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CONSTRUCTION SITE

ON FEEDBACK IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS AND *TAKEMORECARE* AS A SITE FOR ARTISTIC DISCOURSIVISATION*

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Abstract

This study examines *TakeMoreCare*, an artist-led feedback platform in Germany's freelance performing arts scene. Using constructivist grounded theory, it analyses TMC's role in addressing gaps in post-educational support, economic barriers, and fragmented feedback structures. Situating TMC within broader discussions on artistic discourse, institutional critique, and digital labour, the study explores how artists navigate self-education, peer exchange, and knowledge production. It also examines the impact of digital tools, engaging with contemporary critiques of digital privatisation and reflections on institutional entrapment. The research was presented as a lecture performance, exploring how knowledge is communicated and embodied. This format reinforced the study's themes of discursivity and digital entanglement while serving as a performative inquiry into how institutional and digital frameworks influence artistic thought and practice. Findings are primarily descriptive, outlining the structure and function of TMC, while also exploratory in investigating how digitality, self-organisation, and collective discourse creation intersect. The study ultimately positions TMC as a rehearsal ground for agency, offering insights into how artists can intervene in and reshape the discursive conditions of their practice beyond institutional confines.

Keywords: artistic discourse, grounded theory, lecture performance, post-education

N.B.: Key points from this paper were presented at the 1st International Conference on Dance and Digitalization (ICDD 2024) on 29th November 2024, hosted by the Hungarian Dance University.

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the Covid crisis, digitality became a significant focus for cultural funding programs supporting the Free Performing Arts Scene in Germany. This shift aimed to encourage the exploration of new technologies and was fuelled by various factors: increased financial support for the arts, the necessity of online presence due to physical restrictions, and the pervasive marketing of digital platforms that have integrated deeply into our work and daily lives.

For the field of dance and artistic research, digital platforms have introduced new possibilities. These spaces have not only provided collaborative and adaptive practices but have also empowered artists to experiment and share their work autonomously, connecting practitioners across geographical and institutional divides, enabling self-initiated, artist-run ventures. While these tools have enabled innovation, critiques of "techno-solutionism" suggest that they may prioritize privatisation over the public good, raising concerns about whether digital platforms truly serve collective needs or perpetuate inequities. In this context, artist-led initiatives can be viewed not only as democratizing access to a process typically confined to institutional settings, but also as opportunities to influence the social, discursive, and political conditions of artistic practices and their wider landscape. As one such intervention, we present a case study of *TakeMoreCare* (TMC), an online, peer-initiated platform focused specifically on digitised formats for reflection, exchange, and feedback on artistic practices for artists and artistic researchers.

The research presented in this article was conducted retrospectively, drawing on three years of collective practice within TMC, primarily active in the freelance performing arts scene in Germany. The case study examines the dynamics and practices within this unique community, offering insights into how participants navigate challenges of the artistic process in relation to their working conditions and how, consequently, artistic discourse is created, shared, and sustained within the freelance scene. It also investigates the platform's format and its impact on fostering constructive dialogue and collaboration among participants. By centring its analysis on this platform, the study engages with the broader realities of the dance community, addressing the challenges freelance artists face in accessing feedback and contributing to systems of knowledge production.

The study draws on theoretical frameworks related to artistic discourse, practice-based research, institutional critique, performance studies, critical pedagogy, the epistemology of art, and digital media studies to interpret TMC's role within the broader performing arts ecosystem.

Apart from the case study, a considerable part of this article is dedicated to a particular mode of presentation, through which the research was shared at the *International Conference of Dance and Digitalization (ICDD)* in Budapest, Hungary, on 29 November 2024. The lecture performance format is presented in detail, together with our rationale for choosing it as a form of presentation. Its materials are shared as images, QR codes providing access to video work, or transcriptions of the text, such as the following introduction to the practicalities of the TMC format:

TakeMoreCare is a free, monthly, independent (non-funded), artist-to-artist, peer-based feedback session that takes place online over ZOOM. There are no listeners or observers; everyone participating also presents and provides feedback. Each person has five minutes to present and seven minutes to receive feedback from others (paraphrased from *Figure 1*).

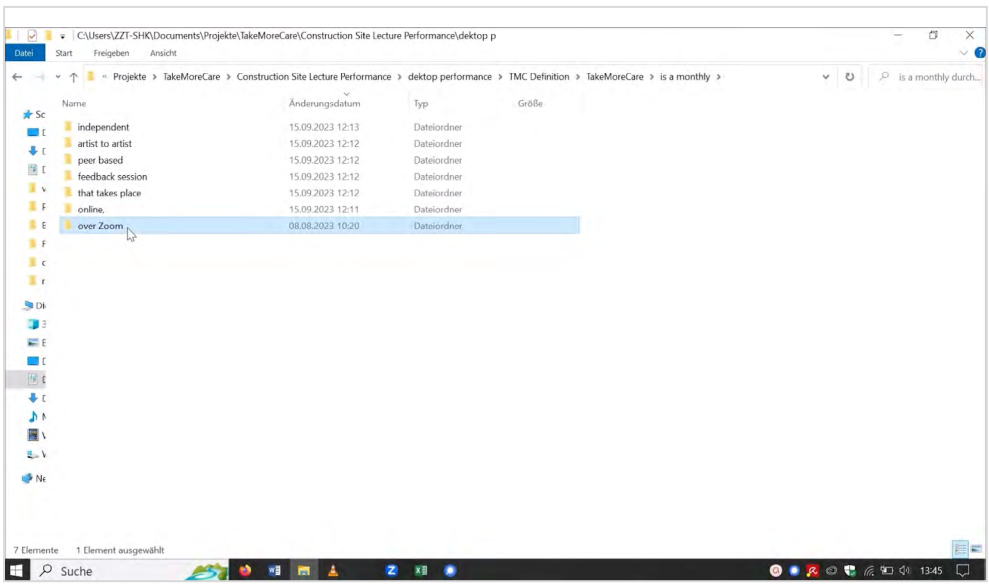

Figure 1. Screenshot from Video #1: *TMC Definition.* All images in this article are originals from the lecture performance *Construction Site*

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter situates the TMC initiative within the conceptual and material conditions that shape the discourse of artistic feedback. It traces how feedback is understood and practised in both educational and professional contexts, examines the institutional and technological infrastructures that influence it, and considers its entanglement with processes of privatisation and commonisation. It also reflects on the lecture performance as a mode of mediation between art and academia, and on artistic research as a field negotiating practice, reflection, and knowledge production.

2.1 Feedback in Educational and Professionalised Artistic Contexts

The TMC initiative was started as a reaction to the lack of non-hierarchical spaces for feedback in the performing arts scene. To an extent, this general shortfall is reflected in the relative scarcity of literature dedicated specifically to artistic feedback. For this reason, we broaden the scope to include discursive practices more generally, such as reflection, articulation, and examination, that might serve similar functions to feedback.

Discussions on discursive practices related to feedback have gained some traction within educational dance contexts. University programs such as *DAS Theater Amsterdam* and *HZT Berlin* have contributed significantly by experimenting with collectivised forms of feedback and proposing widely adopted feedback methods (Haffner et al., 2014; Van de Wiel, 2013/2014).

Although feedback practices seem ubiquitous in higher arts education, its conceptualisation varies. Some publications focus rather on notions of 'critical judgment' (Butterworth & Wildschut, 2009) or 'reflection' (Lavender, 1996), framed as pedagogical tools to support choreographic and dance development. The anthology *Körper – Feedback – Bildung* (Hardt & Stern, 2019) stands out in this regard, addressing both the modes of feedback and the power structures inherent in student-teacher relations. Susan Foster's contribution to the anthology differentiates between two modes of feedback: transactional (hierarchical and economised) and mutual (reciprocated and mutually shaped), a distinction we later draw on in our analysis (Foster, 2019).

In the professional realm, however, particularly among freelance practitioners, the concept of feedback seems underrepresented. One reason for this might be the great diversity of working conditions, funding structures, recognition of artist's status, and professional networks within the dance scene in various parts of Germany, let alone in other European countries. As a result, analysing and mapping the working conditions in the freelance context is a challenging task. Within this complexity, feedback seems to be a rather niche concept.

In light of such a scattered terrain, UK-based Midgelow and Bacon (n.d.) developed the *Creative Articulations Process* (CAP) to address the need for embodied approaches to artistic feedback. While conceptualised within higher education, CAP is explicitly intended for use beyond institutional settings, serving as a tool for collaborators and peers to articulate creative processes grounded in embodied experience. CAP offers a structured model for artists to develop their own reflexive practice, emphasizing the importance of adhering to somatic knowledge and tacit understanding rather than relying on external frameworks removed from the creative experience itself.

Similarly, Katharina Kleinschmidt (2018), involved in the professional creation of dance pieces, draws on the production of reflective knowledge, concept formation, and language within choreographic rehearsal processes, but does not address feedback among professional colleagues who are not collaborating on the same project.

Altogether, these examples demonstrate an evolving yet still limited discourse around feedback. The lack of literature dealing with feedback structures by and for freelance artists both reflects and reinforces the lack of practical infrastructures through which artists might exchange critical reflections on their work and working conditions – though whether the absence of documentation drives the lack of infrastructure, or vice versa, remains unclear. More likely, these absences mutually amplify each other in a self-perpetuating cycle. Given this gap in both practical and theoretical infrastructures for artistic feedback, it becomes crucial to examine the conditions that shape how and where such discourse can, and does, emerge.

2.2 Institutional and Technological Conditions of Feedback

In this part of our practice-based reflection on the TMC feedback format, we focus on the infrastructural conditions of feedback. We trace the mutual relationship of shaping and being shaped between the (im)material context of discourse and discursive practice (Foucault, 2000), first by examining academia as an institutional infrastructure for public discourse production, and then digital environments as technological infrastructures shaping individual, private, and semi-public discourse generation within artistic practices.

2.2.1 Academia as a Specific Language Ecosystem

Our reading of discourse contexts is highly influenced by critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Foucault, 2000), which directs attention to the norms, relations, institutions, arrangements of agencies, forms of capital, and power structures that co-construct discourse. In order to argue for the necessity of feedback formats such as TMC, we analyse the power structures between artists and (educational) institutions that can be addressed through the activity we here refer to as 'feedback'. Focusing on the limitations of freelance artists' agency, we aim to examine how artistic discourse is shaped by the power structures from which it emerges, as well as the potential for co-shaping that environment.

As artistic practitioners and academically trained researchers reworking our lecture performance given at the *ICDD* conference into a paper, we were acutely aware of the tensions between the translatability of practice-based reflections, methodical analysis, and systematic referencing in the context of a conference geared towards advancing dance scholarship. Open questions that we had asked ourselves which lacked satisfactory answers were reformulated into hypotheses that demonstrated analytical preciseness, relevance to the field of Dance Studies, and concise handling of the concepts we evoked and quoted. This required being highly skilled in comprehending, contextualising, and applying the concepts drawn on for formulating hypotheses. That involved the following skills and challenges worth emphasising:

1. Access to relevant texts in the field of study, often hidden away in the libraries of small university departments with absurd opening hours, or behind digital paywalls.
2. Access to discussions regarding the relevance of these texts and sources: who can be considered a reliable thinking partner, and who cannot?
3. The investment of immense time and energy, all while working precariously (in our case, within the freelance art scene) without remuneration for contributions like this.

Squeezing the reflections of our daily activities within the TMC project through the loopholes of respectable research knowledge involves a transgression across two distinct sites of discourse on and about art: the artistic and academic. This requires us to formalise applied, practice-based reflections into theoretical concepts and shape them into a somewhat linear thread of analysis and argumentation, supported by a network of references. The frictions we experience in this process

make palpable how demarcation lines are formed by power structures that assign different statuses to 'artistic' and 'academic' knowledges.

2.2.2 Artistic Practice as a Language Construction Site

Even though the relationship between dance and language might be described as fraught and widely debated (Brandstetter, 2013; Caspao, 2009; Foster, 1995), the everyday work of dance artists consists of manifold discursive and writing practices, including producing original texts, referentially intertwining voices, and more traditional citing. Whether working with theory to fuel a project's concepts, name-dropping literature in applications as referential support, or setting text in action as a dialogue partner in the studio, as artists we speak, think, and work through a dense network of discursive references.

These discursive practices take place both within the art studio and on technological sites such as laptops and phones. Hybrid artistic reflections, such as the video work of multimedia artists and professor Hito Steyerl, reveal how bureaucratic and technological systems shape both artistic discourse and practice (Steyerl, 2013, 2015). The digitalised workspace has become not only an extension or add-on to 'real life' but a fundamental site for watching, practicing, researching, writing, and reading about art. Thus, discursive practice is not only deeply embedded in dance and art making, but once digitised it must also be considered within the context of struggles between commodification and commonisation of digital sites. For an example addressing the artistic realities of digital working sites, see *Figure 6.* (Video #3: *Quote Assembly*).

2.3 Privatisation and the Resistance of the Commons

McKenzie Wark (2020) highlights the immersion of different spheres of life into the unifying interface of the phone or laptop. There is no clear-cut separation between discursive thoughts or ways of living that form online and offline. The collapsing of the mediatised boundaries between entertainment and education, or 'ficting' and 'facting' techniques, as observed by Wark (2020) on a single device, also blurs the economic boundaries of how these media are rendered profitable.

Cultural critic Naomi Klein (2020) raises a pressing concern regarding the spread of commodified software, originally developed for entertainment and business management, into schools and other educational settings. Marketed increasingly as essential tools, these platforms deepen the privatisation of spaces that should be accessible to the public and serve the collective good (for reflections on the implications of this dynamic for TMC, see *Chapter 3*).

A clear example of these tendencies in the educational sector is the so-called *platformisation* of teaching: the increasing structural privatisation of digitalised educational solutions, globally accelerated by the pandemic, which is shifting educational infrastructures and policies as a whole towards more digitalised and hybrid concepts. In their study on educational technologies ('EdTech') in schools, Wiliamson and Hogan (2020) describe Covid-19 as a catalyst for EdTech to develop into "(…) a full-blown global industry, international policy priority, and a

transnational source of influence on teaching, learning and schooling" (Wiliamson & Hogan, 2020, p. 6).

Theoreticians influenced by economic counter-practices (and theories) to globalised privatisation and the commercialisation of everyday life, both within and beyond the digital sphere (namely the proponents of the so-called commons), seek solutions to this ongoing capitalist process. Media studies scholar Shintaro Miyazaki (2022, 2023) discusses the frictions created by the potential for commonisation alongside the constant threat of the commodification of digital software. He describes practices of digital commoning as the creation of societies, networks, or resources based on equalised cooperativity (Miyazaki, 2022, p. 22). Yet, wherever people collaborate on the commonised production of non-commercialised spaces, there is an imminent danger of reabsorption into a logic of value-production that tends to extract, disown, (re-)appropriate, regulate, and close off commonly shared assets as privatised property (p. 44).

We would like to briefly follow the thread of the commons beyond the digital realm to illustrate how strategies for resisting the reabsorption of commonised structures, cultivated in digital activism, can also be found in critical pedagogy. The institutional practice of the *École de recherche graphique* in Brussels, directed by Laurence Rassel, offers a bridging perspective on constructing an institution from the potential of an ever-ongoing 'instituting' (Rassel, 2018). Instituting, according to Rassel, describes "[…] the process of forming an institution. It is the opposite of the already 'instituted,' the crystallised, frozen, and established that often is equated with the noun 'institution'." (Sollfrank, 2019, p. 51).

This feminist model of an institution continually reshapes its modes of operating and builds forms of organisation according to democratic principles grounded in the idea of the commons (Sollfrank, 2019, p. 51). It therefore provides an important ground for rethinking how institutions could be established and, in turn, how artists could relate to them as more participatory and commonized environments for the production of artistic discourse.

Later we will show how TMC is conceptualised as an intervention into the current institutional hierarchies of discourse creation within the artistic field. We rendered the findings of our case study productive by adopting a specific format of presentation that artists have long used to challenge academic norms of producing, acknowledging and disseminating knowledge: the lecture performance.

2.4 Mode of Presentation: Lecture Performance

The lecture performance has emerged as a significant format within contemporary art since the 1960s and 70s, blending lecturing and performing as a tool of institutional critique and merging artistic practice with critical discourse and political engagement. Building on earlier traditions, the lecture performance has seen renewed interest in contemporary practice, demonstrating the format's continued development and relevance. Canonical experiments of the genre in dance, such as Xavier Le Roy's *Product of circumstances* (2009), Martin Nachbar's *Urheben Aufheben* (2008), Philipp Gehmacher's *walk+talk series* (2008–ongoing), Antonia Baehr's *Abecedarium Bestiarium* (2013), Andrea Fraser's *Official Welcome* (2001), and

Eva Meyer-Keller's *Certainly Uncertain* (2021-2024), continue to evolve and adapt to contemporary artistic and cultural contexts (Dirksen, 2009). As a hybrid form, the lecture performance encompasses self-reflection, discussion, and performance, addressing topics such as artistic research, social issues, and political concerns. Artists use the genre to reveal their creative processes and explore new ways of engaging directly with audiences, bypassing intermediaries.

At its best, lecture performance creates conversational spaces that expose artistic practices and allows artists to interrogate the conditions of their production on their own terms, complimenting them with frameworks of academic public speaking. It is ultimately a format that enables the testing of knowledge, where autobiography, invention, partial understanding, and fiction can reveal their essential role in the exploration of truth (Wagner, 2009).

For our contribution to the *ICDD*, we relied on various modalities (i.e., live presence, video work, and role-play) as performative strategies that convey and produce a web of intricate connections that weave together pragmatic and aesthetic approaches to research presentation (Jentjens et al., 2009). The resulting lecture performance facilitates a dynamic exchange that is less about providing conclusive answers and more about exploring multiple perspectives. Rather than reinforcing a binary distinction between art as primary and what is spoken or written about art as secondary, the lecture performance exemplifies how we, as contemporary culture-makers, generate knowledge across different genres of presentation by nurturing discursiveness in unexpected forms and resisting claims to finality or closure. As Dirksen (2009) notes, "in this kind of fundamentally (self) reflexive and critical writing subjectivity and inductivity are combined. It follows that here the associative mental leap is just as valid a means as the logically reasoned conclusion" (p. 10).

Our lecture performance *Construction Site* creates dense webs of video images and pre-recorded text that are not easily deciphered in terms of how they convey descriptive meaning towards one another, or that are simply overwhelmingly dense. By pushing the boundaries of conventional conference formats, we aimed to invite new ways of thinking and interacting with knowledge, encouraging a fertile tension between art and academia. In Wagner's words (2009)

> […] in contrast to scholarship, the artistic lecture performance is an ideal framework within which to test out knowledge. The format permits running together facts and fictions and the interplay of irony, humour and seriousness. The conjunction of real and fictional content functions as a disruptive factor point to the parallel existence of different realities. Doubt and mistrust therefore become productive elements. They prevent a single truth and conclusive knowledge from being established, or discussion from being choked off (p. 21).

Such an approach reflects the inherent messiness of academic research – often hidden and neatly packaged for the sake of clearly communicating distilled findings – yet addressing this messiness can illuminate our own positionality as researchers, revealing our blind spots, and foster a culture of mutual support and solidarity within the research community.

2.5 Artistic Research

The procedure of formatting practice-based research into a lecture performance, as we did with *Construction Site*, can be situated in relation to existing research fields gathered under the framework of practice-based research (Dean & Smith, 2009) or artistic research (Badura et al., 2015; Borgdorff, 2006). Since the early 2000s, a series of terms have appeared to theorise the broad spectrum of methods that bridge artistic and scientific-academic knowledge production. Within the category of 'artistic research', Henk Borgdorff conceptualises activities of research "through art", "on art" and "with art" (2006). TMC can be self-characterised as a combination of the first two, as it both uses art as a medium to express or explore ideas and produces reflection or commentary on art as a subject.

More recently, Lucy Cotter (2019) has emphasised artistic research as a situated, affective, and politically entangled practice, one that expands the field beyond institutional critique to include acts of cultural world-making. In this sense, the potency of artistic research is twofold, as TMC operates both within the arts and at their margins. Outside of institutions, TMC aligns itself with other self-organised collectives. Initiatives such as the feedback platform *You Are Warmly Invited* in Saxony, Germany, or the artistic newcomers' network *Cheers for Fears* in North-Rhine Westphalia, experiment with different forms of presenting and providing feedback on freelance work. Another example, *State of the Arts* in Belgium, intervenes in public discourse on cultural politics. Such initiatives allow for strategic flexibility of intervening and exerting influence on contemporary artistic and political landscapes, effectively challenging and reshaping institutional power dynamics.

Construction Site is primarily aimed at refuelling the TMC initiative itself. In the spirit of feeding back, we understand this article as material that loops the results and enriched insights back into our feedback practice. At the same time, by creating performative formats to convey findings from TMC, we also participate within institutional boundaries, relying on the well-trodden path of artistic research into conventional knowledge systems, a relationship that has experienced significant changes with the institutionalisation of the former within the latter (Society for Artistic Research, 2020).

Artistic research is not only independently recognised but also seeps into the academic field. It is on the verge of becoming recognised as evidence and therefore as a legitimate component of systematic reviews, as suggested by Karin Hannes (2023) in the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* and Gerber et al. (2020) in *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*. Such milestones testify both to the value of artistic research as an intervention into established knowledge systems and, reciprocally, to the openness of knowledge institutions to question their own modes of knowledge production and presentation.

3. ANALYSIS

TMC began as an initiative to foster collective discourse among freelance artists. As facilitators of an ongoing online space, we gained insight into the fragmented and often elusive realities of artistic freelancing. While our observations were

cross-checked with participants, it was only recently that we began articulating these insights systematically. Though it was not originally conceived as a research project, the initiative naturally led us to theorize about artistic discourse and feedback, extracting relevant concepts, drawing parallels, and contextualizing our practice within broader frameworks. Retrospectively, we recognised elements of our approach as aligning with grounded theory (GT), intuitively carried over from Rampre's earlier work on *Artists' Discourse* at *PACT Zollverein* (Rampre, n.d.). That project examined the mutual shaping of discourse between the *PACT Zollverein* production house (Essen, Germany) and its resident artists, using an inductive approach and the AI tool *Infranodus* as an encoder. The project uncovered hidden patterns within written texts, enriching the GT framework. However, in the case of TMC, the absence of formal transcripts and reliance on session notes required an adaptation of the methodology in which digital tools were not used.

3.1 Methodology

As active contributors in the field of performing arts, we have fostered long-term conversations with artists, institutions, and non-institutional initiatives alike. However, GT, with its particular characteristics, has proven far more fitting than a perhaps more obvious auto-ethnographic approach. GT enables the development of new theories based on the iterative collection and analysis of real-world data. It is most often used when, as in our case, no existing theory offers an adequate explanation for the phenomenon under study, or when existing theory is incomplete based on the data that has been collected. (For a thorough overview of GT, the reader is invited to consult Tie et al. (2019).) The specific feedback practice we have established over three years aligns particularly well with the constructivist strand of the GT, associated with Charmaz, who recognizes the co-construction of knowledge between researcher and participant, incorporating reflexivity and subjectivity (Charmaz, 2011). Apart from this, both our practice and research have been shaped by further foundational components of this strand of GT.

- *Iterative Engagement:* Data were collected over three years through continuous interaction with participants, primarily via detailed note taking during presentations and feedback sessions. This iterative process involved ongoing analysis to refine emerging insights.
- *Coding and Categorisation:* Data analysis followed the GT coding process. Initial coding involved breaking the data into discrete segments, while focused coding identified recurring themes. Theoretical coding then contextualised patterns, exploring how factors such as career stage, institutional support, and social dynamics shaped broader power structures. Coding was conducted both individually and collaboratively, with key themes tested in discussions with participants and external contexts.
- *Theoretical Sensitivity:* Insights were developed through collaboration with various institutional and non-institutional frameworks focused on feedback, pedagogy, and artistic mentoring. Each engagement provided an opportunity to refine our understanding and integrate it into our evolving theoretical framework.

- *Theory Building:* The study generated a contextually grounded, substantive theory by analysing power relations and artistic discourse within the specific context of TMC. The initiative's independence from institutional constraints (and funding) allowed for a critical focus on power dynamics without external influences.

3.2 Tracing Engagement over Time – Empirical View

The empirical material for this study derives from three years of continuous facilitation of TMC sessions between 2022 and 2024. The initiative brought together a diverse group of participants in monthly sessions, with occasional additional meetings on special topics. Over the period sampled in this study, skipping only the month of August each year, this amounted to approximately 48 sessions. Attendance across these sessions totalled around 120, with a mix of recurring and new participants shaping the evolving discourse.

While the specific themes have shifted over time, the sessions consistently provided a shared space for exploring, discussing, and experimenting across disciplinary boundaries. During this period, we maintained written notes of presentations, feedback exchanges, and informal discussions. These notes, rather than full transcripts, constitute the primary dataset, archiving topics, questions, methods, insights, and references shared. The latter were distributed among the members of each session in the form of a chat transcript containing the references mentioned, shared only with the agreement of all members to obtain consent for sharing their email contacts.

Participation in TMC was open and non-hierarchical, attracting a diverse group of freelance performing artists, including choreographers, dancers, theatre-makers, and interdisciplinary practitioners such as museologist, writers, and generative art developers. Artists contributed from various stages of their careers, from recent graduates to mid-career practitioners, and represented multiple national and cultural backgrounds, although the majority were based in Western Europe.

Because participation was voluntary and informal, attendance varied from session to session. This fluctuation, rather than being a limitation, offered valuable insight into the irregular and fluid rhythms of freelance artistic work. It also revealed the range of expectations artists brought to feedback: from seeking detailed critique to simply testing ideas in a supportive environment.

3.3 Results

The following results reveal how feedback, as a reflective and structuring practice, is deeply intertwined with the material and institutional conditions that shape artistic work. We have distilled these insights from the TMC project into the following key findings:

3.3.1 Lack of Support for Post-Education

Many artists, especially in the post-education phase, lack access to structured feedback and support networks that cater to different phases of their artistic

process, from conceptualisation to refining their personal language. The following statement by TMC participant Foteini Papadopoulou, freelance choreographer and movement researcher, strengthens this claim:

> […] Making me feel safe to share fragile and vulnerable artistic research processes, making me want to engage with the format particularly in phases when I felt lost and frustrated in my journey as an artist in a post-pandemic reality is something I consider a great success of this work and a product of [Lili's and Valerie's] sensitivity as well as their meanwhile expertise as facilitators . [...] If you come looking for dialogue partners, you will find them; if you come looking for a test audience, you will find a test audience; if you come looking for any resonance with your work, you will find it (Papadopoulou, 2025).

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3.3.2 Economic Barriers in Freelancing

Freelancers often face economic barriers in accessing ongoing formal support, leaving them reliant on informal feedback from friends or partners, most often in the form of unpaid input, and lacking diverse, professional perspectives.

3.3.3 Hierarchical Feedback Structures Limiting Creative Engagement

There is a scarcity of spaces that allow artists to rehearse and actively shape their artistic discourse, leaving them less empowered to influence and intervene in the reproduction of established knowledge systems and norms. Existing traditional feedback models often reinforce hierarchies, with a single authority providing critique rather than fostering collective participation. They often lack creative restrictions that encourage artists to distil and present their work in concise formats, thereby limiting deeper engagement and experimentation with different feedback mediums. Support for this result comes from the following testimony by Naoto Hieda, artist and researcher (https://naotohieda.com/), another regular TMC participant:

> Unlike a capitalistic, rapid "pressure-cooker" process, feedback rounds in TMC feel like a slow cooker; everyone's bringing in ingredients to the pot and the soup simmers over time. It's not about generating fast results, but about revisiting concepts, deepening them, and allowing references, whether texts, artworks, or lived experiences, to slowly infuse the conversation. Unlike critique in an art school, where there's often an implicit sense of direction or outcome, in TMC, there's no pre-planned vision of what the work should become. My card project started in 2023 and has evolved through this cyclic, intertwined and non-linear rhythm for the last 2 years: I bring in raw material, get pointed toward something unexpected, work and reflect on it, and return with more to feed back into the pot (Hieda, 2025).

Both participants, Foteini Papadopoulou and Naoto Heida, agreed to disclose the authorship of their statements.

3.3.4 Gap Between Institutionalised Artistry and Self-Identified Artists

There is a lack of inclusive platforms accessible to artists who are not recognised or affiliated with major institutions. This creates a gap between formalised notions of artistry, upheld by institutions, and the lived experiences of autodidact artists, allowing for self-defined artistic identity, whether individual or collective.

3.4 Interpretation

We now present our interpretation of the above observations concerning the status of feedback in the performing arts and dance scene in Western Europe. We have focused on using the findings to formulate a founding manifesto of our initiative. We invite the reader to view Video #4: *Desktop Performance* (accessible via the QR code in *Figure 5*), where the manifesto is spoken over the video.

3.4.1 Institutions Hinder Rather Than Support Professionalisation

Institutions that educate, fund, and showcase freelance artists dominate the discourse around artistic practices, imposing rigid norms that freelancers must navigate to gain recognition or funding. This dominance is compounded by the lack of access to professional development and peer exchange once artists leave formal education, leaving them isolated and without structured support systems to refine their work or discourse.

3.4.2 Discursive Fragmentation Reduces Agency

The fragmentation of feedback systems across academia, funding bodies, and the freelance art field creates an imbalance in artistic discourse, forcing artists to navigate inconsistent expectations when working with different institutions and constantly reinvent their personal language as they move between these contexts. This lack of a continuous, unified artistic stance is further intensified by the pressure to conform to institutionalised language norms. Freelancers, in particular, must balance self-education with the need to "sell" their expertise, often shaping their articulation to fit funding trends rather than focusing on the core of their artistic exploration.

3.4.3 Transactional Nature of Feedback

In the traditional contexts, feedback is often treated as a transaction rather than a communal gift, embedded within hierarchical power relations. Artists therefore miss the opportunity to build solidarity and achieve a "hive-mind" approach that values interconnected artistic practices and shared responsibility.

3.4.4 Intimate Relationships as Infrastructure

In response to economic precarity and the lack of institutional support, many freelancers pool resources, share unpaid labour, and create stability in the form of

collectives or 'power couples'. These relationships, whether romantic or professional, become strategic alliances that attempt to compensate for systemic gaps in support structures.

3.5 Presentation of Findings

In *Chapter 2.4*, we described the artistic use of the lecture performance to question the hierarchisation of systems of knowledge production between academia and artistic practice. As a contribution to the first *ICDD* in 2024, we presented our results and interpretations through a 30-minute lecture performance combining live speech, performance, and video-recorded material. The latter is particularly challenging to convey in text, and we therefore provide the reader with further explanation.

The videos, which use screen recordings of activities executed on a computer desktop, emphasise the now ubiquitous role of the computer as an indispensable artistic tool, as mentioned in the theoretical framework. Furthermore, the digital workspace blurs the boundaries between work, play, and rest, an effect that is intensified when screens dominate our environment. This collapse of categories impacts how we conceptualize and interact with the materials of our work, making the choreography of digital interactions – cutting, pasting, organizing files – part of the creative process itself. In this sense, the process of file management in the videos becomes an essential consequence of digitalisation and is therefore intertwined with the logic of artistic methodology. For further insight into the dynamic interplay between the format used and the phenomena observed, we provide examples of the videos shown during the lecture performance:

1. In Video #4: *Desktop Performance*, we comment on the dynamics between institutions and artists, reflected in the handling of desktop objects (*Figure 2*).

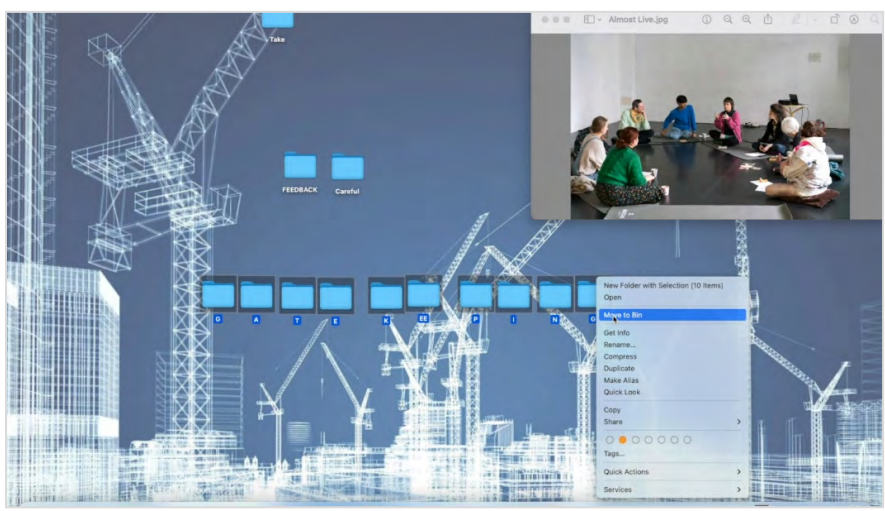

Figure 2. Screenshot from Video #4: *Desktop Performance*

2. This video exemplifies artistic research activities such as literature search or accessing PDF files through platforms that are not affiliated with their official publishers. It also hints at the overreliance on close personal relationships to compensate for the lack of professional assistance (*Figure 3*).

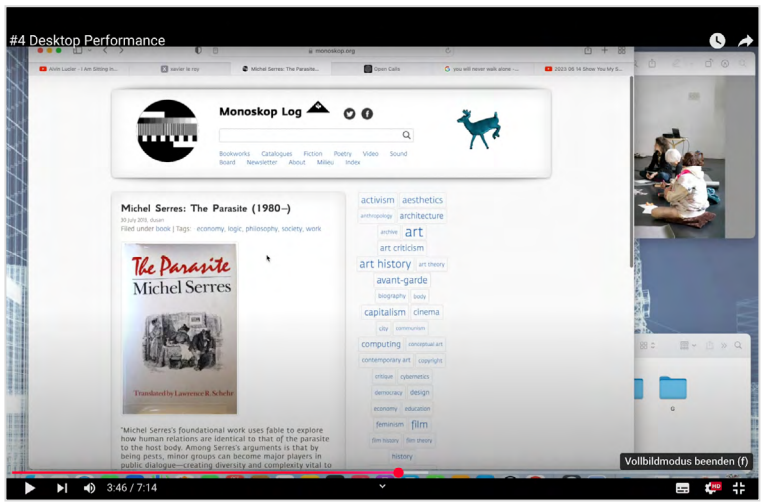

Figure 3. Screenshot from Video #4: *Desktop Performance*

3. Video #4: *Desktop Performance* evokes not only the problems associated with AI-driven apps in academic and educational environments but also accentuates the automated nature of artistic discourse, which often lacks opportunities for intervention, as it is largely dictated by institutions (*Figure 4*).

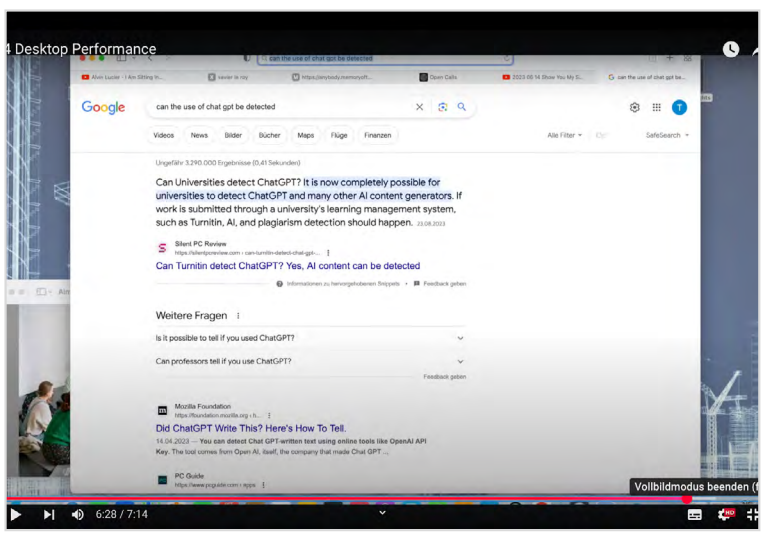

Figure 4. Screenshot from Video #4: *Desktop performance*

The findings above were used by the authors to create Video #4: *Desktop Performance* for the lecture performance *Construction Site*. The video can be accessed by readers via the QR code in *Figure 5*.

Figure 5. QR Code for Video #4: *Desktop Performance*

4. Video #3: *Quote Assembly* from our lecture performance conveys attempts to capture the concept of "discursive ecology". The act of navigating folders filled with texts from philosophy, sociology, and dance studies becomes an aesthetic practice of language assembly. Like geometric shapes in the game *Tetris*, texts appear and disappear while sentences are copied, pasted, and condensed into a Google document. These fragments gradually connect to form a quote by Manning and Massumi (2014).

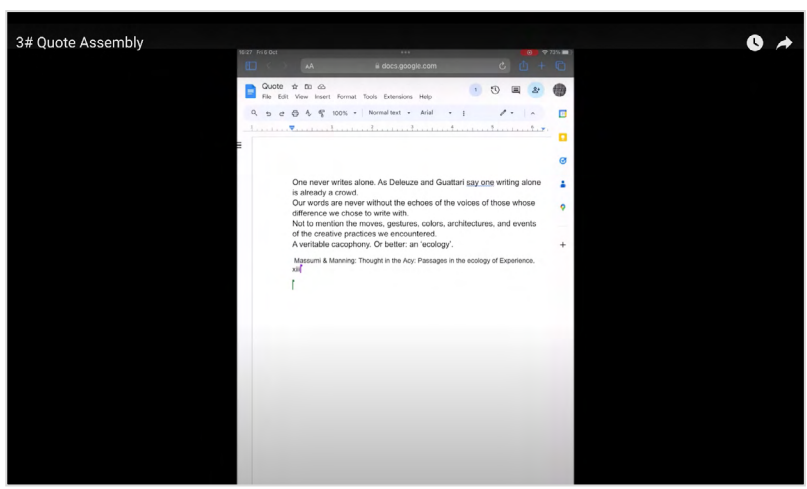

Figure 6. Screenshot from Video #3: *Quote Assembly*

The conceptual approach of 'discursive ecology' inspired the authors to create Video #3: *Quote Assembly* for the lecture performance *Construction Site.* The video can be viewed by readers via the QR code in *Figure 7*.

Figure 7. QR Code for Video #3: *Quote Assembly*

5. We staged a fictionalised reflective conversation with three theoreticians and created Video #5: *ZOOM Dialogues* for the lecture performance *Construction Site*. This fictionalised call featured scholars and theoreticians whose work underpins and intertwines with the theoretical foundations of this article. With this gesture, we sought to reveal the unfinished character of our own initiative, open to revision, criticism, discussion, and feedback, under the same conditions and guidelines we propose for any event we host with TMC (*Figure 8*).

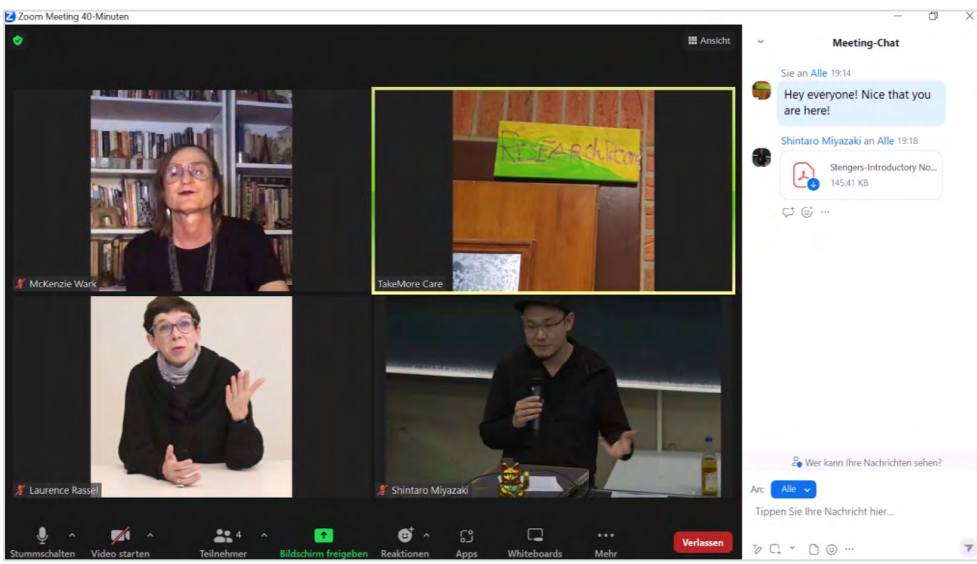

Figure 8. Screenshot from Video #5: *ZOOM Dialogues*: a fictionalised video call with theoreticians of different fields 'giving feedback' on the TMC initiative

The authors interacted with the projected video as if in a live ZOOM call. The video does not include the live-spoken parts, which the authors added during the lecture performance. Therefore, rather than providing access to Video #5, a transcript of the full 'conversation' is available for readers via the QR code in *Figure 9*.

Figure 9. QR Code for the Transcript of Video #5: *ZOOM Dialogues*

4. DISCUSSION

As the state of research on feedback has shown, it remains somewhat of a niche concept, despite its potential as a reflective activity within both educational and professional artistic practice.

As a pedagogical concept and teaching method, a power-critical and de-transactionalised application of feedback practices could provide valuable opportunities for institutional adaptation, provided that practitioners remain cautious of the underlying power structures and inherent notions of valorisation.

As feedback remains undertheorized, it warrants further research. The most precise conceptualisation of different feedback modes in dance that we worked with (i.e., Susan Foster's distinction between feedback as a goods-in-transaction and feedback as a mutual gift; 2019), though poignant in its duality, falls short of capturing the broader institutional contexts and power structures in which the two mutual gift-givers of feedback meet and co-construct the reflections they exchange. Its relative absence from artistic self-publications may also hint at the transactional use of feedback, situating it more in exchanges between artists and their practices than within an individual artist's creative work. The case study we presented here suggests that further conceptualisation of the term might benefit from attention to these larger contexts: interpersonal, infrastructural, as well as institutional.

TMC proposes two relevant interventions: first, through its original feedback format, as an intervention in the artistic field and its lack of accessible, non-transactional spaces of reflection and exchange; and second, through the presentation format of lecture performance, as an intervention in the academic production of knowledge that reflects on the activities of the TMC initiative.

Our dual intervention – TMC within the freelance scene and our lecture performance in academia – demonstrates a shift from institutional critique to integration within the very knowledge institution it critiques. This shift reflects a growing recognition of artistic research as a legitimate form of knowledge production (Borgdorff, 2006; Gerber et al., 2020; Hannes, 2023). In *Construction Site*, we deliberately challenged conventional academic formats by creating dense, multi-layered video images and pre-recorded text. By embracing uncertainty, we open up new ways for audiences to engage with knowledge, mirroring broader trends in which hybrid formats – such as those produced by artists like Hito Steyerl – are increasingly part of scholarly discourse (Steyerl, 2013).

The second intervention, the lecture performance in academia, suggests that knowledge institutions must move toward supporting hybrid, multimodal, and performative formats that blend visual, textual, and live elements. McKenzie Wark (2020) emphasizes how digital spaces are increasingly merging with different spheres of life, including the artistic and the academic. Our work signals that academic spaces should embrace art as a force that reshapes not only how knowledge is produced but also how it is communicated.

The first intervention, the TMC feedback initiative within the freelance scene, can be understood as a critical disruption of the conventionalised relationships between artists and artistic institutions. The success of TMC can be attributed to its low threshold: no credentials are required, and access is free upon subscribing to an email chain. With such low barriers to entry, it is largely driven by everyday digital tools, making it both accessible and inclusive.

Taking the implications of the TMC feedback format seriously, we ask how institutions in the artistic field might be reshaped according to principles of mutuality, equalised access independent of professional artistic status, the de-hierarchisation of the fragmented registers of artistic discourse, and the application of a non-transactional logic to the exchange of reflections on artistic works and their meaning. Naturally, such a question would be answered differently in the context of a university dance program, a dance house, or a funding body, and it is too complex to pursue in detail within the framework of this paper. Yet even the tensions arising from utopically imagining an institution based on these principles serve as productive fuel for potentially reimagining institutional structures. Critical pedagogues such as Laurence Rassel, with her concept of a commonized, ever self-reinventing 'instituting' university (Rassel, 2018), can serve as a valuable orientation in this regard.

Lastly, our intervention reflects on the use of digital tools in education, particularly in dance. Naomi Klein (2020), Shintaro Miyazaki (2022, 2023), and educational researchers such as Ben Williamson and Anna Hogan (2020) point out that social platforms, while crucial for connection, are increasingly subject to commodification. In the case of TMC, Zoom, a company that has been involved in the privatization and pay-walling of its widely used communication software, serves as our main platform for feedback. To some extent, TMC reinforces the very systems it seeks to critique. At the same time, it offers access to Zoom's privatised, closed-off premium services for a group of artists once a month, creating a space for collective exchange. The authors use occasional funding or paid TMC-related work to pay for the software, thereby redistributing resources for TMC's feedback community and creating a digital infrastructure for collegial encounters which is otherwise scarce beyond the digital realm.

Hito Steyerl (2013) emphasizes how digital and institutional frameworks not only influence the content of artistic production but also profoundly shape the cognitive processes and creative methodologies of artists. Our performance reflects how these tools affect artistic practice, embedding commercial and hierarchical structures into the very instruments we use.

As we stand on the cusp of the complete reabsorption of digital tools into dance education, such re-examinations become urgent, raising critical questions about

the accessibility and sustainability of knowledge-sharing platforms in the arts and education, as well as their impact on shaping and/or constraining artistic practices.

5. CONCLUSION

Our research examines the structural limitations of feedback, a notion essential to both pedagogic and artistic domains. Through this lens, it exposes institutional barriers that shape artistic discourse in the state-funded freelance performing arts scene. Feedback, when meaningfully integrated, is crucial for ensuring equal participation in the discursive order, enabling individuals not only to contribute to it but also to question it, thereby engaging in the collective construction and critical reflection of meaning and knowledge building within artistic communities.

TMC emerged as a response to the challenges of discursive access, providing an artist-run platform for feedback and knowledge exchange outside hierarchical institutional settings. Analysed through a constructivist GT approach, the initiative revealed recurring themes, including (but not limited to)

1. a general lack of feedback infrastructure in the post-educational phase;
2. the continued presence of limiting, traditional, transactional feedback structures;
3. economic precarity leading to problematic entwinements of work and intimate attachments;
4. the navigation of diverse discourse registers that force artists into a constant reinvention of discourse and hinder a unified stance, which
5. brings about struggles in creating a self-directed artistic practice within institutionalised frameworks.

The outcomes of this research contribute to the expanding field of outlined research concerns. At the same time, they also lead to a cyclical relationship between our own artistic practice and our theorisation. Rather than presenting a finalised model, we have sought to convey the essence of the evolving initiative that questions how artistic knowledge is produced, shared, and sustained beyond institutional dependencies, and in doing so echoes the broader critique of the hierarchisation of creative and educational spaces.

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