

Article

Social Choreography as a Cultural Commoning Practice: Becoming Part of Urban Transformation in *Une danse ancienne*

Johanna Hilari *  and Julia Wehren * 

Institute for Theatre and Dance Studies, University of Berne, 3012 Bern, Switzerland

* Correspondence: johanna.hilari@unibe.ch (J.H.); julia.wehren@unibe.ch (J.W.)

Abstract: This article examines social choreography as a cultural commoning practice that is embedded within a relational structure between different institutions, the people involved, and specific socio-cultural contexts. The artistic research project *Une danse ancienne* by French choreographer Rémy Hérítier and their team is presented as a case study of this practice. This collaborative choreography is based on a dance performance and social gathering that is reactivated every year by the same dancer in the same peri-urban site in a metropolitan area of Lausanne, Switzerland. *Une danse ancienne* holds strong relationships to temporalities, to the changing urban space, and to communal processes of documentation. Its relational choreographic structure and sharing practices are analyzed against the concepts of ‘expanded choreography’ and ‘cultural commoning’. This article, therefore, discusses social choreography as a cultural commoning practice that involves interactions with different social groups and institutions and practices of sharing and communal documentation. This article shows how, as social choreography, *Une danse ancienne* reflects upon urban transformation through cultural commoning practices.

Keywords: social choreography; cultural commoning; urban transformation; sharing practices; contemporary dance; artistic research; dance documentation



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1. Introduction

This article takes social choreography as a concept that captures the dynamic interdependencies of artistic and social processes. It, therefore, enables a view of performatively created social and societal orders. The following investigation and illustration of the concept is based on the choreographic research and performance project *Une danse ancienne* by French choreographer Rémy Hérítier and his team. Following this project’s conception and performance, this article aims to show how choreography is particularly fruitful for the creation of communal processes in urban spaces undergoing change. This is made evident in the discussion of the process and analysis of the artistic concept and in the evaluation of outcomes as repetitive and performative taken over a longer period. This article discusses the concrete effects and impacts of the project to show how artistic choreographic practices provide insights into the cultural, social, and urban transformation of urban space. The concept of social choreography is, therefore, particularly useful when discussing the creation and formation of communal processes undergoing change in urban spaces.

Methodologically, this case study is based on active participation and participant observation, as well as the analysis of two performances over a period of two years. Our collective notes and reflections inform the description of the relational structure of the social and choreographic aspects of the project and a discussion of the inscribed practices of sharing and documentation. The analysis is led by the following questions: How does the choreography reflect the processes and demands of the (changing) urban space? How does the spatial and communal structure encompass the social, artistic, and documentary practices of this work? And how can the collective documentation process of this dance be understood within a constantly renewing process of actuality?

As a theoretical framework, we primarily draw on the concept of expanded choreography. This allows us to elaborate on the concepts of ‘the social’ and ‘the choreographic’ and the relational structure inherent in the conceptual pair ‘social choreography’, and to examine the extent to which this is effective in the work *Une danse ancienne*. Furthermore, the concept of ‘cultural commons’ is used to show how *Une danse ancienne* participates as social choreography in the communal production and reflection of urban change. Originally developed in political sociology and applied to art in various ways, this theoretical framework is particularly relevant to the example of expanded choreography discussed in this article. It highlights the interplay between the social and the choreographic and reveals how this choreography becomes effective as a communal practice.

The concept of social choreography, as seen in the artistic work *Une danse ancienne*, has the potential to initiate the active participation of the local community and to promote a collaborative process, which, in turn, may encourage critical reflection. As we aim to show, this occurs on various levels throughout the entire creation, performance, and documentation process. To develop this assumption, this article first describes the project and its effects on the artistic and communal processes and then further develops the theoretical discussion on social choreography.

2. The Choreographic Project *Une danse ancienne*

2.1. Urban Transformation as a Choreographic Framework

Une danse ancienne is a long-term choreographic project by French choreographer Rémy Héritier. To date, it has been presented recurrently in the three European cities Cajarc, Grenoble, and Prilly. The project is based on a collaborative choreographic research practice that was first established as an artistic research project in 2018 in affiliation with *Manufacture*, the University of the Arts in Lausanne, Switzerland (Héritier 2023). Héritier conducted artistic research and invited a class of dance students from the University of the Arts to participate. The research included the creation of a repertoire of gestures and the exploration of an architecturally unused site, which has no official name but is called Place Corminjoz, referring to the adjacent street. This place is close to the university campus in the Malley neighborhood of Prilly amidst the transformative urban agglomeration of Lausanne (Torre 2023). The project combines aspects of urban planning, architecture, and processes of documentation by inscribing site-specific choreography into a changing urban landscape.

Une danse ancienne was performed for the first time in 2020 at the Place Corminjoz in Prilly-Malley. Each performance consists of the following three parts: first, the participants gather in a central point at the center of Prilly, and the performance begins with a welcome by the choreographer, followed by a walk through the neighborhood to the site of the performance. This is where the second and main part of the performance begins with a solo by dancer Délia Kraysenbühl. The final part of the performance consists of an aperitif offered by the municipality of Prilly, announcements, and dialogue between the various people involved. The overall choreography of the project generates traces and documents the changing urban sites that are eventually stored in the communal municipal archive.

After its launch in Prilly, *Une danse ancienne* has been transferred and modified for the two French cities, Grenoble (from 2020) and Carjac (from 2023). The choreography was adapted for local amateur and professional dancers, who performed their version on sites that, like the Place Corminjoz in Prilly, are places of urban development. In this article, we focus on the Prilly version as the original, albeit constantly evolving, version of the project. This serves as our central case study. We attended two performances, conducted several conversations, and studied the project documentation and team reports. Our collective observations and reflections form the basis for the following project’s description and analysis.

The title *Une danse ancienne* refers to a manifold temporality. The structure of the project is based on repetition and long duration and, thus, highlights a continuous aging process. The project also has a documentary function. In this sense, the adjective ‘*ancienne*’ (French for old) refers to the ‘old’ dance that *Une danse ancienne* will become one day, in a time

that outlives its current time where the choreography was inscribed, while simultaneously witnessing its own transformation. In terms of its choreographic content, 'old' also refers to the creation process Rémy Hérítier has worked on since 2016. In this sense and according to the conception and philosophical foundation of the project by the choreographer, *Une danse ancienne* can be associated with palimpsest, the notion of ritual, and a repertoire of gestures. These parameters are discussed in the following section against the concept of social choreography.

2.2. Creating Gestural Spaces

Referring to Aby Warburg's atlas of images *Mnemosyn* (Warburg 2020) and choreographer Loïc Touzé's *Atlas des figures* (Hérítier 2017), Hérítier and his team investigate how a movement ritual can be constructed and passed on by repetition and the transmission of gestures. They aim to create a repertoire of gestures that can be inscribed in an urban space by performative repetition over a long period.¹ This repertoire changes over time, but like the palimpsest, time does not erase the previous gestures. Instead, according to the choreographic intention and assumption, one gesture overwrites the next while the origin remains. The urbanization process can be described in a similar way: the vacant square in Prilly is in a constant state of flux, and in a process of gentrification, as is the society associated with the place. This is discussed later in the article.

The dance performance and the second part of the choreography of *Une danse ancienne* take place annually in the urban space in Prilly. In front of an audience, the gestures and poses are barely recognizable as images of their historical predecessors. Yet, in the sequence of a few clearly contoured movements that appear to be both improvised and set, one can sense there is a longer process behind them. They seem solidified, albeit blurred and only vaguely comprehensible in the body of the dancer, Délia Krayenbühl. A closer look at the artistic creation process reveals how this impression surfaces. An entire network of people and materials was involved in the multi-phased procedure of collection, acquirement, repetition, adaptation, and the final documentation of movements. This ultimately led to the formation of the gesture repertoire.

Lucian's *De la danse*, a theoretical treatise on Greek dances, served as the starting point. From here, the group of dancers and dance students distilled a compilation of initial gestures and movements (Hérítier 2023). In the course of their research, they gathered further information from conversations and texts by a range of experts, such as an anthropologist from the University of Lausanne, an archivist, and the director of the Lausanne History Museum. Aside from dance students and professional dancers, the network also included citizen associations, the city's administration, and the Prilly commune archive. The collection of images and gestures, like an atlas of gestures, expanded to fifty basic gestures and their variations, which were photographed during the research and creation process. A further sixty images of ancient frescoes, mosaics, and statues completed the collection of pictures and photographs (Hérítier 2017). Using aleatoric methods, two dancers eventually created short dances from this resource. These were then varied and recomposed using overwriting techniques of movement and repetition.² After the final extraction of the movement composition and a corresponding verbal and written description, these movements were then re-trained and re-learned.

This multi-layered process of abstraction, verbal description and bodily re-inscription was then transferred to the urban site in Prilly. In this final creation phase, repetition was again iterated as a key practice for inscribing the movement on site. The dancers repeated the movement sequence, inscribing it into the square Place Corminjoz to the point where "a logic stabilizes specific to dance and space".³ (Hérítier 2020, p. 5). The choreographer Hérítier suggests the concept of 'interspatiality' as a conception of this process and extension of the theoretical framework of 'intergestuality'.⁴ He understands his conception as an all-encompassing space, one that always contains all spaces within itself: "Interspatiality would reveal in space (mainly choreographic and architectural) all the constructed or 'natural' spaces that preceded it. We hypothesize that this notion will give

us privileged access to the observation of the relationships that unite a place, its inhabitants and the kind of dance we wish to develop.”⁵ (Héritier 2020, p. 1).

In 2021, a written score was created after *Une danse ancienne* had been performed for the first time. Even though this notated movement sequence is preserved as a document, the performer and possible future performers are instructed to reconstruct the dance from their own memory. The performances after 2021 are, therefore, based on the (bodily) memory of the dancer Délia Krayenbühl and other dancers involved in the process. However, the notation of the movement sequence may be consulted to track and reflect on changes in the verbal, physical, temporal, and spatial development of the gesture repertoire.

During the second part of *Une danse ancienne*, the audience members and the collaborators bear witness to the layers of gestural movement in the body of the dancer. They also relate what they see to their own perceptions of the surrounding urban space. It is this joint attempt to locate bodily movement and the spatial (architectural) changes that ultimately make the urban space tangible. As such, the choreography of *Une danse ancienne* can be understood as a cultural common practice that emerges within the relational structure of social and cultural players, such as institutions (university of the arts, municipality), groups of people (artists, public) and within a specific sociopolitical context (urbanization and urban transformation). In its conception and larger framework, *Une danse ancienne* simultaneously comments on the urban transformation and highlights, sometimes subversively, criticism of this development. The dance on the site of the Place Corminjoz thus documents makes visible and raises consciousness of the urban transformation. It also simultaneously demonstrates what will happen in the future when this open space is built up, suggesting a time when *Une danse ancienne* must find a new (urban) space or invent new pathways and movements to find space in Prilly. In other words, the ‘old dance’ documents its own displacement.

Une danse ancienne ultimately brings a remark on its actuality into public space, one that hints at the complex relationality of space(s), time(s), and movement(s). This is made tangible in two ways. The processes of urban change are recognizable in the annual repetition of the performance, while the extended history of the gesture repertoire that Héritier and his team created can be sensed and imagined but no longer seen. This prepares the ground for shared perception and reflection of urban space in transition, which ultimately emerges from the joint practice of the participants involved in the project on a social and choreographic level. The next section presents the concept of expanded choreography and thus reveals more about this sense of perception and reflection.

3. *Une danse ancienne* as Expanded Choreography

We understand this case study of *Une danse ancienne* as expanded choreography. This concept has been theorized and discussed over the last decade, particularly in European dance studies. Its definition is as broad and permeable as the reference of the term. Crucial to its understanding is the potential expansion of conventional definitions of choreography (Leon 2022, pp. 21–22). Dance researcher Anna Leon emphasizes an almost contradictory phenomenon of expansion where the term begins at a center that is reasonably and clearly defined and, at the same time, points to a potentially limitless expansion, which may lead to a dissolution of conceptual frameworks. “[The] adjective ‘expanded’ implies both a core from which expansion occurs (raising the question of what that core may be) and the potentiality of limitless widening, where everything becomes (expanded) choreography, emptying the term of meaning.” (Leon 2022, p. 22). According to dance scholar Sabine Huschka in her article *Erweiterte Choreografie. Praktiken, Diskurse und deren kulturtechnische Dimension* (Huschka 2022), the term primarily refers to aesthetic approaches and models that conceptually turn away from traditional (frontal and theatrical) forms of presentation. This reflects a detachment and departure from physically expressive and subject-centered dance aesthetics and practices, both in artistic and theoretical approaches (Huschka 2022, p. 89).

The historically formed understanding of choreography is, thus, expanded from bodily-expressive dance. As a concept, expanded choreography also includes forms of movement that may not be based on frontal forms of presentation or on human bodies and their aesthetic modes of expression. In contrast, different arrangements of movement are given perspective where non-human objects are also integrated. Huschka emphasizes that such expanded choreographic activity is not primarily aimed at the production and distribution of dances but rather creates singular artistic and social processes and structures.⁶ Following Leon's and Huschka's conceptualizations, *Une danse ancienne* can be understood as expanded choreography from two perspectives.

Based on Leon's argument that expanded choreography "implies a core from which to expand" and the related question of what 'the core' is, the reference should once again turn to the title of the case. At first glance, *Une danse ancienne* refers to the annually performed dance by Délia Kraysenbühl on the Place Corminjoz in Prilly. However, the choreographic work involves much more than this performance, as the structure consists of three parts with the dance as the center; yet, it is also framed by the spectators and artists walking to the square and gathering after the dance. In other words, the choreographic concept based on Délia Kraysenbühl's central dance, is expanded to include the introductory and concluding parts in a social space promoting community and exchange. Moreover, such an expansion is already inherent in the performance itself: only the collectively practiced and imagined space of all participants, the collaborators, locals, and other audience members involved transforms *Une danse ancienne* by dancer Délia Kraysenbühl into a choreography in and with the urban space. This case example shows expanded choreography as an artistic practice that encompasses the societal and social. Following Huschka's argument, the performance creates certain social processes and structures that are not focused solely on the production and distribution of a dance product. Rather, the choreographic practice of *Une danse ancienne* creates a relational structure. This also highlights the second perspective of expanded choreography, where the relational refers to a choreographic process in the sense of creation. Here, the artistic team exchanged with various residents of the Malley neighborhood in Prilly and experts, as well as interacted with the space affected by urban change. The relational aspect also emerges in the circular character of the choreographic work. Just as neighborhood residents are involved in the choreographic practice at the beginning of the creation process, after each performance, the experiences and perceptions of individual audience members are gathered in questionnaires, then archived and taken back into the community, and, thus, back into the neighborhood.

As an artistic research project, *Une danse ancienne* demonstrates how practices of sharing bring meaning across several steps and layers of the creation process and performance. This circular process works through exchanges with people from the neighborhood, with experts, and with the participating artists, where a location is chosen and a repertoire of movements and gestures developed, which, in turn, are shared with an interested audience. Audience members exchange their observations with others and/or write them down for the archive and, thus, document their observations for posterity. The following section discusses the common creation and reflection of the peri-urban space, the repetitive action-guiding formats within a community, forms of witnessing and participation as joint documentation, and discusses *Une danse ancienne* as social choreography.

4. Cultural Commoning Practices in *Une danse ancienne*

The focus of this section lies in the interplay of body, space, environment, and community. Following the concept of expanded choreography, we detach the notion of choreography from the singular body of the dancer and the movement of design in the urban space and ask how choreography is created between the dancer, the participating public, and the urban space. This relational structure is understood as a communal arrangement in space. As a consequence, we suggest that the impact of this artistic research practice is displayed in the common making and presence of the urban space, as well as in its communal documentation. These cultural communing practices are built alongside urban

space while they simultaneously reflect its change. Following this thesis, *Une danse ancienne* is further discussed in relation to the concept of ‘cultural commoning’, which is a term elaborated in European art and cultural studies by cultural sociologists Pascal Gielen and Louis Volont and the cultural philosopher Thijs Lijster, among others (Lijster et al. (2022); see also Dockx and Gielen (2018); Gielen (2020a, 2020b); Volont et al. (2022)).

4.1. Communal Sharing Processes in a Changing Urban Space

The concept of ‘cultural commoning’ does not focus on products or specific resources. According to Lijster, Volont, and Gielen, commoning is a verb and is understood as a production of “social relation and an activity” (Lijster et al. 2022, p. 17). Accordingly, the concept refers to the process of communal sharing and circulation; cultural commons “depend in their very being on sharing and circulation” (Lijster et al. 2022, p. 17).

In *Une danse ancienne*, this relational approach can be applied to the choreographically reflected urban changes at Place Corminjoz. Moreover, it can also encompass objects, the inhabitants of this particular space, and those involved in the artistic project. In this sense, the concept of ‘interspatiality’ that the choreographer elaborated in the artistic research can be extended to social relationships, situations, and activities. *Une danse ancienne* is, thus, commoning in a multi-layered creation of social relations and activities (Lijster et al. 2022, p. 17). While ‘interspatiality’ concentrates on choreographic creation processes, the concept of cultural commoning includes the performance situation, as well as the entire creation process and the prospective connections and transformations in the urban space. The relational structure of spaces, residents, and collaborators of the artistic research project is expanded by the actions and experiences of the participating and future audience and is simultaneously created and actualized. This dynamic and ever-evolving structure implies that creating and performing *Une danse ancienne* is a shared experience and performative production of all participants. The relational structure behind *Une danse ancienne* can be considered a cultural commoning practice.

As *Une danse ancienne* takes place in a void, an area that is part of a wider development of urban change, it stands in the context of the increasing importance of the Prilly municipality for the metropolitan area of Lausanne. In recent years, various construction projects have been introduced, and some are already completed. As part of the urban planning in metropolitan areas, for a number of years, construction projects have provoked discussions about gentrification processes (Pratt 2018). The phenomenon of gentrification describes urban change in a pattern that can be briefly described as follows. Socially disadvantaged neighborhoods (also known as urban hotspots) attract students and so-called creative workers due to rising costs in socially privileged and expensive urban regions. In particular, the influx of people working in the creative sector strengthens the creative industries, which initiates an image of change in the urban region and subsequently, above all, causes structural change that leads to economic and structural upgrading. In extreme cases, this leads to the replacement of social classes in the affected neighborhoods (Pratt 2018, pp. 346–48). Lijster, Gielen, and Volont describe the cohabitation in a city undergoing constant change, which is linked to social mixing and exclusion as well as to the economic value of space in certain districts, as “a particular way of living in common, with all the problems that go along with that” (Lijster et al. 2022, p. 19).

Prilly cannot (yet) be described as an example of extreme gentrification, but its structural and economic change is clearly visible. This is demonstrated by various construction projects in the municipality, as well as by the location of Lausanne’s University of the Arts *Manufacture* and its unequivocal role in the changing district (Ville de Lausanne 2023). Gielen, Lijster, and Volont further emphasize how creative workers in a social–urban network are responsible for entertaining and shaping the leisure activities of the population and also influencing the lives of city dwellers and their identification with the city or neighborhood (Gielen et al. 2022, p. 8). The living and working space of creative workers has an impact on the economic value of certain districts and, thus, on the quality of life in a city: “That is why culture is too important to be left to the market and the government alone. Culture belongs

to everyone. In the first place, this is the civil community that supports and nurtures processes of meaning-making.” (Gielen et al. 2022, p. 8).

The context in which the case study of *Une danse ancienne* is set reflects some of the parameters and phenomena identified by Gielen, Lijster, and Volont. Locating the project at Lausanne’s University of the Arts in partnership with the Municipal Archives of Prilly and in collaboration with various associations and organizations interweaves different socio-political and socio-cultural frameworks (Torre 2023). From a structural–financial perspective, *Une danse ancienne* is not primarily a common artistic research project that is created for and in the community of the neighborhood, independent of cultural and political conditions. This point initially contradicts the basic idea of Gielen, Lijster, and Volont’s commons theory, as the most substantial financial and infrastructure support for the project comes from the government. However, the local residents play an important role in the development and shaping of the project, especially at its beginning. When asked how the project started, the choreographer Hérítier explained in a newspaper interview that he first sought an exchange with people who were interested in dance and/or who lived in the neighborhood. For example, he came into contact with older residents through a senior citizens organization, met alumni of the Manufacture University of Lausanne, and spoke with members of the community center and other people who had a connection to the neighborhood (Torre 2023). In this respect, Gielen, Lijster, and Volont emphasize that ‘cultural commoning’ can never be purely autonomous, even when culture and cultural initiatives should not be left to economic and political players alone: “Invariably, the cultural commoner interacts with at least two other institutions of social life—the market and the state—in configurations that may range from friendly cooperation to agnostic opposition.” (Gielen et al. 2022, p. 10). In the case of *Une danse ancienne*, the structure of commonality is based on the cooperative connections and interdependent partnerships through which the project was realized while at the same time conveying the image of a changing community promoting creative work. ‘Cultural commoning’ always takes place within a structure that consists of different elements, contexts, and positions. These include political, cultural, and social contexts, processes of artistic work and administrative procedures, and connections to educational processes or urban change. The fact that the artistic research project takes place within such a structure requires processes of sharing. These processes are less the sharing of material and/or monetary values but rather the sharing of ideas, experiences, and perceptions. The following section discusses how the documentation process of *Une danse ancienne* is also a sharing and shared practice and, hence, an example of cultural commoning.

4.2. Communal Documentation of a Changing Urban Space

Unlike the process of movement genesis, the performative layout of *Une danse ancienne* is seemingly simple: once a year, always on a day in summer, after a shared walk to a void public space, a dancer-in-person performs a dance as a kind of movement ritual. One year after the first performance in 2021, the signs of the time in this urban planning area have left their mark: concrete blocks obstruct access, and newly built glass apartment buildings rise up around the square. The mayor of Prilly—who addressed a few words to the audience at the beginning—supports the artistic project as a revitalization of the town. In his view, it is a sign of progressive change in an agglomeration community undergoing rapid growth.

The audience is composed of art enthusiasts, fellow dancers, university members, a few strollers, and community representatives. For most of them, *Une danse ancienne* means an hour of heightened senses. Dancer Délia Kraysenbühl, who wears a hat just like everyone else, looks around her, raises a bent arm, pulls up one knee, and drops it together with her body weight. Using gravity and weight, this movement pulls her away from the group of spectators. She begins to walk around the square at a leisurely pace but with long strides. Behind her, the view opens to silhouettes of houses, an elementary school provisionally set up in containers, some pine treetops, and further away, the heights of the Jura are visible on this hazy day. The dancer keeps walking, making a large circle along the edges of the

ground. The further away the dancer goes, the less her gestures are clearly recognizable, and the more the spectators' gaze focuses on the surrounding terrain. We—two of the present audience members—began to perceive details of the surroundings with greater acuity, paying attention to balconies, cars, flowers behind the dancer, colors, shapes, and sounds, such as the scraping on the gravel floor. After a while, some voices within the public begin to rise. Individuals call out what they perceive in the surroundings behind the dancer. Their observations do not always coincide with one's own perception but add another layer to the common performance. However, they tie us back to the community and create a participating group. This is how we began to visualize and reflect on the situation and raise questions such as the following: Is my view that of the others? Should I maybe also say what I see out loud? Who is part of the performance? What is my role? What did the space look like before, and what will it look like after? The choreography provides time and space to observe the urban environment and to become aware of the temporary community of spectators. In this community, everyone knows that the same choreography will happen again in around a year's time. The knowledge of this conceptual framework lends sustainability and persistence to the project, which initially appears fleeting and inconspicuous: it needs a participant community so that it continues to exist and is remembered in its transformation.

At the end of the performance—as we remember—the dancer stops just in front of the audience after having circled the space several times. She then draws a long circle with her arm and turns her upper body away to finally lie down on the gravel ground. But maybe our memory is mistaken, and she actually stops at the end of the performance in front of the audience and looks at us.

These questions and experiences are shared verbally in the third part of the project, in a get-together over snacks and drinks. Lijster, Gielen, and Volont emphasize that 'commoning' is a process of sharing and opening up something and/or activity: "[R]etracting it from capitalist exchange, which runs counter to opposing forces one could call 'enclosure', 'commodification', or 'privatization'." (Gielen et al. 2022, p. 9). In this third part of *Une danse ancienne*, the audience is able to discuss and share their observations and experiences of the dance and the space with the participating artists and staff from the university and the municipality. Some of the audience members are invited to fill in questionnaires relating to their experience of the dance, which afterward is transferred to the municipal archive, where they stay accessible to future residents of the region. Beyond the sharpened senses that the audience experiences, a critical discourse on the changes in the urban space and image may also unfold. Ultimately, *Une danse ancienne* does not aim to block urban change and the accompanying social changes, even though it literally comments on them.

For this reason, the commentary character of the artistic research project can be read as subversive action against the privatization of public spaces and their subsequent commercial use, as well as a critique of the limitation of public spaces that occurs with the changing structural situation. The meaning that is given to this particular urban site through the repeated performance of *Une danse ancienne* is created in a process of exchange. The actual site of every (yearly) performance is constructed and imagined as well as, 'interspatially', all the other spaces that have ever existed. According to Gielen and Lijster, 'commoning' can never happen through a single isolated person. Cultural commoning is a collaborative process of meaning-making based on exchange and is also initiated by memory and interpretation. Culture "is kept alive by people—by repetition, adaptation, actualization, interpretation, and criticism—and is therefore continuously in development" (Gielen and Lijster 2015, p. 21). Continuous change and further development must, therefore, be seen in relation to both culture and urban space. Furthermore, the various forms of sharing practices are social practices, thus forming and reflecting social orders. This leads us to the conclusion that cultural dynamics, as well as urban changes—as constant developments and movements—are relational and are only made possible and are also critically accompanied by social processes of (co-)sharing (Gielen et al. 2022, p. 8).

5. Conclusions

To return to our initial thesis, the choreographic structure and communal arrangement created in *Une danse ancienne* is based on common making, the common presence and reflection of the urban space, as well as common documentation, built alongside the presentations of the construction of the urban site. In its overall structure, *Une danse ancienne* can, therefore, be understood as social choreography.

In *Une danse ancienne*, the audience's focus shifts to the surroundings of the Place Corminjoz. Buildings under construction, a parking lot, and a temporary elementary school set up in containers are made visible through the performance, and possible changes are documented as a shared reflection of the space. Therefore, a collective perception and awareness of how the space changes is created in the community, as the choreography is performed every year and experienced by some returning spectators and the (artistic) collaborators. *Une danse ancienne* is created and transmitted through cultural commoning processes. These multi-layered sharing practices are formed by the interdependency of social and cultural players and institutions, the people involved, and the specific sociopolitical context of urban transformation. The choreography of *Une danse ancienne*, therefore, reflects on cultural communing practices. By detaching the concept of choreography from the singular body of the dancer/performer and the creation of movement in urban space, this article describes how *Une danse ancienne* first arises between the dancer, the participants, and the urban space in a relational network. Based on shared actions and processes, *Une danse ancienne* brings to light a choreographic practice, described and discussed through the concept of 'cultural commoning', as a relational and constantly changing arrangement between space, movement, and community. *Une danse ancienne* opens new perspectives on notions of social choreography as an expanded choreographic practice that is based on processes of cultural commoning.

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Notes

- ¹ Hérítier refers to the concept of "intergestualité" developed by French dance scholar Isabelle Launey, see [Launay \(2019\)](#).
- ² Rémy Hérítier developed this method using a score from the US-American artist Sol LeWitt in 1973. See [Hérítier \(2018\)](#).
- ³ [Hérítier \(2020\)](#), p. 5. Translated from French "une logique propre à la danse et à l'espace se stabilise".
- ⁴ After the first performance, the artistic team wrote a score. This notation of the movement sequence is understood as a document. But each yearly performance is reconstructed from memory and the document is only consulted in order to ask how the vocabulary has changed compared to the physical, temporal and spatial structure. See the project description, see [Hérítier \(2020\)](#), pp. 1–2.
- ⁵ [Hérítier \(2020\)](#), p. 1. Translated from French "L'interspatialité révélerait dans l'espace (chorégraphique et architectural principalement) tous les espaces construits ou 'naturel' qui l'ont précédé. Nous faisons l'hypothèse que cette notion permettra un accès privilégié à l'observation des liens qui unissent un lieu, des habitants et une danse telle que nous souhaitons la développer".
- ⁶ [Huschka \(2022\)](#), p. 89. Huschka writes referring to the 2012 conference *Expanded Choreography. Situations, Movements, Objects...*, which took place in Barcelona and was organized in cooperation between the *Museu d'Art Contemporani* de Barcelona (MACBA), the *Fundació Antoni Tàpies* and the *Mercat de Flors*: "Die choreographische Tätigkeit zielt demnach nicht vornehmlich auf die Produktion und Distribution von Tänzen, sondern versteht sich [...] als ein künstlerisches und soziales Verfahren, 'andere Welten' zu schaffen".

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