

WEAVE LABDAY METHODOLOGY

TRANSDISCIPLINARY CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR CULTURAL COMMUNITIES AND HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS

Rosa Cisneros¹, Marie-Louise Crawley¹, Fred Truyen², Karin Hannes², Valentina Bachi³, Antonella Fresa³, Marta Guerreiro⁴, Joana Ricardo⁴, Alexandru Stan⁵

¹Centre for Dance Research [C-DaRE], Coventry University, (UK)

²KU Leuven (BELGIUM)

³Photoconsortium (ITALY)

⁴PédeXumbo (PORTUGAL)

⁵IN2 Digital Innovations (GERMANY)

Abstract

This paper refers to the Dream Team session hosted in the frame of the European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry - ECQI2022 Conference. It made use of the case study of the EU-funded WEAVE project (2021-2022), to underpin the exploration of an innovative methodological framework for capacity building for Cultural Heritage Institutions to work with cultural communities and with Digital Intangible Heritage. This methodology unfolded through a series of LabDays, which enabled WEAVE to create social, digital and artistic platforms and to set up and maintain various sTpaces that include vulnerable communities and promote social innovation. This participatory and collaborative approach has allowed for multicultural communities to join forces towards excellence in Cultural Heritage and social transformation. Through its LabDay methodology, WEAVE allows participants to create and explore connections to Europeana and its collections, as well as to other European heritage professionals. The LabDays also allow for the direct, active participation of all participants as an entirely experiential process during which each participant's creative involvement extends to the point that he/she decides. Further, the constant interaction between the participants throughout the whole process has enabled the participation of multicultural communities and individuals to freely express their attitude and cultural values through dance, art and cultural heritage activities. Finally, the methodology allows participants to re-evaluate their personal experiences within an emotionally supportive framework of trust and acts as a self-aware exchange process of knowledge, culture and experience.

Keywords: cultural communities; dance; digital cultural heritage; intangible cultural heritage; tangible cultural heritage; communicative methodology; minority representation; inclusivity; capacity-building.

1 INTRODUCTION: THE WEAVE PROJECT¹

WEAVE – Widen European Access to cultural communities Via Europeana - is a project co-funded by the Connecting Europe Facility Programme of the EU. It aims to develop a framework to link the tangible and intangible heritage of cultural communities, safeguarding the rich and invaluable Cultural Heritage (CH) that they represent. To support this, the project is collecting thousands high-quality digitised records representing tangible and intangible heritage from various Cultural Heritage Institutions (CHIs), associations and archives, for publication and sharing in Europeana.eu, the digital gateway to European cultural collections. Publishing the collections in Europeana is a modern strategy to showcase and value these collections widely, along with a set of engaging editorials and virtual exhibitions published online, in the light of enabling citizens to use the Internet to engage with heritage content and, more largely, with the artistic, creative and educational resources of cultural institutions.

As the selected content is also intended to represent the culture of minoritised communities (such as the Roma community, the Portuguese traditional dance community and the historical dance community in the UK), the project is undertaking several capacity-building activities that will help to develop a closer connection between cultural heritage institutions, minoritised cultural communities and Europeana. This is particularly important to consider as preservation within the CH sector is also faced with making decisions whether to rely on existing preservation techniques or to try to develop new modes of documenting that respond to the current complexities of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in particular. There are many challenges faced during the digital transformation that CHIs have embarked on, and more so when considering ICH, most notably the fact that a solid methodology for documenting is missing. Capturing and documenting ICH is facilitated by audio-visual technologies, now transformed in the digital era, which is helping to build knowledge of our cultural traditions and the traditions of communities. Additionally, given that CH can be digitally represented in a variety of formats, including video, audio and 3D, WEAVE develops a set of open and reusable tools available to CHIs for the management, annotation and showcasing of such digitised content.

The project work began by looking at the current stage of the digital transformation process of cultural heritage - and institutions more broadly, including the digital transformation of ICH within that.² The project is also exploring how cultural communities and organisations look at digital tools and resources to represent and share their CH, by engaging these communities in a series of LabDays and capacity-building events. With a bottom-up, participatory approach, these events enable cultural communities to express their requirements and needs concerning the management of their intangible and tangible heritage, thus becoming themselves a driver for innovation in cultural heritage digital transformation.

This paper presents the framing methodology of the WEAVE LabDays both in theory and in practice, then opens up onto a wider discussion of the collective thinking explored in the ECQI2022 WEAVE Dream Team session which took place online on 3rd February 2022. The Dream Team session itself took the form of a 'LabDay in action', examining the LabDay methodology in terms of capacity-building for digitising ICH and dance and opening a democratic space for collaborative discussion and writing around key themes related to it. These key themes - negotiating the presentness of heritage and the past of history, the tensions between reenactment, reconstruction and 'reimagining' historical dance forms, and how digital technology can aid with building a grammar for disseminating traditional and historical dance forms - are further unpacked here.

¹ Acknowledgements: The WEAVE project is co-funded by the Connecting Europe Facility of the European Union (Action No: 2020-EU-IA-0105).

² See WEAVE (2021) (1)

2 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING OF THE LABDAY METHODOLOGY

Underpinned by Communicative Methodology (CM)³, the WEAVE LabDay methodology enables an open, egalitarian dialogue between researchers and participants; it is a collaboratively-held ‘brave space’ where all voices are acknowledged and valued, and stakeholders can together reflect on their needs, desires and various forms of participation. The framework has grown from a first iteration of the LabDay methodology used in the CultureMoves Europeana Generic Service project (2018-2020)⁴ to now enable the communities with whom WEAVE is working to engage with project activities and to select the content and collections to be aggregated to Europeana. As part of the CultureMoves project, the CultureMoves Coventry University team (Rosa Cisneros, Marie-Louise Crawley and Sarah Whatley, the same researchers as the Coventry University WEAVE team) distilled their experience in creating the LabDay methodology and in organising LabDays into a simple set of guidelines that can facilitate others in organising such events. In particular, the CultureMoves LabDay methodology outlines points to consider in designing a LabDay:

Carefully consider your project’s proposed stakeholders – highlight the rationale for, and processes of, identifying and involving key stakeholders [...]

Consider your existing networks to identify potential stakeholders within them and connections to further broaden networks and the reach of the LabDay [...]

Take care to ensure an equal balance of gender ratio, demographics etc. Through an inclusion of diverse voices in well-programmed LabDays, the project will gain an increased understanding of the assumptions and limitations and the relationship and intersections between sectors [...]

Conduct a survey of existing research and practice in order to consider how the chosen project seeks to address the gaps in research and how these can be explored through the LabDay [...]

Define the clear purposes of the proposed LabDay – e.g. to engage in in-depth consultation with key stakeholders; to begin to identify the key questions and assumptions that underlie existing and potential collaborations between sectors; to capture the voices of the key stakeholders and offer them an opportunity to learn about the project [...]

Consider the format of the LabDay – might it be a curated panel discussion? A day of more formal presentations or interactive workshops? [...]

Carefully consider the intended audience and participants for the LabDays: the format of the LabDay will necessarily depend on the invited stakeholders and participants and should be curated specifically for them [...]

³ Cf. Gómez et al. (2013) (2); Aiello et al. (2013) (3); Flecha and Soler (2014) (4); Puigvert et al. (2012) (5); Gómez, Puigvert and Flecha (2011) (6); Gómez et al. (2019) (7)

⁴ <https://www.culturemoves.eu/>

To learn more about the LabDays carried out within the CultureMoves project, you can read CultureMoves (2019) (8) and CultureMoves (2020) (9), both available here: <https://www.culturemoves.eu/#resources>
See also Cisneros and Crawley (2021) (10)

On the LabDay methodology used in CultureMoves, please also see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=If-yDOUm5cQ>
and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOKDFLgVsII>

Consider the reach of the LabDay – is the thinking local? Regional? National? How might this affect the design and programming of the LabDay? Timings / scheduling, etc.? [...]

Define a comprehensive working question set to use as a basis for discussion. Ensure that this is circulated to invited speakers / guest panellists beforehand in good time [...]

In the design of the LabDay, consider any budget restrictions, and specifically when working with independent / self-employed / freelance artists. Take care to carefully consider their needs. How are they to be compensated for their time? Financially (covering travel expenses and for their time) and/or through in-kind support? [...] How might a LabDay be a useful networking opportunity for all involved? [...]

Think of creative and innovative ways to work towards inclusivity of various voices throughout the LabDay [...] Think about how you will document the LabDay and disseminate information explored through it – e.g. documenting through photography and video (ensuring permissions are in place beforehand), live-tweeting, sharing images / comments via social media, etc.

(CultureMoves 2019 (8): 90-92)

In supporting partners and content providers to plan, manage and curate their WEAVE LabDays, the Coventry University WEAVE team implemented the points raised in the guidelines above to ensure that the LabDays were curated in accordance with the bespoke needs of the cultural communities in question. Further, given the pivot to a predominantly digital environment in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of the WEAVE LabDays have taken place online. As such, new guidelines to consider can be added to the above methodology: these include further informed consent for recording and dissemination purposes, the use of music and visuals to enter and exit the digital space and consideration of accessibility aspects (e.g. closed captioning, audio description of speakers and visuals etc.). In addition to the above guidelines, the meetings are recorded and then added to the project's YouTube channel and website which allows for wider engagement as people from the global community can access the content and freely share and reuse.

The highly participatory and bottom-up approach of this methodology thus enables cultural communities to themselves become a driver for how their digital heritage is presented and for the design of the WEAVE Toolkit, developing from their bespoke needs concerning the management and promotion of both their intangible and tangible heritage. The LabDay methodology has also enabled WEAVE to create social, digital and artistic platforms and to set up and maintain various spaces that include vulnerable communities and promote social innovation. The participatory and collaborative approach that WEAVE has employed throughout the LabDays has allowed for multicultural communities to join forces towards excellence in CH and social transformation. Through its LabDays, the project allows participants to create and explore connections to Europeana and its collections, as well as to other European heritage professionals. The LabDays also allow for the direct, active participation of all participants as an entirely experiential process during which each participant's creative involvement extends to the point that he/she decides. Further, the constant interaction between the participants throughout the whole process has enabled the participation of multicultural communities and individuals to freely express their attitude and cultural values through dance, art and cultural heritage activities. Finally, the methodology allows participants to re-evaluate

their personal experiences within an emotionally supportive framework of trust and acts as a self-aware exchange process of knowledge, culture and experience.⁵

3 THE METHODOLOGY IN PRACTICE

3.1 Dance-focussed LabDays

More than 300 participants were involved during nine different online WEAVE LabDays that took place between September-December 2021. Within WEAVE, ICH holds an important space to help challenge the notion that dance is an ephemeral art form that lives and dies in the moment. How we document, archive and safeguard dance heritage are important questions within the wider WEAVE project as it is working with underrepresented cultural communities whose ICH (such as dance) content has historically been underrepresented within platforms such as Europeana. Furthermore, the 'fragile' and 'immaterial' aspects of ICH can also tap into layered aspects of more material CH: this layering then allows for a plurality of 'expertise' and encourages intercultural dialogue. The following section therefore outlines two examples of these LabDays that had a specific focus on dance as ICH⁶: i) the WEAVE PedéXumbo LabDays (November 2021) exploring Portuguese traditional dance, and ii) the WEAVE Early Dance Circle LabDay (December 2021) with the historical dance community in the UK. These two examples were offered as central case studies for exploration during the ECQI 2022 Dream Team session, with participants able to view and comment on video documentation of these LabDays using a collaborative MIRO board.⁷

3.1.1 PédeXumbo LabDays

WEAVE Consortium partner PédeXumbo (Portugal)⁸ promotes and investigates traditional Portuguese dance and introduces new artistic forms based on the practice of ball and European dances. PédeXumbo also promotes the professionalisation of artists and an increase in the offer in the field of traditional dance in Portugal. PédeXumbo held two WEAVE LabDays in November 2021, one online and one live and each having different audiences, formats and purposes. Both LabDays explored questions regarding the importance of Portuguese folk dance and its connection to identity, as well as of the embodied knowledge transmitted through the teaching and learning of dance and other traditional techniques.

PédeXumbo chose to base its first WEAVE LabDay (15th November 2020) on the *Mastros Tradicionais de Odemira*, a cultural practice in the Portuguese municipality of Odemira.⁹ The *mastros* (or poles), currently associated with the Festas de São João, in Portugal, have their origins in the pagan custom of raising the *Mastro de Maio* (the 'Maypole' or May tree), a custom that is still alive today in some parts of Europe, some African countries and South America. Over time, in Portugal, the raising of these poles began to occur in June and to celebrate that month's festivities: a rich popular Catholic symbolism is linked to the procedures involving the raising of the pole and its decorating. Based on this concept of popular *Mastros*, PédeXumbo developed a research project around the practice of dance in party/celebration contexts around the *Mastros*. From country to

⁵ For more on the WEAVE LabDay methodology and LabDay activities, see WEAVE (2021) (11) and WEAVE (2022) (12), both available here: <https://weave-culture.eu/resources/>

⁶ These cultural communities are both examples of underrepresented communities in Europeana. One of the wider aims in WEAVE is to address this underrepresentation of dance content.

⁷ MIRO is an online collaborative whiteboard platform that allows for video chat, synchronous presentation, collective mind mapping and media sharing.

⁸ <http://pedexumbo.com/>

⁹ PédeXumbo began to investigate this practice in 2017, using the *dança das fitas* as a starting-point, which was integrated into the *A Ciência de um Baile de Mastro* project. From this, the *Da Terra ao Céu* project emerged.

country, from region to region, from village to village, the pole takes on its own characteristics as well as its contextualization. In the municipality of Odemira, PédeXumbo identified three forms of *mastro* that are still alive today: the *Mastro Santos Populares*, the ‘Promise Mast’ and the ‘Ribbon Dance’. Dance is associated with these three forms. Researched by Leonor Carpinteiro and Marta Guerreiro and directed by Pedro Grenha and Rui Cacilhas, the documentary video *Da Terra ao Céu* (2020)¹⁰ tells the stories of several people that the team met on a trip through the villages of Odemira and who recount their lives and experiences through the practice of *Mastros Tradicionais*. At this juncture, it is relevant to again acknowledge that cultural communities are characterised by both their ICH, their built heritage, and their tangible cultural heritage. The relationship between intangible and tangible CH is key to understanding and gaining insight into the interpretation of that heritage. During the Pedexumbo LabDay, the research team and one of the video’s directors discussed the documentary, transmitting knowledge about the practice, the region and the people involved, as well as about dances and other community practices related to the making of the poles. Marta Guerreiro, PédeXumbo’s coordinator and a researcher of this practice, also taught the *Dança das Fitas*, a traditional *mastro* dance, and how to make the traditional paper flowers that decorate the *mastros*. Here, the material components are contextual tangible elements that not only stand alongside the dances but also add a layer of texture to the dances. This practice still has a fundamental role in the community’s intergenerational sharing of experiences of the *mastros* celebrations. The LabDay concluded with a conversation about the importance of investigating these practices that will disappear with future generations and therefore about the pressing need to transform this cultural heritage into accessible, documented and digital content, for which Europeana is a major support. PédeXumbo’s partnership with the WEAVE project and the opportunity to publish its content on Europeana is a way to broaden the context of this investigation and to disseminate these artistic forms both not only as a means to perpetuate the practices but also to provide inspiration for contemporary art and to contribute to the development of a European identity based on our multiple cultures.



Fig. 1: Promotional material for WEAVE LabDay (2021). Credit: PédeXumbo

¹⁰ <https://vimeo.com/328380190>

The second PédeXumbo WEAVE LabDay took place within the wider context of the *Desdobra-te Festival*, which takes place every year in November in the city of Évora (Portugal) where PédeXumbo is headquartered. This LabDay had the aim of promoting the Portuguese *Danças de Porto Mós* (Dances of Porto de Mós). The LabDay was a hybrid event, held in person with live streaming. The strategy to integrate it into one of the association's larger festivals was so that the practice could be transmitted and danced by a greater number of people. The face-to-face workshop format was used to both transmit repertoire and to develop new audiences, allowing theoretical and practical information to be transmitted socially and enabling learning.

The repertoire transmitted during the LabDay is part of recent research involving folklore groups from the Leiria region in central Portugal and which is still not widely known. In this sense, the LabDay was an important and valuable opportunity to transmit this developing knowledge to a wide audience through the very moment of collectively practising these dances together. Dance researcher Marisa Barroso taught participants sixteen of the *Porto de Mós Dances*, accompanied by an album of songs for the dances collected and performed by Portuguese dance and music group Aire¹¹, including 'Raspa', 'Bate do Reinadio', 'Sapateia da Choutice' and 'Vira ao contra par e ao par do Fadinho'. As such, the LabDay offered participants the opportunity to learn more about a region and its people both through the dances and through the stories that Barroso recounted about each song and dance. PédeXumbo's wider partnership with the WEAVE project and the opportunity to make its content accessible on Europeana support the expansion of the group's main objective: to give participants an opportunity to know and experience traditional dances both in person and digitally. The partnership is also fundamental for allowing PédeXumbo to document and disseminate these practices digitally. Further, the wider dissemination of these practices enabled by digital access can support cross-cultural investigations of other traditional dances worldwide.



Fig. 2: Promotional material for WEAVE LabDays (2021). Credit: PédeXumbo

¹¹ Aire is a Portuguese group of musicians and dancers formed by Marisa Barroso to give musical structure to the 'Pilot Project for the Safeguarding of Traditional Portuguese Dances'.

3.1.2 Early Dance Circle LabDay

Coventry University, in particular the Centre For Dance Research (C-DaRE), has long standing collaborations with dance archives, dance associations and artists and, as part of the WEAVE project, is facilitating the aggregation of high-quality curated collections from specific dance communities to Europeana. Among those collections is the Early Dance Circle (EDC)¹², an umbrella organisation based in the UK whose main aim is to promote the enjoyment, performance and study of historical dance in the UK and beyond, from the mediaeval period up to the end of the 20th century. Formed in 1984 and including professional and amateur dance groups, artists and researchers, the EDC aims to make historical dance heritage accessible and has curated and organised many events over the last 35 years. The EDC's ethos is that a knowledge of earlier dance forms helps enrich the cultural life of the UK and Europe by accessing a heritage of international importance that 'belongs to us all', but which has, until recently, been largely forgotten. As part of WEAVE, the EDC is brokering new connections with the historical and early dance community in the UK, and beyond, in order to safeguard and promote this marginalised dance heritage. The EDC will aggregate a curated selection of their content (historical dance videos) to Europeana, shedding new light on historical dance forms that have often been missing from archives. This is especially pertinent given dance's traditional ontology as ICH, especially in (dance) performance's oft-cited ephemerality (Phelan 1993 [13]) and in how dance practice and performance might resist and/or enter the archive (cf. Taylor 2003 [14]; Schneider 2001 [15], 2011 [16]; Lepecki 2010 [17], Brandstetter 2015 [1995] [18], 2016 [19]).

In particular, the work in WEAVE aggregating EDC content to Europeana builds on the existing relationship that Coventry University (C-DaRE) formed with the EDC during the afore-mentioned CultureMoves project. For CultureMoves, as part of the 'Creating a Digital Heritage Community' MOOC (massive open online course)¹³ developed in collaboration with the Kaleidoscope¹⁴ project, the EDC - along with Chalemie¹⁵ - worked on a historical dance module examining the relationship between early and baroque dance in heritage settings and digital storytelling (using the CultureMoves digital toolkit, and especially the MotionNotes digital annotation tool which is also being extended as part of the WEAVE digital toolkit). The partnership between Coventry University (C-DaRE) and EDC in WEAVE builds on this exploration of the connections between tangible and intangible CH, considering relationships between dance as ICH, historical landmark settings as tangible CH, and how digital tools can enable deeper interconnections between these forms of CH.

The WEAVE Early Dance LabDay held online on 3rd December 2020 introduced participants to the work of the EDC, offered a sense of the various historical periods and dance forms that their work covers, presented their current online activities and the content they are providing for aggregation to Europeana. The LabDay also revisited the module developed for the MOOC, which provided an introduction to Baroque dance focused on its more formal couple dances, rather than its professional, stage and comedic (more virtuosic) sides, or its rich and various heritage of country dances involving sets of dancers. The LabDay explored how the EDC and the content provided to Europeana is opening up a conversation about the importance of historical dance and music because of its relevance for engagement in historic buildings and other CH sites. The LabDay also offered participants the opportunity to learn more about historical dance and to join a conversation on the ways in which archival material can be reimagined in a contemporary context.

¹² <https://www.earlydancecircle.co.uk/>

¹³ <https://www.mooc-list.com/course/creating-digital-cultural-heritage-community-edx>

¹⁴ <https://pro.europeana.eu/project/fifties-in-europe-kaleidoscope>

¹⁵ <http://www.chalemie.co.uk/>



Fig. 3: Screenshot from CultureMoves video showing Beauchamp-Feuillet Dance Notation, a form of historical dance notation. Credit: Early Dance Circle

Discussion during the EDC LabDay focussed on early dance as something of an ‘orphan’ and how the EDC hopes to give early dance an importance within public perception akin to that which early music has, explaining how research is important in raising the profile of early dance, a significant part of the UK’s (and Europe’s) CH. Early dance brings a sense of community to those involved: as the EDC’s website puts it, ‘it belongs to us all’ (Early Dance Circle, 2022 [20]). Further topics of discussion included the importance of dance as ICH in its historical context; especially the ways in which, as the EDC’s Sharon Butler explained, ‘social dances often embody the philosophical ideas, economic assumptions or unspoken attitudes of different eras. This is a major element within early dance, with social and even political implications and its development is linked with European geographical expansion and colonisation.’ Butler made the case for these elements being important to unpack in the contemporary socio-political context, highlighting the EDC’s recent project, ‘The Life and Dances of Ignatius Sancho (c. 1729 – 1780),’¹⁶ which celebrates the life and dances of Ignatius Sancho.¹⁷ The LabDay also explored how the EDC aims to engage the public through animating historical buildings (our tangible CH) with dance and endeavours to encourage a wider social participation in dance. Participants also spoke about the importance of the ways in which engagement with historical dance and building archives of historical dance can be supported by technological underpinnings through working alongside platforms such as Europeana and that with initiatives such as these, for historical dance at least, as the EDC’s Bill Tuck reminded LabDay participants, ‘the past is no longer a foreign country’.

¹⁶ See the EDC’s Resources section on their website: <https://www.earlydancecircle.co.uk/resources/> and the video of ‘The Life and Dances of Ignatius Sancho’: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOnjOprUWs0&ab_channel=EarlyDanceCircle

¹⁷ Born a slave, Sancho went on to produce several collections of ballroom dances in the 1760s and 1770s. The EDC’s video includes reconstructions of some of Sancho’s dances by the Hampshire Regency Dancers and the Quadrille Club, together with arrangements of Sancho’s music by Green Ginger. The dances are discussed with: Meryl Thomson of Green Ginger who recently recorded the CD *Dances for a Princess*; Paul Cooper, a specialist in Regency dance and Sally Petchey, author of a recent book talk about the life and dances of Ignatius Sancho: *Dances for a Princess*.



Fig. 4 : Screenshot from EDC video, 'The Life and Dances of Ignatius Sancho'. Credit: Early Dance Circle

3.2 Reimagining heritage

During the ECQI 2022 Dream Team session, we offered participants time to watch video recordings documenting the PédeXumbo and Early Dance Circle LabDays as well as a *Dance Research Matters*¹⁸ campaign video (2021) and a short dance film, *TRUCE* (2017)¹⁹. Then, we offered participants several question-prompts for collective discussion in the context of WEAVE's approach to safeguarding ICH:

- What has emerged for you from watching the films?
- What stood out for you in looking at the case studies?
- When you watch the dance films, can you begin to see the potential of the dancing body as a departure point for opening up broader conversations?
- Have you ever considered embodied methods and approaches to your own research? What emerges from you with these?

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcvOeb7i3IM>

This video was made for the *Dance Research Matters* event hosted in May 2021 by C-DaRE (Centre for Dance Research), Coventry University, in association with the UK's AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council), to act as a catalyst for positive change in the recognition and support of dance research. For further information on the event and wider campaign, see <https://danceresearchmatters.coventry.ac.uk/>

¹⁹ *TRUCE* (2017) performed by Trish Martin, directed by RosaSenCis Film Production Company: <https://vimeo.com/253139648>



Fig. 5: WEAVE's collaborative online Miro board at ECQI 2022 where participants could access LabDay documentation and offer collective thinking and writing around key questions related to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage practices

While there was a clear recognition that the LabDays are a way of the traditional and historical dance communities coming together to think collectively about how this heritage might be preserved and to share it more broadly, several interesting questions arose from our discussions. First, we can question the notion of 'preservation.' In a classic understanding, we often 'preserve' through representation and documentation. However, representation is inherently and inevitably 'biased'. An alternative way is 're-enactment', which is obviously a more active and participatory way of 'preserving' a tradition.²⁰ In a historical dance context, how does the re-enactment of historical dance influence our understanding of the past and our present relationship with heritage? There needs to be an acknowledgement that heritage is living; it is not set in stone, fixed for perpetuity, but rather shifts and changes over time. It is not 'just' about the past, but about our present relationship with that past. As such, in considering the safeguarding and transmission of cultural heritage, we might think about dance as a medium rather than dance as a cultural product in itself. Perhaps the focus should be more on the movement as something that needs to be passed onto and transmitted to others, rather than on the history of that movement (which might only be part of the framing you can do to situate dance as intangible evidence and heritage). This links to the question of what we think is more important in sharing knowledge; preserving cultural heritage 'as it is' to inform future generations, or integrating cultural heritage elements from past and present to arrive at new interpretations of the same thing. This requires an openness to 'what it could become' under different conditions and in a different time frame. This essential question may point towards cultural differences in how we tend to deal with the preservation and safeguarding of dance traditions and

²⁰ However it is important to note that even re-enactment is not the same as communities keeping their traditions alive by actually 'living' them. For example, when communities continue a yearly event and/or tradition, this no 're-enactment,' it is actually living the tradition.

ICH in general. Western traditions of re-enactment might lean towards the strategy of keeping the past alive through reproduction and restoration. Other cultures might be more interested in keeping the idea alive and reshaping it to provide a better match with contemporary dance traditions. In this particular line of thought, dancers acquire full ownership of the material and have the flexibility to creatively translate dance grammar into an embodied language of their own. In this sense, the cultural heritage reflex is less about preserving the whole 'product' (whole unit) but rather the individual 'grammar' of the dance. This grammar can be transmitted, embodied and refigured in new and creative ways; here, dance is akin to a living language, shifting and evolving over time, a palimpsest of traces of past traditions and forms yet ever developing. As such, moving, dancing bodies become bodies of living heritage²¹. We might think of re-imagining a historical dance form rather than re-enacting it (Crawley 2021 [21]), and yet, perhaps re-enactment is a necessary first step, for can re-imagining ever be possible without re-enacting?

During the WEAVE ECQI2022 Dream Team session, the sharing of the dance film, *TRUCE* (2017), that draws on contemporary and flamenco dance vocabularies, was used as an example to explore elusive questions of authenticity and what 'reimagined' dance vocabularies might look like. An adaptation of choreographer Trish Martin's dance work *Strivings between me and the other world*,²² this dance film plays with themes of identity and belonging. It explores W.E.B. Du Bois' (1913 [22]) writings of double consciousness and his struggle to synthesise an integrated self out of two conflicting identities; one formed by the individual and the other through a racial lens. Choreographic decisions, coupled with the editing, begin to open up questions about ownership. The film focuses on parts of the body and rarely do we see the whole body in a shot. The decision to focus on the body's extremities is linked to an attempt to offer the viewer a sense of a disjointed dancer struggling to string together a movement phrase. The focus on the limbs is also an attempt to reflect the use of the flamenco hand gestures, and yet this movement is somehow disrupted through no longer being performed in a *traditional* manner and edited with sharp and short cuts. This new contemporary flamenco vocabulary performed to non-flamenco music that emerges in *TRUCE* therefore begins to challenge accepted norms of what flamenco dance grammar should be. As such, *TRUCE* plays with different dance grammars, with the video editing process also determining further shifts and re-interpretations of the dance form.

A further pressing question centres around the ownership of ICH and of widening access to and inclusion within that heritage. The phrase 'this belongs to us all' from the EDC Labday formed a contentious starting-point: this phrase is a strong indicator for distinguishing what is worth preserving as CH, what is not, and for whom, and by whom, it is preserved. Selection is a key aspect of heritage definition. The notion of 'all' is problematic as it constantly changes as constituent communities change. There is also the important question of who is not included in the 'all'. At the EDC LabDay, for example, there was some discussion of the context of (British) Empire in the development of dance traditions - which bodies have been included, which bodies have not - and a clarion call that there should be acknowledgement of these absences and/or appropriations.²³

²¹ Although now well-trodden in dance scholarship, the 'body as archive' discussions (e.g. Lepecki, 2010 [17]) may be useful to consider in relation to this notion, as may wider debates on dance transmission, reconstruction and reenactment (cf. Main, 2017 [23]).

²² Original piece developed and performed for the 2014 Flamenko Coventry Festival coordinated by Rosa Cisneros.

²³ Such questions may point to further thinking about inclusive heritage discourse, which has been put in opposition with so-called authorised heritage discourse (cf. Kisić, 2016 [24]). These concerns also fall within the wider current context, particularly in institutional cultural heritage, of 'decolonial' approaches to heritage.



Fig. 6: Official poster of the dance short *TRUCE* (2017) directed by RosaSenCis Film Productions





Fig. 7 & 8: Stills from *TRUCE* (2017) that highlight the film's focus on the limbs and specific body parts

4 CONCLUSIONS

This paper has outlined the value of the WEAVE LabDay methodology as a participatory and bottom-up approach that enables cultural communities to take ownership of the safeguarding, dissemination and (re)use of their CH. In presenting the methodology in theory and in practice, offering the examples of the PédeXumbo and Early Dance LabDays focussing on ICH/dance practices, we hope to have demonstrated how the democratic and non-judgemental 'brave space' of the LabDay can be a place for difficult and sensitive questions concerning CH to be raised, to collectively reflect upon challenges in safeguarding marginalised, previously underrepresented and at-risk CH and to work together to think through potential solutions to these challenges. In the particular context of the WEAVE project, the LabDay methodology provides an opening whereby the cultural communities themselves become drivers for innovation in the digital transformation of tangible and intangible CH. The 'LabDay in action' format of the ECQI2022 WEAVE Dream Team session similarly enabled an open space to examine, discuss and reflect upon the WEAVE LabDay methodology in terms of capacity-building for digitising ICH and dance. It raised key themes and questions such as the value of negotiating the presentness of heritage and the past of history, the tensions between reenacting, reconstructing and 'reimagining' historical dance forms, and how digital technology might aid with disseminating traditional and historical dance forms. These bigger questions themselves are situated within current 'decolonial' approaches to heritage within which WEAVE's work can be seen to be operating, especially in how the project is working with previously marginalised communities to take up new physical and digital space in terms of the safeguarding, dissemination and re(use) of their CH, de-centering those dominant, hegemonic narratives that have up until now assumed the centre of heritage discourse.

REFERENCES

- (1) WEAVE D1.1 *Digital Transformation of Intangible Cultural Heritage*. 2021. Available at: <https://weave-culture.eu/resources/> [Accessed 22 February 2022].
- (2) Gómez, A., Elboj, C. and Capllonch, M. Beyond Action Research: The Communicative Methodology of Research. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 2013; Volume 6(2), pp. 183–97
- (3) Aiello, E., Mondejar, E., and Pulido-Rodríguez, M. Communicative Methodology of Research and Recognition of the Roma People. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 2013; Volume 6(2) ,pp. 254–65
- (4) Flecha, R. and Soler, M. Communicative Methodology: Successful Actions and Dialogic Democracy. *Current Sociology*, 2014; Volume 62(2), pp. 232–42
- (5) Puigvert, L., Christou, M. and Holford, J. Critical Communicative Methodology: Including Vulnerable Voices in Research through Dialogue. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 2012; Volume 42(4), pp. 513–26
- (6) Gómez, A., Puigvert, L. and Flecha, R. Critical Communicative Methodology: Informing Real Social Transformation through Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2011; Volume 17(3), pp. 235–45
- (7) Gómez, A. et al. Reaching Social Impact through Communicative Methodology. Researching with Rather than on Vulnerable Populations: The Roma Case. *Frontiers in Education*, 2019; Volume 4(9)
- (8) CultureMoves D3.1 *White Paper: Dance in Tourism, Research and Education*. 2019. Available at: <https://culturemoves.eu/#resources> [Accessed 22 February 2022].
- (9) CultureMoves D4.1 *Report on CultureMoves services demonstration*. 2020. Available at: <https://culturemoves.eu/#resources> [Accessed 22 February 2022].
- (10) Cisneros, R. and Crawley, M.-L. Moving, annotating, learning: MotionNotes LabDays - a case study. *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media*, 2021; Volume 17(1), pp. 138-149
- (11) WEAVE *Methodological Framework for Community Engagement*. 2021. Available at: <https://weave-culture.eu/resources/> [Accessed 22 February 2022]
- (12) WEAVE D1.2 *Report on Community Engagement activities*. 2022. Available at: <https://weave-culture.eu/resources/> [Accessed 22 February 2022].
- (13) Phelan, P. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.
- (14) Taylor, D. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 2003.
- (15) Schneider, R. Performance Remains. *Performance Research*, 2001; Volume 6 (2), pp. 100-108
- (16) Schneider, R. *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*. London: Routledge, 2011.
- (17) Lepecki, A. The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances. *Dance Research Journal*, 2010; Volume 42 (2), pp. 28-48
- (18) Brandstetter, G. [trans. Polzer, E. and Franko, M.] *Poetics of Dance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- (19) Brandstetter, G. The Museum in Transition: How do Performing Artists Affect Historiography? Unpublished keynote address, IFTR 2016, June 13th 2016, Stockholm University, Sweden, 2016.

- (20) Early Dance Circle, 2022. Available at: <https://www.earlydancecircle.co.uk/about-us/> [Accessed 22 February 2022]
- (21) Crawley, M.-L. The Fragmentary Monumental: Dancing Female Stories in the Museum of Archaeology. In: Gianvittorio-Ungar, L. and Schlapbach, K. (eds.) *Choreonarratives: Dancing Stories in Greek and Roman Antiquity and beyond*, Leiden: Brill; 2021. pp. 331-350
- (22) Du Bois, W.E.B. The Negro in Literature and Art. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 1913; Volume 49(1),00 pp.233-237
- (23) Main, L. (ed.) *Transmissions in Dance: Contemporary Staging Practices*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- (24) Kisić, V. *Governing Heritage Dissonance: Promises and Realities of Selected Cultural Policies*. Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 2013. Available at: https://www.europanostra.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Governing_Heritage_Dissonance.pdf [Accessed 22 February 2022].