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

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

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

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

40   (2005) seminal piece along with Bennett's (2004) slightly earlier discussion of
41   the "torn halves" (246) of cultural policy research, and Belfiore's later (2009)
42   reflection, all note the complexity of the position of cultural policy research as
43   interdisciplinary, trans-disciplinary and/or cross-disciplinary in relation to
44   academic disciplines. It also demonstrates that cultural policy research involves
45   insights from multiple vantage points—conducted by academics, consultants
46   and practitioners or through partnership among them (DURRER 2018;
47   PAQUETTE/REDAELLI 2015). These studies consider the tensions existing for
48   a "critical and reflexive" cultural policy research practice (see also MCGUIGAN
49   2004 cited in BELFIORE 2009: 355) that engages with—and attempts to impact
50   on—how and what cultural policies come to be.
51
52   When thinking about cultural policy research and its relationship to the practice
53   of policy making and the individuals impacted by such policies— in this case
54   artists—it is important to consider what we know and how we know it. Methods
55   are not neutral in their formation of knowledge (PHIDDIAN et al. 2017). They
56   have a social and political life (SAVAGE 2013; CAMPBELL 2019; BELFIORE
57   2021). The data gathered from different methods "shapes society, culture,
58   politics and policy" in different ways (OMAN 2021: 1). As Cairney (2016)
59   points out in policy studies and Belfiore (2021) in relation to cultural policy
60   more specifically: "evidence rarely underpins decision-making" (2). According
61   to Campbell (2014, 2019) data—so-called evidence—can become the stuff of
62   cultural policy through the role they play in the generation of "imaginaries"
63   (CAMPBELL, 2014: 995). Whilst statistical figures are often privileged in
64   processes of generating evidence, a number of scholars emphasise the
65   importance of practitioner and artist voices in research (WESNER 2018;
66   WODDIS 2014; CROSSICK/KAZYNSKA 2016). Such work is seen, for
67   instance, in the form of collaborative approaches between researcher and
68   practitioner (DURRER 2017; DUXBURY et al. 2021) and in approaches that
69   emphasise practice-as-research (SCHRAG 2016; HOPE 2016). Despite this
70   recognition, there remains very little examination of the methodological
71   processes and tools associated with cultural policy research, and the place for
72   cultural workers and cultural work in this process can be unclear.
73
74   This paper responds to this absence. It begins by contextualising our
75   understanding of artists' cross-border movement in cultural policy studies as a
76   condition of territorial cultural policy. In our focus on the island of Ireland, we
77   pay particular attention to the nature of border crossing in post-conflict societies,
78   but within a post-Brexit context. In laying out our methodological approach, we

79   posit what a mixed methods approach brings to understanding artists'
80   experiences within this context before reflecting on what insights that approach
81   has gleaned. We conclude by summarising what we see as the challenges and
82   opportunities such a mixed methods approach presents to detailing, interpreting
83   and representing artists' experiences within cultural policy studies.
84
85   With the research situated as it is across cultural labour, cultural policy, dance,
86   political and social science, and migration studies, it is necessary to clarify our
87   use of some key terms in the paper before proceeding. We have taken a broad
88   understanding of migration to include short-term and long-term territorial or
89   geographic mobility that might take place through artist residencies, short-term
90   performance related work and / or training as well as cross-border experiences
91   that may involve more frequent and regular movement between locations / sites
92   for work. As a result, the terms cross-border 'mobility', 'migration' and 'travel'
93   are used interchangeably.
94
95   Our discussion of dance as work or labour is situated within a broader range of
96   work in the cultural field, or cultural work / cultural labour. Our focus is on
97   professional dance artists or dance practitioners residing in Ireland and / or
98   Northern Ireland and in all dance genres. We use the terms dance artist and
99   dance practitioner interchangeably and in recognition of the multi-jobbing
100 nature of that field (VAN ASSCHE 2020).
101
102 In relation to 'professional', we have utilised the definition outlined in a cross-
103 jurisdictional report on *The Living and Working Conditions of Artists in the*
104 *Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland* which states:
105
106 'professional artists' refer to people who are active in pursuing a career as artists and who
107 view arts work as their main profession or career, even if not their main source of income and
108 regardless of their current employment status. (HIBERNIAN CONSULTING 2010: 6).
109
110 **Understanding artists' territorial movement in cultural policy**
111 **studies**
112
113 Artists have long crossed borders for work and in ways that have contributed to
114 transnational diplomatic ties and divisions, professional networks, regional
115 identities (BROCKINGTON 2009) and transnational communities
116 (YEOH/WILLIS 2004; DUESTER 2014). Whilst there is well-developed wider
117 literature on the subjects of cultural diplomacy and soft power, the focus is
118 generally on how one nation may demonstrate its cultural prowess to exert
119 influence of some form over another (NISBETT 2015; DRAGIĆEVIĆ-ŠEŠIĆ

120 2017). Research has also explored the role of the arts in signifying and
121 interpreting borders (EU BORDERSCAPES 2016), and has considered how
122 individuals and organisations have collaborated across nations, as well as in
123 border regions where the conceptualisation of 'nation' is contested, creating
124 artwork that may facilitate intercultural and intercommunal dialogue and peace
125 building (RÖSLER 2015; MCCALL 2014).
126
127 What is known about the lived experiences of artists as territorially mobile
128 workers is growing within the field of cultural policy studies (FAGGIAN et al.
129 2014; COMUNIAN et al. 2016; WESNER 2018). Research considers mobility
130 across a temporal spectrum from long to short term and across different
131 territorial scales. Academic studies, particularly those based on social scientific
132 methods, focus on the movement and resettlement of artists and broader cultural
133 workers from one nation-state or particular locality to another. These include,
134 though are not limited to, studies based in particular national contexts, the USA
135 (MARKUSEN 2013), UK (FAGGIAN et al. 2014; COMUNIAN/JEWELL
136 2018), Sweden (HANSEN/NIEDOMYSL 2009; BORÉN/YOUNG 2013),
137 Germany (VAN ASSCHE/LAERMANS 2016) Australia (BENNETT 2010;
138 VERDICH 2010) and Canada (OLFERT/PARTRIDGE 2011). Territorial or
139 cross-border movement also takes place on a short term basis. In a study on
140 artists from the Baltic region, Duester (2014; 2021) has found that there is a
141 greater prevalence of multidirectional and short-term migration or cross border
142 movements of artists through activities like artist residencies, professional
143 development, and touring of work, rather than permanent relocation.
144
145 This exchange of artistic, signifying practices brings together the "symbolic,
146 discursive and identity aspects of borders with their 'hard' functional aspects"
147 (HAYWARD 2018: 250). The activities supported thus involve and influence a
148 range of stakeholders, from individual artists to large institutions such as multi -
149 arts centres and theatres, in the creation and dissemination of artistic forms.
150 These activities also involve the traversing and negotiation of territorial,
151 administrative, and ideological borders that play out through everyday personal,
152 social and professional exchanges (MCCALL 2014; KEATING 2000;
153 DURRER/HENZE 2020; EU BORDERSCAPES 2016). The potential for
154 increased complexity resulting from border crossing is especially acute in those
155 territories where the border region and the conceptualisation of 'nation' is itself
156 disputed (HAYWARD 2007), even if the concept of nation, itself is argued to be
157 "imagined" (ANDERSON 2020: 282).
158

159 Cultural policy research demonstrates that broader political, economic, social
160 and arts policies at different political levels, and across different geographical
161 territories, intermingle with the personal and social in ways that encourage or
162 discourage artists' cross border movement. Occasions that encourage or
163 preclude the cross-border movement of artists for permanent, long-term or even
164 short-term stays are argued to be indicative of the precarity facing the broader
165 creative and cultural industries globally (EENCA 2020; VAN ASSCHE 2017).
166 As such they are also scalar. Borén and Young (2013) indicate that artists'
167 "migration dynamics" result from the "complex" interaction of diverse personal
168 and "socio-economic characteristics …with urban and national scale push and
169 pull factors" (200). Examples of this interaction include how the affordability
170 and availability of studio space or the cost of living in particular localities and
171 nations (BORÉN/YOUNG 2013) or the context of international relations and the
172 prevalence of exchange opportunities and funding initiatives might encourage or
173 discourage an artist to move to a different place to work, in either the short or
174 long-term (WESNER 2018; DUESTER 2021). While interacting with territorial
175 scales of place and their associated international, national and local policy
176 frames, decisions to move or not to move for work are also and often related to
177 personal and familial, socio-economic, and life-stage oriented, as well as art
178 form and network-based relations (VERDICH 2010; BORÉN/YOUNG 2013;
179 DUESTER 2014; BENNETT 2010; MARKUSEN 2013). Largely neglected in
180 these studies, though, are the affective aspects of this movement.
181
182 **Dance and the island of Ireland**
183
184 Study on the working conditions and experiences of artists on the island of
185 Ireland points to the relevance of territorial mobility to career development and
186 sustainability and its affective nature (HIBERNIAN CONSULTING 2010;
187 QUINN 2019; DURRER et al. 2019; MCGRATH/MEEHAN 2018). This
188 movement is particularly significant among those working in dance, a cultural
189 field of work argued to be "mobile by definition" (VAN ASSCHE 2017: 237).
190 The border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is functional
191 and territorial, but equally ideological and cultural (HAYWARD 2018;
192 MCCALL & O'DOWD 2008; GORMLEY-HEENAN/AUGHEY 2017), an
193 international boundary, but also a "border region" (MCCALL 2011: 203).
194
195 Northern Ireland-based choreographer Dylan Quinn (2019: 43) illustrates:
196 I cross the invisible line on a weekly basis. […]and have to sort through coins to identify legal
197 tender for the region in which I happen to be present.
198

199
200 Whilst its existence does not directly prevent me from undertaking work, it has an impact in a
201 variety of ways which are not always apparent.

202 Even if, operating within two very different "infrastructural and resource and
203 funding support systems" (MCGRATH 2021: 1)—that of Northern Ireland and
204 the Republic of Ireland—the mobile nature of dance is especially the case on the
205 island. Sector based reports and reflections indicate strong connections existing
206 across the Irish border for artists' engagement with training and professional
207 development, co-productions and the development of work, and performance
208 touring (DANCE RESOURCE BASE 2018; MCGRATH 2021; WAKELEY
209 2019; O'REILLY 2019). Policy aimed at developing dance in the Republic of
210 Ireland points to an assumption that independent artists engaging in this variety
211 of work are mobile and flexible, with "the potential to encourage greater
212 geographic and spatial distribution of dance (ARTS COUNCIL 2010: 7). This
213 point in policy may be related to the long-standing cross-border independencies
214 in dance infrastructure that seem to exist on the island.

215

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

230

231 The changes to the geo-political and socio-economic landscapes on the island of
232 Ireland brought by Brexit, and felt throughout the pandemic, further illustrate
233 the territorial nature of cultural policy. As a post-conflict society, experiences of
234 artists on the island of Ireland point to the affective nature of movement for
235 work. This nature is articulated by Dylan Quinn who describes the changing
236 presence of the Irish border in the context of his everyday life and working
237
238 practice,

239 [t]he narrative of the border appears like a trilogy running throughout my life: it was there, it
240 was not there, and now, it is considering a return (2019: 43).
241

242 The United Kingdom (UK) Creative Industries Federation (2016) and the British
243 Council (BOP Consulting 2019) have warned of Brexit's negative consequences
244 for the livelihoods of a highly mobile UK-based cultural workforce, but also for
245 wider international and thus intercultural relations and exchange. A Northern
246 Ireland Assembly report highlights key concerns at the time of writing in
247 relation to the movement of professional equipment (like instruments) and a
248 possible limitation on the number of stops allowed in relation to the touring of
249 performances as well as objects for museum and art gallery exhibition
250 (MCCALLION 2021). These concerns are shared in the Republic of Ireland.
251 There have been recent efforts between the Governments of Ireland and Wales
252 to formally solidify cross border ties between the islands of Ireland and Great
253 Britain, through a *Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan, 2021-25*, for six
254 areas of cooperation, including culture, language and heritage, (GOI AND
255 WELSH GOVERNMENT 2021). Additionally, and around the time in which
256 this pilot study was conducted, issues around the free movement and support of
257 artists across this border were acknowledged to be "a major cause of concern"
258 RTÉ 2019: np) at a meeting of the directors of Creative Scotland, and the Arts
259 Councils of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland in Dublin in March
260 2019. These circumstances are further complicated by the political and
261 economic stresses that have resulted from the global pandemic (MCCALLION
262 2021).
263

264 It is in this context that the "value" and "sustainability" of artistic work—
265 particularly that which operates across borders—are in question, as are the
266 "ethics" of the territorial policies that frame and influence the creation of that
267 work (see COMUNIAN/CONOR 2018: 265). More specific assessments of the
268 concerns for particular cultural fields have emerged (see CROOKE/O'KELLY
269 2018). Still, the island's positioning on the European periphery, coupled with its
270 underdeveloped professional dance infrastructure, has meant that the majority of
271 research to date has tended to focus on the necessitated increase in overseas
272 migration of dance practitioners and scholars for training and collaborative
273 purposes (MCGRATH 2013; MCGRATH/MEEHAN 2018; ROCHE 2018).
274 There remains a lack of understanding in both policy and cultural policy studies
275 of the reception and impact territorial mobility—as both a policy practice and a
276 construct—facilitates in relation to the living and working conditions of artists.
277

278 The cultural forms and the circumstances outlined above underline the
279 importance of capturing the voices and perspectives of artists as core to
280 understanding the territorial nature of (cultural) policies as shaping our (rights
281 to) expression (WODDIS 2014; WESNER 2018). They also highlight the need
282 for a methodological approach that recognises artists' "aesthetic" way of
283 knowing (ARCHIBALD/GERBER 2018: 957).
284
285 **Methodology**
286
287 To explore the territorial nature and the cross border professional experiences of
288 dance artists on the island of Ireland, Co-Motion utilised an experimental,
289 interdisciplinary approach of epistemological pluralism and grounded theory
290 that mixed improvised dance methods with a traditional structured survey. It
291 brought together a paper-based questionnaire/survey, with an invitation to
292 respondents to create improvised danced responses to particular key terms
293 utilised on that survey. Beyond enumerating and summarizing types of border
294 crossing, therefore, the decision to include danced responses to research
295 questions in this experiment afforded inclusion of the embodied knowledge of
296 the artists being studied, and for this knowledge to be articulated through the art
297 form under investigation. It also allowed for affective aspects of the dance
298 artists' responses to the Irish border to be acknowledged and integrated into the
299 project's discussions.
300
301 Participants for both danced responses and surveys were drawn from an event
302 attended by dance practitioners and dance support agencies from across the
303 island of Ireland, entitled 'Co-Motion: Dance and Borders' held in October
304 2019. A survey was made available on paper to all 90 attendees at that event to
305 allow for self-completion. In addition to demographic information, questions
306 were asked regarding how dance practitioners experience migration to other
307 countries and across borders; whether they cross borders as a result of their
308 dance practice; why this might be; and what issues these crossings might raise.
309 As discussed further elsewhere (MCGRATH et al. 2021), the use of paper as a
310 delivery method allowed respondents to break the borders imposed by the
311 survey. As others have noted (WARNS et al. 2005), the use of paper surveys, as
312 opposed to digital, goes some way to opening up the rigidity of this method to
313 unexpected inputs from participants, allowing for questioning and resistance of
314 structures imposed by the classifications offered in closed questioning. Open
315 questioning was also used to enable respondents to engage with this method on
316 their own terms as far as possible.

317
318   Dancers attending the Co-Motion event were also invited to take part in a
319   danced data collection experiment designed by McGrath, for which eleven
320   laminated signs, printed with single words taken from the survey text, were
321   placed on a dance studio floor between a camera that recorded their movements
322   for later analysis, and a bordered square marked with tape. Among the words
323   included were: work, development, territory, migration, cross-border and Brexit.
324   Dancers were invited to use the words as prompts for improvised dance
325   responses. A further, handwritten note was placed on the studio floor in front of
326   the camera reading, "Keep inside your borders", and participants were free to
327   interpret this command in any way they chose. The spatial organisation was
328   designed to provide both material borders (the border markings on the studio
329   floor), and indications towards immaterial concepts related to borders and
330   migration (provided by the printed words) for participants to interact with in
331   their improvised responses. Following Franko's argument that dance "calls
332   social space into being" (1995: 211) in its negotiations of the interrelations
333   between space/place and movement, this experiment allowed the particular
334   affective environment of the Irish border, and its impact on the practice and
335   livelihoods of dance artists, to be interrogated.
336
337   The process of analysis involved the recorded dances being viewed by the dance
338   researcher, who then re-performed the movements of each respondent, herself,
339   to gain an embodied sense of how they were articulated, and what it felt like to
340   perform them. The dance researcher then created written exegeses of the danced
341   responses for use in joint analysis with the written survey data. As Meehan
342   discusses in her work on embodied exploration of dance archives, this process of
343   re-performing movements by researchers, allows for the "affective resonances
344   left behind by the performance" to be experienced and included in discussion
345   (MEEHAN 2018: 30). It is important to note that the processes of translation
346   occur both in the reproduction of movements extracted from visual artefacts
347   (such as the video recordings in this experiment), and in the subsequent
348   description of these movements in written text. Similarly, the potential erasures
349   or losses of meaning or intention of the original performance, and changes to
350   these through the (inevitably) subjective interpretation of another, must also be
351   acknowledged. However, this process of danced and written translation also
352   permits an attempt at articulating kinaesthetic empathy with the original
353   performer/performance, as well as an opportunity for "making explicit, drawing
354   out, establishing connections" across multiple performances through a mode of

355 expression that is a "challenge to our linguistically dominated culture"
356 (REASON 2012: 254).
357
358 25 survey responses were received. Survey respondents covered all ages and
359 experience levels available for selection, from under five to over thirty years'
360 experience of dance work, which rests comparably with respondents to similar
361 surveys from other territories (VAN ASSCHE/LAERMANS 2016). Four
362 research participants took part in the danced responses. The majority of all
363 respondents were either British or Irish citizens (or both), female, white, resident
364 on the island of Ireland and did not report a disability. Whilst the demographics
365 of respondents is not representative of the general population, it is likely that
366 these are also the predominant characteristics of those working in the dance
367 sector (DANCE IRELAND/NUGENT 2010).
368
369 The process and experience of integrating this data has been explored elsewhere
370 (MCGRATH et al. 2021). For the purposes of this paper, it is important to note
371 that as scholars, none of us had extensive experience engaging with the methods
372 in one another's discipline, even if we were all certainly aware of one another's
373 practice.
374
375 **Insights**
376
377 This section reflects on the contribution this mixed approach might bring to
378 detailing, interpreting and representing artists' experiences of territory within
379 cultural policy studies. It is ordered by some emerging themes around territorial
380 mobility for training / development and work. In this ordering we have tried to
381 bring the two types of data into conversation with one another. Yet rather than
382 reveal a tidy and complementary presentation of a "single reality"
383 (SANSCARTIER 2020: 48) or types of realities of how territorial mobility is
384 experienced in dance, the study reveals the divergence and complexity that
385 mixing methods may prompt. Indeed, one of the driving forces behind this
386 experiment was the desire to explore the fact that these different forms of
387 knowledge could not be easily reduced to a common denominator, potentially
388 offering fundamentally different, if possibly complimentary, ways of
389 understanding. That is to say, to attempt a single synthesis of the data gathered
390 would be to undermine the basis of the experiment, which is to consider how
391 these may not be two sides of the same coin, but rather different (and both
392 valuable) coins, so to speak.
393

394 For this study, the paper survey focussed primarily on closed questions relating
395 to respondents' professional roles, migration relating to these roles and personal
396 characteristics, with a small number of open questions focussing on their
397 motivations for travel and the impact of border crossing on their practice. The
398 aim was to reveal some useful initial patterns in this field on these topics as a
399 prompt to further study. Reflecting other research on both cultural work more
400 generally and on dance specifically, the patterns revealed in the data gathered
401 showed the dominance of certain types of individual and geographical areas in
402 dance practice, a tendency for practitioners to hold multiple professional roles,
403 and the commonality of migration for training and work.
404
405 The survey data also corroborates research that territorial mobility for dancers
406 on the island of Ireland relates to training and development. More specifically, it
407 appears to support the understanding that the lack of training and development
408 for dance, on the island, likely fosters the movement of artists off the island to
409 develop their practice. Two-thirds of respondents reported that they had
410 migrated for the purposes of training, with England being by far the most
411 common destination for this, followed by the Republic of Ireland (see also
412 MCGRATH 2021). In open questioning on the motivation for this migration,
413 respondents focussed predominantly on the issue of (un)availability of training
414 (for example, "training was available in London", "opportunity not available in
415 home country"). Accessing a wider range of technical knowledge or broader
416 professional networks emerged as secondary issues.
417
418 Whilst this data provides us with somewhat neat, contained knowledge, which
419 could alone be the basis for further policy proposals, we sought to explore other
420 aspects of this experience. The danced responses added another dimension to
421 these findings, providing insight into the affective and embodied experience of
422 territorial movement for dancers, which can potentially be lost in a more
423 abstracted consideration of cultural work. In the example below of one of the
424 dance improvisation responses to the word, "Migration", as analysed through
425 danced and written translation by co-author McGrath (here and throughout the
426 article), the emotional impact of leaving something behind to undertake a
427 journey is apparent:
428
429   The dancer steps into the centre of the bordered space and places her gaze
430   and hands onto her pregnant belly. She walks slowly backwards towards a
431   wall that borders one side of her performance space until she bumps into
432   it and can go no further. Unable to keep moving on her backward

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

443

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

454

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

468

469 The notion of border crossing as a process was also evident in one of the dance
470 responses to the word, Cross-Border. In this response, the process could be read
471 as one of growth and transformation, although the expression of difficulty in

472 finding points of stability when engaging in crossings, as articulated by hands
473 twisting around each other in the example below, arguably placed greater
474 emphasis on the complexities inherent in engaging in cross-border movements.
475

476   A dancer hunkers down in the middle of the bordered square. She
477   brings her hands in front of her body, palms inward, left hand
478   covering the right so that we only see one hand. She slowly moves her
479   hands apart until they are both visible, touching only by the tips of her
480   middle fingers. She pauses for a moment, contemplating this
481   meeting/parting point, before suddenly bringing the palms of her
482   hands together and interlocking her fingers. This joining of the two
483   hands lifts her to standing, but the connection only lasts for a moment,
484   before the hands escape into a twisting dance around each other that
485   expands into a chasing spiral around the dancer's body. Her hands
486   don't join together again (MCGRATH, analysis).
487

488 The paper survey responses support research referenced above, by Rösler (2015)
489 and Duester (2014; 2021) that travel for work can positively impact one's
490 personal and professional development. Equally, the responses suggest areas in
491 need of further study raised by Borén and Young (2013) in cultural policy
492 studies and by Van Assche (2020) in dance scholarship. Namely, how cross-
493 border movement for work may develop or be dependent upon the pre-existence
494 of a professional network, resulting in the potential exclusion from, or further
495 access to, dance work.
496

497 Here again, danced responses provided insight into an affective landscape of
498 overall experiences, highlighting tensions and struggles associated with current
499 territorial negotiations on the island of Ireland, as evidenced in this dancers'
500 movement response to the word, 'Brexit'.
501

502   A dancer picks up the laminated card printed with the word, "Brexit".
503   She grimaces and groans, saying the word out loud with a facial
504   expression of disgust. The disgust transfers to her whole body, which
505   does a ripple of revulsion that echoes through her arms several times
506   until she has shaken off the feeling (MCGRATH, analysis).
507

508 **Discussion**
509

510   While the dataset is small and thus supports only a tentative exploration of our
511   approach, the study points to the complex terrain of cultural policy as territorial.
512   Open questioning did to some extent give a deeper sense of the nature of these
513   issues allowing unexpected and previously unexplored elements of practice to
514   be examined (as per the benefits of open questioning discussed, for example, in
515   SWYNGEDOUW (2001), but survey data was predominantly useful to reveal
516   the broad patterning of practice, and to give some indication of which
517   experiences were majority and which were minority ones. Whilst the realities of
518   the situation are more complex, one of the reasons for the extensive deployment
519   of survey data and the presentation of quantitative findings in multiple disparate
520   fields is the "appearance" of objectivity and neutrality (PORTER 1995: 8, 74),
521   resulting in patterns that seem to need little explanation or interpretation by
522   those outside the research process. Comprehensible categories are presented,
523   relating commonly to events, behaviours and attitudes of a given group, and
524   respondents are sorted into these fixed categories and enumerated. Whilst the
525   role of the survey process in constructing, as well as reflecting phenomena must
526   be acknowledged (SCHAEFFER/PRESSER 2003), it is this demonstration of
527   patterning across categories that is often most useful in terms of findings. What
528   is gained in breadth of coverage, though, can to some extent be lost in depth.
529
530   By bringing in dance, itself, in the investigation of these issues, however,
531   articulations of affective dimensions and impacts of territorial borders, and
532   cultural policies associated with them, can be accessed. These danced responses,
533   articulated through the art form under investigation, provide rich insight into the
534   lived experience of dance artists. They allow a glimpse into artists' embodied
535   negotiations of issues that impact their livelihoods, demonstrating how dance
536   can put problems into motion (MARTIN, 1998). They also allow the embodied
537   knowledge of artists to be recognised and point to the value of this knowledge in
538   policy-informing discussion. At times, the danced responses aligned with
539   findings from the survey data, but at times they were contradictory, or added
540   new aspects for analysis. In so doing, they allow space for exploration that is
541   relatively unconstrained by pre-ordained categories and can offer space, not only
542   to provide answers, but to consider new questions. The danced responses seem
543   to have allowed for increased depth of individual expression for participants in
544   response to research topics. However, in the method employed for this study,
545   they also rely on translation, into the written word, by researchers for analysis,
546   and thereby arguably require a much greater level of subjective interpretation.
547   The written interpretation functions as a performance text in its own right
548   (JONES/STEVENSON 1999). In comparison with the survey data, the dance

549 responses could therefore be seen as lacking in facts and neutrality when
550 considered within the context of representativeness of broader experience
551 beyond individual responses.
552
553 In this way, albeit in a preliminary fashion, we may combine a consideration of
554 variance with process. As Maxwell describes, the latter, process
555
556 relies much more on a local analysis of particular individuals, events, or settings […] and
557 addresses "how" and "why" questions, rather than simply "whether" and "to what extent"
558 (2010: 477).
559
560 He argues that it is the combination of these approaches, rather than the simple
561 combination of numerical and non-numerical data, that characterises mixed
562 methods research, which may serve to fruitfully combine these different forms
563 of understanding, and which is one area that has potential for further exploration
564 by interdisciplinary groups of researchers seeking to elucidate policy-relevant
565 issues.
566
567 **Concluding thoughts**
568
569 This preliminary, experimental mixed methods approach considers bringing
570 dance practice-as-research methods into complement with social science
571 methods. Survey methods are often utilised in evidence-making for cultural
572 policy studies (CROSSICK/KASZYNSKA 2016) and have been established as a
573 useful data collection tool in other dance-sector related studies (VAN
574 ASSCHE/LAERMANS 2016), to the point of potential survey fatigue in the
575 sector. We do not argue here for abandoning these methods, or for policy to be
576 considered solely in the language of the sector it seeks to influence.
577 Nevertheless, a more eye-level relationship between policymaker, researcher
578 and practitioner can potentially bring a richer understanding of the field. By
579 considering more traditional data alongside danced responses, the study places
580 equal value on "sense-based, perceptual, embodied, and emotional forms of
581 knowledge" (ARCHIBALD/GERBER 2018: 957). In other words, through
582 inviting danced responses, we collectively sought to allow artists to "show" us
583 the affective nature of our public policies in addition to telling us through the
584 questionnaire (HALLGARTEN 2011: 237), opening up space to meet practice
585 on its own terms, rather than seeing practitioners as a resource to be mined.
586
587 Insights afford an opportunity to extend dance practice beyond merely
588 functioning as a performative tool for communicating data to, instead, being
589 data in and of itself (MCGRATH et al. 2021). Combining paper surveys with

590 danced responses allowed us to re-orient the study from producing data about
591 a cultural form from an outside perspective, to incorporating knowledge from
592 within the embodied perspective/experience of the art form
593 (MIGNOLO/TLOSTANOVA 2006: 206). Such an approach places the
594 embodied voice of artists as central to how we seek to understand, and thus
595 research, the experience of cultural work. Further research is needed regarding
596 the potential of practice-as-research for cultural policy studies. It would also be
597 useful to understand the transferability of the method across different forms of
598 cultural work.
599
600 The methods and the findings themselves "disrupt" our typical understandings
601 of how artists' territorial and cross-border experiences might relate to policy
602 frames (ARCHIBALD/GERBER 2018: 959). Furthermore, while our insights
603 above do not necessarily "hang neatly together", it is through this mess that the
604 complexity of artists experiences of territorial border crossing are revealed
605 (SANSCARTIER 2020: 48). It is when taken together, that the survey and the
606 danced responses begin to elucidate the affective, personal and professional
607 nature of working in a post-conflict society such as Ireland; one that is
608 continually impacted by political, territorial policies that frame and act upon the
609 cultural. The study shows the potential for drawing greater attention to the
610 embodied nature of (cultural) policies (BELL/OAKLEY 2015), an area that
611 remains underexplored. Due to the privileging of certain forms of knowledge
612 within academia (REASON 2012; HOPE 2016) and the policy making sphere
613 (BELFIORE 2021; CAIRNEY 2016), the role of the researcher and research
614 remains critical to pushing the boundaries of what and how artists' voices are
615 heard and reflected in cultural policy development.
616

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618

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