

Artists' Mobility Across Borders: A Mixed Methods Approach to Understanding Dance on the Island of Ireland

Grenzüberschreitende Mobilität von Künstlern: Ein Ansatz mit Mixed-Methods zum Verständnis von Tanz in Irland

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Abstract

This paper argues for the importance of mixed research methods in capturing the voices and perspectives of artists to understand the territorial nature of cultural policy. A pilot study, *Co-Motion: Dance and borders*, used an experimental, interdisciplinary approach of epistemological pluralism mixing improvised dance methods with survey data to understand the cross border professional experiences of dance artists on the island of Ireland. We see territorial mobility as both a policy practice and a construct, and sought to explore the impact and reception of that mobility on artists. Bringing together mixed methods allows for showing the affective nature of policy as well as telling via survey data. Reflecting on this experiment reveals the divergence and complexity that mixing methods may prompt and highlights the need for a methodological approach that recognises artists' aesthetic way of knowing as crucial to capturing the embodied nature of cultural policy frames and contexts.

In diesem Beitrag wird die Bedeutung gemischter Forschungsmethoden für die Erfassung der Perspektiven von Künstlern im Hinblick auf ein Verständnis des territorialen Charakters von Kulturpolitik untersucht. In einer Pilotstudie, *Co-Motion: Tanz und Grenzen*, wurde ein experimenteller, interdisziplinärer Ansatz des epistemologischen Pluralismus verwendet, bei dem improvisierte Tanzmethoden mit Umfragedaten kombiniert wurden, um grenzüberschreitende berufliche Erfahrungen von Tanzkünstlern in Irland zu verstehen. Wir betrachten territoriale Mobilität sowohl als politische Praxis als auch als Konstrukt und wollten die Auswirkungen dieser Mobilität auf die Künstler und ihre Rezeption untersuchen. Die Kombination gemischter Methoden ermöglicht es, den affektiven Charakter der Politik zu zeigen und durch Umfragedaten zu erzählen. Die Reflexion dieses Experiments zeigt die Divergenz und Komplexität, die das Mischen von Methoden mit sich bringen kann, und unterstreicht die Notwendigkeit eines methodischen Ansatzes, der die ästhetische Art des Wissens von Künstlern als entscheidend für die Erfassung des Charakters von kulturpolitischen Rahmen und Kontexten anerkennt.

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Keywords

Beruf, Rolle / career, professional role, Kulturpolitik / cultural policy, Methodenentwicklung / methods development, Künstler / artists

This paper presents researcher reflections on insights gained from a mixed-methods experiment, *Co-Motion: Dance and borders*. The project was designed to explore the influence of territorial borders on dance artists' livelihoods and practice on the island of Ireland. It was the first experiment leading to a longer-term collaborative project aimed at understanding the working conditions of dance artists amidst, across, and through the post-conflict, post-Brexit and post-pandemic circumstances of the Irish border. As two social science researchers in cultural policy (Campbell, Durrer) and a dance practitioner-scholar (McGrath), we found shared interests in understanding the personal nature of cultural work. We were particularly drawn to understanding the relationship between the embodied and affective experiences of territorial movement for work, and the policies that frame that movement.

Co-Motion provides a unique opportunity to gain insights regarding how research methods inform our understanding of artists' negotiation of the territorial nature of cultural policy in a post-conflict societal context. The project and our analysis sits within a political climate where the presence of borders are particularly felt. Brexit, the pandemic and the more recent Russian invasion of Ukraine underline the significance of territorial borders in everyday life, both in relation to their protection and the need for cross-border cooperation. Questioning how artists negotiate such territorial policy environments through border crossing, as a key aspect of their working life, is thus an important consideration for cultural policymaking and its study (WESNER 2018). Our collaboration brings improvised dance responses to research questions in dialogue with methods of sociological enquiry to examine what a mixed-method approach might lend to such consideration.

While our experiences of bringing these two methods together is explored elsewhere (MCGRATH et al. 2021), our reflections here consider the role of research methods in representing the experiences and, particularly, the embodied voices of the artist in cultural policy studies, with attention paid to the territorial nature of policy in a post-conflict society. While much has been written about cultural policy research, there has been decidedly less examination regarding the practice of this research (O'BRIEN/OAKLEY 2017). Scullion and García's (2005) seminal

piece along with Bennett's (2004) slightly earlier discussion of the "torn halves" (246) of cultural policy research, and Belfiore's later (2009) reflection, all note the complexity of the position of cultural policy research as interdisciplinary, trans-disciplinary and/or cross-disciplinary in relation to academic disciplines. It also demonstrates that cultural policy research involves insights from multiple vantage points—conducted by academics, consultants and practitioners or through partnership among them (DURRER 2018; PAQUETTE/REDAELLI 2015). These studies consider the tensions existing for a "critical and reflexive" cultural policy research practice (see also MCGUIGAN 2004 cited in BELFIORE 2009: 355) that engages with—and attempts to impact on—how and what cultural policies come to be.

When thinking about cultural policy research and its relationship to the practice of policy making and the individuals impacted by such policies—in this case artists—it is important to consider what we know and how we know it. Methods are not neutral in their formation of knowledge (PHIDDIAN et al. 2017). They have a social and political life (SAVAGE 2013; CAMPBELL 2019; BELFIORE 2021). The data gathered from different methods "shapes society, culture, politics and policy" in different ways (OMAN 2021: 1). As Cairney (2016) points out in policy studies and Belfiore (2021) in relation to cultural policy more specifically: "evidence rarely underpins decision-making" (2). According to Campbell (2014, 2019) data—so-called evidence—can become the stuff of cultural policy through the role they play in the generation of "imaginaries" (CAMPBELL, 2014: 995). Whilst statistical figures are often privileged in processes of generating evidence, a number of scholars emphasise the importance of practitioner and artist voices in research (WESNER 2018; WODDIS 2014; CROSSICK/KAZYNSKA 2016). Such work is seen, for instance, in the form of collaborative approaches between researcher and practitioner (DURRER 2017; DUXBURY et al. 2021) and in approaches that emphasise practice-as-research (SCHRAG 2016; HOPE 2016). Despite this recognition, there remains very little examination of the methodological processes and tools associated with cultural policy research, and the place for cultural workers and cultural work in this process can be unclear.

This responds to this absence. It begins by contextualising our understanding of artists' cross-border movement in cultural policy studies as a condition of territorial cultural policy. In our focus on the island of Ireland, we pay particular attention to the nature of border crossing in post-conflict societies, but within a post-Brexit context. In laying out

our methodological approach, we posit what a mixed methods approach brings to understanding artists' experiences within this context before reflecting on what insights that approach has gleaned. We conclude by summarising what we see as the challenges and opportunities such a mixed methods approach presents to detailing, interpreting and representing artists' experiences within cultural policy studies.

With the research situated across cultural labour, cultural policy, dance, political and social science, and migration studies, it is necessary to clarify our use of some key terms in the paper before proceeding. We have taken a broad understanding of migration to include short-term and long-term territorial or geographic mobility that might take place through artist residencies, short-term performance related work and / or training as well as cross-border experiences that may involve more frequent and regular movement between locations / sites for work. As a result, the terms cross-border 'mobility', 'migration' and 'travel' are used interchangeably.

Our discussion of dance as work or labour is situated within a broader range of work in the cultural field, or cultural work / cultural labour. Our focus is on professional dance artists or dance practitioners residing in Ireland and / or Northern Ireland and in all dance genres. We use the terms dance artist and dance practitioner interchangeably and in recognition of the multi-jobbing nature of that field (VAN ASSCHE 2020).

In relation to 'professional', we have utilised the definition outlined in a cross-jurisdictional report on *The Living and Working Conditions of Artists in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland* which states:

'professional artists' refer to people who are active in pursuing a career as artists and who view arts work as their main profession or career, even if not their main source of income and regardless of their current employment status. (HIBERNIAN CONSULTING 2010: 6)

Understanding artists' territorial movement in cultural policy studies

Artists have long crossed borders for work and in ways that have contributed to transnational diplomatic ties and divisions, professional networks, regional identities (BROCKINGTON 2009) and transnational communities (YEOH/WILLIS 2004; DUESTER 2014). Whilst there is well-developed wider literature on the subjects of cultural diplomacy and soft power, the focus is generally on how one nation may demonstrate its

cultural prowess to exert influence of some form over another (NISBETT 2015; DRAGIĆEVIĆ-ŠEŠIĆ 2017). Research has also explored the role of the arts in signifying and interpreting borders (EU BORDERSCAPES 2016), and has considered how individuals and organisations have collaborated across nations, as well as in border regions where the conceptualisation of nation is contested, creating artwork that may facilitate intercultural and intercommunal dialogue and peace building (RÖSLER 2015; MCCALL 2014).

What is known about the lived experiences of artists as territorially mobile workers is growing within the field of cultural policy studies (FAGGIAN et al. 2014; COMUNIAN et al. 2016; WESNER 2018). Research considers mobility across a temporal spectrum from long to short term and across different territorial scales. Academic studies, particularly those based on social scientific methods, focus on the movement and resettlement of artists and broader cultural workers from one nation-state or particular locality to another. These include, though are not limited to, studies based in particular national contexts, the USA (MARKUSEN 2013), UK (FAGGIAN et al. 2014; COMUNIAN/JEWELL 2018), Sweden (HANSEN/NIEDOMYSL 2009; BORÉN/YOUNG 2013), Germany (VAN ASSCHE/LAERMANS 2016), Australia (BENNETT 2010; VERDICH 2010) and Canada (OLFERT/PARTRIDGE 2011). Territorial or cross-border movement also takes place on a short term basis. In a study on artists from the Baltic region, Duester (2014; 2021) has found that there is a greater prevalence of multidirectional and short-term migration or cross border movements of artists through activities like artist residencies, professional development, and touring of work, rather than permanent relocation.

This exchange of artistic, signifying practices brings together the “symbolic, discursive and identity aspects of borders with their ‘hard’ functional aspects” (HAYWARD 2018: 250). The activities supported thus involve and influence a range of stakeholders, from individual artists to large institutions such as multi-arts centres and theatres, in the creation and dissemination of artistic forms. These activities also involve the traversing and negotiation of territorial, administrative, and ideological borders that play out through everyday personal, social and professional exchanges (MCCALL 2014; KEATING 2000; DURRER/HENZE 2020; EU BORDERSCAPES 2016). The potential for increased complexity resulting from border crossing is especially acute in those territories where the border region and the conceptualisation of nation

is itself disputed (HAYWARD 2007), even if the concept of nation, itself is argued to be “imagined” (ANDERSON 2020: 282).

Cultural policy research demonstrates that broader political, economic, social and arts policies at different political levels, and across different geographical territories, intermingle with the personal and social in ways that encourage or discourage artists’ cross border movement. Occasions that encourage or preclude the cross-border movement of artists for permanent, long-term or even short-term stays are argued to be indicative of the precarity facing the broader creative and cultural industries globally (EENCA 2020; VAN ASSCHE 2017). As such they are also scalar. Borén and Young (2013) indicate that artists’ “migration dynamics” result from the “complex” interaction of diverse personal and “socio-economic characteristics...with urban and national scale push and pull factors” (200). Examples of this interaction include how the affordability and availability of studio space or the cost of living in particular localities and nations (BORÉN/YOUNG 2013) or the context of international relations and the prevalence of exchange opportunities and funding initiatives might encourage or discourage an artist to move to a different place to work, in either the short or long-term (WESNER 2018; DUESTER 2021). While interacting with territorial scales of place and their associated international, national and local policy frames, decisions to move or not to move for work are also and often related to personal and familial, socio-economic, and life-stage oriented, as well as art form and network-based relations (VERDICH 2010; BORÉN/YOUNG 2013; DUESTER 2014; BENNETT 2010; MARKUSEN 2013). Largely neglected in these studies, though, are the affective aspects of this movement.

Dance and the island of Ireland

Study on the working conditions and experiences of artists on the island of Ireland points to the relevance of territorial mobility to career development and sustainability and its affective nature (HIBERNIAN CONSULTING 2010; QUINN 2019; DURRER et al. 2019; MCGRATH/MEEHAN 2018). This movement is particularly significant among those working in dance, a cultural field of work argued to be “mobile by definition” (VAN ASSCHE 2017: 237). The border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is functional and territorial, but equally ideological and cultural (HAYWARD 2018; MCCALL & O’DOWD 2008;

GORMLEY-HEENAN/AUGHEY 2017), an international boundary, but also a “border region” (MCCALL 2011: 203). Northern Ireland-based choreographer Dylan Quinn (2019: 43) illustrates:

I cross the invisible line on a weekly basis. [...] and have to sort through coins to identify legal tender for the region in which I happen to be present.

Whilst its existence does not directly prevent me from undertaking work, it has an impact in a variety of ways which are not always apparent.

Even if operating within two very different “infrastructural and resource and funding support systems” (MCGRATH 2021: 1)—that of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland—the mobile nature of dance is especially the case on the island. Sector based reports and reflections indicate strong connections existing across the Irish border for artists’ engagement with training and professional development, co-productions and the development of work, and performance touring (DANCE RESOURCE BASE 2018; MCGRATH 2021; WAKELEY 2019; O’REILLY 2019). Policy aimed at developing dance in the Republic of Ireland points to an assumption that independent artists engaging in this variety of work are mobile and flexible, with “the potential to encourage greater geographic and spatial distribution of dance” (ARTS COUNCIL 2010: 7). This point in policy may be related to the long-standing cross-border independencies in dance infrastructure that seem to exist on the island.

Although cultural policy is distinct across the two jurisdictions on the island, cultural policy is cross-territorial by nature here. This feature exists not only through the connections fostered by the shared infrastructural and support issues described above. Additionally, there is a complex web of legislation, executive level strategies, funding initiatives subsidies, and cross-jurisdictional partnerships, which make cross-border cultural policy a reality as result of the circumstances of the island as a post-conflict society (MONAGHAN ARTS OFFICE 2016; MCGRATH 2021; DURRER et al. 2019). The 1998 *Good Friday Agreement* marked the post-conflict end of the period known as The Troubles. European Union (EU) INTERREG, PEACE and Cultural Cooperation programmes, and local authority support, as well as arts and cultural sector-based and grassroots activity have enabled the (in)visibility of the border for working artists by establishing, developing and realising cooperation activities (DURRER et al. 2019; MCCALL/O’DOWD 2008).

The changes to the geo-political and socio-economic landscapes on the island of Ireland brought by Brexit, and felt throughout the pandemic, further illustrate the territorial nature of cultural policy. As a

post-conflict society, experiences of artists on the island of Ireland point to the affective nature of movement for work. This nature is articulated by Dylan Quinn who describes the changing presence of the Irish border in the context of his everyday life and working practice,

[t]he narrative of the border appears like a trilogy running throughout my life: it was there, it was not there, and now, it is considering a return (2019: 43).

The United Kingdom (UK) Creative Industries Federation (2016) and the British Council (BOP CONSULTING 2019) have warned of Brexit's negative consequences for the livelihoods of a highly mobile UK-based cultural workforce, but also for wider international and thus intercultural relations and exchange. A Northern Ireland Assembly report highlights key concerns at the time of writing in relation to the movement of professional equipment (like instruments) and a possible limitation on the number of stops allowed in relation to the touring of performances as well as objects for museum and art gallery exhibition (MCCALLION 2021). These concerns are shared in the Republic of Ireland. There have been recent efforts between the Governments of Ireland and Wales to formally solidify cross border ties between the islands of Ireland and Great Britain, through a *Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan, 2021-25*, for six areas of cooperation, including culture, language and heritage (GOI AND WELSH GOVERNMENT 2021). Additionally, and around the time in which this pilot study was conducted, issues around the free movement and support of artists across this border were acknowledged to be "a major cause of concern" (RTÉ 2019: n.p.) at a meeting of the directors of Creative Scotland, and the Arts Councils of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland in Dublin in March 2019. These circumstances are further complicated by the political and economic stresses that have resulted from the global pandemic (MCCALLION 2021).

It is in this context that the "value" and "sustainability" of artistic work—particularly that which operates across borders—are in question, as are the "ethics" of the territorial policies that frame and influence the creation of that work (COMUNIAN/CONOR 2018: 265). More specific assessments of the concerns for particular cultural fields have emerged (CROOKE/O'KELLY 2018). Still, the island's positioning on the European periphery, coupled with its underdeveloped professional dance infrastructure, has meant that the majority of research to date has tended to focus on the necessitated increase in overseas migration of dance practitioners and scholars for training and collaborative purposes (MCGRATH 2013; MCGRATH/MEEHAN 2018; ROCHE 2018). There remains a lack of understanding in both policy and cultural policy studies of the

reception and impact territorial mobility—as both a policy practice and a construct—facilitates in relation to the living and working conditions of artists.

The cultural forms and the circumstances outlined above underline the importance of capturing the voices and perspectives of artists as core to understanding the territorial nature of (cultural) policies as shaping our (rights to) expression (WODDIS 2014; WESNER 2018). They also highlight the need for a methodological approach that recognises artists' "aesthetic" way of knowing (ARCHIBALD/GERBER 2018: 957).

Methodology

To explore the territorial nature and the cross border professional experiences of dance artists on the island of Ireland, Co-Motion utilised an experimental, interdisciplinary approach of epistemological pluralism and grounded theory that mixed improvised dance methods with a traditional structured survey. It brought together a paper-based questionnaire/survey, with an invitation to respondents to create improvised danced responses to particular key terms utilised on that survey. Beyond enumerating and summarizing types of border crossing, therefore, the decision to include danced responses to research questions in this experiment afforded inclusion of the embodied knowledge of the artists being studied, and for this knowledge to be articulated through the art form under investigation. It also allowed for affective aspects of the dance artists' responses to the Irish border to be acknowledged and integrated into the project's discussions.

Participants for both danced responses and surveys were drawn from an event attended by dance practitioners and dance support agencies from across the island of Ireland, entitled 'Co-Motion: Dance and Borders' held in October 2019. A survey was made available on paper to all 90 attendees at that event to allow for self-completion. In addition to demographic information, questions were asked regarding how dance practitioners experience migration to other countries and across borders; whether they cross borders as a result of their dance practice; why this might be; and what issues these crossings might raise. As discussed further elsewhere (MCGRATH et al. 2021), the use of paper as a delivery method allowed respondents to break the borders imposed by the survey. As others have noted (WARNS et al. 2005), the use of paper surveys, as opposed to digital, goes some way to opening up the

rigidity of this method to unexpected inputs from participants, allowing for questioning and resistance of structures imposed by the classifications offered in closed questioning. Open questioning was also used to enable respondents to engage with this method on their own terms as far as possible.

Dancers attending the Co-Motion event were also invited to take part in a danced data collection experiment designed by McGrath, for which eleven laminated signs, printed with single words taken from the survey text, were placed on a dance studio floor between a camera that recorded their movements for later analysis, and a bordered square marked with tape. Among the words included were: work, development, territory, migration, cross-border and Brexit. Dancers were invited to use the words as prompts for improvised dance responses. A further, handwritten note was placed on the studio floor in front of the camera reading, “Keep inside your borders”, and participants were free to interpret this command in any way they chose. The spatial organisation was designed to provide both material borders (the border markings on the studio floor), and indications towards immaterial concepts related to borders and migration (provided by the printed words) for participants to interact with in their improvised responses. Following Franko’s argument that dance “calls social space into being” (1995: 211) in its negotiations of the interrelations between space/place and movement, this experiment allowed the particular affective environment of the Irish border, and its impact on the practice and livelihoods of dance artists, to be interrogated.

The process of analysis involved the recorded dances being viewed by the dance researcher, who then re-performed the movements of each respondent, herself, to gain an embodied sense of how they were articulated, and what it felt like to perform them. The dance researcher then created written exegeses of the danced responses for use in joint analysis with the written survey data. As Meehan discusses in her work on embodied exploration of dance archives, this process of re-performing movements by researchers, allows for the “affective resonances left behind by the performance” to be experienced and included in discussion (MEEHAN 2018: 30). It is important to note that the processes of translation occur both in the reproduction of movements extracted from visual artefacts (such as the video recordings in this experiment), and in the subsequent description of these movements in written text. Similarly, the potential erasures or losses of meaning or intention of the original performance, and changes to these through the (inevitably) subjective interpretation of another, must also be acknowledged. However, this process of danced

and written translation also permits an attempt at articulating kinaesthetic empathy with the original performer/performance, as well as an opportunity for “making explicit, drawing out, establishing connections” across multiple performances through a mode of expression that is a “challenge to our linguistically dominated culture” (REASON 2012: 254).

25 survey responses were received. Survey respondents covered all ages and experience levels available for selection, from under five to over thirty years' experience of dance work, which rests comparably with respondents to similar surveys from other territories (VAN ASSCHE/LAERMANS 2016). Four research participants took part in the danced responses. The majority of all respondents were either British or Irish citizens (or both), female, white, resident on the island of Ireland and did not report a disability. Whilst the demographics of respondents is not representative of the general population, it is likely that these are also the predominant characteristics of those working in the dance sector (DANCE IRELAND/NUGENT 2010).

The process and experience of integrating this data has been explored elsewhere (MCGRATH et al. 2021). For the purposes of this paper, it is important to note that as scholars, none of us had extensive experience engaging with the methods in one another's discipline, even if we were all certainly aware of one another's practice.

Insights

This section reflects on the contribution this mixed approach might bring to detailing, interpreting and representing artists' experiences of territory within cultural policy studies. It is ordered by some emerging themes around territorial mobility for training / development and work. In this ordering we have tried to bring the two types of data into conversation with one another. Yet rather than reveal a tidy and complementary presentation of a “single reality” (SANSCARTIER 2020: 48) or types of realities of how territorial mobility is experienced in dance, the study reveals the divergence and complexity that mixing methods may prompt. Indeed, one of the driving forces behind this experiment was the desire to explore the fact that these different forms of knowledge could not be easily reduced to a common denominator, potentially offering fundamentally different, if possibly complimentary, ways of understanding. That is to say, to attempt a single synthesis of the data gathered would be to undermine the basis of the experiment, which is to consider

how these may not be two sides of the same coin, but rather different (and both valuable) coins, so to speak.

For this study, the paper survey focussed primarily on closed questions relating to respondents' professional roles, migration relating to these roles and personal characteristics, with a small number of open questions focussing on their motivations for travel and the impact of border crossing on their practice. The aim was to reveal some useful initial patterns in this field on these topics as a prompt to further study. Reflecting other research on both cultural work more generally and on dance specifically, the patterns revealed in the data gathered showed the dominance of certain types of individual and geographical areas in dance practice, a tendency for practitioners to hold multiple professional roles, and the commonality of migration for training and work.

The survey data also corroborates research that territorial mobility for dancers on the island of Ireland relates to training and development. More specifically, it appears to support the understanding that the lack of training and development for dance, on the island, likely fosters the movement of artists off the island to develop their practice. Two-thirds of respondents reported that they had migrated for the purposes of training, with England being by far the most common destination for this, followed by the Republic of Ireland (see also MCGRATH 2021). In open questioning on the motivation for this migration, respondents focussed predominantly on the issue of (un)availability of training (for example, "training was available in London", "opportunity not available in home country"). Accessing a wider range of technical knowledge or broader professional networks emerged as secondary issues.

Whilst this data provides us with somewhat neat, contained knowledge, which could alone be the basis for further policy proposals, we sought to explore other aspects of this experience. The danced responses added another dimension to these findings, providing insight into the affective and embodied experience of territorial movement for dancers, which can potentially be lost in a more abstracted consideration of cultural work. In the example below of one of the dance improvisation responses to the word 'Migration', as analysed through danced and written translation by co-author McGrath (here and throughout the article), the emotional impact of leaving something behind to undertake a journey is apparent:

The dancer steps into the centre of the bordered space and places her gaze and hands onto her pregnant belly. She walks slowly backwards towards a wall that borders one side of her performance space until she bumps into it and can go no

further. Unable to keep moving on her backward trajectory, she instead brings her gaze upwards and outwards to a space beyond the screen's frame. She breathes in deeply, and her breath lifts her hands off her belly until both arms extend slowly upwards following her reaching, upward gaze. Out of this extension, her right arm first stretches forward to lead her on a slow walk on the diagonal back towards the centre of the space, before then trailing behind, palm lifted, as if pushing something away. At the end of her dance, she looks back towards the place she started from, turning her palms upwards towards something (someone?) in the opposite corner in a gesture that combines a contradictory sense of loss and welcome (MCGRATH, analysis).

Survey responses also support research that indicates the highly mobile and transnational nature of work in the dance profession globally (PICKARD/RISNER 2019; VAN ASSCHE 2020) and specifically in relation to practitioners living in Ireland (MCGRATH 2021). A majority of respondents reported having migrated for the purposes of work, at an average frequency of five times per year (min=1, max=20). Further, crossing borders for work takes place in at least three territorial ways: 1) off the island to showcase or perform work internationally; 2) across the political border on the island between the two jurisdictions of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; and 3) across regional, urban/rural, and county borders within each jurisdiction.

When asked in open questioning what impact crossing borders had on their dance practice, respondents often covered similar territory as that revealed by closed questioning. They also reflected on the increased opportunity that crossing borders allowed in terms of widening professional networks. Qualitative responses included "improves professional connections" and "increase networks". This area of questioning also prompted wider reflection beyond the day-to-day to the broader cultural implications of cross-border practice, with responses including "confrontation with prejudice", "open mind", "cultural exchange" and "more insight into the work of those engaged with refugees/trauma", with some seeing such crossings as a fundamental aspect of their creative practice. Border crossing is thus not solely seen as a means by which practice from one location can be transferred to another, but rather also as a process through which this practice can itself be transformed.

The notion of border crossing as a process was also evident in one of the dance responses to the word 'Cross-Border'. In this response, the process could be read as one of growth and transformation, although the expression of difficulty in finding points of stability when engaging in crossings, as articulated by hands twisting around each other in the example below, arguably placed greater emphasis on the complexities inherent in engaging in cross-border movements.

A dancer hunkers down in the middle of the bordered square. She brings her hands in front of her body, palms inward, left hand covering the right so that we only see one hand. She slowly moves her hands apart until they are both visible, touching only by the tips of her middle fingers. She pauses for a moment, contemplating this meeting/parting point, before suddenly bringing the palms of her hands together and interlocking her fingers. This joining of the two hands lifts her to standing, but the connection only lasts for a moment, before the hands escape into a twisting dance around each other that expands into a chasing spiral around the dancer's body. Her hands don't join together again (MCGRATH, analysis).

The paper survey responses support research referenced above, by Rösler (2015) and Duester (2014; 2021) that travel for work can positively impact one's personal and professional development. Equally, the responses suggest areas in need of further study raised by Borén and Young (2013) in cultural policy studies and by Van Assche (2020) in dance scholarship. Namely, how cross-border movement for work may develop or be dependent upon the pre-existence of a professional network, resulting in the potential exclusion from, or further access to, dance work.

Here again, danced responses provided insight into an affective landscape of overall experiences, highlighting tensions and struggles associated with current territorial negotiations on the island of Ireland, as evidenced in this dancers' movement response to the word 'Brexit'.

A dancer picks up the laminated card printed with the word, "Brexit". She grimaces and groans, saying the word out loud with a facial expression of disgust. The disgust transfers to her whole body, which does a ripple of revulsion that echoes through her arms several times until she has shaken off the feeling (MCGRATH, analysis).

Discussion

While the dataset is small and thus supports only a tentative exploration of our approach, the study points to the complex terrain of cultural policy as territorial. Open questioning did to some extent give a deeper sense of the nature of these issues allowing unexpected and previously unexplored elements of practice to be examined (as per the benefits of open questioning discussed, for example, in SWYNGEDOUW (2001)), but survey data was predominantly useful to reveal the broad patterning of practice, and to give some indication of which experiences were majority and which were minority ones. Whilst the realities of the situation are more complex, one of the reasons for the extensive deployment of survey data and the presentation of quantitative findings in multiple disparate fields

is the “appearance” of objectivity and neutrality (PORTER 1995: 8, 74), resulting in patterns that seem to need little explanation or interpretation by those outside the research process. Comprehensible categories are presented, relating commonly to events, behaviours and attitudes of a given group, and respondents are sorted into these fixed categories and enumerated. Whilst the role of the survey process in constructing, as well as reflecting phenomena must be acknowledged (SCHAEFFER/PRESSER 2003), it is this demonstration of patterning across categories that is often most useful in terms of findings. What is gained in breadth of coverage, though, can to some extent be lost in depth.

By bringing in dance, itself, in the investigation of these issues, however, articulations of affective dimensions and impacts of territorial borders, and cultural policies associated with them, can be accessed. These danced responses, articulated through the art form under investigation, provide rich insight into the lived experience of dance artists. They allow a glimpse into artists' embodied negotiations of issues that impact their livelihoods, demonstrating how dance can put problems into motion (MARTIN, 1998). They also allow the embodied knowledge of artists to be recognised and point to the value of this knowledge in policy-informing discussion. At times, the danced responses aligned with findings from the survey data, but at times they were contradictory, or added new aspects for analysis. In so doing, they allow space for exploration that is relatively unconstrained by pre-ordained categories and can offer space, not only to provide answers, but to consider new questions. The danced responses seem to have allowed for increased depth of individual expression for participants in response to research topics. However, in the method employed for this study, they also rely on translation into the written word, by researchers for analysis, and thereby arguably require a much greater level of subjective interpretation. The written interpretation functions as a performance text in its own right (JONES/STEVENSON 1999). In comparison with the survey data, the dance responses could therefore be seen as lacking in facts and neutrality when considered within the context of representativeness of broader experience beyond individual responses.

In this way, albeit in a preliminary fashion, we may combine a consideration of variance with process. As Maxwell describes, the latter, process

relies much more on a local analysis of particular individuals, events, or settings [...] and addresses “how” and “why” questions, rather than simply “whether” and “to what extent” (2010: 477).

He argues that it is the combination of these approaches, rather than the simple combination of numerical and non-numerical data, that characterises mixed methods research, which may serve to fruitfully combine these different forms of understanding, and which is one area that has potential for further exploration by interdisciplinary groups of researchers seeking to elucidate policy-relevant issues.

Concluding thoughts

This preliminary, experimental mixed methods approach considers bringing dance practice-as-research methods into complement with social science methods. Survey methods are often utilised in evidence-making for cultural policy studies (CROSSICK/KASZYNSKA 2016) and have been established as a useful data collection tool in other dance-sector related studies (VAN ASSCHE/LAERMANS 2016), to the point of potential survey fatigue in the sector. We do not argue here for abandoning these methods, or for policy to be considered solely in the language of the sector it seeks to influence. Nevertheless, a more eye-level relationship between policymaker, researcher and practitioner can potentially bring a richer understanding of the field. By considering more traditional data alongside danced responses, the study places equal value on “sense-based, perceptual, embodied, and emotional forms of knowledge” (ARCHIBALD/GERBER 2018: 957). In other words, through inviting danced responses, we collectively sought to allow artists to “show” us the affective nature of our public policies in addition to telling us through the questionnaire (HALLGARTEN 2011: 237), opening up space to meet practice on its own terms, rather than seeing practitioners as a resource to be mined.

Insights afford an opportunity to extend dance practice beyond merely functioning as a performative tool for communicating data to, instead, being data in and of itself (MCGRATH et al. 2021). Combining paper surveys with danced responses allowed us to re-orientate the study from producing data about a cultural form from an outside perspective, to incorporating knowledge from within the embodied perspective/experience of the art form (MIGNOLO/TLOSTANOVA 2006). Such an approach places the embodied voice of artists as central to how we seek to understand, and thus research, the experience of cultural work. Further research is needed regarding the potential of practice-as-research for

cultural policy studies. It would also be useful to understand the transferability of the method across different forms of cultural work.

The methods and the findings themselves “disrupt” our typical understandings of how artists’ territorial and cross-border experiences might relate to policy frames (ARCHIBALD/GERBER 2018: 959). Furthermore, while our insights above do not necessarily “hang neatly together”, it is through this mess that the complexity of artists experiences of territorial border crossing are revealed (SANSCARTIER 2020: 48). It is when taken together, that the survey and the danced responses begin to elucidate the affective, personal and professional nature of working in a post-conflict society such as Ireland; one that is continually impacted by political, territorial policies that frame and act upon the cultural. The study shows the potential for drawing greater attention to the embodied nature of (cultural) policies (BELL/OAKLEY 2015), an area that remains underexplored. Due to the privileging of certain forms of knowledge within academia (REASON 2012; HOPE 2016) and the policy making sphere (BELFIORE 2021; CAIRNEY 2016), the role of the researcher and research remains critical to pushing the boundaries of what and how artists’ voices are heard and reflected in cultural policy development.

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