CHIEF (Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future)
Grant Agreement no: 770464

WP7_D7.1: Case Study Report_Spain_Street Dance

Author: Nele Hansen (UPF)

Index

1   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the study on a street dance community carried out in Barcelona during 2019 and 2020. As central research questions, we asked about cultural heritage in the making and (sub)alternative expressions of youth culture within street dance. Furthermore, our analysis focused particularly on the meaning of public space. The aim also consisted in uncovering central features of street dance culture. The methodological approach involved ethnographic fieldwork, including non-participant and participant observation, informal conversations, and semi-structured interviews with young dancers and key referees. Findings point to the multifaceted meanings present in the street and the interconnection of street dance with lifestyle and a broader value system. Street dance culture can be considered a powerful emotional and sociocultural tool. Crucial cultural aspects include an intergenerational transfer of knowledge, on the basis of oral and corporal/bodily transmissions, and learning processes that are horizontal, collective and informal. Street dance culture is based on both origins/history and evolution/innovation. Young dancers engage in global community-building networks and show new hybrid cultural identities. Although the level of inclusion and integration is generally high, equality in terms of gender is still "a work in progress", as we still observe masculine dominance and patriarchal tendencies. Our main findings can be situated and understood as powerful self-organised subcultural expressions set against adult-centred and authority-guided spaces. Through street dance practices, the youth are creating their own meaningful spaces, especially in the public space, as potential "contact zones" with other identities, enabling new hybrid cultural practices and identities.

2   INTRODUCTION

During the last few years in Barcelona we could witness an increasing presence of young people practising street dance in certain public places in the city centre. You could encounter small groups of young people, boys and girls, dancing in the evening and through the night to the hip hop music coming out of their boom boxes, quite self-absorbed, cheerfully and peacefully sharing time with each other. Who were these youngsters and why did they engage in this activity? Why in those particular places and not in others? This furnished an excellent opportunity for researching an *informal and self-organised group,* with no adult authorities involved in any way whatsoever. It also provided an interesting case for researching *processes of cultural heritage in the making and (sub)alternative expressions of youth culture.* As we followed along this line, the first research questions popped up: What is the relation between street dance and culture and the role of *public space/the street*? How do young people live, understand and share this culture? Our research was further guided by other questions: In what way is participation as a street dancer meaningful to the construction of young people's

identity? What values, philosophy and lifestyles are concealed in hip hop culture? In general, it was important to understand this cultural participation in relation to the experience of being a *young person* – that is, being at a certain stage in life and having a determined social role in society – taking into account the possible links to youth cultures. During fieldwork, more research questions unfolded: What do street dance and hip hop culture have to offer to young people, in terms of informal learning processes and sociocultural tools? In what way does street dance culture generate community building and senses of belonging? Last, but not least, the gender aspect turned out to be a crucial transversal element: our study looked into how gender relations and roles were constructed, and the perspective that the community has on diverse sexual identities.

3   METHODS

3.1   *SELECTION OF WP7 SITES*

The two cases chosen in Catalonia – the street dance collective in Barcelona and a traditional Catalan female "devils group" – represent contrasting examples of cultural heritage processes among young people in present-day Catalonia. They are appealing also because of the contrast they offer in terms of cultural expressions, between an urban/metropolitan environment (street dance) and a small, more traditional city with closer links to Catalan and local heritage (devils group). In the street dance case, the form of organisation was another criterion: it is a fluid, not formally constituted collective that is completely self-organised by young people, without any involvement on the part of adult authorities. In Barcelona, we can classify street dance as an *emerging* cultural phenomenon taking place over the last ten years and involving youths and public space. In the process of our research, on the basis of our interviews with key informants, stakeholders and young dancers, we learnt that street dance and hip hop culture in Barcelona (and in Spain in general) has had several ups and downs since the 1980s. What we witnessed was a "rising again" of a cultural expression that had experienced a peak before. Moreover, the street dance collective offered the possibility of reflecting on youth culture using the street as its main performing and gathering space, thereby reflecting on the intersection between youth, cultural expressions, and public space. It also offered the opportunity to deepen our understanding of (sub)alternative cultural expressions of youth in the context of a globalised world, and of a city like Barcelona with its simultaneously very transnational and local traits. Analysing dance as a cultural expression is highly appealing, because dance focuses on nonverbal and bodily experiences and learning processes, as compared to other expressions that involve much more discourse and verbality. Before starting fieldwork we had little information on the socio-economic profile of the participants, but taking into account previous studies of hip hop culture, it was likely to find a high degree of cultural/national diversity and

a slight majority of youth belonging to lower social classes (being youth of middle and higher social class also present, but to a lesser extent).

3.2   DATA COLLECTION

Fieldwork included non-participant and participant observation, informal conversations taking place during observation, practically unstructured interviews with key informants ("experts") and semi-structured interviews with young informants. Overall there were 20 non-participant/participant observations, numerous informal conversations, and 17 interviews – 2 slightly structured interviews with key informants ("experts") and 15 semi-structured interviews (14 individual and 1 group interview). All 17 interviews were transcribed. 23 hours of conversation were recorded.

It was clear from the beginning that this would imply a relatively long phase of "entering" the field, and that observation would be the starting point. This first phase took place between May and August 2019. I entered the field through personal contacts with young dancers from a previous study, my rudimentary knowledge of "hot spots" of urban dance activities and by contacting community and youth centres where I imagined street dance activity to be present. First contacts and information led to further contacts and information, according to a snowball-principle. It involved intensive non-participant observation (during gatherings and activities in the public space, in training rooms, and at competitions and festivals), a lot of informal conversations (getting to know people, having a chat), pictures and videos taken during observation, interviews with 2 key informants and 5 semi-structured interviews with young informants. The second phase took place between November 2019 and March 2020. This phase consisted of a reconnection with the field and a higher level of field involvement. At times, non-participant observation turned into participant observation (for example, when I asked young people to teach me a move, or when dancing myself in the training room or attending events). Contacting more informants was made possible in part thanks to some very collaborative informants, who put me in contact with other dancers, shared information with me about events/activities, and even organised a group interview. The contacting of informants in this second phase was more gender balanced than during the first one, which was characterised by a slight gender bias that was mostly due to my own perceived distance and inhibition when contacting male dancers, since I tend to sympathise faster with females than with males. During the second phase the rest of the semi-structured interviews were conducted. As regards my own positionality and role in the field, I was conscious of a series of factors throughout the process: my gender, my age, not being a street dancer myself, and my condition as a researcher. From my perspective, young people were the experts in the research field: I was learning side by side with them and providing them (through my questions and observations) a space/possibility to reflect on their participation and identity as street dancers.

Overall, the degree of collaboration was good; access to spaces and activities was not problematic at any moment. At the beginning, the young people showed a rather distancing and restrained attitude towards me, but after the first contacts they were happy that someone from the outside should demonstrate honest interest, and they were grateful to be able to share their experiences. For many informants, the interest shown in them meant a *recognition* of their practices, lifestyles and culture; many were eager to communicate the main features of street dance and hip-hop culture. In general, it was challenging to build relations of trust and proximity and "getting involved", given the fact that they are not a fixed group with regular activities, and it also proved difficult to "follow" and keep in touch with the same people. But thanks to certain "key informants" and their high degree of collaboration in the second phase, relations grew closer and my involvement became more intense, allowing me to get more and more "native" (identify more with them, gain more understanding, listen to hip hop music at home, watch movies, accompany informants to events/battles, etc.). Overall, integrating into the collective was tricky, in the sense that I remained an outsider due to my not being a dancer myself. My role as a mere observer often made me feel like I was "intruding" on their confidence zone. But I could make up for this intrusion with my genuine interest and passion for dance, as well as by taking pictures and videos during activities, which turned my role of observer into a more active one. Dancers generally appreciate being photographed and filmed, since they use this audio-visual material to review their performance and improve their dance. On the one hand, proper language skills were a plus: the diversity of origin of the informants could be duly respected and interviews could be conducted in Spanish, English and German. On the other hand, it was a handicap for me that Spanish is not my mother tongue: sometimes this hampered my understanding and communication with the young informants, especially in relation to daily and slang language.

The schemes of the interviews' topics were maintained, but they were extended based on the interests of WP7 in Spain. The questions worked well in general, although the question "What is culture for you?" was often perceived as confusing and vague, even though throughout the whole interview, the young people (unconsciously, without asking) actually kept referring to culture every time they talked about "the hip hop culture", "the dance culture", "we have to preserve the culture". Regarding certain issues, contradictions were observed between what was spoken in the interviews and our own observations, for example in relation to aesthetics and gender issues (see section 4.2.10).

3.3   DATA ANALYSIS & ETHICAL ISSUES

Analysis of the fieldwork diaries and interviews was carried out via manual coding. The first step consisted in a thematic analysis of the fieldwork diaries and interviews, with the aim of summarising 10 fieldwork diaries and 10 interviews, choosing the most signifying and

contrasting ones, in order to represent the whole range of diversity. This thematic analysis, resulting in summaries, served to identify emerging subjects and important issues in *each* interview/fieldwork diary (the unit of analysis being each single interview/diary). In this way it was possible to outline the most central issues, not only for each informant/observation, but also from a comparative perspective. This analysis constituted a first important step for an exhaustive comparative thematic analysis, involving both deductive (preconceived topics we expect to find and focus on, based on previous knowledge and theory) and inductive aspects (which allow emerging topics to arise from the information).

Ethical issues first came up in the context of filming and taking pictures. Although many young people actually appreciated our filming and taking pictures of them, it was still a sensitive issue: Is it ethically valuable to take pictures of street dance activities in a public space, given that these activities are undertaken in the public space and are therefore "public"? For practical reasons, it was impossible to ask each and every one in the room or in the street for permission before filming/photographing group activities. When taking pictures expressly of any particular dancer, I always asked for their verbal consent beforehand. At all moments, I found it ethically important to share this material with the young informants if they wished to, stressing the idea of an exchange instead of "a researcher studying an object".

Given this ethical perspective on researcher-participant relations, a premise of WP7 research consisted in sharing the transcriptions of the interviews with the young informants and receiving feedback from them (still in process). The anonymisation of the street dance collective was not problematic in itself, because it is a fluid (not constituted) collective with numerous/changing participants. Moreover, it was possible to anonymise the names of places, neighbourhoods, etc. Nevertheless, this anonymisation implied losing richness of contextual and geographically situated information: for people who know and are interested in the context and (geographical) dynamics of Barcelona, it would have been highly interesting to situate the practices and activities geographically, because particular places have specific meanings and evoke imaginaries and "feelings".

4 FINDINGS

4.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The street dance collective in Barcelona is a fluid, non-static and not formally constituted group of young people who practice street dance in different places in Barcelona. Practitioners of *freestyle* street dance engage in different dance styles of the "umbrella" *hip hop culture*: mainly breaking, popping, locking, house, and hip hop. Hip hop culture was born in the 70s in marginalised neighbourhoods in New York (and later in the Los Angeles area), within African-American and African-Caribbean communities, on the margins of the big melting pot,

propelled by migrant populations that were socially, economically and culturally excluded from the "centre" (for more details on the origins of hip hop culture see for example Kitwana, 2002; Rose, 1994; Ross & Rose, 1994).

The street dance community in Barcelona has had different "ups and downs" in the course of time. The information on the development of street dance culture in Barcelona and Spain in this study is based exclusively on the data obtained from participants and informants, since there are only a few studies (Bachelors, Master and Doctoral thesis) that concentrate more on hip hop culture in general and rap in particular (see for example Reyes Sánchez, 2003; Sandín Lillo, 2015). Breaking is mentioned, but further dance styles are almost unrepresented. Beginnings of street dance can be traced back to the 1980s, when hip hop culture was brought to Spain and Barcelona, mostly through rap music and dance movies. The most important dance styles that were being "reproduced" in Barcelona were breaking – dancers are "b-boys or "b-girls" - and, to a lesser extent, popping and locking. At the end of the 80s, street dance activity had stopped, but regained strength in the middle of the 90s. Social dancing and learning took place mainly on the streets and through imitation and sharing. Starting from the 2000s, breaking remained as a freestyle and street-based dance style, whereas popping, locking and hip hop are increasingly being "transferred" to the dance academies. An important generational change took place nearing 2010, as former freestyle pioneers in Barcelona got older and retired from dance activities. At that time, a strong community associated with the "krump" dance style was gaining presence on the streets. However, after a legendary (territorial) battle between krumpers and the "new generation of freestylers", who were fighting to claim their place in the city and the community, the krumpers' community dissolved and the new (presently active) generation took over, taking control of downtown squares like M. and U.

Over the last decade, "institutionalised" street dance has gained more and more importance in dance academies, as the relevance of competition and professionalization of street dance increases. Historically, there has been a dispute within the collective of street dancers between *freestyle dancers* (on-the-street and improvising) and *dance-school dancers* (structured learning and choreographies). Participants in these two "worlds" have quite different socio-demographic profiles, as Estefania explains:

> *In freestyle you find interesting life stories, people have a story of their own – such as where they come from, since they come from many different places – and their trajectories and life are interesting. In academies, instead, there are young people from here, from Catalonia, who started dancing hip-hop in school and are now in the dance academies learning choreography. They only learn what they are taught and they just go to competitions.* (Estefania, 26 years old, hip hop teacher)

Given these differences, our study concentrates exclusively on the *freestyle collective*. Within this collective we find a high diversity of socio-demographic profiles and cultural backgrounds. National/cultural origin is very diverse, many young people come from Latin America, Barcelona and other parts of Spain, and also from Africa and Asia. Although the sociocultural background is quite varied, there are many young people from low-income families and impoverished/marginalised neighbourhoods. True to the origins of hip hop, the characteristics of street dance favour a relationship between marginalised neighbourhoods and street dance participation. Lucas explains some possible reasons:

> *In order to dance street dance, you don't need anything. You don't need to know how to read, how to write, you don't need to have any means. In order to paint you need a canvas and some paint, and maybe you can't afford it. For music you need an instrument. But for dancing you just need your body and what's inside your body: what you've lived, what you feel, what you may not be able to express in words, and then you can transmit it with the body ... I think that's the reason it reaches a greater number of underground scenes.* (Lucas, 30 years, b-boy and dance artist)

The majority of street dancers are aged between 20 and 30 years, although there is an older generation that is still participating, mostly engaging in teaching activities in workshops and dance academies, project collaborations, organising events, etc. (and acting as key referees of the scene). Gender balance varies depending on the different dance styles: whereas breaking is still male-dominated, dance styles like house have a stronger presence of young women, while hip hop is more or less gender balanced. Generally speaking, over the last years there has been an important increase in female participation.

Freestyle dancers gather in specific public places in Barcelona: the M. and U. squares, located at the heart of the city centre, are hotspots of the freestyle dance scene. Every day, starting from 7 or 8 pm, dancers meet there. They communicate their meetings and activities through a Whatsapp group (I had no access to it) and a public Facebook group. People stay as long as they want, their activity usually lasting until 2 am, with more activity on the weekends.

> *Square M. is a huge public space in front of the X Museum. It features an elevated section, a kind of platform, and then broad stairs to the right-hand side of the museum. The place is shared by skaters, breakers, street dancers and all kinds of other people (citizens, tourists) who just sit around on the square to drink, eat, talk, etc. The place itself has a very exciting and lively atmosphere. (…) Some 10-12 people are dancing for their own pleasure in front of the stairs, at first not forming any cypher (a round circle where one dancer at a time steps into the middle and*

"performs"). (...) Many people sit on the stairs, chatting, watching and drinking. (...) There is an atmosphere of camaraderie and good vibes, very relaxed. (...) In the greetings and interpersonal encounters between the dancers I can see a lot of affection and trust. (Fieldwork diary, 16/05/2019)

Street dancers also make use on a regular basis of the training rooms of community centres as a place for dancing; these have an increasingly important role, since more and more dancers prefer to train in closed spaces (see findings related to public space). The most important training rooms are also located in the city centre of Barcelona, in close proximity to squares M. and U. and to public transport. Community or youth centres provide free training rooms on a regular basis, but sometimes demand in exchange that the dancers participate in events or workshops organised by them. Freestyle dancers furthermore participate in local, national and international competitions and workshops.

4.2 EMERGING TOPICS/RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

The topics that emerged were considered in the light of the research questions. We focused on the following key elements of street dance culture, because they are crucial for understanding the particularity of street dance culture: horizontal, informal and collective learning processes; the intergenerational transmission of information/street dance culture; the interrelations between origin and invention; the meaning of the street; local and global community building, and inclusion principles based on interculturality. Apart from these central themes, special attention was paid to gender issues.

4.2.1 First contact with street dance and hip hop culture

It is highly interesting to give an account of how the young dancers first got into contact with street dance, because this points to crucial elements of how information is accessed and shared. For most of the young people, one of the most influential elements was watching dancers in the street and establishing informal teaching/learning relations based on curiosity, challenge, confidence and friendship. Lupus tells about his entry into street dance culture as a teenager, when he was living in a small town and a neighbour told him about "rappers" gathering in a park:

My friend told me that they were very dangerous people, they were criminals, and that I couldn't go up there because they would beat me. But that caught my attention even more. I said: "Damn it!" There was something dangerous about it, so I liked it. So I spent a few months crouching behind parked cars to watch them dance, but of course I was afraid. Until one day they caught me and said: "Come over here". (...) I sat down and learned – yippee! And from then on, they were like teachers to me and my friends. (...) I used to sit in the park, and I was forbidden to dance while

they danced. I could only watch. (...) I would try the steps and then ask them: "Hey, how do you this step?" (Lupus, 35 years, b-boy and founder of street dance crew)

In Barcelona, it is central places of street dance culture like square M. where young people get into contact with the community. Neuralgic places serve as a showcase and "contagious" place, as we will see later on (the meaning of the street):

When I went (for the first time to square M.), I was totally blown away, the whole space was full of people dancing.... (pauses in awe and unable to explain himself)... I was really astonished and surprised at how many young people there were who could dance like that...! They were really passionate about it. Not just passionate, they were letting the reality of the moment sink in. (Juanito, 26 years, hip hop dancer)

Nevertheless, not only physical and personal contact, but also the media, internet and cultural products, such as movies, are key. For the generation of street dancers who were active during the 90s in Barcelona (24-30 years old, approx.), DVDs and YouTube videos were the "sources of knowledge and contagion", the means for appropriating music, dance, styles and meanings of street dance culture:

And then all those dance films came out. So "Streetstyle" (DE), "You got served" (US), was my first real hip hop film. It really inspired me. And that was the time when lots of people, including many people I know, really started to dance. They formed crews because they had seen something like that in the film, one crew against the other, and the audience decides and all that. (Markus, 27 years, hip hop dancer)

I was browsing the internet one day when I saw a boy dancing in a video, and I liked the red jacket he was wearing. Looking at the way he moved his feet I said "This is so cool...!" So I started to watch tutorials on the Internet and "how-do-you-do-this-thing" videos. And there was a guy who explained it ... So that was what motivated me to dance. At that time, some boys had come from London and we had a typical high school party. These boys started dancing and that changed my life for good. I was impressed and I started dancing, I don't even remember what I was dancing. (Benjamin, 31 years, popping dancer)

The importance of the Internet and cultural products such as movies, YouTube videos, and information found in the social media must be highlighted, but spaces such as the street and community centres are also of great significance.

4.2.2 Meanings of the street and public space

Bearing in mind the experiences of the young people described before, and in order to approach the essential elements of street dance culture, it is crucial to talk about the meaning of public space. The reasons for using the street are highly diversified. First of all, the use of the street is free and involves no entrance fee, unlike dance academies. Furthermore, the street is always available and allows free access to young people at any hour of the day, unlike the community and youth centres that usually close at 9 in the evening, leaving little time for people who get out of work at around 8 or 9 pm. For many of our informants, dance academies are not an option, due to economical constraints and the costs of taking classes. This is the main explanation that accounts for the power of street culture in the eyes of youths coming from low-income families and marginalised neighbourhoods. Apart from this, most young people appreciate the power of the street for other reasons. Street culture means most of all *interculturality*: a *melting pot* of different people (origin, social class, age, culture, background, etc.), where anything and any kind of interaction is theoretically possible:

> *The street has its own culture, its own codes. Many cultures intersect there. Street culture has the most extensive codes. Because there you have the poorest person and the richest person in the same place. (…) Managing these different codes within the culture... for me street culture is always the most important thing. Because I am who I am because of the street. The street taught me, the street gave me the chance and the street brought me to Europe.* (David, 31 years, hip hop dancer)

In this sense, young people affirm that they "have learned a lot of culture in the street" (Gonzalo). When it comes to dance, the street offers a possibility for positive contagion, with dancers turning into references for other young people and potential future dancers, as BD explains:

> *Someone may come by, look and say "Hell, I like it!" and then start learning. Some people may just pass by, see it and say "Wow!" Or someone might say "I know a person who likes this". So he will tell that person: "Hey, look, I've seen such and such in this place". Or he will discover the culture and want to learn about this culture. Because we do things on the street. Otherwise, if we kept indoors, it would much more complicated for these situations to happen.* (BD, 31 years, hip hop dancer)

Moreover, the street offers the street dance community a possibility for transmitting and promoting their culture, not only to other possible dancers, but to the broader public. In this sense, *"dancers use the public space as a showcase for their cultural expression, it is a way of*

showing to the broader public what they are doing, what they love, how they have fun, what they are passionate about" (Fieldwork diary entry, 16/05/2019). For some young dancers the street also has a political dimension, as it allows them to show resistance by carrying out cultural expressions – such as their dance - in a public space – which is meant to be open for everyone – that are not regulated or imposed by the city council or other formal institutions:

> *It's that feeling that you're not doing something they're imposing on you, but rather doing it because you want to, in the space that you want to, and it's not regulated by any law, nor by any entity that controls you. (...) And I believe that in all urban cultures it's important not wanting to be part of society but instead generating a culture of one's own, not governed by other institutions. We're doing it our own way.* (Luz, 24 years, hip hop dancer)

> *I think the beauty of street dance is that we can "occupy" a public space for a period of time. (...) I believe that public spaces are made to be occupied, to be danced on, to be transgressed ... to be a little dissident. (...) We (dancers) offer the possibility of inhabiting sites that are uninhabited, in a different way. It may be a subway entrance; it may be a square... Because if they are public, they are public. In other words, the public space is for everyone.* (Lucas, 30 years, b-boy and dance artist)

For many young dancers, the street represents a space where the principles of their culture (see section 4.2.3) are respected, where fundamental values are transmitted (ibid.), and which allows the construction of an open space. But not all aspects of public space are valued positively by participants. One such aspect has to do with the fact that the street, much more than indoor spaces, is associated with the consumption of alcohol and drugs, not only by other people in the street but also by the dancers themselves.

> *Of late, I don't like training too long on the street. It's often very dirty, many people bother you, dancers often smoke marijuana and don't take training seriously.* (Arantxa, 24 years, electrohop dancer)

> *Street dancing gets mixed with drugs & alcohol here; I try to convince young people to come to the training rooms, trying to turn them away from the "dark side", because in the training rooms you're not allowed to consume anything.* (Ben, 28 years, b-boy)

Indeed, the street is potentially open to disturbances and interruptions, as well as a place where robberies and physical and verbal violence can occur. The issue of security and the risk of

physical violence are definitely much more critical for women than for men. Many female dancers point to the fact that they don't feel comfortable training in the street because men pick on them:

> *It's not easy (being a woman in street dance) because the environment doesn't make it easy for you. (…) And there are many people in square M. (non dancers) who get drunk or whatever [inaudible], but this is normal. (…) It's mostly men who go there to annoy a woman, tell her (sexist) things… (…) If I believe he is saying nonsense and might get violent with me, I do my best to turn a deaf ear, but I'll be the first one to let it out and say "I need you to go, thank you, just go away. Leave us alone", because in the end it gets too annoying. (…) But it's not easy.*
> *INT: And do you feel that you have support from others, from other dancers, both girls and boys?*
> *Yes. (…) At one point, one of the boys, a dancer, who was there, at the other end who saw what was happening, approached the man and told him "go away or I'm going to hit you" ... (…) But, the fear we suffer always, somehow, no matter what the degree of harassment. But yes, when someone comes who wants to bother us, everyone tries to get him to leave.* (Susana, 27 years, krump and wacking dancer)

The issue that bothers young dancers the most is the fact that the public authority – the police – turn them away at a given time during the night (10 or 11pm), frequently fining them for putting on music. The strategies young dancers apply is to try to talk and negotiate with the police, but sometimes they have no other option than to change locations and find a new spot with no police presence. Informants talk of a *double moral standard of the public authority*, in that the Municipality is using street dance in Barcelona, on the one hand, to present a positive image of the city (Barcelona as a young, open and multicultural city), and on the other hand they are penalising any dance activities taking place on the street:

> *BD: It's very ambiguous. (…) The city council promotes it, but then the fact is that the police come in and say "Hey, hey, shove off!" And on Tuesday, for example, we were fined. Every one of us.*
> *G: Everyone. Let me tell you, in the last few years the police seized about 10 or 15 loudspeakers... (…) And we're not doing anything wrong. But they treat us like thieves. And we get angry, man. Because there are a thousand things that are going bad here in Barcelona, and yet they come after us. But actually, we're giving the city something good. Are we doing any bad thing? Loud music. I know there are people sleeping...*

BD: For me the main thing is that they are false people. They promote you in order to sell Barcelona, you know. "Wow, look at this!" Then suddenly, boom! (BD, 31 years, and Gonzalo, 26 years, hip hop dancers)

The lack of public support for street dance culture is criticised by many of the young participants. Street dance, as in many other countries, is not recognised as an *art* worth funding. Dancers who are more involved in projects and collaborations with the municipality complain that they are treated as children and not taken as seriously as other dance styles/artistic expressions: *"street dance is still seen as a bunch of kids playing around"* (Mateo, 40 years, b-boy and coordinator for dance projects). In part, this is due to the fact that information about street dance is often wrong or missing, so that the broader public and authorities still have a stereotyped image of street dance. Dancers wish for a change in public support, although they believe this is difficult to achieve.

4.2.3   Street dance culture: its culture, its values, its lifestyle…!

All of the participants have assimilated the vision of street dance as a *culture* – they have no doubt about it. Even without being asked, young people will talk of "the culture of street dance", "in the culture…" Street dance culture derives from hip hop culture, the broader "umbrella" culture. Informants are aware of the multiple layers of culture and they associate this with subculture. They also refer to key elements of culture, like the simultaneous maintaining and transmitting of the "origins", the "ancestral knowledge" of hip hop and street dance culture (such as particular moves) and a constant evolution of the culture due to diverse personal and collective interpretations and "uses":

Dance itself is a great culture. And within dance there is hip hop, which is another culture, and commercial hip hop is yet another culture; they are all different subcultures. (Arantxa, 24 years, electro-hop dancer)

Within hip hop culture there are so many different minds, and for me each of those minds is a different culture, which in the end make up that group. So, there are so many different points of view and everything is evolving. Musicians create different music, mix different stuff, and people who dance take that music and create different things from that root, something different, because they personally feel that way. (Paula, 30 years, afro-house dancer)

Hip hop culture consists of four elements, which are graffiti, DJ[1], MC[2] and dance (which in its origins was only breaking but has by now evolved into more dance styles). All of the informants are highly aware of these four elements and that all of them belong intrinsically to hip hop culture. Along with these four elements are the particular *values* that form part of hip hop culture: "peace", "unity", "love", "having fun" and, as a later addition, "respect". These serve as the moral guidelines that lead the members of hip-hop culture, not only within the collective, but also in their private lives.

> *I like the values that hip-hop culture promotes. (…) This interested me and I felt even more attracted by the fact that it promotes such values …* (Esperanza, 22 years, hip hop dancer)

These days - where conflicts and rivalries are much less present in street dance culture compared to the beginning in the USA - informants stress values like "respect" and "love", and very importantly to the value of "*having fun*": the "*right for free time and "uselessness of activities in these times of bills and suchlike"* (Lucas), the right to play, in contrast with young people's worries about the future and increasing responsibilities. Hip hop and street dance allow young people to disconnect from reality and from capitalist/individual society, to *feel free* and have the possibility of becoming a "*superhero*", a sort of *alter ego*: in dance, they can counterbalance their feelings of inferiority or failure (for example, those in the formal educational system), and escape from the impositions of society, even trespassing legality:

> *Our nickname, in hip-hop culture, is our superhero name. So in normal life we have the name our parents gave us and the way of life that society imposes on us: study, work, behave well, be a good person … (…). We are lucky in the hip-hop world that we can create an alter ego, we can be a superhero and do what we want: our rules, our laws, and I do what I want. (…) In normal life my name is such and such, but when I get into hip-hop, my name is Lupus. Here, I behave normally and do what society tells me: I pay my bills, work and so on; but in hip hop I'm going to paint graffiti, which is illegal, I'm going to dance in the city square, I'm going to throw myself on the floor, I'm going to do things that in the normal world would look weird. (…) It's our way of living our life: be free.* (Lupus, 35 years, b-boy and founder of street dance crew)

These values and ways of doing and living constitute a concrete *lifestyle*, which is crucial for the identity constructions of young people:

---

[1] DJ: Disc-jockey, a person who selects and plays music for an audience.
[2] MC: Literally "mic-controller", but actually a term for the person who raps.

Hip hop is a way of life, a lifestyle. (…) And hip hop is to really live this life. And, really, it is a statement. Not saying "I am hip hop because I dance hip hop", but because you are really living it. (Markus, 27 years, hip hop dancer)

For example, I am co-director of an urban dance festival (…) but I go out to the street to dance and I meet with kids who train. For me, it's part of my way of doing. It's a lifestyle. I'm closing in on 40 years old, but I think: why not...?! (Mateo, 40 years, b-boy and coordinator for dance projects)

4.2.4 Gathering and transmission of knowledge

One of the most important aspects of street dance culture is the transmission of information and knowledge and the balance between origins/tradition and innovations/evolution. These elements stress the cultural dimension of street dance and contrasts with existing stereotypes about hip hop culture: *"it's not about some kids playing around and not knowing what they're doing!"* (observation notes). We should also pay special attention to the oral and face-to-face nature of the transmission of knowledge, which remains until today, although new technologies have also been changing the transmission processes. Since its origins in the 70s, hip hop culture has evolved and has been transmitted in "person", in social gatherings and parties. What the dancing (breaking) represented symbolically was the fight between different gang members; it was a substitution for physical violence, transformed into a playful competition. Knowledge and information were passed on through watching, imitating and asking the knowledgeable ones. Until the rise of the Internet, knowledge was spread *orally* and corporally, that is, *through the body*. It was for this same reason that information had difficulty in spreading across geographical space; information only arrived through the dancers' social exchange, and through those who had the opportunity to travel and share the knowledge. For this reason, information arriving in Europe was often misinformed or insufficient:

A: (In N.Y.) they did not share that information. So the information that has come to us is above all information from Paris, that is, of older generations. (…) And we do not want this to happen, at least I would not like for a generation gap to happen, because that's when disinformation begins. And then you start not knowing "what was that?", "where do I look for it?" You can look it up on the internet but it's not enough… (Alex, 24 years, hip hop dancer)

To preserve "ancestral" hip hop knowledge, dancers from Europe/Spain and the incipient street dance community would travel to the United States in order to gather direct knowledge from the pioneers (often older dancers with more experience and mobility and with higher incomes,

in order to afford traveling). Dancers like Lupus still gather this pioneer knowledge during their frequent travels in search of the origins and "stories" of a movement or a dance style:

> *Especially when I go to the United States, I try to talk to old school people from every city I go to.*
> *Who are the old school people?*
> *The pioneers. People who are now 45-50 years and can tell you part of the story (of hip-hop culture), but not because they studied it but because they have lived it. And I love it when they tell me, "Oh, that day this and that happened and that's why we dance like this".* (Lupus, 35 years, b-boy and founder of street dance crew)

Knowing the origins and history of street dance culture, formed in the United States, is for most of the informants, highly important. The community tries to spread this information among its members. Young dancers agree that this history needs to be known in order to understand "where you are within this history" and what meanings you are representing when you dance, as Carme points out:

> *For me it's fundamental to understand the basis. (...) Why that outfit? Why that brand of cap? Why this movement, why those codes, and so on? If you don't know, you are not being respectful. (...) So you are representing a culture that is not, really. You are not being aware of what it is. It's like being a Christian without knowing who Jesus is, you know? Because it's a culture and every culture has a basis, a history that you really have to know. Whether you share it or not is your decision, but you do have to be aware of what you are doing and how you are meant to represent it, respect it, be careful with and, above all, appreciate and care for it, so that it can move forward.* (Carme, 22 years, hip hop dancer)

In this sense, dancers connect the original stories from American territory to their own stories in Barcelona. In this sense, the young dancers of the street dance collective in Barcelona feel a need and responsibility to transmit the knowledge, experiences and information *to the next generations* of young dancers: *We are part of this, the education of the next generation, which also benefits us. I mean, we should feel good about it. "We have co-created", as the Old-G's say, "this path for you". In the same way, we will create a path for those who will follow after us.* (BD, 31 years, hip hop dancer)

But in street dance culture, not only origins/history is crucial, but also innovations and evolution. As the informants highlight, the culture builds on evolution and change, as an intrinsic part of hip-hop culture. Because of its social, oral and corporal learning processes and the cultural fusion, evolution has always been part of the game.

Many things are merged within break (dance), there are steps that come from salsa or capoeira. So, if you take as a starting point that break (dance) is a fusion of everything, you can add more things, it's quite free. (...) I like innovation, so long as you learn the origins and the tradition first. From there you can go ahead and deconstruct. First build, understand the foundation, and from there deconstruct and personalise it. This is important for any culture ... (Paula, 30 years, afro-house dancer)

4.2.5 Informal, horizontal and collective learning processes

In street dance culture, horizontal and informal learning processes are key, and are valued very positively by informants, since they represent a contrast to the learning processes of formal education and "the things society forces you to learn". In hip hop, the rule is "each one teaches another":

Since the beginning (hip hop culture) has been transmitted through generational relays, by people teaching other people, kind of like "each one teaches another", which is like saying: whatever you learn you teach it. You integrate it into your body, you develop it, and then you teach it to the next generation. (...) They put you in context in order for you to understand. For example, "this move comes from such and such party..." So you can understand it and create your own thread of hip-hop history. (Alex, 24 years, hip hop dancer)

Knowledge is passed on among friends and acquaintances through observing, asking, imitating movements; everything is based on social exchange. For many young dancers, the informal learning process that takes place on the street is one of the main attractions of the culture, an expression of a subcultural lifestyle oriented towards *experienced-based* learning processes, as Luz explains:

I've always liked suburban cultures; cultures that arise in cities. (...) Learning on the street, learning from experience. (...) It is not as structured as studying a career; it's more an experience of living it and feeling it. (...) I felt that learning through experience was more real than studying something that may give me a lot of information but does not interest me. I learn what I want to learn, not what I am forced to learn. (Luz, 24 years, hip hop dancer)

Knowledge is shared in an informal, horizontal and collective way, it's something that happens within a community and which builds up a collective knowledge with no owners, as Mateo points out:

These are horizontal pedagogies. But it's not self-taught; you are always doing it with other people, so it is a community teaching. (...) It's a spectacular value at the artistic language level, because it has been jointly created by millions of people without their knowing it, a sum of the innovations they have come up with... We have created a collective knowledge that does not belong to anyone (...) I have invented some movements of my own, but they are being imitated by other people after their own fashion, and I love it when I see that something that I have invented has been taken and mutated by someone else. (...) The pedagogical aspect is basic in urban dance because of the exchange of knowledge. (Mateo, 40 years, b-boy and coordinator of dance projects)

Key concepts here are *community-based education* and *exchange of knowledge*. Our informants want to use them to defend against commercialisation and the individualistic tendencies within the community, in view of the increasing importance of "selling the culture in order to gain money" (competitions, individual achievements, economic competition between dancers, etc.).

4.2.6 Outputs from participation in street dance culture

Taking into account what young people get out of street dance culture – what they learn, what motivates them, what it means to their understanding of the world – is crucial for understanding young people's lives and what this subculture is offering them in terms of tools for "being in the world". One of the benefits many of them derive from street dance is a *connection/communication* with themselves and other people on a completely non-verbal and non-mental level, as Luz explains:

I see dance as a super authentic ritual of connecting on an energetic level and connecting with something that goes beyond words, beyond the mind. Today society is too intellectual and mental, and I mean there are ways to connect that go beyond being intellectual or thinking or speaking: stop talking and start dancing, or start sharing or seeing the essence of people beyond their intellect. We are always judging or rating people by their intellect, but there are many ways to express who we are beyond words. Sometimes you can get to know people in a much deeper way by watching them dance than by listening to them. (Luz, 24 years, hip hop dancer)

Many young people consider that street dance allows them to gain more *self-confidence* in many aspects of their lives, confidence in their bodies, feeling capable of dealing with different situations and challenges in life:

I'm not ashamed of anything. That's another thing that dance does; dance shapes you, dance changes you. Whatever you do, it's because you want to try it too. It changed me a lot: from not having much self-confidence to having the greatest self-confidence on this planet. Because I believe in myself and in everything I can do. (Juanito, 26 years, hip hop dancer)

Informants tell us that dance represents for them a crucial *emotional tool* with which they can overcome negative states of mind and difficult situations in their lives. On a psychological level, it is a very powerful tool for managing emotions and serves as a kind of "antidepressant":

Dancing and music generally give me so much strength, no matter how shitty you feel in life, or if you are having the biggest problem in your life (smiles), if you have a broken heart or you are super happy or just feel completely pissed off and aggressive... No matter what mood you are in, dance always gives you something that you can always express. (...) It actually gave me my life back. (...) It helped me the most when I had really bad times, both in the family and in love ... And that's always the time when you are at a very low point and when you are somehow trying to find yourself again, to become the attractive, confident person you used to be. (...) And under such circumstances, for a long time I was dancing every day! Whether at home, or dancing to a love song, to hard hip hop, to house music, to anything. Dance has helped me so much to become myself once again in such situations. (...) If it wasn't for dance, I think I would be really often… absorbed in something. Suicide…? (smiles) I don't know! (Markus, 27 years, hip hop dancer)

Through young people's voices we realise that street dance activity is not a simple hobby for young people just playing around without having anything else to do; quite the contrary, it's about young brave people who have found a tool to achieve wellbeing and overcome challenges in life, an important psychological-emotional support:

When I lived in Valencia as a teenager, I did not have a good life. (...) I used to party a lot. I had a partner and it was a very toxic relationship that led to abuse and things like that. At the end of that relationship I started to dance again, a little bit of hip hop. (...) The hip hop dance and music helped me move forward and decide to come to Barcelona, move forward in life. (...) Actually, when that relationship ended I did not go to see any psychologist, although I think I might have needed it; instead, I self-analysed and went back mentally to 4 or 5 years ago, and started doing what I would have done at that time, I started living again from scratch. (Esperanza, 30 years, b-girl and rapper)

For many informants, street dance means getting another chance in life, undergoing a positive change and renewing interest in life, as well as feeling responsible for themselves and for others. It is also about gaining interest in acquiring knowledge, for example learning languages, as Juanito explains:

Dance is what made me, it made me have an interest in life. When I started dancing, I was curious about learning languages. As I started dancing I realised: all music is in English. When you go to foreign countries, if you don't know English you can't do anything. I made many trips outside Spain, and if I had not spoken English I would not have been able to communicate. Thanks to dance I learned English. I didn't learn by signing up to an academy, no. (Juanito, 26 years, hip hop dancer)

4.2.7   Street dance as a sociocultural tool

On a collective/communitarian level, street dance is considered by most informants to be a powerful social tool. It is essentially regarded as a positive reference in marginalised and violent neighbourhoods, where children and young people often come from families that are disrupted and/or with a lot of economic and sociocultural restraints:

The fact that (children of marginalised neighbourhoods) watch people dancing is like "Ah! There's something else in the neighbourhood outside the common things, that is, something that doesn't hurt". It's a way of teaching children "Hey, you have more possibilities; you have a whole range of possibilities if you want". (…) When you grow up in a neighbourhood and you see nothing but violence, you will be violent. Unless you push that child into doing activities in his neighbourhood, far from violence and that stuff (…) It is important for society to contribute a grain of sand to help these marginal people and say "Hey, I know you're wrong, but I'm going to teach you other things, other ways of doing things". (Ray, 26 years, hip hop dancer)

My Bachelor's thesis was about how dance influences minority groups (in Portugal). (…) At what social level practicing urban dance benefits those who live in marginal neighbourhoods. (…) When the (kids) came to class they were fighting, shouting, they wanted to leave; and, little by little, by playing games and trying to make them socialise with each other (…) And at the end of the two hours everyone was playing with each other, dancing, cooperating. It was a brutal change. (Paula, 30 years, afrohouse dancer)

Mateo, for his part, stresses the relation that street dance and hip-hop culture have always had as means of expressions for social and political resistance, and how they are an intrinsic part of street dance culture that can and should be used and reactivated within civil society in general:

> *Hip hop creates many cultural and pedagogical tools for social impact. (…) Because it is anti-racist... it creates meeting points, memory loads linked to places of concrete social and political struggle. Urban dances bear inside them the struggles of the 60s to claim civil rights, hip hop bears inside the Black Panthers. Those memory loads that we express in the movement, I know them from that. I want to open spaces where this can continue to be learned, because it has ties with something very ancient, such as forms of oppression. This memory load is granted to me by urban dances.* (Mateo, 40 years, b-boy and coordinator of dance projects)

4.2.8   Community building

Although the dance collective in Barcelona is not fixed and "constituted", the sense of belonging to a global street dance community is very present in the young people's identifications. First of all, street dance is a great place for socialising and making friends, beyond the barriers of origin, nationality, age or social class, even though informants stated in informal conversations that friendships are also built on national and cultural affinity (for example, Moroccans with each other, Latin Americans and Asians likewise, etc.). But most informants stress the fact that they make friends and socialise more easily within the community, given the fact that they share the same passion for street dance:

> *If I didn't have dance, my socialisation would have been different. Maybe less so at the university, because I studied here, but I never socialised much because the groups were already fixed. It was more difficult to access culturally closed groups. All the Catalans knew each other from school. Here on the street we all fit in: immigrants, students ...* (Mateo, 40 years, b-boy and coordinator of dance projects)

Young dancers value very positively the feeling of belonging to a globally connected community that allows one to have a "home in every part of the world": dancers travel frequently and connect with the local communities in the place of destiny. These communities offer them information, accommodation, friendships and sharing:

> *I moved here like five weeks ago. And on my second week I was able to type in "hip hop Barcelona" and I saw an Instagram story by Markus. So I messaged him and it was like "Yo, I just moved here. Is there any hip hop training?" (…) I went to the session, and since then we have managed to chill out and we were able to enter*

together into a competition and I've met so many people already (…) And you know Benjamin? So straight away he was like "Bro, anything you need, don't be afraid to ask." And hip hop is like an open arms community. (…) It's a big, big melting pot. But we all love the same thing. It's very easy for us to relate. (Jonathan, 25 years, hip hop dancer)

The street dance community represents for young people a place where they can feel safe, accepted, recognised and comfortable: the possibility of being yourself and connect with other people who share the same passion. Of course, there also *conflicts* within the community, especially in local communities. But these conflicts, young people assure, are basically due to conflicting interests regarding the commercialisation of street dance culture (to what degree should or can we "sell ourselves to commercial means in order to gain a living?"), or to conflicting "egos" (people are competitive and want to be the best, etc.) In general, dancers take different positions with regard to these conflicts – from more extreme positions to more "harmonising positions", between competition/sharing – in an attempt to integrate both aspects into their cultural practices.

4.2.9   Inclusion-exclusion: Creating an open mind and an intercultural community

In keeping with the dynamics of an international community, most informants affirm street dance to be an "open arms community", having no mechanisms of exclusion based on origin, nationality, age, social class or sexual orientation. The intercultural origins of hip hop culture in the United States are referred to as being always a *"cultural encounter, enabling adoptions between different cultures"* (Mateo).

This culture has really always been a very open culture. Remember that hip hop culture dates back to the late 60's. It has always been open-minded, very open to everything. Culturally, mentally, sexually. So hip hop culture has really been an escape for many people who have perhaps felt isolated or excluded. So if anyone says they have had a bad experience with (hip hop) culture, they have really been with people who don't respect hip hop culture. (Ray, 26 years, hip hop dancer)

Since street dance culture is formed by highly heterogeneous groups in terms of national and cultural origin, young informants assure that the culture is intrinsically antiracist and accepts "the other" in its diversity:

A: At least here, no matter who you are, no matter if you are queer or trans, if you dance you can come here. Your sexual orientation doesn't matter, it doesn't matter who you feel you are, if you're female or male or transsexual.… You dance, and

that's all. We accept everything. And, generally, hip hop culture is very inclusive. (...)

BD: And I also think that we are sort of an example in the sense that we have variety. So there's not going to be racism there. It's like an example of what this culture is, unconsciously promoting that there is no racism here. Our culture is against it. (Alex, 24 years, BD, 31 years, hip hop dancers)

At the same time, some informants – older ones, more experienced and more travelled – question the image of hip hop as 100% open and tolerant towards all kinds of identities; for example Lucas:

Sometimes I think there is a somewhat idyllic idea that this is a super open environment, a very international environment where people have no prejudices… Perhaps this is so in 90% of the cases. But there are possibly people in this culture who have a more macho, homophobic, racist and segregating way of thinking. (Lucas, 30 years, b-boy and dance artist)

This observation by Lucas is very important because it deconstructs possible idealizations and generalizations of hip hop culture that can take very distinctive forms and ideologies according to national and local contexts. Nevertheless, in the concrete case of Barcelona the idea of a deeply "humanizing culture" is very present among street dancers: The majority of participants assert that thanks to this melting pot of cultures in hip hop culture they learned to "be more human" and show tolerance towards different kinds of people. This idea is very clearly explained by Arantxa, of middle-class background, who affirms that for her this open mind was one of the most important "learning effects" of street dance culture:

(Hip hop) has given me a lot of things that have made me open my mind: not to judge people, understand what racism is and which are the existing borders, how the upper or middle classes behave. I have always lived inside a bubble, I never lacked anything, I went to a religious school and have been surrounded by white people with money. Everything was fine, I never had parents who were alcoholics or drug addicts. (…) I had also not had contact with people of colour, never had a father who mistreated a mother. (…) Getting to know hip hop has allowed me to disassociate myself from all that and from people who don't match these ideals, the life that I should be leading. My parents say, "Arantxa, you are always socialising with Latinos or immigrants". I understand their fear, but it's cool, because it gives you other things and it opens your mind a lot, and without hip hop I would not have learned all that, had I followed the life I was supposed to follow. I could have said "I am not racist" or "I am multicultural". But I really wouldn't have had a clue, I

wouldn't have any friends telling me what their lives have been like, telling me "Two months ago I came from Venezuela without a single dollar…" (…) A reality that makes you much more human… (Arantxa, 24 years, electrohop dancer)

The one thing that a few informants (as well as the observations by the researcher) have confirmed to be an exclusion mechanism – or at least a possible factor for disregard and unequal power relations – is *gender*, an issue worth explaining in depth in the next section.

4.2.10 Gender

Opinions about gender equality and relations in street dance culture vary widely: many informants affirm that there is no gender issue at all (including issues of sexual identity, homosexuality, etc.), and that women and men are treated equally, having the same opportunities and power. These opinions are expressed by more men than women, and more by younger ones (under 30 years old).

I think it is very even, very connected. (…) I think that everyone likes to dance, both boys and girls, there is no such thing as marginalisation against women. At least in our circle, we try to respect women very much and give them importance. I know that in other places there are people who believe themselves to be stronger, more skillful. Not here, a woman comes here and everyone treats her well. (Benjamin, 31 years, popping dancer)

They (the boys) took great care of me. I never felt like I was being left out. On the contrary, they always empowered me a lot. (Paula, 30 years, afrohouse dancer)

This discourse was partly contrasted by the fieldwork and observations. At least in the "researcher's eyes", it was possible to observe gender inequalities (bearing in mind the researcher's outsider position, with less knowledge and experience in the field than young people):

In the cypher there are more male dancers than female (only two female dancers). This fact seems to have an influence on the gender dynamics: I observe a lot more protagonism from male dancers: they show more initiative to step into the middle of the cypher and perform, they encourage each other quite a lot. The women don't dare to step into the middle. There are even moments when female dancers try, but they are "interrupted" by another male dancer or another male dancer is faster and takes rapidly the attention away from the female dancer. I observe this in the case of Paula, who is one of the few female dancers participating. (…) She is really

supportive and friendly towards the male dancers in the cypher, but many of them seem to ignore her or not look at her: I sense a kind of excluding behaviour here, that contradicts the comments of Paula herself (…): she has never felt any differentiation or discrimination due to the fact of being a woman. (…) At the same time she tells me about the "aggressive cyphers" and that today she and some other female dancers just "played" in the back, just having fun. (Fieldwork diary, 04/12/2020)

Some informants – more females than males – confirm masculine dominance in street dance culture and talk about the patriarchal structures and machismo behaviour that assign female dancers an inferior role within the community:

I feel that there is a lot of machismo in hip hop. (…) During trainings there are more girls, but then during battles there are always more boys, and it costs them less to gain recognition. Then there is the idea of being macho, of being aggressive when you dance, which gives you points. (…) The mentality of men is that of a macho, thinking that the female dancers are going there to hook up with them. Not always, but they do have that mentality of trying to "see if I can catch this one", and they don't value how they dance as much. (…) Girls are criticised much more than boys. In Barcelona, dancing freestyle means everyone ends up getting involved with everyone. (…) When the boys do it "Oh, with this ... what a fucking master", and with the girls "Pshaw, she's a bit of a slut". As in the real world. (Arantxa, 24 years, electrohop dancer)

Patriarchal structures vary depending on the different dance styles: in breaking, where men are a majority, discrimination against women is much more present than in dance styles with a higher participation of female dancers, such as house.

Especially in breaking, patriarchy and machismo generate barriers of exclusion in urban dance. I am very critical about that in my community. (…) When I began dancing I would never have excluded a dancer for being Moroccan, but saying things like "This girl comes to dance because she wants to fuck one of us" this kind of thing happens. It's horrible, yes. (…) That macho side is changing now. There is a collective of female dancers and these things are noticed. Now, if someone says anything of the sort, you call him a macho. That has changed. (Mateo, 40 years, b-boy and coordinator of dance projects)

As Mateo points out, times are changing and feminist movements within society are helping visualise women in street dance more and more and grant them – albeit slowly – more and

more power. For example, in the last years there has been an increase in initiatives/events initiated by female dancers for female dancers. Both men and women are seeing a possibility of changing gender aspects in street dance, as Esperanza, b-girl and rapper, for example, expresses:

> *As regards the subject of gender there is much work to do. Today the boys are much more aware (of) ... the values that hip hop culture promotes: trying to respect each other, equality, fight against racism and inequality. Nowadays we are opening our minds to all of that, because although the boys sometimes continue doing these things, since we are their friends or sisters, they have to understand it. Women have an important role in hip hop culture. It is a way of sending a message and having people listen to it. To overcome that barrier in hip hop, which is a very masculine culture, we take the female hip hop artists as an example (…) You need that to help empower yourself. Hip hop helps us to empower ourselves as women.* (Esperanza, 30 years, b-girl and rapper)

4.2.11 European belongingness and national identity

Viewpoints about Europe are highly diversified among informants. It is interesting that Spanish young people are very critical of the European project and politics, and don't have any feeling of belonging to Europe as such, as Esperanza explains:

> *I only see the negative part: that whole thing about capitalism. (…) Due to the refugee problem in Greece, I went there for a week, and that was enough to see the situation. I did not like how the European Union reacted, so I am very closed-minded about it (…). This needs to be integrated into European culture.* (Esperanza, 30 years, b-girl and rapper)

She and other young people talk about the inequality between Europe and other parts of the world (at the capitalist "periphery"), but also about the North-South inequality within the European Union itself. Young people like Lucas feel like they are "the cheap labour force" of Northern Europe, and have no desire to identify with Europe. Other young people from outside of Europe often see Europe as an opportunity, both for learning (in terms of street dance), studies and work (for example, Mohamed from Morocco).

In terms of national identity, the overwhelming majority of informants identify themselves as a "citizen of the world":

> *I am a man of this earth. (…) You know, I have a mixed heritage. My mom is Irish and my dad is Afro-American. So how I view the world, how I view people, is like…*

everyone is from everywhere. We all have a mix from everywhere. So I never give too much emphasis to a person's background, to who they are, visually speaking. (Jonathan, 25 years, hip hop dancer)

All cultures inspire me a lot, there is something I like about every country, so I feel like I am from all over the world. I don't really feel like I belong to a particular place, because all of my friends are Latin American, and I have many friends in Sweden who are super different, and then also Africans, North Americans, Japanese, Asians… So, I consider myself as belonging to the world. (Carme, 22 years, hip hop dancer)

As we can see, many young people have mixed backgrounds, and therefore identify themselves with mixed heritages. But the intercultural and interracial experiences in the street dance culture definitely shape young people's identifications to a great extent, as citizens of the world or as nomads who grasp the cultural aspects that they like and integrate them into their identity.

5 DISCUSSION

In street dance culture we can observe a complex and multifaceted, hybrid and vivacious culture. We have seen how this gets articulated through central aspects: the use of public space/the street; the appropriation of a specific lifestyle and system of values; the intergenerational transmission of knowledge; the importance of evolution, invention and creativity within the culture; learning processes that are horizontal, collective and informal; global and interconnected community-building; appropriation of the culture as a sociocultural and emotional-psychological tool; the intention of creating an "open-arms community" with no exclusion criteria, and an understanding of themselves as "citizens of the world".

These cultural expressions can be situated within *youth cultures,* since the underlying driving force of street dance and hip hop culture is youth, and participants self-identify as "young man or woman" in relation to other groups of people/society at large: it is not a matter of age but a perspective on life, lifestyle and values; participants feel young because they share a set of experiences, cultural practices, codes and lifestyles. We can understand youth cultures as collectively-expressed social experiences of young people "through the construction of differentiating lifestyles, mainly in their leisure time, or in interstitial spaces in the institutional life" (Feixa, 1998, p. 84). The aspect of leisure time, "in their own time", outside of institutional, adult-dominated spaces, is crucial for understanding the dynamics of youth cultures: we are talking about "'youth micro-societies' with significant degrees of independence from the 'adult institutions' that provide specific space and time" (Feixa, 1998, p. 84). One of the main appeals of street dance is its character as a micro-society with its own rules, established in a collective way by the young folk themselves (although not free from

conflicts), and not dictated by any adult-regulated institution or authority. The way they establish their own rules is the antithesis to how adults implicitly demand young people to accept the "rules of the game" upon their coming into adulthood. This is what Bourdieu describes when he talks about "social fields", where the dominant powers (here understood as adult society, with its institutions, rules, ways of doing) "lean towards conservation strategies (...), while those with less capital *(who are usually newcomers, that is, young people)* are inclined to use subversion strategies (...) Newcomers have to pay an admission fee that consists of recognizing the value of the game (...) and knowing certain operating principles of the game. They are condemned to use subversion strategies, but they must remain within certain limits, if not, they are penalized with exclusion" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 206). In this sense, we can understand street dance culture as an "interruption" and questioning of the social field of adult society; the culture creating a proper "street dance field" within that field where dominant adult rules and powers no longer prevail. With Bourdieu's reflections in mind, young people's desire for creating their own rules and codes, their own style and system of values within street dance culture takes on a new importance. The importance of gaining freedom that many young dancers refer to is essentially a freedom from society's imposed values and norms and its "judgement system" – it is a liberating act.

In this sense, we can associate street dance culture in Barcelona with subcultural expression. Originally understood by Hall and Jefferson and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) as "cohesive and collective cultural resistance to the dominant order" (Hall & Jefferson, 1991 [1976]), Feixa defines subculture not necessarily as explicit resistance but as a "cultural minority in a subaltern position with respect to a hegemonic or parental culture" (Feixa, 1998, p. 271). Hip hop culture has been, since its origins, subculture and subversion, though always intertwining commercial and mainstream elements within its subculture. Although some authors consider that these concepts are mutually exclusive, others affirm that this is not necessarily so, and that subcultural youth culture has always, at one time or another, been intertwined with mass media and commercialisation (Huq, 2006; Rose, 1994): expressions of alternative ways of living, lifestyles, and even resistance, do not necessarily exclude the desire for making money. Although street dance culture in Barcelona is distant in time and space from the original hip hop culture and cannot be understood without the diversified evolution of hip hop and street dance – as well as the specific context of the place (Barcelona) and time (years 2019-2020) of the fieldwork –, street dance culture shares some of hip hop's original subcultural characteristics. Within broader adult society, it definitely occupies a subaltern position. Some dancers clearly affirm that they practice resistance by occupying public space and the street, or simply by preserving and transmitting the culture. Some others do it more unconsciously or as a "side-effect". Also, a particular sector of the freestyle dance community in Barcelona shows resistance by specifically criticising the present-day trends of the commercialisation of street dance (mainly by dance academies and organisers of contests), because, according to them, this involves a risk of disinformation and

of losing the sense of community and meaning of the street. The resistance against authorities and adult society is also manifested by young street dancers by awarding special importance to leisure time and the right to "having fun", the right to spend free time in a supposed "useless" way (according to adults' dominant perspectives). With these parameters, street dance youth culture builds on "hedonism, fun, irrationality and emotionality", in contraposition to an adult world "based on values such as rationality, responsibility and obligation, (implying) (…) economic and symbolic power through participation in the labour market" (Hansen, 2017, p. 57; see also Alegre i Canosa, 2007). This is also a form of resistance, by "not playing by the rules" and establishing priorities that are contrary to what adult society and the capitalist system demands from young people. Street dance and hip hop groups may be considered as "communities of resistance" (Rose, 1994, p. 85) that at the same time claim their right to communal and individual pleasure and fun without any further intentions.

It is in the public space, on the street, that freestyle youth culture appropriates meanings of space and constructs senses of belongingness. We can see how young dancers claim the right for public space to be treated as an authentic *public* place "where everyone has the right to enter or use it without having to pay money or meet any requirements, that is, they are places where the right of admission is not reserved" (Benach, 2008, p. 89). Freestyle dancers claim that they, like many other youth cultures, "rediscover forgotten or marginal urban territories, (…) give new meanings to certain areas of the city, (and) humanize squares and streets" through their dancing practices and gatherings (Feixa, 1998, p. 96). Public spaces are transformed by young dancers into meeting points that have both private and public features, turning the "street into their houses", where they "share fashions, music, norms and values" (Feixa, 2000, p. 63). The street provides the street dance community with "'ways of being together', in which surprise, the unexpected and other situations reign, allowing young people to put in parenthesis the self-control and the order that must necessarily be kept in other areas" (Urteaga, 2011, pp. 191-192). By carrying out practices like gathering, putting on music and dancing, celebrating jams and competitions on the street, young people *transgress* the public space: they cross the border of what is expected by those who build normality in the public space (Benach, 2008, pp. 89–90). By transgressing the public space, freestyle dancers strengthen the main feature of public space, a place where people of all kinds, with "different ways of seeing the world and living life come together naturally": they co-create, shape and reinforce the "contact zones" of people, lifestyles, philosophies, cultures, etc. (Benach, 2008; Pratt, 1992). The *centrality* of the public places, which the street dance community makes use of, is key: it is no coincidence that the main hotspots (squares M. and U.) are located in the city centre of Barcelona. It is in this way that young people can claim their centrality, their importance as actors to be seen and taken into account by society: activities are not carried out in outlying neighbourhoods, they are brought to the very core of the city, to the centre of power.

Special attention should also be paid to the lessons we can learn from street dance culture in terms of *knowledge transmission and learning processes*. Hip hop and street dance culture

show how *oral and corporal* memory and knowledge transmission interconnect with the use of social media, the internet and other technological applications and devices: information is passed on and shared, whatever the medium. We may even see in the intergenerational transmission a "present-day successor to premodern oral traditions", as Rose and other authors affirm with respect to hip hop culture (Rose, 1994, p. 72). Cultural heritage is orally and corporally preserved, multiplied and shown off on the social media. The fascinating cultural key to street dance culture is this: it gives importance to cultural heritage, origins and history – in dance: "the foundation" – at the same time as it highly values evolution, innovation, creativity and the development of unique styles: if you are like everybody else, then you are lost. This has its expression in street dance *style* (clothing, accessories, body decoration): street dance style and clothing underscore simultaneously group belonging (see also Feixa, 1998, p. 97) and uniqueness, an outstanding performance as a particular dancer (and sometimes attention-seeking) and a unique style and character. It is the combination of a sense of community and individuality that marks out street dance culture. If we look at the learning processes in street dance culture, we can see how important and highly valued *informal learning* is for young people. We may consider informal learning as "forms of learning that are intentional or deliberate but are not institutionalised. It is consequently less organized and structured than either formal or non-formal education. (…)" (Glossary UNESCO, 2011, p. 80). But it is not only informal learning that is gratifying and fruitful for cultural heritage processes in street dance culture, but also *non-intentional forms of learning*. Generally, these do not occur by intention, but happen while carrying out activities such as listening to the radio, reading the newspaper or interacting with other people. Or also – and this is especially relevant to our case – when we engage in cultural or social activities, even if they are not organised for specific learning purposes, but rather just "to have a good time", pursue a common cause, relax or engage with other people. On a pedagogical level, we can learn a lot of things from street dance culture. This learning has four characteristics: it is motivated, horizontal, collective and informal/non-intentional.

In street dance culture we can observe the presence of global and interconnected "*community-building networks*" (Rose, 1994, p. 78). Street dance community is at the same time local (we have a local community in Barcelona, with its particularities owing to space, climate, geography and time, policies of authorities, etc.) and global. Street dance culture creates both local and global senses of belongingness, within which young people highlight the pleasures and benefits that they gain from the international connectedness with dancers all over the world: it enables the encounter and exchange between different nationalities, cultures, lifestyles, dance styles, languages, etc., thereby enabling the creation of intercultural relations that will forge cultural tolerance and "an open mind", as young people claim, bringing humanity ever closer. Here, after García Canclini (2004), we can observe the *hybridisation of cultures* converging into one "umbrella" culture: street dance culture. This goes along with the very important result that shows that young dancers primarily identify as "citizens of the

world". Other studies about youth cultures confirm this tendency of youth's national-cultural identifications in cosmopolitan Barcelona: behind the identification as a "citizen of the world" there lies an "important questioning of the hegemonic system of states and nations, which is based on borders and exclusion. (…) In short, young people speak up against the world organized by strong socioeconomic and power inequalities" (Hansen, 2017, p. 550).

6 CONCLUSION

Linking with the above discussion, we should highlight street dance as a potential intercultural and learning tool that is able (in principle) to counterattack discriminatory or racist practices. Of course, as seen in the findings, street dance culture is not free of conflicts, incongruences or contradictions. Equality in gender relations and power is still a "work in progress", and we have yet to see in what way street dance culture will evolve in this aspect. We should also take street dance culture into account as a powerful sociocultural and emotional tool, as shown in the findings. It is its potential for psychological, emotional and physical wellbeing that could serve as a reference when reflecting on and looking for sociocultural tools to work together with youth and youth communities. It is also interrelated with the way young dancers acquire knowledge and skills in street dance: we can see how fruitful, joyful and challenging learning processes can be for young people, provided they are horizontal (no teacher-pupil hierarchies and power relations), communitarian (knowledge is acquired and shared within a given community, no matter how diffuse the community is, as in street dance), self-motivated ("nobody, above all no adult, is telling me what to do or learn") and informal/non-intentional. Street dance culture and its learning processes are full of trial and error. This permission to "try, fail, try again and overcome", to express oneself through one's passion and personality, to "have fun" without responsibilities and worries, the right to a *presentness* in a society that is always one step ahead: this makes street dance a liberating cultural expression for young people around the globe, coupled with the power of a globally interconnected community and the creation of practices and meanings that are created and determined by the young people themselves, in contrast with institutionally imposed ones.

Policy Recommendations

Referring to the point above, policies should reinforce informal learning processes, in all kinds of areas, also formal education. This implies more funding for programmes and initiatives that go in that direction. As the experience of street dance shows, non-formal and informal environments of cultural socialisation are rich sources of cultural literacy innovation, creativity and inclusion. A good starting point to improve the experiences of youth involved in activities such as street dance would be to acknowledge their activities clearly as Culture and cultural

heritage, on the same level as "institutionalised" culture such as theatre, opera, cinema, etc. This would mean to take them into account in discourse, planning and funding when negotiating the promotion of culture. We need a redefinition of what constitutes culture and cultural heritage, which arises from the "bottom" and actors of civil society themselves. So, the first step would be an official recognition (with real consequences) of these activities, without the necessity of institutionalisation of street dance (integrating into official Curricula of public dance academies, for example); in fact street dance should be recognised as non-institutionalised, self-organised and "public" cultural expression, that "is fuelled" from the use of public space. In this sense, public policies should enable, permit and fund the use of the street and public space for street dance activities (and similar cultural expressions), provide spaces in the public sphere, because the restriction and punishment of the use of the street is one of the major restraints in this area. In this context, it is necessary for policy makers and other stakeholders to see culture as in investment rather than an expense, by foregrounding the economic potential of culture and cultural heritage and their capacity to drive local and regional development and/or regeneration.

This involves also a rethinking of what is public space and for whom public space is considered: Local and regional governments should enhance the use of public space as "cultural contact zones" for all kinds of actors and be aware that these contact zones are not free of conflicts or "disturbance", which are natural processes of negotiating, community building and learning processes: Youth involved in street dance activities remind us that we have to be disturbed sometimes in "our contact zones"; this creates awareness and change.

7 FUTURE ANALYSIS

As commented in the sections before, there are certain issues that are especially worthwhile exploring further and in more depth. The *gender issue* was addressed briefly, but warrants more profound analysis, including a comparative study between countries: how are gender relations, roles and structures experienced in different countries, and in which particular communities? It would be interesting to highlight similarities and differences in this comparison. Also *social class* was addressed only very briefly, although it is a constant transversal element in street dance and hip hop culture (since its origins), especially with respect to marginal neighbourhoods and dynamics that reinforce informal and communitarian practices on the street, in which young people find themselves having no more resources than their own bodies and a boom box. As Rose points out: "emerging from the intersection of lack and desire in the post-industrial city, hip hop manages the painful contradictions of social alienation and prophetic imagination" (Rose, 1994, p. 71). As commented in the conclusions, different *learning processes* represent an interesting analytical field within cultural heritage issues and informal cultural practices among European youth, especially when we think about how young

people can apprehend, in a constructive, self-motivated and critical way, sociocultural contents and practices. Above all, we should ask ourselves which spaces allow the empowerment, self-expression and "trial and error processes" of young people, and which learning processes (in formal, non-formal and informal contexts) can improve these issues and enhance the acquisition of particular skills that will be useful to young people in their lives.

8 REFERENCES

Alegre i Canosa, M. À. (2007). *Geografies adolescents a secundària: posicionaments culturals i relacionals dels i les joves d'origen immigrant*. Retrieved from http://cataleg.uab.cat/record=b1708763~S1*cat

Benach, N. (2008). Espacios urbanos para transgredir las diferencias. In R. Tello, N. Benach, & M. Nash (Eds.), *Intersticios* (pp. 89–97). Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra.

Cobo, C., & Moravec, J. (2011). *Aprendizaje Invisible. Hacia una nueva ecología de la educación.* (Col·lecció Transmedia XXI. Laboratori de Mitjans Interactius, Ed.). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-92029-0

Feixa, C. (1998). *De jóvenes, bandas y tribus*. Barcelona: Ariel.

García Canclini, N. (2004). *Diferentes, desiguales y desconectados: mapas de la interculturalidad*. Retrieved from http://cataleg.uab.cat/record=b1624206~S1*cat

Hall, S., & Jefferson, T. (1991). *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*. London: Routledge.

Hansen, N. (2017). Abriéndose camino: mundos juveniles de descendientes de familias ecuatorianas, dominicanas y mixtas en Barcelona (Univeristat Autònoma de Barcelona). Retrieved from https://www.tdx.cat/handle/10803/456040#page=1

Huq, R. (2006). *Beyond Subculture*. New York: Routledge.

Kitwana, B. (2002). *The Hip Hop Generation. Young blacks and the crisis in African-American culture*. New York: Basic Civitas Books.

Pratt, M. L. (1992). *Imperial Eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*. New York: Routledge.

Reyes Sánchez, F. J. (2003). *Graffiti, breakdance y rap: el hip hop en España* (Universidad Complutense de Madrid). Retrieved from https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/tesis?codigo=196437&info=resumen&idioma=SPA

Rose, T. (1994). A Style nobody can deal with: Politics, Style and the Postindustrial City in Hip Hop. In A. Ross & T. Rose (Eds.), *Microphone Fiends. Youth music & Youth culture* (pp. 71–88). New York: Routledge.

Ross, A., & Rose, T. (1994). *Microphone Friends. Youth music & Youth culture*. New York: Routledge.

Sandín Lillo, J. (2015). *El Hip Hop como movimiento social y reivindicativo (Trabajo final de Grado)* (Universidad Politécnica de Valencia). Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10251/71229

UNESCO. (2011). *International Standard Classification of Education*. Retrieved from http://www.uis.unesco.org

Urteaga, M. (2011) *La construcción juvenil de la realidad. Jóvenes mexicanos contemporáneos*. Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana.

9   ANNEX I: SUMMARY OF INFORMANTS' PROFILE

No.	Pseudonym	Dance Style	Gender	Age	Country of birth	Citizenship	Occupation / Employment	Languages fluent	Highest education qualification
1	Alex	Hip Hop	M	24	Colombia	Colombian and Spanish	Working at a gas station	Spanish, Catalan, English	Advanced Vocational qualification
2	Arantxa	Electrohop	F	24	Spain	Spanish	Works as dance teacher and in a shop	Spanish, English	Advanced Vocational qualification (tourism)
3	BD	Hip Hop (photographer)	M	31	Peru	Peruvian, Spanish	Works in marketing, as a photographer	Spanish, English, Catalan	Advanced Vocational qualification (computing, sound)
4	Benjamin	Hip Hop, Popping	M	31	Spain (Mother Latin American)	Spanish	Works as a dance teacher and in a shop	Spanish, English, Catalan, Portuguese	Advanced Vocational qualification (administration)
5	Carme	Hip Hop	F	22	Spain	Spanish	Works as a dance teacher and in a shop	Spanish, English, Catalan	Baccalaureate
6	David	Hip Hop	M	31	Argentina	Argentinian, Spanish	Works as a dancer in publicity/ looking for a job	Spanish, English	Middle-level Vocational qualification
7	Esperanza	B-girl, Hip Hop, Rap	F	30	Spain	Spanish	Sports and dance teacher	Spanish, Catalan	Musician (Conservatory)
8	Gonzalo	Hip Hop	M	26	Ecuador	Ecuadorian, Spanish	Works in online warehouse	Spanish, English, Catalan	Secondary School

No.	Pseudonym	Dance Style	Gender	Age	Country of birth	Citizenship	Occupation / Employment	Languages fluent	Highest education qualification
9	Jonathan	Hip Hop	M	25	Ireland	Irish	Works as a dance teacher and in projects	English	Baccalaureate
10	Juanito	Hip Hop, b-boy	M	26	Colombia	Colombian, Irish	Works as a dance teacher and in projects	Spanish, English, Catalan	Middle-level Vocational qualification
11	Lucas	B-boy, Hip Hop, Acrobacy, Contemporary	M	30	Spain	Spanish	Works as an artist/dancer in diverse projects	Spanish, English	Advanced Vocational qualification (sports)
12	Luz	Hip Hop	F	24	Argentina	Argentinian	Looking for a job	Spanish, English	Baccalaureate
13	Markus	Hip Hop	M	27	Germany	German	Working in marketing	German, English	Advanced Vocational qualification (business)
14	Mohamed	Hip Hop	M	26	Morocco	Moroccan	Looking for a job	Darija, Arab, English	Secondary School
15	Paula	Afrohouse, Hip Hop, b-girl	F	30	Spain	Spanish	Working in a big shop	Spanish, Valencia, English, Portuguese	Bachelor (University, Sports)
16	Ray	Hip Hop	M	26	Spain	Spanish, Colombian	Working in a clothing shop (hip hop wear)	Spanish, Catalan, English	Middle-level Vocational qualification
17	Susana	Krump, Wacking	F	27	Uruguay	Uruguayan, Spanish	Working in a shop	Spanish, English	Bachelor (University, Nutrition)

No.	Pseudonym	Dance Style	Gender	Age	Country of birth	Citizenship	Occupation / Employment	Languages fluent	Highest education qualification
18	Mateo	B-boy (key referee)	M	40	Spain	Spanish	Working as a dancer and coordinator in dance/arts projects	Spanish, Catalan, English	Master Degree (University, History of Art)
19	Lupus	B-boy (key referee)	M	35	Peru	Peruvian, Spanish	Working as a dance teacher and in projects	Spanish, English, Catalan	Advanced Vocational qualification