

# METHODS OF RESEARCHING DANCE WITHIN CROATIAN ETHNOCHOREOLOGY

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*This paper describes the deliberate process of applying, modifying and adapting the research methods of ethnochoreology – a sub-discipline of ethnology, folklore research and cultural anthropology – in an attempt to determine a sufficiently flexible method for dealing with data that only recently has become the focus of Croatian ethnochoreology. The author finds that the selection and adoption of such methods – such as interviews or participant observation – must take into account the specific nature of the research objects.*

Keywords: ethnochoreology, Croatia, research methods, dance

*Prispevek opisuje premišljen proces uporabe, spreminjanja in prilagajanja raziskovalnih metod v etnokoreologiji, pod-disciplini etnologije, folkloristike in kulturne antropologije, da bi določili dovolj prilagodljivo metodo za obravnavo podatkov, ki so šele nedavno postali središčni v hrvaški etnokoreologiji. Avtorica opozarja, da morata izbor in privzetje metod, kakršni sta intervjuvanje in udeležba z opazovanjem, upoštevati posebne narave raziskovanih predmetov.*

Ključne besede: etnokoreologija, Hrvaška, raziskovalne metode, ples

In doing research of several dance forms not typically the focus of previous ethnochoreological studies in Croatia, I was compelled to justify, both theoretically and methodologically, my selection of research topic. Dance forms such as European historical dances and dances currently popular on the Croatian dance scene – including sport dances and classical ballet – have not previously been included in Croatian scholarly research projects.<sup>1</sup> Thus, I considered the appropriate choice of methods during the course of my research and analysis, which also resulted in my trying to reconcile the discrepancies and contradictions that I encountered.

Ethnochoreology is not formally included in the Croatian ranking system of scientific disciplines but ranks alongside ethnomusicology as a sub-discipline at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research (IEF) in Zagreb, which has been the main centre for research into these disciplines since 1948.<sup>2</sup> One can argue that there are two other centres of research for Croatian dance. On the one hand, researchers at the Institute of Ethnology and

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<sup>1</sup> This research was also part of my doctoral thesis (Katarinčić 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Despite the increasing presence of ethnochoreology in educational processes since 1998 (Zebec 2009a) and the Dance Academy's presence in Croatia (since 2015), neither dance nor ethnochoreology rank among formal disciplines and their branches.

Folklore Research focus on traditional dances.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the magazine *Kretanja* (Časopis za plesnu umjetnost Kretanja - Magazine for dance art Kretanja) systematically follows the contemporary Croatian dance scene by bringing together analyses of dance performances, expert essays, translations of theoretical texts on dance, interviews with dancers, and texts of a significant scope that otherwise fall outside of a scholarly institutional frame.

This text presents a combination of ethnological, anthropological, historical, and ethnochoreological methods in dance research. It introduces a view of the legitimacy of one's own experience as a source of information. My approach to research of dance and thinking about appropriate research methods has been conditioned by a few details from my own biography. The first is my employment at the IEF, which has shaped the ethnochoreological framework of my dance research. The second is my familiarity with a different set of methods due to my graduate studies in history – in addition to methods common to ethnology, anthropology and ethnochoreology. Lastly, my approach has been conditioned by my own dance experience in several roles and various dance forms, which I will analyze in considerable detail.

## ETHNOCHOREOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN CROATIA

Ethnochoreology has been developing gradually, expanding both in terms of its area of research and its methods. Several authors have carried out an overview of dance research in Croatia (Dunin 1981; Sremac 1983; Zebec 1996, 2009a). Research into ethnology and folklore, which represent the boundaries of ethnochoreological study, initially focused on traditional folk dances and comparative studies. As an accepted field of folklore research, ethnochoreology shared a similar course of development aimed at preserving a disappearing folk heritage. Researchers studied music and dances that were on the “path to extinction” and chose their research subjects on the basis of their authenticity.<sup>4</sup> In this quest for “original” and “authentic” folklore, “new styles” of dance and anything that was not “national” were excluded.<sup>5</sup> Using an empirical approach, research was directed primarily at recording collected data on a given dance and its structure. Dances were systematized according to history, type and function and then arranged by location. The direct observation of dance

<sup>3</sup> I recognize traditional dances as a unique dance form made of a number of dances, mostly associated with locations identified with a single local community. They are accepted as traditional dances, despite it being well known that some were adopted from other cultures and changed and adjusted to become a part of cultural identity of a local community that adopted them.

<sup>4</sup> A number of other national movements in Eastern Europe attempt to renew and reconstruct dances from the past, from the 19th century onwards. (see, for example, Giurchescu 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Naila Ceribašić (2003: 261) asserts that originality is “a contemporary aesthetic conception and practice which finds its support in an imagined earlier practice. Genuine proximity to an actual practice of yesteryear (if in reach at all) is quite non-essential, although it is core to the concept of originality.”

events in their natural environment was the central research method. The systematic collection of data on dance in Croatia resulted mostly in descriptive texts about dance and omitted a broader analysis of dance as a complex cultural phenomenon.

Unlike their American counterparts in dance anthropology, Croatian and European ethnochoreologists approached dance as a production, neglecting to include the wider context of dance in their studies. Anca Giurchescu and Lisbet Torp (1991) demonstrated the leading ideas in dance research within the European tradition as well as the similarities and differences between the anthropological (American) and choreological (European) approaches. Ethnochoreology studies focus on dances from researchers' own culture, while anthropologists approach dances as cultural phenomena and as complex social processes of foreign peoples. Other differences between the two disciplines probably stem from these essentially different approaches. It is logical that anthropologists who venture out to foreign and faraway cultures cannot focus only on dance, but out of necessity try to capture the broader context of the dances that they study (including language, customs, beliefs, social order or hierarchy of dance). Outsiders cannot interpret or understand dances without the aid of the broader cultural context. Due to its focus on different cultures in remote destinations (a focus that has been questioned in modern anthropology), anthropologists approach the study of dance by placing dances in broader contexts and studying them as processes in culture or processes of communication within the research communities. In ethnochoreological approaches to dance, studying the wider context of one's own known culture might have appeared as an unnecessary framework.

From the 1970s onwards, the "observer" also became a participant in Croatian ethnochoreology, with personal experiences operating as the guiding principle in dance research. The wider contexts of dance became more relevant only from the 1980s onwards, when ethnochoreological dance research began to employ anthropological research methods. Similarly, ethnochoreology widened its scope from folk, village or folklore dances to include the dances of urban areas.<sup>6</sup> Further developments in these disciplines and the expanding interests of researchers shifted the borders of folk culture from exclusively village culture toward urban culture as well as elite and popular culture. Contemporary folklore research and ethnochoreology is no longer limited to the study of one social class, layer or group. Ethnochoreology belongs to society at large and not exclusively to villages; it focuses on all cultures and to times old and new.

Although Croatian ethnochoreologists have striven to encompass various forms of urban dance phenomena in their studies, most of them have been devoted to folk dances

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<sup>6</sup> The tradition of Croatian ethnochoreological study and presentation of traditional dances at folklore festivals has focused primarily on rural dance heritage. Until recently, historical and urban dances have rarely been presented at festivals. They have begun to be displayed at festivals held in urban settings in Slavonia or Dalmatia – regions historically exposed to Central European influences (Ivančan 1973, 1981, 1982, 1985; Ceribašić 2003; Sremac 2010) – and at court dance festivals since 1993 (Vinkešević 2007).

that have been relocated, adapted or transformed in urban environments, thus eschewing the study of dance forms with urban roots that are practiced exclusively in cities, irrespective of their “traditionality”.<sup>7</sup> Some of the studies of more recent contemporary urban dance forms have not been followed up consistently. Therefore, these types of dance have not been recognized as relevant research topics. Instead, ethnochoreologists have focused their attention primarily on meanings and on expanding the contexts of observation.<sup>8</sup>

## INTERTWINING OF METHODS

I intended to focus my research on a few seemingly diverse and unrelated dance forms, which required combining the methods of several disciplines to capture their specificity and complexity. The dance forms included European historical dances – Renaissance and Baroque dances – and social and sports dances, such as ballroom dances and classical ballet.<sup>9</sup> This approach required the adaptation and intertwining of several applied research methods, contributing in this way to the interaction of ideas, events and institutional patterns. The application of ethnographic, anthropological and historical strategies in dance research has opened new interdisciplinary research possibilities as well as some inconsistencies and difficulties to be discussed later in this paper.

When trying to reconstruct historical dances from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, I employed historical research methods to interpret the historical framework of dance events and research methods typical to cultural anthropology and ethnology to examine contemporary events. One of the historical sources most useful for my research was Beauchamp-Feuillet dance notation,<sup>10</sup> but I also conducted interviews with teachers and

<sup>7</sup> For example, Kuhač (1893) drew a distinction between national dances and folk dances; Ivan Ivančan recorded (primarily folk) dances mostly in Mediterranean (1973, 1981, 1982) and continental (1988, 1989) Croatian cities. Stjepan Sremac (1983) advocated the link between urban and rural dances in his research, arguing the existence of a “folklore level” in urban areas, thereby expanding the interests of Croatian ethnochoreology into contemporary life and independent urban dance forms not necessarily associated with their rural and traditional counterparts.

<sup>8</sup> Researching the context of dance or/and dance events has introduced new themes. Tvrtko Zebec, for example, exposed their ritual element in researching *krčki tanac*, widening the scope of ethnochoreological research to include social, political and cultural contexts (Zebec 2005). He examines dance events “from general, global context toward micro context” (Zebec 1996: 103), “striving to accomplish union of synchronic and diachronic research of dance” (ibid.: 104). Elsie Ivancich Dunin researches dance on three continents, contributing to the methodological development of comparative studies (Zebec 2009a: 138–140), and Iva Niemčić introduced a gender perspective into her research of last-ovski poklad (2001, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Since the focus of this paper is on methodological approaches to dance research, I will not discuss further the terminology that I have chosen for dance forms, which are standing here only as a motive to adjusted dance research.

<sup>10</sup> The Feuillet dance notation system was published in *Chorégraphie ou l'Art de Décrire la Danse, par Caractères, Figures, et Signes Démonstratifs* [Choreography, or the Art of Describing Dance with

students of dance workshops.<sup>11</sup> The history of dance cannot rely solely on written sources (often recorded by outsiders). Historical sources should also include oral histories, cultural memory, ethnohistory and ethnographic research (cf. Kaepler 2006: 29). I approached the study of history as field research in order to capture the feeling of history in all its dimensions, adopting Louppe's argument that "the feeling for history should be interested in all fluctuations and all echoes" (Louppe 2009: 34). By interpreting specific moments in history, one can reach history in present time (Kaepler 2006: 29). Historical echoes not only occur in the past but also in the present and in the future; in order to compare and analyse new dances, it is necessary to study and know the old ones.

However, the methods of historical and ethnological/anthropological research differ in significant ways. The former uses existent, inherited, mostly material traces of the past while the latter engage their sources directly through interviews and participant observation. Unlike ethnologists and anthropologists, historians frequently demand a time lag to assess a historical situation more effectively and objectively. Ethnologists frequently write about present-day, contemporary phenomena. The greatest challenge for me was grasping the differences between my own experience and subjective perception in the discipline of history on the one hand and the disciplines of ethnology and cultural anthropology on the other.

Although instances of historical research are ultimately reflected as individual interpretations, history in general abhors the subjective participation of researchers in the process, giving the right-of-way to material sources as the most reliable basis for the interpretation of historical sequences. For instance, Ivan Lucić Lucius (1604–1679), considered the founder of Croatian scientific historiography, introduced objectivity, the critical approach, and the precise citation of sources (for research to be verifiable and transparent) into historiographical research while eschewing bias, emotions, and personal impressions (cf. Lucić 1979a, 1979b, 1986). His methods and use of data charted the path for the development of Croatian historiography and has remained the standard to the present.

Ethnology and cultural anthropology have been increasingly focused on self-reflexivity, given the discipline's expanded sphere of research area and additional paradigms of understanding. The researcher and his or her own personal involvement in research processes (through observer participation) represent significant elements of the research toolkit.

Since the methodological starting points of ethnological and anthropological research differ significantly from those of historical research, I concluded that it would be better to modify partially the project's research methods, choosing and adapting my methods to my object of research.

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Demonstrative Characters, Figures and Signs] in 1699. Today it is used for the reconstruction of dances from the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

<sup>11</sup> For more about dance workshops, see Katarinčić 2008.

Aside from the different methodological starting points of history and anthropology mediated by scholars who shape and adapt research methods to match the objects of their research, these two disciplines in fact complement each other, as Peter Burke notes:

Encounters of scientific disciplines, similar to encounters of cultures, often follow the principles of congruence and convergence. What attracts people of one culture to another are customs similar to their own, at the same time close and unusual. Following this attraction, the ideas or customs of two cultures begin to look even more similar to each other. (Burke 2006: 50)<sup>12</sup>

Thus, historical, ethnographical and anthropological approaches can complement one another and can be useful across disciplines; combining them may even be necessary in some cases.

However, even the combinations of methods of several disciplines may at times not be sufficient because dance analysis is based only on intangible traces, impressions and memories. Because of this, it is important to reconsider not only a discipline's research subjects and methods of interpretations but also its research methods, allowing for their variation, adaptation and innovation. For example, if we want to know more about why people dance in their communities, how they create dance, the basic specifics of their dance behaviour, and their uses of dance for their personal and social needs, we have to look below the "visual surface" and attempt to find out what is "in the heads of dancers" – which requires the use of new methods (Felföldi 2002: 18). Numerous researchers have argued how necessary it is to comprehend the peculiar theories and philosophies of dancers and dance communities. Brenda Dixon Gottschield asserts that it would be wise for historians and researchers to listen to their materials and allow the context to suggest the method (Gottschield 1997: 172). Grozdana Marošević recognizes that "methodology and approach [should] determine the new subject of ethnomusicology" (Marošević 1992: 120) in ethnomusicological research because research is not determined by any particular kind of music. Given that dance manifests itself in a number of ways, Judy Van Zile (1985) recognizes the dependency of approach and method depending on the subject that the

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<sup>12</sup> See more about the "meeting of history and anthropology /.../ from the perspective of the anthropological component of history" in Gross (1996). His collection of papers in *Dancing from Past to Present, Nation, Culture, Identities* (Buckland 2006) also presents the encounter of two disciplines. When the methods of history and anthropology are combined, new practices are created that contest the theoretical differences and split between the disciplines of history and anthropology. Van Zile (2006: 153–174) emphasized the necessity of accepting multiple perspectives to understand historical documents and the relationship between history and ethnography. Peter Burke recognized that the concept of culture (which was applied earlier to elite culture, but now includes everyday culture, i.e. customs, values and ways of living) has aided historians get "closer to understanding culture the way it is understood among anthropologists" (Burke 2006: 44).

researcher chooses. I therefore let the contents of my research inform my methods rather than letting the research discipline determine them.

## RESEARCH PREMISES

The premises related to objects of research can be partly determined even before the beginning of the research process by prejudicially assigning them conceptual and other characteristics. Folk dances, for instance, can be researched as primarily ethnic in nature without questioning their ethnicity because they are presumed to be “folk”. This becomes a scientifically and traditionally given, so that being viewed as folk and belonging to a specific ethnicity is the starting premise for further research. They possess the identity of folk dances. It is unlikely that the premise of their research will be, for instance, art. Their given identity is often so dominant that it cannot be circumvented.

Researchers’ perspectives – inevitably framed by premises and approaches not only unique to their general culture but also to the culture of science (Rowe 2008: 41) – are frequently shaped by western deliberations. One’s own understanding creates the basic, initial context, such as “I am first cause/first context” (Gottschild 1997: 167). Research topics and practices are conditioned by cultural and social habits, habits that precede researchers’ education, individual proclivities, and their earlier choices (ibid.: 168). “We know that, regardless of what we do, we will see the world through the lens of our specific, individual histories and our generic, sociocultural, economic, and political backgrounds” (ibid.: 169). It is necessary to think like the other or to step into his or her shoes in order to see, experience and feel his or her position. Understanding both sides, that of the researcher and of the researched, provides insights unavailable to the person staying on one side of the divide – which in this case applies to dancers, choreographers, dance instructors or researchers.

Victor Turner called for a “performative and reflexive anthropology” in which ethnographies should not be only read and commented but also performed – that is, approached in an integral manner (Gottschild 1997: 168) – because “choreography and the dancing body play a role in shaping my approach to research. I arrive at ideas affectively and kinaesthetically, as well as cognitively” (ibid.: 167). Jane C. Desmond proposed that researchers should be able to analyze visual forms of rhythms and gestures and become literate in forms of movement in order to figure out how to analyze a body in motion appropriately and reveal a new sense of its textuality, of which the body is one of the broadest dimensions (Desmond 1997: 50). Movement literacy necessitates not only visual experience and knowledge about dance or mediated dance information but also dance experience. My starting point was therefore my own bodily awareness and dance experience.

I differentiate my own interpretations in terms of perspective, be they from the perspective of a researcher as a predetermined outsider or from the perspective of a dancer who is “movement literate” and can experience her embodied dancing. The double role of

an outsider-researcher and insider-dancer led me to engage in a self-reflexive “dialogue”.<sup>13</sup> The perspective of an insider-researcher led to me to question myself within the framework of the research. Inevitably, self-reflexivity arises in research, during the course of which personal perspective, understanding, and positionality affect personal experiences, perceptions and analyses of people and performances – during which everything is happening in interaction (cf. for instance Powel 1997: 41; Marion 2006: 7). When entering a community, a researcher adopts its identity and supplements his or her own. The researcher does the same in the course of the research process.

### PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN DANCE RESEARCH

In the comparison of segments of several dance forms, I was conscious of my own background in dance, which enabled me to shift from a purely descriptive stance to a comparative and analytical one. Participant observation as a fundamental method of ethnological and anthropological research includes personal experience and interpretations of the experiences of others. I thus did not avoid my personal experience; instead, I employed some of the dance forms that I have lived, more or less intensely, during different periods of my life as examples for my research.<sup>14</sup> Personal experience determined my choice of dance themes and the analysis of more than one dance form. It caused me to modify partially a common method of ethnographic and anthropological research. While I did not expose or describe my personal experiences, they greatly influenced my thinking, evoked new ideas, and facilitated a more systematic comparison of my experiences and the experiences of other members of dance communities. It is worth emphasizing that self-reflexivity, which stems from submitting and employing one’s personal experience makes sense only if it goes “above” the personal and subjective (Williams 1976/1977, see also 2004).

The study of dance is contingent on the skills of the observer and the observed. The methodology of oral history includes the voices of participants, their memories, experiences and subjectivities, which might or might not concur with the established facts (Hanna

<sup>13</sup> Contemporary anthropological research and the questioning of methodological procedures in a researcher’s fieldwork, which “are in continual flux and mixing of personal experience and creation of anthropological knowledge” (Čapo Žmegač, Gulin Zrnić and Šantek 2006a: 32) has recognised a researcher’s dialogue with him/herself through a circuitous methodological procedure.

<sup>14</sup> When striving for objectivity, traditional anthropology attempts to capture the experiences of the object of research, i.e. the experiences of others. Understanding that it is not possible to encompass what is objective, scientific writing becomes authorial writing (cf. Povzanović 1992: 62). Participation, along with the observation of dance processes has, since the 1970s, placed one’s personal experience at the top of the methodology in anthropological studies of dance (cf. Giurchescu and Torp 1991: 4); thus research based on personal experience became one of the proclaimed methods of anthropological research. For instance, by analysis of one’s own research relations, Drid Williams (1976/1977) applies the “method of personal anthropology”.

2010: 215). It is about the conditioned and created (double) subjectivities of the observed and the observer (who is also a participant). The manner in which the observed is interpreted is also subjective because research requires skills in writing and interpretation that are inevitably influenced by personal perspectives. Being an insider and an observer boils down to the personal perception and interpretation of others' interpretations. Research results are constructed from the combined information that the researcher manages to collect, grasp, and link together. Whatever remains unseen by the eye of an observer, participant, or researcher will remain unrecorded and unanalyzed. Every text discloses a part of the personality of its author, even if only in the form of thinking, exposition of ideational processes, and conclusions. Every study is therefore also an autobiography to some degree – albeit an unintentional one – because it represents its interpreter and his/her methods of thought, selection, and analysis. The same applies to the method of writing, which, in its specific processes and peculiarities, is unique, although mediated through the scientific discipline. There is no single mode of writing. There are as many modes of writing as there are writers, and it is left to the writer to improvise and think on her own. The method of thinking, connecting, and systematizing thoughts, ideas and conclusions cannot rely on references or be apprehended from a text as the end result of a writing process. It may rely on the experience of writing or the experience of processing recorded data and similar experiences, which taken together constitute the methodological process of writing. It may also rely on daily varied moments of inspiration, capacities, and abilities or a series of other circumstances.

The presumption that every text is (auto)-biographical does not exclude scientific texts. Narratives about the lives of individuals are interpreted in anthropology and folklore research mainly in functional terms – as “windows into social life” (Velčić 1991: 68). However,

in all forms of communication, an awareness of oneself will be manifested, not only in those in which ‘I’ talks about its life. If the subject is the constitutive element of an act of utterance, every text can ultimately be understood as a search for the definition of a subject, and not only texts that announce so. (Velčić 1991: 23)

To choose one's own experience as a method of analysis and means for questioning one's premises (which every insider of ethnological or anthropological research does when collecting others' and one's own experience) means questioning one's own memory as well as one's own self. Memories and experiences, which are inherently composed of memories, are in the first place subjective and often one-sided. Memories can appear quite rewarding because the data (which are inherently selective) are already available, and there is no need to venture out to (physically) look for them. However, they are not predictable. They swarm without order. Frequently, they have to be invoked and brought to one's awareness to appear again.

## INSIDER AND OUTSIDER RESEARCH – RESEARCHER AS DANCER AND DANCER AS RESEARCHER

Here I turn to examine in detail the procedures and discussions about the “live” and “interactive” research processes and methods. The methods of historical research proved to be especially interesting and more “settled” in nature while the methods of ethnological and anthropological research prompted questioning of the procedure itself. “Every ethnological writing implicates certain choices and has a starting position which corresponds with the personal interests and views of the researcher and also with the space and moment in which ethnologists act” (Čapo Žmegač, Gulin Zrnić and Šantek 2006a: 18). Before the beginning of the research process, I was included in insider events of almost all dance forms, which I later analyzed within the scope of my study. I began to identify and distinguish the various possible roles that “appear” in the process of researching and interpreting dance phenomena. My dance experience as a classical ballet student, an engaged classical ballet dancer, a participant in social dance courses, a competitor in sports dances, and a participant in international schools of historical music and dance have brought with them a number of roles that were not ignored in the research. Instead, I had to determine their proper place within the research process.

In various phases, each of the roles (student, dancer, instructor, competitor or teacher) or any of their possible combinations could provide a different grasp and understanding of any particular dance. For instance, the experiential transitions from one dance practice to the next, i.e. the sheer experience of a new kind of movement, as Cynthia Novack noted, “changed my perception and changed me” (Novack 1993: 38).

Becoming an observer of dance did not change my insider status. Instead, I continued with my involvement in dance until the moment of “distancing” (see further in text), regardless of whether it formed part of the research process. My involvement in dance communities continued on the basis of having previously joined and participated in them before the onset of the research process. The field of research was created partially in the space and time of a non-professional daily life, while my personal participation and life in my research communities as well as my personal contacts and relationships would thereafter gain a new, analytical dimension. I was able to circumvent the classical, formal entrance into a community as a researcher.<sup>15</sup> It later became clear that it was necessary to “enter” into the role of outsider and not, as is usual in ethnological and anthropological research, into the role of insider.<sup>16</sup> For the purposes of this research, it was neither feasible nor necessary for the usual procedure to be followed in which a researcher, as a predetermined outsider,

<sup>15</sup> “Entry” into a dance community is not always feasible because of its variable geographical location and because every new town, every new competition, and every exercise hall require different approaches.

<sup>16</sup> Mohn Anis Nor (2002) presents the case of a paradoxical situation in which the roles of the researcher and the researched are reversed: in this relationship the researchers became the observed as opposed to being the ones who pick the situations, communities and people as foci of their research.

enters into a community to become an insider and become familiar with insider information and understanding.

The exact date or year of entering into a community as an observer with the aim of researching, analyzing and interpreting dance phenomena and processes is therefore omitted, as well as the fixed research location.<sup>17</sup> I also did not actively participate in every community at the time the research took place, but still felt like a part of it even when in a different role. Temporal distance and perspectives yielded different realities.

I made the conscious decision to become an outsider so as to observe phenomena more carefully and take note of them with a certain aim and with the understanding that they possess or come with potential meanings. However, I considered it necessary to step aside and create some distance (not to cut all ties but only to cease all activities related to dance practices) in order to look at dance processes in dance communities “from the outside”. Possibly reaching a more objective position and aware of my almost lifelong insider position and my own assumptions would facilitate my questioning and redefining my role of outsider. My decision to continue with my distancing strategy was based on my feeling more as an insider than an outsider, my awareness of the multiple dimensions of the dance communities that I focused on, and the awareness that I would not be able to transfer to paper much of my experience or adequately “use the professional language, interpret emic knowledge with a scientific discourse, i.e. with the terminology of the discipline” (Čapo Žmegač, Gulin Zrnić and Šantek 2006a: 24) without adopting the role of outsider. Namely, unlike the researchers who “enter” into the communities and processes that they intend to observe and research, I had already been included in such communities before and during the research. Of course, my deliberations about the themes and people researched would intensify during the research. By distancing myself (at least to a certain degree), I also created some distance from the intensive emotional states or feelings that tied me to my particular communities.

My general impression was that interviewees were not taking me “seriously” because most of them considered me to be primarily an insider and not an outsider (as did I), which contributed to my decision on distancing. This is due in great part to the lack of research on non-traditional Croatian dance communities. For example, in the case of the continual, decades-long observation of traditional folk dances, the observed become aware of being observed and even participate in the research process – for instance, by displaying dances for research. However, it was not completely clear to those in non-traditional communities why they should be monitored at all: after all, what do they have to do with scientific research and what could be gained scientifically from observing, interviewing and

<sup>17</sup> Theories and methods employed to research static terrains can vary significantly from those who study mobile terrains (cf. Marion 2006: 131). For instance, constant mobility, travel, and accommodations are financially demanding not only for dancers but also for researchers (ibid.: 58). In researching virtual places, Iva Pleše (2006: 117–138) recognizes social rather than geographical localities.

participating with them?<sup>18</sup> During the course of continual and prolonged research, those being researched learn not only something about their own customs<sup>19</sup> but also about the work, focuses and interests of scientific circles. Therefore, it can be concluded that some observed communities are more aware (even more educated) and some less aware.

With intentional distancing, I attempted to attain the position of outsider and thus maintain my objectivity. I noticed a few possible types of outsider role: lay, dance, and researcher outsiders. Lay outsiders may be audiences without any knowledge or deeper insight into dance and dance processes of an observed dance community. A dance outsider is a dancer, choreographer, dance teacher, or other dance expert familiar with general dance processes and movements but not too involved in the dance community under observation. This would usually be an observer who is knowledgeable of another dance form. A researcher outsider is a person for whom the level of expert knowledge or experience of dance is immaterial but whose claimed intention is to learn about the community itself and its phenomena so as to gain personal experiences in the observed community. An insider is someone with access to an insider's grasp of the rules and information related to a particular dance community. During the course of the research, a further distinction among outsider roles emerged between an insider researcher who is an insider before the onset of the research and a researcher who becomes an insider only for the sake of the research.

During this research process, I was an insider belonging to the community for every form of dance form I wrote about, primarily due to having been an unannounced insider. When a researcher consciously and intentionally strives to become an insider, this may occur exclusively on the basis of his or her participation, but he or she may not necessarily in fact belong to that community. The approach of a researcher who does not possess the same intention is different and, subsequently, so is the information to which he or she is privy – at least in some phases of the research.<sup>20</sup>

Assuming the role of an insider for the purpose of research and data collection in a given community enables more complex perspectives than those revealed to an outsider. However, being an unannounced insider, an insider who has considerable insider experience but whose presence is not defined solely by research interests, offers alternative insights. Such a role offers the capacity to notice and recognize situations and relationships that do not appear significant for the understanding of a structure or particular relationships within a community to a researcher who only participates for a limited time. The advantage of being such an insider is that information is more accessible, given that circumstances,

<sup>18</sup> “A long ingrained position of the discipline to look only at the oldest layers of tradition” (Zebec 2006: 171) has gradually “educated” narrators not only about which dance forms are suitable for ethnographic research but also has guided them towards the narratives that they believed were expected from them (ibid.: 172).

<sup>19</sup> Due to the interests and questions of researchers, research subjects gave greater thought to their own culture.

<sup>20</sup> Some people are able to identify with a group or (dance) community and some are not (Powell 1997: 139). Participation does not guarantee the feeling of belonging to a community.

“histories” and people are better known and sources of contacts are more numerous. An insider can recognize internal terminology and details (often not intelligible without understanding the situations and “internal histories” of communities through many years of familiarity) of a given community. In addition, such a person is also well-acquainted with the formal language of dance as well as the informal or unusual language adapted or specific to a particular community.<sup>21</sup> The person who is barely an insider, i.e. just an outsider with access rights, cannot get all the relevant data accessible only to an authentic insider and often cannot ask the questions (or does not know how to ask them in a proper way) necessary to resolve complex details.

Although I did not formally announce or explain my work to members of the observed communities,<sup>22</sup> I noticed that some members distanced themselves from me after I had announced my research intentions and offered me information in a more selectively manner – this sort of behavior stemmed from research subjects’ awareness of being observed. In general, being an insider makes access possible. However, writing about the community and not for it, the “fear of being ‘present’ in the research” or of “placing myself in the research” (Powell 1997: 35), are some of the more important questions researchers are required to consider. An insider is frequently privy to very intimate and personal information about interviewees. Furthermore, an insider’s personal observations often do not accord with what interviewees say or believe about the group or can even contradict interviewees’ beliefs and feelings about the group, community or phenomenon being researched (cf. *ibid.*: 36–37). Such observations can create dilemmas about preferring one role over another or choosing one role at the expense of the other. When the role of an outsider is chosen on the basis of observation, it provides the researcher (who was an insider before the onset of the research) a dual role, which can undermine the role of an insider. The same can happen in the opposite case. Maria Koutsouba for instance, a dance expert and dance ethnographer, aware of her

<sup>21</sup> Human perception is reduced within the frames of what is known and can only, with difficulty, notice something new, not yet learned, or stored in the physical or mental memory. As Burke (2006: 32) explained: “It is well known that what we notice or remember is what interests us personally or what fits into what we already believe in.”

<sup>22</sup> By announcing my future work to the whole community, I took care not to influence the events, atmosphere or phenomenal processes within it. Only some members were familiar with the purpose of the research, and they mostly included those who were my interviewees or those who noticed that I arrived to training sessions with a camera – although using a camera is not uncommon. Dancers frequently use technical aids to record some dance sequences or events at dance parties. Ethnology and anthropology consider, primarily on ethical grounds, that it is appropriate to inform the people who are to be observed and to inform them in a comprehensible manner of the aims and purposes of the research. However, very few of the people I informed showed much interest in the final textual result of my research (which probably stems from the aforementioned novelty of the idea of researching previously unstudied dance communities and forms). Furthermore, given that there would be no intrusion into anyone’s privacy with the text, I decided not to write in more detail about my own dilemmas regarding the consent obtained from the research subjects or insist that the observed community should understand my procedures better or take them more “seriously”.

feelings of authority, obligations and responsibility, faced the moral dilemma of whether or not to teach dance to the dance community she was observing. Despite being uncertain about her decision, she ultimately decided not to teach, criticize, express objections or dance. She made this choice so that by her actions and her choice of role she would not deprive local teachers of their opportunities and ultimately would not jeopardize her relationships with people with whom she could possibly talk in the future (Koutsouba 1999: 192, 193).<sup>23</sup>

Reflexivity thus also creates a feeling of responsibility towards the discipline and those who are the object of research. The most frequent methodological issues that researchers are concerned with include the kind of relationships they should form and the ways that they should approach the communities they are to study. For example, Tvrtko Zebec (2006) considered his multiple roles as researcher, dance expert and evaluator of folklore festivals. He worked as a critic and also wanted to stimulate performers while also applying scientific knowledge and know-how. Jasna Čapo Žmegač discussed “the responsibilities that the ethnologist close to contemporary phenomena has towards the researched (during and after research and publishing work), the profession, and society in general” (Čapo Žmegač 2006: 214). In this instance, she chose to take on the role of an observer and not a witness (*ibid.*: 216).

The compulsion to choose roles opens up the question of levels of belonging. For example, when I conduct research, do I belong more to the dance community or to the research community? Or, is it sometimes necessary to give up or choose a part of my own identity or competence in order to activate the other? It is my view that affiliation with the dance community does not have to conflict with affiliation with the scientific community and vice versa. Just the opposite, multiple affiliations open up multiple possibilities so long as one continues to adhere to ethical and moral principles (of the discipline and one’s own).<sup>24</sup> “Experience gained during the application of expert, specialist knowledge stimulates new scientific thinking”, while “the permanent permeation of theoretical knowledge and its practical application and questioning are exceptionally stimulating and useful” (Zebec 2006: 169).

Also, the roles of insider and outsider permeate each other and are at times difficult to distinguish. Nevertheless, when researching dance and its many forms, both perspectives are necessary, as Zebec (2006: 171) argues: “proper results can be achieved only by mutual amending of emic and etic research discourses.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> In similar situations, I tested myself in almost any role offered to me and took every available opportunity to gather information from as many perspectives as possible. The dance communities who had no permanent location contributed to this sense of “freedom”. Fortunately, it was always straightforward to locate another dance troupe, which meant that I did not have to fret too much due to a possible “loss of terrain”.

<sup>24</sup> On ethics in ethnological research see Zebec (2009b).

<sup>25</sup> Etic/emic (or insider/outsider) distinctions and perspectives of field research were introduced by Kenneth Pike (1954) (Kaeppler 1999: 17–18).

I have conveyed in this text my own experiences of finding optimal solutions when “doing choreography” with the aid of the methodological frameworks of several disciplines but with ethnochoreology as the backbone. My experience demonstrates that every new research project, in addition to offering insights in terms of content, also offers potential contributions in terms of new proposed approaches and methods. This range of findings should be investigated in order to ascertain the scope and possibilities that they offer for existing work in related research topics as well as in the framework of one’s own discipline.

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## METODE RAZISKOVANJA PLESA V HRVAŠKI ETNOKOREOLOGIJI

*V raziskavi nekaj navidez zelo različnih in nepovezanih plesnih oblik predlagam izbor kombinacije raziskovalnih metod iz različnih disciplin, da bi lahko uspešno zaobjela specifičnost in kompleksnost obravnavanih plesov. Upošteva je, da plesne oblike, kakršne so klasični balet, zgodovinski plesi iz obdobja renesanse in baroka, športni in družabni plesi, niso bile predmet hrvaških etnokoreoloških raziskav, se je pokazalo, da je treba teoretsko in metodološko upravičiti izbiro predmeta raziskovanja.*

*Poleg samega raziskovanja in interpretacije je izbrani raziskovalni pristop, ki ga je deloma sooblikovala moja autobiografija, zahteval prepletanje in prilagajanje uporabljenih metod. Njihova raznovrstnost (kombinacija etnografskih, antropoloških in zgodovinsko-pisnih strategij pri raziskavi plesa) je prispevala k interakciji disciplinarnih vzorcev in novim interdisciplinarnim možnostim, izluščila pa je tudi nekaj težav, s katerimi se je bilo treba spoprijeti.*

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