Europäisches 2 Mobilitätsprojekt

RAIL2DANCE

RAIL2DANCE:

Reflections on Audience Engagement, Sustainable Touring and Working Collectively in Public Spaces

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Preface: What is Rail2Dance Reflections?

This publication is a short collection of lessons from Rail2Dance, a collaborative Creative Europe project that took place in 2022—2023 and dealt with the topics of audience engagement, sustainable touring, working in public spaces, knowledge exchange, collective creation, and possibilities of remote co-creation in the contemporary dance sector.

It brought together four countries (Finland, Sweden, Germany, and Slovenia), eight towns, four established European venues (all, except one in Ljubljana, located outside the capital cities), six dance artists of different backgrounds, nationalities, and ages, one mentor, five pairs of VR-glasses, thousands of railway kilometres and dozens of interactions with viewers and other dancers in public spaces.

If we describe it simply, Rail2Dance was a 40-day tour during which a team of very different dance artists that had never worked together before, travelled across Europe, from Tampere in Finland to Ljubljana in Slovenia, by trains and ferries (which are considered greener means of transport), stopping in eight towns on the way and collectively making dance interventions in public spaces. However, this publication's focus goes beyond the stage that was available for audiences and pays special attention to a lengthy preparation process in which the crucial decisions defining the overall working structures were made. In the course of this work, we discovered lots of opportunities, challenges and questions that might be of relevance for everyone who is interested in encountering potential audiences in the city, plans to shift to greener mobility or wants to organize international collaborations.

This publication deals with three major topics that were at the centre of the project's attention:

- bringing dance in public spaces to explore possibilities for audience engagement;
- sustainable touring and greener mobility;
- knowledge exchange in European international collaborations that bring together different organizational structures and working cultures and capacity building in the local dance communities.

The publication asks:

- What does it mean to bring dance to public spaces? How can it work? What do we need to consider while doing that? What does it have to do with audience engagement and how can these two work together?
- What does it mean to create and tour sustainably — both in terms of environmental impact and working conditions for artists?

- How can international projects be truly collaborative given how deeply we are situated in our very different working cultures, organizational needs, and local contexts? How can artists exchange knowledge and productively work together even if they come from different backgrounds and don't share the same artistic approach and aesthetic preferences?

The publication contains four parts:

INTRODUCTION is a brief description of the main purposes, stages, and participants of the project.

CHAPTER I: ON THE GROUND deals with the topic of performing in public spaces. It contains the fundamental questions one has to consider before working in public spaces, the issues of attention management, the basic questions about encountering passersby in the city and broader perspectives on performing outside the theatre boxes.

CHAPTER II: ON THE MOVE is devoted to the issues of sustainability and observes railway touring through the lenses of its infrastructural specificity and artists' experience, as well as the different types of mobilities performed in the project.

CHAPTER III: IN HYBRID SPACE concentrates on the preparation phase of the project and highlights opportunities and organizational traps and challenges of collective work of such kind. It gives insights into the work structures performed in the project and asks how they could have been organized in a more sustainable way. The chapter talks about such things as venues' collaboration, challenges of working collectively at a distance, approaches to mentorship, team building in artistic processes, working conditions and work-rest balance, different functions in artistic group work, and communicational issues.

Each chapter has a few repeating sections:

- **Overview** (brief intro)
- **Questions to get grounded (Ch. I), moving (Ch. II), connected (Ch. III)**
- **Broader perspectives** (wider political, philosophical, and practical questions that come along)
- **A few recommendations**

Other sections are specific for each chapter and designed to serve the purposes of the narration.

The order of the chapters unfolds backwards from "the result" (ON THE GROUND) to the preparation phase (IN HYBRID SPACE) to help the reader imagine themselves in the position of an audience member and then find out what kind of processes led to that kind of artistic outcome.

Chapter III might be the most valuable for the professional readers that might be interested in arranging something similar in the future, as it uncovers the real organizational challenges of the project, maps the needs of different parties involved and highlights the crucial preparation stages that shouldn't be overlooked.

About the position of the author

The publication is based on informal talks as well as structured interviews the author had with all the organizers and dance artists from the "core artistic team" (see Introduction for details), as well as on her participation in the tour on the first and last stops of traveling (Tampere and Ljubljana) and on the experience of moderating discussions at a conference in Chemnitz that was organized after the touring phase of the project.

Several factors defined my position:

- I am coming from dance and performing arts research, so I am trying to put the processes I observe in broader cultural, social, and political perspectives.

- I joined the project just before the touring phase began, so I was involved neither in the preparation nor in the experience of touring. My observations come from spending time with the team on two stops of the touring (Tampere Dance Current Festival and Ukrep Festival in Ljubljana), as well as extensive talks I had with artists, partners, other festival participants and some audience members both in Finland and Slovenia, as well as in Chemnitz during the final conference of the project.

- This publication is mainly a generic summary collected from the participants, but sometimes concrete voices sound through the interviews' excerpts.

- The "Broader perspective" sections contain wider questions that can be addressed to the project, and the "Recommendations" sections are concise summaries of general suggestions that can help others avoid the most common mistakes.

INTRODUCTION

Background and aims

Rail2Dance is a collaborative project organised by four established European dance venues which brings contemporary dance to public spaces, aiming to engage new audiences and promote performing arts outside the theatre context, while also testing strategies of sustainable and greener mobility. Seeking to involve viewers that rarely interact with dance, the project also aimed to provide dance professionals with opportunities to enhance their skills in audience development, performing in public spaces, and sustainable touring.

Starting as an idea to bring dance to train stations and other transportation hubs, with the goal of revitalising these spaces through performing arts after the COVID-19 crisis, the project grew into a movement laboratory that dealt with **three main areas of exploration and aims**:

1. Audience engagement / To involve new audiences in dance throughout Europe, with special consideration for those with limited access to cultural experiences and rare engagement with arts, through both physical and virtual performances in public spaces in the city.

2. Sustainable co-creation and mobility / To develop a mobility program for dance artists that focuses on sustainable transportation and technologies, and test new models for greener touring. The project takes a holistic approach to sustainability, considering the environment (greener mobility and artistic production solutions), artists' working conditions, the development of dance scenes, and their interactions with the audiences.

3. Capacity building / To develop and disseminate methodologies and skills within the dance sector, with the goal of improving the overall competence and growth potential of dance professionals. By dance professionals, we mean both local dancers and people working in performing arts production.

Organised by four partners, Städtische Theater Chemnitz ⌐ Ballet in Germany, Tampere Dance Theatre in Finland, Plesni Teater Ljubljana in Slovenia, and Norrlandsoperan in Sweden, the project has been developing since 2018 through regular discussions and meetings[1][2].

While shaping the project, the partners were considering several questions:

- How does dance foster togetherness and collective artistic experiences in Europe?
- In what ways can we rethink sustainable artistic mobility and exchange?
- What role can technologies play in promoting sustainable mobility? Can collective remote work be as successful as the one performed in real life? Can VR technologies

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[1] The original concept for the project application in 2019 had five partners including Manchester and the kick off meeting was planned to be organized there. Due to Brexit the fifth partner had to leave the project, however Anthony Missen, the co-founder of Manchester-based Company Chameleon, proceeded the collaboration in the mentor's role.

[2] All partners, except Umeå (that had already been culture capital) were candidates in the competition for the European Capital of Culture: Tampere for 2024, Ljubljana and Chemnitz for 2025.

      play a role in reducing physical travelling while still delivering the quality art experience to audiences?
- How can we support the professional growth of a sector that has faced significant challenges because of the COVID-19 crisis?

Chemnitz, a lead partner of Rail2Dance and a city that holds an important place in the European Route of Industrial Heritage, is also at the centre of the project's inception, which is focused on its rich industrial and rail history. The city's train station, established in 1852, has played a pivotal role in its industrial and trade growth, as well as in the advancement of the railway system in Germany and Central Europe. The essence of rail techniques and industries has been deeply ingrained in Chemnitz's identity since the 19th century, and after the Second World War, train has been a metaphor for European reconnection, as well as one of the most democratic means of travelling.

Today, railway, once deemed obsolete compared to air travel, has experienced a resurgence in investments and visibility. This is primarily because of its low carbon emissions, positioning it as a leading sustainable mode of transportation. The project aimed to delve into various aspects of mobility, including railway stations, trams, bus stations, and ferries, intending to examine current methods of travel and connection within Europe. Air travel and airports, given their high carbon footprint and stringent security measures, have not been considered relevant for artistic exploration within the framework of the project[3].

Partner organisations and core artists

Lead partner: Städtische Theater Chemnitz gGmbH (Germany) is a non-profit organisation and a five-branch theatre in Chemnitz, Saxony with opera, philharmonic orchestra, ballet, drama and puppet theatre. Chemnitz Ballet, the partner of the lead project, has 20 professional dancers who have annual contracts and an apprentice program as well. The Ballet Chemnitz, under the direction of Sabrina Sadowska, creates a spectrum from classical ballet to contemporary dance with international guest choreographers. The theatre has been running the International Festival TANZ | MODERNE | TANZ—Platform for Contemporary Dance since 2015.

Core person from the theatre ⌐ Sabrina Sadowska, Ballet Director
In 1997, **Tampere Dance Theatre MD (Finland),** the only professional dance theatre in Tampere and the Pirkanmaa region, merged two Tampere-based dance companies, Mobita (1972) and Dansco (1988), to form their own company. MD produces ca. 80 shows on its home stage annually and 20 more on tour. In addition, the dancers are frequent visitors to various theatre and opera productions. MD also plays host to the annual Tampere Dance Current contemporary dance festival.

Core person from the theatre ⌐ Anniina Kumpuniemi, Director and Choreographer
In 1984, Ksenija Hribar established **Plesni Teater Ljubljana (Dance Theatre Ljubljana),** also known as PTL, as the first professional contemporary dance company in Slovenia. Most of today's contemporary dance choreographers in Slovenia emerged from or collaborated

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[3] Note: Rail2Dance is not a flight-free project. Although the core touring stage was concentrated around railway traveling, some participants would take planes to get to the kick-off residency, starting touring spot and the conference.

with PTL. At the end of the nineties, PTL opened the doors of the first theatre venue for a contemporary dance in the capital and in Slovenia. So far, PTL produced over 350 dance and dance-theatre performances by Slovenian and foreign authors who received important awards at home and internationally. With first projects, it opens the way to future creators. With a festival of dance perspectives Ukrep, it encourages innovative creativity and development. PTL also enters into international collaborations and co-productions with artists, festivals and theatres. In its theatre venue, Plesni Teater Ljubljana presents to the public a wide range of selected Slovenian and international contemporary dance creativity.

Core person from the theatre — Katja Somrak, Deputy Director

Norrlandsoperan Umeå, Sweden, is a venue and production house for performing arts in Umeå in the North of Sweden- working with opera, symphony orchestra, art and dance. Norrlandsoperan Dance is one of Sweden's most vivid platforms for dance and performance and co-produces and presents around 25-30 different performance projects and hosts residencies every year. A major priority is to enable the production and presentation of emerging dance and performance artists and collectives by providing residencies, co-productions, mentoring and international networking.

Core person from the theatre — Birgit Berndt, Artistic Director for Dance

Core artists

The artists that went on the whole Rail2Dance tour as a group are called "the core team." However, they are not the only dancers involved in the project. At each stop, the core group would meet with local dancers to exchange experience through workshops and talks. In many cases, the local dancers would perform together with the core group, and two of them would join the tour until the next stop.

The core team of the project consisted of five dance artists and a tour leader: Alja Lacković (Ljubljana, Slovenia), Anna Pehrsson (Stockholm/Umeå, Sweden), Laura Chambers (Tampere, Finland), Patrik Riipinen (Tampere, Finland), Sascha Paar (Chemnitz, Germany) and Maria Naidu (Malmö, Sweden, the tour leader also contributing as a dance artist). While the organising partners invited some artists, they selected others through the open call in their respective countries (May-June 2022). The artists had never worked together as a team before and had very different artistic backgrounds and personal experiences, so the selection was presenting a variety of dance practices, aesthetics, approaches, as well as cultural, gender, and generational diversity.

Project stages

Preparation stage

A major part of Rail2Dance had taken place before the artists even met for the first time and the actual touring started. The conversations between the partners had been developing since 2018 and the actual formulation of the project's purposes was much influenced by the COVID-19 crisis.

On the one hand, the need to work remotely during the pandemic pushed the organisers to look closer at opportunities for remote collaborations in dance and explore them as potential

solutions for the need to reduce constant travelling. On the other hand, the post-pandemic needs for physical togetherness and consequences of social isolation nourished the idea of meeting audiences in public spaces. Sabrina Sadowska emphasises that the project also sought to acknowledge and address the significant effects the pandemic had on the social, physical, and mental well-being of the dance field participants. These individuals had become exhausted from isolation and had experienced personal losses because of COVID.

During that phase, the partners planned the route and conducted the artists' selection process that was performed separately in each country through different procedures. They also decided that a big part of the project would be happening online because of the recent shift in working processes provoked by the pandemic. Later on, the organisers admitted that they should have put more attention and effort into the preparation phase (see Chapter III).

Kick-off Residency in Slovenia (September 2022)

To begin the project, Plesni Teater Ljubljana hosted a 10-day kick-off residency aimed at developing scores and methods of interacting with people in public spaces. The artistic director of Company Chameleon guided the residency, Anthony Missen (UK), as the project's mentor (the UK initially was another core partner of the project that had to quit after Brexit). During the final two days of the residency, the project partners gathered in Slovenia for an in-person meeting and could meet the artistic group and try out the collected material in public spaces.

Local action Research (October ︱ December 2022)

After the residency, the artists conducted a 3-month research-action phase in their home countries. During this phase, they tested the developed skills, structures, and performative scores in communication with the mentor (online). They adapted them to their local contexts and their own artistic practices. The actual amount of work during that period was 96 hours.

VR Development in Sweden

Norrlandsoperan developed and adapted from an existing large-scale project led by Swedish choreographer Robin Jonsson and monitored following the local action research, a virtual reality experience, "Instant Rave", in Umeå. The project then went on tour together with the dance artists as a few sets of VR-glasses while the choreographer and performers participated in their hometowns.

Core Mobility Phase: Rail2Dance on tour in Finland, Sweden, Germany, and Slovenia (May ︱ June 2023)

The core phase of the project consisted of a 40-day journey organised by the organisers. During this journey, selected dance artists travelled and performed across Europe from Finland to Slovenia, following the route: **Tampere —> Vaasa —> Umeå —> Malmö —> Chemnitz —> Nuremberg —> Maribor and finally to Ljubljana.** The partner cities (in bold) became the primary hubs of activities, but workshops and performances were also developed on the way to stopover sites: Vaasa in Finland, Malmö in Sweden, Nuremberg in Germany, and Maribor in Slovenia.

The organisers solely used railways and ferries to organise the tour. During this mobility phase, the artists performed in public spaces, concentrating on encounters with new potential audiences, ran workshops for local dance professionals to share methodologies, as well as exchanged experience with citizens.

Conference in Germany (October 6－8th 2023)

After the core touring phase, the lead partner organised a 2-day conference in Chemnitz to reflect on the project's teachings and challenges and to share good practices in audience engagement and dance creation in public spaces, as well as slow and sustainable mobility. The conference was fully streamed and gathered a selection of online/physical experts: Sabrina Sadowska (DE), Birgit Berndt (SE), Anniina Kumpuniemi (FI), Katja Somrak (SL), Anthony Missen (UK), Alja Lacković (SL), Laura Chambers (FI), Maria Naidu (SE), Patrik Riipinen (FI), Oliver Essigmann (DE), Prof. Katarina Christl (DE), Tove Berglund (SE), Fabrice Guillot (FR), Arnd Wesemann (DE), Helena Waldmann (DE), Olga Tsvetkova (RU, online), Robin Jonsson (SE), Serena Tabacchi (UK/IT, online), Peter Sténs (SE), Anna Kozonina (FI).

CHAPTER I. ON THE GROUND

Overview

On a practical level, the basic idea of Rail2Dance was to bring dance to people in public spaces outside the theatre and combine it with longer artistic and experiential exchange with local dance communities and greener touring.

Initially, the selected dance artists were supposed to perform exclusively in transportation hubs, like railway or bus stations, as well as on trains and ferries while traveling from one city to another for 40 days. However, during the planning phase it turned out, many of those spots were not given permission to perform at. Gradually, the focus moved to public spaces in general, and in every city, performance locations were chosen following different logics. In some cities, they were selected by the artists, in others — suggested by the organizers and supported by other activities. For example, in Tampere, Rail2Dance was presented as part of the guided tour of dance interventions through the city centre, which was in the programme of the local Dance Current festival; in Maribor it became part of Festival Lent. In Ljubljana — of the Ukrep Festival, in Chemnitz it was supported by other outdoor performances as part of TANZ | MODERNE | TANZ festival.

So, what were the main intentions of this experiment "on the ground"?

- **Visibility:** To make contemporary dance more visible in spaces that are not defined for theatre goers and thus put people outside the theatre bubble in contact with this art-form. This also implies bringing out a *variety* of dance forms which was supposed to be realised by the variety of experiences of the involved artists.

- **New encounters and connections:** To create situations in which dancers can get in touch with people that are not necessarily often exposed to dance in public spaces; to find out *what types of encounters are available in public spaces and how they can be more meaningful.*

- **Accessibility:** To challenge the idea that contemporary performing arts mainly belong to secluded and exclusive places like theatres and are confined by their rules and social rituals. To make dance accessible through available performative acts that would be *free*.

- **Role and relational function:** To think about *the relationships contemporary dance can create with "the public" and its audiences-to-be* as well as about the *possible functions of dance in ordinary city life* and activities outside the designated spaces of theatres and art centres.

- **Movement laboratory:** To come up with a set of *possible approaches to working with dance in public spaces* and to prepare a set of questions that are crucial in this type of work.

Questions to get grounded

The focus of the project thus was on **artists' and dance's relationships and encounters with people in the city**, although it's not always the angle that prevails in such type of art. Performances in public spaces are themselves an immense area of art making that can have various considerations and research targets[4]. Since the "stage" of such shows or "interventions" is in itself a complex environment, the process of "bringing" something to the space (or sometimes "taking away from it") would usually start with exploring its different layers.

Things to consider may include:

- **Large-scale components of the environment, such as geography, city planning, and architecture**

Possible questions:

- Which large scale components are dominant in space and which ones are not that visible or apparent?
- Do we want to underline the existing visual and conceptual hierarchy of the space or challenge it with art making? [5]
- Do we want to concentrate on the human-created components of the scenery, natural ones, or explore their intersections?
- How are we approaching material (sizes, textures, materials) and symbolic aspects of the place?

- **Embedded timelines and historical narratives**

Possible questions:

- What do we want to learn about the histories of the space we are dealing with?
- Which historical layers will play a major role in our research?
- How do we approach the historical and the everyday and mundane in our work?
- Are we following the canonical historical "knowledge" of the space or want to challenge it with alternative or personal histories?
- How does the local historical background "work" in the present moment?
- How do the histories we work with help us question the present?

- **City infrastructures and choreographies: routes, traffic lights, dead ends, directions**

Possible questions:

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[4] See, for example, Koplowitz S. On Site: Methods for Site-Specific Performance Creation. Oxford University Press, 2022; Hunter V. Moving Sites: Investigating Site-Specific Dance Performance. Routledge, 2015; Pearson M. Site-specific performance. Palgrave, 2010; Kaye N. Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation. Taylor & Francis LTD, 2000.

[5] For example, entertaining formats of media and light arts usually follow the already existing visual hierarchies, highlighting their presence and value through working with facades and exteriors of important buildings while dance, as a smaller scale art form can bring attention to less obvious details of the city scenography such as alleys, corners, ditches, hallways, "empty spaces", transit spaces, etc.

- Who and what normally moves in the space?
- Which infrastructures and rules define the movement in the space? What are the large scale "choreographers" (like city planning and roads)? And what are less obvious structures that define movement (social protocols, city legends, unspoken rules, art pieces)?
- What type of movement is prescribed for this space? Does it fall under the category of a transit space, such as a railway station, bus stop, road, shopping centre, etc.? Is it a space for being still and having rest (like a park with benches, a public garden, etc.)? Is it a space for a certain type of activity (like a playground, a beach, a training yard, etc.)?
- Do people tend to follow the prescribed pathways or break the rules?

● **Legal regulations**

Possible questions:

- What activities are legally permitted in the space?
- How can we determine what is allowed, and what is not? Is it obvious to a stranger?
- What happens if the violation of the order happens? (Does it ignite curiosity of those passing by? Does it make local authorities interfere? Will locals try to defend the existing rules, for example, by asking or forcing you to stop making art in the space?)
- Do we want to highlight the existing order? Challenge it? Intervene with it? Break it?

● **Nature, weather, elements**

Possible questions:

- How is the space affected by the weather conditions? Does it depend a lot on it?
- What are the relationships between the natural and human-made environment in space?
- How "organised" is the natural site we are dealing with (for example, a garden, a lane, a forest and a nature reserve would be "domesticated" in different manners).
- What are the main elements of the space, and do we want to consider their presence?

● **Affective landscapes: intensities, speeds, sounds, smells, light**

Possible questions:

- Which "invisible" components create an atmosphere of the space? How does the space "feel" and why so?
- What speeds are prevailing? Is it a space that asks to slow down or to accelerate?
- Does it feel like an "intense" or "loose" space? What makes it feel like this?
- What is it like in terms of lights, smells and sounds?
- Do we want to change the atmosphere or make people more aware of what's already there?

● **Local inhabitants**

Possible questions:

- Who inhabits the space? Consider humans, other-than-humans, individuals, and collectives.
- What do they do there?
- What kind of relationships do they have?
- Do we want to deal with these relationships and, if yes, in what ways?

● **Public space's purpose vs. actual usage**

Possible questions:

- Do locals tend to use the space in the way it is "supposed to" or do they use it otherwise?
- What is the artists' attitude to this dynamic and how do we want to deal with it?

● **Access and exclusion**

Possible questions:

- For whom is the space we are dealing with accessible?
- What determines the accessibility or exclusivity of the chosen spot?
- What does the notion of public include?
- Who and what do we exclude?
- What are the rules of access and exclusion?
- How do we want to approach them?

● **Relationships with the potential audiences**

Possible questions:

- What kind of encounters are possible with the local inhabitants of the space?
- Do we want to inspire particular reactions from the spectators?
- Do we want people to observe us? Interact with us? Take part in the performance?
- What kind of relations can be established through the scores we deal with?
- How can we take these initial interactions further?

The spaces we "stop at" are always already in motion

In the vocabulary of touring, people describe moving between cities and venues as "mobility" while considering working in concrete places as a "stop" in the flow of movement. However, like many of the above-mentioned questions suggest, what we call "stops" are actually spaces with their own logics of movement and circulation[6].

If we agree that each space already "hosts" certain types of movements and a certain amount of stillness, we then need to get curious about this dynamic and try to find out how we can relate to it. Then again, if the main focus is to get encounters with people in the space, we need to consider **how they move and what moves them.**

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[6] See Wilkie F. Site-specific Performance and the Mobility Turn / Contemporary Theatre Review, Volume 22, 2012 — Issue 2: Site-specificity and Mobility, pp. 203-212.

"One of the main challenges of picking a proper spot for performing was to find out how the natural movement flows of the space are organised. This is defined by many things: what the weather is like on that day; if it's lunchtime for people when they can relax or a rush hour when they are in a hurry; is it an "empty space" where nothing is supposed to happen, or it's a densely packed place where there's a lot of entertaining going on, and then the audience will be bigger, but the context of performing will be completely different."

Laura Chambers

For example, in Malmö, one artist chose the spots that were not defined for performing or even staying there. "Nothing ever happens there", so it is easy to attract the attention of passers-by but then there will be only a few people that dancers will encounter. This can be a strategy to *establish more intimate connections* with those who get interested: to talk personally if they stay until the end, to invite to join in a gentle and playful way.

Whereas one of the "interventions" in Ljubljana happened in the city centre, in a very crowded and densely packed space full of tourists' activities. Patrik Riipinen and Sascha Paar performed a so-called "Mirroring" sketch, in which they were moving across two small bridges with a fraction of the river between them, gently concentrating on each other and mirroring each other's movements. Although the dancers were much more available for many eyes, the high sensual saturation of the space was also making them lost in the crowd. However, the nature of dance performed there was quite different from the overall entertaining activities: it was much more subtle, quiet, concentrated, and intimate. In this sense, those who stumbled upon those little interventions could probably change the affective mode of being present in the tourist centre of the city, and share some experience of otherness, and of connecting to other types of presence.

So, if we want to concentrate on potential interactions with people in an already moving environment, we can ask ourselves:

- What kind of movement flows is this environment already producing or hosting?
- What defines this movement?
- What kind of role do people play in these movement flows and how do they relate to them?

Looking at these questions allows us to choose a strategy of placing a performative act, a show, or an "intervention" in relation to the *already existing environment* and be aware of how we can create space for meaningful interactions with audiences-to-be in each situation.

Let's look at a few examples from Rail2Dance experience.

Some performative proposals

Joining and transforming the existing movement flow

In Tampere, one of the performing spots was the passage at the local railway station. It's a transition space that is not defined for staying there for a long time: its purpose is to let people pass through while connecting the city with the train station. There're timetables with schedules where people stop to check the departure times, but mainly people's movement is flowing in one or the opposite direction, and it's a relatively fast movement that is defined by

a concrete goal: to get somewhere else, not to stay and rest on the spot. However, this environment is only partly "choreographed" (compared, for example, with a security control line at an airport which would be a "highly choreographed" space) and allows movement "hiccups", hesitation, and stillness. Some people are waiting on the sides of the passage, others can change direction quickly when realising they are moving in the wrong direction.

The Rail2Dance team made a short intervention in that passage, joining the flow of the movement but transforming it in a certain way. Gathering in a close bundle, the dancers started to move slowly exaggeratedly, as if illustrating a scene that could have happened in this passage if it were more crowded. Pushing each other, falling, and "rushing" in very slow motion, with exaggerated facial expressions of discomfort, surprise and rage, they changed the normal affective flow of the space while staying with the overall direction of movement that was already present there and proceeding forward. Unlike performances happening on defined still spots (an example would be street musicians performing in the same passage but being still in their positions), the **proposal** of that little intervention **was to inscribe itself in the already existing flow, change its energy for a moment and break its automatism** by intensifying it humorously. However, it didn't really create space for passers-by to ask questions or exchange reflections on what they saw, and the act was not inviting them to join the movement as it was short and theatrical, but intended to leave an impression, an affective trace in people's everyday reality.

"Settled" act performed in a public space

One of the easiest ways to bring dance outside the theatre is to perform a prepared scene somewhere in the street. In this case, performance material gets fixed and slightly adapted to the site, and the major decision to make is where and how to place it in relation to the ongoing flow of people in the city.

For example, during the tour, the dancers Alja Lacković and Patrik Riipinen performed the so-called "Picnic date", a prepared and rehearsed sketch, multiple times in different locations. In this sketch, they illustrated a couple on a picnic moving in an extremely unnatural, robotic manner, which creates a contrast that makes it ironic, funny, and highly theatrical. I saw it once in Tampere, where they showcased it on the city bridge, and then in Ljubljana, where they staged a performance on a small wooden amphitheatre in a park where locals were already enjoying their picnics and other social gatherings.

On the bridge, they placed the sketch in a relatively spacious transit zone where people usually pass by. Here, just being present in the space, the dance **proposed** to people **to stop and watch,** which is the most common strategy of any street theatre acts.

On the contrary, when performed in a park in Ljubljana, the very placing of the sketch in the middle of other resting activities created a different proposal for the interaction with the audience. The contact was more intimate and closer, since people *found dance being part of their normal leisure activity,* and they could sit and look at it in a relaxed manner. **The proposal to the audience-to-be was to experience art as an organic part of their pastime**. This setting also allowed for conversations with the viewers, as dancers placed themselves on the same level with the audience. (It is curious that the sketch started with the dancers sitting on a blanket, sharing a meal, just like people around them in that setting.)

Creating participatory situations

Maria Naidu's "Line dance" was a **proposal for people to join the dancers in the street**, by repeating and learning a simple catchy choreography. This approach is very direct and participatory: it does not ask people questions about their immediate surroundings but tries to work as a virus, spreading dancing vibes around and inviting people to join the movement. Usually starting on her own, with a small speaker on the waist, Naidu would first attract attention as an individual performer dancing for pleasure, but gradually, by dragging other Rail2Dance participants into movement, the dance would grow in space and by naturally expanding, invite passersby to join. Here, we deal with the pure affective and participatory power of dance to attract people to dance for pleasure, which is probably the most democratic way of "sharing the dance." [7]

Subtle moments of intimacy

In the series of dance appearances called "Ghosting," Anna Pehrsson (Stockholm-based artist who developed her research with two dancers in Umeå) explored how public dance "interventions" can work with subtle affective tissues of the environment and create ephemeral situations of intimacy with people and non-humans on the spot.[8] Combining an idea of embodying the Other through a figure of ghost, be it a ghost of an instinct animal or any other possible unearthly visitor of the place, she started with listening to the environment and attuning to it. While using a practice of "floating" which invited to soften into movement and improvise through listening to her own body and the space around, she, however, prevented improvisation from going into an act of "self-expression", rather allowing her presence to be a filter and a connective tissue between different intensities of the space, evoking "the promise of the unknown and the revelation of newfound realities in familiar/unfamiliar places."[9] "The ghost", as a more or less unruly creature, than could be found in very different social and environmental settings: in an abandoned "stage" down by the water at a little channel, or in a spot where alcohol addicts were enjoying their time.

This example "attracts attention" in a manner very different from what a pre-rehearsed humorous sketch does. It works through disturbance and very direct yet intimate and subtle acts of communication and co-presence. The **proposal here is to change the viewers' perception of environment and temporality through spending some time together with "the ghost."** It highlights the sensitivity of dance and its relationships with time as a means of transforming the state of mind.

Inviting to follow

"The traveling duo" by Alja Lacković and Beno Novak (a Slovenian dancer who worked with Lacković during the research-action period of the project) was originally created for a train

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[7] Apart from spontaneous encounters in the street this proposal in some cases was also organized as a structured workshop.

[8] Following Victoria Hunter's expression, we can say that here "the site is metaphorically freed from its everyday, normative meanings and associations and its identity becomes mobilised through the individual's processes of experiencing and perceiving the site in a different manner." In Hunter V. (2012). "Moving Sites": Transformation and Re-location in Site-specific Dance Performance. Contemporary Theatre Review, 22(2), 259–266.

[9] Ibid.

and once performed on a way from Maribor to Ljubljana. The duo ended up being the only intervention that happened on public transport, so they then recreated it for Ljubljana city centre and performed by moving along the river, where tourists and locals usually stroll and rest during the day.

Originally made for a narrow passage of a train car, the duo was slowly moving in one direction through a set of tender and playful touches and long and short lift-ups, embodying a range of intimate states between the two dancers: from gentle, hesitant, and caressing to intense and almost brutal. On a train, the piece was literally "shaped" by the car setting, flowing from tight corridors with the seats to little oases of space in front of the doors, from one train car to another, from almost empty spaces to those packed with travellers. In Ljubljana, they adapted it for the bigger space but still maintained the embodiment of narrowness and closeness, inviting the audience to follow the dancers along their travelling path. **One proposal** here was **to engage passers-by in a different rhythm and logic of strolling** and get a bit more concentrated on one particular event happening in a busy touristic centre.

Instant Rave: the VR proposal

The "Instant Rave" piece by Robin Jonsson was an experiment on how you can send a performance work on tour while working from home, thus reducing the amount of travelling for the artists. In addition, from the audience engagement point of view, it was **a proposal for the spectators' activation**. While most of the other performative scores kept the audience in the role of observers, VR encouraged them to be more active. In that case, they invited the audience to dance with a dancer's avatar in the virtual space. In terms of audience outreach, VR appeals much more to younger groups of population such as teenagers and youngsters who are usually embarrassed to be approached in the street, but with VR, they willingly participate. However, as the project showed, to make it work, you need to facilitate strong technical infrastructure since the tolerance for technical issues in the street is much less than in a theatre.

Whatever situation is created by the performance, it's good to keep in mind that dance in public spaces does not just create another "stage" for itself, but in one or another way **interferes** with the already existing movement flows. If we look closer to those particular examples, to "interfere" here means:

- either to suspend the existing movement for a moment,
- or to suspend and redirect it.

It implies some kind of break in the automatic preexisting movement, and passers-by can choose how to deal with this "reality glitch" (to stop and watch, ignore, avoid, engage, spend time with the new experience, interfere, try to stop it, contradict, express something towards it, etc.) This encounter or interaction implies uncertainty and spontaneity, but it's good to ask ourselves before: what is the purpose of this dynamic and where do we want to bring it?

Attention management

If we keep in mind that encounters with people in public spaces are in the focus of the project, we can say that this interference mainly deals with **attention management**, which

has a direct connection with the complex question of "visibility" with which the project is dealing (see more questions on this in the "Broader perspective" section of this Chapter).

Theatres are spaces that are constructed to direct and focus the attention of the audience. Traditional theatre spaces follow the logic of direct perspective: the point of attention is concentrated on stage, and the overall conditions (like closed or deemed lights, silence, and stillness) are created to bring attention to performers. Contemporary performing arts challenge this disposition by making shows in galleries and transition spaces, which have already been observed and analysed by researchers[10]. But in the city, there is no such thing as a condensed audience attention. There are individuals busy with their daily routines, tasks and itineraries, so any public space performance that places itself in such a space is facing re-choreographing the attention of the potential audience.

If getting visibility means attracting attention, we need to ask: what do we attract attention to, and how to work with the attention we get?

- If we want to bring attention to **dance "on its own"**, we are dealing with its *artistic, aesthetic, and entertaining aspects.*

Here the question of stylistic variety and diversity of aesthetics and approaches to dance comes to the fore, and the composition of this diversity is defined by curatorial choices and an ability of the performing group to build the structure that can "host" different aesthetics (see more about the challenges of this task in Chapter III).

- If we want to bring attention to **dance in relation to space**, we are dealing with *environmental, political, and social aspects of dance.*

Here we should choose a focus of our attention (the questions above can be of help) and see how dance can become a mediator between the space and the citizens, and what kinds of new relationships with the space it can propose to the spectators.

- If we want to bring attention to **how dance can alter social encounters and relationships**, we are dealing with its *social aspect.*

Here, the focus can be on a relational aspect and proposals for participation. How can dance invite spectators or passers-by to join? Can it propose a structure that could allow for interactions between people?

- If we want to bring attention to **how dance can alter sensations of the body being present and moving in the space**, we are dealing with its *somatic, kinaesthetic, and experiential aspects.*

Here, the proposals can be to join the movement through a guided meditation or an expressive dance session, so that potential participants would have a clear entering point to dance as practice.

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[10] Bishop C. Black Box, White Cube, Gray Zone: Dance Exhibitions and Audience Attention. TDR/The Drama Review (2018) 62 (2 (238)): 22–42.

Based on that, we not only choose the artistic formats of performing but also different ways of approaching people that can become the audiences-to-be, so that initial encounters could not only get more meaningful but also be taken further. For example,

- **"dance on its own"** can be a way to invite interested people to a theatre performance, and thus *to see more*;
- **dance in relation to space** can be an invitation *to talk* about the environment and connect with the city in a new, less detached way.
- **dance as a social interaction** can be a way *to encourage new social encounters* and reduce the amount of isolation, loneliness and alienation in the city; as part of audience development work, here organisers can invite the interested participants to another project or activity;
- **dance as a physical practice** can be an invitation for spectators *to experience and practice it on their own*, which can be preceded with an invitation to a dance class, movement laboratory or workshop.

All these actions, however, imply that **the organising institution stays in a constant dialogue with the artists** during their work as well as takes responsibility for taking the initial encounters further and facilitating conversations with the audiences. Performing artists cannot be responsible for doing this work on their own. Neither can they always be aware of the overall dynamic of what is happening in the space since the cityscape already hosts too much information to pay attention to and be sensitive with.

Another important thing to consider is that in order to create meaningful encounters in the space, which is always already in motion, **artists need longer research periods to make observations, prepare and test artistic proposals**. To observe and "mobilise" your own artistic perception, you need **to slow down**. In reality, in Rail2Dance, this crucial necessity was in contradiction with the hectic pace of touring and the expectation of constant production of acts and situations in each place the group stopped at. As all the dance artists noted in their interviews, in the schedule, there was not enough time to slow down and observe the space in order to pick a question or task that would be in focus of the next public appearance.

Broader perspectives

Whenever performing arts deal with contemporary cityscapes as their potential stages or places to encounter new people, they are usually concerned with one or a few of the following background goals: to break the existing automatism of the city life, to become a means of connection for people in the city, to bring joy or attract attention to a particular problem, or to re-appropriate the city, breaking, at least for a moment, the predominant alienation. However, the spectrum of thousands of artistic acts that can happen in the city can stretch between decoration to strong political acts, or from "complexity to complicity." [11]

The idea of exploring personal encounters with passers-by on its own can seem quite neutral, as if it did not have anything to do with other layers of the cityscape, its histories, timelines, infrastructures, and politics. It sounds like a relief, especially when the artists are

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[11] The expression of Miriam van Imschoot from "Anxious Dramaturgy", in Woman and Performance, A journal of feminist theory, 13: 2, 57-68, 2008.

coming to a place for just a few days and don't have time to get acquainted with its complexity. However, if we treat such "encounters" as random stimuli, they likely will add to other intense stimulations of city life, thus becoming complicit with the overall dynamic or being perceived as mere entertainment, sometimes even devaluating the possibilities of art.

Attention management is one of the most charged topics nowadays, with algorithms and interfaces capitalising and manipulating our attention, as well as teaching us to always exist in hybrid spaces, creating new forms of embodiment that are distributed across physical reality of our surroundings and digital scopes that we are equally inhabiting and embodying. With the growing problem of ADHD, dysregulation of our nervous systems that are largely disturbed by how our body-minds adapt to new attention choreographies, and the decreasing attention span, "attracting the audience's attention" in arts cannot be taken for granted. Another obvious fact is that attention does not necessarily convert into interest or participation, so these very basic objectives of any audience engagement project should be thought through more thoroughly from the beginning. What do we attract attention to? Why do we think it is important? What makes meaningful encounters? How can we work with those and bring them further? All these questions are worth a conversation between the organisers and the artists involved.

As a body-based art form, dance is often putting itself in conversation with the ongoing digitalisation of the human experience. Again, one of the impetuses for the project was the pandemic isolation that affected our social rituals and feelings in our bodies. Dance, with its openness of interpretations and a big space for improvisation and experiencing, could oppose the structured algorithmic attention capitalism and its political manipulations. Spontaneous encounters with passers-by are beautiful in their unpredictability, and the job of an observer or institutional mediator here would be to follow this unfolding process of connection in order to find out what is in its core, and in what needs dance is meeting its audience half-way. In that case, we would start attracting attention to something we share and something we define as important but underestimated.

Another question to think about is what researcher André Lepecki called "the task of the dancer" in his article "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics"[12], which partly deals with performing in spaces highly regulated by different control measures and which conformity is secured by the police function (it can be either embodied in the figures of real police officers or provided by other forms of control, like surveillance cameras or GPS trackers). Following philosopher Jacques Rancière's "kinetic" understanding of the function of the police, he repeats its slogan: "Move along! There's nothing to see here!"[13] Thus "The police is that which says that here, on this street, there's nothing to see and so nothing to do but to move along. It asserts that the space for circulating is nothing but the space of circulation."[14] The choreopolitical task of the dancer (in any system of control), suggests Lepecki, "simultaneously answers Hannah Arendt's call for claiming kinetic knowledge on how to move towards freedom, but

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[12] Lepecki A. Choreopolice and choreopolitics, or the task of the dancer. TDR: The Drama Review, The MIT Press, Volume 57, Number 4, Winter 2013 (T220), pp. 13-27
[13] Rancière, Jacques. 2010. Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics. Trans. Steve Corcoran. New York: Continuum.
[14] Ibid.

also demonstrates, perhaps against Arendt, that somehow, somewhere, someone always finds a way to move politically." [15]

Interestingly enough, one of the Rail2Dance partners noted that one of the project's tasks is to educate the agents of control, including the police, that dance also belongs to the streets. Another hope that came up in the partners' interviews was that "the city that dances harms less." So, if the dance in such projects is somehow perceived as a microdose of freedom or peaceful curious connection, it requires a thorough conversation about the relationships we are striving to create with the predominant systems of conformity and control. It is not only an organisational task (in reality, dancers were often confused about the regulations of every place they performed at), but also a task of unpacking the ethical and political approach to the public space that the group would share. And this, in turn, requires longer presence in each space, exploring its contexts, its controlling systems, its choreopolicing strategies, and finding out a common method of approaching it.

A few possible recommendations

- Take time to scout for the potential performance sites and map the conditions of the spaces.
- Explore a few potential sites and pick those that you find interesting to perform at. Why do you pick those?
- Come back to each site to experience it in different times of the day and weather conditions.
- Investigate who are the people who inhabit or pass through the space. Make a list of potential audience categories you encounter on the site. Find out or try to guess who these people might be.
- Look through the "Questions to get grounded" section and pick a set of questions you want to deal with. Before asking yourself "what to do there", consider exploring other input data that the site is providing. Ask yourself: what would this site need?
- Explore the site from the perspective of the question(s) that you chose to concentrate on.
- Notice the movement flows and choreographies that are already present on the site.
- Ask yourself how you want to interact with those movement flows and moving humans.
- Try different respective scores.
- If your task is to make dance more visible and encounter new people, ask yourself what aspects of dance you want to attract attention to. Why are those important to you? Why can they be important to others?
- Think of encounters.
- Ask yourself, how could you deal with those encounters and take them further to allow initial engagements to add to the sustainable audience development strategy?

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[15] Ibid.

CHAPTER II. ON THE MOVE

Overview

One of the core ideas of Rail2Dance was to explore sustainable ways of co-creating art in public spaces while still supporting mobility and artistic exchange. "Sustainability" in the project is understood holistically and encompasses:

- conditions of artistic work,
- creating long-lasting connections and exchange with colleagues and audiences,
- exploring environmentally friendly modes of art production and travelling ("greener mobility").

Working with such a complex notion of sustainability implies dealing with an inherent conflict: in order to promote knowledge exchange and sustainable international connections, we need to move between cities and countries, i.e. encourage cultural mobility. But this, in turn, increases art's carbon footprint.

As a side note, we should mention that infrastructures for dance production are very much focused on how theatres work inside ("container-focused"). The massive interest of ecological sustainability studies in theatres thus focuses on the theatre building and its operations. (A great example is the three volumes of the Theatre Green Book[16].) Nevertheless, a fair share of discussions around ecological thinking in (performing) arts unfolds around carbon emissions released through moving between those "containers" — both while touring and networking.[17]

"Greener mobility" usually means cutting down carbon emissions by:

- avoiding flying and instead implementing travelling schemes with greener means of transport (mainly trains and sometimes ferries) — usually called "slow travel";
- moving a big chunk of work to the online space[18];
- planning itineraries so that professionals travel closer and stay longer in each place;
- involving fewer people in travelling by actively collaborating with locals — for example, by hiring a performance cast at a place of performing to avoid transporting the whole artistic team[19];
- using digital formats of works' dissemination that can "tour" almost without people involved (an example, presented within Rail2Dance, was Robert Jonsson's VR dance piece "Instant Rave").

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[16] URL: https://theatregreenbook.com

[17] Transportation produces 15% of the world's greenhouse gas emission. See: https://www.c2es.org/content/international-emissions/

[18] A big chunk of preliminary collective work in Rail2Dance (including partners' meetings as well as "local action research" phase of artistic work) was done remotely to reduce traveling and also explore ways to work more sustainably as well as being able to work at home and with the local communities. See Chapter III for more insights on this condition.

[19] Famous examples include the work of Jérôme Bel and André Uerba.

In this sense, Rail2Dance is an interesting endeavour which puts all these measures together as an experimental performative bricolage and works with them **experientially.** Although any greener measures research is usually fairly based on calculations, as Juha Huuskonen remarks, "this type of narrow numerical approach can also be deceiving and even counterproductive towards the fundamental cultural shift that is needed in post fossil transition."[20] Without downplaying the importance of accurate calculations, Rail2Dance brings to the fore **the experience of human bodies going on a "slow journey"**, and the relationships between them and between infrastructures[21] they embody.

But how does greener touring affect the working conditions for artists? As the participants found out, meeting environmental goals does not necessarily translate to sustainability of artistic work.

In the next few sections of this chapter, we will examine the core team's experience of travelling by trains, as well as railways as a metaphor for connection that is not always as pleasant as we would like it to be.

Questions to get moving

On a very practical level, Rail2Dance put together a team of very different dance artists that did not share a common methodology of dance making in public spaces and sent them on a 40-day tour by railways, with a few ferry rides on the way. The itinerary connected very different countries and towns with different political and economic situations and cultural scenes, most of which were not capital cities. The questions that may arise from this basic disposition are the following.

- **Types of mobilities involved**

Potential questions:

- What are the types of mobilities the project is dealing with?
- How are they interconnected in the project?
- How do they affect each other? Are they supporting each other or repressing one another?

- **Artist's experience**

Potential questions:

- What are essential differences of slow touring from airplane-based mobility for artists?
- Which effects can this type of travelling have on the artists' working conditions and their bodies?

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[20] Huuskonen J. Post-Fossil Transition, Introduction, p. 6. URL: https://www.hiap.fi/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Pofo_Reader_2021_October.pdf
[21] By infrastructure, after B. Larkin, I mean "built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space. As physical forms they shape the nature of a network, the speed and direction of its movement, its temporalities, and its vulnerability to breakdown. They comprise the architecture for circulation, literally providing the undergirding of modern societies, and they generate the ambient environment of everyday life." Larkin B. The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure // Annual Review of Anthropology. 2013. Vol. 42. P. 327-343.

- What happens with the work-rest balance when we expect people to be on the road most of the time and create different performing proposals on the way?
- What is even considered work? And what is rest?
- How can an experience of being together on such a long journey affect the artistic collaboration, creativity, and quality of productions?
- Which individual and collective routines should be considered as necessary before touring? Or can we expect them to be developed on the way?
- How do frequent change of performance spots affect the quality of artistic work?

● **Organisational specificities**

Potential questions:

- What would be the proper schedule for the tour?
- What functional roles should be included in the journey?

● **Opportunities and challenges of connecting through railway travelling**

Potential questions:

- How to navigate the differences in dance scenes in each place?
- How to organise the communication, so that the travelling experience could be understandable for those organisers that stay "on the ground"?

Layered mobilities

As a site-dance project, Rail2Dance did not only deal with **cultural mobility** but created a **continuum of different types of mobilities** that came into layers and became interconnected.

● **The mobility of online exchange happening before the tour** sets up the basic working conditions for the actual touring (see Chapter III for more details). The decision to move most of the core preliminary work online (decrease physical mobility) becomes an essential challenge for creating strong artistic connections and achieve collective understanding and creativity.

● **The mobility of travelling** (sometimes called "meta-mobility"[22]) creates the overall rhythm, pace, and conditions for the entire project. Since the time spent on the move accumulates and settles in the dancers' bodies, this creates the framework of what is possible on the level of overall creativity and productivity of performers.

● **The social, interpersonal mobility** inside the core team is the moving setting of individual and collective relational practices of negotiation and care that are necessary to sustain the group work.

● **The dancers' mobility in the space of performance** combines bodily movement with creating sites and pathways for the audience to perceive it, so it is a place where the physical capacities and dancers' imagination meet the movement flows of the others.

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[22] Hunter V. "Moving Sites".

- **The audience's mobility** is something that exists before the dancers appear in the space and usually get paused or redirected when it encounters the artistic movement. Here we are talking about the conversation of different movement flows and how performative proposals invite the audience to change their states of mobility.

- **The mobility of the organisational framework** is something that frames the possibilities of audience-dancers' encounters. The importance of this component was very visible in Rail2Dance, since "the artistic freedom of movement" was very much predefined by the organisational setting of its presentation. For example, in Tampere the project was included in a "guided tour" which invited the audience *to follow* a group of dancers across the city centre and encounter different performative acts on the way. In some places, performances were *occurring* in the space, in others ⏤ were *placed* in an improvised stage, thus being more or less "fixed."

- Finally, there is **the specific mobility of the site** that, as we discussed earlier, is always already in motion.

The layering of these mobilities comes together in the artists' bodies. They are the only ones who experience them all at once, becoming mediators of different movement flows, accumulating them as time passes by and transforming them through their conscious movement. Hence, it would be naïve to think that the "artistic", "audience engagement" or the artists can easily control other organisational goals on their own.

Another curious fact is that when poorly navigated and choreographed, these different mobilities can get into conflict with each other. The meta-mobility of long travelling would interfere with the personal artistic mobility when exhaustion takes over; the interpersonal mobility inside the team would affect the audience's mobility if there were too many unresolved conflicts. And, funnily enough, the very layered ness of different "moving" factors can **paralyse** the mobility of artists' perception, imagination, and creativity.

The bodies keep the score

Touring in dance production differs from moving art objects around the globe. While safety measures and insurance contracts guarantee the preservation of visual art objects, the dance medium, which is a human body, is obviously not just an object to be transported. The care work involved in touring is much more peculiar and relational. For instance, ironically, long travel on a train which in the infrastructural lens embodies the essence of "mobility", for dancers' bodies, on the other hand, means **long hours of stillness**. As Alja Lacković noticed, *"This project was the time I was moving less than ever in my life. I started to feel uncomfortable in my body, so it pushed me to include exercising in my daily routines. Knowing how long sitting affects our body condition, imagine being a dancer who is constantly used to moving but all of a sudden, spends days not doing that but has to be always ready to perform on a way. It is not sustainable for the body."*

Another tricky part of the touring process that most of the dancers agreed on was **the balance of working and resting**. An 8-hour workday is challenging in such conditions because the normal balance of work and rest on a tour becomes unclear and messy. Three hours on a train might feel like a rest period, but when it extends to ten, it becomes exhausting, and it's unrealistic to expect much creativity and perceptiveness from the artists

even the next day. Another crucial aspect that was hard to predict is how this working schedule would affect the dancers' bodies that are supposed to stay fit and ready for physical work while also being sensitive, transparent, and healthily vulnerable to perceive the space while performing.

"We were supposed to work "full day." However, not enough attention was given to the fact that we had to spend a lot of time outdoors with people passing by, and this exposure is something completely different than being in a quiet room and concentrating on your work. It takes much more energy. I am a hard worker, but it felt too much. You need to consider it on a human level and on a level of working environment: there is no solid floor, people pee where we are, we are among drug addicts, people that have many frustrations. Happy people also! But being in a space where anything can happen takes a lot more psychic energy. I understand that such exposure is at the core of the project, but the conditions of care and working environment should be adjusted to these realities."

Anna Pehrsson

Maria Naidu suggested that the day after being on the road for more than 5 hours should be completely dedicated to resting. Many other artists claimed that a sufficient part of working hours should have been given to free exploration of the new spot, as well as just thinking of what should be made there.

It seems that, **in creating sustainable structures for touring; it is hard to find a right balance between time spent on the move and time spent on the ground.** With Rail2Dance, moving from one place to another slowly, which is better for the environment, had a negative impact on the bodily and mental state of dancers. Extending the time of travelling also took away from the time on the ground, that very slow grounding that is crucial when doing site-sensitive work. "*Why does slow touring put us in such a stress and hurry?*" — wondered the artists, laughing. Probably because the travelling was slowed down at the cost of expectations of overproduction on the "stops." Overproduction here does not necessarily mean "producing too much" but producing too quickly with too much new data being uploaded to the "system" of the travelling collective: new countries, new weather conditions, new dance scenes, new technical obstacles, new, unclear city regulations. Instead of slowing down, the pace of the project actually heightened the activity, which was getting less and less meaningful and grounded. In dance, the body here becomes the site of overproduction and omnipresent capitalist flexibility that is being taken to its limit.

Broader perspectives

However, if we observe this as an experiment on the **embodiment of travelling infrastructures**, meaning that the dancer's body here lives through the continuum that the railway suggests experiencing, we will come across some fruitful questions that can be in the focus of further projects like that. For example,

- How do material infrastructures that are getting more obscure the more effective and omnipresent they get[23] become re-materialised in this project by being put back into the bodies of touring dancers? And what does this embodiment suggest?

- While the speed and detachment from the earth on an airplane brings an illusional feeling of closeness and familiarity without actual contact (technology is hacking time), with slow touring we embody the experience of how things are gradually changing and unfolding with time passing by. Can we say that while flying establishes the ethos of *discreteness*, slow touring replaces it with the ethics of *continuum*? What does it mean for ecological thinking and for our experience of touring?

- Crossing the border of the country by land differs from magically appearing in a transitional space of another international airport. What does slow travel teach us about intercity and international cultural exchange, as well as the *techniques of translation* between the different zones that are needed to create intercultural connections?[24]

The experiential focus of the project also means that **bodily experience of those on the road and those working remotely will be different** and to some extent untranslatable (?), which might create communication challenges since the preset expectations do not correspond with the realities of actual touring.

Looking back, we can say that instead of exploring concrete greener technical infrastructure solutions, the project provoked the formation of a certain **sociotechnical infrastructure**, a series of communicative, organisational, and physical practices of taking care of oneself and each other, which developed as a response to the challenges of a long collective journey. This practice involved not only the choreographers participating in the trip but also partner organisations that were responsible for the management, as well as local artists and audience members they encountered along the way.

Long-term travelling shifts the focus from the result of touring (performances) to the process of moving and micro-political practices of communal survival, such as communication, conflict resolution, ecology of practices[25], care work and common artistic vision.

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[23] The ubiquitous expression about infrastructures is that it's something users don't notice until it breaks down. However, this statement has been called fundamentally inaccurate in Larkin B. The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure.

[24] Consider this quote from B. Larkin's article on infrastructures that can be partially translated in the realm of slow touring. "A technical system originates in one place, growing in response to particular ecological, legal, political, and industrial techniques native to that area. But as it grows into a networked infrastructure, it must move to other places with differing conditions, technological standards, and legal regulations, elaborating techniques of adaptation and translation. This conception places focus on practices of routinization and extension, requiring an account of translation (which can be technical, but also managerial and financial) as a process inherent to system building".

[25] Stengers I. An Introductory note on Ecology of Practices, Cultural Study Review, 2013.

A few recommendations

- While planning the tour, try to balance time spent on the move and time spent on the ground properly.
- Send a tour manager with the artistic group, the person that would be responsible for all the practicalities, schedules, communication with the organisers, bookings and tickets (see more on this in Chapter III).
- If the travelling time exceeds 5 hours, consider adding proper rest time before starting work.
- Get curious about how slow travelling changes your relationships with time.
- Pay attention to what the continuity of slow travelling teaches you about the new environments you are entering by land.
- Make a list of different types of "mobilities" you are dealing with and explore how they would affect each other.

CHAPTER III. IN HYBRID SPACE: CAPACITY BUILDING, WORK SUSTAINABILITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES

Overview

Apart from being a movement laboratory for creating scores and practices for performing in public spaces, Rail2Dance became a big working experiment that explored possibilities of sustainable co-creation that would combine longer periods of remote work with greener touring practices. The project investigated potential opportunities of international collaborations of such kind but also uncovered many challenges for cultural and infrastructural exchange to combine different organisational structures, working ethics and procedures — those that are hard to fully consider in advance and that became one of the major teachings of the project and a big part of capacity building for all organisations involved.

In this section, we will look at various organisational aspects and challenges that the different participants faced, as well as at potential suggestions for the future similar projects to be more aligned with its initial purposes.

Questions to get connected

Looking back at the project now, the partners agreed that some corrections could have been made to almost all the project's parts. Instead of asking the concrete questions, we will sum them up to two:

- **What could have been done differently in each stage of Rail2Dance?**
- **How could the entire process have been organised in a more sustainable manner?**

Project stages:

- Planning the project (2018—2022)
- Core artists selection and subsequent collective work (May — June 2022)
- Kick-off residency in Ljubljana (September 2022)
- Local action research / Individual work on a distance (October 2022 — May 2023)
- Touring phase (May — June 2023)
- Rail2Dance Conference in Chemnitz (October 2023)

In this chapter, we will go through the crucial points that were of a challenge in most of the stages, try to identify points of conflict, and propose potential solutions. Suggestions about better planning appear at the end of this chapter as a conclusion.

Artists' selection, kick-off residency and mentoring phase

As we mentioned earlier, the core team of artists came from different life paths, artistic backgrounds, aesthetic preferences, generations, cultures, and expectations. The selection process was happening separately in each country, and in places where partners used an online open call application, the selection didn't include an in-person audition. Before meeting at the kick-off residency, the artists hadn't had an opportunity to meet in person and find out whether their ideas on the project and artistic visions matched. So, by the start of the project, nobody knew how the selected participants would work together as a group.

As Anniina Kumpuniemi, the Tampere Dance Theater MD director noticed in an interview, *it would have been better to organise a residency for a pre-selected group of all the interested artists and make a final selection on the spot, evaluating whether people shared similar artistic views, were interested in each other's working methods and ideas, and actually eager to create something together.* However, since the artists were put in a team without knowing each other in advance, the methods of collaborative work were supposed to be developed during the kick-off residency and on the actual tour.

The project started with a residency in Ljubljana in September 2022, when all the artists came together for the first time to spend 10 days with mentor Anthony Missen, get to know each other and develop a set of ideas, scores and structures for the upcoming tour.

"My role was to stimulate the thinking of the artists involved, to start imagining what's possible in terms of types of interventions in public spaces, and how we'd like to engage with audiences. A big starting point was to simply ask why? What's the purpose? Is it to entertain, inspire, educate, provoke, interrupt? Before creating any tools, choreography or scores, we interrogated possibilities around where, how, who, when and where before working creatively to develop the what. Location access points, legal restrictions, every day and historic use of spaces, vantage points, use of street furniture and structures were amongst the many discussions.

During the first residency, we condensed ideas down into three areas — that which could be observed, interventions for interaction, and those which encourage participation.

We were afforded the time to experiment with a great many of the ideas out on different sites and locations in Ljubljana. I encouraged the artists to develop their own lines of enquiry as well as those collectively found. Each artist spent time in their home countries undertaking action-research to develop their ideas, a process I mentored them through over many months."

Anthony Missen, Lead Expert in Audience Engagement, and Interactions in Public Spaces; Project Mentor

Most of the artists agreed that the catalogue of options collected during the residency was rich, and those days were productive in terms of creative process. However, as the touring began, most of the participants didn't find the substantially narrowed down catalogue of options collected during the residency satisfying. Most of them admitted that despite the fact they developed concrete practical scores for public space performances, not many of those stayed and were implemented on the tour. The reason for that, apparently, was that such an

approach **didn't consider developing the shared artistic method that could have hosted the artists' different artistic, stylistic, and aesthetic modes of work.** In other words, they didn't own this catalogue as a group.

> *"When we met on the first day of the residency, I was expecting that we would just sit and spend a few hours introducing our artistic backgrounds and practices, sharing our expectations and ideas about the project. However, we started with a warm-up and in the end never had that space to create a solid ground for a shared artistic view or methodology."*

> *Laura Chambers*

> *"We were guided into the direction of instantly producing something, so we didn't really have a chance to talk about the common vision, goal, and approach as a group of different individuals in the beginning of the project. Neither did our group take the initiative to really stop and force those conversations. It hit us back because when the actual tour started, we didn't agree about the scores we had. Most of us had their own things going on and it felt like we almost had to start from scratch."*

> *Patrik Riipinen*

It seems, the residency didn't pay enough attention to the fact that when there is a goal to make a team out of very different artists coming from various aesthetic and working and sometimes even political backgrounds, more attention should be paid to the process of team building and developing modes and ways of working together and collective decision-making. As Sabrina Sadowska mentions, *the generational gap between some participants was another challenge that was underestimated by creating the team.*

The scores work as an important practical tool, but they are only enough when a team works in a more traditional way: following the vision of a theatre director. In that case, the "hosting approach" is provided by the leader, and the dancers can stay creative within this predefined mode of production.

In Rail2Dance, however, the artists were invited to work horizontally as a newly created democratic unit. This implies starting with sharing everyone's own artistic practices, unpacking each concept used in the project (such as public space, intervention, audience development, audience-to-be, encounter, interaction, presence in the space, etc.) and finding out what kind of common approach can contain the variety of the artists' practices.

If we imagine two different models of dance production:

Model 1: strong leadership of the director with dancers following the director's vision.

Model 2: communal production with distributed responsibilities based on consensus.

we can see that the residency was designed in a way that was closer to Model 1, and the actual touring was expected to follow the Model 2. However, the tools for Model 2 were not developed during the residency and were expected to be constructed by the artists on the way.

> *"The tools for democratic decision making became the focus during the touring phase for me because they were not developed during the residency; we didn't have those talks and were*

supposed to create the ways of working them on the way. However, it was extremely time consuming, so not much energy was left for real research in public spaces".

Laura Chambers

From the perspective of sustainable work conditions, it would have been beneficial to provide the artists with more guidance on how these decision-making structures could work. This would mean to define clear roles in the group, responsibilities, negotiation procedures and leadership positions within the artistic team. As Rail2Dance experience showed, such communicative structures can't be expected to appear naturally on the go, since the overall conditions of touring are already physically and emotionally demanding.

Local action research / Remote collaboration

The residency was followed by an extended period of individual remote work. From October to December, the dancers were supposed to devote 96 hours to exploring performing sites in their own cities and developing scores and performative situations individually. There was also an opportunity to work with two local dancers and try those scores with them. The exchange of each core team member with the mentor continued via online meetings, but many of those were not attended by some participants because of other responsibilities and a general challenge to create a schedule for seven freelancers that would work for everyone. Moreover, online meetings were not designed to come up together with the common approach but were there to support the individual creative processes of each artist.

In the end, most of the dancers claimed that the period was productive for their personal artistic explorations, but not for building team bonding and creating a common artistic approach for the upcoming tour. The time spent together in physical space was not enough, either.

"As a dancer working in a group with others, it's crucial for me to spend time with them in a studio and get to know the bodies I am working with. It's not only about the common vision but also about being able to be co-present and feel each other physically."

Alja Lacković

"The period of working separately and connecting online felt passive. The time frame was wide for such a few working hours, so it was hard to synchronise working periods between the artists."

Patrik Riipinen

"The idea of taking a break from travelling and seeing how the work can be sustained from a distance was to some extent an experiment with the conditions which were imposed by COVID and normalised through those two years of social isolation. For the same reason, part of the project was to add a VR piece by Robin Jonsson to the touring program: to see how a performance can "tour" with just a pack of VR-glasses while the choreographer, the performers and the technical support team all stay in their hometowns. This approach is also aligned with the requirement of greener theatre production and fewer travelling, which implies individual work on the site and a lot of online communication.

However, those months of working online showed that it is quite hard to create an artistic team out of very different individuals that would have a common understanding of their creative goals while working remotely. The online space and the ways in which other projects, responsibilities and distractions affect people just does not give enough possibility for human and artistic connection, bonding, feeling of each other in the open situation when there is no artistic director and other forms of control over the participants. It seems that more personal meetings would have benefited this cooperation. We also need to understand that if moving processes online is an alternative structure, that's going to be more and more present in the next decades, it requires the same amount of attention, investments, and commitment than the offline one. If you decide for a different work structures, you have to value it in an equal way."

Birgit Berndt, Norrlandsoperan

"In the earlier version of the project there was supposed to be the second residency in April, just before the start of touring," ⸺ says Anniina Kumpuniemi. *"But with the budget cuts that came later, we decided to cancel that one. Now it is clear that the second residency that would have allowed artists to reconnect on a personal as well as artistic level and develop the common working methodology, was a crucial missing part."*

Collective work: opportunities and challenges that come with diversity

While on the tour, the group didn't have an artistic director and was supposed to develop horizontal procedures of working together as artists as well as individuals. One of the main challenges here is that this type of collective work implies developing procedures and protocols that could host a variety of opinions and aesthetic approaches. As the artists' experience showed, such protocols do not necessarily appear "organically," nor can they be expected to be easily developed in a hectic situation of spending hours on the road, frequently changing places, being busy with workshops and performance preparations. It takes time to make a team, and this time should be spent together in person.

As all the artists agreed, this kind of process requires **preliminary facilitation that should have been part of the preparation phase.**

This would imply facilitation of the following processes:

- coming up with a **common artistic approach or a few conceptual methods** that could **host the variety** of particular aesthetics and dance genres;

- developing a **procedure of decision making** that would inspire better collective engagement in the process and, as a result, more courageous artistic results;

- developing **working and self-care procedures** that would make space for better preparation for working on the ground (such as daily check-in rounds, proper warming-up routines, propositions for constructive collective and individual rest);

- establishing a **feedback structure, feedback rules and ethics** and developing a **common evaluation procedure** for the performative encounters that would be based on common values and understanding of "success" and "failure."

Having such a diverse group creates many possibilities for exchange. First, it's a rare opportunity to come out of one's own artistic bubble and working aesthetics and get open to other approaches, looking for connections between them and challenging each other artistically, ethically, and politically. This can be politically very strong as it opposes the natural segregation of styles and communities in dance. Another opportunity is to bring the variety of dance formats to the audiences-to-be. However, in many cases, it turned out hard to achieve the artistic result that would feel satisfying for the whole group since the common ground in terms of values, approaches and artistic methodologies was never established, and the initial feeling of bonding that was built during the kick-off residency was almost completely lost during the period of remote work.

Nevertheless, the core team managed to develop a way of coexisting and working together, but a lot of time and energy was devoted to adapting to the changing environment and finding out how to proceed as a group. This is probably the main reason why the initial catalogue of ideas was very much narrowed down during the touring phase: **when the working infrastructures are not yet designed, creating them will take away from artistic freedom and creativity.** Most of the artists reported that it was also the reason for them to stay humble in their artistic interventions, since they felt that any conflict and power struggle should be avoided, not productively transformed, in order for the group to keep functioning.

Working conditions: touring schedule, organisation, and other practicalities

Another role that seems to have been missing during the touring phase is a **tour manager,** who wouldn't have any artistic or other creative responsibilities and would only be busy with practical issues of the trip: train tickets, hotel bookings, contacts with the partners in each city, daily schedules, and legal regulations for each place.

"Touring organisation in general worked out well but felt chaotic, mainly because we didn't have one person responsible for practical issues, and since the project involved coordination between different countries and theatre structures, sometimes it was hard to understand whom to contact on the tour, and distribution of responsibilities between organisers was not clear. Having a tour manager, the person responsible for planning and booking travel and accommodation, with us on tour would have significantly reduced stress and confusion. One of the most crucial parts for touring personnel is having clear schedules for at least one week ahead, and in the ideal case, a tour book, with all the practical information collected, before the tour starts. In a project with such a high level of flexibility and mobility, it's crucial to minimise chaos in routines and schedules, since the human psychic has limitations in terms of the amount of uncertainty it can handle."

Maria Naidu, Tour leader

Another crucial point that was not properly thought through is **warm-ups**. *"Warming up is an essential part of a dancer's workday, especially in the conditions of touring, changing sleeping conditions, spending a lot of time sitting,"* noted a few core team interviewees.

Some participants found it hard to navigate between exploring the sites of performances and **workshops** that they were supposed to give to the local dance communities. Although

knowledge exchange with the locals was one of the important parts of the project, it felt too much for the dancers to be responsible for those as well. The most crucial challenge was a great variety of circumstances, details and obstacles to adapt to.

Being responsible for VR glasses and corresponding organisational issues did not feel organic for the core team, either. As Birgit Berndt pointed out, *"in many ways, the problem was in the lack of facilitation for the technical infrastructure as well as lack of introduction of this part of the project to the core team. As a result, the VR part sometimes felt distant and alien to what was happening on the site."*

One more organisational challenge for the core team was lack of understanding of the **legal restrictions** of each spot they were performing at. On the one hand, artists were encouraged to "get bold and experimental" in their endeavours, on the other hand, there were a few situations when performative acts were perceived as a violation of the local established rules or restrictions.

"Although we use the word "dance intervention" in the public space, we never actually unpacked this concept, nor did we speak of our attitude towards the city regulations. To intervene means to do something unexpected or unusual for the space, but in some cases, we were not aware of what was allowed, but moreover we didn't agree on our common attitude to those rules. Is it a complete taboo for us to go against them? Or do we want to play with those a little bit? How to react when we accidentally find out that we are somewhere we are not supposed to be? The lack of a basic discussion about regulations, safety and our relations to those, sometimes led to confusion and unwanted stress."

Sascha Paar

Another challenge on the tour was the **lack of feedback** both between the artists and from the organisers to the core team.

"Outside eye perspective and external feedback were very much missing. We were not a group that was able to give each other feedback because such procedures were not developed before the tour. It made me feel lost. You start questioning everything, but not in a productive manner."

Alja Lacković

"In terms of feedback to each other, we didn't have space, and we didn't take the time to develop things that could have been improved. Because of the overall hustle, long days and different interests, the ideas were categorised mostly as 'it worked' and 'it didn't work,' so we never actually went into advancing something that had potential but was not an instant success."

Patrik Riipinen

Although all the artists assessed the touring conditions as acceptable and reported that in general touring went well, the tour manager role would have taken a lot of stress off the artists' shoulders and allowed more space for actual creative work.

The general recommendation from the core team would be to reduce the amount of aims for one project, get clear about the managerial roles, and allow artists to spend more time on the sites in the process of actual research.

The partners, however, reported a lack of understanding and receptiveness from the tour leader in terms of responsibilities and schedules. Most of them claimed that the tour leader's role was initially meant to be managerial rather than artistic, and this task was misinterpreted, which led to a lot of miscommunications. For example, some information (including about the warm-up sessions organised for the artists in Chemnitz) didn't reach the artists.

Broader perspectives: opportunities and challenges of international collaborations

Rail2Dance worked out as a great test for international cooperation between organisations with very different working structures, needs, and views on dance production. It also brought attention from the big international centres of dance making to the challenges that are relevant for regional dance organizations as well as their audiences and local professionals.

If the train is a metaphor as well as a real way of connecting organisations and artists across Europe, it also gives an opportunity to embrace differences and potential conflicts that come with such connection. If the railways infrastructure is the way to overcome and make visible the "blind spots" of tension that stay obscure with hopping from one place to another by plane, we need to look for ways to embrace frictions that come with real connection and learn how to create modes of work that would allow for democratic collaboration between theatres, cities, and production structures. As the project showed, this requires much more clear communication and putting more effort and resources into the preparation work.

"The project showed that in terms of budgeting, it makes more sense to allocate larger resources in the initial phases of planning," says Birgit Berndt. *"In our case, the touring phase was the most expensive one, but now it's clear that all the preparation work that allows for better team building and developing modes of collaborating is as important as performing and travelling itself. Better communication is another key aspect."*

"This project showed us that such collaborations require much more clarity in defining the organisational roles between the partners and better overall planning of activities. However, we need to keep in mind that working in public spaces always comes with a lot of unpredictable obstacles. Changing political situations and regulations are part of this uncertainty. Since the planning phase took a lot of time, lots of changes had come across on the way. This requires a lot of flexibility, and everyone should be properly prepared for that," concludes Katja Somrak.

"By the end of the project I realised how much individual imagination interferes with the common goals we had," adds Anniina Kumpuniemi. *"It seemed we all agreed on the common purposes and concepts, but only on the way we realised how much our personal interpretations of those were situated in the actual differences of our dance organisations and particular needs we had. Those needs are not only defined by the theatre structures and budgeting specificities, but also the scenes and audiences we have in our cities. We could have paid more attention to communicating those between each other as well as delivering*

them to the dancers. It would have allowed us to create the process in a way that would have helped everyone to meet those expectations."

Indeed, the project made both partners and artists question the very concept of "common sense." What looks natural and obvious to one might work completely differently for another, and a lack of understanding of how to bridge those differences brings frustration. This, again, shows the importance of mediation work that seemingly cannot be expected to be distributed between the parties and come by "naturally", and the need for responsibility awareness on both (artistic and organisational) sides.

While in the Nordic countries, where theatres and many cultural activities are supported by the state, it was easier to see the project as a movement laboratory and a test for public interventions practices, for Chemnitz, for instance, the artistic outcome was crucial, since for the last years the theatre's survival has depended on being able to sell dance as an attractive product. The scenes also have different situations in terms of the place dance occupies in the city life. As Sabrina Sadowska mentions, *"Our job is to make dance visible in public and not only to get citizens interested but also to educate authorities, politicians, the police, security guards, as well as local dancers, since they are not at all used to be exposed in the ways the street asks them to. To be creators of their own work, dancers need to get to know citizens of their own town."* Sadowska also mentions a huge gap in the working capacities and human resources the involved organisations have: *"For Die Theatre Chemnitz, it was all about learning, and we realised that we are missing people who can create such project applications as well as be ready to coordinate projects of such a scale."*

Nevertheless, the amount of learning from Rail2Dance is impressive. Almost everyone agrees that the project made space for things that wouldn't be possible otherwise. The project became an opportunity to learn from an international partnership and test new working structures, as well as to connect the local dancers with international colleagues, and bring the diversity of approaches that are not always present in the cities.

As Sadowska concludes, Rail2Dance was a challenging but inspiring way to teach the population outside the capital cities that dance belongs to the city life. While AI is replacing humans everywhere, dance can become one of healthy and creative ways to connect and reconnect with each other. *"When two people are dancing, there is always a relationship, which usually comes with emotion, and this brings people to talk. A city which dances makes less harm."*

I would add that bringing people to talk through, with and about dance is an essential part of audience development of any scene, and it requires not only looking for performance proposals but also finding sustainable formats for such communication. This, in turn, requires better communication between artists and institutions, as well as researching the needs of the audiences-to-be and understanding which of them dance practices can meet. But also, we should ask ourselves what kind of needs and desires dance can raise and inspire in those potential audiences.

A few recommendations

For the preparation phase:

- When planning a long-term collaborative project, don't underestimate the time and effort that should be invested in the preparation stages.
- If possible, consider starting with sharing the local organisational specificities, working ethics and capacities.
- Consider clarifying the needs of each local context involved and discussing which of them can be met by the project.
- Make a list of all the key concepts of the project and unpack them to make sure you have a common understanding of them. For example, if sustainability is in the focus of your attention, explore: how do you define sustainability? How are you going to allocate resources for different kinds of sustainability?
- Define clear organisational roles and responsibilities.
- Facilitate technical infrastructure for the technological parts of the project (including VR).
- When working with public spaces, find out the most you can about the local regulations and permissions. Decide on how you are going to approach them.
- Define the framework for the artists' collaborative work. Are they individual creators? Collective creators? Or performers in a director's work?
- Organise a selection process that would correspond to that framework. Make space for more personal connections during the selection process.
- If you expect the artists to work as a group, make sure you allocate enough resources to help them get to know each other and comfortably work together in the physical space.
- Consider organising the selection process that would allow you to assess artists' working compatibility.
- Make sure the mentoring procedure corresponds to the expected methods of artistic work.

Communication:
- Try to organise a get together and a workshop before the actual touring phase.
- Make sure the partners have common expectations and can communicate them clearly to the team.
- Define the procedures for communication (this includes schedules and common digital instruments: online meetings, cloud folders, messengers, etc.)
- Find a medium to keep records and collect materials (for example, a structure of cloud folders.)
- Create a feedback loop that would allow for continuous exchange between those on tour and on the ground.

Working conditions:
- Make clear what kind of responsibilities you expect to secure the process and make sure team members are aware of how these responsibilities are distributed. For example, consider including a tour manager if it's needed for your purposes.
- Include warm-ups in each workday.
- Make sure to balance work and rest. Travelling should also be considered work.
- Reduce the number of different activities the artists are responsible for and let them concentrate on artistic research and performing.
- Don't expect the artists to do the audience development work. The latter should be delegated to the institutional representatives or developed by the organisers in a dialogue with the artists.

Audience engagement:

- Discuss in advance the role of the organisers on the ground in terms of taking the encounters with the audience further. This can be based on the overall audience development strategy of the organisation.
- Think of the concrete practical tools to take the initial encounters further (i.e. fliers with performance invitations, personal talks, after-show discussions, mediation practices, etc.)

Don't forget to thank and support each other.

Afterword

Rail2Dance taught its creators a lot about international collaborations, sustainable work structures, remote co-creation, long-lasting physical co-presence and working in public spaces. The key lessons and insights are concentrated around the challenges that come with horizontal co-creation structures, making art at a distance, longer touring schedules, caretaking on the way, and decision-making in international collaborations.

The project showed that although only a small part of the work is visible to the audiences, its meaning and artistic quality hugely depend on the sustainability of working processes that take place behind the scenes. However, it's up to the participants to find out how different sustainable solutions come together and affect each other. One of the main points of controversy within Rail2Dance was how more environmentally friendly work formats affect the working conditions and health of dance artists, which in the end has a tremendous impact on the artistic result. Another broad area of exploration is decision-making, mediation, feedback structures, and leadership in artistic processes with horizontal structures. Both areas of project preparation then in many ways define how art is being moved through the countries and presented to people in public spaces.

Allocating more time, expertise, and resources into investigating the needs and expectations of all the parties involved and communicating them properly to each other is crucial.

About the author

Anna Kozonina is a Helsinki based writer and educator with expertise in contemporary dance and performing arts. As well as obtaining an MA in Political Science and Linguistics, she studied dance history and performance theory and holds an arts MA from Aalto University. Since 2017 she has been reviewing pieces by emerging and established European choreographers, researching the new post-Soviet dance scene (the book on the topic was published in 2021), and diving into somatic discourses in contemporary dance, which she observes from critical and political perspectives. She currently gives lectures on dance and performance theory, writes dance reviews and is diving into the topic of audience engagement. As a critic, researcher, and writer, she collaborated with institutions and festivals across Europe, including Norrlandsoperan, Moving in November, Baltic, and Nordic Dance Platforms, Impulstanz, STHLM DANS, etc. She is also a regular contributor to Springback Magazine.
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