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Embodied cultural property; contemporary and traditional dance practices

<A> Introduction

The WhoLoDancE project (2016-2018) was a multi-partner European Commission-funded project that created a variety of prototype digital tools for supporting the transmission of different dance practices (contemporary dance, ballet, Flamenco and Greek folk dance)¹. The aim of the tool development was to support educational and creative processes in dance; including analysis (through annotating and discovering dance content stored within the movement library) and choreography (through a blending tool and virtual learning devices). The recordings and subsequent processing of dance material into digital data raise interesting questions about the responsibilities of the project team to the dancers who have contributed their material to the project, particularly when it is transformed into data visualizations that could be accessed and reused by others. I will explore how value accrues in these kinds of resources and sometimes in unexpected ways, partly through the preservation of traditional (and previously undocumented) dance practices but in collecting and sharing these materials, I will discuss how dance remains bound to the communities in which it is performed and tends to resist its abstraction from the body to be commodified as a form of cultural property. This then points to how dance, as intangible cultural heritage, is self-regulating in terms of principles of ownership and attribution.

¹ WhoLoDancE: <http://www.wholodance.eu/>

The dance genres that are the focus of WhoLoDancE together represent a range of dance practices but by no means all, so together they emphasize the complexity in dance practices and thereby presented a challenge to the technology partners who were trying to develop tools based on consensus views relating to dance actions, qualities and underpinning movement principles. But it is in the complexity that interest lies. The genres were selected to ensure that both theatrical and participatory dance forms were represented within the project, but also for pragmatic reasons; expertise in particular dance genres resided with the partners in the project team. In this paper, I focus on two contrasting dance practices beginning with a brief account of contemporary dance and then a more extensive discussion of Greek folk dance. Contemporary dance is a theatrical form that has evolved to reflect its own cultural, political and aesthetic history. But it is a diverse practice and develops often through the particular style characteristics, vocabularies and idiosyncrasies of the individual choreographer and/or dancer. By contrast, Greek folk dance is sometimes theatricalized and performed for audiences but is primarily a participatory practice situated within local or regional communities. Both dance forms are concerned, albeit in different ways, with their own preservation. As a living cultural expression, dance has recognized its own condition of inevitable 'loss' when dependent on being passed from body to body and projects such as WhoLoDancE are funded to help to safeguard dance. However, as I discuss, these safeguarding methods can impose processes that are at odds with the values of the practices, threatening integrity and authenticity. What I seek to point out is how dance, precisely through its insistence on being a living culture, has resisted pressures to comply with norms of property and thus has developed its own way to manage its assets and safeguard in its own terms.

<A> Dance as Cultural Heritage; politics and property

As one of the more intangible art forms, dance has struggled to find its place within the records of Cultural Heritage (CH), resisting until quite recently modes of documentation that reside easily within the collections of cultural/memory institutions, being transmitted primarily body to body. In recent years, digital technologies have had an impact on dance preservation strategies and this has drawn interest from researchers in disciplines beyond dance to explore ways of documenting dance, but these are not yet widely applied. Hence, when alternative modes of documenting the practices of specific cultural groups are explored, and then generate potential methods for preservation, such as in WhoLoDancE, they remain largely outside of the traditional repositories of CH. But the desire to preserve and share, presupposes that heritage belongs to everyone, whilst it is inextricably enmeshed with the identity of specific groups or people. As dance anthropologist Adrienne Kaeppler warned, what results is the “appropriation by the world” of Intangible Cultural Heritage.² Moreover, CH is not limited to the transmission of themes and events emerging from the past. Dance finds presence in communities in different ways and in some cultural groups the concept of past, present and future has little or no relevance (for example, in Malagasy society, the copresence of the living royal dead in the lives of contemporary inhabitants, confuses the idea of there being a concept of ‘past’ and therefore problematizes the idea of what is ‘past’ dance practice.³

Whilst WhoLoDancE was not principally a preservation project, as a European Commission funded project there is a concern for European identity construction. European identity in the context of the European Commission is partly built upon how we value and fund the creation

² Kaeppler 2001

³ Palmie and Stewart, 2016: 216

and preservation of European CH, and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). But there are tensions inherent in what we think counts as CH. CH is inevitably ideologically-loaded. For example, UNESCO's safeguarding programme, which determines what constitutes 'masterpieces' worthy of preservation, has been challenged in recent years by dance ethnographers and anthropologists who have argued against the instrumentalization of cultural resources implicit in 'heritage' creation that draws on Intellectual Property Rights, and ethical and monetary considerations. Dance anthropologists Andree Grau, Georgiana Gore and Maria Koutsouba have critiqued the impact of capitalism in relation to CH, and particularly how capitalism tends to commodify everything, including human relations.⁴ Elsewhere, Grau and Gore have further argued that "heritage is constructed within the frame of Western consumer capitalism where 'culture' is part of the economy [...] Heritage is packaged, priced and sold to the public, including the inheritors themselves. Landscapes, buildings, artefacts and cultural knowledge are selected, promoted and framed. Those who make the selection influence what is selected and it may be argued that only those domains that are easily packaged and contribute to the self-aggrandizement of the selectors are chosen".⁵ Whilst a bold critique of the impact of capitalism on the cultural heritage 'industry' as they experience it, dance has tended to oppose being packaged in this way, but there are still tensions and these relate to the relationship between cultural heritage and copyright.

Law scholar Fiona Macmillan points to how the tension "rests on the fact that while cultural heritage is something that 'belongs' to a community, intellectual property including copyright is a rivalrous form of private property. Consequently, these two systems involve two very

⁴ Grau, Gore and Koutsouba 2016: 182

⁵ Grau and Gore 2014: 119

different ways of expressing value”.⁶ Macmillan considers how dance responds to this tension, turning her attention to how value is expressed as a form of commodity and argues that “[w]hen we talk about the commodification of artistic works, such as dance, then the relevant instrument of commodification is almost always copyright because it is copyright that turns the creative forms of dance into private property”.⁷ However, Macmillan also acknowledges that “private property rights like copyright are not a route to building a community of cultural and creative value. Such a community needs to be built by a bottom up commitment to the value of the artistic practice, which then communicates that value to increasingly wider communities” (ibid). She argues that dance is an example of a community that has formed its own value system and “tends to operate outside the formal architecture of copyright law” (ibid) and means that it has successful experience in building and controlling value outside the system of private property rights imposed through copyright law (ibid). She concludes that the CH of the dance community, rather than the private rights of copyright holders, still dominates its cultural practice.

Macmillan’s perspective could well be applied to all forms of dance but when digital technologies come into play, it may be that the dance community is less bounded and others may claim rights over the dance, such as those who turn the dance into data, such as programmers, software developers and designers. The digitisation of dance for the purposes of preservation, circulation, education, or other purposes can inadvertently make dance seem more like property. However, these renderings of dance have not yet been commodified in a way that can be identified as a form of property that can be packaged and transacted beyond

⁶ Macmillan 2018: 56-57

⁷ Macmillan 2018: 57

the communities who dance it (and find their own means to sustain it). It is in its state of resistance to being packaged that dance has similarly resisted being commodified and perhaps leads to the kind of concerns expressed by dance anthropologists; dance is embodied, indivisible from the bodies that dance, and a living expression of human relations and actions.

<A> Contemporary Dance as ICH

All dances are situated within a particular context, whether that is a staged theatrical context or a street. Contemporary dance is a rather loose term referring to theatrical dance that is current whilst having its origins in various practices and practitioners from the early 20th century and is often particular to the choreographer and performers performing. As an embodied practice, contemporary dance could be considered ICH just as ‘traditional’ dances, which (as according to UNESCO’s definition of ICH: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/performing-arts-00054>) express or represent other activities specific to the community (such as religious festivals, hunting, warfare). Contemporary dance has evolved to be more of a hybrid form, borrowing from different cultural influences, meaning it is a porous genre, harder to map to a particular location or tradition. But as with all dance, contemporary dance reflects the recognition that cultural heritage is as much about people, as of objects, providing a rebalancing of where value is placed.

If the argument made earlier still stands, that no dance practice can be separated from the people (and bodies) that dance, attempts to fix the dance in a form beyond itself, and which can then be captured by property, may find it hard to succeed. Indeed, it is often in the process of documenting, archiving and attempting to share contemporary dance in forms other than in the live performance that questions of ownership and property are raised. Whilst

the dance is most often attributed to the choreographer in terms of identifying the ‘author’, dancers frequently contribute dance material that is particular to their own unique bodies and creative impulses. The collaborative experience that typifies the contemporary dance community is in many ways a challenge to conventional ways of determining ownership, and in turn, copyright, as noted above. Whilst contemporary dance has been the focus for many projects that have experimented with methods of capture in various analogue and digital formats, Greek folk dance has not had so much attention, which is what I turn to next.

<A> Greek Folk Dance

Greek folk dance is rich in cultural tradition, customs and regional character, frequently originating either in ancient Greece or in more recent vernacular expressions, relating to everyday community activities. For example, the *hassapiko* is a dance that was performed originally by the unions of butchers in Byzantine cities. The *trata* dance was associated with the everyday practice of fishermen taking their fishing boats out in the Greek archipelago. Dances such as *tsamiko*, *pentozalis* and *pontic dance* are war dances: the first mainly in the Peloponnese, the second in the island of Crete and the third danced by Greek refugees from coastal areas of the Black Sea in Asia Minor. There are also clear elements that reveal the influences from foreign conquerors, dating back several centuries, such as the *ballos* dance in Corfu or the Cyclades. In many of these dances, the patterns and step sequences go back two and a half thousand years, based on representations on vessels that have been excavated, and on descriptions from texts of ancient Greek literature.⁸

⁸ Sarris, 2012

Continuing today, dance events in Greece are “a means of socializing and entertainment; therefore, they can be seen as an escape for everyday life activities”.⁹ Kalogeropoulou, a scholar who writes on dance, culture and national identity, describes how Greek dance events can “symbolically bond the cultural collectivity”.¹⁰ But she argues that expressions of nationhood can also have negative connotations when the folk dance is conceptualized as an “inherited national quality that is exclusive to Greek people, defined both genetically and culturally”¹¹ and those who are not Greek are thought not to be able to embody the dance and the values associated with it. Bringing Greek folk dance into a project like WhoLoDance that is attempting to support the transmission of the practice for teaching and learning purposes through various online tools is thus not without its challenges, not least because one of the project aims is to ensure widespread access and encourage those from outside the tradition to experience Greek folk dance. Inevitably, given the constraints of the time available and the focus on technology development, emphasis was placed more on capturing the movement patterns and step sequences than on recording the detail of the genre’s expansive cultural and political history.

In traditional Greek folk dances, there are two main categories of dance; the springing/leaping dance and the oldest form, shuffle/dragging dance, known as *sirtos*. There are ‘rules’ that pertain to the form, gender roles within the practice and distinct regional variations. As most Greek dances are also circle or partner facing dances, the teaching and learning of the dances require understanding of how the group functions, of relationships

⁹ Kalogeropoulou 2013: 60

¹⁰ Kalogeropoulou, 2013: 61

¹¹ Kalogeropoulou, 2013: 67

between the ensemble, and of the spatial pathways taken by the dances. Music is also particularly important and as the folk dances are often interlinked with song in the native language, “the lyrics of the songs become the narrative of the nation and its people”.¹² As Kalogeropoulou describes, the reference to ‘we’ in many of the songs address the nation and its people, and with reference to one particular song that specifically references the ephemeral nature of the physical body and how the body internalizes and embodies the concept within the song (*‘Touti gi pou tin patoume oloi messa the’ na boume*: ‘We are all going to be buried in this earth that we stamp on’), the dance brings the ‘we’ physically closer through the way the dancers are linked together hand-by-hand or shoulder-to-shoulder.¹³

Greek folk dance has a rich history, so some of the dance practice may be regarded as historic because the dances have been practiced for a very long time, but they also have a clear presence and function within contemporary Greek society. The dances reflect the landscape, the language, climate, region in which it was created, values and religious festivals and beliefs of the Greek people, fostering a sense of Greekness that is carried through the food, music, songs and most particularly, the dance protocols. Indeed, “[I]n everyday life, people may usually see themselves as simply dancing, but in these circumstances, they see themselves as ‘Greek dancing’ or dancing Greekness”.¹⁴ Consequently, and as discussed above, the way in which Greek folk dance is woven into the broader activities and values of Greek society, reveals the complexity of this cultural expression of one of the European

¹² Kalogeropoulou, 2013: 64

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ ibid

Union's member states, presenting a challenge for any method of 'capture', documentation and commodification. These aspects are embodied and hard to capture and commodify.

<A> Greek folk dance in context; documenting embodied practice

As a primarily participatory dance practice, recruiting Greek folk dance for the purposes of the WhoLoDancE project carried with it some risks in terms of compromising the necessary and salient properties of the practice. Expert commentators from within the folk dance community, and those with direct knowledge of Greek folk dance, express views that are important to respect in this context, claiming that folk dance is an integral part of the life of a community and often has an important function within that community, and to take it away from the community is “essentially to damage the life of the community”.¹⁵ Further, in recording and naming aspects of the folk dance, for the purposes of learning the dances, and learning about the dances from outside the community in which they are practiced, means ‘fixing’ the dance. Whilst some Greek folk dances do have fixed figures and frameworks, others are more improvisational within a specified framework, so continuously evolve and change over time. As Hoerburger cautions, “when a folk dance in its first existence is fixed by means of documentation, it has always to be remembered that this is only a snapshot from a continuously flowing stream, from an ever-changing pattern, but that it is not the essence of the folk dance itself”.¹⁶

Our Greek folk dance partner on the project, Amalia Markatzi, is a highly-experienced teacher who talks of teaching regional dances across the country, including the Greek islands,

¹⁵ Hoerburger, 1968: 30

¹⁶ *ibid*

involving many 100s of participants. Performances can attract audiences in the 1000s and performances often become participatory. Greece has a strong culture of learning traditional dances and her classes will be attended by men and women of all ages, many of whom become very proficient as they practice the dances regularly. Dances are taught body to body through generations of dancers, much like an oral tradition, and from a very early age. Children grow up participating and learning about the dance from their families as well as important stylistic features based on regional differences, etc. From a general idea of the dance, learnt mostly through imitation, expertise emerges, and which may then be developed through attending classes that are led by teachers who are expert in the different folk dances and traditions, such as Markatzi. The importance of the personal contact and knowledge of context is therefore important to recognize, although even those who are very protective of folk dances also recognize that it is important to “encourage documentation of living folk dances still in existence. Because these dances, which at the moment may still be seen in remote villages, and which can give us an idea of the dances of our ancestors, will have disappeared within a short time”.¹⁷ Most records of Greek dancing rely on still images that focus largely on costume and spatial patterning, and notated analyses of the rhythmic structures, but these notations are usually only accessible to experts in dance analysis and dance ethnography.

Markatzi told us that there are several core aspects of the form, that are common to most if not all Greek folk dances. The relational properties are one of the most important aspects as most dances rely on close communication between the lead dancer and musician, the connection between two dancers when in couples dancing face-to-face; and in circle dances, dancing ‘in

¹⁷ Hoerburger 1968: 32

the round' the tacit communication between the lead and the other dancers signal small but important changes in step patterns and direction. Of equal importance are the costuming, the step patterns and the emotional feelings that guide the execution of the dances. Markatzi is clear that the dances, originating from different regions and practiced over generations so are often imbued with the personal histories of a community, transmit the relationship between feeling in the body and mind, and the physical execution of the dance. Costumes are also important in how the dance is constructed and performed. For example, the skirts of the women are often very full to exaggerate the circling motifs within both the individual dancer and the ensemble floor patterns, and feature in the choreography with brushing motions and gestures to express ideas about courtship. In terms of the movement, core features are the specific and repeated stepping patterns that are rhythmically precise and complex, and create a particular kinetic patterning of the dance as a whole. The feet and lower body actions focus attention on individual body parts but the relationship with the upper body and relative inactivity of the arms, emphasize the relationship of individual body parts to the whole body. All dance steps align closely with the music so music and songs are indivisible from the dance.

<A> From the body to dance data

For the project, Markatzi recruited some of her dancers to be filmed performing a large range of 'typical' Greek dance sequences. These videos formed a bank of sequences, from which many were selected to be re-performed in a motion capture studio, and avatars then created from the dancers' movement, which became the principal data bank from which the tools were developed. Examples of individual segments of dances include those from *ballos*, *karatzova*, *statria*, *ikariotico*, amongst others. As with the other dance genres in the project, the segmenting of the dances into micro units for the purposes of machine learning, and its

rendering through different digital processes, can threaten the integrity of the individual dance. Each dance genre is a complex movement system and the necessary segmentation of the practice, for capturing and analysis purposes, can mean that the dance as a coherent and multi-level cultural expression, effectively disappears through its atomization and categorization. Moreover, when dances are taken out of their environment and rendered through a motion capture process, important contextual matters can be lost. For Greek folk dancers who perform in large ensembles, often in various rural or civic contexts, the transposition from a communal environment to the computerized motion capture 'lab' can be destabilizing for the dancers who are 'captured'. For this project, the dancer was required to wear a motion capture suit and not a traditional costume. The motion capture suit is a black all-body suit on which reflective optical or magnetic markers are attached to various body parts, so cameras positioned 360 degrees can capture the movement the dancer makes. Also, the motion capture process does not easily permit the capture of more than one dancer at a time. Capturing a solo dancer does not easily convey the full nature, complexity and subtleties of the dance. To aim for as much authenticity in the captures, dancers performed together even if only one dancer was captured, producing in some cases a dancing avatar 'performing' with an absent partner, suggesting - in arm gesturing and weight distribution - contact with an invisible other, or 'ghost' partner.

The process of capture for the purposes of sharing these embodied, enfolded, communal and relational cultural expressions thus requires them to be stripped of many of the constituent parts that construct the practice in the first place (variously relating to music, costume, custom, context, location, climate, space and place). On the other hand, the visualizations created by the motion capture data can reveal hitherto 'hidden' aspects of the dance that may enrich the dancer's experience of learning and performing the dance. Markatzi commented on

how “the accuracy of the recorded motion of each bone of the skeleton, full of information, is valuable, and will complete the existing recordings of the past, for further study” and how “the fragmented sequences, for blending, with the possibility of assembling them, according to the dance, will be useful for teaching/learning purposes and why not for other proposed purposes”.¹⁸ The process has thus managed to expose new information whilst it seems from Markatzi’s point of view, retaining something of the core properties of the original dance sequence. However, Markatzi is an expert viewer and teacher, on the ‘inside’ of the dance as well as the capture process. Overall, whilst different capture processes were employed in attempts to record each dance genre in order to share each more widely, the originating dance itself actually slips away and becomes ungraspable so instead ‘returns’ to the individual dancer or dancing ensemble, inseparable from its home community for the purposes of capture¹⁹.

Perhaps because of the abstraction of the dance into data, the video content that captured the original dance sequences has been of greater interest to many who have had chance to explore the WhoLoDancE Movement Library. The individual sequences, which record so many examples of Greek folk dances, as well as the other filmed records of Flamenco, were regarded as highly valuable as they are some of the only filmed records of these dances. Although not a comprehensive archive of different dance genres (this was, after all, not the

¹⁸ Comments were made during an interview with Greek folk dance expert Amalia Markatzi.

¹⁹ This may be why the project’s tools have not endured. Whilst technical and financial pressures are involved, it is an indication of how processes that ‘remove’ the dance from the dancers are not sustainable so the responsibility for sustaining the practice is returned to the dancers.

intention) they have inadvertently produced a very valuable library, or ‘accidental archive’²⁰ that many, particularly in the cultural heritage community, have regarded as important documents. These traces seemed to support more engagement with the dance practices, by being able to see, enjoy and even experience the living and more ‘human’ aspects of these cultural expressions. Whilst abstraction may be a necessary part of the process of preservation, it may inadvertently shorten the life of the practice that it seeks to preserve. If all that persists is the ‘data’ then the living form is compromised and potentially changed. However, these filmed records were never intended to be openly available, acting only as source documents for the technical partners and to determine a selection of sequences to be motion captured. The agreements we made with the dancers involved was accordingly to keep these filmed records private. Moreover, for the Greek folk dance, Markatzi is also clear that we have responsibility to the dancers, who were recruited by her for the purpose of data collection, to keep the film records private as they are amateur dancers and exposing them in this way is potentially harmful. Here is where the question of ethics enters most forcibly and care is required in how their content is used and reused. Going further, there is an ethical responsibility to Markatzi as dance leader, as well as her dancers.

Projects can develop their own momentum and what may have been intended in the beginning, and what was contributed in good faith earlier on in the project can change, not least because of the unpredictability of the digital environment that can be leaky and uncontrollable. The original permissions secured for inclusion at the start of the project became outdated. Moreover, as the project developed, so did the relationships within the project consortium as well as between Markatzi and her dancers. What ethnographer Carolyn

²⁰ AUTHOR 2018

Ellis refers to as ‘relational ethics’ then has more relevance, as the project team needed to recognize the “interpersonal bonds to others” and the need to value mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work.²¹ These relationships reflect the relationships that are a core factor of folk dance itself (as well as other dance practices), relations which vary, are complicated, and may be diverse according to their extent, intensity and profundity, and which according to Anna Panagiotopoulou have the following characteristics:

- Amicability, mutual support, encouragement and solidarity, therefore having a humanitarian aspect;
- The dancers have their own personal histories and are social beings, therefore emphasizing humanitarian relations;
- The dancers move within the boundaries of dialogue, inter-communication, and contact; therefore, not a mob of people silently moving to the same rhythm but living, articulate people, expressing themselves, revealing themselves, moving with each other and exciting each other, under the influence of the songs, music and musicians, the participant onlookers and of the dance itself;
- Relations are not static but as a result of particular moment of dance and relevant to the choreography of the particular dance. These are choreographic relations and they are created on the spur of the moment, thus are choreogenetic relations;
- Originality, spontaneity, simplicity, naturalness, truth, authenticity, and enthusiasm within the framework of self-discipline. All co-dancers thus establish connection with each other, and attachment, friendship, partnership, and a dialogue, resulting in a group unity, social

²¹ Ellis, 2007: 3

interdependence, and solidarity.²²

In short, Panagiotopoulou's claim seems to be that dance is a phenomenon which carries and manifests relationships but also generates new relationships – and these relationships contribute to the cultural development of the village/community.

The emphasis on relationships and a clear sense of community is particularly relevant for Greek folk dance, but is a feature of many dance practices and these human relationships can be tested, or take on a different shape when the dance comes into partnership with technology and forms the basis for the development of digital 'tools'. The dance is shared and taught body to body, without the need for technology but as with other dances where the tradition is to pass the dance on through non-technological means, the arrival of digital tools raises the question of whether there is now a greater responsibility to use, or avoid, the digital as a transmission mechanism for recording and preserving the dance.

<A> Conclusion

The work in WhoLoDanceE produced a valuable video collection of different dance genres in the form of dance sequences, motifs and step patterns, available for users accessing the WhoLoDanceE platform during the three years of the project to view, annotate, blend and reconstruct in multiple ways. A byproduct aim of the WhoLoDanceE project was thus to contribute to the preservation, or safeguarding of dance forms, but our aim was to do this without disrupting the necessary intangibility of the form whilst simultaneously enabling present and future dancers to find out how dance is an embodiment of our culture. However, even though these were contributed by dance experts and dancers experienced in each genre,

²² Panagiotopoulou 1994: np

we may ask if these records are actually the dance at all if taken out of the cultural/local/community context. As discussed, Greek dance events express to some extent social aspiration, social protest, or social reality²³ and Greek folk dance is clearly woven into the community in which it is danced, so taking it away for the purposes of recording, segmenting, annotating and other processes designed to preserve, appreciate and share the practice may inadvertently undermine its core values and properties. Clearly, there are ethical considerations at play when including dance practices in projects that have multiple aims, including but not confined to, documenting for preservation purposes. Some commentators go further with their concern for how traditional dances “have been stripped of their social and historical context and have been transmuted into patterns, or models, which are nothing more than cultural cans”.²⁴ And yet, there are, according to Sarris, positive aspects about how ‘globalization’ as a consequence of international exchange and influence across geographical boundaries, and a convergence of teaching methods, leads to him reflecting that “we come close to one another through our dances, which, in turn, develop as a crystallization of knowledge and experience that can be further enhanced as we get to know each other and get better acquainted with each other’s dances”.²⁵ The same can be true for contemporary dance and all dance practices; the dance is woven into the communities who dance.

A focus on WhoLoDance has opened up questions about how dance as an important cultural expression confronts the difficult questions related to copyright, property and the politics of cultural heritage. To return briefly to Macmillan, she argues that to resist the reduction of

²³ Loutzaki, 2001: 127

²⁴ Sarris 2012: np

²⁵ *ibid*

cultural practices to their value in the market, we need to “find a device that resists the commodification, or creeping propertization, of everything and proposes an alternative basis for expressing and controlling value”.²⁶ She proposes that a more fully articulated concept of CH is needed, which “expresses and controls value according to the norms and identity of a community and not according to the market value of private property rights”.²⁷ Dance exerts well its norms and values as a community, and shows how these values offer an alternative to a property framework for productive social engagement and the ongoing life of cultural expressions. But the relationship between the live practice and digitalisation means understanding that property operates in different ways, and without care, can undermine those values; respecting those values is important but is not easy. Digital technology can allow the practices to be seen and experienced within a different environment but digital interventions also mean that they can make dance more like property.

The various digital tools developed within the project provided an immediate visualization of each dance form, with the opportunity to comment/annotate and engage with the dance, albeit in segmented form. But understandings based on initial good ethical practices can sometimes be compromised in the transformation from film to motion capture visualizations, and the way in which motion capture data can travel and be rendered through different processes in sometimes unpredictable ways. The data that is contributed by the dancers is thus passed through the hands, computers and repositories of multiple agents in the journey from the physical studio to digital artefact. Dance was abstracted from the dancers, who would stand apart from their own image and their own data, but that data was inevitably marked by a sense

²⁶ Macmillan 2018: 57

²⁷ Macmillan 2013; Macmillan 2015, in *ibid*

of loss of what it was abstracted from. Perhaps this is why the tools have not been sustained whilst the dance continues in practice.²⁸ Data, however transformed through these stages, still carries the personal signature of the individual dancer so can be identified, even if not named. The dancers dance their history, society and relationships and the study of their dance provides information about how the moral, cultural and aesthetic values of that society are embodied into the dance experience and continue to contribute to our cultural life.

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²⁸ Attempts were made during the project to find ways to monetise through collecting, storing and sharing dance data but this didn't work as it is not something that the dance community recognises as something inherently useful.

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