

Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt, Franziska Bork-Petersen, Jonas Schnor, and Karen Vedel

Dancing necessities

introduktion



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Infrastructures, interventions, and maintenance

*By Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt, Franziska Bork-Petersen,
Jonas Schnor, and Karen Vedel*

“While dance researchers have gained significant academic traction through critical analysis of dancing bodies, dance’s ‘offstage’ labour and cooperation have received minimal attention in dance research,” dance studies scholar Sarah Wilbur has argued in a text introducing infrastructural analysis as an approach to dance (Wilbur 2020, 261). With this issue, we suggest working with an infrastructural analysis of the field of dance and choreography: the venues and funding and touring possibilities, the educational landscape, the collaborating relations, the reception and self-archiving practices. How are the conditions for dance and choreography in Denmark today? And which kinds of dance find their way to receive funding and enter the stages of the institutions? What are the historical conditions, legacies, and changes for the art form in our local context? Is the field supported or threatened differently in our neighbouring countries? With an urge to give thought, archival capacity, and discourse to the field of dance and choreography, we in the editorial team came together to create a call for contributions focusing on the *conditions* rather than the *expressions*. Or, as the title of this issue suggests, we look at how the education and artistic work of dancers and choreographers are conditioned by necessity, infrastructures, interventions, and practices of maintenance.

Infrastructure studies is a transdisciplinary approach across the humanities and social sciences informed by science and technology studies, architecture studies, media studies, critical and indigenous anthropology, black feminism, and decolonial theory, and also probed among scholars in dance, theatre and performance studies (see for example Kittler 1986; Vedel 2011; Easterling 2014; Vedel 2014; Schmidt 2018; Wilbur 2020; Gilmore 2022; Beck et.al. 2022; Kunst 2023; Doery 2024; Daugaard, Schmidt and Tygstrup 2024). The etymology of the word infrastructure is the latin description of

← Image from the demonstration #keepdanceincopenhagen 2022. Photo: Theo Baunsgaard.

what comes from below the structure. After World War II, it has been used massively in military vocabulary, before it became a more mainstream word to describe public substructures such as cables for power supply, tracks and roads for transportation, and pipelines for water, sewage, oil, and gas in the 1980s (Batt 1984). An infrastructural analysis directs the gaze towards what is below, *infra*: the supporting, solidifying, restraining, and co-producing, often hidden circumstances and flows surrounding the traditional object of analysis (the performances).



Image from the demonstration #keepdanceincopenhagen 2022. Photo: Theo Baunsgaard.

“Infrastructures are matter that enable the movement of other matter,” as defined by anthropologist Brian Larkin (Larkin 2013, 329). The study of the enabling of movement – here movement understood as access, progress, mobility, change, not dance in the initial analysis – is a study of politicised conditions and rationales behind the artistic production, presentation, and reception. In our use of the concept of infrastructure, we are interested in both institutionalised and self-organised patterns for movement, hard and

soft infrastructures, and material and immaterial structures of support. What makes some bodies advance and appear, and others not? Which aesthetic rationales make some artists move and others not? Which notions of taste and quality make some artworks presented, discussed and critiqued and valued, and others not? Which economies and institutions support which kinds of dance? Infrastructural analysis is thus the study of the politicised distribution of affordances across the field of dance and choreography.

Asking questions about the infrastructure of an art form inevitably also means to ask questions about which forms of living are possible for the practitioners of the field. Concretely we wish to ask: How are the lives of dancers and choreographers sustained? Training and educational regimes ensure *one* aspect of individual dancing bodies' creation and maintenance (Foster 1992) the performances and the lives of artists, however, rely on support structures made up of diverse emotional, financial, physical, and administrative factors too. When severe changes in Denmark occur such as seven years of homelessness for the field, as Copenhagen's key stage for production of new works, guest performances of contemporary dance, and training facility, Dansehallerne, moved out of its buildings, or as a removal of an education in Copenhagen became a fact, and conversely, infrastructures, socialities, and orientation fall apart for many practitioners, we ask ourselves what to repair, what to reorganise, and how to continue together.

Feminist scholars have in recent years attended to practices of maintenance – the often invisibilised care of upholding bodies, social relations, artworks, institutions – and conceived of these as a way of creating class solidarity and redistributing attention to unvalued, gendered, and racialised labour (Bryan-Wilson 2009; Baraitser 2017; Vergès 2019; Schmidt 2022). At the same time, maintenance has been linked to colonial conservation and the upholding of power relations and racist representations in their infrastructural embeddedness (Hass 2023; Mattern 2023).

This introducing article thus provides a critical analysis of what has happened infrastructurally within the past 10 years in the Danish field of dance and choreography. We look at four aspects, namely: the landscape and economy of venues, the educational changes, an upsurge of self-organised spaces and cooperatives in the field, and finally the field of critique and

self-archiving. Through an analysis across frames of production, presentation, and distribution, we suggest tendencies of how dance and choreography is currently moved by its material and immaterial infrastructures.

Venues and budgets

On a sunny late summer day in 2024, a cathedral for dance and choreography opened: the new venue of Dansehallerne was entered by dancers, choreographers, neighbours, funding partners, and other curious audiences. The programme paid attention to both legacy, local positions and their wish to diversify the art form. Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker performed her solo *Pioverà*, embodying one of the grand dame positions in the history of contemporary dance. Local recognised-spectacular positions such as Dansk Danseteater filled the central stage with a designer-clothed and eroticised group choreography, the children's dance company MYKA performed in huge designer dresses in and outside the building, and Sparrow Dance danced on the vertical walls outside the building. For smaller groups of audiences, the black box and a studio were filled either with children's workshops by Kalliopi Siganou and Karin Bergman, or with bass, body, and politicised positions by Malik Sharpe and Marie Kaae, respectively. The new house was long awaited: after seven years from the closing of the former venue, first the director of Dansehallerne from 2015-19 Efva Lilja, then Danjel Andersson (2019-) together with the board of Dansehallerne and Bygningsfonden Kedelhuset fought to raise the required funding from private foundations and the Municipality of Copenhagen, a total of 170 million DKK, for this new, spacious place for movement. The building, from the mid-1920s, is enormous with its 4,600 m² and four floors. A part of the former Carlsberg brewery, it is situated in what is today a highly gentrified district with expensive apartments, hotels, bakeries, and shops. The architecture of the restored building – rephrased by Mikkelsen Architects – is stunning with columns, open staircases, and sky-high ceilings and a central stage one would need to be many or out-of-this-world-charismatic to fill. It evokes the association of a cathedral, a word repeated several times in the first recensions of the building, albeit also furnished by smaller, intimate room for rehearsals (prayers?) and a black box for intense experiences (the chapel?).

In the meantime, from the closing of the former Dansehallerne at Pasteursvej in the same Carlsberg district in September 2017, until the opening of the new house in 2024, the national centre for dance operated from an address for the administration while, in terms of performances, moving nomadically from one venue to the next. On a national scale, the field of dance and choreography in Denmark is, moreover, housed by a little number of venues explicitly dedicated to the contemporary artform and its further development: Bora Bora in Aarhus with a yearly budget of 4,8 million DKK, Aaben Dans in Roskilde with a yearly budget of 6,2 million DKK, Black Box in Holstebro with a yearly budget of 9,5 million DKK, and Dansehallerne in Copenhagen with a yearly budget of 14,6 million DKK¹. In addition, two national ensembles exist: the Dansk Danseteater, an ensemble of contemporary dance with annual state funding of 12,6 million DKK; and the company of The Royal Danish Ballet, including the Royal Danish Ballet School and the development initiative Koreorama, housed as one of the three art forms in The Royal Danish Theatre and part of their yearly budget.

In addition to Dansehallerne, independent venues of a more experimental kind – Toaster, Sydhavn Teater, Tårnby Park Studio, Momentum –, national residency centres – HAUT, Birca – and festivals for adult and young audiences – Detour Festival, Det Frie Felts Festival, Klap, Spring, and not least Københavns Internationale Teater (KIT) – also provide stage capacity and international guest performances, and support the development of the independent dancers and choreographers, mostly with a funding from the municipalities and the Danish Arts Council, supplemented by the few private foundations supporting explicitly dance and choreography: The Wilhelm Hansen Foundation, The Augustinus Foundation, The William Demant Foundation, and The Bikuben Foundation. Finally, Dansekapellet, the cultural house for dance, is supported by the municipality of Copenhagen with 6,7 million DKK and has an accent on the support and development of urban dance, community dance, and diversity by providing training, residencies, and co-producing performances. Altogether, the dance and choreography

1) All numbers are budgets from 2024 according to the respective official agreements with municipality and state (Da. *rammeaftaler*). Most budgets are higher, between 30 and 50%, due to successful private funding.

scene has been growing on a national level and is integral to the DNA of the independent performing arts scene.

The Royal Danish Theatre has an obligation to educate, develop, and premiere ballet within its budget of total 542 million DKK. The five regional theatres in Denmark (Da. *Landsdelscenerne*) have a total budget of 387,2 million DKK without having any written obligations to house dance and choreography. They all have ensembles of actors. Looked at in severe numbers, dance and choreography in Denmark has a minor status within the landscape of the performing arts. Although the new building in Carlsberg repeats an architecture of grandeur and impress, the local budget is stunningly humble compared to stages for theatre of the spoken word. Dansehallerne receiving a quarter of what is at hand at Aarhus Theatre, for example, which only has the obligation to produce speech theatre – not even opera or ballet.

The national landscape for dance and choreography is a mycelium-like infrastructure of co-producing and -presenting venues, and within the past 20 years, many reports have been made to underscore the importance of strengthening the infrastructure of dance and choreography (Vedel 2001; Kulturministeriet 2003; Statens Kunstfond 2021). However, both the production muscles, square meters, and budgets are incomparable with the ones of speech theatre. With infrastructural inequity in the field of the performing arts privileging speech theatre, one might ask, what a poor cathedral might be able to – on a structural level – offer its visitors? How many dancers can Dansehallerne afford to put on the enormous central stage? How many guest performances are needed when no permanent local ensemble is (wanted, afforded) in-house? How impressive might light design and new composed music and sound be with a tiny budget for project productions? How many stops on the national tour might be possible? For dance and choreography, as for other artistic endeavours, the conditions co-create the expressions we meet on stage (Kunst 2013; Bengé et.al. 2022). The short life of most performances and the demand of newness, the few times a performance play, the low number of people on stage, the absence of scenography is not just a given, chosen, or ‘universal’ aesthetics of contemporary dance and choreography, but an infrastructural aesthetics necessitated by the conditions of how dance and

choreography is funded based on projects, and nationally (dis)regarded and supported in the landscape of performing arts.

Education

In 1992, after consistent lobbying by dancers, choreographers, and their organisations, the Danish state awarded three years of trial funding for an education in dance, then termed The Dance Project [DanseProjektet]. After an evaluation, the education was made permanent in 1995 and renamed The School of Contemporary Dance in Denmark [Skolen for Moderne Dans i Danmark]. The programme, then solely focused on creating dancers, was also extended with a fourth year. The next thirty years have been marked by a series of structural and locational changes: In 1998, the school was merged with the National Danish Theatre School [Statens Teaterskole], which later entailed a locational move from Nørrebro to the beautiful facilities of Gymnastik and Eksercerbygningen in the former marine area of Holmen, where it became a neighbour to the other state art schools in Copenhagen. The merger also entailed a move from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Culture as the new institution's governing body. Still, for the first 10 years, the school retained some autonomy with a separate budget and school leadership. With time, the programme was expanded with an education in choreography, founded by Christine Meldal and accredited in 2005. A third education named Dance Partnership was developed in 2010 and led by Sheila de Val with a focus on developing participatory projects with schools and cultural institutions. A defining shift in terms of the artistic approach to choreography took place 2012-2016 while the choreography education, was under the leadership of Sara Gebran, who successfully introduced critical theory and decolonial approaches, and encouraged the students to work as collectives rather than as individual auteurs. In 2012, the larger institution was called The Danish National School for Theatre and Dance, but only for a short time, before all state educations in performing arts were administratively unified in 2015 as The Danish National School of Performing Arts (DASPA). Today the degree programmes related to dance and choreography include a BFA in Dance, an MFA in Choreography, and an MFA in Dance and Participation.

#keepdanceincph it said on hand-painted signs and banners in front of a large group of young dance professionals and students of dance and choreography (see the cover image of this issue). In September 2022, just as a new year group of students entered the DASPA, the gathered field performed a dancing mob in the square in front of the government building, they shouted; they made SoMe-protests and wrote letters to the minister of culture, social democrat Ane Halsboe-Jørgensen; collected support and voices across. What was about to happen was the displacement of a successful and progressive, international dance- and choreography bachelor education based in contemporary, critical approaches from the capital Copenhagen to the city of Holstebro, more than 300 kilometres across the country. One could consider this political decision, at its best, as a strategic boost of the geographical periphery, and as its worst, a destruction of a thriving and developing, internationally permeated milieu of dance and choreography based in Copenhagen. Ultimately, the decision has been manifested in a ‘compromise’ whereby the BA in Dance and Choreography takes place both in Holstebro and Copenhagen with admission alternating between the two. In Holstebro, the BA-programme is taught with a focus on educating dancers for repertory and/or independent dance companies, while in Copenhagen the same curriculum is taught with a focus on creating dance makers for the independent scene. Another very concrete infrastructural loss was the upheaval of the rental contract for the buildings at Philip de Langes Allé 3 at Holmen, where the accredited educations in dance had had a permanent home since year 2000.

Conversely, a year before in May 2021, the Danish Arts Council published a set of recommendations for the dance- and choreography field entitled *Danseøkologien* (The Dance Ecology). Here, not a word about educational changes was mentioned. However, it was recommended to investigate “new geographical areas” for dance- and choreography practitioners, most explicitly to build a network of national production houses and touring as well as finding strategies for collaborations across sectors (Statens Kunstfond 2021, 4). On a rainy day, one could claim that the ecology so generously wished for became a wrongly-interpreted wish, creating a tipping point, where the potential was taken out of the capital, collapsing a whole ecology of proximity and exchange between education, the independent field, and venues in Copenhagen, with the

vague promise that an education in the province can provide both immersion during education and spread out the potential more democratically across the country.

Within academia, the fate of the study of dance can be described by both expansion, cuts, and instability: In the course of 25 years between 1989 and 2014, the dance programmes offered at University of Copenhagen trained graduates who today work in the field as dance critics, dance producers and as teachers in high schools offering dance as a line of specialisation.² The fate of the study of dance in Danish academia, however, has been marked by precarity. The one-year programme named The Aesthetics and History of Dance founded by Erik Aschengreen in 1989 under the Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics at University of Copenhagen (UCPH), was, at his retirement in 2000, continued by Inger Damsholt and moved first to the Department of Art History, Dance and Theatre Studies, then – at the establishment of Department of Arts and Cultural Studies – to the Musicology Section. In 2004 Inger Damsholt and Karen Vedel together with dance scholars from NTNU, Trondheim, Teatervetenskapliga Institutionen in Stockholm co-initiated a Nordic MA in Dance Studies (a.k.a. No-MA-ds) that was later joined by Tampere University in Finland, combining the expertise of dance scholarship in the four countries. In 2007, the programme was re-structured as a BA-elective in Dance Studies (*Dansevidenskab*) comprising courses in dance history, dance anthropology, dance and cultural theory as well as dance analysis. However, in connection with budget cuts, Dance Studies was closed as an elective at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies in 2014. The following year, UCPH, unable to solve how to award a joint MA with the collaborating universities, also withdrew from No-MA-ds. Although dance is taught as part of courses in the section of Theatre and Performance Studies and the unit Sport, Individual and Society in Department of Nutrition, Exercise and Sports, UCPH, as well as in the Department of Sports Science and Clinical Biomechanics, at the University of Southern Denmark – it is currently not possible to obtain a degree that mentions dance at a Danish university.

2) In 2024, a 15 high schools/GCE A-level educations in Denmark offer Dance as an elective taught in 3-4 classes per week. Each school has between one and five teams of students and the interest is growing fast.

On a more positive note, the No-MA-ds collaboration resulted in a three-year research project entitled *Dance in Nordic Spaces (2009-2011)* funded by Svenska Riksbanken and Svenska Litteraturselskapet in Finland. Counting dance scholars from Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, the outcome of the project includes two anthologies (Tapir Academic Press 2011; Ashgate 2014) and a special issue of *Dance Research Journal* (2020). More recently, the research project *Knowing in Motion. Dance, body, archive* was awarded funding for a three-year period beginning in 2023.³

The past plus twenty years of education in dance and choreography in Denmark have been characterised by both strong, new initiatives across the Nordic region and the establishment as well as the cancelling and displacement of education. What should be added is that some artists in the field have taken their education abroad at School for New Dance Development (SNDO) in Amsterdam, P.A.R.T.S in Brussels, UNIARTS in Stockholm, KHiO in Oslo, and the Inter-University Center for Dance Berlin (HZT), from where they have brought both inspiration, guest teachers, and collaborators to the Danish field and vice versa. With educations in Denmark also being taught in English, the field of contemporary dance and choreography is considerably international, but also, in its way of being contemporary and international, rather “unidirectional,” as choreographer and cultural studies scholar Fabiàn Augusto Barba has once described it.⁴ Only a few venues have an afro-diasporic, Caribbean, or transnational profile. Educations on BA- or MA-level are not offered in rhythmic dance, nor does the Tuukkaq Theatre, where the Inuit drum dance was rehearsed and further explored from 1975-1994, exist as a venue and school for Kalaallit performing anymore. The landscape of education in Denmark is thus offering a continuation, solidification, and development of

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- 3) The project includes practice base explorations with dance artists. It is funded by the private Augustinus Foundation and hosted by Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, UCPH, and has co-funding from The Royal Danish Library. The research, led by Karen Vedel, is carried out by a small team including Franziska Bork Petersen (Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, UCPH) and Anna Lawaetz (The Royal Danish Library) in collaboration with artistic consultants from Danish Dance Stories.
 - 4) Barba – born in and having had their first professional training in Quito – writes about their education at P.A.R.T.S where they discover that being “international” and “contemporary” in the field of dance means to inscribe into a unidirectional culture, from the West to the rest. Apart from the years where Venezuelan Sara Gebran taught at DASPA, this tendency can also roughly be said to apply to the Danish education, led since 2015 by Swedish Rasmus Ölme, educated at P.A.R.T.S. himself. See Barba 2016.

ballet, (Western) contemporary dance and choreography and dance pedagogy, as well as knowledge production.

Self-organisation

While the dance and choreography component of DASPA has lost its building at Holmen, a cornerstone in the school in Copenhagen, a newly graduated generation of dancers and choreographers has formed a strong community in the past 10 years. Members of the dance community have self-organised in platforms, studio-communities, and cooperatives. Examples are three collectives all graduated from DASPA.

DANSEatelier was established by a generation of eleven former students from the years when Sara Gebran taught at DASPA. As alumni they decided to remain a group after graduation and secured themselves a material frame of continuity though establishing a shared studio for daily practice, rehearsal, and community sharings in 2016, first in Valby in an industrial setting, later in a back yard 3 floor studio at Nørrebro in the centre of Copenhagen.

DanceCooperative was initiated as an artist-run platform and studio on more explicit theoretical and ideological grounds: the wish among the founding members – professionals across ages and experiences – was to dedicate their common reflection and practices to intersectionality. Or as they state on their facebook profile “The cooperative aims to organise artistically with an active feminist and intersectional approach, externally as well as internally.”⁵ The group of 14 members has not been permanent but based on membership, and there has been a call for members to reach beyond the usual crowd of colleagues and dance genres. Besides sharing a VAT-number and a studio for rehearsals in Valby close to Copenhagen, DanceCooperative hosts practice sharings and festivals of works in progress.

The youngest form of collective organisation is the association and production platform KOMMA Performance Productions (2021-) which is a group of approximately 12 dancers and choreographers gathered around sharing resources, VAT-number, accountant, and production manager as

5) https://www.facebook.com/hello.Dance.cooperativE/about_details (website visited November 2024).

individual artists.⁶ The artists have come together believing that shared production conditions is a pragmatic solution as well as an artistic proposal. Inspired by the notion of production aesthetics (KOMMA 2023; Schmidt 2022), KOMMA Performance Productions has the ambition to be a support and sparring group for each other when writing applications and struggling in the independent freelance patchwork economy.

A separatist collective organisation has also been initiated by artists identifying as global majority, BIPOC, or explicitly anti-racist or anti-colonial coalitions. The work of these collectives is more platform-based and – despite their many differences – rather transdisciplinary than solely based in dance and choreography. Examples are the Northern Jutland-based Lim Collective (2022-), a platform of approximately 15 members, connecting artistic experimentation with health and care work, collaborating with institutions such as theatres, art galleries, homes for the elderly, and refugee centres. Humus Collective (2021-) is a group of artists from the global south based mainly in Denmark and working with healing and community-nurturing. A third initiative is Diasporic Dimensions, a performing arts company led by Danish-Kenyan choreographer Phyllis Akinyi, which premiered a work made by an afro-diasporic team of artists based in Denmark and beyond. Their collaboration manifested in a performance in November 2024, *Correlations – Meetings in the Multiverse*, where the ensemble stomped and tapped on the black floors of the Royal Danish Theatre. It was a ritual of exorcism of restrictive colonial aesthetics and predominant institutional whiteness, and a ritual connecting diasporic positions; a celebrational coming together of dance styles and African musical heritages – an example of how the intended reorganisation of bodies and choreographic styles both alters the aesthetics meeting the audiences and the possibilities of representation in the institution.

Despite organisational differences, the three examples show a current persistence in working with and against racist and colonial infrastructures inherent in the art world, including the field of dance- and choreography. Their separatist collective work can be regarded as both compensating for what is not at hand in the current educations, boards, venues, and criticism; that is,

6) A biased selection can be suggested here, as Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt, co-authoring this article, is on the board of KOMMA Performance Productions.

as a *means* to alter cultural infrastructures at large through decolonisation, anti-racism, collective organising, and variations of reparative strategies, and also as an *end* in itself: as affective and collective healing and celebration of community (Gaonkar and Schmidt 2024).

The establishing of collective platforms, shared spaces, and production units can be regarded as a pragmatic solution in times of structural precarity for dancers; it can be read as an artistic proposal in times of institutional instability playing with organisation, community, and bricks as material, i.e. an infrastructural performance (Schmidt 2017; 2018). Or it can, thinking along the lines of black feminist abolitionist geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore, be understood as a way to materially and mentally build a supportive infrastructure of feeling to accommodate both exhaustion among independent artists as well as experiences of discrimination in the Danish cultural scene (Gilmore 2022). Gilmore formulates her definition of an infrastructure of feeling as follows:

In the material world, infrastructure underlies productivity – it speeds some processes and slows down others, setting agendas, producing isolation, enabling cooperation. The infrastructure of feeling is material too, in the sense that ideology becomes material as do the actions that feelings enable or constrain. (Gilmore 2022, 490)

If the infrastructure of feeling is scattered due to wobbly funding, homelessness, provincialisation, and continuously low prioritisation of dance in Denmark, then the self-organised scene can be regarded as a counter-infrastructure of feeling: one that keeps the artists afloat through social belonging, one that literally saves their individual economies, and one that provides a space for intersectional, queer, and anti-racist practices. According to art theorist Bojana Kunst (2023), the field of dance and choreography play an important role when it comes to confronting structural precarity through practices of self-organisation and community-building. As Kunst notes, the sensorial and somatic investigations in dance give way to modes of coming together that are not rooted in rigid identity-confirmation. Instead, they are anchored in the capacity to feel (for) the complexity and asymmetries of bodies, to configure

spaces and temporalities where bodies can remain incomplete and fluid but still supported – maintained – in the vibrant socialities of communities in the making (2023).

In recent years, examples of this can be traced in the increasing number of work-in-progress sharing events by self-organised groups such as DANSEatelier and DanceCooperative and the national residency centre HAUT. In 2023, DanceCooperative curated four evenings where the group's members shared works-in-progress with the dance community in Copenhagen. HAUT created the Y choreographic festival in 2019 and the YC festival in 2023, both devoted to showing works-in-progress, foregrounding communal feedback culture, and strengthening relationships among practitioners in the field. This tendency even blended with the established dance venues when Bora Bora in Aarhus, Aaben Dans in Roskilde, Teater Momentum in Odense, and Dansehallerne in Copenhagen co-created the event *Aabent Laboratorium – on tour* in 2024. The four venues showcased four choreographers (Andreas Haglund, Julianne Doko, Keren-or Ben Shachar, and Peter Scherrebeck/Misty Deluxe) whom the venues supported in further developing solo works. The four solos were shown during one evening in each of the four cities (Schnor 2024). In 2017, 2019 and 2023, Danseatelier hosted the feminist festival for dance and choreography, thecarrierbag festival, which “focuses on how we gather around works.”⁷ In September 2024, DanceCooperative organised the small festival SCOOP showing fresh works from the organisation's members as well as from their Amsterdam sibling organisation Jacuzzi. Again, aim of this event was, according to the organisers, to give “insight into the practices” of the artists through communal gathering and to amplify the connection between the independent dance fields of Amsterdam and Copenhagen⁸. In addition, DANSEatelier and HAUT also regularly host short (two weeks) residencies dedicated to artistic research.

Initiatives by DANSEatelier, DanceCooperative, KOMMA Performance Productions, Lim Collective, Humus Collective, and Diasporic Dimensions show that, among practitioners in the field, there is a drive towards infra-

7) See <https://danseatelier.dk/work/thecarrierbag-festival-2023> (accessed November 1, 2024).

8) See <https://www.facebook.com/events/27199743556291765> (accessed November 27, 2024).

structural critique through the means of self-organising otherwise: nurturing community and practicing solidarity.⁹ Whilst facing structural precarity, institutional discrimination, and competing for the same, limited funding opportunities, coming together to share practices, to critically reflect on infrastructural conditions and, not least, to build and maintain friendships and belonging, become strategies to counterbalance the instabilities of life in art. Moreover, perhaps these counterbalancing strategies also reveal a shift in (how to perceive) the artworks themselves: by including, or even prioritising, ‘how we gather around works’ as a (necessary) component of production in dance and choreography, focus shifts from the spectacularity of finished works to the ongoing processes of artistic research, political critique, and their entwinement with the singularities of lived lives. This shift does not necessarily diminish the importance of the works presented on stage, but it presents them as part of larger and smaller processes of life; the infrastructural substructure seeps, so to speak, into the work and out of it, making the lives of both artists, curators, audiences, producers, dramaturges, critics, and production managers oscillate, assembled around the embodied and affective questions posed by artistic pursuits. By highlighting process and relation, dancers and choreographers are, from the bottom up, exposing the material and social conditions that are structurally challenged and in need of maintenance. At the same time, by drawing these conditions to the foreground, artists are also producing works that strive to actively, and continuously, intervene into both infrastructures of production and the infrastructures of feeling.

Public attention and self-made archives

When analysing through an infrastructural lens, the flows between production, presentation, and reception become central. It is impossible to think about how the funding possibilities are, and what is presented at the dance venues without also looking at which kind of media (in)attention is at hand. In recent

9) Political theorist Marina Vischmidt differentiates infrastructural critique from institutional critique and defines infrastructural critique as “(...) a critique that cuts and lets in air, a critique that takes upon itself to find or make the holes through which this infrastructure comes into view.” (Vischmidt 2022, 32).

years, however, the space for dance criticism in the major newspapers has been considerably reduced. Monna Dithmer, a prominent critic of theatre, dance and performance at the paper *Politiken* since 1994 and the responsible editor for theatre since 1995, became free-lance after the paper in 2016 decided to no longer prioritise the area of performing arts. In the leftist newspaper *Information*, there is Anne Middelboe Christensen, whose reviews also cover a broad spectrum of performing arts and who, in terms of dance, writes mainly about ballet. Another continuous voice in the daily press is the dance critic Vibeke Wern, connected to the cultural editorial of the liberalist-conservative newspaper *Berlingske* from 1996 until today, and currently writing for the Swedish journal *Danstidningen* as well. A fourth critic, also housed at the newspaper *Berlingske* for 41 years, was Erik Aschengreen (1935-2023), a true lover of Bournonville ballet. And finally, Majbrit Hjelmso, who was the editor of dance at the former magazine *Teater1*, as well as a critic at *Kristeligt Dagblad*. and who now writes for *Weekendavisen*. A magazine named *Dans* (formerly *Dansemagasinet Terpischore*), specifically dedicated to dance, also exists today and celebrates its 25 years birthday in 2025.

Today, new voices are also reviewing contemporary dance performances, but not in the printed press. One decisive online platform is *bastard.blog* providing focus on performance art, dance, and transdisciplinary artforms since 2019, and having amongst its critics Mette Garfield (editor in chief), Karin Hald, Filip Vest, and one of the editors of this journal issue, Jonas Schnor. Another consistent online platform is *Iscene* where especially the dance critic Dorte Grannov Balslev has provided thoughtful and generously co-thinking reviews in the past couple of years. Both online platforms are dependent on paid media collaborations where theatres and companies pay the platform to write independent features (however, reviews are not possible to order). Finally, this very journal *Peripeti* itself has a reviewing practice providing lengthy and academically sound reviews, albeit prioritising theatre over dance and other performing arts genres due to the capacity and training of the team of critics currently engaged.

Opposed to the increasingly shorter or explicitly cancelled critiques written in the printed newspapers, the online platforms provide length and – as is the case of especially *bastard.blog* - manifest the explicit will to

write as much as is necessary in a language and visual form allowing the critics to experiment and explore too. Similar to the venues of experimental performing arts Toaster and HAUT, *bastard.blog* infrastructurally provides an artform-ignorant kinship by placing dance, performance art, fine arts, and poetry as online neighbours without categories. Characteristic of the critics in the online formats is that they are entangled in the field themselves as dramaturges, as writers, or as artists. This also tenaciously provokes the border-drawing logic between practice and critique that has – since Kantian aesthetics in the enlightenment – required a distanced and presumably disinterested, objective perceiver. This intertwining of practice and theory produces a more embodied and explicitly situated form of critique, where the author – often informed by feminist and queer thinking and the use of personal experience (Haraway 2018 [1988]; hooks 1994) – is aware of their bias and plays with their personal affinities.

The feminist and situated form of writing from within the field is also practiced by the generous collective Danske Dansehistorier who since 2018 have been archiving with colleagues through a format of remembering-workshops. Their work is a practice of self-archiving of the field, inviting to remember both works seen (guest performances, colleagues' rehearsals, inspiration in other countries) and works made. The very practice of bringing the field together across generations to share (her)stories of lives and events in dance and choreography has been empowering to the field. It has not only disturbed the institutional "right to canonise," but also expanded the understanding of what can be seen as "Danish" dance history.

What does not come across from this written mapping of critique and archiving of dance and choreography, is that all reviewers and writers mentioned in this chapter are able-bodied, Danish, and racialized as white. Although feminist and queer perspectives have been widely accentuated in recent years, there is an absence of voices with lived experiences of disability, indigeneity, and racialisation. The infrastructure of critique can thus be regarded as a normative substructure that to some extent might limit how the field is remembered and contextualised.

Conclusion: Infrastructural Choreographies

Infrastructures are both material and immaterial. To look at the dance and choreography field in Denmark through an infrastructural lens can report on two different, main aspects: a “hard” infrastructure of money, venues, and education; and a “soft” infrastructure of bodies, feelings, and knowledges. The hard and the soft infrastructures are dynamically intertwined.

The hard infrastructures have been characterised by growth but also by instability: the educational landscape has been growing and collapsing, the economy has grown due to both state- and private funding but asymmetrically, and the venues have become more and connected – still the artform is struggling to achieve recognition in public media and stately financial support on a scale comparable to drama. The field of artists and producers has suggested a self-definition as ecology (Stengers 2005; Statens Kunstfond 2021), but the sustainability and liveability of the field is by no means guaranteed. In the independent field, most artists have a precarious existence rhythmised between residencies, project-employments, and unemployment benefits, as none of the collective platforms receive a continuous support from the Arts Council just like any independent performing arts groups.

When it comes to the soft infrastructures, or what we could call the onto-epistemological foundation, then the field of dance and choreography in Denmark has expanded artistically to include more ways of moving, representing, and producing community through dance and self-organisation. But at the top of the institutions and among the writing and preserving capacities, a Danish, able-bodied, cis-white dominance is observable. While the field itself is both aesthetically thriving, expanding, and challenging its own controversies of (mis)representation, racism, and body-normativity, the infrastructures of support do not seem to monetarily be able to mirror and support the corporeal knowledges at hand in the artform in writing and critique.

Infrastructures are what is below. They become visible when they break down. What has been extremely visible the past years has been self-organisation, self-archiving, and self-schooling. This can be read as an infrastructural choreography by the artists in the field: a way of compensating for and maintaining what has been destabilised, is absent, and in need of repair. We consider the infrastructural choreography of the artists as artistic proposals

where organisation might replace phrases, where a collective reading circle might substitute a group show, where an archiving workshop might be a new way of interpreting inherited traditions of movement – at least for a while, until the infrastructures solidify as bearing and bearable.

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Cecilie Ullerup Schmidt is an associate professor in Cultural Studies and Performance Studies and deputy director of the Art as Forum research centre at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen. From a feminist-materialist perspective her research centres production aesthetics, particularly in relation to structural precarity, infrastructural discrimination, and self-organisation. With postdoc Anna Meera Gaonkar she is co-directing the research project *Communities of Separatism. Affects in and around Separatist Collectives by Racialised Artists and Cultural Workers* (2022-24). Most recently she co-edited the anthology *Infrastructure Aesthetics* (2024).

Franziska Bork-Petersen is an associate professor in Performance Studies at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen. She is a member of the research project *Knowing in Motion. Dance, body, archive* (2023-26). Her writings on performance art, fashion, dance and digital bodies have appeared in *Performance Research*, *Nordic Theatre Studies* and *MedieKultur: Journal of media and communication research*. Her latest book publication *Body Utopianism: Prosthetic Being Between Enhancement and Estrangement* (2022) explores the paradoxical relationship between bodies and utopianism.

Jonas Schnor is a postdoctoral researcher in Performance Studies at the Research Centre for Visual Poetics, University of Antwerp, and external lecturer at the Theatre and Performance Studies section at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen. They have worked as a freelance dance critic for *bastard.blog* and their research on dance and ecology, collective creation and practice-based dance making has appeared in *Performance Research*, *Performance Philosophy Journal* and *Critical Stages/ Scènes critiques*.

Karen Vedel is an associate professor in Theatre and Performance Studies, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen. Coming from a professional background in dance, she has worked extensively to further the visibility of dance and choreography as an art form in Denmark – both in the cultural political arena and in academia. Her widely published research centres on dance historiography and critical heritage studies. She is project leader of the research project *Knowing in Motion. Dance, body, archive* (2023-2026).
