sense of belonging to a community have been central. In social science studies, identities, individual or collective, are considered as also about self-recognition and representations found in the (self)-narratives. Hall (1996) claims that identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language, and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: how we have been represented and how that bears on how we represent ourselves. Identities are, therefore, constituted within, not outside representation. They arise from the “narrativization of the self” (Hall 1996, p.4). The “narrativization of the self” can also be understood as a social construction, constituted by both social reality and the subjects’ worlds of knowledge and experience, and is “constantly constructed and transformed within the dialectical relationship between life history knowledge and experiences and patterns presented by society” (Fischer-Rosenthal and Rosenthal 1997, p. 138).

The research methods - participant observation, interviews, and focus groups - have been adopted as qualitative methods to analyze self-representation and meanings attributed to the whole project process, which brought individual and collective transformation. In particular, the focus group technique was

aimed at revealing identities, roles, and a sense of belonging departing from the lived experiences of all components of this project: communities, dance makers, audience developers, and artistic directors.

In order to disclose representations on the topics of discussion, the focus group technique was also crucial to revealing the interaction between different cultural organizations through discussion and stimulating each participant’s reflective ability (Frisina 2010). Indeed, narrating one’s own experience related to the role and experiences within the project departing from a situated position and the interaction between different narratives gave space to a major awareness thanks to the collective confrontation.

Narratives were also at the center of the dance practices and final production on the stage, both using narrative as a text form to communicate events experienced by the self but also through the body practice conceived as a path for individual and collective self-representation.

Qualitative methods are therefore crucial to understanding both the lived experiences of the different actors of the PG-DIYS project and the trajectories of social transformations produced.

## 2.4.

### FINAL NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

---

To conclude this section, before presenting the implemented process and our findings in the next one, we want to share final notes concerning data collection methodological challenges and the mitigation process.

Being the unique academic partner of a large-scale Creative Europe, one of the biggest challenges for the research team has been the creation of a reciprocal understanding in terms of languages, categories, and experiences. Indeed, being a collaborative research, the aim was to create an environment for reciprocal learning. This meant investing time in knowing each other, rooting in a common language, and reviewing our questions when necessary, thanks to the stimulus we received from the partners. This critical exchange led to a rich debate and reflection about research activities.

As also stated in the introduction, this type of research has been challenging and empowering with its transformative impacts on us as researchers since it required a critical self-reflexivity on our power, positionality, and social and cultural frames within the research process and mutual recognition of the roles among the different actors. This project has also contributed to having a new understanding of the role of academic research inside collaborative and artistic-based processes. A second significant challenge has been tied to combining two factors: the large number of partners/project actors and the pandemic. The project started in the middle of the COVID emergency, so dance practices were rescheduled to another

phase of the project, and meetings that had to take place physically were held online.

In a community-based art project like PG-DIYS, physical distance during the global lockdown was a real challenge. Even if COVID slowed down at a certain point, the caution of keeping physical distance and wearing masks lasted longer. Also, there were differences among different countries regarding the COVID measures. For this reason, each partner had a different situation concerning the pandemic and the possibility of conducting activities in presence.

We had to adapt our research methodologies and the time scheduled initially for the data collection to identify a standard period of activities of dance practices.

In general, it was challenging to match the academic calendar of the research team for data collection - and the timeline of the project’s activity (dance practices and production) of the project. Another difficulty was, in part, about the compilation of data by the partners caused by the necessity to concentrate on a lot of research activities rescheduled because of the pandemic. All these aspects rendered it sometimes challenging to gather systematic and homogenous data.

However, we were to gain significant insights that allowed the creation of this handbook as a legacy of the project with its social impacts but also as a mitigation tool for the eventual challenges that this type of project could experience.



## SECTION 3

# Challenges and creative practices

# Chapter 1

## Mapping the context

As already stressed in the first section of the handbook, the project is composed of two parts: the exploration of the notion of gender **through performing arts and the building of communities**. These two pillars of the project are part of the broader aim of **developing and engaging audiences in the field of dance**.

To better understand the different experiences of each organization concerning these dimensions in the initial part of the project, we have collected data through interviews, materials such as PowerPoint presentations, images, and videos shared

by the organizations through online meetings dedicated to presenting each other.

Several key **dimensions and questions** emerged, influencing community engagement, dance practices, and production. These dimensions give an account of **the context in which the project has been implemented and constitute a “baseline” to understand the lived experiences and changes that occurred throughout the project**, which we will present in the next chapter.

### 1.1.

#### AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT AND ARTISTIC EXPLORATION OF GENDER ISSUES

---

Concerning gender issues, many different contexts characterize the partnership. We have identified three main areas of experience.

- Organizations for which **gender is already “embedded” in their activities**. This is the case of Gender Bender- Il Cassero LGBTQIA+ Center, City of Women, Norrlandsoperan.
- Organizations for which gender is not the main focus, but it is “specifically addressed” by the involved artist, as in the case of SÍN Arts Center, or by a previous project of Performing Gender, as in the case of Paso a 2, or through a Festival as for KLAP with “+ de genres” festival.
- Organizations for which the **artistic practices supported by the organization or projects directly implemented by them are related to an exploration of broader identity categories**, such as Yorkshire Dance, Boulevard Festival, and DansBrabant.

Within these different fields of experience, it has been essential to dedicate time to sharing ideas, questions, and views about how to work around gender issues through dance in a community-based project.

In interviews and conversations during the “Nice to meet you” meetings (see the paragraph on the methodology of research), two crucial issues emerged, defining an area of reflection for the implementation of the project.

The first one concerns **how much, in the project, the exploration of gender could resound as a “provocation”** due to the socio-political context of each country or because of the type of groups involved for which gender issues could be complex to work on explicitly.

One key open question that the partnership assumed as a “guiding” principle was **“How to combine provocation and**

**constructive approach”** or **“How to create a journey between these two poles”**? (“Nice to meet you” Meeting, December 2020- Hannah Robertshaw, Artistic Director, Yorkshire Dance/Leeds, UK)

Considering the heterogeneity of experiences mentioned above, a second complementary issue was about the possibility of experimenting **with different paths of dance practices and final productions: investigating “identity” and opening up questions on that through the body practices or exploring specific issues related to LGBTQIA+ identity**. These questions and issues are strictly connected to the co-design approach that informs the PG-DIYS project, as illustrated in the specific chapter on the project actors’ lived experiences. To give a first account specifically on the **“Performing Gender” first part of the project title from a co-design point of view**, we report what the coordinator of the project Gender Bender- Il Cassero LGBTQIA+ Center stressed in a meeting:

*“About gender, we have many meanings to explore through performing arts. In this sense, I don’t need to establish a common language about gender; I prefer to find different meanings and experiences and what meanings we want to work on with people. Taking a listening position, and I hope to be surprised!”* (“Nice to meet you” Meeting, December 2020, Daniele Del Pozzo, Artistic Director, Gender Bender Festival/Bologna, Italy)

In continuity with this idea, another organization underlines that it is important to give space to *“multiplicity of representations and awareness of the positions we have. Plurality and diversity, to create access with equity in representations, in the production of meanings”* (“Nice to meet you” Meeting, December 2020, Laureant, KLAP Maison Pour La Danse / Marseille, France)



## 1.2.

### AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT AND BUILDING COMMUNITIES

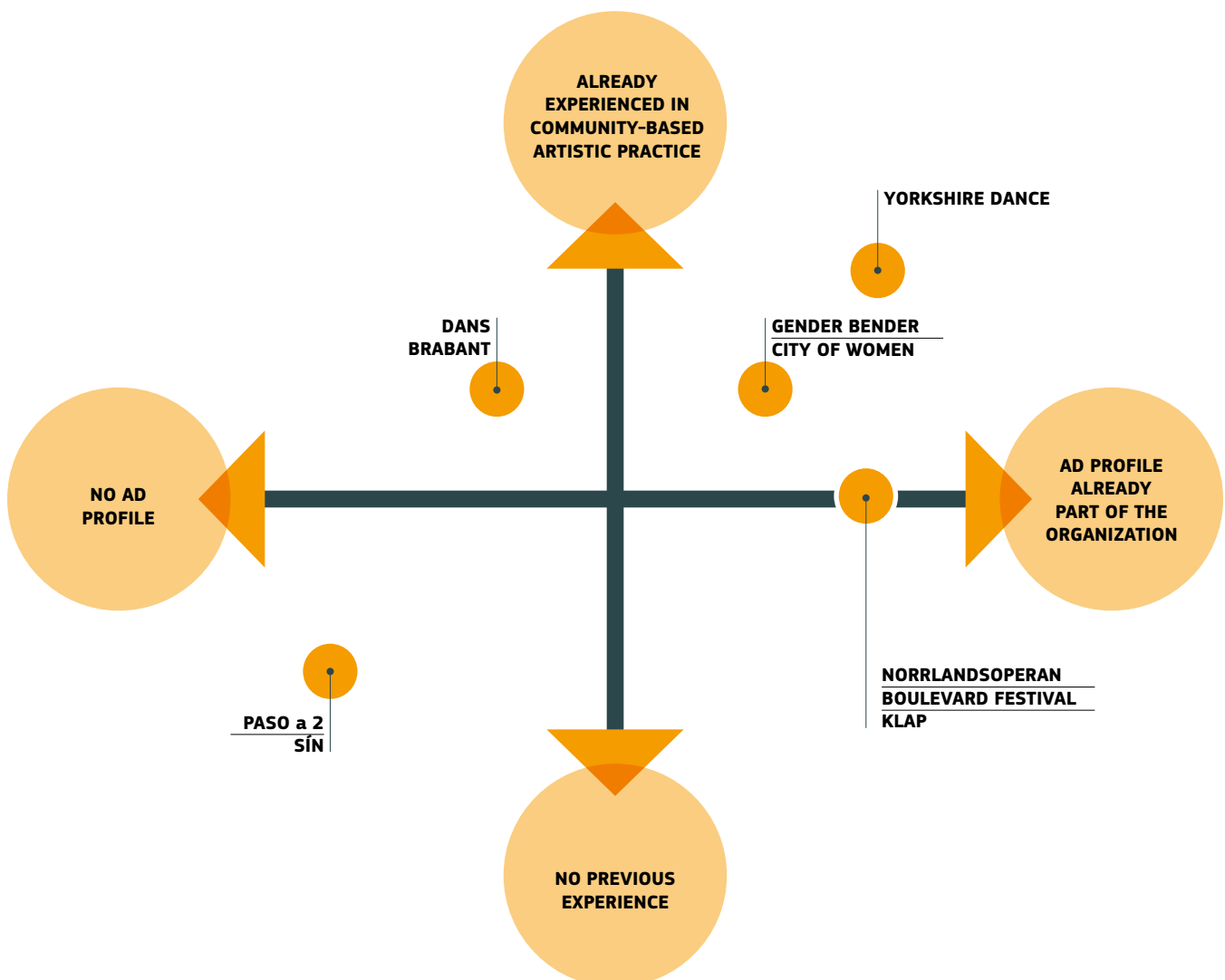
The partnership is characterized by **diverse experiences regarding audience development and working with the communities of non-professionals**. This **heterogeneity of contexts** is a crucial element of the project since it has been **an opportunity for exchange among partners**. As we have seen in the first section of the handbook, audience development can be composed of different types of activities with varying scales of intensity in terms of audience participation. Considering the “spectrum” of involvement, we can position most of the partnership’s activities in the “mediation” field, ranging from talks with audiences, developing projects with schools, or implementing dance workshops with a diverse community of non-professionals around specific topics. Differences are instead in terms of:

- **How much the organization has specific experience in engaging communities through dance practices or in specific community-based artistic practices**
- **The existence or not of a specific profile dedicated to fostering audience participation (with different intensity scales).**

Concerning this latter issue, it is essential to specify that we refer to this profile as **“audience developer.”** However, we should also underline that there is no precise definition of this profile in the literature. Indeed, one of the project’s aims was to consolidate this organizational profile. In the lived experiences chapter, the role of the audience developer will be unveiled through words and attributed meanings by the project actors who covered this role in the project.

In the scheme below, we present different scenarios through the intersections of the two variables mentioned above. In some cases, organizations already had both a specific audience developer profile and experiences in community-based artistic practices.

For instance, Yorkshire Dance has already developed diverse experiences in working with many communities within several projects. In the case of Gender Bender, the majority of experiences are related to projects implemented throughout the year or with the specific work of dance makers working with non-professionals during the days of the Gender Bender Festival around diverse issues, such as ageism or different abilities, addressing issues of “conformity” and normativity of bodies.



In the case of City of Women, participatory and community-based art is promoted with art projects with people from the local community, especially marginalized groups of women and from a feminist perspective.

In other cases, we have a more nuanced situation. These are organizations (Norrländoperan, Boulevard Festival, KLAP) that already have a dedicated profile to work on audience development but with less specific experience in engaging communities, or this is not a particular area of work for them. Another experience is the one of DansBrabant, which had a dedicated profile for communication but with a sensitive approach to engaging audiences. Even if the organization was already used to implement “audience groups” or workshops during the PG-DIYS project, DansBrabant, and Boulevard Theatre Festival shared the same audience developer. Concerning community-based work, the organization didn’t have specific expertise but a commitment to finding ways of connecting with people through constant sharing with dance makers about coping with social issues and the world around them.

Not all organizations had a dedicated person as an audience developer, even if they had already experience in audience development activities. Indeed, there are organizations for which the PG-DIYS represented the opportunity of having a dedicated profile of audience developer for the first time. This is the case of Paso a 2, and SÍN Arts Center, which have less experience in community-based work.

The scheme below provides a visualization of these different contexts departing from which the organizations started their community engagement process in PG-DIYS.

It is important to stress that even if the engagement of communities through dance practices was a novelty only for some organizations, working with them based on a participatory approach of co-design and co-creation constitutes a new experience brought by the project for all of them. The possibility of having, for the first time, a long period dedicated to deepening and developing ways of building communities through performing arts or learning how to implement them through a specific profile is one of the major innovations of the project.

# Chapter 2

## Engagement, community dance practices and production

The PG-DIYS project **has engaged and contributed to building different types of communities based on different engagement aims.** This heterogeneity has in itself a significant value in terms of improvement of cultural participation at the European level and in terms of plurality of **socio-cultural instances and creative practices enhanced by the project.**

In this chapter we provide an overview of **the implemented process**, focusing the attention on:

- The different **aims** and type of **communities engaged** by each partner
- Examples of **methods of engagement adopted throughout the project**
- The **performances** emerged as a result of the artistic exploration shared by the communities and the dance makers.

### 2.1.

#### AIMS AND TYPES OF COMMUNITY

---

From the beginning of the project, the aims of engagement, widening, deepening, or diversifying (see the paragraph on Framing Audience Development in section 2) and the type of community each organization wanted to reach out were part of initial reflections in meetings and particularly in a dedicated session during the “International Meeting Lab.”

From our analysis, the following variables emerged as crucial in thinking about how and with whom the partners wanted to engage:

- If engagement aimed to **widen their audiences, diversify them, and/or deepen their relationship.**
- If there was **already an acquaintanceship and relationship** between the community and organization, which might derive from previous collaborations throughout other projects, or if the community was new to the organization.
- If the **community has been built departing from specific “identity-based” groups** (mainly intersectional considering race, gender, age dimensions and sharing interests, and cultural or political instances) or has been built through engaging **people who do not express a specific identity group belonging.**

Even if these variables helped in planning the engagement, at the same time, in some cases, initial intentions changed, and the result is more nuanced and not easy to frame in fixed categories. Indeed, as we will see in the next paragraph, the engagement process was also based on investing time to experiment, test, or understand needs, possibilities, or criticalities linked to each organization’s specific context of intervention. The research team also shared a sheet to map the engagement process and activities as a tool to reflect on and track these dimensions. A process-based project such as PG-DIYS always foresees (unexpected) changes as part of self-reflexivity. In this part of the handbook, we provide this “journey” for each organization, starting from initial intentions and arriving at describing the composition of the communities engaged.

# Gender Bender Festival Bologna, Italy



Gender Bender Festival – Il Cassero LGBTIQ+ Center had the main aim of deepening the relationship with the already known LGBTIQ+ community while at the same time diversifying this community by trying to open it to other encounters and to reach people who did not have a previous relationship with the center, as stressed in the initial interview:

*“Putting communities that are very recognizable as LGBTIQ+ into dialogue with communities that we have never reached before [...] On the one hand, I would like it to be a project with a strong impact within the community of reference, but at the same time, it would drive it crazy to put it into dialogue, potentially conflictual, with those who are distant”*

(Initial interview, Daniele Del Pozzo, Artistic Director, Gender Bender Festival, Bologna/Italy)

With this intention of engaging new people in the organization, after a first open call, they wanted to experiment by bringing dance to the doorstep of very different realities, as explained in the paragraph on the “engagement methods,” to involve different people with different backgrounds, life experiences, interests, and to create “alliances” between different identity groups as the intersectional theory suggests.

*“We would like to reduce that distance during the journey, to ensure that the community that will be created during the journey becomes a community of intent rather than a community of identity [...] because with respect to identity dynamics, a community and an alliance based on the process would be created”*

(Initial interview, Mauro Meneghelli, Audience Developer, Gender Bender, Bologna/Italy)

Crowded Bodies,  
performance by Daniele  
Ninarello and the  
Community of Bologna.

June 18, 2023, Certosa  
cemetery of Bologna.  
Ph: M. Caprilli.





Crowded Bodies,  
performance by Daniele  
Ninarellò and the  
Community of Bologna.

June 18, 2023, Certosa  
cemetery of Bologna.  
Ph: M. Caprilli.

The **community** built for the PG-DIYS project, is composed of people from the territory of Bologna who are between 20 and 61 years old and interested in gender issues, performing arts, and dance practices, with and without dance experience.

The community was hosted during the dance practices in different locations, thanks to a network of organizations involved in the community-building process:

- Cantieri Meticci - an association from Bologna with solid experience with refugees and marginalized people, and they got in touch with them through the Salus Space project, which is dedicated to social inclusion and intercultural welfare.
- DAMSLab is a workshop for urban cultural enhancement, activated and managed by the Department of Arts of the University of Bologna.
- PraT – Ateliersi – Teatro del Baraccano – important cultural venues dedicated to music and performing arts in the metropolitan city of Bologna.

City of Women (CoW)  
Ljubljana



*“Our initial desire was to invite a diverse group of young participants with diverse experience related to specific issues (gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexuality) or interest in learning about modern dance and performance (prior knowledge was not required). In the end, we created an intergenerational community (17–50 years)”*

(Initial interview, City of Women, Ljubljana/Slovenia)

**The community** is composed of an intergenerational group (17–50 years old): Some have already participated in other City of Women projects, and some are new people. The community was gathered through an open call; no prior knowledge was required, but diverse experience related to specific issues (gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexuality) or interest in learning dance. Some have participated in other CoW projects, and some are new to CoW. They didn't reach out to a specific already existing community or a community that is identified as such from the outside.



Nobody whistles anymore, performance by Vita Osojnik and the Community of Ljubljana.

October 2023,  
Mesto Žensk, Ljubljana.  
Ph: N. Žgank

# SÍN Arts Center Budapest, Hungary



SÍN Arts Center, during the initial interview with the researcher, expressed some doubts from the organization side even though keeping the focus on the process:

*"We are new for PG-DIYS, and we don't have so much community work because we are more of a background organization and we had a dilemma: we see that everybody is doing a lot in recruiting communities, but it is difficult for us to start that without knowing the topic or the direction of that this workshop will have."*

*(Initial interview, SÍN Arts Center, Budapest/Hungary)*

Community of Budapest,  
dance workshop.





Community of Budapest, dance workshop.

“*Sin is located in between “Buda” and “pest,” with a lot of industries in a very ugly industrial area. There are residential houses under development. In the socialist period, this was the factory district. There are big warehouses, printing houses, and mechanics. It is not a very homely and friendly neighborhood. There are not many cafes and restaurants. It is “a sleeping district,” but we do have so nice to reach out to for the locals. This is the ambition [...] We are in discussion about top reach, engaging communities, and which ones the easiest way is to invite students of the university, young people, and those who would come to the workshop anyway. The first step is “reachable people.” Then we thought that it would be so nice to reach people that were not so obvious to reach. SÍN has this long desire to discover who the locals are, who is*

*the old woman next door: We have friends in Italy, but we don’t know who is next door. We don’t have “an open-door policy,” so we want to look at the possibilities, but we know that is a huge amount of work, especially in this COVID situation. We want to put these groups together, but to reach these people, you have to go there, you have to show your face, e-mail is not enough, you need personal discussion, and we don’t know if this can happen before June.”*

.....  
*(Initial interview, Anikó Rácz, Artistic Director, SÍN Arts Center, Budapest/Hungary)*

After this initial reflection and exploration of the field, in the end, they opted for an open call. Thus, community members had different backgrounds and experiences with movement or dance: the youngest member was 20 years old, and the oldest was 70. Some people had not known each other before, and most of them did not even know SÍN Arts Center.



KLAP Maison Pour La Danse  
Marseille, France



*“We are thinking of focussing on teenagers, mainly from the area because it is important for us to make them participate and come ... Well, it would be good to make them think about identity and gender [...] Since the beginning, we wanted to create a specific event dealing with gender issues but also sexual gender issues, but because of the district at KLAP, we considered as the first aim to create a connection with the neighborhood, meaning that it was not possible to go directly on that topic- just for you to know that some parents wanted to take out a child from the*

*school because the child went during the day at KLAP to see a show and there was women on stage and it was “hoo” not possible for them, as Muslim. So, it was a very hard friction at that time.”*

*(Initial interview, Mariette Travard, Audience Developer, KLAP Maison Pour La Danse, Marseilles/ France)*

After this initial reflection and exploration of the field, in the end, they built a mixed community composed of people from 7 to 77 years old and of every type of gender. If some of them were among the regular public attending shows and workshops, some have discovered KLAP coming for the first time for Dancing in Your Shoes.



Performing Gender - DIYS creation, performance by Arthur Perole and the Community of Marseille.

March 2023, Festival + De Genres, Marseille. Ph: A. Mellon

## Paso a 2 Madrid, Spain

*“From the organizational point of view, we have had an enormous number of relationships through all these years, and in terms of collaboration, we did. So, in one sense, we have an ongoing engagement with the dancemaker community and the performing art community, and then because we have worked with the Performing Gender project, we do have a relationship with other communities, for example, with the LGBTQIA+ community but it is not deepened, and I think part of that is because we don't have a space of our own. PG is the opportunity to grow our dance community. We have a deep relationship with the gender community, nonspecifically as a dance public. Our activity is very specific for the dance public, and now we have the opportunity*

*to grow and to deepen the public we have reached in the previous Performing Gender.”*

*(Paso a 2, Madrid, Spain)*

After this initial reflection and exploration of the field and the expressed intention to deepen and consolidate their community relationships in the end, the community was composed of people who came from different associations, as well as LGBTQIA+ community and other social activists, some from more formal structures, others, more informally organized, with a variety of ages ranging between 25 to 65 years of age. This group was rich in terms of gender diversity but also age, cultural diversity, etc.

The engagement has been based in particular on the involvement of some organizations:

- Association Kif-Kif – an organization for the defense and representation of LGBTQIA+ migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers in Spain.
- 26 de Diciembre Foundation – a non-profit entity created by, and in support of LGBTQIA+ elders.

How we occupy the body, performance by Javier Vaquero and Marina Santo and the Community of Madrid.

December 2023,  
Certamen Coreográfico,  
Madrid.  
Ph: J.C. Arévalo



Yorkshire Dance  
Leeds, UK

# YORKSHIRE DANCE

Yorkshire engaged **four different communities:**

- RJC Dance – a leading inclusive Black dance organization comprised of young people aged 13 -16 years.
- House of Flava – is a KiKi House by and for Trans, nonbinary, and GNC (gender non-conforming) PoC.
- Feel Good Factor is for women aged 50-85 years from the Afro Caribbean Community.
- Space2 – adults from one of the most disadvantaged communities in Leeds.

All communities come from the same geographical area of Leeds: Chapeltown and Harehills. The area is home to many Black and Asian families and is very diverse in terms of age. Yorkshire Dance has partnered with RJC Dance and Space2, but they built a new engagement with House of Flava and Feel Good Factor; thus, most participants were new to the organization.

The four groups gathered together in the **Company of People**, which has also been opened more widely to participants from other Yorkshire Dance projects:

*"I think this is a good example of the shift in the organization in trying to put together really exciting professional dance artists and communities within the same context which is exactly what we want to do with Company of People and PG-DIYS, in terms of festival series this is different, but the ethos of let's bring people from all walks of life together to find their common and share experience through dance and straightening a bond of the relationship with the artform and with each other and the artists that are encapsulated in Encounter Festival."*

*(Initial Interview, Hanna Robertshaw, Artistic Director, Yorkshire Dance, Leeds/UK).*

Epic Everyday,  
performance by TC  
Howard and the  
Community of Leeds.

November 2023,  
Gender Bender Festival,  
Bologna.  
Ph: M. Caprilli.



# Boulevard Festival 's-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands



*"We wish to start working with people with roots in the former Dutch East-Indies and The Moluccas. The 'Dutch-Indo's' do often not so much feel part of a community but have mixed ('integrated') a lot with the total population. The Moluccans have strong feelings of community. We even have Moluccan quarters in the Netherlands, where only Moluccans can rent houses (this is policy). Moluccans and Dutch-Indo's often look at each other with much (inherited) suspicion. We plan to involve inhabitants of the city we work in ('s-Hertogenbosch or Den Bosch), or relatives/ friends from outside, with a background in the former East-Indies and The Moluccas".*

*(Boulevard Theater Festival, Retrieved from the "Mapping Engagement Activities" Sheet)*

After this initial reflection and exploration of the field and the expressed intention to deepen and consolidate their community relationships with the Moluccan diaspora, with which they already had a chance to collaborate, the Boulevard Theater Festival involved people from the Moluccan diaspora to the PG-DIYS project. The community was joined by people from in and around the city of 's-Hertogenbosch. They came from first- or second-generation immigrants with roots in the former Dutch East-Indies and The Moluccas (a former Dutch colony). Some of the group members were already familiar with the festival. They met in a series of meetings to co-design a program at the festival in 2020 around the 75th commemoration of the Japanese capitulation and liberation of the Dutch East Indies on 15 August 1945. The Boulevard Theater Festival organization used the snowball technique to extend the invitation into the broader diaspora network. Thus, they mainly reached new people from the Moluccan diaspora, different from those who had already collaborated in the previous editions of the Boulevard Theater Festival, even though they were from the same ethnic diaspora community.

But first we are going to eat, performance by Jija Sohn and the Community of 's Hertogenbosch.

August 2023, Theaterfestival Boulevard, 's Hertogenbosch. Ph: J.Philipse



*“At the beginning of COVID-19, we entered this new building, and we said we want really to get rooted here, and to connect with the people around us, and see what is possible with dance, to use dance to connect with communities around us. So, we haven’t developed yet, but for us, that’s starting from the artistic practices of the people we mentioned to reach out to the real local communities. And this is the research we want to do in the coming years”.*

*(Initial Interview, Wim van Stam , General Manager, DansBrabant, Tilburg/The Netherlands)*

After this initial reflection and exploration of the field and the expressed intention to widen their community relationships, they decided to work with a community of women with shoe sizes 37,5, like the shoe size of the dance maker. The choice of departing from the shoes of the dance maker also gives information on the methods used by the organization, according to which the starting point is the artists and the artistic practice, and then comes the engagement of the community, while some other organizations were focused already on some groups they wanted to work.

The initial community was formed by women of Tilburg with shoe sizes of 37,5 and aged between 35 and 70. Under the name ‘37.5 community Tilburg,’ this developed over the months from a community of 19 women to the current core of 9 women.

DansBrabant focused on the more challenging areas of the city. To reach out to these women, they collaborated with different networks and social organizations:

- Feniks – Center for Emancipation;
- MST – Social support center;
- Ronde Tafel Huis – Intercultural meeting center and different community centers.

Residu(e), what we leave behind, performance by Nikita Maheshwary and the Community of Tilburg.

October 2023,  
Mesto Zensk, Ljubljana.  
Ph: N. Žgank



Norrlandsoperan  
Umeå, Sweden



“We want to reach out...We have a suburb with “people houses,” which are cultural houses-meeting points,” there is also a library, and they board for these buildings, and there are 4 people part of this board, and they are working with young people, they can decide what they want to do, how to fill the building, and we were talking with 3 of these members of this board and our wish is to involve them in PG-DIYS and we will work with the organization for people coming from different countries – it can be immigrants, or students, or teachers at university but also Swedish people. We are also going to cooperate with a group called “30 plus,” and people over 60, and we are also thinking of a study group that we started in

April, which is a study association that also involves the ballet academy. We want first to work with each one so they can feel “safe.”... Maybe some of them we can mix from the beginning, at some activities. The idea is to start to create the different groups, and then when it will come to the production in the final phase, we would like to mix”.

.....  
(Initial interview, Birgit Berndt, Artistic Director, Norrlandsoperan, Umeå/ Sweden)

After this initial reflection, exploration of the field, and the expressed intention to widen their community relationships, they created a community. Its members came from networks for people looking for new friends, but also seniors interested in culture, as well as young people from the LGBTQIA+ community. Also, anyone with an interest in identity issues and dance has been involved.



Vingel, performance by Sindri Runudde and the Community of Umeå.

December 2023, Certamen Coreográfico, Madrid.  
Ph: J.C. Arévalo

## 2.2.

### CO-DESIGN, ISSUES AND PRACTICES

As described in the second section, audience engagement is a process based on two main steps –outreach and engagement– each one composed of different types of activities that can foster an increasing degree of involvement of audiences. In the PG: DYS project, co-design and co-creation (or production) informed all the project and the implement-

ed activities. Therefore, during the project, the partnership dedicated time to reflect on issues concerning community engagement and final co-production with them particularly in the “International Meeting Lab”. In this paragraph, we provide an overview of issues that emerged, and examples of practices implemented during the project.



---

## A. Creating an environment of engagement

The preparation of the terrain is crucial to create an environment of engagement. This step includes activities ranging from information to activities aiming at understanding needs and opportunities and the creation of alliances. Several important issues emerged and have been discussed by the partnership. The first one was about **invitation** and **language**. Indeed, invitation is considered as **“where the co-design starts”** (International Meeting Lab). Three main related questions were underlined: **How explicit are we about the topic of gender/intersectionality and emancipation? Do we use the word “dance” or “movement”? How can we communicate the idea that there is no need for skills to participate?**

A common ground of the partnership has been the idea of stressing the dimension of **creativity, making together**, and the **openness** of the process. At the same time, **the specificity of the intervention context** was stressed as crucial. An example was the issue of “dancing in your shoes”: in some cases, it was seen as a **privilege**.

The preparation of material to invite - online and offline - and the various activities implemented to engage the communities were developed considering these issues.

Partners dedicated time in **meetings with local stakeholders that helped reach “target communities” and create a network that can make more rooted activities in the territories and** the long-term perspectives. **Laboratories (as a “test”)** with communities were implemented to give the community the **possibility to experience** the dance practices concretely and to **understand which type of structure of the dance practices could be the best suitable in a local context to encounter the needs of the communities**.

The variables, such as the level of acquaintanceship between the organization and the community, the different aims of engagement, and the type of community to be reached, described in the previous paragraph, shaped the invitation and how the partners properly started engaging the communities. For instance, DansBrabant (Tilburg/The Netherlands) wanted to work with women of different ages, classes, cultures, and ethnicities they did not know before the project. Indeed, the outreach activities were addressed to get to know them through one-by-one **walking sessions** with the rooted dance maker Nikita Maheshwari, by exploring their relation to the city of Tilburg, as she explains with these words:

.....  
*“This project is called 37.5, and it has a funny story behind it. 37.5 is my shoe size, and my desire was to walk with women who share the same shoe size and literally see the city or understand the city from their point of view or by walking in their shoes. We started this project last year with the idea of building a community in Tilburg of women and visibilizing different stories of women of different age groups, of different class, cultures and ethnicities. It really started with the idea of walking with different women in their own neighborhoods to understand how they relate to the city, what kind of belonging do they have to the city, and how much at home do they feel. It also comes from a personal urgency of understanding what public space can mean or what a city can mean to different people”.*  
.....

However, not all of the organizations aimed to work with new communities/audiences, but some of them, such as City of Women (Ljubljana, Slovenia), Norrlandsoperan (Umea, Sweden), and Boulevard Theater Festival (‘s-Hertogenbosch/Den Bosch The Netherlands) aimed at working with already known communities to their organizations, not necessarily with the exact same people they worked with before but through **snowball technique departing from those already known communities**.

Boulevard Theater Festival organizational team e-mailed the inhabitants of the city (‘s-Hertogenbosch/Den Bosch) Indos/ Moluccas with a background in the former East Indies who volunteered for the Boulevard Theater Festival in 2019-2020, asking them the contacts from the Moluccan diaspora:

.....  
*“We are choosing our words careful and need to be aware of the sensibilities that are there in both groups, so we decided to take our program-maker colleague along during the first community-building meetings, who has a background in the Former Dutch-Indies and therefore embodies knowledge that is so relevant in this process”*  
.....

*(Boulevard Theater Festival, Retrieved from the “Mapping Engagement Activities” Sheet).*

For organizations such as Gender Bender -Il Cassero LGBTQIA+ Center, for which the desire was to both deepen the relationship with the already known LGBTQIA+ community. At the same time, they initially wanted to diversify this community by trying to open it to other encounters with different communities through initial laboratories implemented in very different parts of the city. These explorations were important to start to **experiment and understand possibilities, challenges, and limits**: *“Our desire is to work in the spaces where they live instead of inviting people to experiment dance practices with dancemakers in places that are not their everyday places”* (Gender Bender Festival, Retrieved from the “Mapping Engagement Activities” Sheet).

Gender Bender organized dance workshops with the rooted artist Simona Bertozzi and the traveler artist Daniele Ninarello in different spaces such as the MET- a cultural space managed by “Cantieri Meticci”, a theater company and cultural association working with people both with migrant background and not; “Salus Space”, a multifunctional living center, which accommodates a community, who share a common living space, arts and crafts workshops, a theater, a study center with co-working spaces, an emporium, a farmer’s market, vegetable gardens, and a food court; and DAMSLab, an urban cultural enhancement laboratory, activated and managed by the Department of the Arts of the University of Bologna (one of the partners of the PG-DIYS), which aims to promote projects and foster synergies that identify cultural and artistic production and participation as a key factor of territorial growth.



---

## B. Co-design approach and the involvement of the dancemakers

Another **crucial part of the co-design approach** was related to the **involvement of artists in the PG-DIYS project**. In relation to this aspect, several issues emerged from the beginning of the project as a part of an important **self-reflexivity of the partnership**. Indeed, as we will also illustrate in the paragraph dedicated to lived experiences, the involvement of the artists can impact the community's building and the co-creation of the process.

The first discussion point regarded the **involvement phase of the dance makers to the project**:

“At what point do we invite artists?  
Before starting the practice?”  
“Should artists be invited into the mapping/focus group workshops?”  
“Should we ask the artists to participate in mapping the community?”

.....  
(Retrieved from the International Meeting Lab Report, April 2021).

Cornering practices, all the partners had in mind those questions and were committed to a co-design process with the dance makers. For instance, the above-mentioned initial workshops implemented by Gender Bender were part of a co-design meeting with the dance makers to share ideas:

“We wanted both dancemakers - Simona Bertozzi as the rooted one and Daniele Ninarello as the travelling one - to be present and active from the very beginning with us on every decision taken regarding the type of community, what specific people and places, and how to activate the project. In fact, we wanted to establish a horizontal relationship on processes and desires and a shared responsibility on the decisions to be taken”

.....  
(Gender Bender, Retrieved from the “Mapping Engagement Activities” Sheet).

The same idea was stressed by Yorkshire Dance:

“We are fully embracing the co-production model by working in a triangulated way across Yorkshire Dance, Community Partners, and Artists. This work is taking place before we even begin to work with communities. In August and September, artists will begin co-leading the four community groups through a series of 6 tester sessions and a block of 10 weeks of delivery. This will be their time to begin to learn about each community and their needs and also an opportunity to explore, create and play with ideas around gender”

.....  
(Yorkshire Dance, Retrieved from the “Mapping Engagement Activities” Sheet)

A second key issue was about the **background of the dance makers** in relation to community-based practices. During the International Meeting Lab, key aspects and questions were put on the table regarding:

- The importance of a **balance between skills in working with the community** and the **artistic practice itself** or between being **artistically interested in the theme versus the capacity to work with the community**.
- The issue of risk: **“What risk do we take if they do not have that co-creation/community practice, in case that experience is an unpleasant/off-putting one?”**.

Many different choices have been made throughout the project, depending again on the aims of engagement and the type of communities.

For instance, in the case of SIN, a rooted community artist with an in-depth facilitatory practice and experience background was involved and always present when other artists came to provide other artistic proposals, with expertise in deconstructing gender roles, also with the intention of *“building a community of artists on the base of lived experience”* (Retrieved from the International Meeting Lab Report, April 2021).

The issue of dance makers' background as will be extensively shown in the next paragraph, is also related to positionalities, depending on their **intersectional, professional, and political identities**. For instance, in the case of Paso a 2, Madrid/Spain, the rooted artist Marina Santo and rooted/traveler artist Javier Vaquero are activists and were already connected with some communities, so they had a crucial role in community engagement besides their dance maker role.

During this first part of the project, co-design and community-based work were explored also from the point of view of the **relationship between the artist and the community**.

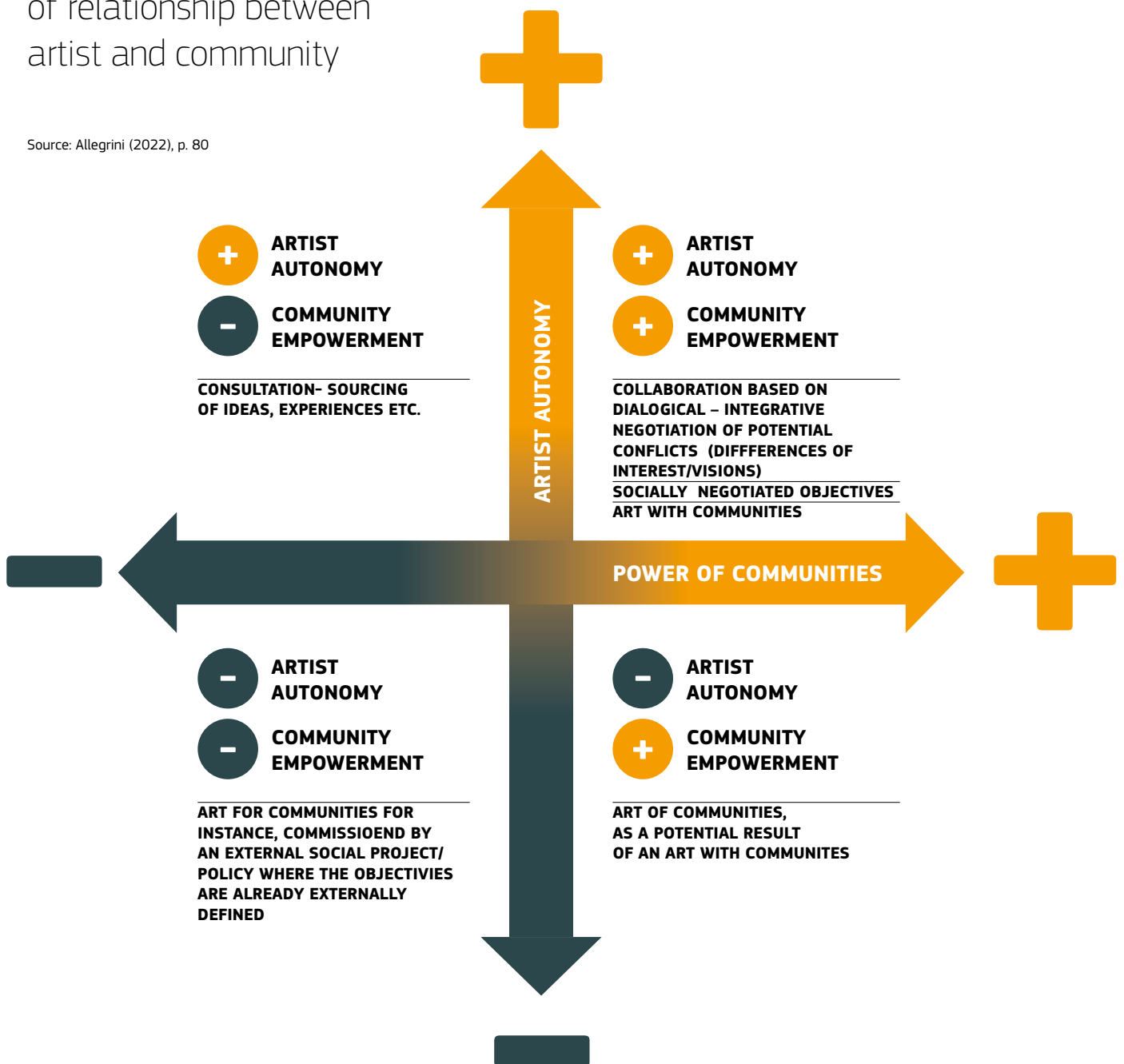
A first stressed issue was, in line also with the definition already provided in the second section, the **awareness of differences between co-design and co-creation**: Co-design can be defined as a “collaboratively planning and shaping the whole activity from the start,” while co-creation as “collaboration to explore during the creative practice (the studio practice) and make the things.”

A second issue was raised on the awareness of the challenges of co-design and co-creation. Related to this issue, the dimension of the **values** informing co-design and co-creation and the **transparency of these values** were part of the debate. In particular, about the difference between involving in clear structure or leaving the communities to influence that structure, since there is “a difference between evaluating the structure and influencing the process”. While at the same time could be necessary to find a **balance between giving space and giving framework**. These issues are related to the *dialogical aesthetic*, recalled in the second section, based on the difference between activating a context and providing a content (Kester 2005). This dialogical practice also defines a **challenging field of encounter between the identity of the artist and the power of the community and the purpose of social change**.

From this point of view in the International Meeting Lab a challenging question has been posed: “How much are we ready to run the ‘risk’ of co-creation?”, having in mind that a radical principle of co-creation should be respected: “Nothing for us without us”.

## Different kind of relationship between artist and community

Source: Allegrini (2022), p. 80



A map of different combination of autonomy and collaboration in the relationship between artist and community (Allegrini 2022, p. 80)<sup>1</sup>.

The map takes into consideration both the scale of intensity of participation (see section 2) and the dynamic between the artist and the community. It also stresses the fundamental

**difference between art *for* community and art *with* the community, based on the principle mentioned before, “nothing for us without us,” at the same tracing a possible direction - a long-term effect - of empowerment, thus increasing autonomy toward an art of community.** PG-DIYS engaged the organizations, the dance makers and

<sup>1</sup> A first draft of this map has been shared in the Report of International Meeting Lab and then published: Allegrini (2022) “Partecipazione e innovazione culturale a impatto sociale” in Paltrinieri R. (a cura di), *Il Valore sociale della cultura*, FancoAngeli, Milano.

communities in exploring the first scenario, which is the most challenging one, recognizing that *“in collaboration there can be autonomy!”* (International Meeting Lab). It was also important for the partnership to share the idea that even if the project had the aim of building and empowering communities (a social change purpose), **this path is shaped by an artistic journey**, assuming art as a language and as a way of engaging communities in a kind of “world picture-making process” mentioned in the second section:

*“Why do we need an artist as opposed to a teacher? We need the world view (developed in the mind of the artists) and the artistic language (that an artist has developed). The artists need to use their tools to generate with the group - also taking the group on an artistic journey” (International Meeting Lab, Report, April 2021).*

Finally, strictly connected with this approach of co-design and co-creation, the idea itself of community was discussed at the beginning of the project. As shown in the previous paragraph, different communities have been engaged, following different aims of engagement and starting from different groups. Within this multiplicity of experiences, the partnership often shared the idea that the project aimed to contribute to building communities based on a “shared will” (International Meeting Lab), communities that “recognizes the intentions through the doing together” (Field notes, co-design meeting, Gender Bender) thus “a community that is in the way of becoming a community”, constructing in this way “cultural instances and relations” (Field notes, co-design meeting with Gender Bender and the dance makers Simona Bertozzi and Daniele Ninarello).

---

## C. Co-design: the role of the Audience Developer

The audience developer has played a key role in the project. And the project, as already stressed, intended to reinforce this role within the organizations, specifically in community-based work. In the following chapter, we will illustrate the profile of the audience developer and what is expected from this figure, which has been explored thanks to the project. From the very beginning the audience developers felt the necessity of talking about their role and “identity” and of sharing experiences during the project. In the International Meeting Lab working sessions, key words and perspectives emerged to define a common field of

practice. The word **“mediator”** has been the most important to describe their role. Concerning the aims of this role, the most mentioned ones were to “create curiosity and trustful spaces”, and curiosity has been seen as *“curiosity to get to know different communities, without having the attitude to give them voice since they already have voice. Not to behave as decision-makers or apply a hierarchical perspective in the process”*. And also, *“create other opportunities for the community to **increase their connections**, thus fostering a process of **empowerment**”*.

---

## D. The role of space

Another issue, discussed in the beginning of the project and experimented in different ways during the project is the space dimension, which is indeed an important variable in the process because it affects the community’s engagement and involvement in the project and the relationships between the community members and the organization. PG-DIYS project showed that owning a space where to welcome the community for the workshops, events, and conviviality moments helps to keep the relationships alive more easily with less effort and less participation in some cases from the organizations’ side since having a dedicated space facilitates some logistical issues. However, the lack of space can be transformed into an opportunity to create new encounters in other places and spaces with the potential to engage with different communities and build new relationships. This can allow

organizations to expand their artistic practice and influence new territories while also empowering community members through access to new places and communities to which they did not have access. Therefore spaces, can have an impact in creating sense of belonging and thus in fostering cultural participation.

All of the issues reported here are crucial to plan a co-design process, however we should also consider that relational dynamics cannot always be foreseen since they involve power dynamics, identity issues, positionalities, hierarchies, emotions and bodies. We conclude this overview with the speech, held at the final Brussels Summit at the European Parliament, of the artistic director of Paso a 2, which sheds light on the complexity and the potentialities of co-design and co-creation.

**“Co-design as artistic process.**

**What is co-design and why do we need it?”**

**Speech by Laura Kumin**

**(Artistic Director, Paso a 2/Spain),**

**PG-DIYS Brussels Summit, Panel on “The cultural and civic value of using arts to engage with questions of gender, sexuality, and marginalized communities”, 15/11/2023**

Good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of our artists, our teams and our communities. When we put this project together, we were sure of the tools that we were proposing. Co-design, along with dance, was fundamental. But what exactly is it and how do we use it in such a variety of contexts? After 3 years we are still finding out. We are still learning.

Co-design is more than artistic collaboration. It does not mean that no decisions are made and that things just gradually fall into place. Co-design thinks about where we are coming from and where we might go. Co-design is WE and not US for THEM. This is an important lesson for all of us.

Co-design means sharing responsibility. It means taking the time to reflect together.

Co-design is an active and activating tool. It requires us to be responsive and agile. It commits us to being articulate and to reading each other. It is slippery, it awakens all kinds of new questions about hierarchies in cultural organizations and creative practices. It opens us up to constant questioning. Who are we all? What are our needs, what tools do we already have and what new tools are required? What have we accomplished and what does that mean for us all? What is the next step? What are we doing right? What are we doing wrong? And how do we address that?

Going forward, whether it is on a personal or collective basis, is implicit in co-design.

It is time-consuming. It’s not easy and it can be scary because it takes us into unknown territories. It makes us think about what we have been doing, what it means to us, and why.

But it ultimately results in commitment that goes far beyond habitual models of cultural projects. It deepens layers of meaning and opens new and unexpected possibilities and challenges. Not all of them can be controlled, and that can be a good thing.

We all need to be shaken up a bit.

Co-design has special requirements. It means constant evaluation. We work to find ways to listen to each other better, not only when speaking, but when moving together. In this way, dance is a great facilitator for co-design. The kind of attunement that comes with moving together influences the way we listen to each other.

This quality of good listening, of striving to be in tune with each other puts the emphasis on what we can achieve together rather than on whose ideas get more time or resources.

It means that we are all active participants. We take risks together. We support each other. We take care of each other.

It also puts an emphasis on how the community reaches consensus and makes space for all members to be seen and heard.

When we make decision-making a conscious, shared practice, a group of participants starts to become a community.

In *Performing Gender: Dancing in Your Shoes*, the dancemakers aren’t here to make a work FOR community members. They are here to share practices, to be keen, sensitive observers of what happens within the community. Empowerment is such an overused term, but this project has generated a sense of capability and visibility for many of our community members along with the confidence that we will take care of each other. Artistic processes are risky. What better way to take a creative risk than in the company of fellow community members, everyone invested in making a safer space and expanding that safer space outside the physical practice.

Co-design generates a sense of true investment. Community members matter, and the artistic process matters too. It is also a new experience for us, and it means rethinking our roles. All of this takes time to develop. We are deeply appreciative of the time frame built into this project.

After three years of practice, we can affirm that co-design is a powerful way to create shared experience and a sense of true investment in artistic practices, in communities and in organizations. It has become more important and more relevant to our way of working, not just within this project, but in all our work as an organization. It has been a game-changer for us.

*Performing Gender: Dancing in Your Shoes* was always a good project on paper, but co-design left us space to flesh it out in the doing and made it so much more than we imagined it could be.

Co-design moves us, and it makes us move. It is an ongoing process that challenges and nourishes us.

It awakens potential and provides it with generosity and respect.

It’s complex, demanding and inspiring. It means more work, but the work is more joyful and has a longer-lasting effect. It makes small revolutions that evolve into big transformations. So, who needs co-design? We did, although we didn’t know it, and we do, and I would propose that in the long run, as policy-makers committed to positive change, so do you.

Thank you.

## 2.3. THE PERFORMANCES

---

From January 2023 to May 2023, project actors have been involved in the production period after the end of the co-design process of creative workshops. The result has been the creation of eight performances and one workshop, which had a first moment of visibility within both festivals and events organized by the partners in a tour of the project. Indeed, each partner hosted the production of other communities in their festival. The production phase was entirely co-created, including the selection of the performance topic, music, costumes, scenery. The engagement of community members in the final co-production took place after a long period of community dance practices composed of outreach sessions, constant and frequent dance workshops based on both physical and theoretical training on the reflections around the PG-DIYS project's initial themes such as gender, identities, community building, solidarity. As mentioned in the introduction section of this handbook, there are eight final performances, one final workshop, and 198 officially registered workshops (without counting non-registered, unofficial gatherings between community members and dance makers) dedicated to the final production. This section provides information on the title and description of each co-designed performance and workshop between the community members and dance makers.

### Gender Bender

---

#### Performance title

##### **Crowded Bodies**

Show by the community of Bologna and traveler dance maker **Daniele Ninarello**

#### Performance description

A dance performance resulting from a shared creation workshop between choreographer Daniele Ninarello and the Bologna community of the European project Performing Gender - Dancing In Your Shoes, composed of people of different ages, with and without dance experience. A live-collage in which, through movement, each performer generously expresses their individuality. An intimate quest to connect one's own self to that of those around us, moved by mutual trust and the desire for closeness, acceptance, unity, understanding.

### City of Women

---

#### Performance title

##### **Nobody whistles anymore**

Show by Ljubljana Community and dance makers: **Vita Osojnik** and **Brina Klampfer**

#### Performance description

"Nobody Whistles Anymore" is a performance created as part of the international project Performing Gender. The intergenerational community that has trained and formed itself over a three-year creative period has completed its final phase with theatre director Brina Klampfer Merčnik and choreographer Vita Osojnik. The central theme of all participating countries was the question of how to perform gender. A group from Slovenia, with participants aged 27 to 74, explored the theme of performing gender in different ways: in the form of workshops, conversations, home-

work tasks, improvisations and through dance. They explored the common movement of an intergenerational group and tried to focus on what intrigues us all, regardless of gender and age. The result is an author-based performance, a collage of scenes and of our reflections on the given theme. This performance has already been on tour in Sweden (Umea), England (Leeds). They have also run a workshop in the Netherlands ('Hertogensbosch).

### SÍN Art Center

---

#### Workshop title

##### **Pomegranade Research Group/Club and our journey**

They did not have a performance or open sharing. They had several open hub events where the group/community shared their way of working together, the co-creation and the co-design of the workshop-series itself.

### KLAP Maison pour la danse

---

#### Performance title

##### **Dancing in your shoes**

Show by Marseille Community and dance makers:

**Arthur Perole** and **Anne Rehbinder**

#### Performance description

An international cooperation project supported by the European Union's Creative Europe program, Dancing in your shoes is centered on the issue of audience development. The project aims to build new forms of artistic practice in dance and the performing arts through the active involvement of local communities in different countries. For two seasons, artists Anne Rehbinder & Arthur Perole, in the company of dancer Luc Bénéard, will set in motion a group of forty participants from Marseille, through a series of workshops.

The final form of this long-term encounter opens the curtain on the Festival + DE GENRES with great meaning.

### Paso a 2

---

#### Performance title

##### **On How We Occupy the Body**

Show by Madrid Community and dance makers:

**Javier Vaquero** and **Marina Santo**

#### Performance description

We are in process. We are in the process of understanding what it means to share and show ourselves. We are in the process of understanding how to open something as intimate as our collective body. We have no idea what will happen, but we know that we have dug deep within ourselves, always dancing. We know that we have shared a long experience in time, where the center is the body. And now we have the challenge of condensing all that history into a few movements." Movement is a talisman, an amulet. So, in this performance, still in progress, we want to give you that amulet full of stories, pierced by dissidence in its broadest sense. A dance, a ballet, fingernails, Salsa, skin, layers, memories, a Samba, a party, great joy, and all the power.



## Yorkshire Dance

---

### Performance title

#### **Epic stories of the everyday**

Show by the Company of People and traveling dance maker

**TC Howard** with support from rooted dance artists **Kate Cox, Izzy Brittain** and **Bakani Pick Up**.

### Performance Description

We are breathing deeper, holding one another ever more lightly with a deepened strength and bravery to trust. The new work is an evolution of our togetherness. We are guided by the invisible bonds that connect us; bonds born out of curiosity and play and freedom to be 'other'. We are an unlikely and beautiful mixed community of ages, cultures and identities; the new work will play homage to this and our on-going journey of what it is to redefine being together.

We will look to our boundaries, at what contains us and what brings us to the edge of ourselves. At what connects us to one another, the world around us and enables a sense of belonging. We will see how the generations and wisdoms of ages find unexpected joy and meaning, autonomy and self-hood by being together. How established relationships too, can still surprise and amuse in uncharted waters.

We will question the performativity of our identity and how we learn our roles. Be both the watcher and the observed, have the gaze upon us and our gaze on others; be watched while watching and watch the watchers. We will dare to be seen, be silent and be heard.

We follow in the footsteps of the company's previous work, where the epic stories of our everyday lives are at the heart of the process, expanding and contracting from intimate detail to the epic and monumental. In this vein we are looking to the symbols, metaphors and composition of Renaissance art. Finding within the humour, pride and ownership of who we are and how we live; elevating and displaying the content of our own 'everyday' culture, literature and history to the grandeur of high art.

### Presentations

Encounters Festival UK, Boulevard Theater Festival The Netherlands, Gender Bender Festival, Italy

## Boulevard Festival

---

### Performance title

#### **But First, We are going to eat**

Show by Community of 's-Hertogenbosch and dance maker, **Jija Sohn**

### Performance Description:

Eight people are searching for the ways and the words to share their stories and find collective voice. Connected by their Former Dutch East Indies and Moluccan roots, but different in how they express themselves, the performers reflect on their experiences as a minority in the Netherlands. Both fragmented and united, they overcome silence to create a new understanding with each other and their audience.

But First, We are going to Eat put food at the center of the community. The audience is invited to taste some of the food cooked live during the performance.

## Norrlandsoperan

---

### Performance title

#### **Vingel (Swedish)**

#### **In English: Wobble - Love yourself for being off balance**

Show by Umeå community and dance maker **Sindri Runudde**

### Performance Description

Can we practice our empathy through dance?

Have we underestimated the creative potential of imbalance? For just over two years, people in eight European cities have participated in the European community and audience development project Performing Gender – Dancing in your shoes, of which Norrlandsoperan is the only Scandinavian party. They have approached life and art through workshops with professional choreographers and discovered the range of their expressiveness. They have explored questions of identity, listened intensely with their hearts and opened up to each other in movement.

In a confidential collaboration with choreographer Sindri Runudde and composer Marta Forsberg, Umeborn explores the power and creativity in moments of imbalance. Vingel reminds us to listen curiously, inwardly and outwardly, and to take advantage of the charged moment, here and now.

## SECTION 4

Collective

learnings:

voices of the

people involved



# Chapter 1

## Community dance practices and production: the lived experiences, challenges and changes

In this chapter, we present our findings concerning the community-building process, learnings, and significant changes recognized by all the involved actors, achieved through dance practices, workshops, conviviality and socializing, and deep reflection moments during and outside the workshops.

As already stressed previously, in our research, two key dimensions have been explored and then analyzed through narratives: the role of (multiple) identities and one's positioning in creating a sense of belonging, community, and spaces of solidarity, as well as the role of dance practice, as a bodily ex-

perience, in creating communities and in achieving new skills, knowledge, in changing behaviors and living conditions (see the scale of changes presented in the chapter dedicated to the methodology).

Within this perspective, many issues emerged and have been systematized under key categories for each group of actors – communities, dance makers, audience developers, artistic directors – and are presented in this chapter under the broader category of “the lived experiences.”

### 1.1.

#### THE COMMUNITIES

---

The constant sharing process implemented in PG-DIYS appears to be characterized by many different dynamics and transformative effects.

In particular, the lived experiences of the communities are significantly related to the following main fields of experiences, recognized by the communities as also resulting in key learnings and changes:

- The exploration of multiple identities, around gender, ethnic and inter-generational issues, through body practices and the achievement of self-awareness
- The body experiences and its effects in terms of deconstruction of identities and empowerment
- The possibility of sharing memory and (his)stories through «self-representation» and its powerful effects
- The role of trust, care, safe space, and conviviality as pillars for community building and a sense of belonging
- A broader feeling of personal and collective empowerment in and out the community

#### 1.1.1

##### MULTIPLE IDENTITIES: ETHNIC, GENDER, AND INTER-GENERATIONAL DIMENSIONS

Identities have been explored, bodily and discursively, in dynamic and intersectional ways. The specific composition of the community in terms of gender, ethnicity, and age influenced the co-creation of the dance practices, issues discussed, and the final production. The awareness around the body, untold stories, and veiled identities, ethnic and gender, has been recognized by the community members as individual and collective empowerment.

The intersectional (gender, race, ethnicity, class, age) composition of the communities and the specific historical events constituted important elements on how people approached the project.

---

## Ethnic dimension

For example, the legacy of the colonial past of the Moluccan diaspora (Indonesia), the former colony of the Netherlands, had a major influence on the dance practices and the final production where the community members of DenBosch (Boulevard Theater Festival) wanted to tell the stories of their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents who left their native soil to build a new life in The Netherlands. In the account of one of the community members of DenBosch (The Netherlands), the awareness of her ethnic identity and its transmission to her daughter became clearer, and the lived experience through the project is stated as one of the experiences that raised her awareness of her ethnic identity. For the DenBosch community, sharing their collective story related to their colonial past had an awareness-raising effect, which has been recognized as empowering by the community members.

.....  
*"Before I did not talk to my daughter about my identity, I took her to Molokan and Indonesia, but we never talked about it while the blood runs through her veins [...]. I became more aware, but I wonder if this experience or other experiences helped".*

.....  
*(Community member, Boulevard Theater Festival, DenBosch/ The Netherlands)*

Most community members reported the intersectional dimensions of the identities. In the account below, a different ethnic identity is recognized by the other members of the community based on a linguistic difference, which the community member has overcome through new learnings on gender issues on which the Umea community worked (through the Drag workshop and the costume workshop) that has been stated as new learnings which almost compensate for the lack of her dance identity and her different ethnic identity.

.....  
*"I don't have a dance identity, but I am reminded of my identity because I speak differently (known by others as "the Finnish" as I come from Finland originally). I have now learned new expressions instead. Learned more about male, female".*

.....  
*(Community member, Norrlandsoperan, Umea/Sweden)*

---

## Gender dimension

The gender dimension is always present in social life. For the project, the gender dimension was in the background, as the title suggests. Depending on the intersectional compositions of the communities in some communities, discussion around gender was more explicit; meanwhile, it was more challenging in some communities due to the political climate. Another challenge was combining dance practices based on bodily movements with the debate around gender, which needed words, and translating these words into dance practices was not always easy and direct. An article written by dance maker Gergo Farkas (SÍN Arts Centre-Budapest/Hungary) and published on the website of the project offers a deep understanding of this challenge.

.....  
***"Using dance to open up the body for discussion around gender"***

***Blog post by Gergo Farkas (dance maker, SÍN Arts Centre/Hungary)  
(Retrieved from the website of PG-DIYS project, 07/06/2023)***

.....  
*On the 2nd of April 2023, the Pomegranate Club Research Group closed its second season in Budapest's SÍN Arts Centre with an open day. This season, colleague Ágnes Grélinger (Ági) and I continued the work Luca Borsos had done so consistently in 2021 and 2022. We stayed true to the group's main principles: we have been facilitating and partaking in informal sessions that were centred around a broad understanding of gender, feminism, politics, and self-knowledge, allowing space for personal and interpersonal research, and different forms of knowledge to coexist; however this time, we introduced a less regular schedule, while making attempts to lay the grounds of a self-sustaining community that will hopefully expand from the scope of SÍN's building or the program of Performing Gender.*

The season consisted of a 4-day creative workshop with Performing Gender traveling artist TC Howard, an individual research period, a weekend sharing session, a 2-day workshop on verbal and non-verbal communication with Ági, on gender identity and the transgender community with drama instructor Barbara Lévai and me, and a closing weekend with an open day.

### **The context**

Pomegranate Club operates within a truly unique societal, institutional and artistic context, which needs to be disentangled in order to further understand the potentialities the program encompasses. In recent years, discourse on queerness and feminism has been stirred up as well as suppressed by the misogynist communication strategy of Hungary's current political regime as well as by a number of new laws, making certain forms of LGBTQIA+ representation, or gender-confirming legal procedures impossible for Hungarian citizens.

Hence, the public opinion on gender equality, gender identity or same-sex relationships highly differs from that of most countries of the European Union. Although under such a political climate, no prior knowledge should be taken for granted, thanks to their overall awareness, literacy, kindness and open-minded attitude, participants were always prepared for detailed, comprehensive research and in-depth conversation. Most of our sessions took long journeys between personal and social, and our participants never failed to surprise us with their dedication and trust which allowed them to dive deep into the concepts, conflicts and experiences that were proposed. Many of our participants came to our sessions with clear goals and processes they wanted to work on and potentially share with fellow members. On one hand, the sensitivity and diversity these personal trajectories give to the group are some of the most precious elements of the sessions. On the other hand, they create a vulnerable space which needs to be taken care of, preferably collectively. During organising, taking care of and holding these spaces it has become extremely important to us to be clear about the fact that we are neither pedagogues nor therapists: we are artists invited to facilitate this program with the kind of knowledge we have. Keeping this in mind allowed us to draw healthy boundaries and helped participants remain responsible for their own experiences.

### **The form**

Performing Gender encourages us to discuss gender through dancing and other physical practices. This idea obviously awakened my interest in an early moment: dancing and discussing gender are two activities I very much enjoy. But how can physical work actively contribute to a discussion so complex and so broad, and how can theoretic knowledge enrich somatic experiences? These are extremely difficult questions and it probably doesn't come off as a surprise that I don't have a full answer to them. However, what I managed to understand throughout the sessions is that this framework actually offers a variety of connections between theory and practice one can choose from. Of course, dancing about something is always exciting and fun and it can also be very insightful, but how about other forms of connections? How about the for, the with, the through, instead of the about? How about moving with our thoughts on equality? How about making a dance for our childhood self? How about thinking through movement? And also, how about using physical practices to open up the body for verbal discussion or to provide after-care?

### **The content**

After assessing last year's material, it was clear to us that Luca did an excellent job constructing and following a year plan that gradually guides participants into deeper complexities around gender. This consistency allowed us to create our year plan more freely, balancing between speculations on what the group might need, what our societal context might need from a group like ours, and what can be discussed further. We also had the chance to ask ourselves the question: what can we personally offer to the group?

As a gender non-conforming person, having been given such a platform under the current political climate feels like a huge opportunity and responsibility as well, therefore setting time aside to discuss gender identity, and learn about transgender identities and the trans community became crucial to me. I knew that this would lead to a fairly irregular workshop as some people might find this topic less personal or tactile than for example discussing those heteronormative gender norms that are present in everyone's lives. Luckily, Barbara, the person I invited to accompany me on this journey, had a clear understanding of how this field of knowledge can be just as personal as any other matter that was introduced to the group before.

On the first day of the workshop, we started with physical exercises that were designed to create a body-mind that is soft, empathic and emotionally engaged. The exercises we used to achieve these states were physical practices aimed to release our nervous system, a visualisation meditation on interconnected bodies and a speculative dance improvisation in which we move in accordance to what the space or the group (as an autonomous transforming, organic entity) needs from us. Then, Barbara proposed a number of physical experiences placed in relation to privilege, gender expression, and identity as a continuously progressing, unfixed terrain of affinities.

On the second day, we focused on gathering more theoretical knowledge about gender identity and the transgender community by watching a documentary movie and having an in-depth conversation, using the Genderbread Person, an illustrative educational resource which gives a clear image of biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation as separate spectrums.

At the end of the day, following the concept of the Living Library, we invited someone to talk about her lived experience as a Hungarian transgender woman based in Budapest (we agreed not to publish this person's name due to safety reasons). This conversation was probably the most powerful part of the weekend, thanks to our guest's openness and the participants' deep interest. I believe that progressing from general knowledge towards actual, living representation and personal reality is what made this weekend a truly unique experience. Finishing this article makes me emotional as writing it also allowed me to relive, understand, summarise, and let go of some of the extremely powerful experiences this series of events contained. I am so thankful to Luca Borsos, Ágnes Grélinger, Barbara Lévai, Luca Kövéc, Anikó Rác, the whole team of Sín Arts Centre and most importantly, all the participants for being the most prodigious partners, and I cannot wait for our ways to cross again.

The project, as mentioned before, aimed to improve access to culture in the field of dance, focusing on youth, elders, migrants, and underrepresented LGBTQIA+ groups, taking an intersectional perspective; experimenting with co-design



and co-creation processes aimed at questioning the issue of gender, sexuality, LGBTQIA+ identities. The testimonies of the community members prove the achievement of the project's objectives as the community members highlighted gender issues, such as new learnings that transformed their lives, and described them as having a positive impact.

*"It has been to awaken, get in touch with my inner child. At the same time grow as an adult. Playing, dancing, laughing, and crying with a group of people I have never met before. I never danced in my childhood because of my parent's beliefs (members of a Christian Free Church). It was a sin. When I joined the project, I didn't know what it was about – dance. I joined and stayed with the group with mixed feelings of horror. I have learned a lot about male and female. The strongest thing has been to access my male side and dare to feel it. I've learned a lot about myself through that. I don't have to be so feminine and perfect. It has been the strongest experience in the project - and in life. I want to try more and more things in it".*

.....  
(Community member, Norrlandsoperan, Umea/Sweden)

.....  
*"I learnt the word Queer; in the « Aubagne Team » (Aubagne is a small city in Marseille's neighbourhood) we hadn't heard about this concept before ; we knew LGBTQIA+ but not queer"*

.....  
(Community member, KLAP, Marseilles/France)

.....  
*"It has opened my mind, become more fluid, and it's pretty nice. Some things I wasn't aware of; I couldn't say when it clicked, but I feel I changed, I'm different. I think of someone I met named R., whom I never knew if they were a man or a woman. And I feel like today, I would approach them in a totally different way"*

.....  
(Community member, KLAP, Marseilles/France)

---

## Inter-generational dimension

The intersectional perspective of our analysis made it clear that the dimension of age and the presence of different generations were transversally present and perceived as determinants of how the community members lived and interpreted their experiences related to body, dance, and multiple identities present within the communities. The dialogue below, extracted from the focus group conducted with the community of Marseilles, shows how some see gender issues as an issue for younger people and others recognize the importance of it as a new learning.

.....  
*"H: I always refused to specify a pronoun when presenting myself. I have a name, which is my representation of me. And human beings evolve. I introduce myself, I am who I am, H.*

*S : I think it's a question [gender identity] when you are younger, maybe 20, now I'm 40... but one has to be curious*

*O: It reminds me of the young ones' reaction; they said it's part of their life, and they don't question it – meanwhile, we older must learn".*

.....  
(Dialogue extracted from the focus group with the community of Marseilles, KLAP/France)

The age dimension was not related only to gender issues but also how their perception of their body experience related to their age and how this project freed them from rules imposed on dance and body.

.....  
*"You have such freedom here. I have danced tango and other ballroom dances and there are codes and rules. Here we don't have to worry. I feel more comfortable in my body and with my age".*

.....  
(Community member, Norrlandsoperan, Umea/Sweden)

The perception of ethnic identity and how it is remembered and narrated differed from one generation to another; some members of the Den Bosch community overcame the silence imposed on their past by the previous generations through sharing and dancing.

.....  
*"Maybe the circle of life of the Indos. I think my generation is not scared to talk and how feel, what we want to do, but the generations before me do not talk"*

.....  
(Community member, Boulevard Theater Festival, DenBosch/The Netherlands).

### 1.1.2

#### BODY EXPERIENCES AND THEIR EFFECTS IN TERMS OF DECONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES AND EMPOWERMENT

Bodily practices and the possibility of exploring of one's own body through others' bodies emerge in our analysis as crucial in the (de)construction of identities and in discovering one's own needs, limits, and unexpected possibilities, leading to co-creating a common ground for the community, collective empowerment, and a sense of freedom.

*"I was very surprised by the ease with which we created and continually recreated the sense of community within. I also arrived (returned) in May 2022 but never felt like an outsider to the community. It was also very nice to welcome and observe and have people who were coming later also participate in discovering their bodies, discovering my body through new bodies, and that, in my opinion, was, I mean, the moment of opening the group was also very important for me".*

*(Community member, Gender Bender, Bologna/Italy)*

Expressing oneself through body and dance gave community members new lenses through which they saw dance and their bodies. They discovered that everyday life could be "epic," from which they can get inspiration to create dance. The connection of bodies through the transmission of movements and dance created a new (collective) body which, with its gestures, movement, and features, refers us to its biographical path, which is marked by the networks of relationships we are embedded in (Ghigi and Sassatelli 2018)

*"Expressing yourself freely with your body. Entering into other identities (mentally and in the body). Also, if I make a movement - how to pass it on to someone else so it continues to live- I have learned that you can make a dance from the movements of everyday life. We have been physical in the learning. I have worked with people theoretically, administratively, etc, during my life. But to learn here with the body is another thing. We are more free here".*

*"Awareness - what can I do and what can I not do? I have a huge awareness of my limitations - both positive and negative. Interaction - I've had the opportunity to dance with others, and we have learned things together. It's strong and a good point of the project".*

*(Community member, Norrlandsoperan, Umea/Sweden)*

The interconnection between body experiences, dance, (his)stories, and memories was present in different ways in different community experiences of the project, even if it is not direct and very easy to translate words into movement or theoretical debates into choreography, dance came to "liberate" when words were painful as stated by one of the community members of Marseilles, KLAP/France or helped to break the silence as it happened for the members of the Den Bosch community.

*"I was working with H., we had to express it in locutions beginning with « I am » something...; for me, it has been painful. We were to say all this in front of the group, and it was difficult for me to let it out. But immediately following that, we had to dance in the exercise, which was very liberating. And I think that it was thanks to the dance at this very moment that I entered actually into the project".*

*(Community member, KLAP, Marseilles/France)*

*"The positive was the body relationships with each other. Everyone has their own story and that made it easier for me to tell and be open about my story. I want to break the circle. But that is not easy because we live in another world. You talk about the past but I want to go to the future. With all the stories I heard I want to break the circle".*

*(Community member, Boulevard Theater Festival, DenBosch/ The Netherlands)*

### 1.1.3

#### SHARING MEMORIES AND STORIES THROUGH SELF-REPRESENTATION

Through making art – amateur and professional, formal and informal communities – preserve, invent, and assert their identities, they transmit heritage, and comment on their existence. Sharing stories through words and dance practices contributes to building a community, a safe space where people narrate their stories and traumas and feel that they are not alone. The courage to open oneself to others through body, dance, and words was one of the main points of this project.

*"I am aware of my identity. I was not really aware of it. I like the sharing we have; we are all different but have something in common: we all have Indonesian blood running. I like the sharing of the stories. It is sometimes difficult to understand because it was different for me regarding the same age. Personally, I read more book about Indonesia".*

*(Community member, Boulevard Theater Festival, DenBosch/ The Netherlands).*

“What I learned here is that in the beginning, we told our stories of our family and traditions and shared them. I never did this before. Only with other Indos or friends, but at school, nobody knew. I learned here to share it and to feel the pain. It is good to process the pain. Initially, I was very emotional and left a bit sad and emotional after all the stories. But it was good to process the story”

(Community member, Boulevard Theater Festival, DenBosch/ The Netherlands).

Self-representation through body, dance, and words were complementary in this project; where words were painful, dance came to the rescue, as we observed above, under the body experiences paragraph. At the same time, dance evoked memories narrated through words in the community, and those moments helped break the silence. The courage to open oneself through dance and stories became possible in a circular way: creating a safe space in the community made sharing and self-representation possible, and this sharing increased the comprehension between community members and strengthened the sense of belonging to the community.

“I remember one weekend we were working on the emotions, theatrical exercises in which we were to walk the space and express some emotions, depending on where we were physically. It was very harsh, but also very liberating because we dug deep inside to express the most difficult emotions to show. But the more we do it, the easier it becomes, and the more we enjoy it. It was in May or June 2021”.

(Community member, KLAP, Marseilles/France)

“Everything that was about speaking, expressing emotions, and feelings, I’ve been living it as a personal violence to me. But at the same time, it allowed me to surpass myself, including my own violence, and it has helped me a lot in moments where I wasn’t OK, for instance, when my brother died”.

(Community member, KLAP, Marseilles/France)

“[...] To me, on the contrary, it was texts and acting that allowed me to jump into the group, the fact to exchange words. It turned the group into a collective. Words allowed understand better other people and then enter into the body and movement.”

(Community member, KLAP, Marseilles/France)

During the project, some artists collaborated with the community on the connection between body and memory. In the Bologna community’s work, the traveler artist Daniele Ninarello proposed the body as an “archive” of fragmented and inherited movements:

“With which movement do I feel at home? Which represents me: the element of identity as a matrix of infinite possibilities; starting from that matrix, not following the “idea” but observing what it generates. Inhabiting postures, being a multitude of bodies, being crowded bodies and exercising how the body feels in everyday actions”

(Field notes, artist conversation with the community)

In the Madrid community’s work, Javier, both the traveler and rooted artist, works on how the body goes through memory. In this excerpt taken from Miren Muñoz’s diaries<sup>2</sup>, the audience developer of the Madrid community/Paso a 2, it is clear how the movements evoke memories. It becomes visible how those memories that might have been interpreted at first sight as disconnected from movements are actually embedded waiting to be dug out from the “archives”. In this workshop experience narrated by Miren, the image of a seaweed evoked the memories of some community members on how they did not feel free to dance, moving their hips as it was considered “sissy”. Even if, at first sight, the relationship between the image of seaweed and the burden of self-censorship on moving the hips is not immediate, the reflection offered by the Madrid community members after the workshop developed around the image of seaweed shows clearly the power of the process created within the project on the connection between body and mind, movement and word, dance and memory.

**13/01/2023 – Miren Muñoz  
(Audience developer for Paso a 2 – Madrid Spain):**

We start standing; Javier proposes not to talk now but to move and then share how we are.

Javier proposes moving from the fingers of the hands, thinking that the fingers have light and illuminate the space; this proposal is developing and expanding to more body parts: shoulder girdle, head, forearms, feet, knees, pelvis, etc. We place ourselves in a circle, and we share how we are. We generally express the joy of being and meeting each other again. We return to movement. Javier proposes the image of a seaweed moving in the sea. We start from the arms and move to the shoulders and spine. We stop and try another dynamic to develop from the waist down, in which he talks about integrating the rhythm from the pelvis down. After having explored both dynamics independently, Javier tells us that he is going to play a very moving music, a salsa, in which we have to combine the image of that seaweed in the upper part of the body while the rhythm coexists in the lower part of the body.

Amber: I remembered the movement of the hips, I started from a very nice moment, and suddenly I remembered when my mother told me that moving the hips was for sissies.

Maykol: The same thing happened to me, I remembered when I was 12 years old dancing in the mirror, I remembered that my mother told me the same thing. Now, with that soft music, I have reconciled with that moment.

Javier: How the body can go through memory.

Cristina: I am very happy, I am very happy to resume.

Lara: I am also very happy to be back.

2 The words have also been used as a methodology to evaluate and monitor the project by the artists and audience developers; some kept a diary beside the monitoring and evaluation tools offered by the research team.





#### 1.1.4

### TRUST, CARE, SAFE SPACE, AND CONVIVIALITY AS PILLARS FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING AND SENSE OF BELONGING

Trust, care, and safe spaces are crucial elements in developing a community that includes those people who have normally been marginalized and discriminated against. Building relationships of trust and safe spaces where people can freely express themselves and conquer the spaces they have always been denied were initially among the project's main aims. The research and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data based on the entire process of the project showed how these aims were successfully achieved as positive social impacts as referred to by different community members.

*"Positive: Sense of belonging, joy also experience, trust, sharing the stories"*

*(Community member, Boulevard Theater Festival, DenBosch/ The Netherlands).*

One of the elements referred to by all community members was the suspension of judgment within the community. Trust, care, and safe space based on suspended judgment within the community led to a major (artistic) self-expression and freedom, which is stated to be difficult to find outside of the community.

*"Belonging- it was fascinating to have that feeling from the very beginning and then throughout the project. Trust results from this- you can be who you are and everyone dares [...] we can and do make "mistakes"*

*(Community member, Norrlandsoperan ,Umea/Sweden)*

*"I feel such a sense of community in the group and no one would laugh at me."*

*(Community member, Norrlandsoperan ,Umea/Sweden)*

*"S: we never critiqued each other or felt judged, and people would come to see me when I wasn't well to reassure me. Y: Sincerity. We all proved ourselves through difficulties, and that encourages having a try. H: Trust, between us and also with the artists. I added «measure» because we try to do and respect the limits of everyone"*

*(Community member, KLAP, Marseilles/France)*

Community members developed relationships while working together during the dance practices. The opportunity to communicate in a safe space where the judgment is suspended facilitated the possibility of getting to know each other "on a different level with their hearts," leaving aside the judgmental lenses imposed by society based on performativity, which should not substitute the "human" dimension of the collectivity.

*"I have felt safety and trust in the group. It's exciting how we get to know each other. I have no idea who the others in the group are (maybe some). We get to know each other on a different level, with our hearts"*

*(Community member, Norrlandsoperan, Umea/Sweden)*

*"It immediately seemed to be a space where judgment was suspended. Clearly, each of us brings automatic parameters of evaluation when we are in a group context, but I realized that it was the human, it always came before the performative"*

*(Community member, Gender Bender, Bologna/Italy).*

These relationships have been strengthened also through the sharing of spaces, meals, and moments outside of the workshops, like having coffee/beer, participating in events and shows, and pride. This "being together" had also an important effect in creating a sense of belonging between community members.

*"[...] I discovered and felt a new definition of family and that creating a family, creating a community cannot be imposed and decided at a desk, but that it comes of itself and with assumptions and relationships that are created because there are people at a certain time and in a certain place. For me, this has been a great lesson."*

*(Community member, Gender Bender, Bologna/Italy).*

*"We went from being participants in a project to really building relationships, sharing even experiences outside the workshop, and even seeking each other out not only to see shows or attend the festival together or go to Pride together but also to have a coffee and say, "Okay, tell me about your day. I listen to what yours is like, how your life is going. So outside of even the workshop itself. Of course, [...] space and time have their role in this."*

*(Community member, Gender Bender, Bologna/Italy)*

Informal connections based on conviviality and daily routines emerged as fundamental for community building among community members. The project provided community members with both a shared interest in the project and the opportunity to interact socially, thereby allowing them to discover additional connections and solidify collective bonds.

“I learned that workshop-related appointments were crucial, so seeing a show together, or beer, something was done around, however useful, important for building community relationships”

.....  
(Community member, Gender Bender, Bologna/Italy).

“I was questioning the concept of community [...] Some little silly things, but bringing food to share at lunch, cleaning together after eating and so forth. Most of us don't meet that much outside, but there is a creative, healthy competition, a common encouragement to go beyond one's own limits between us, when we meet as if we were living together, and I think that is really the idea of community.”

.....  
(Community member, KLAP, Marseilles/France)

Issues such as trust and care or creating a safe space for free self-expression and working together during the dance practices require time. The “luxury” of taking time to share and spend time together in our modern world was a huge issue that resulted in one of the most important awareness achieved during this project, which all the project's actors reported as a fundamental social impact and element that evaluators/funders of community-based art projects should take into consideration.

“For me this year Pride was beautiful [...]is this knowledge? Is this a change? Maybe it's not on this thing that you evaluate a European project, but on a personal level, I definitely put it.

.....  
(Community member, Gender Bender, Bologna/Italy)

“Marina (rooted artist) plays a song and proposes to start moving from our feet. She emphasizes the possibility of heights, pausing, and looking. Marina asks us to enjoy the people in the space as inspiration: Let's not always propose; let's flee from the capitalism that makes us propose all the time, and let's build, taking advantage of what is already there. Marina places some wicker seats in the space and proposes this space where we will start sitting; 5 people will come out, and from the music, new relationships will start to emerge. Words that have emerged: *diversión-divertido-alegre-juego* (translation: amusement-fun-joy-play)”.  
.....

(10/02/2023 – Miren Muñoz, Audience developer for Paso a 2 – Madrid Spain)

### 1.1.5

## PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE EMPOWERMENT, IN AND OUT OF THE COMMUNITY

In a world marked by diversity, challenges, and constant evolution, the concept of collective empowerment stands out as a flare of hope and progress. Collective empowerment refers to the process of individuals coming together to amplify their strengths, share resources, and collaborate towards common goals. This collective synergy fosters a sense of belonging and unity and unlocks immense potential for positive change at various levels – be it in communities, organizations, or societies. In this project, personal and collective empowerment emerged as the result of a combination of what has been experimented with about identity (and awareness), the body experience, and the co-creation of a safe space where the traditional idea of art canons and beauty standards are being challenged thanks to the suspension of judgments, freedom of self-expression and a space for each member's unique beauty. This generated a positive impact on people's daily social life and participation in public life outside of the community

“The change is empowering. My own identity as a dancing pensioner/senior is strengthened. If I'm going to devote my time to anything, it's dance. It is now a priority. It's related to self-awareness”

.....  
(Community member, Norrlandsoperan ,Umea/Sweden)

“This change has been total in how I experience both the group and myself. Trivially how I cross the street or how I experience a social situation like a birthday or dinner with friends. I often think that if everyone and everyone took a dance workshop at least once in their lives, the uncomfortable situations, even very simple ones, could disappear from the face of the earth.”

.....  
(Community member, Gender Bender, Bologna/Italy)

Collective empowerment is based on the reciprocal encouragement between community members, so everybody with their diversities, beauties, defects, and limits is included and never left behind. Throughout three years, there were also moments of discouragement and frustration; however, community members encouraged each other's participation.

“I think there is collective empowerment. We are able to accept each other and stimulate each other. Collective is the change in the perception of minorities and related issues such as gender and identity. From the first time, it has been pure well-being. Also, a safe place, which means a lot. I have been able to express myself freely. It has been empowering”.

.....  
(Community member, Boulevard Theater Festival, DenBosch/ The Netherlands)

“For me, a very significant change on a collective level has been to be able to let go more in group contexts in general, let’s say, within always these dance practices, but also clearly outside when I simply go out, in any social context [...] Awareness of the body in a different way, that is, knowing how to use just in a totally new way that was unknown to me until recently. Being able to feel the different parts of the body, even in contact with others, especially in contact with others [...], I used to have a very hard time trying to have physical contact with other people. I freed myself from that point of view. A very strong change.”

.....  
(Community member, Gender Bender, Bologna/Italy).

We conclude this part with the speech of Olga Carreño Pedrozo (community member, Paso a 2, Madrid, Spain) presented during the Brussels Summit of Performing Gender: Dancing in Your Shoes, on November 14th -15th 2023, which summarizes significantly the personal and collective empowerment fostered by PG-DIYS project.

.....  
**The impact of Dancing in Your Shoes**  
**Speech by Olga Carreño Pedrozo (community member, Paso a 2/Spain)**  
**PG-DIYS Brussels Summit, Panel on “The cultural and civic value of using arts to engage with questions of gender, sexuality, and marginalized communities”, 15/11/2023**  
.....

Performing Gender has changed my life and healed my mind, because I say these two things first, I am a person convinced that art can transform lives and that art can liberate you and help you to express yourself freely, I have always been an activist for the rights of trans women and the visibility of trans women in public spaces, for trans women to come out of the darkness of the night and in Performing Gender I discovered a community where I could be myself, be safe, be calm where I could be and develop myself freely create from what I had in my imaginary and build new things, a world with different imaginary and reach totally safe spaces where I could develop myself. I could externalize my emotions and my new skills and challenge myself to do things that they thought I would not be able to do, maybe because of the age I was, maybe for being a different person, for showing myself differently, for what I felt inside.

I think that art and dance allowed me to externalize myself, to travel to be myself, to express myself as I want and free myself. When you free yourself, you are a happy person, you are an authentic person, and you are a self-confident person with ideals and goals that you know exactly where you are going.

The second not less important in my migratory grief when I arrived in Spain without family without friends without acquaintances. And then a community arrives where I feel loved, wanted and I feel important for this community, during my practices a year ago, I lived an episode where I was not able to raise my head where my mental health deteriorated each time and I did not feel able to manage it alone, I had no energy, My Performing Gender community encouraged me to return to the practices we did every Friday. I returned one Friday and that day Marina Santo, our choreographer who is precisely in this space with us, was in the workshop and I thank her for the wonderful workshop she did that day and for the amazing practice she did.

When I arrived, there was the smell of incense, there was the smell of palo Santo which is a type of incense that is used a lot in some relaxation rituals and that was an incentive for me to want to be there, I want to enjoy that session which was wonderful. It was disconnected from my reality and connected me to an awakening, to a desire to live and continue dancing. At the end of that session, I said I want to be there because this is what my mind needs. I need to be focused to be there which is totally encouraging to know that in this place I had the will to continue, I had the will to continue dancing, to continue doing workshops, to continue training and today I am here thanks to Performing Gender, I am on my feet thanks to Performing Gender, my mental health has improved so much although my physical health has been deteriorating, I have a herniated disc that hurts me a lot when I walk, and every night I feel a lot of pain but Performing Gender gives me the strength and gives me the freedom to move as I want even with a herniated disc, because I learned to love and value my body.



## 1.2.

### THE DANCEMAKERS

The relationship between identity, positionality and co-creation appears as crucial in framing and affecting the lived experiences of the dancemakers.

Three main fields of experiences emerge, each one characterized by a number of challenges and learnings.

- The role of different intersectional identities in working with communities
- The experience of a dynamic positioning
- The challenge of combining autonomy, power and co-creation and its effect in terms of learnings

#### 1.2.1

##### THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES IN WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

The background – gender, race, ethnicity, and class identities – influenced positioning of the dance makers on the ground and the artistic work with the communities.

In this work dancemakers could experiment with a dynamic “(de)construction” of identity in the relationship with the communities. This process led to a collective sense of belonging as dance makers and a discovering of new possibilities of being an artist.

*“The community is Lgbtqi+, and I am in a heterosexual relationship and mom of a little kid. They invited me because of my relationship with community work in Madrid. I am not a choreographer; it is not my main work. I consider myself a facilitator, teacher, or whatever you want to call me. It is about the process of creating something really creative. For me, there is no hierarchy between creating pieces and creating classes. The process, a little cliché, is what interests me. [...] I am a mover who creates sessions and teaches sessions for non-white-diaspora. I have to say that Madrid is very white, very classist, and elitist. I have been living in Madrid for 17 years, and until very recently, I was the only non-white person in the room. So that’s why they invited me. The queer community here is not only white; access to contemporary art, dance, and shows is all white. So they invited me because of my trajectory and path in activism. I was there, an Afro-descendent woman, a straight mom. It was a really really really amazing opportunity for me to unbuild lots of truths I had in my mind. I facilitated a lot of tools, and I learned so much from them. This is a turning point for my role in this community because I really felt, I can cry now; I really felt a belonging that in many feminist spaces, I don’t feel”.*

*(Marina Santo, rooted dance maker, Passo a 2/Madrid-Spain)*

During the project, positioning and identities played an important role in negotiating roles, recognition, and legitimization. These positionings were conditioned by many variables, including the different cultural contexts and the composition and specificity of communities (differences in generations, the multiplicity of languages, ethnic and gender identities, and different personal and collective experiences). These dimensions were important in matching the artist – with her/his identity and social positioning – and communities. That’s why an intersectional perspective is crucial in community art-based projects.

*“I think it is important to say that through the process of this project, through co-participation, the roles are shifting and changing. People have different roles because of their identities; because I am an artist coming from a working-class background, I don’t have that hierarchy between the ways of working/making a performance and offering participation, so I was so welcomed in that way. Through the process, we understand that nothing could have happened without all the different parts. Amazing process; when I speak about roles after working so closely with the community and not only through the weekly session but in general, the word role became more fundamental and impacted my practice”*

*(Izzy Brittain, rooted dance maker, Yorkshire Dance, England)*

The speech titled “People & Dance: Finding Community” by Bakani Pick-Up (rooted dance maker, Yorkshire Dance, England), read during the Performing Gender Brussels Summit (14-15 November 2023), demonstrates the interconnections between their artistic and intersectional identities. They narrate how they became the person/artist they are today through the support and solidarity of the communities in which they were raised and thanks to the power of dance, which is described as an “act of care” and “the ultimate medicine for the soul”.

##### **“People & Dance: Finding Community” Speech by Bakani Pick-Up (dance maker, Yorkshire Dance/UK)**

##### **PG-DIYS Brussels Summit, Panel on “Performing Gender: provocations on the relationship between Personal Identities and Artistic Identity”, 14/11/2023**

*My name is Bakani Pick-Up, I was born in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. My parents are Ephraim Pickup and Samkeliso Moyo, they too were born in Zimbabwe, except in their time it was known as Rhodesia, a colony named after Cecil John Rhodes. I come from a big family which comes with love and its own complexities. I assume this is where my fascination with the eclectic nature of communities stems from. It is this thread that I recognise in my work. Some background on how I found myself here. At some point my father became ill and later died, as a consequence of his illness I followed my mother to England. I left my home without knowing it was forever. When we arrived in England we lived in a small town in Hampshire called Bordon, a beautiful and extremely complex home. I was not familiar with British communities and found myself*

jumping from people to people, it is here through them I learnt about Britishness. In this small town I was supported and encouraged to dance and perform, they set me on this life altering path, they did so through care and endorsement. Through community. Since moving to the UK I have lived in Bordon, Cornwall, London, Nottingham, Cardiff and now Leeds. Each home has come with it's own communities and complexities. It is perhaps also through this, I feel that each community needs it's individual consideration, it is unwise to assume that we all require care and to be seen in the same way. I was raised by a single mother who was simultaneously supporting us and a family back home in Zimbabwe. Through sharing an environment with a person so caring, I learnt that this was the way I want to be, someone who can do something for others, offer care the only way I know how, through dance, but not just any dance but something that allows us to connect to joy and pleasure, to find space to express ourselves and take care of each other. I must also acknowledge the hand my sister has played in my life, she is a therapeutic counsellor. She has taught me about the small ways we can show up for people. She once said to me that she sees our jobs as the same, she helps people through offering space for them to talk about how they feel, I, in her eyes do the same through the medium of dance. And with that in mind, I take this honour of holding space with the upmost care and responsibility. Dance to me is a wonder, a unique joy. I learnt to dance in Zimbabwe, so to me it is a part of my culture, it is a part of who I am and so it feels quitasential to allow this part of myself to exist. At times of feeling lost and disconnected and being an immigrant in a completely different world, the one thing that stayed with me and that would later become apparent, is that whether in Zimbabwe or England, dance inevitably brings people together. I don't know what kind of a person I would be without the things dance has taught me about myself and about other people. To be black and queer, an immigrant and be able to find sanctuary amongst places and people is only something you can only truly appreciate by living through it and maybe perhaps with the most intent listening. Along my career I have had the most fortunate experience of working with people who have been kind and nurturing, they have taught me that dance can be so much more than entertainment or a spectacle, it can speak to the emotions that are not attached to words. Katherine Hall, a dance artist wrote 'can choreography be an act of care?' This resonated with me, it resonated to the feeling that dance offers that isn't centred in showcase but in empathy. It is also this role I recognise in my upbringing, my mother a carer, someone with endless amounts of passion for looking after people and making them feel loved. How might my role as a facilitator take this way of being with me into the studio? It is here I have found my improvisational practice. Improvisation to me is not about codified technique,

it is embodied knowledge that rises to the surface from a particular stimulus, whether a song or a score or a need. It comes from a feeling and a want, and it is important to realise the power that lies in being able to do with your body as you please. I have been a part of Performing Gender with Yorkshire Dance since 2021. Admittedly a newbie to the city at the time, but through Company of People, our performance group for this programme, through their experiences and their stories, I feel like I have been in Leeds all my life, and joined a family that has come together to dance. I have had first hand experience in seeing the power of dance. This is something perhaps that you cannot measure in profit or product, but something even more important, in the way it makes people feel. The youngest in our group is 13 and the oldest is 83. We have all taken turns looking after each other and we have all cried and danced together. In zulu/ ndebele we say "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" it means a person is only a person through or because of others. I am part of many marginalised communities, it is here I have seen what happens when we are not more thoughtful and more caring. But it is also these communities that have taught me that above all else, it is important to have a space where we can be ourselves. Community isn't about conformity or whether or not we are all the same, although this can be the case, but I would argue it is about many individuals coming together and inserting a piece of themselves to build and perhaps hold each other with well intentions, much similar to a rainbow. A rainbow is a rainbow because of all its different colours not because it is one colour. So I conclude, it is the longest and most extravagant journey that I have been on that has brought me here. The biggest take away I suppose is that more than anything I am the result of a child raised by a whole village, many communities have embraced me and allowed me to be the person I feel is the truest. In this sake, the truest thing to me is to be liberated, to be a caring person and a caring artist. I wish to see all the communities I have learnt to love, reflected in the eclectic nature of dance. A few years ago a retired gentleman from a working class community, who by his own admission didn't dance, found himself in one of our community workshops, at the end he came up to us and said 'it is things like this that make life worth living.' And I agree. To dance is the ultimate medicine for the soul, to dance is to be able to liberate yourself through movement and pleasure. We all dance, the difference is about who is allowed and who is not. I believe that you can learn a lot about the condition of a human being when you give them space to connect to their sense of truth. How do we hold space for this? How might we improve the quality of our lives? By bringing a part of ourselves and by being welcoming, we may find some of the most nuanced ways of being that change our lives for the better. From Bulawayo to Bordon to Belgium. Thank you.



“For me, the co-creation is that we can co-create/co-design with the community, but at a certain point, the community said, ‘Can you stop this? Just decide’ I think co-creation has to be designed in a certain way so that it doesn’t tire the community. I will give you a simple example: it took almost two months to decide on the traveler dance maker. At a certain point, the community said we do not know who to choose because we don’t have a point of reference, so you choose. So, I think that co-creation is cool, but democracy doesn’t work all the time; it has to be facilitated, and there is the necessity of leading. For me, co-creation as a team they have to see how we can facilitate collective choices”

.....  
(Javier Vaquero, rooted and traveler dance maker, Passo a 2/ Madrid-Spain)

Performing Gender: Dancing in Your Shoes is a project where all the partners realized deep (self) reflections, researchers included. Reflection on identities, positionalities, hierarchies, community building and empowerment, and social justice have been present from the very beginning of the project. Regarding the identities, positionalities, hierarchies and working methods within the community-based art projects, the speech of Marina Santo and Javier Vaquero (Paso a 2, Madrid-Spain) presented during the Brussels Summit of Performing Gender: Dancing in Your Shoes, on November 14<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> 2023 summarizes their innovative approach:

**Speech by Marina Santo and Javier Vaquero (dance makers, Paso a 2/Spain)**  
**PG-DIYS Brussels Summit, Panel on “Performing Gender: provocations on the relationship between Personal Identities and Artistic Identity”, 14/11/2023**

.....  
“When I was thinking about the theme of this meeting I thought about a fragment of a text from Audre Lorde, an amazing Afro American cis woman, lesbian, professor, philosopher, intersectional feminist, poet and civil rights activist. She said: “What separates us is not our differences, but the resistance to recognizing those differences and confronting the distortions that result from ignoring and misinterpreting them. When we define ourselves, when I define myself, when I define the space in which I am like you and the space in which I am not, I am not denying the contact between us, nor am I excluding you from contact – I am expanding our contact space.” So, I take this quote as my starting point to talk about my personal identities and my artistic practice. I have been dancing since I can remember: in the oldest memory I have of myself I am happily dancing in the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, my home town. Dance has been a big part of my life but I didn’t dare to do it professionally because of economic reasons. So I studied History at the University. I truly believed at that time, if I became a history teacher, I could be part of a political revolution in Brazil. The idea of changing structures has always been a very important part of who I am. My personal identity and artistic practice are totally connected in my body, which is exactly the place where dance happens. I am an afro Brazilian cis woman, mum of a little kid and I have been living 20 years in Europe as an immigrant from the Global South. My relationship with contemporary dance has been mostly connected with alternative and experimental spaces outside of

the structured and well-recognized dance world. As a performer I have danced in some prestigious spaces but as I never had access to formal dance education and had to work very hard doing many other jobs outside of the artistic field in order to be able to pay my bills and keep dancing I always felt that I really didn’t belong to the artistic class. If we consider activism as... the efforts to promote actions and practices with the desire to make changes in ourselves, in people and in society toward a perceived greater good. My answer is yes, I consider my artistic practice as activism. At the same time I think activism is a concept that has been so stereotyped that I sometimes wonder if it could somehow tag or limit my artistic practice. As Clarice Lispector said - an outstanding Brazilian writer – freedom is not enough for me, what I want is still unnamed.

*Dance is disruptive*  
The practice of dance in itself is subversive for several reasons: because it is a non-verbal language and therefore questions the dominance of the word; because the temporality of bodily practices is counterproductive to the capitalist system; because enjoyment and celebration become revolutionary in a system that only wants us to work. Let’s not forget: If society is racist, the cultural system is also racist. Therefore, our practice should at least point at these structures. We also must horizontalize the resources for those bodies and practices assumed as amateur or “non-professional”: many of those bodies assumed as “amateurs” are so because they have not had access to professional spaces. Let’s not perpetuate a hierarchy that divides artists from non-artists. Often, one significant flaw in community art projects is that the “artists” feel disconnected or do not identify with the individuals they collaborate with. Well, so how I became part of Performing Gender in Madrid?

I was invited to give some sessions to group and the experience I had partaking in the sessions went so well that I was invited to stay as a dance maker together with Javier Vaquero, an amazing human being that defines herself as a dancer, transvestite and multi-faceted worker forced by capitalism. I felt much more embraced in the LGBTQIA+ community than in some white, feminist spaces. I’ve participated in previously. I will take with me a set of unforgettable experiences and beautiful connections with the participants. I feel honoured to witness their development through dance.

The amount of new things I’ve learned and continue to learn has been revolutionary, as a person and as a professional. It makes me think about all the connections and similarities between outsiders, marginalised communities. I felt deeply supported. Outsiders learning and dancing together. Artistically, Performing Gender gave me the strength to really dare to put my ideas out there avoiding that recurring imposter feeling. I gained loads of self esteem. When I think about the role of the artist in society I honestly think that is to be able to live with dignity, work, pay the expenses, develop ourselves, live peacefully and be happy, like any other citizen. And once we have reached that point, we can then ask ourselves about transcendence and moving up the ladder.

I am forever energised and inspired doing what I do because I have discovered, in the arts space, where I can authentically be myself and connect with others on a profound level, awakening myself and other individuals to our own humanity. Artists have the ability to showcase alternative approaches



to living in the world and it means a lot. When I am asked about intersectionality I feel that is now very 'trendy' concept the in policy making but I personally believe that, with some exceptions, it's a concept that people like to mention but without truly practising it and integrating it into their lives. Individuals who have always had privileges and priorities in accessing work, having visibility, and holding economic power need to step back and allow others to take these spaces. That means including nonwhite, non-European, nonmale, non able-bodied, noncisgender - occupying positions of power within the institutions and projects that allow us to make decisions and, consequently, transform what is needed. Unfortunately, I often see people reacting defensively when, for example, their

antiracism policies or practises are questioned. In order to be constructive, here are some suggestions: Use your privilege and access to power to create spaces and platforms for visibility for marginalised groups. Convert your privilege into a potential alliance. In addition to this, the key characteristic that I see as essential in all kinds of projects and organisations is one based on caregiving. We need healthy and nurturing spaces for processes of sharing and feeling supported to have a balanced mental health. Thank you"

### 1.3. THE AUDIENCE DEVELOPERS

The audience developers play a key role in the project in the community-building process. Different complex issues emerged around this mediating role that we have organized around two main categories:

- Recognition/nonrecognition of the identity and fluid role of audience developers
- Power asymmetry and equal relationships

#### 1.3.1 RECOGNITION OF THE IDENTITY AND FLUID ROLE OF AUDIENCE DEVELOPERS

As shown by our findings, Audience developers play a crucial role in community-based art projects by connecting the artwork with the community, fostering engagement, and enhancing the overall impact of the project. They serve as the "bridge and glue" between the art project and the community, ensuring that the project is seen as embraced and integrated into the fabric of the community's life.

However, there is a degree of conceptual ambiguity in the definition of audience development, which has remained elusive and has confusingly been used as an umbrella term (Kawashima 2000). In the '90s it became "the mantra of arts and museum practitioners" (Hayes and Slater 2002, p. 1) and was "the political flavour of the month" (Kawashima 2000, p. 7). From this point of view, the lived experiences of audience developers and their narratives assume a significant role in contributing to understanding these ambivalences, restoring the complexity of artistic co-creation practices, and moving beyond participatory rhetoric. They render more comprehensible the interconnection of complex and multiple relationships between artistic organizations, artists, and the community they work with, resulting from a combination of positionings, roles, and identities. In particular, difficulties emerge due to a general absence of a common reference on what this figure is, and this, in fact, implies investing time in making clear the reasons for some decisions even within one's own organization and with the communities and to set boundaries.

"Sometimes what I thought was needed wasn't exactly what was intended as needed by other people and the organization. I had to explain what I was doing to the organization, the artist, and the community because nobody really understood my work. This was very difficult, especially within the organization, because sometimes I had to confront myself with the organization that asked me to do that role, so I needed to fill up a role. Sometimes the visions differed, and I needed to defend what I thought was more valuable. This, of course, was uneasy because it was obvious that there was not a common ground since the beginning".

(Mauro Meneghelli, Audience Developer, Gender Bender/Italy).

Despite the absence of common references, the lived experience reveals some characteristics of the role that are widely recognized, in some case recalling the idea of a fluid role with no exact definition and boundaries, but also the idea of having multiple tasks; of being a facilitator, a trust builder and bridge at different levels and between different actors: organizations, communities and dance makers.

I think all of our jobs as audience developers, the projects would not be what they are if it wasn't for us. You know, we are the glue that sticks everything together. We're as well as providing support for the artists and the structure of the project; we are deepening that trust and relationships with the individuals who keep, as Coralie was saying, amazingly coming along every week and prepared to put themselves in situations that you would never imagine that they would put themselves in before. It's the massive effect this work has on individuals' health and their relationships with people especially. A lot of the work we're doing is intergenerational. Um, you know, on the back of COVID, all that stuff that people are experiencing of isolation and loneliness, you know. And I think without our role, I don't think people would attend because the artist is involved with other things that are equally as valuable, but they have not got the time to invest in getting people, people there and building people's trust".

(Kirsty Redhead, Audience Developer, Yorkshire Dance/UK)

“Someone who has to keep together the wills and the needs of the organization, the artists, and the community. So in essence, I have the image of the “glue” or the fluid, something that keeps things fluid, and starting from communication but also in the way that in the project, decisions have been made [...]”

(Mauro Meneghelli, Audience Developer, Gender Bender/Italy)

“There’s another word in which I can find something maybe in a more personal and professional level; it’s the term “in-between” because I feel like we are the glue, but also we are the thing that goes from one to another and sometimes we don’t know where we are, well me, I didn’t know because I was trying to catch this, catch that and catch that again, and sometimes it was very difficult, and sometimes it made me think about my work and also why the organization, the people, the community, or artist said what they said or required what they required”

(Mariette Travard, Audience developer, K LAP/France)

“The first word that popped up in my mind was facilitator, but on very, very many levels [...] I’m the first one when there is something they want to ask [...] I’m like also the distributor of questions. Sometimes I also feel that I’m sitting on the artist’s chair. Sometimes, I’m sitting on the artistic director’s chair; sometimes, I’m sitting on no chair because I don’t have a clue. Um, so it’s really like you have to be a chameleon, you know, and be fluid within the process”

(Coralie den Adel, Audience Developer, Boulevard/The Netherlands)

“Takes a lot of different works from organization to resource management to resolving conflicts with the group, trying to find a common way between artists organization participants. So it’s unpredictable and ongoing. I would describe this is like, in one sentence.”

(Sara Šabec, Audience Developer, City of Women/Slovenia)

The project also represented the opportunity to define better or even “nam” more clearly this approach of engaging communities:

“Audience developer in England is more about somebody who works with the marketing team typically, but I think I’ve adopted this new role in developing audience or participants within and connections with the community, which I was probably doing already. But this project allowed me to work with new groups, particularly from underrepresented groups, and also build deeper connections with individuals, but also communities and other organizations who now value this work and will continue to do this work.”

(Kirsty Redhead, Audience Developer, Yorkshire Dance/UK)

Moreover, the lack of clarity and precise boundaries are seen as a field of creative possibilities to be explored and used as a new learning for their role as audience developers that gives freedom and empowerment.

“After that, what was instead easier for me was to decide by myself what was needed. Of course, I had work to do, but I was free, I had a creative field in front of me, and I was able to decide the way in which I would have done that work”

(Mauro Meneghelli, Audience Developer, Gender Bender/Italy)

“I felt a lot of freedom within that process to perhaps explore my role as an audience developer and how I fit in with the group”

(Kirsty Redhead, Audience Developer, Yorkshire Dance/UK)

Concerning recognition of identity and roles, one of the key issues seems to be the dimension of “professional vs personal” in the relationship with the communities and organizations as part of those ambivalences mentioned earlier. The blurred area of “personal vs. professional” comes from the lack of a concrete definition of this role, but it is also a consequence of the “nature” of this type of relationship, which involves emotions, care, and body. Some audience developers described this involvement of emotions and care as “being the mother” of the community who does not want a child to be left behind, “making them feel at home.”

“They [ professional vs personal] just blurred. I mean, I give like, which I know all of you will as well, like my heart to this project. You know, people I have attended funerals of people that, during this period and with the group, and so it was quite.. they are people that come to these projects, it is about their lives and connecting with people and the love [...] it is a family that many of people haven’t got. And I think with the company of people on the Sunday, a lot of people, are from like other countries like Jamaica, Croatia, Ireland, so their families are not present. So I think it’s even more important that the connections that they have, and..I suppose the struggle is sometimes like for instance, when I’m taking part, I feel more that I can give more of me because people get to see the real me, and I suppose I maybe get to see the real me as well a bit more through that process [...] I can find myself getting quite prickly about certain things or how people react to my family.”

(Kirsty Redhead, Audience Developer, Yorkshire Dance/UK)

“They really must feel they are like at home and they can have all open discussion and [...] they can call me 24 hours per day, and I have felt, yes, I’m like, their mother”

(Barbara Zonta, Audience Developer, City of Women, Slovenia)



“We formed this group together, and it’s been a bit difficult during the pandemic because we started online with one group, then we met outside, and then we had to meet and split up the group into smaller groups, and new participants came in. So it’s been a lot about forming this group and going deeper into the art of dance and performances, and the theme identity. So I think it’s been a lot like being an audience developer has been to be a participant yourself and also “the mother”[...] but it can be hard work to have them... not letting anyone slip away, until they don’t want to participate, we don’t force anyone, but so they can feel that they are held in some way. I think it’s been a good experience and we can see that some in the group they have changed, you can see changes and they have a deeper understanding and being an audience developer is to keep the interest, keep the people and follow this red thread throughout the process, and connect all the activities so it makes sense, so it’s logical to everyone while we do this”.

.....  
(Linda Wiklund, Audience Developer, Norrlandsoperan/Sweden)

Complementary to the previous points on recognition of audience developers’ role and the identity in the project, the fluidity of the role of audience developers emerged not only regarding their position within the organization they work at but also their positionality in the project, particularly regarding their position as facilitator and/or a participant who took an active part also in the community dance practices. The recognition or nonrecognition of the audience developer as part of the community by the community members lies at the bottom of the blurring area of “personal vs. professional” where audience developers, in some cases, were members of the community but at the same time they had to do their work as the audience developer by managing the community life, needs, conflicts, and decision-making processes which will be the topic of the next point, power relations.

“Once I got a phone call from my mom just before we started with the workshop. And so I’m not in a workshop, but I’m still there, you know, in the beginning. So saying, Hey, mom, how are you? Yeah, can I call you back? Because I’m still at work. And then the group laughed at me, saying, At work, at work. Ha ha ha. Are you calling this work? So they don’t see me. They think I’m just one of them. I’m just there, you know. They don’t see me in a role as like an employee, which is also nice, of course, because then it’s maybe easier to have this warm and deep connection with them. I really, I miss them if I don’t see them for a few weeks. You know, I’m curious how they’re doing. I’m. I had dinner with one of the group members [...] Yeah, it’s called Kumpulan, which is like a get-together for people with Indonesian backgrounds. And they dance, and they eat. So, I’m going there. So, it’s also like a gray area between professional and private”.

.....  
(Coralie den Adel, Audience Developer, Boulevard/The Netherlands)

“What it means to be a participant as an audience developer [...] I think it’s very relevant in the way we consider our work, and I’ve seen it in another project I’m working on as audience developer with Gender Bender [...] I can see the difference in the tools I can work with, they are less powerful. If I’m not in there’s this difficulty, first of all, not being recognizable: I’m just a guy outside of the group working on the computer [...] This is an issue about our work in terms of being both an observer and a participant, so being in and while participating also observing the dynamics [...] I happily decided to be part of the production. I had to be more of a participant than an audience developer, so I need to try to bring out the organizational part [...] I really had to give something personal [...] That’s really interesting for me, an exercise of keeping connected, but separated, the personal from the professional. I think it’s interesting to try to investigate how these two parts of us are obviously connected because they are two parts of the same person, but they need to have a clear definition [...] Dancing in your shoes, we have a lot of shoes to dance [...] I have this perception as an artistic professional that it is kind of unusual that the professional participates in the activities, especially if they are physical activities. Not in terms of “Ok, so I’m doing my presentation of the book”, which is thought as a super high thing in which you give your intelligence in the discussion, but doing physical practices I think is something that is still very uncommon for artistic professionals, in the organization I mean [...]. I’m pretty sure that to some of my colleagues in Italy at least, the fact that I’m participating in the production really sounds awkward, it’s like “so you are a performer or what?” There is a hierarchical issue of course, it is something like “how you see me as a role and not as a person”. That role is really heavy and impacting on how things can be seen [...] With other professionals, I think this is an issue, something uncommon”

.....  
(Mauro Meneghelli, Audience Developer, Gender Bender/Italy)

In one of the focus groups conducted with the audience developers, while talking on the recognition/nonrecognition of the identities and roles of audience developers, this dialogue above happened where the issue of recognition/nonrecognition was posed from a perspective of hierarchies that can differ from one cultural context to another.

“Do you think this can be different from country to country? because I don’t experience that so much. It’s pretty flat, hierarchy is not so obvious [...] From the participant’s point of view they don’t make any difference between administrator, audience developer, they see me as, I don’t know, this person that does everything”.

.....  
(Linda Wiklund, Audience Developer, Norrlandsoperan/Sweden)

According to this perspective, where positions have no boundaries and are not attached to specific people, when “everybody does everything”, hierarchies can get less obvious. The issue of hierarchies brings the debate on power and equal relationships which have been one of the major issues of the project from the very beginning of the project, not only for the audience developers but for all actors who reflected and questioned the issues of asymmetries of power, positionalities and equal access to culture.

### 1.3.2

#### POWER ASYMMETRY AND EQUAL RELATIONSHIPS

In this project, audience developers had a key role also in creating a space for equal relationships on multiple levels – between audience developers, dance makers, and the community through self-reflexivity. Power asymmetries and hierarchies exist; however, in this project, different actors reflected deeply on how to change it through equal relationships and applied it to their relationships with and within the community. Access to culture should be equal to all, especially for disadvantaged and marginalized communities and minorities who were historically left out of access to culture.

*“How to make projects more participatory, how to make culture accessible? We have a very huge item with this term. How to make the black communities feel part of the cultural representation? How to make the LGBTQIA+ community take over public places or spaces? I don’t know, in other countries, but we have the problem that these communities are still moving in a radial space and not in the center. And very important terms, at least for me, is like how to name and make visible the problems through this project”*

*(Miren Muñoz, Audience developer, Paso a 2/Spain)*

Having an “in between” role within a set of multiple relationships, the audience developers, needed to work on asymmetries in many directions: not only in the relationships with and within the community but also for instance in the relationship with the dance maker. However, as mentioned above, the consistent self-reflexivity of the different actors was practiced in every phase of the project, allowing them to “step out” to correct defects or errors throughout the project, which is based on the “learning by doing” method, as stated by different actors of the project.

*“I was really building this relationship with them, but also making sure that they were building a relationship between them, in the group. So the group was growing stronger as a community [...] So then I decided to step out of the group because I felt like I need to make sure that the group is having this relationship with the choreographer, which is most important in this moment, to make sure that we have all like an equal relationship”*

*(Coralie den Adel, Audience Developer, Boulevard/The Netherlands)*

The reflection on power relations touched also the issue of legitimacy. Indeed, one of the huge debates was around who is legitimated as a “specialist” in working on issues like gender with the LGBTQIA+ communities or with other minorities such as Moluccans in the Netherlands who had a colonial past. It sometimes created confusion and unease for the dance maker and the community.

*“I think there was a lot of unease within the artist and the group about obviously the title of the project, performing gender and how and questioning are we, um, exploring gender enough. Are we with the right communities? What are other communities doing in terms of gender? Should we be working with the LGBTQIA+ community? Am I an expert in that area? And I know like a lot of the artists were like, No, we need to get specialists in. And it was like, No, no, we’re performing our gender all the time, you know? So, it was I feel as the project developed, that became less of a thing. But [we arrived] to the point of questioning, “am I the right artist for this project? Because I don’t identify with the LGBTQIA+ community, or have I got the skill?”*

Another important aspect related to power dynamics is related to the respect of the co-designing principle and the necessity limit themselves as audience developers to not imposing anything on the community:

*[...] I think at the moment there’s a little bit of unease when a few people have talked about this as well, about this production and the management of the kind of process and what that looks like and how as you start pushing towards, as you were saying about costumes and things, the actual intention and the connection in the group can be a little bit lost. So sometimes I find that difficult to navigate my way around that. And personally, I do have my kind of producer programming head of thinking actually that might not look really that good on stage when people are coming up with different ideas. But obviously, it’s very much about co-designing what the group wants and how the artists are steering that forward”.*

*(Kirsty Redhead, Audience Developer, Yorkshire Dance/UK)*

In the analysis of the entire project, the research team, drawing upon Bauman’s (1991, 2000) concept of modern, postmodern, and liquifying societies, highlighted present ambiguities and ambivalences as silver linings of the process since those offer a key for a major understanding, offering a bigger perspective without judgment. From this perspective, trying to overcome hierarchies with no leaders or facilitators can also bring some confusion to the organizational aspect of community life, the contents of the production phase. In the lack of a leadership community, at least in some phases, can feel as “faded away” and lost.

*[...] The mother of the project, in our case it was the rooted artist obviously, because she was with them all the time, and in the second part was not present anymore, so the group started slowly fading away. Without a leader or without a facilitator, even if they had another one, they said it wasn’t the same. It was like in elementary school, you need guidance, otherwise you can’t really know what to do next. My relationship with the group was interesting because they expressed their doubts and their mixed feelings: [the community asked] “What comes next?, Should we continue? Do we want to do this? Am I understanding what this project is about?” There were always doubts and one step back.*

*(Luca Kövécs, Audience Developer, SÍN Arts Centre/Hungary)*

The need of a facilitator, especially at the beginning, is crucial for the trust development and community building. Facilitating leadership, when it is practiced delicately through self-reflexivity, becomes vital for the creation of a safe space where community members can feel “at home”, included in the community, and have equal possibility to participate and take the word when they desire.

*“I really think that the community has to be built up, that it isn’t something that is given, it was definitely our way to relate with our group. When I say community I think of an ever evolving community, it’s not something static and that’s it. I keep seeing in this phase of the project in which we are working on the production that there are issues, obviously. It’s not like in a community everybody agrees on everything, or that everybody participates in the same way. There’s an issue that we are trying to tackle, and it’s the fact that in the group when we do the circle and we are trying to express what we want to bring into the group, some people speak all the time and there are some people whose voices we never hear. It’s not like they are not speaking ever, but maybe they’re speaking in smaller groups, but not in front of everybody, not in front of the artists, and not in front of the organization. It’s something we still need to work on by inviting them. Of course, we are not there to say “You have to speak!”, but it’s just to remind them*

*that there is this possibility, and also to make the people who are always talking aware that they can leave the floor, that they can just leave time for silence and also for the people who are not the first to speak. It’s something we are still working on”.*

.....  
(Mauro Meneghelli, Audience Developer, Gender Bender/Italy)

This project proved that the traditional roles and hierarchies of the artistic sector can be practiced with a major self-awareness in innovative ways, as this excerpt from one of the focus groups shows. Facilitating as “a technician in the human process” to create a harmonic safe space is different than traditional hierarchical leadership and can help to balance different sounds of the community, reminding those who have “harder sounds” to “leave time for silence” so those with “softer sounds” can be heard.

*“Like turning the buttons. Like when you are working with sound, you’re like, Oh, this one has to be a bit more hard, this one a bit softer.. So it’s also a technician in the human process.*

.....  
(Coralie den Adel, Audience Developer, Boulevard/The Netherlands)

## 1.4.

### THE ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

---

Performing Gender: Dancing in Your Shoes project questioned what it means to be an artistic director. As for the other actors also for their roles, identities, and positionings are key issues, particularly concerning the co-design process and creating horizontality.

#### 1.4.1

##### THE ROLE AND IDENTITIES OF THE ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

The “traditional” role of artistic directors has been challenged and “creatively” constructed along the implementation of the process.

Key aspects mentioned to describe this type of role are: coordination instead of a “top down” artistic direction process; experience collector; connector, bridge, oversight, flexibility, being adaptive and taking care of complexity; in some cases, also a mediating role between artist and community, together with the audience developer.

*“I think for me, the role is about oversight. And I think there’s sometimes a bit of a conflict with the title artistic director because I feel like the artistic direction of the project is coming from the communities and the lead of the rooted artists. So, I feel like maybe in other projects, I might bring more to that than I have in this project because I’ve been very aware that the artistic leadership of this project is not hierarchical and is not coming from an artistic director downwards but is coming upwards from the community and the artists working in the studio. So, my role is about oversight and holding space for a framework for something to happen. And actually, it’s been very based on logistics in this project. I think a lot of the conversations between the artistic directors have been about project management and project coordination admin”[...] I think there’s been a lot of artistic decisions around like how the work is framed and presented and the context [...] So there’s also something about like how we’re inviting in a broader audience to engage with the project where there are lots of artistic decisions going on about how best to do that, how best to present, and talk about the work.”*

.....  
(Hannah Robertshaw, Artistic director, Yorkshire Dance)

The fact that artistic leadership in this project is not hierarchical does not mean that the roles cannot be clear. The artistic directors agree that it is important to explain the roles involved in the project to the community from the very beginning. Being clear brings a major awareness of one's own role as well; the fluidity and the "complexity" of the roles in this project do not mean chaos but having more awareness of one's own role and its performance when it is necessary, in the right time and place.

*"It's about the complexity [...] of course, we have a specific role, and we were very, very, very clear from the beginning to declare it to everybody. Of course, when we introduce ourselves to the community, we declare, I mean, our roles; that's a starting point, and you have to be very clear about it. So, in a way, this project was an exercise to become aware of your role and aware of the right moment at the right space, the right way you can exercise it, or in which moment it's better if you take a step back. If I have to find other words to describe the experience. I'm not always the leader, all the time, everywhere with all the people. That's the point. Of course, it's important to declare our roles, also because in a moment of possible crisis or conflict, you, as a person, can address a critic or a feeling in a very specific way to the right person. And it's something that I report on in terms of complexity [...] Artistic director reminds me of another word that is direction. Direction is where we want to go, and I use "we" because I have in mind the complexity of the teamwork, I mean necessary to achieve a result, a goal. [...] As an artistic director, I drive the vision together with the others. Taking charge of the complexity, the unexpected. [...] So, in a way, my role is to drive the common passion in a constructive way. And to find the possible solutions to the criticalities, to take in charge of the complexity of the relationship that we build because a lot of people are, I mean, part of this process. There are a lot of unexpected results. So, every time you learn by doing and changing while you are learning."*

*(Daniele Del Pozzo, Artistic Director, Gender Bender/Italy)*

The artistic directors reflected on how they exercise their role, on how they pose themselves. According to them, the posture, the tone of voice, and the method through which the role of artistic direction is practiced matters.

*"Being part of the community and listening is very important. Not saying so much is very important, but I think also being part of the community because, however you see it, you are part of this community. Whether you are an artistic leader or audience developer or whatever, you are part of the community, and it's also good to take that role at some points. And I don't mean that: "OK, now I take the lead," but in the role you have, at some point, you also act, and it's good to be considered in what all the different roles are. But at some point it's also very nice, for instance, if you at one point think: "Now really something has to happen" because at some point that was the case that our place and it's also good to say that and it's not like: "OK, now I'm taking the lead", but it's also good to be aware of your role and to take the role at some points. And then of course it's a question, how do you take it? And what kind of tone of voice do you use?"*

*(Nienke Rooijackers, Artistic director, DansBrabant/The Netherlands)*

*"I think the thing where you [have to say something], I feel like it [should be said] in one sense, it's a reminder. It's not saying this is what has to happen, but remember that this decision needs to be taken. Remember that, you know, we do have this. Because it invites it, sometimes, you know, I find it as a reminder of asking questions".*

*(Laura Kumin, Artistic director, Paso a 2/Spain)*

Co-direction of community-based art projects, where two or more actors share the responsibility of guiding and overseeing the project's process, can offer various benefits but also comes with its own set of risks. Accepting to participate in a project where the general direction is shared by many actors, including the community, composed of nonprofessionals who do not belong to the artistic sector, is empowering for the community. Still, it is a challenge for the artistic directors since the project on paper is perfect, but its implementation through co-direction is not always smooth in real life. Despite these potential challenges, successful co-direction is possible with clear communication, defined roles, and a shared commitment to the project's functions and goals. Establishing a strong foundation and addressing issues proactively can help mitigate the risks associated with co-direction in art projects.

“ I think part of it was in the beginning, falling in love with the project even though it was such an open thing because the project on paper is one thing and it's coherent, but because the decision making is shared, the project is much more open than it looks on paper and that's a big change in... It's a leap of faith because the general direction that the project is meant to take, but because the decision making is shared by so many people, and especially with the community, it means that this becomes much more flexible. And I did feel like I was very much a connector. Part of my role is very much having to do with connecting people. It did have to do also with making choices [...]. In our team, a lot of these roles have been very flexible [...] another part of whatever my role was how to communicate something that is open and flexible to people who are in positions that could help support the project, but found it difficult to understand something that was so open”

.....  
(Laura Kumin, Artistic director, Paso a 2/Spain)

“Coordinating function and that holding space for the other. Functions is very important. I sometimes see myself as someone who is collecting experiences that other people make.”

.....  
(Nina Aalders, Artistic director, Boulevard Theater Festival/The Netherlands)

Directing the financial aspects of a project within an organization is not merely an administrative process, but it requires creativity. It involves strategic thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to balance various factors to ensure the success and sustainability of the project.

“I was responsible for the financial design of the project within our organization, so that's also a creative process in a way. How are you going to make it possible financially within your organization? How do you know? How you put together budgets or and that. And I think all of us are spending a lot of time then, and that's a responsibility one person will need to take.”

.....  
(Anikó Rácz, Artistic director, SÍN Arts Centre/Hungary)

Deciding how to organize logistics and allocate financial resources among different aspects of the project involves creative artistic direction, even if it is about just practical logistics, be it the organization of the food catering or arranging the dressing room, which has to do with the valorization of the community work. This includes determining the optimal balance between short-term and long-term impacts of the project on the communities but also on the organization's strategy and the message it wants to communicate outside and to other stakeholders.

“It's a project where the artistic director is a much more a project manager [...], we spent the most of our time here in this project. I have the feeling that all of these coordination, practical issues, and logistics are really key tasks in the project. It's not only an administrative or a managing task; it's always very much connected also to artistic processes and decisions because we realize that everything is very much connected to how we plan, how we gather the groups, but also how meetings will be facilitated is very much connected also to the impact of who will be invited, but in which room, which kind of break, which kind of catering, which kind of a structure around is so important. So also, the decisions about timing mean what's happening with a community that is gathering during a whole day and needs to share meals with each other, but also needs to change clothes. So, what are all facilities need to be provided to secure a safe space and to create a safe space is an important question. So there's also a lot of very important choices to make in all of these very practical things [...] How the project will be able to make a long-term impact on the organization's strategy, how to reach out, but also how to be received and how to be read as an organization that is working with communities and with different kind of proportionalities even if the so-called non-professionals are on stage. This has been a very big issue in our organization how to raise the value of community work. So, it's a lot of advocacy work as well to do in this project. So it's a mixture of a very different task, sometimes exciting and unexpected”

.....  
(Birgit Berndt, Artistic director, Norrlandsoperan/Sweden)





## 1.4.2

### CO-DESIGN: POSITIONING AND HORIZONTALITY

Concerning artistic directors there are three main issues related to the implementation of co-design and horizontal relationship.

- the relationship with the community
- the relationship with the artist
- questioning the meaning of production from the perspective of the organizations

---

## The relationship with the community

Concerning this point, the necessity of reframing the role is often underlined, also in relation to practical decisions such as participating or not in the workshop with the community. This decision is, in some cases, related to the possibility of welcoming the community in its own space or not and being able to keep the relationship alive.

Embracing a truly collaborative approach requires letting go of traditional hierarchical structures and taking a more inclusive and participatory mindset. In the *Performing Gender: Dancing in Yours Shoes* project, most of the artistic directors participated physically in community dance practices. They engaged in reflective practices to continuously learn from the co-design experience. This reflexivity brought a “silent presence” which allowed a major listening the “rhythm” in the room. Even if might be hard sometimes, witnessing in silence required the condition of “stepping back from the role of artistic director” in a sincere way “taking shoes and socks off” without acting to “dismantle hierarchies” and “hiding behind the co-design curtain” but “doing it authentically”.

“Co-design requires a strong relationship, requires trust, requires clarity, and reliability. [...] Codesign required me to take a step back from myself. We decided to participate in the workshops and to participate as witnesses [...] just to be present and silent. That is another posture, another way. Of course, I used to exercise my leadership in a very proactive way and also to be very present, to say, to speak a lot. But what I learned through *Performing Gender's* co-design is also that you have to reposition, positioning yourself into... we're super tight and invisible. To stay present, to stay alive, to keep your attention, but also listening a lot. And there are a lot of things more about co-design, is the rhythm. You have to take the rhythm according to the others [...] When I talked about codesign, I didn't want to use the word as a sort of curtain in which I hide behind like a sort of a secret puppetry. You know the time. For sure you have to tune the best, I mean your role with the needs of the group, that's for sure. So it's about complexity”.

.....  
(Daniele Del Pozzo, Artistic Director, *Gender Bender/Italy*)

By relinquishing some control and embracing a more egalitarian approach, co-design and co-creation processes can be nourished by the community's collective intelligence and creativity, resulting in more impactful and community-driven outcomes. It encourages experimentation and risk-taking to explore innovative ideas. It helps to understand that not all outcomes may be predictable, and some experimentation is necessary for truly creative and novel solutions.

“[...] I was so involved. I was part of the production. I would physically do the all the exercises in the physical practice with them. I'd only ever step out at the point that they were like rehearsing the work. So I felt like one of, you know, that felt really important to start the project in that space of being seen as one of the group, almost and not, you know, again, like this, dismantling the hierarchy of roles. There was something about, you know, taking shoes and socks off and being with the group in that way. That felt really important [...] I'm trying to say is to do it authentically, to really co-produce, to really co-create, you have to relinquish some power, some control, some frameworks that you're used to working in that give you comfort because you know how to work in them and you know how to manage your, your workload in that time. You have to give some of that away, which is quite hard. It also creates opportunities for the unexpected, which I think is so much what this project is”.

.....  
(Hannah Robertshaw, Artistic director, *Yorkshire Dance*)

Co-design is not a one-time event. The lived experiences of the artistic directors showed that cultivating long-term relationships, even in silence, with the community to sustain the collaborative spirit through physical participation is vital to establishing trust among participants since it is seen as a demonstration of the commitment to inclusivity and collaboration.

“I made the decision to participate [...] It comes from a place of great trust, so it was interesting for me to be able to feel included in that just as another person, not as the artistic director. [...] I think being there without voicing opinions, just listening and being there and when it's time to share something, we all share something. It's a good exercise in [...] I don't even know the word for it. In being in a different place, in a different space in the project and I find that really a wonderful learning experience”

.....  
(Laura Kumin, Artistic director, Paso a 2/Spain)

For cultivating long-term relationships with the community, it is crucial to have a dedicated space that contributes to community building by providing a sense of identity and belonging. It establishes a common ground for members to connect and share experiences and helps build and consolidate consistent relationships.

“It's so good to listen that how space, how specific it is like design the project itself in the locations because we have our own space. So when these people came in on a Friday afternoon we were there, we asked how they were, we offered them tea and bananas. There was like two hours where our audience developer was in the office preparing for the workshop, us having the conversation. So there was, you know, it's not that it happens somewhere completely out of our sight, but we were hosting it in a different way”.

.....  
(Anikó Rácz, Artistic director, SÍN Arts Centre/Hungary)

However, the lived experiences of the artistic directors revealed that they adapted strategies based on what works and what doesn't to improve collaborative efforts. Having a dedicated space gave more freedom to the artistic director and the audience developer in deciding whether to take part or not in the community dance practices. Meanwhile, the absence of a dedicated space rendered crucial the participation of the artistic director in the community dance practices since it was the only chance to be with the community.

“Since we don't have a space, if I weren't participating in the physical practice ever, I wouldn't see them because we don't have a space where we can welcome them and say: “Hi, come on in, you know, have a cup of tea”, we'll, you know, we'll have a coffee afterwards, if you know, maybe. And that made a big difference. If I don't go to the physical practice, unless I'm going to performances, sometimes we go to performances together, or some of us will go and maybe I'll go and be the only one from the team there, I wouldn't have a chance to be with the community.”

.....  
(Laura Kumin, Artistic director, Paso a 2/Spain)

The lack of a dedicated space imposed the necessity to work in different spaces in the city, so the community had the chance to go to different neighborhoods. This gave the possibility of major visibility to the community and the project, reaching a broader audience, expanding the possibility of major participation. The silver lining of not owning a dedicated space

contributed to increasing the agency and self-confidence of the community in accessing some parts of the city where they didn't feel welcome before. One of the most important impacts of the project on the city and the community is that the entire city itself ended up being the community's own space, “a sacred space for them” as described by the artistic director.

“Our situation is a bit different because we do not have a physical space of our own. We work with a lot of physical spaces, we collaborate with a lot of them, but we don't have a place where we can have an ongoing open, an ongoing activity in the same space where people can come to us? We have been working with one space in one area of the city in Carabanchel, which is downtown; it's a very working-class neighborhood that a lot of artists are moving to because it is more because it's a little bit cheaper to find space there. So we have developed a relationship, we developed the relationship with this neighborhood, and we are going to have to find a way to continue that because the space that we are working at is closing. It will be closing before we finish working [...] They are going to spaces where they wouldn't have gone before because they didn't feel welcome. And this is really important and also in the community because we really have, it's a fairly stable community of a mix of people who are, some are immigrants and political refugees, some are in the midst of gender transition, some are activists, some are teachers, some are recovering from addictions. It's a big mix and a very supportive group. So it's been very much about making a safe space, but I think that, in a sense, it's making the city a sacred space for them. And it's making them feel like they have more agency in doing that and engaging with the city. I think that's a big thing. We may not have a space, but I think that the product is working to make the city a space for the community”

.....  
(Laura Kumin, Artistic director, Paso a 2/Spain)

Besides not having a dedicated space some of the partners, given that they are festivals and not community or arts centers, did not have dedicated time to this kind of community dance practice before the Performing Gender: Dancing in Your Shoes project, which throughout three years of the project established a dedicated time for those activities which gave the possibility to expand their audiences which has been registered by the artistic director as a key learning and transformation.

“Starting from very practical points as Madrid, we have no space for activities like this, and we have no time devoted to activities like this. I mean, we started as a festival, years ago, but more and more we needed to develop specific projects just to keep the relationship with the people alive during the whole year. So, for us Performing Gender was an ordinary occasion that it has giving us time, specific time and specific space. I mean time because it's quite extraordinary for us, and I use “us” as the team, the community, the people involved anyway for such a long time. I mean we are talking about a free year experience. Three years in which we have regular meetings, workshops, encounters, and dialogues. So, it's quite an extraordinary occasion. What I gained I mean or what I learned from this experience is strictly related to the audience.”

.....  
(Daniele Del Pozzo, Artistic Director, Gender Bender/Italy)

---

## The relationship with the artist

In this project the artistic direction approach was to push the boundaries of conventional art and community engagement, creating a space for experimentation and mutual influence between the artists and the community. It acknowledges that the creative process is dynamic and collaborative, allowing for a more organic and authentic exploration of artistic expression.

“We developed something that we call human specific work, and that was also about the mostly implemented in the triangle of the artist, the organization and the audience member or the citizen or the person that that would like to enjoy art. We already did some very educative and interesting projects and started to more explicitly work with artists who would like to involve in some way citizens in their process. But this was the first time to involve, to really ask an artist to be part of a whole production process with a community that we engaged. There was also the stigma on the art we were making, that we had to fight against. It is not education that we are making. It's an old dilemma. So what does make it art? [...] We focused a lot in this project on the development of the community and we gave a lot of space to them [...] So it is it is really a bit searching in the dark, like, what do we get back? How can we respond to it?”

.....  
(Nina Aalders, Artistic director, Boulevard Theater Festival/The Netherlands)

“How we give that authority or that freedom to the rooted artist: This is your territory, do whatever. We have an agreement, we have put together the framework, but within that and of course now thinking back, it was different when she also started, the other Luca, so I think she also needed that kind of freedom and authorization that that's her space, and that's her team, and we are not there to, you know... So I think she would have been so different even that we had trust and that was never an issue, but that she has that territory for herself.”

.....  
(Anikó Rácz, Artistic director, SÍN Arts Centre/Hungary)

“We give to the dancemaker complete freedom to develop the artistic research together with the community in the direction that they prefer. And we didn't say a single word about the form, the shape, the direction, the languages. Nothing at all. I mean, we gave them a white page. Completely, and we didn't say a word about the decisions taken by the group and the dance maker. It is something that I like to give you in a very explicit way”

.....  
(Daniele Del Pozzo, Artistic Director, Gender Bender/Italy)

“In our case, both Javier and Marina have been important in connecting us with communities that they were connected with and bringing them into the project. That's something I think, you know, besides their capacities as dance makers, they have been very important in terms of bringing the project out to their own communities.”

.....  
(Laura Kumin, Artistic director, Paso a 2/Spain)

---

## Questioning the meaning of the production

Co-design revealed also a dilemma about what does it mean art production in this project. On the one hand the artistic directors had a deep self-reflection on applying a horizontal approach regarding the artistic work and production. They tried to leave the decision making completely to the artist and the community. On the other hand, the work-in-progress of the production revealed the necessity to confront with material conditions such as making a calendar of production or finding financial solution to make things happen. All of these different aspects are seen as related to production process.

“We are not producing a show. We are not producers. We are the team that thanks to the project gives this possibility to a group of people to create something together, or to experience an artistic research together and to express themselves into an artistic form together. But we didn't in any way, any drive the form the or shape of the performance”.

.....  
(Daniele Del Pozzo, Artistic Director, Gender Bender/Italy)

“I’m not sure because I would say we are producing, but of course it’s producing in a way of offering opportunities and I think also producing is also a creative, artistic thing to do [...] It’s also a way of giving opportunity. It’s what you make of producing, but it’s a nice way of questioning the whole role of producer.”

.....  
(Anikó Rácz, Artistic director, SÍN Arts Centre/Hungary)

“I feel that part of my role is to, once they make that decision, do what I can to make it possible [...] I felt that that is the point where I felt most kind of pressured because we’re still in the process because it’s co-creation and the decision isn’t in my hands [...] So it really has to be made by the community. The time when I felt the most pressure was, we’re going to go somewhere. What can we tell the people who will be our hosts, the organization, what we’re gonna do? I know that something is going to happen, and I have total confidence that it will be of interest, but the idea of having to define it with a calendar, which is a production calendar, to know when you’re presenting what the people, what will be necessary, what conditions can it be presented in. Those are all production decisions.”

.....  
(Laura Kumin, Artistic director, Paso a 2/Spain).

“Of course, we are producers when we say to the community: “now you are developing a creation for 25 performers, but remember that just a version with five of them will tour in other countries.” This is a production, we talk as producers, but, we didn’t give any specific indication to them about the artistic, the direction, the artistic research. They are completely free, but on the other way around as the people in charge to find economical resources, to find the way, the most feasible way to develop the project and to go until the end this is a production approach.”

.....  
(Daniele Del Pozzo, Artistic Director, Gender Bender/Italy)

# SECTION 5

Final

recommendations

for policy makers

and cultural

professionals

# Chapter 1

## Highlights and recommendations for cultural professionals

In this chapter, we provide a final summary of the handbook, with a systematization of our findings, departing from the analysis of the entire process and the actors' lived experiences achieved throughout the project (see section 4). In particular, we present highlights regarding learnings and recommendations for cultural operators aiming at planning

and implementing an audience engagement process based on co-design and co-creation and oriented to produce effects regarding community building and social changes.

The intention is, therefore, to present the outline of the co-created knowledge achieved through the PG-DIYS project.

---

### Highlights on the roles and ways of performing them

In a project such as the PG-DIYS, focused on a community-based artistic process through a co-design and co-creation approach, roles and the ways of performing them, the positionings in a multiple set of relationships emerge as fundamental for the success of the project, also to overcome the rhetoric of participation. Concerning these aspects, the following two points summarize highlights and learnings.

#### 1. Be open to overcoming the “traditional” positions and new organizational roles

Organizational changes can be fostered through:

##### a. Deconstructing the hierarchical position of the artistic director and reframing the role by creatively (re)constructing it in relation to dynamics and the whole process.

**Key learnings** for the artistic directors of PG-DIYS that can be considered as hints for future community-based projects:

- Co-coordination instead of a “top-down” artistic direction process;
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Taking care of complexity
- Co-mediation with the audience developer between the artists and community

##### b. Being open to new organizational roles to work with the communities.

Implementing a community-based artistic project requires

a new role, an **audience developer (AD)**, for instance, dedicated to **taking care of the relationship with the community.**

Several aspects prior to the assessment of the AD should be taken into consideration, which are gathered under this **“checklist of questions”** prepared departing from the experiences of the organizations involved in the PG-DIYS.

- In your organization, is there already a figure dedicated to this role?
- Do you want to invest in it for a capacity-building process with the communities you are working with?
- In your organization, is there a shared understanding of what this figure is about?
- What tasks do you think this figure should cover in your organization?
- Would you consider giving a broader space for creatively exploring possibilities about “being an AD”?
- **Remember:** The self-reflection on hidden hierarchies and positionings of artistic directors and audience developers is crucial in a community-based project. AD has a key role in co-creating a space for equal relationships on multiple levels – between audience developers, dance makers, and the community. Taking care of relationships often implies a challenging combination of professional and personal aspects for the ADs. A broader space for the creative exploration of this figure also implies practical decisions, such as taking part or not in the community artistic practices with important impacts on the process such as the necessity to invest more time in the decision-making process within your organization.

**2. Be prepared to take – as an artistic director – multiple decisions at multiple levels, taking into consideration different risks and opportunities**

These **types of decisions on one side require an in-depth reflexive posture regarding intersectional identities and “hidden hierarchies” that can be in the “room”** (e.g., in the relationship with the community). On the other hand, trust and more horizontal relationships can be fostered thanks to those decisions (e.g., participating or not in crucial project activities such as workshops with the community).

**3. Be open to reassessing your idea of programming and production**

Programming and production often require finding new creative encounters between a horizontal approach regarding artistic production and material conditions, such as making a production calendar or finding financial solutions to make things happen since these aspects are part of a production process.

**4. Be aware and prepared that in a community-based artistic process, the role of the artists could be challenged in the process.**

A **key learning** emerged from the process is that co-creation is a challenging field of an **encounter between the autonomy of the dance makers in terms of artistic choices and research interests and the agency of the community**. This encounter can also be conflictual; co-creation challenges also arose during the **decision-making process**, which calls into question how power should be shared regarding knowledge, co-construction, and responsibility.

- **Remember:** Artists’ positionalities depending on their intersectional, professional, and political identities (activists already engaged with the community or not) and previous experiences (or lack of experience) in working with communities, have an impact on the relationship with the community.

---

## Highlights concerning the method and planning of community engagement

**1. Be aware of a double necessity: a common ground regarding aims and values around key issues of the project and a place-based approach**

Co-design and community-based projects, particularly when implemented by a partnership characterized by many different socio-cultural and political contexts, need, on one side, to give space for a discussion inside your organization and partnership to **create a common ground in terms of aims and values informing the project**. On the other side, **be open to adapting the process to your specific context, in line with a place-based approach**. For example, in PG-DIYS, different choices have been made concerning using categories of “dance” vs. “movement” to define and communicate the project and how the gender issue has been explored through artistic practices in different political and social contexts. At the same time, key principles and values have been shared in the partnership, for example, concerning the issue of hierarchies and power.

**2. Consider having a reflection on the involvement process of the dancemakers.**

Departing from our findings, we provide a **“checklist of questions” to plan this involvement:**

- In your organization, do you dedicate time to discuss the role of the artists/dancemakers you work with in this process?
- Do you also consider them as facilitators in this process?
- What criteria do you follow to hire dancemakers?
- In which phase of the project are you planning to involve the artists?

- Are you open to co-designing the process with them by sharing aims, discussing what it means to co-create, and ideas about the community that you want to engage?
- Have you discussed with the dancemakers the type and style of commitment the project needs?
- **Remember:** While reflecting on the checklist questions and during the discussion with the artists, remember the impacts of the roles and positionalities of different actors involved in the community-based project, as stated above.

**3. Think about owning a space or not for the project**

PG-DIYS showed that having a dedicated space to welcome the community for the workshops, events, and conviviality moments helps to keep the relationships alive more easily with less effort and less participation in some cases from the organizations’ side since having an own space facilitates some logistical issues. However, the lack of space can be transformed into an opportunity to create new encounters in other places and spaces where you see potential to engage with different communities and build new relationships. This can help you expand your artistic practice and influence on new territories while also empowering community members through access to new places and communities.

**4. Consider having a reflection on the type of community and the aims of the engagement**

Departing from our findings, we provide a **“checklist of questions”** around the engagement of communities:

- Are you thinking of starting to build communities **departing from specific “identity-based” groups** (mainly intersectional considering race, gender, age dimensions,



shared interests, and cultural or political instances) or **through engaging people who do not express a specific identity group belonging?**

- Do you aim to engage audiences **not already in relation to you** – with a widening and/or a diversifying aim – and/or do you prefer to deepen an existing relationship?
- **Remember:** Consider **being open to unexpected encounters** to have a more **intersectional community**

that can welcome **differences** and create inclusion and more **participation**.

5. **Based on the type of the engaged community and the aims of engagement, consider different possibilities of communication and invitation and new alliances for community empowerment.**

---

## Highlights concerning the implementation of community dance practices

1. **Be aware that it is a complex process that requires time to build trust, care, safe space, and time also for conviviality.**

Indeed, an artistic process interested in working on the creation of communities is strictly related to **how a sense of belonging is built through body experiences, the exploration of multiple identities, and the sharing (his)stories/self-representations**.

Trust building can also be influenced by important decisions such as whether to leave or not during the process **or having the “door open” for other people to join in**. The “openness” can create a field for experimenting with how to be a community through dancing together and body practices, but it often requires facilitation.

2. **Be aware that the transformative role of artistic practices requires space and time to generate long-term change through co-creation and learning based on a common but diverse experience.**

For instance, the following learnings and changes, generated by PG-DIYS, show how deep and far this type of process can go, however thanks to a long period of dancing together:

- The discovery **of own needs and desires, of limits and unexpected possibilities and opportunities**, the **(de) construction of identities** and the possibility of **“being in many shoes”** but also of **“having many shoes to dance”**, thanks to the encounter with ‘others’ through bodily practices
- the exploration of one’s own body through others’ bodies leads to co-creating a **common ground for the community and collective empowerment**;
- the generation of a **sense of freedom**, of **(artistic) self-expression** and a **space for each member’s unique beauty**
- all the above learnings and changes generated a positive **impact on people’s daily social life and participation in public life outside of the community**.



# Chapter 2

## Policy recommendations and concluding remarks

In this final chapter of the handbook, we aim to shed light on key points for policymakers and art funders, whether at a municipal, regional, national, or transnational level. The following recommendations have been developed departing from the data analysis conducted by the research team and related findings presented during the Closing Lab at Boulevard Theater Festival (August 2023). In this chapter, we present the highlights and recommendations (see the previous chapter) drafted by the research team and reworked by the British Council in order to identify five main recommendations during the final PG-DIYS Summit in Brussels (November 2023). The foreground of these recommendations is the recognition of the expertise developed through almost 10 years of

Performing Gender projects, and by the consortium partners in a deep understanding of questions around gender and sexual identity and, in the 2020-2023 edition, *Dancing In Your Shoes*, regarding how artistic processes can support community-building through genuine co-design between professional artists and target community members.

The project also showed that deep engagement with communities does not have to result in cultural works that are somehow 'less valuable' or 'less professional' than works authored by isolated choreographers. In fact, the project has shown that rigorous, innovative, and excellent works can result from this deep collaborative practice.

### 2.1.

#### KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

---

##### 1. Dance as a cultural vehicle for a positive change in people's lives

So many of the communities we have worked with carry their lived experience of marginalization in their bodies – through gender-based violence, sexual discrimination, experiences of racism, aging, disability, homophobia, or transphobia. Dance, if explored with sensitivity and experience, has the power to transform individual experience and to build stronger and happier communities.

##### 2. Working with communities needs time and resources

Collaborative relationship-building with an identified community needs to be supported outside of the usual cultural project-to-project timeframes. This work takes time, trust, and reflection. It also takes money! Therefore, an appropriate budget and considered actions to support trust-building need to be set aside outside of a project's artistic budget and framework.

##### 3. Co-design with vulnerable communities is an expert cultural practice

This innovative working methodology requires knowledge and experience. We encourage policymakers to seek out excellent examples but also to learn to recognize bad practices.

##### 4. Historically, community engagement in cultural organizations has not been valued equally to artistic production.

Policymakers should encourage and support different hierarchical structures that will better encourage and value innovative, inclusive participation.

##### 5. New evaluation methodologies and timelines are needed

Robust evaluation processes support policymakers and the cultural sector to improve their decision-making. However, evaluation methodologies must be flexible, adapted to ensure depth of impact is measured, and must allow long-term impact and change to be measured.

During the Brussels Summit, a specific session was dedicated to critically reflecting on the evaluation process. As the academic partners, we participated in this session and shared our lived experience in this project in dialogue

with partners, community members, local policymakers, and other experts in this field. The results have been the following recommendations.

## 2.2.

### RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING CREATIVE EUROPE EVALUATION METHODOLOGIES

---

**M**ultiply the opportunities to open a dialogue with the cultural sector: the cultural sector is available to co-design with policymakers new evaluation criteria within the current Creative Europe program and for Creative Europe beyond 2028.

We want to break the cycle of the evaluation burden that is placed both on policymakers and the cultural sector. Please bring the cultural sector in now so that we can support you. Together, we can explore how the evaluation criteria can be more efficient and valuable to both funders and beneficiaries

1. As we have learned from *Performing Gender: Dancing In Your Shoes*, expertise in Co-Design leads to better outcomes for gender equity, LGBTQIA+ representation, people with disabilities and marginalized communities, and **needs to inform current evaluation methodologies and those in subsequent Work Programmes.**

2. There needs to be more **flexibility in terms of evaluating a Creative Europe project.** The European Union needs to **acknowledge place-based approaches** vary due to local context, and we propose that there should be **guiding evaluation principles which permit local adaptability.**
3. Please **reduce bureaucracy.** Cultural organizations want evaluation, but to evaluate is expensive and time-consuming. We already collect and provide large amounts of data, sometimes having to submit data already submitted to another funder.

We are calling on the European Parliament to convene a **Data Reduction Taskforce** to map the data burden across all the key funding bodies with which cultural institutions engage, and to identify where it can be minimised. We hope through this it is identified where and how the outstanding burden might be reduced.

## 2.3.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

---

In these concluding notes, we want to focus on several key points about the value of the arts, evaluation, and our role as researchers.

A significant debate concerning cultural and social values has developed in recent years. A widespread distinction is made between three types of values (Holden 2004).

**Intrinsic cultural value** typically refers to art “for its own sake, because it has a value in its own right” which is closely linked to the artistic content and can be considered an essential part of the cultural experience. It describes art’s subjective effect on people and defines its quality and “excellence” (Holden 2004). **Instrumental value** refers to the link between culture (as an instrument) and the achievement of economic and social goals; **Institutional Value**, linked to the notion of “public value”, refers to how an organization behaves, in particular when interacting with the public, citizens, territory and to the generation of growth and resilience of the local community. As Holden (2004, p.25) states, using these categories can constitute a risk, particularly if connected with the policy aims. The emphasis on the social benefits of the cultural dimension has sparked debates on the risks of excessive political exploitation of the arts (Belfiore 2002). There is the risk of a divergent discourse between «instrumental value vs. intrinsic value” and “excellence vs. access” to culture. The instrumental/intrinsic debate also tends to polarize along class lines: aesthetic values for the middle classes and instrumental outcomes for the disadvantaged. Finally, this debate is related to the framing of the relationship between producers and audiences of culture: too much concentration on impacts minimizes

the role of artists and curators in favor of the audiences, and a concentration on intrinsic values tends to place the artist or curator in a central position to the detriment of the audiences. We argue that PG-DIYS has contributed to overcoming this dichotomy and has shown how cultural organizations, dance-makers, and communities of non-professionals generated collaboratively an intrinsic value (Walmsley 2019) while also deeply interrogating the role of the organizations, dancemakers as “mediators” (Allegrini 2022; Paltrinieri and Allegrini 2022) in facilitating the co-creation of artistic experiences, and possible ambivalences that can characterize these roles. Indeed, the community-building process through the co-creation and working on themes such as community, solidarity, and intersectional identities, immediately brought the reflection on the power dynamics within the community and the relations between different project actors.

In this process of co-creation, time has been a crucial dimension. Time to create a safe space and time of “not being productive,” have been reclaimed by the project’s actors. From this point of view, time is connected with the meaning of “production” and to the necessity of recognizing, in evaluating arts and their social impacts, the value generated by co-creation practices with communities.

All of these issues were addressed during the session on the “Re-evaluating Evaluation” at the Bruxelles Summit by Nikita Maheshwary, one of the rooted dance makers, whose speech helps us in changing the “standpoint” and understanding how revolutionary has been this project in transforming the “social system” of art production.

**“Turn the table. Evaluating what the communities did for the cultural field.”**

**Speech by Nikita Maheshwary, Panel “Re-evaluating Evaluation”, Brussels Summit, 15 November, 2023**

Good morning! I am Nikita, a choreographer, and in the past years, I am deeply invested in arts academia and research. I want to start today, by speculating, that when this project – (Performing Gender: Dancing in Your Shoes) was envisioned, the research trajectory and the funding application written had a lot of emphasis on how this will potentially create an impact – a long standing impact – on a community of people. The people whose narratives are not in the mainstream, their voices not perhaps heard often and how they have had a history or present of being marginalized. How through and with this dance project, their voices will get a platform and be heard and how this listening and feeling of being heard can (and will) create ripple effects. Having had the absolute privilege as a choreographer and a facilitator to have worked with the community of women in Tilburg/ DansBrabant, I would like to turn the table and reflect and evaluate what projects like PG and the communities it formed or worked with did for to the cultural field.

**Evaluating what the communities and projects like Performing Gender do for the cultural field**

Given the time frame we have today, I want to share two concrete aspects of it:

- how did the communities expand the language of contemporary dance
- how it helped re- imagine the established ways of doing of the theatre and dance sector

**Expanding the language of contemporary dance Expertise of the non-dancing bodies.**

It's something Birgit touched upon yesterday, and I take your words Birgit because mine weren't that articulate. The communities brought to the table (in our case, the studio) an urgent need to reimagine the aesthetics of contemporary dance. How we, and by we I mean organisations/dance houses/ programmers/choreographers; how we are used to package dance/performance as per a certain standard of “good” aesthetics- and put it neatly in a box. Even if the theme is chaos or grief, we find ways to package that as per these so-called high-art aesthetics. There are so many dialogues and analysis of these dynamics of high art-low art on policy paper and in conferences, but DIYS as a project has really made us tangibly negotiate this by bringing the professional & non-professional in the same room. To reimagine and expand this aesthetic and performative language. In the doing, in the listening.

**Presenting vs Representation**

In Boulevard this August, we watched 3 days back to back community after community sharing their work, snippets into their process, the cathartic moments... that on the third day even before Leeds had finished their performance, I broke down. I was so overwhelmed that I walked for two hours on the

streets of Den Bosch crying before I found my way back home (which is fortunately not far, in Tilburg). It took me a while to realise what caused it and I shared with Carina yesterday; it was hearing her story of not being allowed to dance all through her life before dancing at the age of 70. That was the tipping point but also to realise that what I witnessed all these days were real presentations of real stories and real people. To think of Gayatri Spivak's seminal essay ‘Can the subaltern speak?’, I felt the subaltern (the so-called other) could speak and when it did, it was just beyond spectacular to listen. We, in the field of contemporary dance, are also busy with themes synonymous - on care, on guilt, on fragility, on trauma - but we are mostly representing or portraying it vs what PG enabled was the true ‘authentic’ movement vocabulary to appear.

**Reimagine the established “ways of doing” of the dance sector**

I was mulling over the brilliant session we had last evening, when Bakani, Marina, and Parvin talked about their work and how it emerges from critically engaging with queer thinking, intersectional feminist thinking and decolonial thinking - and what I feel DIYS made space for was this thinking/philosophies to really find articulation and build an alternate way of doing in the framework of the dance sector which is deeply rooted and built on the Eurocentric, Colonial, Neoliberal-capitalist philosophy. It challenged the top-down approach from day one, it questioned the power dynamics between institution-artist-performers on structural levels, it argued what we consider as output (can we find spectacle in failure?), it debated can we honestly remain relevant if we continue to run the ship the way it did a decade ago. On the other hand, it also made us see, that horizontal ways of working are perhaps not the alternative either. We have to engage in sociocratic structures which requires constant listening, humility, adaptivity and responsibility to play your role in a community, but also in an organization.

Question: Was working with just a community a of 15-20 people worth the public money spent?

Fact: Most of us didn't perform more than 4-5 times with halls not packed to it's full capacity

Question: was it still worth the funding?

To sum it up and evaluate this 3 year PG trajectory (and I am very much about numbers), the answer for me, (and I come from India, where this sort of project will be called a white-man's privilege), is Yes. This project and the communities that came together collectively weaved another narrative than the normative. The Decolonial Thinking/Queer Thinking/Feminist Thinking came into play tangibly, out of the discursive and academic, they appeared in daily confrontations with self and created fractures in ways of approaching and doing arts at a ground level. It bought time, the most precious commodity of them all - for listening, for awkward silences to remain awkward, for spaces to become safe, and then, and only then, for dialogue to appear. All these ‘so-called’ alternate philosophies can only appear in the doing, through time to structurally change and make grassroots level impact on the overall dance and theatre sector. Thank you.”

In dialogue with the words of Nikita Maheshwary, we conclude by sharing a reflection concerning our role. As researchers engaged in observing and acting within the field, we sought to assume a posture aimed at being part of a collective process of knowledge production. Our intention was also to develop a way to make visible and legible the co-production/co-ownership of knowledge and the experiences that made this production possible.

In this handbook, we tried to share the collective journey made by community members, dancer makers, audience developers, artistic directors, and researchers. We also tried to create a multifaced picture of the several effects this journey had generated, impacting all the actors involved. In academia, there are many ways to describe this posture. The most com-

mon one is investigating the relationship between power and knowledge production, and the contradictions inherent in this relationship.

Considering these contradictions and theoretical concepts on the “posture”, we departed from the “standpoint theory” to activate a self-reflection process on us, as researchers and all the other subjects, as producers of social knowledge based on lived experiences.

We tried to put into dialogue analytical perspectives with direct voices and narrations of many actors, which emerged through multiple conversations or already written texts. The tensions between power and knowledge haven’t been really “solved”, but we hope we have contributed to creating new alliances.

PG-DIYS Brussels Summit, 2023.





# References



Allegri G. (2019), *Sociologia pubblica e democrazia partecipativa. Una proposta di analisi critica*, «Quaderni di Teoria Sociale», 1: 61- 84.

Allegri G. (2020), *Artistic practice and the constitution of public sphere: an explorative inquiry*, in Paltrinieri R., Parmiggiani P., Musarò M., Moralli (eds.), *Right to the city. Art and Migration*, FrancoAngeli, Milano: 124-141.

Allegri G. (2021), *Prospettive di analisi della dimensione culturale del Welfare di Comunità*, in Manzoli G., Paltrinieri R., (eds.), *Welfare Culturale, La dimensione della cultura nei processi di Welfare di Comunità*, FrancoAngeli, Milano: 91-113.

Allegri G. (2022), *Partecipazione e innovazione culturale a impatto sociale*, in Paltrinieri R. (edited by), *Il valore sociale della cultura*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 57-89.

Allegri G., Paltrinieri R. (2022), *Audience Engagement and Cultural Diversity*, in Musarò P., Papastergiadis N. and Peja L. (Eds.) *MIGRATIONS / MEDIATIONS Promoting Transcultural Dialogue through Media, Arts and Culture*, «Comunicazioni Sociali, Journal of media, performing Arts and Cultural Studies», (January-April 2022): 121- 134.

Appadurai A. (2004), *The capacity to aspire to: culture and the terms of recognition*, in Rao V. Walton M. (eds.) *Culture and Public Action*, Stanford University press, Stanford: 59-84

Appadurai A. (2011), *Le aspirazioni nutrono la democrazia*, Et al. Edizioni, Milano.

Arnstein S. (1969), *A Ladder of citizen participation*, «Journal of American Institute of Planners», n.35-4: 216-224.

Bauman Z. (1991), *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Polity Press, Oxford.

Bauman, Z. (2000), *Liquid Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Belfiore E. (2002), *Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK*, «International Journal of Cultural Policy», 8 (1): 91-106.

Boal 1974, *Teatro do Oprimido e outra politicas*, De la Flor, Buenos Aires.

Bishop C. (2011), *Artificial hells: participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*, Verso, London, New York.

Bollo A. (2014), *Cinquanta sfumature di pubblico e la sfida dell'audience development*, in De Baise F. (a cura di), *I pubblici della cultura. Audience development, Audience Engagement*, FrancoAngeli, Mailno, pp. 163-180.

Bollo A., Da Milano C., Gariboldi A., Torch C. (2017), *Study on audience development – How to place audiences at the centre of cultural organisations*, European Council.

Bonaga G. (2021), *Metodologie di valutazione di impatto degli interventi artistici e culturali*, in Manzoli G. Paltrinieri P. (eds.), *Welfare Culturale, La dimensione della cultura nei processi di Welfare di Comunità*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, pp. 75-90.

Bonet L., Négrier E. (2011), *The end (s) of national cultures? Cultural policy in the face of diversity*, «International Journal of Cultural Policy», n. 17, 5, pp. 574-589

Bourriaud N. (1998), *Relational aesthetics*, in Bishop C. (eds.), *Participation*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, pp. 160-171.

Brown A. S., Novak-Leonard J.L., Gilbride S. (2011), *Getting in on the act: How arts groups are creating opportunities for active participation*, James Irvin Foundation, San Francisco CA.

Butler J. (1988), *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*, «Theatre Journal», 40, 4: 520-521.

Butler (1990), *Gender trouble, feminism and the subversion of identity*, Routledge, New York.

Carpentier N. (2017), *The Concept of Participation: if they have access and interact, do they really participate?*, in Iannelli L., Musarò P. (eds.), *Performative Citizenship. Public art, urban design, and political participation*, Mimesis International, Milano, pp. 25-49.

Carastathis, A. (2016), *Intersectionality: origins, contestations, horizons*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincol.

Chatzidakis A., Hakim J., Littler J., Rottemberg C. and Segal L.(2020), *The Care Manifesto*, Verso, London.

Chouliarakis L. (2013), *The ironic spectator: solidarity in the age of post Humanitarianism* , Polity Press, Cambridge

Collins, P. H. (1986), *Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought*, «Social Problems», 33(6):14–32.

Collins, P.H., and Sirma B. (2016), *Intersectionality*, Polity Press: Cambridge.

Crenshaw, K. (1991), *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color*, «Stanford Law Review», 43(6): 1241–1299.

Dâmaso, M. et al (2022), *Culture For Health Report. Scoping review of culture, well-being, and health interventions and their evidence, impacts, challenges and policy recommendations for Europe*, in [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/365427746\\_Culture\\_ForHealth\\_Report\\_Scoping\\_review\\_of\\_culture\\_well-being\\_and\\_health\\_interventions\\_and\\_their\\_evidence\\_impacts\\_challenges\\_and\\_policy\\_recommendations\\_for\\_Europe](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/365427746_Culture_ForHealth_Report_Scoping_review_of_culture_well-being_and_health_interventions_and_their_evidence_impacts_challenges_and_policy_recommendations_for_Europe).

D'Amico F.D. (2017), *La performance della soggettività tra scena e studi di genere*, Collana Studi di genere. Quaderni di Donne & Ricerca. Vol 1.

D'Amico F.D. (2019), *Il corpo come luogo di negoziazione di significati*, «Comunicazioni Sociali», n. 2, 332-342.

Elliot A. (2019), *Routledge Handbook of Identity Studies*, Routledge, London.

Fischer-Rosenthal, W. and Rosenthal, G. (1997), *Narrationsanalyse biographischer Selbstpräsentation*, in: Hitzler, R. and Honer, A. (eds), *Sozialwissenschaftliche Hermeneutik. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden*. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-11431-4\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-11431-4_6)

Foucault M. (1976), *La volontà de savoir*, Gallimard, Paris; tr. it. 2010, *La volontà di sapere*, Feltrinelli, Milano

Fancourt D., Finn S., (2019), *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review* World Health Organization.

Frisina, A. (2010), *Focus group. Una guida pratica*, Il Mulino, Bologna.

Fulco E. (2022), *Il campo semantico del welfare culturale: tra partecipazione, autorialità e visione sistemica*, in Paltrinieri R. (edited by) (2022), *Il valore sociale della cultura*, FrancoAngeli, Milano: 117-128.

Ghigi, R. and Sassatelli, R. (2018), *Corpo, genere e società*, Il Mulino, Bologna.

Gielen P. (2013), *Mapping Community Art*, in Gielen P., De Bruyne P. (eds.), *Community Art. The Politics of Trespassing*, Valiz, Amsterdam, pp. 15-33.

Gielen P. (2015), *Performing the Common city. On the Crossroads of Art, Politics and Public Life*, in Bax S., Gielen P., Ieven B. (eds.), *Interrupting the City. Artistic Constitution of the Public Sphere*, Valiz, Amsterdam pp. 273-298.

Kester G. (2005), *Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially-Engaged Art*, in Kucor Z., Leung S. (eds.), *Contemporary Art Since 1985*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden.

Kawashima N. (2000), *Beyond the Division of Attenders vs. Non-attenders: a study into audience development in policy and practice*, Centre for Cultural Policy Studies:[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/theatre\\_s/cp/research/publications/centrepubs/ccps\\_paper\\_6.pdf](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/theatre_s/cp/research/publications/centrepubs/ccps_paper_6.pdf).

Hadely S. (2021), *Audience Development and Cultural Policy*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Hall, S. and Du Gay, P. (1996), (eds.), *Questions of cultural identity*, Sage Publications Inc.

Hammonds W., ECORYS (2023), *Culture and Democracy: the evidence. How citizens' participation in cultural activities enhances civic engagement, democracy and social cohesion. Lessons from international research*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Harding, S. G. (2004), *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, Routledge, New York and London

Holden, J. (2004), *Capturing cultural value. How culture has become a tool of government policy*, Demos,

London.

Jancovich L, Bianchini F. (2013), *Problematising Participation*, «Cultural Trends», 22: 63-66.

Iannelli L., Musarò P. (eds.), *Performative Citizenship. Public art, urban design, and political participation*, Mimesis International, Milano.

Isin E., Nielson G. (2008), *Act of citizenship*, Zed Books, London.

Kawashima, N. (2000), *Beyond the Division of Attenders vs. Non-Attenders: A Book Into Audience Development in Policy and Practice*. Retrieved from [http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/35926/1/WRAP\\_Kawashima\\_ccps\\_paper\\_6.pdf](http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/35926/1/WRAP_Kawashima_ccps_paper_6.pdf).

Leach, N. (2002), *Belonging: Towards a theory of identification with space*, in: Hillier, J. and Rooksby, E. (eds.) *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, Ashgate, Aldershot: 281-95.

Lewin K. (1946), Action research and minority problems, «*Journal of Social Issues*», 2,4: 34-46.

May, V. (2011), *Self, Belonging and Social Change*, «*Sociology*», 45(3), 363-378.

Manzoli G., Paltrinieri R. (a cura di) (2021), *Welfare Culturale. La dimensione della cultura nei processi di Welfare di Comunità*, FrancoAngeli, Milano.

Matarasso F. (1997), *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*, Comedia, Glos.

Matarasso F. (2019), *A Restless Art. How participation won, and why it matters*, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, London.

Miller, L. (2003), *Belonging to country - A philosophical anthropology*, «*Journal of Australian Studies*», 27(76): 215-23.

Morley, D. (2001). *Belongings: Place, space and identity in a mediated world*, «*European Journal of Cultural Studies*», 4(4), 425-448.

Montalto V. (2021), *Cultura per lo sviluppo sostenibile: misurare l'immisurabile?* Fondazione Unipolis, [online]: [https://www.fondazioneunipolis.org/Risorse/Unipolis\\_Cultura%20e%20Sviluppo%20sostenibile.pdf](https://www.fondazioneunipolis.org/Risorse/Unipolis_Cultura%20e%20Sviluppo%20sostenibile.pdf)

Moralli M. (2020), *Action Research in Practice: Towards a Co-Construction between Academics and Artist*, in Paltrinieri R., Parmiggiani P., Musarò P., Moralli M. (2020) (eds.), *Right to the city, Performing Arts and Migration*, FrancoAngeli, Milano: 46- 65.

Paltrinieri R. (2012), *Felicità responsabile*, FrancoAmgeli, Milano

Paltrinieri R. (edited by) (2022), *Il valore sociale della cultura*, FrancoAngeli, Milano

Paltrinieri R., Parmiggiani P., Musarò P., Moralli M. (2020) (eds.), *Right to the city, Performing Arts and Migration*, FrancoAngeli, Milano.

Papastergiadis N. (2012), *Cosmopolitanism and culture*, Polity Press, Malden

Rancière, J. (2004). *The Politics of Aesthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*, Continuum, New York/London.

Sachs J. D. (2012), *Il Prezzo della civiltà*, Codice Torino.

Schechner R. (2002), *Performance studies: an introduction*, Routledge, London.

Vertovec, S. (2009), *Transnationalism*, Routledge, London.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006), *Intersectionality and Feminist Politics*, «*European Journal of Women's Studies*», 13(3): 193-209.

Walmsley B. (2019), *Audience Engagement in the Performing Arts. A critical Analysis*, Palgrave Macmillan.

World Health Organization (2015), *Culture and Health*.

Videos

# British Council's videos for PG-DIYS

## Dance and celebration of personal identities

<https://youtu.be/OncnursGZnQ>

Experience the transformative power of movement and self-discovery

The liberation of the body, self-acceptance, and the beauty of diversity through dance and expression. A community of participants shares their personal journeys and insights on how this project has impacted their lives and the broader community. Watch as they break free from societal norms and embrace their authentic selves. Discover the strength and empathy that comes from connecting with one's body and celebrating individuality.

This is more than just a dance project; it's a path to a happier, more compassionate world. Be inspired by the beauty of working with the body.

## Building Communities through Dance

[https://youtu.be/RUBAOV2r-oA?list=PLirq\\_toZIT\\_FMKfKICWRX-9tdnOMJAJ\\_lq](https://youtu.be/RUBAOV2r-oA?list=PLirq_toZIT_FMKfKICWRX-9tdnOMJAJ_lq)

3.5-year journey, where stories have woven a deep connection. People rediscovered their shared backgrounds, hidden in the city. Participants opened up, delving into their histories, diaries, and albums, forging lasting connections beyond weekly meetings.

British Council was committed to supporting this bond beyond the project's end. These diverse groups care for one another, challenging traditional views of senior activities. Through self-discovery, we're learning and growing, welcoming new challenges with open arms.

Performing Gender has been a series of European collaborative projects using the Performing Arts, and Dance in particular, to deepen understanding of questions around gender and sexual identity. The results have included greater innovation from artists, strengthened communities and excellent dance works. The 2020-2023 edition, Dancing In Your Shoes, has explored how artistic processes can support community-building through genuine Co-Design between professional artists and target community members.

## Co-design as an artistic Methodology

<https://youtu.be/TJd7P49TmMI>

The fascinating world of co-design in the Performing Gender project

Co-design is at the heart of this unique endeavour, where community members and professional choreographers come together to create something truly extraordinary. This video delves into the complexities and joys of co-design, showcasing how it empowers participants to shape the project's direction. You'll understand how this collaborative approach transforms the artistic landscape and allows everyone involved to have a stake in the creative journey.

## Building Trust and Embodiment through Dance

[https://youtu.be/l-Zc40jTL\\_k](https://youtu.be/l-Zc40jTL_k)

An inspiring journey with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Meet Olga from Colombia, June with Indonesian heritage, Marianne, Vesna, and many more. They come together, forming a unique community embracing dance as a means of self-expression, self-discovery, and healing. These brave souls share their stories, experiences, and the profound impact of their involvement in the project.

From using dance as a refuge to fostering acceptance and understanding, their stories are a testament to the power of unity and the arts. Witness their incredible transformations and the sense of belonging they've found. Dive into their world and discover how this vibrant community transcends borders, ages, and backgrounds, finding solace and strength in dance.

## Culture, communities and the city

<https://youtu.be/AWJxo4SiPA4>

The journey of Cassero, a space rooted in the diverse history of Bologna

In the heart of the city, Cassero has been a beacon of inclusivity since its establishment in the 1980s, proudly becoming the first expressly gay space supported by the city administration. This historical milestone cultivated a community that thrives today. The Gender Bender community, now 20 years strong, is a testament to this enduring legacy.

Furthermore, the success of the Gender Bender Festival showcased the power of co-designing processes and services, strengthening the bonds between institutions and the cultural scene. Explore in this video the significance of co-design in the context of municipal structures. Learn how innovative practices like co-design can lead to social innovation and present opportunities for institutions to collaborate. As the Gender Bender journey continues, you'll witness its transformative impact on local communities and discover the potential to foster social change from the ground up.

Films commissioned by **British Council**

Directed by **Canal 180**

Director and editor: **Carolina Ribeiro**

Camera: **Carolina Ribeiro and Joana Ferreira**

Interviews: **Marta Miranda and Càtia Bastos**

Canal180 production: **Marta Miranda and Càtia Bastos**

Subtitles: **Clàudia Alegrete**

Motion design: **Rui Lisboa**

[www.performinggender.eu](http://www.performinggender.eu)

[www.kitchencoop.it](http://www.kitchencoop.it)



**PERFORMING  
GENDER**  
DANCING  
IN YOUR  
SHOES