



PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

# DISTANCE DANCE AS AN ACTOR NETWORK: ISSUES OF HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN BECOMING IN VIRTUAL DANCE WORKSHOPS FOR OLDER ADULTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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## ABSTRACT

As a contribution to the critical and creative discussion regarding definitions and examples of how dance practices are being reimagined in the age of distance, this article focuses on possibilities and challenges with organizing virtual contemporary dance workshops for older adults. The aim of this article is to explore intra-actions within entanglements including older adult amateur dancers, a choreographer, homes, dance studios, the software zoom, devices, music, and dance during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. Situations seen as webs of relations including the mentioned actors were created. To be able to describe how the constantly performed intra-active networks of dancers and other material actors were constituted, actor-network theory was applied. The results show specific trajectories that exemplifies intra-actions with the participants. The older adults became dancers that make meaning in their lives, even if the virtual trajectories possible to follow to some extent, are limited by the pandemic cursed distance.

*Keywords:* Actor network theory, distance dance, older adults, post-humanism, virtual workshops

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## Introduction

An experienced choreographer and two younger dancers dance together in a big light studio, where the summer breeze is flowing in through the windows. The dancers perform a clear engaged choreography with large soft movements, in relation to beautiful melancholic music. The choreographer speaks clearly and loudly at the same time as she models movements with her whole body: One two, param-pam, right, left-right, through the feet, the hips, circles, wonderful, other side, plié, ok? Good! One more time, first position: Plié and in, right, left-right, big circle, arms over head, in, over to left leg, turn around, going down, yes. We witness the three dancers intra-act with each other, the floor, the music, and the dance. Although, what we see from this perspective is just a part of a larger network, a part of an entanglement of common contemporary dancing, which also includes 12 other dancers of the ages between 69 to 81, 13 or more digital devices, 12 homes, where a multitude of human and non-human actors are entangled, as well as me, a researcher. What we see is one example of virtual live dance workshops for older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic in Sweden.

As a contribution to the critical and creative discussion regarding definitions and examples of how dance practices are being reimagined in an age of distance, this article focuses on the possibilities and challenges when organizing virtual amateur contemporary dance workshops for older adults. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced new digital alternatives for aesthetic experiences for a variety of target groups, which creates a unique possibility for research, and for insights that might be useful in future sustainable ways of living. During the period of March to October 2020, people in Sweden aged 70 and above were defined as a “risk-group” and received specific recommendations to relate to from the Swedish government. They were asked to avoid all close contact with people outside of their households, even with their children and grandchildren. They were also recommended not to go shopping, visit a pharmacy, or to visit other settings with many people, and they were encouraged to avoid public transport (Montgomery, 2020). Accordingly, they were more or less bound to their homes and could not take part in creative collaborative activities, unless they were digitally designed. Research findings regarding older peoples’ participation in digital arts activities are few. Hence, it seemed important to take the opportunity and explore existing contemporary dance workshops (Ferm Almqvist, 2021) that were transformed from in person activities to take place digitally during 2020.

However, people in Sweden who lived at home and who were aged over 70, were encouraged to go outdoors for exercise if they avoided close contact (no closer than two metres) to other people. This could even include socialising with others at a distance, for example playing croquet or boules, according to the Swedish Public Health Agency. Researchers across the world accentuate that older adults have been undervalued, and even oppressed, during the pandemic (Fraser et al., 2020). There are studies that report that this group feel depressed, anxious, and lost, because of COVID-19 related social

distancing and isolation (Day et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2020). Loneliness among older adults can result in the need of professional mental health support (Simard & Volicer, 2020), and hence there are implications for gerontological social work in the age group (Berg-Weger & Morley, 2020). Practical social and economic losses, the loss of (in-person) social interaction, loss of income and loss of structure and routine, in turn seem to imply psychological and emotional losses, such as loss of motivation, meaning, and self-worth.

One way of attending, and or at least diminishing, the issues mentioned above, is to communicate digitally (Day et al., 2020). Laura Robinson et al. (2020) defines digital connection as “having adequate access to digital technologies and being connected through the Internet and social media platforms and social connections as being connected through in-person, face-to-face interactions” (p. 1). Taking the health consequences of the COVID-19 related large-scale social distancing as a starting point, Robinson et al. (2020) explored whether differential access to digital technologies may affect health and wellbeing outcomes. Older adults are, in Robinson’s study, characterized as at risk, both when it comes to social isolation and opportunities of digital connection, even if great variations concerning access and use among older adults are discovered (Hargittai et al., 2019; Robinson et al, 2020). Results from the study show that digital inequalities are directly and increasingly related to both life-or-death exposure to COVID-19, and consequently digital equipment should be accessible to all, and digital literacy should be developed among all (Robinson et al., 2020). Therefore, it can be asked: What has been done to avoid such scenarios through offering older adults meaningful activities in connection with others?

Making technologies less expensive, easier to learn how to use, and easier to maintain use over time, will perhaps enable older adults to cross the digital divide and by that be able to go online (Cotten et al., 2016; Day et al., 2020). Such accessibility makes treatment, social communication, but also meaningful activities possible among older adults. For example, Sofia von Humboldt et al. (2020) indicate that smart technology during the COVID-19 health emergency period was important to the meaning of life for older populations – mostly by facilitating meaningful relations and rewarding and spiritual activities. When it comes to virtual activities for the older age group, researchers have tested various interventions (Mukaino et al., 2020), such as line-dance and physical training programmes, as well as inter-generational virtual activities through craftwork, simple games, music and movement, virtual chats and reading (Chatterjee & Yatnatti, 2020; Tan et al., 2020), which appeared to be experienced as meaningful among the participants. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic practices such as intergenerational virtual choirs were tested, for therapeutic aims, which showed to fill participants’ expectations of increased comfort (Belgrave & Keown, 2018). It has also been noted that group online activities, such as “attending” a spiritual service (Rote et al., 2013), yoga (Belam, 2020; Louie, 2014) or playing an online game (Nguyen et al., 2017) or new music technology (Court-Jackson, 2011), may also decrease feelings of loneliness, while providing holistic stimulation and routine (Conroy et al., 2020). With such studies in mind, it could be viewed that there is a need to explore how dance activities in the virtual space for older adults can be organized, as well as how they are experienced.

When it comes to virtual dance activities on a general level, they have been studied in institutions as well as commercial/home-based situations. Roy Martin Simamora (2020) reports that the change from studio teaching to digital teaching in arts colleges has challenged dance education, where modelling and physical contact traditionally function as embodied teaching tools. Personal response and engagement, as well as performance as a goal, become challenging to achieve within the offered digital environments, even if there are examples that show how these can be managed (Gingrasso, 2020; Restian, 2020). Even tertiary dance education seems to suffer from the same dilemmas (Papp-Danka & Lanszki, 2020) and stresses the importance of the engaged atmosphere in the studio. Hence, Tuomeiciren Heyang and Rose Martin (2020) underline that developing a community and fostering a sense of belonging in online dance communities constitute crucial tasks for dance educators, as well as consideration of access to functional technologies and physical space in home environments. Heyang and Martin (2020) note that “teaching online could be viewed as the major shift that dance educators have encountered due to the Covid-19 pandemic” (p. 9). Universities organized dance classes during COVID-19 with the intent of providing a healthy and engaging environment to help students and others in the community to cope with lockdown stress, depression, and anxiety (Bohn & Hogue, 2020). In the online setting new teaching methods are developing to suit the digital format, with considerations given to: synchronization between music and instructor audio, inclusive creativity, progression, and requirements. It could be said that educational discoveries during the COVID-19 time, even in the field of dance, will potentially change educational repertoires in the future (Williams et al., 2020).

Home based commercial dance classes as leisure activities, seem to have developed, to make the best of the COVID-19 situation, in addition to being recommended as physical (Chtourou et al., 2020; Hammami, 2020) and mental wellness activities (Angosto et al., 2020; Puyat et al., 2020). For example, Jonathan Skinner (2020) shows how synchronic tango instructions are extended with poles that represent the legs of the dance partner, how response is clearly directed, and how digital literacy is developed to optimize the situation. Self-organized digital social dance events, such as rave parties (Palamar & Agosta, 2020), have become common during COVID-19 (Stodolska, 2020). At the same time, live streaming of dance classes has become popular (Williams et al., 2020), and commercial apps such as TikTok have seen a rise in users and cultural visibility. Hence it can be underlined that dance has functioned as a meaningful activity in the time of the pandemic (Kennedy, 2020).

It can be stated that aesthetic and artistic activities offered to older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 can be explored and investigated further. Therefore, this article shares an analysis of a series of virtual contemporary dance workshops, led by a professional choreographer, Charlotta Öfverholm, and her assistants. In these workshops amateur dancers aged between 69 and 81 participated, and there was a focus on becoming in the entanglement of older amateur dancers, choreographer, technology, music, and dance.

▶ **A post human perspective on digital distance dance**

As mentioned above, there is a risk that older adults are treated as an oppressed group in society, particularly within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The marginalization of older adults may happen even if they have the same rights as anyone else, for example to take part in and express themselves through artistic encounters (UNESCO, 2019). In the anthropocentric world of 2020, theories are needed that challenge hierarchies and oppression, and instead strive to equalize human beings of different ages and with varied backgrounds, as well as other actors in the world. Rosi Braidotti (2017) sheds light on the complexity of the Anthropocene. She underlines that the Anthropocene “entails not only the critique of species supremacy – the rule of *Anthropos* – but also the parameters that used to define it” (p. 26). It has been stated that the condition of the Anthropocene can be addressed by crossing boundaries between humanities and sciences, as well as between cultures and natures (Guattari, 2000; Haraway, 1988). Hence the Anthropocene calls on scholars to see themselves as participants in a ‘becoming world’, where everything is interconnected and exploration takes place in tentative, trial and error sort of ways (Gibson-Graham, 2011). In turn, consideration can be given to the notion of “ethical relationality” which also “seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other” (Donald, 2009, p. 6), and provides a framework through which to read the discourses of the Anthropocene. Dwayne Donald (2009) further emphasizes the relationality between all things and all relationships, which reaffirms the way these connections are enmeshed in webs of relationships. Such a way of thinking also challenges unequal hierarchies between different groups of people, such as age groups, which André Lepecki (2013) underlines with the help of the concepts *gaze* and *choreopoliced* spaces. According to Lepecki, spaces must be created where individuals are free to become the dancers they are, independent of the eye of the beholder. In turn, activities can go beyond borders of youth and old age, virtual and actual, as well as present and future.

In arts research, it is important to move from arts studies *about* the Anthropocene towards studies in the Anthropocene, with an awareness of the ways in which arts connect to several aspects of the humanities–science/nature–culture spectra (Brennan & Devine, 2020). Hence, the task for research, according to Dianne Dumanoski (2009), is not to predict, but to experiment and act inventively via diverse adventures in living. Anthropocene feminism can be viewed as such an experiment (Gruisin, 2017), countering the “technoscientific desire of specificity, definition and fact” (Gruisin, 2017, p. xi), and allowing for the assembly of small-scale systems and the responsibility for all human and non-human actors. Braidotti (2017) further stresses the need to “actualize virtual possibilities of an expanded, relational self that functions in a nature–culture continuum and is technologically mediated but still framed by multiple power relations” (p. 34). Accordingly, the challenge is to reach beyond the norms that steer human and non-human actions, for example, age norms. It could be said that one such virtual opportunity to expand relational selves situated in a technology-mediated virtual web of nature–culture actors is through virtual contemporary dance workshops for older adults. ▶

▶ This article thus explores the potential for becoming that might be found in the entanglement of older adult actors, technology, music, and dance, and investigates opportunities for older adults' relational expanding selves, viewed as experimental diverse adventures in living. Therefore, the human–non-human continuum preserved and maintained by current technology, must also be challenged. Donna Haraway (1988), who among others, contributes to setting the agenda for a new tradition of politicized science and technology studies, interrelated with feminist body politics, underlines the need for critical thinking based on a technology-mediated view of the nature–culture continuum and challenges the dichotomies of for example human–non-human, nature–culture, male–female, and European–non-European. As one movement originating from this post-anthropocentric turn, the development of information technologies, including global mediation possibilities, opens doors to new ways of thinking, even when it comes to becoming in relation to ageing. The question explored in this article, regarding becoming in the entanglement of older amateur dancers, choreographer, technology, music, and dance, can be viewed as one part of such a movement.

According to Donald (2009), such an ethic holds that the past occurs simultaneously in the present and influences how we – including older adults – conceptualize the future. He further emphasizes that the approach requires that we see ourselves as related to, and involved in, the lives of those yet to come. Hence, it becomes an ethical imperative to value the meaning of relationships with others, the way life histories and experiences are layered and position us in relation to each other, and how our futures as people similarly are tied together. Donald (2009) notes that: “It is also an ethical imperative to see that, despite our varied situated cultures and knowledge systems, we live in the world together with others and must constantly think and act with reference to these relationships” (p. 7). Therefore, it becomes important to be aware of what experiences of and in relationships make us even more tightly connected, and in turn contribute to our life-worlds, independent of age.

To be able to grasp relationships from the above described post-human perspective, it could be fruitful to use Karen Barad's (2007) concept of intra-action, which replaces interaction. Barad stresses that interaction necessitates pre-established bodies that then participate in action with each other. Intra-action, on the other hand, understands agency as not an inherent property of an individual or human to be exercised, but as a dynamism of forces (Barad, 2007) in which all designated 'things' are constantly exchanging, influencing, and working inseparably. Intra-action also acknowledges the impossibility of an absolute separation or classically understood objectivity, in which an apparatus (a technology or medium used to communicate) or a person using an apparatus are not considered to be part of the process that allows for specifically located 'outcomes'. In this article intra-action is used to make human and non-human actions within entanglements visible.

It can be acknowledged that the current study is situated in a North European, Scandinavian context, but it presents an important and current case of becoming, where possibilities for interrelations between older adult identified actors, technology ▶

and art are presented. Braidotti (2017) suggests a *zoe-view* (non-human) of a world that is based on an egalitarian vision that allows for relations, alliances, and mutual detailed statements. Braidotti explains that all agents in the *zoe-world* are embedded and embodied, as well as situated, and this is an important starting point for making possible such a view of life and a world that is dynamic and self-organized.

Members of the *zoe-species* are always embedded and embodied, enfolded and relational, and thus creatively *zoe-centred*, aware of the location, and capable of becoming. Furthermore, Braidotti (2017) underlines that the technologically mediated world does not categorize or divide people or cultures per se, and thus should be able to function as an alternative ground for formation of selves. But it can be understood that capitalistic powers have interrogated *zoe-related* interrelations, as intra-action during the pandemic force digital devices and software such as Zoom, to be intertwined with human and other non-human actors. There could be limitations though, when it comes to what older adult *zoe-bodies* can become, having been captured in the age structures of society for a long time, and still to a great extent intertwined with traditional power relations. Braidotti's (2017) vision is instead to release the "generative force of the relation and the awareness that difference as positivity entails flows of encounters, interactions, affectivity and desire" (p. 36). Such a way of thinking about the world, as enfolded and *zoe*, sheds specific light on relationships and becoming where dancers, choreography, age, technology, music, and dance are included in sensible intra-actions. In such a context, this study can be viewed as a project where connection and interdependence constitute important starting points, where all are considered equal (as expressed by Elena M. Bennett et al. (2018)), just different, collections of the same "stuff". As a researcher, my interest in becoming among older adult dancers in the mentioned entanglements was explored in this *zoe-viewed* world.

The aim in this study has been to explore intra-actions within entanglements including older adult amateur dancers, a choreographer, homes, dance studios, devices, the software zoom, music, and dance during the COVID-19 pandemic. To be able to fulfil this aim, the following questions were formulated:

1. How do the dancers express their entanglements and intra-acting in online classes?
2. How do the elderly intra-act with their physical dance situation?
3. What does intertwinements contribute with in their lives during this period?

During the period 2015 to 2019 I have been following physical contemporary dance workshops (Andersson & Ferm Almqvist, 2021; Ferm Almqvist & Andersson, 2019, 2021) and connected performances (Ferm Almqvist, 2020; Ferm Almqvist, 2021) for the older adult amateur dancers, titled *Age on Stage*, run by the choreographer Öfverholm. Compared to other studies regarding dance among older people, where dance as treatment, health, and well-being have been in focus, the studies I have been engaged in focused upon dance as aesthetic experience and communication. From April to October 2020 Öfverholm offered digital contemporary dance workshops for people over 65, mediated via the communication tool Zoom, as she felt that there was a need



for such an activity, as such an age group could be isolated and in need of common dance activities. The workshops were marketed through her established networks, and took place approximately once a week, and lasted for 1.5 hours each. Most of the time she was assisted by 1-3 younger dancers. The cost was based on income, as the target group had varied resources.

The workshops consisted of warm up activities mixed with yoga movement, choreography, and guided improvisation in the spirit of contemporary dance (Andersson & Ferm Almqvist, 2021). English was used as the main language, as a couple of the participants were British, and relevant dance vocabulary drawn from ballet practices were used by the choreographer. Before and after the dance class, the participants had the possibility to talk with each other, which was something they made use of.

### **Creating research entanglements**

The study is based on a post human onto-epistemology, as described above, where nature and culture are intertwined agential and entangled, which challenges the Anthropocene and instead encourages experimental approaches aim for open ended becoming to be accessible. Hence, situations seen as webs of relations including the actors of older adult dancers, choreographer, I as the researcher, digital devices, and the software of Zoom, were created, to produce material for analysis and thus fulfil the aim of the study. Inspired by internet-related ethnography (Postill & Pink, 2012), I chose to take part in, and record three dance workshops mediated via the communication tool Zoom. Additionally, I took part in informal chats with the participants during the dance classes. I also saved screen shots and zoomed into specific participants during the classes. In addition, a photographer video recorded the choreographer and her assistants during seven workshops in the studio. To get insight into the entanglements from the older participants' perspective, a qualitative survey was sent out via e-mail after eight performed workshops (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009), that 12 dancers (10 women and two men) that continually participated in the workshops answered. The questions they were asked to answer were formulated as follows:

1. Where do you live, and when were you born?
2. Why did you decide to participate in the virtual workshops?
3. How did you create your situation, your room, (in a broad sense) where you could dance at home? I would be happy if you tell me about your room!
4. What technical equipment do you use? Did you have that prior to starting the zoom dance workshops, or did you have to obtain something?
5. How does it work to use Zoom as connection to NN, the music, and the other participants?
6. What does the virtual dance workshops offer to your life?
7. If you compare to physical dance classes, "in real life" (IRL), what similarities and differences are most prominent?
8. Is there anything else you want to share, that you think will be useful to me?

Also, the choreographer answered questions, covering the same themes, regarding her participation in the entanglements. In accordance with ethical advice and recommendations in Sweden (Swedish Research Council, 2017), all participants gave their consent and were assured that they could end their participation in the study whenever they wanted without repercussions.

As noted previously in the article, inspiration has been drawn from internet-related ethnography. Internet-related ethnography is defined by John Postill and Sarah Pink (2012) as an approach that engages with internet-based practices and content directly, but not exclusively. Virtual dance classes can be viewed as a research environment that “is dispersed across web platforms, is constantly in progress and changing, and that implicates physical as well as digital localities” (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 125). Hence, accounting for “face-to-face” social and material contexts such as synchronic chats and dance activities became necessary. This facilitated the orientation of the research material production towards the users’ experiences and memories of specific situations and events as points of departures for the informal chats and qualitative survey. In such a way, research material was created that gave access to the entanglements and could be analysed as networks including various actants.

To be able to describe how the constantly performed intra-active networks of dancers and other material actors were constituted, as well as how the actors influenced each other, actor-network theory was applied (Callon, 1986; Callon & Law, 1997; Latour, 1986, 2003, 2005; Law, 1992, 1999). The recorded workshops as well as the written reflections, and expression accessed through the questionnaire, were analysed following the theory of Actor Network Theory (ANT), which aims to describe how intra-active networks are constituted and how included agents are influencing each other. ANT implies that natural and social worlds are seen as mutually emergent and entangled, “situating materiality as a part of social practices” (Ahn et al., 2013, p. 2). ANT provides tools for exploring socio-material-practices, which makes it useful to analyse human-technology relations (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010; Latour, 2005; Law, 1999). In focus are how the dancers and the choreographer participated in virtual dance workshops, and their impact on contemporary dance activities, in relation to human and non-human actors. In focus was also becoming as effects of socio-material entanglements, exploring the query: What are the agents becoming through participation in the entanglements?

Song-ee Ahn (2015) describes that ANT-analyses can be conducted in three steps. Step one identifies what human and non-human actors are present in the networks. Step two attends to questions regarding what the different actors do in the networks and how they influence intra-active process. Step three describes the effects of the process as well as the different meetings and connections that occur as the actors are identified and connected (Ahn, 2015).

The analysis identified significant actors in the organizing and performing processes, which were co-extensive with the network. Hence, “different networks produce and define appropriate trajectories within the networks, which organize the actors’

movements in time and space” (Ahn et al. 2013, p. 9). Actors move along trajectories, which at the same time connect actors together in networks, in time and space. The study presented in this article aims to identify significant actors in virtual dance workshops for older adults, focusing relational aspects of organizing virtual dance workshops. Therefore, in the results, specific trajectories of the network that exemplify intra-actions with the participants structure the writing. The starting point for the description in the results is the intra-action between dancers and choreographer in the dance activities, and following intra-action, it became clear that the human and non-human actors were involved in significant ways in the entanglements: physical surroundings, family members, technology, sounding actors, and the dance. The becomings of the actors will be explored in the results as well. Quotations are not connected to any specific actor; they are only used as examples of intra-actions or becomings.

### Results

The 12 participants were aged from 69 to 81 years. Therefore, they belonged to the group that has been treated in specific ways during the COVID-19 pandemic – those who have been asked to stay home, and to avoid socializing with people or taking part in group activities. It can be noted that 10 of the dancers live in the Stockholm area, and two in England (in Cambridge and London).

Before COVID I attended regularly dance for older people and was desperate in lockdown for the type of movement that they promote.

The reasons that were given for applying for and participating in the virtual workshops – and by that act in the entanglements – included views such as: is “awesome” and a necessary part of life, earlier experience of dancing with Charlotta, that dance “IRL” was missed, and that the virtual setting offered something other than being alone in a “bubble”.

To participate in online workshops was self-evident for me. I have been participating in *Age on Stage* from the beginning and looked forward to be in touch with Charlotta and the other dancers, as well the movement and the dance to the extent that is possible.

The participants mention that they during the pandemic they have been forced to skip other activities, such as attending gyms. The age group was, as previously mentioned, asked to avoid meeting people indoors, and to avoid public transport during the height of the pandemic. So, the virtual workshops seemed to be an alternative, and to dance in one’s living room was a logical option.

Even if it wasn’t “IRL” I experienced it in a positive way to be included together with the others.

Physical actors that the elderly had to intra-act with to make the dance possible to take place were furniture, books, doors, windows, the actual mediator of picture and sound, walls, and floor, as well as clothes and shoes. Motives for intra-action were to create a space that were big enough, but at the same time intimate enough for dance, that the room was beautiful and inspiring.

▶ Charlotta managed to access a studio to base herself for most of the workshop occasions, to lead the workshops together with two assistants, and where she also distributed the music. On one occasion she ran the workshop from her living room. It became clear that the participants intra-acted with the physical actors in negotiating manners, to create space for movements and sound, even if some of them already had organized rooms for virtual activities. Furniture was put close to the walls, and in a way that furniture, together with books, could be a place where the mediating device was placed in a reasonable, functional height.

I used my iPad, which I placed up on a ladder.

One participant used a movable shelf as a ballet barre. Other functions in the homes, such as kitchen, office, dining room, and so on, were combined with the possibility to dance in front of the device, and in other cases the device was placed in other rooms. One of the participants said that she had tried to dance in her living room first, but that it felt too gaunt, and that the computer was placed too far away, so she moved into her home-based office instead. Other participants explained that the space they created was a bit small, but that they appreciated the intimacy, the closeness with the device, and they had enough space to perform the movements that were meant to take place. Doors were opened to let fresh air in, and windows were seen as important to have a view. Art was mentioned by one of the participants to contribute to the holistic dance experience.

My room is originally furnished in a way that make space for yoga/dance/movement as I have used video-clips from YouTube and own recordings to train choreography. The room is a combined living room and kitchen. There is a small table, two small bureaus and a small high sideboard for the cat. All this furniture is placed along the walls so there is place for movement in the middle of the room.

The analysis of the produced research material makes visible that the participants intra-acted with these physical actors. Partly, the movements were adjusted to fit the surroundings, and partly, the surroundings were adjusted to fit the movements. The intra-actions seemed to be influenced by an impetus to see and hear as well as possible, depending on what kind of movement were being performed, which in turn influenced how the movements could be performed. For example, that the participants had to rise, or turn their heads to be able to see the choreographer's and her assistants' demonstration, disturbed the flow of the movement.

Other actors mentioned were family members, such as husbands and pets, who the dancers wanted to be separated from during the dance activities. The space should, according to the analysis, be undisturbed by family members and animals, with comments such as: "My husband had to spend time in the guest house in the garden". It is mentioned that the feeling of being watched disturbed the flow and possibility to go into the dance and express oneself, even if the door was closed. ▶

I have a husband and a cat in the house, and that makes me feel watched even if I can close the door to the room where I dance. It would be really interesting to get to know if people living alone appreciate Zoom-dance even more.

When it comes to the virtual-digital actors that the dancers intra-acted with during the workshops, the devices were mentioned, such as computers, iPads, and cell-phones, as well as the Zoom platform. All the dancers owned their equipment prior to the workshop series, and most of them were used to use Zoom and other communication software as Teams, Skype and Google Meet. The choreographer was also used to Zoom and mediated a manual to the participants to help the older adults understand how the communication tool could be intra-acted with. Those who did not have Zoom installed prior to the dance classes, thought it was easy to download, start up and use. Hence, to intra-act with hardware and software seemed to be a common, taken for granted and internalized activity. One of the participants even wrote: “I have no technical equipment”, which shows that the intra-action was taken for granted, as he used both a device and software to be able to participate in the dance workshop. Instead, the Zoom-actor, as well as other involved digital actors, opened trajectories that made intra-action possible between participants spread out in Sweden, and other parts of the world.

The analysis delivered that the entanglement offered a space for dance as dwelling, where choreographies were created and embodied. The participants underlined the similarity with the “real” dance workshops, regarding the intra-action with – as they defined her – the “energetic”, “happy” and “creative” choreographer, Charlotta.

Charlotta transcends through the screen, as you say, with her inexhaustible engagement, pedagogical clearness, contaminating inspiration and humoristic sense.

On the other hand, Charlotta explained that she felt limited when it came to giving personal feedback, and that she was forced to demonstrate extensively through the classes, which in turn influenced what kind of intra-action that was possible. She showed the movements, and gave verbal instructions, combined with utterances that showed that she cared about the elderly, related to warming up, choreography and improvisation.

It is not so fulfilling for me at all to do the zoom classes. I actually always felt that I didn't give enough. but I have understood that it is appreciated anyway.

The participants underline the weight of being able to see other participants on the screen. What was mentioned as confusing though, was that they saw Charlotta mirrored, and that left and right become confusing. But in intra-action with the assistants, the choreographer offered both mirrored demonstration, and demonstration in the same way as the participants. Now and then Charlotta also shows the movements and positions in profile, to make the demonstration, and possibilities for intra-action even more clear. Some participants did not mute their microphones and it was noted that this disturbed the flow in the entanglements, making it complicated to concentrate on

what Charlotta was delivering. Several of the participants also expressed that the sound quality was bad, but they did not invite any new technical actors into the network, such as loudspeakers or sound systems that could have increased the quality of the sound. One of the participants though completed the entanglement with a cell-phone to have the sound closer to her body. Some of the older dancers expressed that they were satisfied with the spoken, as well the musical sound.

Yes, I think that is the difference between the physical and digital workshop – the “living” disappears to some extent, the small square offers more desire for the physical meeting, than happiness for the dance.

The possibility to take part in dance workshops during the time of pandemic, when the elderly felt isolated, seemed to be appreciated, with comments such as: “Virtual dance is for me a life saver”. Also, to be asked to keep a choreography in mind, was mentioned as meaningful.

Dance workouts and classes in one form or another are an important part of the rhythm of my life, for both my physical and mental welfare, and have been, for years. In the new COVID world, they have an accentuated importance.

Charlotta’s way of being a “teacher” in the network was stressed. The time with her and the dance contributed to happiness, according to the participants. They express that they felt that she treated them as professionals. To be offered occasions to move one’s body was mentioned as a motive as well. That the setting was safe, enabled the participants relax, and be present. That the dance entanglements also included other human beings was valued by some of the participants.

I got the chance to intermingle with others, me who is rather otherwise, experienced that Charlotta and her company actually cared about me.

The music as an actor in the entanglement was taken up especially by some of the participants. The music used was defined as engaging and touching, and related by participants to hard life experiences, which in turn had the possibility to be treated through the dance exercises.

In the times of pandemic, the virtual dance classes were seen as alternatives to physical workshops, and several pros were mentioned, whereof some are exclusively exemplified by the possibility to dance “alone” at home, to feel that someone cares. Some of the participants know each other from earlier “IRL” workshops with Charlotta, a state that seemed to influence the feeling of commonness. Others who do not usually dance in Sweden, expressed that they felt the distance “in their virtual world”, even if they were all are participating virtually.

These workshops were important to me and even if I danced alone in my room, I could indulge in the dance, and it didn't feel strange at all. It gave a structure for the week, and felt important, and it was meaningful to see the others, and say hello to each other. Everyone looked happy and excited, at least to me.

The analysis illuminates that the elderly intra-act within and with the dance and the music, following Charlotta's instructions in warm up activities and new choreographies, as well as "disappearing" into intense improvisation, or more concentrated common choreographies. The participants seem to be in a common movement network, although in different geographical places. What the virtual classes offer, according to the produced research material, is that the "eye of the other" is excluded. To dance at home is expressed as something participants find to be less nerve-wracking, explaining "I might dare more, and I have to use my imagination ability to a greater extent". Another participant says that she went more "into herself" when dancing at home, as she did not have to think about how the others danced, or how they perceived her ability. In the longer perspective though, the "dancing at home" is perceived to be lonelier than dancing IRL by the participants.

I felt a bit abandoned dancing there in my living room.

All participants expressed that they missed physical dance classes, with the virtual classes being defined as "the second-best thing". What the studied entanglements do not embrace is the physical contact, the eye-contact, the "real" intra-action with others, the nearness, and inspiration from other's movements, the music, and experiences. Such "tight" entanglements are defined as "more living" and by that more developing when the virtual intra-action, as the atmosphere and the co-operation characterize the face-to-face entanglements. The small "squares" through the Zoom screen encourages a longing for physical meetings.

Even if the physical dancing per se functioned very well, I missed the common room where all dancing bodies were physical present, all faces, glances, and touches, which I now during the pandemic especially miss. In the physical room it becomes something more than the individual dance, a concrete commonness, the feeling of creating something together, that gives hope and meaning in our confused and disrupted life and world.

The friction in the entanglements seem to be connected to sound quality, and the risk of being disturbed by family members, and not necessarily to the technical equipment, which on the other hand seemed to be taken for granted, and embodied.

Teaching-wise it functions, but it is not at all as fun and providing. Technically everything worked well, but I missed the atmosphere and the collaboration with the other dancers.

The social setting of IRL dance classes is also missed, even if the participants appreciate the possibility of small talk before and after the classes via Zoom. The social part of physical dance intra-action is taken up as something that happens in the moment.

- ▶ Dancing is viewed, by one of the participants, as a room where she feels free to express herself together with others in the same situation. She underlines that such kind of space of commonness is impossible to create at home.

I really miss 'real' dance classes. I miss the physical contact, the challenge of dancing and moving around others, the chat and the laughter of spontaneous communication. And exploring movement with others. And of preparing for and presenting a piece to the public that we have worked on together.

Also, the choreographer agrees:

I hope the world will go back to normal soon. We need to meet, to see, to touch, to get involved and be touched by each-others' emotions and physicality. This is really a disaster for the arts.

The picture that the ANT-analysis exposes is that the significant actors are in processes of becoming. The older adults show to become dancers that make meaning in their lives, even if the virtual trajectories to some extent are limited by the pandemic distance. In the intra-action with the physical room, including furniture and digital devices, as well with family members, it seems that several possibilities are created. They older dancers become flexible, artistic, aware, connected virtual selves. It is interesting that the intra-action with the digital equipment does not seem to lead to any meaningful processes of becoming. The participants' technical selves seem to be un-changed, the technical equipment seems to be taken for granted, which means that possible improvements, such as enhanced sound, does not happen. The digital equipment becomes stable mediators of sound and movements, as well as of a feeling of community and a common artistic experience. By that it looks like established entanglements including participants and technology are conserved.

The choreographer is not surprisingly defined as a significant actor in the entanglements. She is the one who most clearly expresses that she is diminished when it comes to possible virtual selves; that the trajectories she can follow are few. She becomes a demonstration choreographer, who cannot give personal feedback, which in turn diminishes possibilities for common artistic experience and development. She becomes a collectively caring choreographer in intra-action with the older adults, the music, the dance, the technology, and her assistants.

### Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this article has been to explore intra-actions within entanglements including older adult amateur dancers, a choreographer, homes, dance studios, the software Zoom, music, and devices during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically in 2020. The results of this study have identified significant actors, as well as what trajectories they were following and what kind of becomings were at play. The analysis reveals that established unequal age structures in the anthropocentric society were challenged, and to some extent overcome. As earlier studies have stated, the unwillingness to become lonely, and the risk for a meaning-less life (Day et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2020)



encouraged the participants to enrol in the virtual workshops, and that they continued to take part as it made their life meaningful. Also, the analysis illuminates that handling digital devices and technical equipment did not seem to be a big challenge for the target group (Hargittai et al., 2019; Robinson, 2018). That the choreographer had to adapt to the situation, as many other dance educators have been challenged to do during the current period, is also stated by other newly performed studies (Gingrasso, 2020; Papp-Danka & Lanszki, 2020; Restian, 2020).

It is worth considering that the intra-action in the dance workshops contributed to artistic becoming among the older adults, which seems to not be stated in earlier research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. That kind of becoming does, as mentioned above, challenge unequal age structures, and contributes to older adults feeling less marginalized in the “becoming world”, where everything is interconnected, and becomings happen in trial-and-error sorts of ways (Donald, 2009; Gibson-Graham, 2011; Gruisin, 2018). It can be stated that experiments and life adventures were encouraged in the dance workshops. Hence, further innovative workshops where all actors can become artistically diverse selves must be conducted and performed, to find egalitarian ways of being and becoming within dance, regardless of age. Even if companies like Zoom are products of the Anthropocene, and risk trapping behaviours and experiences in traditional unequal patterns, it seems that the technical service offers entanglements where all can become expanding artistic selves. But, to make that happen all actors must be aware of the interconnectedness and open to uncertainty and diverse adventures of living, in which several pathways of becoming are encouraged and taken care of.

Without such considerations there is a risk that human-non-human digital entanglements may contribute to the preservation of traditional age norms and patterns. One challenge is to figure out how older adults can become even more aware of opportunities for becoming expanding selves, of the world artistic virtuality's, beyond age. Another problem to investigate further is how a zoe-view of intra-acting selves can allow older amateur dancers to let themselves be in dance musical becoming settings, without having to divorce or go to the training studio. The virtual dance workshops are one example of how entanglements with technology, music, dance choreographer and views of contemporary dance can contribute to becoming virtual selves. The post-human lens helps us to see that such stories demand that all are aware of connectedness, and how that connectedness can be used for change, in the Anthropocene.

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