

# S:PAM

Studies in Performing Arts & Media

# CLESO

## CONTEMPORARY DANCE ARTISTS IN BERLIN

A DESCRIPTIVE REPORT ON THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC POSITION



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This report is released in the frame of the FWO-funded research project *'Choreographies of Precariousness. A Transdisciplinary Study of the Working and Living Conditions in the Contemporary Dance Scenes of Brussels and Berlin'* supervised by Prof. Dr. Katharina Pewny and Prof. Dr. Christel Stalpaert (Ghent University) and Prof. Dr. Rudi Laermans (KU Leuven).

## Introduction

This interim report was written within the context of *Choreographies of Precariousness: A Transdisciplinary Study of the Working and Living Conditions in the Contemporary Dance Scenes of Brussels and Berlin*, a four-year study funded by FWO (Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek – Vlaanderen / Fund for Scientific Research – Flanders)<sup>1</sup>. The transdisciplinary orientation of this project will offer facts and figures on the working and living conditions of contemporary dance artists based in Brussels or Berlin (through quantitative research) as well as deeper insights into their motivations, choices and values (through qualitative research). Moreover, since the working conditions and aesthetics within dance cannot be neatly separated from each other, the study will allow an in-depth analysis of their interaction. The quantitative investigation of the working and living conditions of Brussels- and Berlin-based dance artists rests on a theoretical framework that was constructed through the study of existing theories on flexible work and the 'precariat'. In the qualitative part, the focus of the project shifts to dance artists' motivations and values as well as their choices pertaining to possible career paths or professional trajectories, working processes and aesthetics.

The quantitative data collected in Brussels and Berlin respectively facilitated the well thought-out selection of a limited number of project-based<sup>2</sup> contemporary dance artists with different profiles in each city. Because we hypothesize that precarity dominates within the profession and vastly influences both the actual lives of contemporary dance artists and their modes of working, the professional practices of the selected respondents are observed and documented in detail. However, this is, for the moment, still on-going fieldwork. As for now, this report gives a descriptive outline of the Berlin contemporary dance scene based on facts and figures stemming from an online survey conducted between 12 April and 14 November 2016 and resulting in 63 completed and valid questionnaires. This report is set up in the same manner as the report on the Brussels data that was released in the summer of 2016, which facilitates comparison<sup>3</sup>. *Annex 1* offers more information on the consulted background literature and, particularly, the overall research design. Most of the figures we refer to hereafter

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<sup>1</sup> Annelies Van Assche (Ghent University) is the principal researcher and will use the research results as input for a joint PhD in Theatre Studies (Ghent University) and Social Sciences (KU Leuven). Theatre scholars Katharina Pewny and Christel Stalpaert (S:PAM – Studies in Performing Arts and Media, Ghent University) together with sociologist Rudi Laermans (CeSO – Centre for Sociological Research, KU Leuven) act as principal supervisors; Pascal Gielen (University of Antwerp) and Gabriele Brandstetter (Freie Universität Berlin) assume the position of co-advisor within the project. For the initial quantitative part, Simon Leenknegt and Wim Christiaens provided important assistance for the statistical analysis and Béla Bisom and Simone Willeit provided significant advice and insight into the German freelancing system.

<sup>2</sup> We opt to use 'project-based' here instead of 'freelance', since the term 'freelance' is understood differently in each context. In the performing arts sector in Flanders the term freelance relates to project work based on short-term employment contracts with employers, management bureaus, workspaces or payroll agencies. By contrast, artists working under the self-employed status are rare in Flanders, but are most common in Berlin. Both cities have in common that the queried artists work on a project basis.

<sup>3</sup> The descriptive report on the Brussels contemporary dance scene is available for download online: <http://www.ugent.be/lw/kunstwetenschappen/en/research-groups/spam/news-events/news/first-report-dance-brussels.htm> (Van Assche and Laermans 2016).

can be found in *Annex 2*. For an overview of the regulations and figures on the German unemployment benefit system, the minimum wages and the social security fund for artists, see *Annex 3, 4 and 5* respectively. For the list of bibliographical references, see *Annex 6*.

## 1. Demographics

In general, the contemporary dance sample from Berlin is a well-educated group. *Figure A* shows that 92% of the respondents completed a professional or academic Bachelor, received a Master's degree, obtained a certificate from a private school for higher education, or even have a PhD-degree<sup>4</sup>. During their studies, the majority (89%) of the queried dance artists focused on the arts, mostly dance and choreography. The humanities and social sciences dominate among the few non-artistic study choices. One-third of the respondents studied in Berlin, whereas 60% studied abroad. Merely 6% studied elsewhere in Germany. Particularly within the context of Berlin, it makes sense to ask contemporary dance artists whether they have studied at Hochschulübergreifendes Zentrum Tanz (HZT), the contemporary dance school founded as a pilot project with the support of Tanzplan Deutschland, an initiative from the Kulturstiftung des Bundes. Since 2006 the school has generated a relatively small network of ex-students in Berlin, which may facilitate the inclusion in the contemporary dance scene (and this in spite of the diminished importance of a diploma testifying to specific competences or qualifications within contemporary art contexts). It should be noted that of the respondents who indicated that they had studied in Berlin, the majority (83%) went to Hochschulübergreifendes Zentrum Tanz (HZT) – that is a quarter of all respondents.

Most respondents are female, with a higher percentage of female respondents indicating that their educational level is very high. Half of all female respondents belong to the highly educated group with a Master or PhD degree, compared to one-fifth of all male respondents. 92% of both the male and the female respondents hold a degree in higher education, which demonstrates that the queried dance artists are overall well-educated.

Due to the high level of physicality and the dependence on the body, dancers or performers tend to be relatively young. Also, dancers and performers are often obliged to retire at a relatively early age because of injuries. It is therefore not surprising that dancers or performers tend to be of a younger age than those choreographing, teaching or directing rehearsals. The latter occupations indeed allow dance artists to practice their profession at an older age. The numbers in *Figure B* show that the majority of the respondents (two-third) are younger than 40. The average age lies between 37 and 38 years old. The oldest respondent is 68 years old and the youngest one is 24. The age

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<sup>4</sup> For a comparison with the statistics for Germany, consult: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1988/umfrage/bildungsabschluesse-in-deutschland/> or <https://de.statista.com/themen/1159/studium/>.

cohorts of 31 to 35 years and 36 to 40 years together make up more than half of our sample population. Only 4 respondents are over 50 years old.

Almost all respondents (89%) indicate that their principal occupation is performer, but only 11% mark 'performer' as their only main occupation. Indeed, 78% of the self-defined performers have several main occupations. Those only performing are all under 35 years old. The oldest respondents (over 50) tend to combine several main occupations. Actually, few respondents are only choreographers, and none are only teachers or rehearsal directors.

*Figure C* synthesizes the years of work experience among the respondents, which vary from one year to 37 years. The average number of working years lies between 12 and 13 years. We find the largest number of respondents in the category of six to ten years of working experience (38%). It must be noted that more than two-third of the respondents have been working between one and 15 years, which confirms the predominance of relatively young professionals within our sample. Overall, after having finished their education, contemporary dance artists do not experience too much difficulty in finding work<sup>5</sup>. Approximately only 14% of the respondents needed more than a year to find a job. More than half of them started working within the first three months after graduating, of which the majority could enter a job already during their education or immediately after graduation. The most common way to enter the job market seems the engagement as a dancer in a subsidized project: one-third of the respondents indicated that this was their first adequately paid job in the dance field.

*Figure D* demonstrates that half of the queried dance artists have a single marital status, whereas the other half are married, officially living together with a partner (non-marital cohabitation), separated or divorced<sup>6</sup>. The majority of the respondents live together with their partner (38%) and children (16%), whereas about one-fifth live with flat mates and another fifth of the respondents live alone. Most respondents are childless: merely 19% have at least one child, with a maximum of three children. The predominance of young artists in the profession may help to explain the rather low percentage of respondents with children. When asked for the main three reasons for not having children, the top choices are 'I'm single' and 'conscious choice', followed by 'not now, maybe later'. However, the most indicated reason among the respondents (without it necessarily being their primary reason) was 'flexibility in planning and location'. Several respondents also indicated the 'insufficient income' as a top three reason for not having children.

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<sup>5</sup> The performing arts sector in Berlin has its own modalities of work. It is therefore necessary to point out the specificity of the sector, in which most workers are busily making and creating performances or are asked to participate in a project. 'Finding work' in this sense has less to do with searching or applying for jobs but rather with looking for funding or residencies on the one hand and entertaining a broad professional network and the corresponding possibilities for collaboration on a project basis on the other.

<sup>6</sup> For a comparison with the statistics for Germany, consult:

<https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/286810/umfrage/umfrage-in-deutschland-zur-anzahl-der-singles-nach-geschlecht/>.

## 2. Income

When asked about their average monthly income in the past year, the median lies within the category of 750 to 1.000 euros per month. The respondents were asked what their average monthly income was for all their work if they counted the past year. They were instructed to take the approximate year total and divide it by twelve, but to not deduct the monthly insurance costs. This means that in fact they reported the gross year total of all income divided by twelve. As *Figure E.1* shows, more than half of all queried dance artists indicate that they earned less than 1.000 euros per month on an average basis. According to their income, the respondents can be categorized in four relatively equal groups, i.e. those earning (1) less than or equal to 750 euros per month (24%); (2) between 750 and 1.000 euros (30%); (3) between 1.000 and 1.500 euros (27%); and (4) more than 1.500 euros per month (19%). Merely 8% of the respondents earn more than 2.000 euros per month. The data show that the majority of the respondents (81%) earn less than 1.500 euros on an average monthly basis, which does not seem to be very much, particularly not in light of their high educational level. Taking into account that Germany has a basic income tax allowance (*Grundfreibetrag*), which is used to secure the subsistence minimum, a taxable yearly income is not subject to any income tax until 8.652 euros (in 2016, for singles)<sup>7</sup>. The respondents in the lowest income category therefore do not have to pay any income tax. It should be noted that the monthly averages are very low in general. We may thus assume that the average numbers are even lower after deducting income tax. Of course, it is more complicated to calculate the actual net incomes of the respondents, because when calculating the income tax, numerous regulations (e.g. several exemptions, lump sum payments, special expenses, etc.) consider the personal capacity of the taxpayer.

It must be kept in mind that the respondents were asked to estimate their monthly income, which does not necessarily exclusively come from salaried work. We are indeed dealing with a substantial group that owns a multiple income, a patchwork of several earnings not necessarily stemming from artistic activities in the strict sense. Moreover, when we speak of an estimated *average* monthly income, we must bear in mind that one may earn 500 euros in month X and 1.500 euros in month Y. Unfortunately, this aspect of potential precarity coming with an instable, unpredictable income remains invisible in the given monthly average incomes. Overall, the observed numbers are fairly low, especially bearing in mind that we asked not to deduct the monthly insurance costs from these numbers. As *Annex 4* explains, these costs are usually relatively high and seem quite impossible to cover with the mentioned meager incomes. However, are the dance artists themselves also of the opinion that they in average do not earn much each month? Do they consider themselves as ‘under-earners’?

We asked the contacted dance artists to estimate the average monthly income they actually need. *Figure E.2* demonstrates that they can be again classified into four groups,

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<sup>7</sup> This amount is doubled for married couples and higher for people with children. For the amounts, please consult: <https://www.steuertipps.de/lexikon/g/grundfreibetrag>.

yet the weight now slightly shifts from the lowest category (max. 750 euros) to the second one (750 – 1.000 euros). Quite strikingly, more than half of all respondents state that they need 1.250 euros or less. For sure, Berlin is a very affordable capital compared to London and Paris, but rent prices are rapidly increasing these days due to a lack of housing and gentrification, among other things. While living costs (such as food and heating) are still much cheaper than elsewhere, insurance costs are incredibly high for freelancers. Moreover, dance artists have to invest in their bodies in order to remain employable. This entails costs for training (master classes, workshops, auditions, yoga, etc.) and health (osteopathy, physiotherapy, massage, etc.). In addition to this, there are also costs for networking such as buying theatre tickets and travel costs. Nevertheless, it seems as if most respondents have learned to cover all these costs with their rather meager income and have learned to survive with it: they say that they do not really need (much) more than they actually earn<sup>8</sup>. In a word, besides being dance artists, they also appear to be survival artists. Probably a combination of factors is at play here: the factual accommodation to one's material situation, thus also avoiding feelings of 'relative deprivation' (i.e. knowing that there are not many genuine chances to substantially improve one's situation), the choice for a relatively non-consumerist lifestyle, and – perhaps most importantly – the compensation for a relatively low income by a professional activity one really likes, which involves in an often direct, non-estranging mode one's self and personal capacities (compare Abbing 2002).

We subsequently asked the respondents the average monthly income they deem appropriate for the work they perform. As *Figure E.3* indicates, the balance now decisively shifts to the higher income categories we already discerned. When considering the previous division into four categories, the majority of respondents appertain to the highest category of more than 1.500 euros. A closer look reveals that the respondents can be divided in the categories of 750 – 1.500 euros (21%); 1.500 – 2.000 euros (31%); 2.000 – 2.250 euros (21%); and 2.250 to > 3.000 euros (31%). We note that about 10% of the respondents find an average monthly income of 3.000 euros or more appropriate. Whereas the median of their actual estimated earnings lies in the category of 750 to 1.000 euros per month, the median of the income they think they should earn lies in 1.750 to 2.000 euros per month. This is quite a noteworthy difference of 1.000 euros, which may have to do with the implicitly invoked reference group. Indeed, if dance artists regard themselves as economically independent professionals, relatively well-earning liberal professions may act as the prime reference group (or, in fact, they may even take salaried workers who are paid according to their education level and seniority as a reference to get to these numbers too). Nevertheless, the respondents do not deny the importance of remuneration with regard to their artistic work: 94% of them find it important to very important.

Overall, the answers to the questions on the average monthly income they need and deem appropriate respectively prove that at least the Berlin dance artists we

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<sup>8</sup> An interesting question would be: how do the dance artists compensate the lack of finances and how do they cover times of unemployment? These are important points followed up in the qualitative phase of the comprehensive research and shall be discussed in a subsequent paper.

contacted are prepared to work for relatively little money. Our figures demonstrate that we may effectively speak of a probably widespread form of *self-precarization* within the Berlin dance community. As Isabell Lorey (2015: 39) points out, precarization is today to a great extent a specific mode of governance: people are normalized through processes of socio-economic precarization. For a long time, flexible work formats and, concomitantly, an insecure income were considered to be the unwanted exceptions to the rule of full-time employment and a permanent contract. Within the now prevailing neoliberal context, what was once the exception has increasingly become the norm. However, particularly within the creative professions, precarization-as-coercion is supplemented by self-precarization: 'external precarization induced by the meanwhile institutionalized neoliberal or post-Fordist regime of flexible artistic accumulation is intrinsically interwoven with a partly voluntary self-precarization, stemming from the desire to be a creative subject' (Laermans 2015: 291). Precisely this self-precarization is reflected in the results of our three questions on the actual, needed and appropriate monthly income. The figures on the average income of the queried dance artists, and their attitude toward it, demonstrate that there exists a voluntary basis for the risk of precarization that is driven by a supposed *immaterial income*, consisting of the benefits of a relatively autonomous life that artists are able to lead and that is first and foremost dedicated to their artistic preoccupations (see also further: 6. *Motivation and satisfaction*).

In order to get more insight in the level of precarity reflected in the commented figures, we compare them with the official minimum wage scales for performing artists in Germany (i.e. *NV Bühne* for employed artists and *Empfehlung für Honoraruntergrenzen* for freelance artists) as well as with the amounts in the unemployment allowances, or rather the social integration benefit called 'living wage' (ALG II, or benefits according to Hartz IV), tailored to the official minimum subsistence level. For a detailed overview of these regulations and amounts as well as comments, see *Annex 3* and *4*. The Unemployment Benefit II, also known as the Hartz IV is a basic service for jobseekers, which is provided by the municipal job center. In order to apply for ALG II, the applicant seeking assistance needs to be capable of working, be in financial distress, and present a risk to the subsistence minimum. From 2017 onwards, the regulations provide a monthly basic rate of 409 euros for individuals and 368 euros for members of a shared household (*Bedarfgemeinschaft*). In addition to the regular services, the appropriate costs for health insurance, accommodation and heating are taken over. In principle, employment does not exclude the right to benefits according to Hartz IV. In addition to the income earned from employment, one may also be eligible for services under ALG II provided that the amount of such income is not sufficient to ensure one's family life and livelihood. It is important to note that ALG II is available for those with an employee status as well as for those with self-employment (freelance) status. Thus, freelance artists are entitled to and often relying on Hartz IV benefits. Since ALG II covers individual monthly necessities (409 euros), monthly health insurance, rent and heating costs (and pays a small amount for having children), we may assume that at least one-



quarter of our respondents earn less than the so-called subsistence minimum (i.e. 24% earn less than 750 euros monthly, which is 409 (single) or 368 (with partner) euros necessities, health insurance and a low rent price). According to this calculation, thus at least one-quarter of our respondents do not really seem to be able to cover all insurance contributions or save any money whatsoever with their incomes.

When comparing our data to the minimum wage scales<sup>9</sup> within the *NV Bühne* (*Normalvertrag Bühne*, the standard contract for employees in performing arts), we stumble over two difficulties. First, we are likening an average (and multiple) monthly income with a gross minimum salary. Secondly, we are referring to monthly salaries for those who are long-term employed, which per definition do not apply to freelance artists. However, the delegation meeting of the Federal Association for the Performing Arts unanimously adopted a declaration and recommendation for a minimum standard fee for freelance performing artists in October 2015. It must be stressed that this concerns a recommendation, or a guideline, rather than a legal obligation. The recommended minimum is based on the same qualification of the freelance artist at the minimum wage of the nationwide standard contract for performing arts (*NV Bühne*) for commonly long-term employees of theatres with public funding that belong to the German stage association. At the time of calculating the suggested minimum standard fee, the *NV Bühne* minimum wage amounted to a monthly 1.600 euros gross for employees (that has meanwhile increased to 1.850 euros gross). However, since the remuneration of freelance artists is not an employment relationship (including the employer's social contributions) and payment is not on a long-term basis, the additional costs for insurance and expenses as well as the necessary preparation and follow-up of an artistic project were also calculated within the context of the fee recommendation. The recommended minimum was therefore raised to 2.000 euros gross for freelance artists insured through the KSK and to 2.500 euros gross for freelance artists not insured through the KSK (the amounts are per month and for full employment)<sup>10</sup>. The gross-net calculator on the *TV-L* website<sup>11</sup> converts the gross minimum salary of the wage scales for public service workers to a net salary. In order to have a better idea of how much remains after deducting health, pension and care insurances, taxes and solidarity contributions of the minimum gross monthly salary according to the *NV*

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<sup>9</sup> Note that minimum wage scales are always determined per sector. In Germany, however, a minimum wage for employees was introduced in 2015 and amounts to 8,5 euros per hour. This number has been increased to 8,84 euros as from 1 January 2017 see:

<http://www.bmas.de/DE/Themen/Arbeitsrecht/Mindestlohn/mindestlohn.html>). Nonetheless, freelancers are self-employed workers and are thus not necessarily entitled to this minimum wage.

<sup>10</sup> We note that in the process of writing this report the recommended minimum fees have been reconsidered for the first time and as from 1 June 2017, the LAFT Berlin recommends an increase of the fee to 2.300 euros per month for freelance artists with insurance obligation through the KSK and to 2.660 euros per month for freelance artists for whom social security is not possible through the KSK. For more information on the history and calculation of the recommended standard fee, please consult *Annex 4*.

<sup>11</sup> Collective Agreement for the Public Service of the Federal States, or *Tarifvertrag für den Öffentlichen Dienst der Länder*: <http://oeffentlicher-dienst.info/tv-l/berlin>. The wage scales for *NV Bühne* are based on these scales.



*Bühne* (1.850 euros per month in 2017)<sup>12</sup>, we can use the calculator fitting the simplest profile: no children, no extra insurances or payments, lowest tax bracket and a contribution rate for health insurance of 14,6% (see further for calculations with KSK). This leaves a net salary of 1.311,05 euros for tax year 2016. In detail: an employee receiving 1.850 euros gross pays 135 euros for health insurance (at a rate of 14,6%), 26 euros for social care insurance, 173 euros for pension insurance and 28 euros for unemployment insurance (on a monthly basis and in rounded numbers). Another 168 euros is deducted for taxes (in the lowest bracket) and 9 euros for a solidarity surcharge<sup>13</sup>. Observing that more than three-quarters of our respondents indicate that they earn less than 1.500 euros per month on the one hand and bearing in mind that they have not yet subtracted their insurance costs on the other hand, we may conclude that the majority of them have a monthly income that is much lower than the official minimum wage for performing artists<sup>14</sup>.

However, we did not ask the respondents to what extent they can depend on their partner's income or on support from others (such as parents or other relatives). Even when we know that it is common for both partners to hold occupations in the arts, we have no direct empirical proof of this. Nevertheless, we can relate the incomes back to whom the queried dance artists are living with. *Figure E.4* demonstrates that the majority of the respondents living with housemates (71%) state that they only need 1.000 euros per month or less. This is true for only one-fifth of the respondents living with partner and children, and for a bit more than one-third of those living with a partner. The majority of the respondents living alone (77%) indicate that they need between 1.000 and 1.750 euros per month. The data thus indirectly suggest that whereas those living with housemates can share several living costs, singles have to carry the weight themselves and therefore need more.

We expect that income tends to grow with age, which is confirmed by studies that have found that poverty in the arts predominates at a young age (Siongers, Van Steen and Lievens 2014; Sorignet 2010). Nevertheless, the recent CUDOS-study reports that the average income of performing artists in Flanders does not increase anymore after the age category of 35 to 44 years old (Siongers, Van Steen and Lievens 2016: 61). In any case, poverty at an older age is also a structural possibility in the dance profession, since several consequences of the lack of benefits and securities only emerge from a certain age onward<sup>15</sup>. Despite this, *Figure F* demonstrates that among our respondents, the youngest generation is indeed the poorest one: those between 21 and 25 years old only

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<sup>12</sup> As the survey was administered in 2016, we should in fact make these calculations with the minimum wage as it was back then, i.e. 1.765 euros per month. However, since the calculator on the website mentioned above only allows calculation for the current year, we provide this example with the minimum wage as set for 2017. This should be kept in mind when comparing this example to the data.

<sup>13</sup> For calculations of net incomes as well as calculations of unemployment allowances, living together is an important factor (even if it does not imply official cohabitation). For the minimum wage, however, living together or living alone does not make a difference.

<sup>14</sup> This especially since those who are not registered with the KSK pay significantly more for health insurance (see *Annex 5*).

<sup>15</sup> E.g. low retirement fees, absence of seniority (which refrains a salary from growing), and insufficient health and hospitalization insurances (which bring high costs when injured or ill).

earn up to maximum 1.000 euros per month. This holds for half of the respondents between 26 and 30, for even more than half of those between 31 and 35, and for a bit over half of those between 36 and 40 years old. The ages vary within the lowest income category, which indicates that all respondents between 21 and 50 years old suffer from low incomes. Remarkably, within the oldest categories (41 to 68 years old) only two respondents earn more than 1.500 euros on a monthly basis. The two oldest respondents indicate that they earn between 1.500 and 1.750 and 2.000 and 2.250 euros monthly respectively. The remaining respondents over 50 years old merely earn between 1.000 and 1.500 euros on a monthly basis, which is in light of their age a rather poor form of compensation and rather a clear sign of poverty at an older age, unless they can rely on income from a partner, support from family, savings or other forms of income.

Those respondents with the highest numbers of years in work experience (over 26 years) do not all belong to the highest income categories. On the contrary, their meager earnings definitely refute the idea that also within artistic professions work experience may be quasi-automatically translated into financial compensations<sup>16</sup>. With regard to the past five years, most respondents observe a change in income. Whereas more than one-third say their income has fluctuated, 30% of the respondents indicate that it has increased. 11% of the queried dance artists state that their income has remained rather stable, and 21% indicated a decrease, which suggests that seniority is often not considered or that it has become more difficult for some respondents to find (adequately paid) work.

### **3. Künstlersozialkasse (Artists' Social Fund)**

The earlier discussed figures suggest that contemporary dance artists undergo a double process of precarization, one that is externally imposed through the neoliberal regime of artistic accumulation and one that is self-imposed. However, the notion of precarity refers to a situation of long-lasting socio-economic insecurity or structural vulnerability (Standing 2011; 2014). Due to the establishment of an artists' social fund in Germany (*Künstlersozialkasse*, or KSK), this might apply in a lesser extent to a number of respondents. However, as our data demonstrate, access to the KSK does in fact not reduce the socio-economic precarity of dance artists in a significant way. We must note that about one-fifth of the respondents are not members of the KSK. Of these respondents, merely one-third indicate they have pension insurance at all, however, all these respondents have a health insurance (with the exception of one respondent who is still only registered and insured abroad)<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Because the respondents with the most work experience are not the oldest ones, we suspect that some respondents may have calculated their work experience from the moment they started dancing instead of counting the years following their first professional assignment (after training). It should be noted that the question when 'work experience in dance' starts is often posed among dance artists.

<sup>17</sup> The respondents were asked to indicate how much they pay for each insurance. However, since this was not obligatory, we cannot provide a trustworthy average of these numbers, because many respondents chose not to share the amounts.

The KSK sees to it that independent artists and publicists enjoy similar protection in statutory social insurance as employees. It is not a service provider, but it coordinates the transfer of contributions for its members to a health insurance of the members' choice and to statutory pension and social care insurances and adds the contribution for social insurance of what the employer would pay in an employment. So the KSK is not responsible for the implementation of pension, health and long-term care insurance, but it only reports the insured artists and publicists to the sick and nursing care funds and the general pension insurance and forwards the contributions to the responsible institutions (together with their 'employers-contribution'). Self-employed artists and publicists are entitled to the entire statutory service catalogue. However, they only must pay *half* of the contributions due. This is also the prime financial contribution made within the context of the KSK-system, which for the rest only plays a mediating role regarding statutory social insurance. The monthly contribution paid by an artist or publicist to the KSK depends on the amount of his/her income from work activities. Almost 8 out of 10 respondents pay their insurances via the KSK, which suggests that the threshold for entering the system is rather low. Yet, in terms of benefits and securities, only 5% say they have an additional sick pay covering the first 6 weeks of illness (these are generally not covered through the standard health insurance) and merely 10% indicate they have additional accident insurance. Also merely 10% pay for unemployment insurance.

Even while the KSK covers half of the contributions due, the average amount for mandatory insurance costs as indicated by the respondents who are KSK-members appears to be rather high compared to their indicated incomes. The respondents who mention the costs of their KSK-insurances (all-in) suggest they pay in average 121 euro per month (which would be much more when not associated to the KSK)<sup>18</sup>. This number certainly reflects the low incomes that the queried dance artists declared at the KSK. *Annex 5* offers an overview of the calculation in case the expected year income amounts to 10.000 euros in 2017. This corresponds to 833 euros per month, which lies within the mean average income category of 750 to 1.000 euros per month. The calculation results in monthly contributions of 78 euros to pension insurance, 61 euros to health insurance (plus extra costs for additional services) and 12 euros to care insurance (for childless artists). This totals 151 euros approximately. As our respondents have indicated they contribute less than this result in average, we may assume that they *declare* less than 10.000 euros of income on an average yearly basis. From the example calculations provided in *Annex 5*, we may thus conclude that the given average of 121 euros KSK-costs seems rather low, which could mean that several respondents in fact only do earn very little money, or that they simply report low incomes to the KSK in order to save on insurance costs. Other reasons might include that they do not declare incomes from non-artistic activities to the KSK and/or are freed from paying health insurance as they earn more with their employment activities.

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<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that we do not consider this average completely reliable. Again, it was not obligatory for the respondents to provide us with the costs. Therefore, we cannot provide a trustworthy average of the numbers, as 18% of the respondents insured through the KSK chose not to share the amounts.

The lack of entitlements, benefits and securities revealed in the data, proves that a suitable social security tailored to the needs of a highly flexible and precarious profession is clearly missing. Despite the KSK-system and its '50% help'-rule, the data show that the queried dance artists barely make enough money to be able to afford the required social security contributions. This outcome has everything to do with the high cost of these insurances on the one hand and the fact that self-employed artists have to pay these themselves on the other. The results are rather sour to digest: several respondents do not have mandatory pension and care insurances, which puts them in a precarious position as they get older. The lack of pension insurance (when not in the KSK-system) and the rather meager contributions to the pension fund (deduced from the low incomes when in the KSK-system) are of particular concern, since this results in poverty at an older age. Germany has even established a word for this, *Altersarmut*, which indicates that it is a highly debated issue in the country. Additionally, in light of the intense physicality of the profession, supplementary accident and injury insurance should be a priority for dance artists.

*Figure G* presents several cross-tabulations between KSK-membership and variables such as age, work experience and income. The figure demonstrates that more than two-third (77%) of the respondents who are not members of the KSK have been working less than 10 years, and that approximately the same number (73%) have been living in Germany for less than 5 years. This has partly to do with the proof of a sufficient income required by the KSK and/or which may be due to the fact that they have not figured out yet how to enter the system. The majority of KSK-members tend to make more than 750 euros per month, whereas almost half of those not associated to the KSK earn less than 750 euros per month. However, the KSK has made an exception to its regulations for beginning artists and publicists. The first three years after the first recording of an independent artistic or publishing activity are considered as the start of the profession. Career beginners can be insured over the KSK even as they are not expected to exceed the required minimum income of 3.900 euros per year. We moreover note that no significant relation exists between having children and KSK-membership: the support in socio-economic security does not seem to stimulate parenthood.

#### **4. Employment**

We already suggested more than once that the job market for contemporary dance artists mainly consists of short-term contracts tailored to the specific duration of a project, a company production or even the number of days necessary for the rehearsal and performance of an existing show. This view is confirmed by the respondents' ranking from 1 to 3 of their most common forms of employment over the last five years. *Figure H* teaches us that merely one respondent has ranked long-term employment with a company with structural subsidies as his/her primary form of employment and only a meager 5% have put this mode within their top three. Around one-third of respondents

have worked under an employment contract for one production or season with a company, but only 8% indicated this as their primary employment form. It is particularly noteworthy that all respondents have worked within a system of freelance self-employment. Even 70% have marked this as their primary form of working. Nearly 6 out of 10 have used alternative sources to secure their income such as teaching fees and 43% worked with short-employment contracts abroad – although these do not tend to be their primary forms of employment. Others added they have worked as a dance artist via a university position or a grant or through a payment merely based on ticket sales.

More than half of the respondents have worked in a system of self-employment on the basis of freelance contracts bringing them from project to project. Others worked self-employed via project subsidies they acquired themselves (19%) or equally often for projects initiated by others and projects initiated by themselves (27%). This suggests that most freelancers have not acquired their own subsidies in the past five years. Correspondingly, when they participate in a production or work season-long in a company, the majority of the respondents indicated they danced for someone else's company (68%). Almost two-third of the queried dance artists are not part of any company or collective: 14% is part of a company, 21% of a collective and 3% of both. Those who are member of a company or a collective tend to be paid differently according to the specificities of a project and/or funding modalities. More than one-third of the respondents state that the type of payment for their work varies and depends on the project or the funding: they could be paid for only performance days or for rehearsal days and performance days (with different or same salaries), they might receive a monthly salary, or earn an income in the form of ticket sale benefits. This variety and uncertainty of if and how one is getting paid when working in a company or collective reflects the already discussed precarity within the performing arts field. The two most common ways of payment are different salaries for rehearsal and performance days on the one hand and remuneration only for performances (via ticket sales) on the other. Especially the last form of payment exposes the precarious working conditions since payment is not guaranteed and depends on a highly unsure turnout. More often than not, the returns from ticket sales are usually split with the venue and among those involved in the production. Hence only a negligible fee remains for each performer of for instance a six-person production with two performance dates in a venue with 50 seats.

According to Menger (2014), artists often end up in the rather unattractive situation of multiple jobholding to earn enough money to survive. Among Berlin-based contemporary dance artists, the level of multiple jobholding seems indeed very high: nearly 9 out of 10 of our respondents say they have more than one job. Most strikingly, 43% earn more with their para- and non-artistic activities than with artistic labor. We employ a broad definition of the latter: it includes creating, rehearsing and performing as well as the related preparatory and administrative work. Para-artistic activities involve teaching, lecturing and writing; non-artistic activities refer to practices such as

bar tending, baby-sitting, etc. We asked to indicate the percentage of work time spend on artistic, para-artistic and non-artistic activities respectively, given a hypothetical work time budget totaling 100%. The average time budget for artistic work, para-artistic activities and non-artistic work amounts to 54%, 30% and 15% respectively. *Figure I* presents the work time budgets for these respective activities in graphs and charts. It should be noted that half of the queried dance artists (51%) maximally devote half of their work time to artistic labor. Two-third of the respondents spend between zero and 40% of their work time on para-artistic activities (such as teaching or writing) and an absolute majority (62%) devotes merely 10% or less of that same work time to non-artistic activities (such as bartending or babysitting).

When dividing the artistic activities into two categories, one comprising creative-productive work and the other administrative-organizational tasks, we observe that the balance between both types of activities is somewhat equally divided. In average, 54% of the work time can be spent on creative and productive activities, whereas 46% is devoted to preparatory and administrative work related to artistic activities. The chart shows that no respondents spend less than 10% of their artistic work time on creative and productive activities, nor do they spend more than 80% of their time to administrative and preparatory activities related to their artistic labor. These results suggest that the respondents tend to devote almost half of their time budget to activities not directly related to art-making. Furthermore, the respondents suggested that they hold the following other occupations within a production (in order of popularity): organization and production (73%), application for support (71%), light, sound and video (49%), costumes, set and props (49%), public relations (44%), stage technique (43%), rehearsal director (41%), cleaning set and costumes (38%) and to a lesser extent also photography, video recording, cooking, body practices, hosting, ticketing and wardrobe. Actually, the respondents hold between one and 12 occupations during a production, with an average of five occupations per respondent. This reflects the extent of manifold job descriptions that come with the dance profession. Hence, a dance artist is clearly required to be multiskilled and to have 'talents' going beyond dance or performing.

## **5. Working conditions: time, nationality & mobility**

Are the members of the Berlin contemporary dance scene rather easy-going? Or do their lives, on the contrary, tend to the kind of strong entanglement of life and work that characterizes the alleged biopolitical economy and its immaterial labor as described by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2009)? And how much of their labor is actually paid? When we look at the average number of remunerated working hours per week, *Figure J* shows that two-third of the respondents are paid up to a maximum of 20 hours per week. A mere 8% are paid between 31 and 40 hours per week. In average, the respondents tend to be paid around 19,22 hours per week, whereas they indicated in average to work around 42 hours per week. Indeed, another picture emerges when looking at the table featuring all working hours, regardless of remuneration. In fact, the

number of queried dance artists working less than 20 hours per week is very low and represents a mere 10%: the majority (70%) works between 21 and 50 hours per week. Most significantly, almost two-third of the respondents are maximally remunerated for only half of their actual working hours. These numbers represent a grim reality and suggest that a substantial number of contemporary dance artists indeed undergo the reality of both the contemporary biopolitical economy and the neoliberal regime of flexible accumulation and exploitation. Except for the high costs (and the consequential lack) of securities, the biggest problem indeed seems to be the absence of payment for work. In general, the respondents work half of their time unpaid. They might as well be underpaid during the other half, as we can tentatively induce from the data on their financial condition that we already presented above.

*Figure K* reveals that most respondents were born in Europe (60%). About one-third of the respondents are native Germans and another 16% were born in the USA. The figure on citizenship teaches us that the majority (two-third) of respondents have European citizenship (of which almost half have German citizenship). One-third of the respondents have non-European citizenship. Three-quarter of the respondents without German citizenship have had their residence in Germany between two and 10 years<sup>19</sup>. We note that HZT, realized with the support of Tanzplan Deutschland, is currently celebrating its 10th anniversary, which may suggest that HZT and Tanzplan Deutschland have facilitated the influx of international dance artists as reflected in the number cited above. About 21% of the respondents without German citizenship are currently dealing with legal issues and 7% had 'paper problems' in the past. Additionally, around the same number (22%) of respondents mention that they currently only have a temporary work permit (one respondent does not even possess a German work permit).

Contemporary dance artists not only hop from job to project, but are also considered to be highly territorially mobile: they temporarily work abroad, have residencies in other countries and tour their productions around the globe. In order to gain more insight in their mobility level, we asked the respondents to rank where they worked the most during the last five years. As indicated by *Figure L*, they had the choice among the following locations: (1) home; (2) personal studio; (3) theater; (4) café, train, airplane or hotel room; and (5) multiple workspaces or residency spaces. The majority of our respondents have mostly worked from home, as this was indicated by 95% of the respondents and marked as top-ranking location by 56%. This is followed by having worked in several residencies and workspaces, which is mentioned by 62% of the respondents but only marked as primary work place by 21% of them. Different locations probably entail different activities carried out there. However, the popularity of working from home suggests that Berlin might be lacking affordable and sufficient infrastructure. Of the respondents working in residency spaces or workspaces (62%), 36% say that they work in Germany: 21% primarily remain in Berlin and 15% are active within the entire country. Almost two-third of the respondents thus mostly work outside Germany, predominantly in Western Europe. Overall, this figure confirms the standard picture of

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<sup>19</sup> At the moment of the questionnaire, one respondent had not (yet) applied for official residency in Germany.



the transnational character of the contemporary dance profession, since only one-fifth works exclusively in Berlin. Yet, it simultaneously puts this situation into perspective since approximately a majority of respondents working outside Berlin do not regularly cross the European borders in order to do so.

## 6. Motivation and satisfaction

When asked to give their top three of motives for being active in the field of contemporary dance, the respondents predominantly mentioned artistic pleasure (62%), lifelong learning (60%) and self-development (41%). Artistic pleasure is the top choice of one-third of the respondents, followed by calling (19%) and autonomy (16%). Quite strikingly, lifelong learning and self-development are indicated very often by the respondents, but do not end up in the top three of primary motives. Interestingly, recognition, 'flexible working conditions and hours', 'geographical mobility and travel opportunities' and the 'work and leisure time overlap' are never marked as a top three motive.

We also measured the queried artists' job satisfaction on a scale going from one (very dissatisfied) to five (very satisfied). By disregarding those who have no opinion or a neutral stance, the scale was subsequently reduced to two extreme categories (satisfied vs. dissatisfied) in *Figure M*. In general, the respondents seem (very) satisfied about their profession, with a majority being especially satisfied about by the aspects of artistic expression (76%), collaboration (68%), flexibility (65%), community (64%), audience's resonance (60%) and mobility (60%). The aspects of future perspectives (49%), planning (46%) and leisure time (40%) are found somewhat dissatisfactory by the sample population. By employing the technique of factor analysis<sup>20</sup>, we could further distinguish two reliable underlying dimensions between these aspects of the profession, having to do with 'flexible and mobile management' and 'the working conditions and perspectives in Berlin' respectively. The first dimension includes the positively valued elements of mobility and flexibility together with the more negatively valued element of planning, which all three refer to space and time management. Given the positive appreciation of the first two, we may assume that within this dimension, the respondents particularly value the chances for temporal autonomy in a highly mobile and flexible labor environment, but are not so keen on both the amount of and the contingencies in the planning that comes with it (both dimensions are of course interrelated: if dates or schedules must be regularly revised, the burden of planning grows). The second dimension refers to the working conditions typifying Berlin (such as the positively valued working hours and environment) and the negatively valued future perspectives related to these. In short, regardless of the precarious future prospects, the respondents are quite satisfied with their professional environment in Berlin. At first sight, one's socio-economic status seems a crucial mediating factor. More particularly,

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<sup>20</sup> Factor analysis is a statistical method that can uncover possible relationship patterns underlying various interacting phenomena. It enables the reduction of the number of elements to be studied and enables to observe how they are entwined.

we observe that the respondents with a monthly income of maximum 1.000 euros are mostly dissatisfied about their future perspectives, planning and leisure time. However, no significant relationships result from the comparison of the satisfaction level and the average income categories through cross tabulation analysis. This might indicate that professional satisfaction does not depend on income, seeing that the queried dance artists are in general satisfied with their profession, regardless of their income level. We consider these findings once again indicative of the already signaled tendency toward self-precarization in the sample of the Berlin contemporary dance scene.

## **7. Berlin and the contemporary dance profession**

When asked in an open way about the reasons for living in Berlin, the most recurring answers are 'cheap living', 'Berlin's vibe' and 'artistic community', followed by 'Berlin's scene' and 'Berlin as a base'. The top motive for living in Germany's capital, 'cheap living', which is explicitly mentioned by approximately a quarter of the respondents, includes cheap rent prices, affordability, low costs of living, good living conditions and 'the comfort of living without a big income'. When referring to the vibe of the city, about 20% of the respondents claim to live in Berlin because they like the city, the city's sense of freedom, and the laid-back attitude as well as the lifestyle and inspiration Berlin offers. About the same number of respondents mention the interesting artistic community as the factor that attracted them to Berlin and that motivates them to stay. In this context, the respondents mention having established a network of contacts, having great opportunities for collaboration, feeling connected to like-minded people, having friends and a sense of family, etc. Several respondents stressed that Berlin has become their base, either for family reasons (a 'home base') or for geographical advantages (a 'strategic hub'). One respondent commented that 'Berlin is a platform to be active worldwide'. In a similar vein, several respondents specifically mention having moved to Berlin because of the promising scene, meaning the cultural and international art scene in general and the dance scene in particular. They value Berlin's work opportunities and explain that there are cheap dance classes, that there exists no need to have a side job and that it is a meeting point facilitating the encounter with other artists. However, several respondents in turn commented that Berlin is at a turning point. To quote one respondent: 'Right now the dance scene is almost too conceptual and craftsmanship and technique are negated as a result of finding new ways and being up-to-date. I am longing for a simpler way and straight-forward connection to my creativity without having to check first if what I do fits the criteria of the momentary *en vogue* themes and approaches to be able to get funding'. Others mentioned that the scene has become oversaturated and that the funds are too small for all the people working in the field. Many hardly ever work in Berlin and rather work abroad. Additionally, the city is perceived as becoming more expensive and offering less and less alternative spaces.

It appears it is still possible to make a living as an artist in Berlin, although it is a meager living. Yet, many Berliners question how long this will last. We therefore asked

the respondents whether they consider moving away at some point and why? The majority of the respondents, 81%, have reacted to this question. Quite a few respondents (37%, so almost half of those who reacted) explicitly asserted that they consider moving away and an additional 14% indicated that moving away might be an option in the future. In general, the reasons for moving away are to be found in Berlin's climate, both in a figurative and literal way. On the one hand, several respondents would prefer to live in a warmer climate or on the countryside in order to avoid Berlin's cold winters or to raise their children. On the other hand, in an almost fifty-fifty balance, respondents consider moving away due to the socio-economic climate of precarity predominating within the Berlin art field. Some claim that there are no longer work opportunities for them in Berlin and others fear they do not have future prospects in terms of social security or making a decent living. As one respondent asserts: 'I think about moving away when I long to be more politically and socially active, when I fear that I will not have proper retirement in the future. I think about moving away to get out of the bubble of contemporary dance in Berlin'. Another respondent adds that s/he finds 'the precarity and the impossibility to carry out [her/his] work often daunting'. Some respondents think of moving back to their native countries, others have heard from better conditions in other countries such as Norway, France and even Portugal. Many of them refer to the current artistic climate in the professional dance scene, which has evolved past its glory days, suggesting that it has become too competitive and overcrowded. Concomitantly, the dance community is perceived as 'really closed and hard to enter' and not as experimental as it used to be.

Another open question probed into the respondents' feelings about their social standing as a professional dance artist: do people in general take them seriously? Most respondents believe that they are taken seriously within the artistic field, but that people outside the field have difficulties in understanding what it means to be a professional dance artist and therefore question whether it can be considered a 'real job'. In line with this predominant answer, about one-fifth of the respondents commented that people often ask them how they can make money when doing this type of work, or how they can keep doing it when they get so 'little' for it in return. Some respondents are tired of always having to justify what they are doing and do not feel 'politically represented' or even 'a real citizen'. Overall, our respondents remark that, generally, the profession seems to be respected as a full-fledged one within the sector, but this esteem is not translated into proper working conditions. In the words of a respondent: 'I receive appreciation and recognition for my artistic work, which encourages me to follow my ideas. It doesn't pay off financially yet, but I am very much at the beginning of my career. Still, I know that it might never pay off financially, but it pays off socially instead'. Most significantly, the respondents feel that their 'invisible' work is not acknowledged. Therefore, several respondents state they worry about their future: 'Our work is about offering, is giving and giving and giving, [so it] is frustrating to look into our future and realize that nothing is safe even though you had a great career full of commitment and talent.' Additionally, several respondents compared the profession's standing in Berlin (or Germany) to the respect it receives elsewhere,

claiming for instance that the position of dance artist is particularly taken seriously in Berlin on the one hand, yet that Germany lags much behind in recognizing the profession in comparison to the Nordic countries, France or Belgium on the other hand.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to select their primary future worry from a list. The findings in *Figure N* reveal that the top future worry of the queried contemporary dance artists in Berlin is the lack of pension, or the previously mentioned *Altersarmut*. This future worry was marked by 44% of the respondents as first, which is a remarkably higher percentage than the two other top three future worries, respectively 'parenthood' (14%) and 'transition after dance' (11%). All worries have been indicated at least once as a primary worry. The remaining worries include 'physical health', 'mental medical consequences', or 'real estate' (settling down, acquiring loans). Interestingly, after the lack of pension, 'real estate' was marked by 65% of the respondents within their top three future worries and therefore the second most indicated future worry. There of course exists a relationship between both worries since the personal ownership of a house may significantly compensate the income drop after being pensioned. Conversely, not owning a house significantly increases the chances of ending up in the situation of *Altersarmut*. Several respondents explicitly expressed top worries for their future other than the ones given in the survey, such as 'getting enough work', 'not being able to carry out my work anymore due to financial pressure', 'sustaining a regular income' and 'that nothing ever changes, no matter how long you are working in this profession'. One respondent remarked: 'I don't spend time worrying, I have actually assumed that this is the price I will pay.' An additional question probed into the way the respondents expect to make a living in the future. The data indicate that merely 6% of the respondents expect to change careers in the future. One-third of the respondents simply state to continue with making art. The majority, i.e. more than half of the respondents, expect to make a living in the future by combining artistic creation with other jobs. Three respondents specifically mention that they will combine art with teaching. Together with the lingering lack of pension, the future prospect of combining art-making with other jobs compellingly reflects the precarious working conditions prevailing in the Berlin contemporary dance scene. When asked how precarious the queried dance artists themselves consider the working conditions in Berlin, more than two-third of the respondents consider them rather (43%) to very (33%) precarious. Only 7% of the respondents claim that they do not (really) experience socio-economic precarity in the Berlin contemporary dance scene (all of these respondents are members of the KSK).

## **8. Summary and discussion**

Since we cannot assess the representativeness of the presented data, we have to be cautious when drawing conclusions. Indeed, we do not know to what extent the 63 queried dance artists, and the substrata within this sample, do mirror the opinions or concerns of the entire Berlin dance community. Nevertheless, some tentative general conclusions do not just seem appropriate but impose themselves in light of the gathered

data. Evidently, they are first and foremost ‘food for thought’ and, particularly, ‘food for discussion’.

1. Overall, the contemporary dance profession as seen through the lens of the 63 respondents seems marked by a multifaceted socio-economic precarity. Our contemporary sample of Berlin-based dance artists comprises a highly educated group, with 92% of the respondents having a bachelor’s degree or higher, an average age that lies between 37 and 38 years old and an average work experience between 12 and 13 years. However, the average monthly income (defined in relation to the year preceding the moment the questionnaire was completed) of more than half of all respondents amounts to less than 1.000 euros per month. 81% of all respondents earn a maximum of 1.500 euros per month, among which several of the oldest respondents. In addition to this, almost two-third of them are remunerated for only up to half of their actual working hours.
2. The level of multiple jobholding among the respondents seems very high: the majority of the respondents have worked freelance in the past five years and nearly 9 out of 10 of them have more than one job. Most of the time budget in a situation of multiple jobholding is devoted to activities related to artistic labor. In average, a bit over half of this time budget can go to creative-productive activities. Yet, 46% of the complete time budget for work goes to para- and non-artistic activities. Strikingly, 43% of the respondents state that they earn more with their para- and non-artistic activities than with their artistic work.
3. Our sample suggests that the contemporary dance profession is highly transnational and is generally practiced by international dance artists who are active in a mobile work environment. Most respondents of the Berlin dance community were born in Europe (60%), with about 1 out of 3 respondents born in Germany. Of the many respondents working in residency spaces or workspaces, 36% say they actually work in Germany. The other two-third of the queried artists predominantly work in Western Europe. This confirms the standard picture of the transnational character of the profession, yet it simultaneously puts it into perspective: many queried artists are German-born, regularly travel to do their work, but do not regularly cross European borders.
4. The KSK may reduce the high costs in social security associated with self-employment in Germany, but this system does not reduce socio-economic precarity in a significant way. Together with the high costs (and the consequential lack) of the covered securities, the biggest problem seems to be the absence of a fair payment for the delivered work. Indeed, our respondents in general work half of their time unpaid. In light of the obtained data on their financial situation, we presume that the other half might well be underpaid. As the KSK does not interfere with unemployment insurance, there is no provision for the type of project-based work

that is dominant in the sector<sup>21</sup>. Particularly the lack of pension insurance, or – given the low incomes – the rather predictably meager contributions to the pension fund should raise concern since this results in poverty at an older age (as also our data reveal).

5. Numerous debates on fair practices in the arts were recently organized, also in Germany<sup>22</sup>. Nevertheless, most debates recurrently disregard the issue of social security, while it should be kept in mind that a fair income does not guarantee full social security or financial stability. Nonetheless, advocating fair practices in the arts is trending and appears to be even quite logical within the German context of the KSK-system. Indeed, as we just pointed out, higher fees seem a necessity to secure higher KSK-contributions within the context of a professional regime in which self-employment (and not wage labor) is the rule. Yet, this regime must also be put into perspective. Particularly in relation to the way unemployment benefits, substitutes such as the 'living wage' and other allowances are currently attributed. Artistic self-employment appears to be part of a broader mode of neoliberal governmentality based on (the treat of) continual precarization (Lorey 2005).
6. Last but not least, our data confirm the existence of a considerable degree of self-precarization among the respondents. Notwithstanding their low income and few securities or benefits, the respondents are generally very satisfied with their profession. Moreover, most of them do not feel that they need a higher income, though they would find a much higher income appropriate. These observations fit the logic underlying artistic self-precarization: one is willing to sacrifice material benefits for the sake of immaterial ones such as artistic pleasure, temporal autonomy, a relatively egalitarian work setting and regular chances for self-development. The power to say 'no' to unfair socio-economic conditions lies within the collective, yet many artists are 'post-materially' motivated and therefore willing to accept their precarious situation. However, we also note by way of conclusion that the logics of precarization and, particularly, self-precarization are also resisted by artists through various modes of self-organization and collective care, or artist-run initiatives.

Through the in-depth investigation of all dimensions of precarity in contemporary dance, including aesthetic ones, the qualitative phase of this project will further explore the choreographies of precariousness within the Berlin dance scene. We assume that individual dance artists perform these proverbial scores with various degrees of reflexivity and consent, detachedness and resistance.

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<sup>21</sup> This provision could be a form of *flexicurity*, which aims to find a balance between flexibility and protection. A *flexicurity* approach offers socio-economic protection that is customized to the sector by taking into account the predominance of short work relationships in a highly mobile work environment.

<sup>22</sup> See particularly the annual symposium *Branchentreff* organized by Performing Arts Programm, the three-day symposium *Working Together Transnationally* held at K3 | Tanzplan Hamburg (31 March and 1-2 April, 2017), and the initiative between German-speaking countries, *Art But Fair* ([www.artbutfair.org](http://www.artbutfair.org)).