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Curating Participatory Dance in Norwegian Museums: Four Approaches to Creating an *Events of Practice Exhibition*

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Tone Erlien Myrvold

Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance, Norway

https://orcid.org/0009-0000-2831-4296

This article discusses the concept of *events of practice exhibition* in the *Dancing Museums* project. *Dancing Museums* has been a development and research project at the Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance (Sff) since 2014. *Events of practice exhibition* is a concept that explores how to use the local communities' dance concepts, viewpoints and participation to disseminate living dance heritage and make it relevant to the museum audience. The overarching aim of the project is to enhance the relevance for different target groups and potential users, and to build networks around dance as living heritage in the museum.

Keywords: participatory dance, living heritage, community, exhibition, museum

This chapter builds upon earlier research that aimed to develop exhibitions and performances as a means of dissemination for dance in museums (Erlien 2014). Significantly, it also aspired, through a project entitled *Dancing Museums*, to help dance practice enter museums in an informal and permanent way, as a contributory strategy to safeguarding dance knowledge. This idea clearly resonated with the widespread Nordic custom of dance parties. But safeguarding requires more than simply opening museum doors to dance parties. I maintain that through dissemination of live dancing / dance events in an exhibition and communication / dialogue with visitors, it is possible to make dance heritage in museums relevant and sustainable for future generations.

Central to my work is the concept of *events of practice exhibition* which was developed in the *Dancing Museums* project (begun in 2024). Over a decade of development and research plus six exhibitions, the *Dancing Museums* project became a model for disseminating dance knowledge and curating social dance in Norway. Several different strategies were developed and tested: the facilitation of heritage communities, mentoring of museum and dance networks, curation of exhibition design and content, arranging participatory events, and teaching dance as intangible cultural heritage (ICH) to museum pedagogues, adults, children and teenagers. In addition, the work focused on supporting dance as living heritage through communication and dialogue with different groups of the general public, such as visitors, students, school classes, immigrant groups and the Sami people. What was striking was the value created when museums took part in the important network of communities, groups and individuals that are the core of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003).

The 2003 UNESCO Convention served as a fundamental framework from which the *Dancing Museums* project formed its principal methodology. According to the Convention, equal value should be placed on expressions at the local and universal level, in addition to appreciating popular cultural forms and "high culture" forms on their own terms. In achieving this effectively, museums and new museology could be tools for challenging old paradigms and recognising new modes of thinking and forms of practice. The Convention highlights the needs of stakeholders, and this entails new and changed perspectives on what, from a curatorial point of view, is judged to be valuable. As I will argue, when museums or other cultural institutions deal with living heritage, stakeholders should be in-

cluded in defining which intangible aspects should be promoted and safeguarded in these institutions (UNESCO 2003).

My experience of organising three exhibitions in Trondheim (2015–2018), two touring exhibitions co-created with a range of different local communities in the whole of Norway (2018–2026) and one Nordic cooperation exhibition touring in Norway, Sweden and Finland (2020–2023) led me to establish four main curatorial methods: (1) co-created exhibition elements; (2) curated dance events; (3) participatory events; (4) dialogue between all interested parties.When used together, these constitute the concept of *events of practice exhibition* and provide a creative template for implementation within a museum or other institution of cultural heritage. These ideas were further tested, explored, and fresh innovations made in the European project *Dance as ICH: New Models of Facilitating Participatory Dance Events* (*Dance-ICH*), which was conducted across six different European countries and for which I acted as project leader and led a focus project in Trondheim. The overall method is the use of local communities' dance concepts, viewpoints, stories and participation in order to disseminate and transmit living dance heritage, thus ensuring its relevance to museum visitors and to any new community members. Through the example of three touring exhibitions drawn from the Norwegian and Nordic projects, this chapter discusses each of the methods noted above, underlining the crucial interconnections within a museum context between the dance event and the contextualisation of cultural heritage as exhibition. The key question is how this might be done by inclusion, and not exclusion, in dance heritage communities. I also argue, in brief, why and how museums should play a part in future sustainable structures for safeguarding dance as living heritage.

New Trends in Museology

Fieldwork at ten European museums revealed a lack of innovative methods in how museums disseminate dance as living heritage to the general public (Erlien 2014). This gap could be filled by using methods in line with both the "new museology" (Black 2005; Davis 2008; Kreps 2008) and the 2003 UNESCO Convention. The continuous early-twentieth-century practice of staging folk dances represents an institutionalised form of dissemination whereby the host museums – that is, museums entrusted with custody –

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protect their own tradition and history of folk dance group performances. Although this practice is popular with tourists, change is needed to be aligned with new museology trends which promote the idea of the active visitor, who takes part in a multi-dimensional visit, consisting of a holistic adventure of knowledge, activities, amusement and experience (Hooper-Greenhill 1992).

Over the last decades, there has been a new focus on a people-centred and action-oriented democratisation of museum practices for satisfying visitor expectations. The social role of the museum as a meeting place and its educational role, both formal and informal, has led to a transformation: from the museum operating as an autonomous institution to improving inclusion of community involvement through its selection of which memories to disseminate (Kreps 2008). The late museologist and professor of heritage policy, Patrick Boylan supported the need for a more people-centred museum practice and found good solutions in the concepts of the ecomuseum (Boylan 2006) and the post-museum (Hooper-Greenhill 1992). Community museology is an alternative branch of new museology that is used extensively in the model of an ecomuseum (Davis 2008). There are examples of postmodern museums that operate as a type of entertainment that aim to mix the open-air museum's historical mission with directing visitor behaviour in a similar manner to that of those visiting a theme park (Davis 1995). By experiencing something that is fundamental to the context, visitors, it is argued, will be drawn into performing themselves rather than watching others perform. This leads to a deeper exploration of the museum's role as cultural interlocutor.

With respect to this term of cultural interlocutor, Richard Kurin (1997) proposes that museums should execute the role of social engineering by researching the communities that they are trying to represent. Ralph Regenvanu (quoted in Alivizatou 2008, 50) considers that museums need a total transformation in order to work with ICH, and that they should do this by becoming more of a cultural centre. Marilena Alivizatou (2012) argues that living heritage can be disseminated as a process, a lived, evolving interaction in the engagement of communities and uses R. West´s (2007) words: "museums as a dynamic cultural centre" (quoted in Alivizatou 2008, 52) or "social engineers". Today, curators work with cultural heritage and try to communicate it in accessible terms for the general public (Martinon 2013). Curatorial methods, defined as any activity, behaviour, body of practices and knowledge related to, amongst others, the interpretation of cultural

property are conceptualisations that challenge traditional thinking on curating (Kreps 2008). Traditionally, curatorship emphasised scholarly authority and custodianship of collections, whereas today it increasingly focuses on collaboration, inclusivity, and shared meaning-making with communities. These new forms may be evident in the relational nature of curatorial work and diverse museological forms of today. In the field of new museology, community museology and indigenous heritage presentation, curatorial work can imply a means of curating a continuing and functioning heritage practice while sustaining important intangible qualities of the heirs of the cultural heritage. These might include dance variations, enjoyment of live music at dance parties, typical dance structures and dance improvisation. These are all functions of a vital museum as expressed in new museology trends (Boylan 2006).

From a museological perspective, recognising the intangible as acceptable museum content is a means to break curatorial authority and to challenge the spatially bounded concept of a museum (Lynch 2017). New approaches to museology have caused key changes in "western museum practices", and many of these are essential in understanding dance as living heritage in a museum setting (Erlien 2014, 2015; Erlien et al. 2018; Erlien and Bakka 2017; Myrvold 2020, 2022).

Methodological Inspirations

Dance as embodied cultural heritage is a powerful tool for the inclusion of diversity, for communication between cultures, and for both physical and mental wellbeing. The *Dancing Museums* project has resulted in seventeen different exhibition spaces or social engineering locales (Giddens 1979) created for both internal dance community members and the public. This mixture of outsiders and insiders (Simon 2016) brings together new constellations of participants in museums. Participatory dance community members, the general public, museum pedagogues and curators can realise remarkable results together, all of which contributes to social and cultural sustainability that changes local communities and the futures of dance groups and individuals.

The curation of dance participation involves organising people to dance together (Myrvold 2020). The *Dancing Museums* project drew inspiration from museum director, consultant and researcher Nina Simon who called

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for museums to be used for social bridging in order to build stronger communities, and thus to become relevant and meaningful for a broader audience. She defined participation as a means to transform the visitor from a passive consumer to an active participant who can add content to the exhibition. In *The Participatory Museum* (2010), Simon proposes five stages of engagement to encourage people to participate socially with each other. Her notion of "me-to-we" promotes individual experiences to support collective engagement. When individuals are connected to other individuals, she argues, they will start to feel as if they are part of a communal experience. In this transformation of a cultural institution into a social hub, the staff members are responsible for connecting people through the content on display. The final stage in fostering engagement is when sharing content as a common principle between institution and visitor results in the entire institution feeling like a social place.

Simon describes four different but equal working methods for this participation of insiders and outsiders in an institutional setting: (1) co-creation – where communities, groups, individuals (hereafter CGIs) and museum employees decide content and methods together and have an equal stake; (2) collaboration – where CGIs and museum employees embark upon an active partnership, but the initiative lies with the museum; (3) contribution – where CGIs provide ideas and suggestions to the museum; and finally (4) hosting, which implies that the museum turns over a portion of its facilities and resources to the CGIs for them to manage and implement their plans. Two criteria are important in ensuring that content will result in positive engagement and aid social participation. First, the provision of new information that will stimulate a positive cognitive effect and yield conclusions that matter to the individual. Second, consideration of how much effort is required to obtain and absorb that new information – the lower the effort, the higher the relevance.

In accordance with these strategies, a dance arena should be a social platform, a third space (Oldenburg 1999), open and warm with an inviting atmosphere. The driving idea is to enable visitors to become dance community members and to find their way back to their own personal history of dance experiences. Key aims are for visitors at a dance arena to experience social learning, creative participation and meaningful conversations about dance content, something so relevant and valuable that they wish to become practitioners and community members.

Turning towards the policies and strategies outlined by the 2003 UNES-

CO Convention, Article 15 states that the initiative of safeguarding and promotion of ICH should be a bottom-up approach from the CGIs themselves. Safeguarding – the process of transmitting the embodied knowledge of living heritage to new generations – is a concept whose meaning is shaped by what the practitioners of the heritage element themselves invest in it. In particular, the Operational Directives for the Convention's implementation declare that community centres, associations, museums, archives, and similar entities have a role in "supporting" heritage communities in safeguarding strategies. They should raise public awareness about their heritage by, for example, co-creating exhibitions, seminars and debates with museum support and participatory presentation approaches. The heirs, also referred to as the stakeholders of the heritage, should be included in the widest possible participation and involved actively in its management. Safeguarding means measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage. In other words, safeguarding is about supporting communities in practising their living heritage in a way that is meaningful to them.

Although the Operational Directives of the 2003 UNESCO Convention do not provide a "how to" strategy, their suggestion of co-creation, emerges as the most valuable approach to safeguarding. Co-creation describes a partnership in which both parties define their needs and goals at a project's inception and work together towards fulfilling them. Communities should have more power than in a regular participatory project, as this underlines the value of those practising the heritage. Not only the practice itself, but both the institution's and community's goals should be achieved. The finished outcome of the collaboration is then co-owned by the community and the institution (Simon 2010). In the case of dance as living heritage in museums, safeguarding requires negotiation with two equal partners (Lynch 2017) rather than an institution operating as the carer and the visitors/local community becoming beneficiaries. Without an expert touch, however, safeguarding may become problematic, running the risk of linearisation – that is, the impoverishment of a living heritage element – or derailment, as when outside forces push the dance element out of its context or form (Bakka 2020).

Rather than curators, specialists of intangible cultural content should instead operate as facilitators, employing the skill of translation to find common ground between professional discourses, dissemination methods and terminology of ICH in the encounter between local practices and heritage communities processes (Alivizatou 2012, Van Mensch and Meijer-van

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Mensch 2011). A facilitator is a neutral person who helps a group of people articulate their common objectives and assists them in planning and finding ways to achieve their objectives, and understand/formulate challenges. Facilitators are not in a position of authority, imparting knowledge that only they hold; instead, they put in place structures and processes which will assist the group in communicating their own ideas (Van Mensch and Meijer-van Mensch 2011). As a related concept, cultural brokers

> study, understand, and represent someone's culture (even sometimes their own) to nonspecialized others through various means and media. 'Brokering' also captures the idea that these representations are to some degree negotiated, dialogical, and driven by a variety of interests on behalf of the involved parties. (Kurin 1997, 30)

In the role of a facilitator or a cultural broker, the individual is in charge of the cultural dialogue. As Burbules (2007) argues, this has a dynamic character, composed of give and take processes, which may lead not just to to new knowledge but also to amazement and uncertainty, furnishing opportunities to ask new questions.[1]

The above framework, coalesced from recent trends in museology and in museum theory, underpinned my practical explorations in the potential aspects of museum dissemination and curation of intangible cultural dance heritage. Dance communities within Norway were selected in order to represent varied locations and genres.

Method 1: Co – created Exhibition Elements

The first method used was the involvement of dance communities in Norway, which were selected to represent varied locations and dance genres. To exemplify this method, I will explain the process of curating one exhibition and its nine different versions while touring for four years. The first touring exhibition produced was a 'best-of' exhibition made from the three first exhibitions in the project. The exhibition was scheduled to tour long distances in Norway, nine museums in total, and we planned for national relevant content as the recurrent idea. What was added to the best-of-Nor-

[1] A person that uses dialogue to make people feel important could be the museum curator. Compare, for example, the role of the artist in participatory art making (Bishop 2004, Bourriaud 1998).

way content were installations curated to be adapted locally. First of all, a geographical area was decided by the host museum in order to invite the local dance communities in the museum's vicinity to participate and engage in the curation of the local dance content. Another aim was to encourage interest from the local audience. By projecting local material and dance history, we hoped to encourage the local inhabitants to visit the exhibitions.

To begin with, it is important to clarify the types of material, both tangible and intangible, with which we are dealing. The intangible in dance is the embodied kinaesthetic knowledge inherited over time and held within a dancer´s body. It is a powerful human practice because it integrates the intellect, mental apparatus (reason and cognition) and affect (emotions) (Grau 2016). Dance's social function is essentially as a non-verbal medium of communication that establishes contact between people, or between people and the supernatural (Giurchescu 1984). Its social structure, including movement patterns, style, the use of space and leading/following techniques in partner dance and group dances, is a symbol of social relations between individuals, between individuals and groups, and between groups. These structures can thus be judged as a culturally determined programme, where social, historical and environmental factors interact with the physical, psychological and mental features of the individual. As a dialogic interaction between product and process, new meanings are constantly created by giving new meaning to old forms (Kaeppler 1991).

These intangible factors are documented in tangible materials, collected and sent by different dance heritage communities to the curators of the exhibitions. The team received text formats, films, metadata for the films, photographs, slogans, ideas for types of installations and suggestions and requests for content to be collected and produced for dissemination in the exhibitions.

The exhibition curator always exercised a neutral approach to the overall concept of the exhibition, providing initial input for each exhibition and for each part of the exhibition. The external content was either sent to Sff or we had meetings with the dance heritage communities to co-creatively find the people, information and voices that were needed for promotion purposes and awareness raising (Erlien et al. 2018). The team then asked the key community members to guide us further as to where we might obtain permission to film the everyday life of dance communities and dance parties. Obtaining people's consent to be filmed, promoted and projected

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visually in a public space such as a museum rarely caused problems, as the individuals mostly expressed pride or humility when asked.

Archival film material from the archives at Sff was chosen carefully to improve understanding and provide more depth in variations and age of the co-created content. In addition, pedagogical documents for teaching school children and for guiding visitors were also offered by the host museums. If the host museum had no prior experience of dance dissemination, or knew no other dance pedagogues from its network, I, as a curator of the content and a dance pedagogue, taught the museum pedagogue(s) the basic steps, structures and rhythms of the main Norwegian traditional dances.

All forms of participation, which Simon divides into collaboration, contribution, co-creation and hosting, have aspects of networking. To curate living heritage and its artifacts can be a challenge in terms of ownership and who has the right to decide. In accordance with the 2003 UNESCO Convention, the heirs of the practice should have granted their prior consent. The process began with an open invitation in the local newspaper and on social media. As people reacted but were slow to send material, we realised that museum professionals had to intensify their efforts and ask for specific material. This method effectively connected the museum with local dance communities, as conversations and email outreach expanded its network across the regional dance scene. One good piece of curatorial advice is always to include the dance communities in the interactive installations, together with the diverse types of arranged dance events during the hosting of the exhibition.

Additionally, the work involved in asking for permission to show old archive clips from the Sff archive was undertaken in collaboration with Sff, the host museum, local dance enthusiasts and local community members. This was also a revelatory experience for the museum pedagogues as it put them in contact with the relatives of highly respected, traditional dance stakeholders from the village or city. This way of working was challenging but it produced unexpected and valuable results, especially in the post-exhibition period. Many museums reported an expanded network and a continuous programme of organising and facilitating dance events and dance content.

Figure 1. *Dance exhibition "Everybody dance!" at Rockheim*, 2022. Photo: Jana Pavlova, Sff.

Method 2 – Curated Dance Events

Alongside content displayed in the format of film, text, pictures and interactive installations, the exhibitions have also included dance events, in the form of *events of practice* (Erlien and Bakka 2017 – see Method 3 below) and curated participatory dancing /curated dance events (Myrvold 2020). A dance event is a focused gathering with an expressive specialist who maintains the integrity of the dance, in case the activity might be questioned and threatened by participants, time, space or other activities. This specialist is a person knowledgeable in dance interaction, given that dancing is a form of socialisation, enjoyment and pleasure (Crease 2002). The social dance floor provides a sense of inclusivity and acceptance, of belonging to the body of dancers, the space and the traditions that participants share, providing an ideal environment for learning with other dancers by intuitively copying a large number of dance experts (Bakka 1978, 1999). Thus, the aim is to be able to witness dance qualities such as personal style, variation and rhythmical expression on the dance floor. Such an event is a free space for social interaction and existential activity (Crease 2002), operating as a neutral, welcoming space without any obligations,

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except to dance with other regular dancers and newcomers – it operates as a third space for dancing (Oldenburg 1999).

Curated dance events, on the other hand, are organised by a project manager, project team or host museum, to highlight connections between certain heritage communities and the curated exhibition content. These have either been thematic dance parties such as a swing dance party or a Sami dance course and social dancing, or multicultural social dances with a mix of two to six different dance traditions. We also arranged events with talk shows followed by dancing, curated dance seminars, dance competitions, dance days and pedagogical programmes in collaboration with the local dance community during the touring exhibitions.

My use of the term ' curated dance event' to signal a dance event within an exhibition is inspired by dance scholar Inés Moreno's notion of "occupation of duration" (2014). This explains the connection between a dance community´s or institution´s structural lines and codes, the logic of an exhibition and how these elements together shape a new contemporary, recurring, curatorial activity.

Figure 2. *A dance party for deaf dancers, Trondheim, 2018.* Photo: Jana Pavlova, Sff.

My approach was to invite, facilitate and lead dance meetings between different groups of dance stakeholders, knowing from my experience as a mentor for dance groups, that each would like to attract more participants and a larger network. As a neutral space, the museum venue proved to be an initiative and a form of support for gathering local people across communities. The fewer labels attached to the venue, the more open and inclusive the events became, fostering enthusiasm and, ultimately, sustainability. If used thoughtfully then, such diversity can be a tool. This was evident through curated dance events attended by diverse dance groups participating simultaneously, and through the curation of dance dialogues with an audience of young people and a general audience, discussing similarities in ethnographic dance concepts.

Commencing dialogue with dance leaders and lead musicians to ask how they might all best work together for mutual benefit, museum pedagogues gained new knowledge, recognising and enabling the dance groups´ desire to raise awareness and safeguard their living heritage. Dependent on good collaborations with the communities, since they rarely function as expressive specialists, the museum pedagogues took on a triple role, as producers, hosts, and cultural brokers/facilitators of living heritage. It is in fact the expressive specialists who maintain the possibility that the dance event will take place (Ronström 1989) through the third method: *events of practice*.

Method 3 – Events of Practice

The idea of dance hosting – that is, the use of the museum as a social arena hosted by a dance group or community (cf. Simon 2010) was developed and theorised from the second to sixth exhibition (2017–2024). Referred to as "dance hosting" in Norwegian oral everyday language, it is termed *events of practice* by Erlien and Bakka (2017) in academic and cultural political terms.

Museum employees require external help in order to accomplish their agenda of working with living heritage as they have no control over what the exhibited content of invited dance groups might entail. An *event of practice* should be requested by dancers proficient in a specific dance tradition, who should then be encouraged to promote their practice on their own terms (Erlien and Bakka 2017). The concept of *events of practice* was realised through museums sending invitations for groups to book the "invited space" (Frazer 1992) for free and with only one requirement: to talk to and

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Figure 3. *Events of practice at Rockheim, Trondheim*, 2022. Photo: Jana Pavlova, Sff.

invite a general audience to dance. The museum could only succeed in this strategical aim, of course, if the invitation to the dance communities, the stakeholders, was accepted.

Although the group was in charge of what happened at the venue the museum host needed to ensure the input of an expressive specialist who understood his or her role and that the atmosphere in the dance space was informal, warm and welcoming enough to encourage the public to dance. Luckily, most dance groups already had this kind of person.

All museums on the exhibition tours undertook these recommendations, reporting back that although unusual, they proved easy means of getting visitors to be engaged and participate actively in the museal experience. This meant that the museum staff felt comfortable and satisfied with the pre-event networking preparations and that this type of dissemination activity was also new and exciting for the visitors. In opening their doors to new groups of people for disseminating intangible cultural heritage, museums also positioned themselves as "facilitators" of an exchange over which they had no control. Instead, they raised awareness and ensured respect by implementing projects and activities for safeguarding, as recommended by Article 18 of the 2003 UNESCO Convention. This leads to Method 4: the change in how museum professionals communicate about dance.

Method 4 – Sustainability Through Dialogue

The package that Sff provides to host museums consists of a three-part staff training programme in the following: first, bottom-up working methods with the dance communities; second, how the exhibition space and the exhibited elements can be useful in the curation of pedagogical programmes and space for dance; and third, dialogic techniques and storytelling that can support sustainable dance transmission.

My experiences in this project revealed to me the importance of knowing how to communicate about dance. Museum pedagogues, communicators and curators may be experts in cultural heritage communication, but they need training to present information on dancing's embodied knowledge, its structures and historical contexts. This function can be undertaken by a knowledgeable enthusiast, a dance pedagogue, a museum pedagogue, or a curator, but should ideally embrace the role of an expressive specialist at a dance event. There are, in my opinion, correspondences between a facilitator, arts-based researcher and dance pedagogue, since they are all experts in fostering participation.

It is essential to encourage and engage nondancers to share stories from earlier dance experiences or family dancing, helping them to remember and reconnect. Through asking the right questions, carefully listening and responding positively, the facilitator can recreate dance relevance and establish a person´s relationship to dancing as cultural heritage. Such a role emphasises good dialogic methods for negotiating representations of the past that are adapted to the present, and how to harmonise these non-authorised practices of today with the carefully documented and authoritative forms of past practices. One basic question for the museum professionals concerns the best way to disseminate intangible exhibition knowledge captured in elements such as old dance clips so that the general audience understand their relevance and meaning. All host museums on the tours offered pedagogical programmes which were a combination of mini-lectures about the context and background of the exhibited content, followed by a dialogue session and a dance class, ending in participation in a short dance party session.

Using the exhibited cultural content, references to a time, place, people, traditions, embodied knowledge, music and memorable historical events, a facilitator stimulates visitors to talk freely, helping them to see historical trajectories or connections between the different dance stories: to under-

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stand that hip hop battles are the same kind of dance communication as the male dance battle of the Norwegian *halling* dance some centuries earlier: that leading in salsa is the same embodied communication as leading in swing dances, and that enjoying a dance party also incorporates the feeling of power and togetherness of the participants. Through such methods, visitors to the event may understand that they are also a part of dance history and heritage, and appreciate how human it is to dance.

In debriefing this experience with the participating visitors, we aimed to highlight and investigate the heritage relevance and value for these new generations. This dialogue was also a part of the curated experience that was finally to be co-curated by the visitors. To start the dialogue, I used participant interactive facilitation as a method on the dance floor in the actual curated experience (Myrvold 2022). This was taught to the museum pedagogues, in addition to reflections regarding which types of answer we could receive, and then how to respond. We asked simple questions such as "Do you smile when you dance?", "Do you have dance memories?", "Why do you dance?", "What is your favourite music to dance to?", "Do you see any similarities in these two dances?", "How would you do this dance structure?" The museums reported that this way of asking questions about very simple experiences and memories resulted in numerous good conversations about social dancing as living heritage. They also reported that as a result local museum audiences became educated, raising awareness thus making it easier to arrange permanent future dance events. Feedback from the tours also stated that the level of ownership and anchoring by the museum pedagogues was crucial for success when using this dialogic method.

I consider this style of dialogue to be related to strategies of coaching, resilience-building and adaptive management of a community for a sustainable future. For ethnomusicologist Jeff Titon (2015) sustainability may be defined as recognition that change is both natural and inevitable. Change requires management in order to guarantee continuity, integrity and resource availability for the future. Thus, resilient dance communities need to be nurtured with safeguarding strategies based on adaptive management that captures and embraces the dynamic nature of the world and maintains the most desirable state whenever possible. In an ideal situation, the culture worker learns the culture's sustainability goals and helps its people plan and then implement a sustainability strategy which they self-manage, relying on the culture worker as a collaborator and consultant, in a role similar to that of an empathetic coach (Titon 2015). The coach

Figure 4. *Dance teaching at the dance seminar "Hosting a dance party" at Rockheim, Trnodheim,* 2025. Photo: Jana Pavlova, Sff.

is there to help the mentee reach goals and must guide the process and not direct it, while the mentee is responsible for the conversation and must set the agenda (Hart, Blattner and Leipsic 2001, 234).

Participation comprises both physical and dialogical interactivity (Simon 2010; Skydsgaard, Andersen and King 2016). The former concerns embodied intelligence, our senses, our physical experiences and bodily somatic processes. The latter expands participation to include dialogue. Narratives and storytelling are therefore also of importance: narratives from members of the same target group as the audience help to increase the personal relevance of the concept of the exhibition; narratives from other generations can help participants to see cultural differences; and narratives from experts offer insight into research and help to humanise science, making this accessible to the general audience by linking the exhibited context to real life (Skydsgaard, Andersen and King 2016). Cultural interlocutors and facilitators work as translators of different generations of socialisation and need to differentiate between which relevant stories to tell to a specific target group. Nonetheless, together they can emphasise

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the continued social functioning of the living practice, raise awareness about social and health functions, embodiment, personal and social development, good relations and use of the senses. Dancing together, touch, and being present are tools with a high degree of functionality, but these can also be beneficial in the act of communication.

After implementing these methods, the museums reported back on stories of fathers who have gone from refusing to dance to stepping outside of their comfort zone and dancing at the end of the tour. The exhibitions have also resulted in countless good conversations, new and old dance stories, dance meetings between Norwegian and immigrant communities, and dancing a traditional dance for the first time in thirty years and executing it perfectly. Thousands of teenagers have encountered social dance as a space for rehearsing relational skills such as empathic embodied compassion, flirting, smiling, having fun, acknowledging other people's expressed emotions, being a good audience, giving feedback, feeling cohesion and togetherness, and most importantly, seeing their cultural expressions as much of a cornerstone of cultural life as older heritage expressions. They have felt and understood connection to the heritage of older generations and have participated in an embodied experience of being part of the safe, inclusive flock.

Conclusion: Concept of *Events of Practice Exhibition*

The *events of practice exhibition* concept may be defined as the combination and intentional alignment of the four methods discussed above: co-created exhibition elements; curated dance events; participatory events; and dialogue between all interested parties. The goals and resultant benefits are twofold: firstly, the aim of making the local dance community and dance traditions sustainable by recruiting new members; secondly, the value of a permanent space for dance as living heritage for social and cultural sustainability, including wellbeing, inclusion and diversity factors.

These two dimensions may be merged. It is essential to acknowledge participatory dance as significant cultural heritage and to promote its role in fostering social and cultural sustainability. And it is possible to increase active membership of dance communities by addressing the value of dance at regular public dance events, pedagogical programmes and dance exhibitions in museums. To achieve this, it is essential to curate, organise, and

host dance events in order to establish a sustainable framework for safeguarding living dance heritage within museums. This framework which I have termed *events of practice exhibition* should therefore contain more than just the *events of practice* (dance events). These events need to be recurrent and in a permanent space, and include the specific role of the facilitator. A cultural institution, in this case a museum, and its living heritage facilitator can thus help the dance community by promoting and incorporating their practices into an organisational system, without interfering with the execution of the intangible heritage practices itself. For future and continuing research, it will obviously be important to research these methods over time, in different contexts, and to question the distribution of roles in co-creative processes and sustainable structures when it comes to funding and recourses. Overall, the decade of research in Norway, together with the *Dance-ICH* project, have demonstrated a field in development within museums and similar institutions, but that through the concept of *events of practice exhibition* promises future benefits for the sustainability of dance as intangible cultural heritage.

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