Passion, Precarity and Inequality?
Working Conditions of Urban Dancers in Colombia

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Disclaimer:

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"Dance, the movement of the body in a rhythmic way, usually to music and within a given space, for the purpose of expressing an idea or emotion, releasing energy, or simply taking delight in the movement itself.

Dance is a powerful impulse, but the art of dance is that impulse channeled by skillful performers into something that becomes intensely expressive and that may delight spectators who feel no wish to dance themselves. These two concepts of the art of dance—dance as a powerful impulse and dance as a skillfully choreographed art practiced largely by a professional few—are the two most important connecting ideas running through any consideration of the subject. In dance, the connection between the two concepts is stronger than in some other arts, and neither can exist without the other".

Judith R. Mackrell, celebrated dance critic

Quisiera darle las gracias a todos los bailarines que decidieron compartir conmigo su tiempo, sus vidas y sus increíbles e inspiradoras historias: Andrés, Yami, Shaka, JayD, Zulma, Daniel, Swagga, José, Richi, Karina… Gracias a ustedes y a sus movimientos, este trabajo ha sido posible. Espero que mis palabras hagan justicia a sus vidas; espero más aún que logre contribuir en la construcción de un mundo más lleno de baile.

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CCI	Cultural and Creative Industries

Abstract

Cultural and Creative Industries is a growing sector that has been characterised to offer precarious working conditions. Nevertheless, as cultural work operates under the complex dilemma of passion and precarity, there is no clear understanding of how can social policy effectively support the increasing number of workers to overcome these circumstances. Therefore, any social policy that aims to provide protection needs to question how labour precarity is interpreted and managed, and what are the specific demands of the workers.

By using a life history research and intersectional sensitivity, I analysed the working conditions of urban dancers in Bogotá from their subjective perspective. Seven participants of a different class, age, race and gender were interviewed using online means, and a digital ethnography exploration of their social networks (Instagram, YouTube and Facebook) was conducted.

With this research, I will argue that it is necessary to problematize the negative connotation of labour precarity because dancers experience their work circumstances according to their positionalities and context. The interconnection of different identity markers influences their perception of precarity and the strategies they used to manage it. Moreover, this diversity of experiences has revealed an enrooted problem of cultural work inequality. Regarding their demands, social policy should acknowledge their double facet of artist and worker when listening to their need. This is a process that includes addressing issues both for redistribution and recognition.

Keywords

Urban dance, Colombia, Cultural work, Cultural and Creative Industries, Precarity, Cultural Justice, Life History, Intersectionality

HOW
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Preface
My dance research journey

March 2020, Sunday afternoon. Rolling down on my Instagram account, a video posted by @kevdjesus appeared. He is one of the first dancers that I met in Colombia. We got to know each other in 2018 when I was working as a project manager with a Colombian NGO; he was one of the dance instructors of the project. I could not say we were close friends, but we have shared some details about our personal lives; I knew he had some financial problems at that moment.

On the video, he was dancing champeta[1] with some kids. The energy, passion and skillfulness of his movements moved me. It made me reflect on the contrast between what I was feeling when watching his performance and the stories I remembered about his struggles. *'How can be possible that something that powerful as his art could be done under such difficult conditions?'.* With this question in mind, I started this journey.

With a deep feeling of injustice, I was concerned with the structural conditions that make the cultural work in dance so precarious. Of course, my assumptions about the subject emerged from my position as a Colombian, middle-high class woman with a background in sociology and with no experience dancing. Moreover, they came from someone that has had the privilege of a let say stable studying and working life.

However, while getting more involved in the 'dancing world', I gradually realised that dancers were not necessarily suffering from the capitalist system dynamics, as I have imagined first. Instead, I encounter the importance of considering their agency in their interpretation of their working conditions and their creativity and resilience to do what they love despite the circumstances. It challenged the way I was thinking about dance and dancers.

Researching about dance was both exciting and challenging. During the multiple conversations I had with the dancers, and the several hours I spent watching dance videos online, I learnt, got inspired, and grew. However, synthesizing the rich and fluid nature of dance on a static text indeed required a significant effort. Akinleye accurately describes this challenge:

> Acknowledging the act of moving (dancing) generates knowing in itself, and leads us to acknowledge that writing about dancing involves representation of that physical knowledge. Therefore, it is not a direct sharing of the knowledge (—come into the dance studio and dance with me for that), the story is a communication of an experience (2018p. xvi).

In my case, the task was even more significant because I am writing about the passion for dancing and movement without having experienced it. I guess there is inevitably a gap in meaning between the dancers' experiences and the final product of this research. Nevertheless, recognising that the diversity of knowledges among 'researcher' and 'researched' will produce certain gaps and uncertainties, as Rose (1997) suggests, is an honest way to position the research. Even though, to bridge this gap (or at least to try), several links to dancers' performances and projects are included here. I highly encourage the reader to visit them to gain a better understanding of the subject and to appreciate the magic of dance.

The document is structured as follows. On chapter (1), I set the discussion to understand dance as cultural work. I argue for research that using an intersectional sensibility, analysed how cultural workers interpret and manage the precarity of their working conditions, and what are their social protection needs to deal with it. On the second chapter (2), I present the methodology of the study, which consist of a life history research informed mainly by online interviews and a digital ethnography approach. The third chapter (3) describes what the urban dance in Bogotá is and what means to be a dancer thought the lives of the participants of the research: Swagga, Daniel, Zulma, Shaka (with whom I use gender-neutral language[2]), JayD, Yami and Andrés. The fourth (4) one critically analyses the strategies used by the dancers to secure their livelihoods depending on their positionalities, while dealing with labour precarity. Here, different sources of provisioning (market, State and social networks) were considered. Chapter five (5) presents the dancers' demands for support and intervention regarding social policy, emphasizing the double angle of their claims (artistic and worker). Finally, in the sixth chapter (6), I present my conclusions, policy reflections and research recommendations.

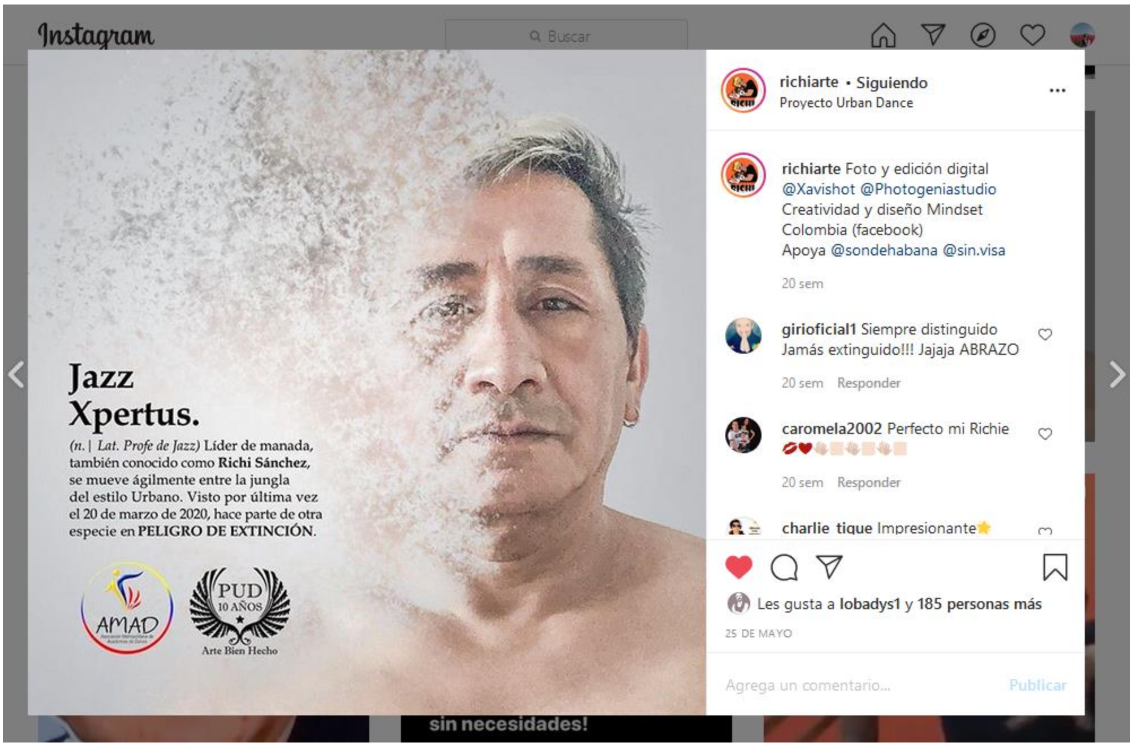
So here, my interpretation of their voices and movements.

VIAJE
yoyo
CAMI

Chapter 1
Discussing dance

1.1 Claiming for attention

Figure 1
Instagram post made by @richiarte



Jazz
Xpertus.
(n. | Lat. Profe de Jazz) Líder de manada, también conocido como **Richi Sánchez**, se mueve ágilmente entre la jungla del estilo Urbano. Visto por última vez el 20 de marzo de 2020, hace parte de otra especie en **PELIGRO DE EXTINCIÓN**.

richiarte • **Siguiendo**
Proyecto Urban Dance

richiarte Foto y edición digital @Xavishot @Photogeniastudio Creatividad y diseño Mindset Colombia (facebook) Apoya @sondehabana @sin.visa
20 sem

girioficial1 Siempre distinguido Jamás extinguido!!! Jajaja ABRAZO
20 sem Responder

caromela2002 Perfecto mi Richie 💋❤👏🏻👏🏻👏🏻
20 sem Responder

charlie_tique Impresionante⭐

Les gusta a **lobadys1** y **185 personas más**
25 DE MAYO
Agrega un comentario...

Source: (Richiarte, 2020) Available at https://www.instagram.com/p/CAmRXPeJN3g/

> **Jazz Xpertus.** (n. Lat. f Jazz teacher) Herd leader, also known as Richi Sánchez, he moves nimbly through the jungle of the Urban style. Last seen the 20th of March of 2020, he is another specie in DANGER OF EXTINCTION.

This picture was posted on the 25th of May 2020 by 'Richi Sánchez', an experienced dancer and choreographer, an icon in dance sector in Colombia, and a member of Bogotá's Metropolitan Association of Dance Academies AMAD (Asociación Metropolitana de Academias de Danza) on his personal Instagram account. His words express the situation that urban dancers in Colombia are living since the government imposed lockdown measures as a response to COVID-19 virus, prohibiting all the non-essential activities and the perform of events, among them, dance-related activities. This restriction has affected dancers' livelihood to the point that he called themselves an 'endangered species' under risk of extinction, and he asked the government for urgent intervention and support for the dancers.

Dance is a performing art that consists of the intentional execution of a sequence of human movements that has a symbolic or aesthetic value. Regardless of the different manifestations of dance like social dance, dance competitions, participatory practices like 'Dances for people with Parkinson', worship dances or healing dances like biodanza (Desmond, 2019, p. 97) dance also found its way to generate income.

With the banning of all their regular activities, the lifestyle and economical means of the dancers have been threatened. However, the world pandemic only has exposed the already insecure conditions around the production of culture, and it has drawn the attention to the necessity of social policy intervention. Considering that according to Mkandawire, social policy is "*collective interventions in the economy to influence the access to and the incidence of adequate and secure livelihoods and income*" (2004, p. 1), perhaps it has a role in preventing the current or future extinction of dancers.

The importance of putting attention to the material conditions of dance (economically rather than artistically) and the social protection needs of dancers like Richi is higher given the expansion of these type of activities in the world economy. Dance is part of what is called the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI), which is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy nowadays.

Currently, there is an increasing global trend of people aspiring to have 'creative jobs' (Morgan et al., 2013, p. 398) and "*from being rather gentle backwaters of employment, these areas have come to the forefront of the 'new economy*" (McRobbie, 2009, p. 123). Also, governments and policymakers around the world have been promoting the development of CCI, an innovative solution to encourage employment and entrepreneurism. In the case of Colombia, for example, the National Development Plan launched by Ivan Duque government for 2018-2022 presents for the first time in the country's history a specific national objective to develop CCI (Presidencia de Colombia, 2018).

In a moment when CCI are expanding, it is essential to recognise what are the material conditions that this sector offers and what are the specific necessities in term of support and regulation. Yet, as illustrated by Murray and Gollmitzer on their analysis of creative labour policy in Western countries, there is a gap in the subject that has a direct impact on social policy efficiency:

> If the general direction of such restructuring [CCI growing] is well documented, its empirical magnitude and material meaning for cultural production as well as job, income and social security are not. […] Due to a lack of knowledge about the material circumstances of creative work, cultural labour force policies for adjustment – and for social security – are often illtailored, and the costs of policy coordination have multiplied (2012, p. 422).

Likewise, studies that analyse the economic aspects of dance in Colombia are scarce, even less those that inquiry about the role of social policy. Research developed by Angélica Gamba (2019) can exemplify the lack of information. On her study, she analysed all the bachelor thesis produced between 2009-2019 in the whole country that researched about dance; only 12 of 237 documents studied economic or sectoral aspects. Nonetheless, the only significant attempt to characterise the sector was made by the municipality of Bogotá in 2006 (Beltrán and Salcedo). Still, there have been no more recent or comprehensive studies since then.

1.2 Dance as cultural work

From a social science perspective, mainly sociology of work and cultural studies (Banks, 2017, p. 5), there has been a comprehensive conceptualisation on the nature of CCI and what has been called cultural work. These contributions enlighten the study of the material conditions of dance and the dancers' social protection needs.

Cultural and creative industries are *"those activities involved in the production of goods whose economic value is primarily derived from their aesthetic, expressive or symbolic value"* (Banks, 2017, p. 5). They generate its economic value in the direct commerce of good and services to consumers or in property rights. Artists, designers, creatives, media makers, writers, film-makers, photographers, publicist and similar belong to this category; they are called cultural or creative workers.

1.2.1 Passion or precarity?

The extensive research done about the subject has established that it is a complex and contradictory type of work (Banks, 2017; Banks, 2019; McRobbie, 2009; Sandoval, 2016): flexible, psychologically rewarding, loveable, passionate, but also informal, insecure, unstable, precarious are some of their contradictory characteristics.

A particularity of this type of job, more than a simple relation where workers are selling their labour power, cultural work brings individual satisfaction for the mere act of doing it:

> Cultural work is presented as an undertaking that produces both 'internal' and 'external' goods- the former being specific rewards that can derive only from immersion in the demands of the practice in question; the latter being rewards such as money, prestige and power that stand in a contingent, rather than dependent, relation to the practice (Banks, 2017, p. 5).

In that sense, cultural workers experience pleasure, job satisfaction, self-realization, and fulfilment when working; this has been characterized as 'passionate work' or a 'Do What You Love' working culture (Arvidsson et al., 2010; Sandoval, 2018; Umney and Kretsos, 2015). Nonetheless, sociologists of work have claimed a particular interest in creative work because it also typifies precarious labour (Umney and Symon, 2019). Labour scholars have studied it (Kallebert and Vallas, 2018; Standing, 2011), and despite all the nuances that this concept has, it can be broadly described as the negative connotation attached to the risk, insecurity and uncertainty that work carries out.

In the case of cultural work, it has been argued that its specific characteristics are what makes it so inclined to precarity; not only because of the structural conditions of the industry but also the subjective job experience. The short-term projects, the informality, the reputational work, the network-based are some contributing factors to income instability or low control of the working time for example; and the self-management nature hinders collective claims processes that could potentially lessen the situation (Sandoval, 2018). Also, the 'Do What You Love' culture keeps the workers working despite these conditions and allowed them to manage, tolerate or even embrace insecurity and precarity (Sandoval, 2016; Van Assche, 2017). Moreover, some authors have described it as 'self-precarisation' (Lorey, 2006), a reference of how they actively chose precarity if this enables them to follow their passion.

Regarding dance, some studies have analysed the working conditions of dancers and have encounter insecurity and precarity. For example, Solíz and Brijandez (2018) characterised the working conditions of dancers in México with low economic compensation, informal contracts, temporal instability, insufficient access to social protection (health, pension, working risk) and few mechanism or spaces for ensuring workers' rights. In Colombia, the few research done in this subject, which refers only to contemporary dance (Antolínez, 2016; Lozano, 2019), have confirmed similar patterns.

It is necessary to precise that precarity in artistic work does not constitute a novel phenomenon. Instead, in some ways, it has always been 'part of the job' (Sefton-Green et al., 2020, p. 5). Nevertheless, as Murray and Gollmitzer remark, *"there is little opposition to the view that cultural work currently is more intensively casualized, and indeed, more precarious as a whole, than the general labour force"* (2012, p.422). Furthermore, studies on precarious work in the Global South (Munck, 2013; Scully, 2016) have shown that precarity has been a tendency rather than an exception among the Southern workers. This reflection invites to consider the broader frame of Colombian labour to see the specificity (if any) of dancers' labour precarity.

1.2.2 Cultural justice

Another perspective for the critical analysis of the conditions of creative work is the cultural justice approach; it addresses issues of equality and equity in the CCI. Several authors (Brydges and Hracs, 2019; Conor et al., 2015; Gill, 2014) have argued that under the label of openness and flexibility that creative work portraits (everybody can be creative!), there are some enrooted inequality and exclusion patterns. The large proportion of people from middle and upper classes, the underrepresentation of people of colour, or the differences among women and men in certain creative positions are some of the examples of the inequalities in the sector (Gill et al., 2019).

Now, the informal, insecure and precarious circumstances of cultural work have a direct impact on enhancing these inequalities. Desmond illustrates well this connection when referring to precarity and class privileges in the dance scene:

> Precarity has had and continues to have a shaping influence not only on dancers, dance making, and audiences, but also on the larger demographics of the dance world(s). An important question to consider is who can afford not to be paid? Given the precarity of the dance world, and the slim chances of making a living from this as one's primary form of employment, who enters this world and who doesn't? Who feels they can take the risk? (2019, p. 99).

Given the multiple connections between the cultural justice issues and the working precarity, an analysis of the material conditions of culture should consider this angle.

1.3 Subjective experience and intersectional sensibility

Even though the framework of precarity offers an alternative to analyse the material insecurities around dance, it could also be a narrow lens. What is objectively called 'precarious working conditions' is likely to be interpreted in different ways by the artists themself. For example, cultural workers are always doing trade-offs between the expressive and the instrumental aspects of their work. So, they are:

> willing to sacrifice material benefits for the sake of immaterial ones such as artistic pleasure, temporal autonomy, a free work environment and opportunities for self-realisation, as long as they have enough to survive (Van Assche and Laermans 2016 in (Van Assche, 2017, p. 239))

Hence, when considering the subjective experience of the artist, several interpretations of their job circumstances appear; so, a straightforward positive or negative valuation of the cultural work conditions, and their social protection needs will be naïve. Therefore, a study centred in the understanding of the subjective experiences in dance production is needed.

Now, this diversity of individual interpretations and assessment needs to be explained by the context and positionality of the workers. The work of Umney and Kretsos is illustrative to clarify this point. On their study of the jazz scene in London, they showed how musicians with family safety nets that can rely upon in case of need are likely to prolong the time they spend on passionate but precarious jobs. Therefore, the way people experience precarity is related to how they used their agency to deal with it. In other words, *"the extent to which work precarity is problematic depends on whether other social support networks exist or not"* (Gentile, 2011 in (Umney and Kretsos, 2015, p. 316)).

From the cultural justice perspective, there have been significant contributions to the understanding of how positionality affects creative work experiences. To unpack the inequalities around CCI, an intersectional approach that considers how multiple axes of oppression produce distinct experiences has been essential:

> The reasons for these obdurate inequalities are multiple and complex. They must be understood as intersectional, recognising the way in which different locations and identities produce distinctive experiences, shaped by intersections of gender, race and class- as well as age and disability and sexual orientation (Gill et al., 2019, p. 135).

An example of these axes combination is given by Gill when analysing gender and age inequalities in the UK, for example. She shows that *"TV industry was better at recruiting women than at keeping them"* (2014, p. 513). That year, women between 25-34 years represented the vast majority in the industry, while men over 35 constitute 70%. Here, age and gender lead to different working experiences. Though this intersectional approach has been used mainly to understand cultural work in terms of equality and recognition, it can also enlighten research centred on the subjective experiences regarding precarious work.

Despite the cultural justice literature points out different identity markers (mentioned above) on affecting the creative work experience, not them all may be pertinent when analysing the dance industry. As Winker and Degele stayed, *'an intersectionality-based approach has to always keep open the number of socially defined categories available and necessary for analysis on this level research'* (2011, p. 54). Therefore, a customized selection of categories is needed.

For this research, the centrality of class has been highlighted by Desmond (2019), while the work of Solíz and Brijandez (2018) has remarked that the aesthetic and performative character of dance (which uses bodies as labour instrument) required the usage of categories based in the corporeality, like gender, race and age. Also, the work of Antolínez (2016) describe the maternity penalty suffered by Colombian dancers, which emphasised the importance of a gender approach.

1.4 Artist or worker?

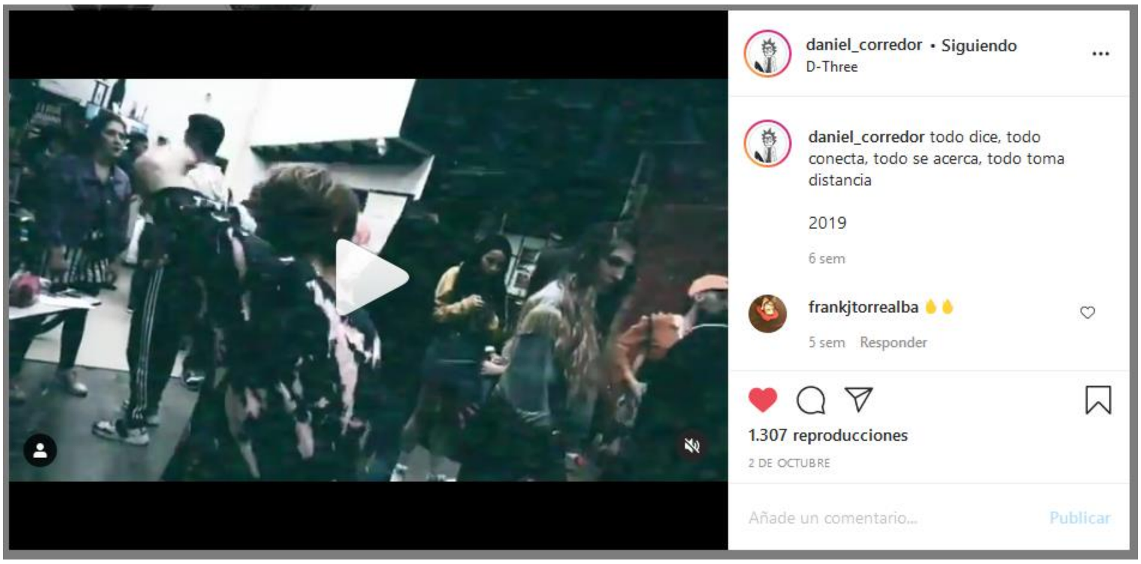
By claiming the multiple and individual perceptions of the material conditions of the production of culture, I am arguing for research that aims the analysis of the subjective experience in dance production: the dancers' interpretations and claims. Using the voice of the dancers as a starting point will contribute to the development of accurate social policies that respond to their specific needs. Nevertheless, putting the dancers' voice at the centre brings an evident challenge.

The understanding of the labour dynamics around culture has used the term of cultural worker and it has proved to be useful to capture a political economy contemporary phenomena. However, despite the existence of labour relations in cultural production and the increasing commodification of arts, many of these dancers prefer to consider themselves artists rather than workers.

When speaking with Daniel, one of the dancers that participated in this research, the simple question of what he thinks about the working conditions of dance was out of place. He firmly argued that dancing is *'pure love",* a way to be in contact with himself, to express himself, and the material conditions were secondary:

> It has flow. I have never thought about it, I guess. When I start to think about it is like: *'Hey, calmed down; you're missing the north'.* Because if I start to feel that I am doing this for money… no no no… It has never been present.

Figure 2
Daniel dancing video on his Instagram account



daniel_corredor • Siguiendo
D-Three

daniel_corredor todo dice, todo conecta, todo se acerca, todo toma distancia

2019

6 sem

frankjtorrealba 👏👏

5 sem Responder

1.307 reproducciones

2 DE OCTUBRE

Source: (daniel_corredor, 2019) Available at https://www.instagram.com/daniel_corredor/

This self-representation of artist rather than worker influences the study in two subjects: the relation with other sources of provisioning and the nature of the dancers' claims.

For dancers like Daniel, his working conditions are not an issue; what matters for him is to be able to keep dancing. Now, he is a young middle-class dancer (22 years old) that has counted with his family support for dancing, which means that he has solved his livelihood needs mostly outside of the labour market. Therefore, a critical understanding of the strategies used by the dancers to secure their livelihoods that consider different sources of provisioning beyond the market (social networks and State) is also needed. Reflecting on how the positionality of the dancers influence the usage of specific strategies, and how this affects the perception of artistic work would allow a deeper understanding of the kind of social protection needs and claims.

By the other hand, an example to unpack the issue of the nature of the claims could be seen on Richis' post. When reflecting on his message in detail, I realised that the selection of that metaphor is not random and that his claim has a deeper meaning. Refer to the extinction of dancers not only speaks about a working issue; it argues the end of the life itself (metaphorically speaking of course). Considering that dance is for dancers not only a source of income but also part of their social identity (who they are) (Antolínez, 2016; Desmond, 2019), the metaphor makes sense. In other words, it seems that Richi is claiming not only the right to work but also the right to exist.

In that sense, when analysing the subjective perspective of the dancers, their claims and needs inevitably emerge around their own contradiction of being artists and workers, or to put more clearly, to consider themselves artists but still need to depend on market relations to survive. Further than being a problem, including this variety of claims is part of the exercise of listening to their voices. By incorporating it, I analysed how their artistic and working claims go together and reinforce each other.

1.5 How to proceed?

With this discussion in mind, I am proposing a critical analysis of the dancers' interpretation of their working circumstances and the strategies they use to manage insecurity, uncertainty, and precarity, which then allow the more in-depth understanding of their necessities and demands in terms of social policy support. This constitutes the first step to develop accurate and effective cultural social policies. With this research, I aim to contribute to the closure of this gap. In that sense, my main concern will be to analyse how cultural workers interpret and manage the precarity of their working conditions, and what are their social protection needs to deal with it.

I will argue that the negative connotation of labour precarity needs to be problematized because dancers experience their work circumstances according to their positionalities and context. The interconnection of different identity markers influences their perception of precarity and the strategies they used to manage it. Nevertheless, this diversity of experiences has revealed an enrooted problem of cultural work inequality. Regarding their demands, social policy should acknowledge their double facet of artist and worker when listening to their needs, which includes addressing issues both for redistribution and recognition.

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Chapter 2
Life History Research

2.1 Situating the research

When I started this journey, I decided to delimitate my research to the urban dance industry in Bogotá. Besides my familiarity with the context and subject, the selection of one specific dance genre was guided by the scope of this research project. In Colombia, the National Dance Plan 2010-2020 (Plan Nacional de Danza) recognise five different genres: folkloric, classic, contemporary, popular and urban (Ministerio de Cultura, 2010, p. 54). Each subsector has specificities that influence the perception of the material conditions of dance and in that sense, narrow the research down to only one sector was necessary. Also, the selection of the place was because, in Colombia, the most significant dance industry is in the capital (Ministerio de Cultura, 2010, p. 36). A big dance sector will provide a broader perspective of cultural work interpretations.

2.2 Life histories as the methodology

As the aim of this research is to understand how urban dancers in Bogotá interpret the material conditions of dance, the strategies they used to secure their livelihoods, and their social protection expectations, an interpretative research method was implemented. By using this approach, I do not aim to produce generalizable knowledge based on distant observation as much positivist research seeks to. Instead, the produced knowledge is "*embodied, situated and partial*" (Willemse, 2014, p. 39) because it emerged from my interpretations of dancers' subjective experiences.

The selected methodological approach was life history. It is an interpretative research process that attempts to capture how people provide their own lives with meaning (Cole and Knowles, 2001, p. 11), with the aim that *"a cultural and/or social experience can be better understood"* (Lanford et al., 2019, p. 460). As a method design to analyse how the context affects the participants and how they respond to it (Suárez-Ortega, 2013), life histories provided in-depth information of what personal and contextual elements shape the dancers' perception.

The uniqueness of each artist's career supports the methodology selection too. The singularity of every cultural worker experience offers a variety of interpretations of non-comparable nature. This factor makes life histories an appropriate method as McRobbie suggested it: *"conventional methodologies for carrying out social research on or with the creative workforce are less effective than research strategies which foreground life-biography"* (2009, p.132).

2.3 Identifying (as) dancers

The process of defining who is an urban dancer shown me the challenges of trying to apply objective criteria on diverse and complex experiences. Many people dance (in the shower, as a hobby, etc.), but who can be considered a cultural worker? Neither a degree issued by an institution, the time spent dancing, nor the percentage that dance activities represent on the monthly income can certify that. So then, how dancers can be identified to participate in my research project or in any social policy given the few objective categories that help in the process?

Therefore, I decided to use a more subjective perspective to define the possible participants. Those that identify themselves as dancers, that were receiving money (or actively looking to earn it) with dance or dance-related activities within the urban genre, and that had experience in the urban dance sector in Bogotá would be eligible candidates. However, during the first conversations, the fluent and informal nature of the urban dance immediately appeared, and I realised that even this definition was not entirely unproblematic. For example, Shaka described how they was earning money by dancing even before considering themself a dancer:

> My first job was when I was at school. I was 14. A guy at the school told me: *'Hey, they need someone for a Michael Jackson choreography'*. The only thing I did at that time was to imitate Michael Jackson choreographies, so I knew everything. But I was not really a dancer at that time.

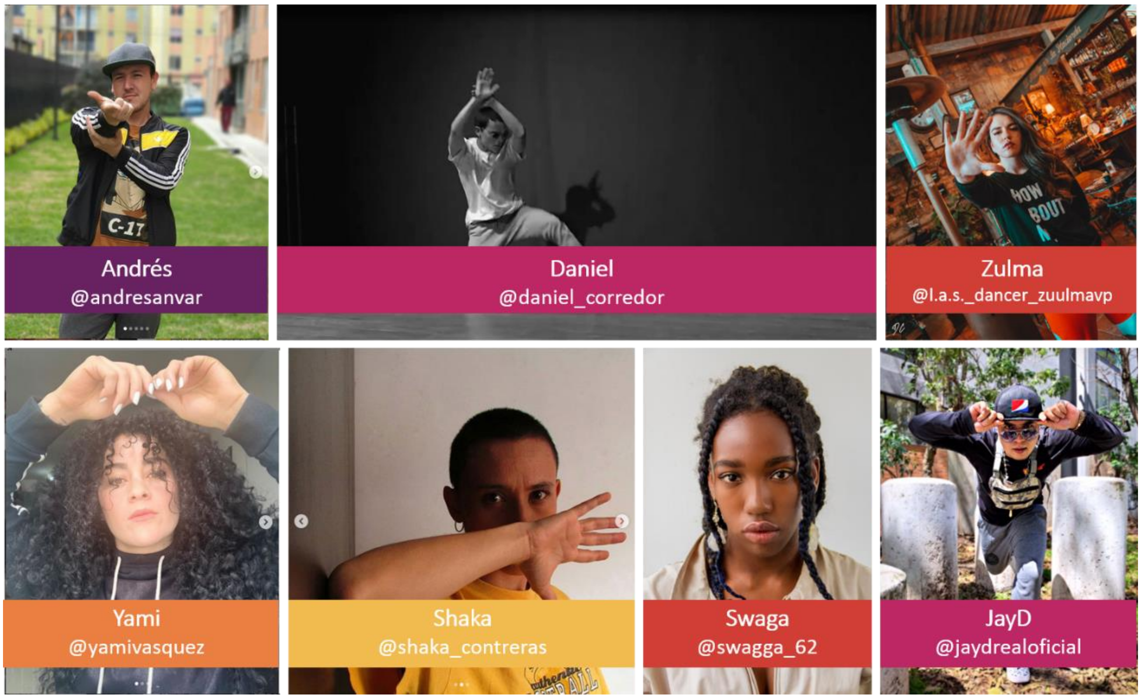
This and other particularities remind me that dancers create definitions and categories within their own logic. Hence, the use of uniform and objective criteria is challenging.

Regarding the selection process, given the qualitative character of the research, I decided to use a purposeful sampling applying two different types of methods: the criterion sampling and the chain sampling (Patton, 1990).

As described before, dancers' positionality and context influence their interpretation of the material conditions of dance; thus, an intersectional sensitivity was needed. It implies that I was looking for dancers with different identity markers (age, gender, class and race), not to achieve representativeness but to ensure different angles of exploration. Then, I used chain sampling to contact potential dancers with varying identities within those categories. My entry point was the dancers that I met from my previous job, and later, I asked them to introduce me to other dancers with the anticipated characteristics. By using this method, I got in contact with some of the most influential circles of urban dancer in the city.

In total, seven life histories were made: **Swagga, Daniel, Zulma, Shaka, JayD, Yami and Andrés.**

Figure 3
Research participants



Source: Author using pictures authorized by the dancers

These are their real or artistic names as they agreed to reveal them. Their ages vary between 20 and 39 years. Considering their self-gender identification, they are two men, three women, one trans-nonbinary dancer, and one that prefers not to say it. Based on their class, three low-middle class, three middle class and one middle-high class are in the group. According to the self-reported race, seven are mestizos, and one is afro-Colombian. Appendix 1 includes the detail information of each participant.

When applying the criteria of class in the selection process, it turns out that there are few or any urban dancer from a high class that lives in Bogotá. The dancers I spoke with had problems pointing more privilege dancers as most of them belong to low and middle classes. The reason for this distribution is related to the origins of the urban dance in Bogotá; it emerged as a cultural expression in marginalised neighbours that only recently has expanded to the rest of the city.

This demographic distribution of dance is problematising the ideas of Umney and Kretsos (2015) presented above. If the socio-economic background of the jazz artist in London is central on their pursuit of passionate but precarious jobs, is not precisely the case of the urban dancers in Bogotá. Here, the context and cultural values associated with this type of dance shape who aspires to be a dancer or not. This does not mean to say that class is not a meaningful category but questioning to what extent in this industry is necessary.

Limitations to consider are regarding those who were 'left out' of the research by the selection process. First, the participants of the study were those that are still dancing despite the conditions of dance; they are survivors. Those dancers that were cultural workers and 'fail' or 'stop trying' were not included, and indeed, they could have a lot to say about the material conditions of dance. Second, as artistic work highly relies on networking, dancers informally cluster themselves in groups. With the chain sampling approach, I only reach dancers that are affiliated or related to the leading dance academies in Bogotá, letting out those outside this big network. Finally, even if I contacted several dancers that were referred to me, the final sample was be formed by those willing to commit to research.

2.4 Collecting and analysing histories

For the data collection, the technique I used was mainly in-depth interviews. Giving the COVID-19 situation, they were conducted using online means (Zoom or WhatsApp video call) to avoid any health risk. Other useful techniques when doing life history research like participant observation were not considered for the same reasons. However, the interviews were supported by a digital ethnographic exploration of the social media of the dancers (Instagram and YouTube) and a minor document review when they agreed to share with me their artistic CV.

2.4.1 Online interviews

With the interviews, I tried to reconstruct the dancer's life histories: who they are, how they started to dance, how their careers have been and what they think about the material conditions of their jobs. They took place between July and August 2020 and were conducted in Spanish[3]. The duration of each of them varied depending on the individual willingness to talk and availability (Appendix 2).

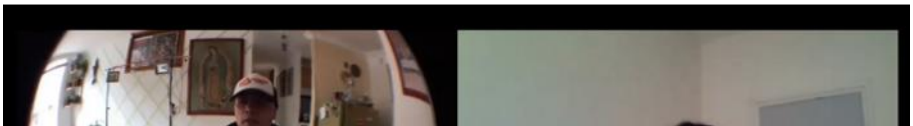
As mentioned before, the core of this research relies on the interactions between the dancers and me. Thus, it is necessary to expand the nature of this relation. First, as someone without significant experience in dance, I was researching an unfamiliar topic (Berger, 2013). With this detachment, I feel something is inevitably missing as I described above. Yet, it also allowed me to give the dancers the freedom to lead the narration as they wish and then pose even simple questions. Now, my identity regarding the research was fluid and always negotiated with the participants (Adu-Ampong and Adams, 2019); they sometimes saw me as insider because they knew me from my previous job, or as an outsider to the urban dance industry.

Regarding the context of narration, while conducting the interviews, the dancers were under a lockdown imposed by the local government as a strategy to slow-down the virus spread. All of them described how they were frustrated, angry, sad, depressed or annoyed by the situation, how much they missed dancing with others outside their houses, and how affected their current sources of income and future projects were. Indeed, it is necessary to consider this setting given the disruption that has created in their lives.

Nonetheless, one advantage of the online interview process was that the dancers were at their homes; I felt it was a safe space for them to talked about their lives. In general, all of them showed significant openness to speak extensively about their trajectories, dance achievements and artistic aspirations; however, in some cases, there was resistance to discuss more economical affairs.

The data analysis involved transcribing the interviews, identifying the emergent themes and comparing the different narrations depending on the positionality of the dancers.

Figure 4
Online interviews (some)



Source: Author

2.4.2 Artifacts and digital ethnography

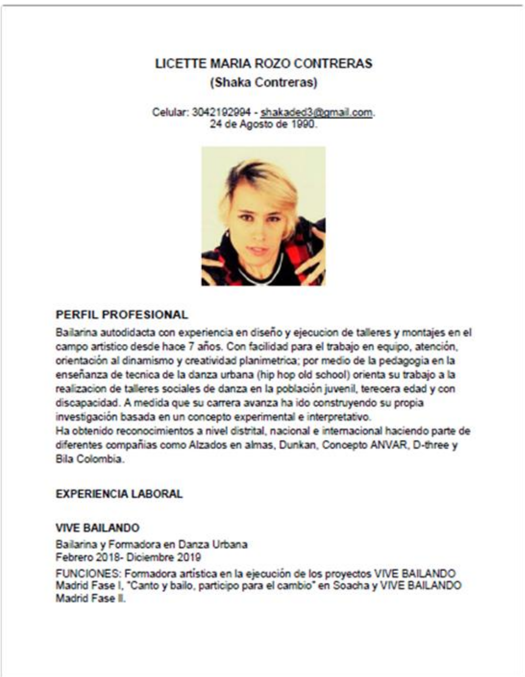
Collecting artifacts of the participant is a recommended technique when doing life history research (Cole and Knowles, 2001); so I requested their artistic CVs before the interviews. Only some of them did; nonetheless, they proved to be useful to pose more precise questions and to establish a timeline of their careers.

With the digital ethnography approach, I intended to enrich my understanding of the urban dance culture. As described by Lanford et al. analysing the online artifacts of the participants constitute a rich source of information for life history research because *'much of contemporary life progressively transpires in digital spaces'* (2019, p. 460).

Thus, I explored the social media of the interviewees (Instagram and YouTube) by doing a digital participant observation; it *'involved using the platform to observe other's posts and interact with other users through the occasional 'like', but without publishing any of my own content'* (Bluteau, 2019, p. 3). Their accounts are full of pictures and videos of their previous and current works, and the most important ones are certainly uploaded somewhere. Hence, while reviewing their CVs or listening to their anecdotes, I also could see what they were referring to. It was useful to appreciate their art and work, to connect with their histories, and to understand better what they were describing.

Likewise, when interacting with the personal accounts of the participants, I could start involving myself in the urban dance environment. All the dancers are continually uploading or sharing contents (pictures or videos) where their tag other dancers, dance groups or dance academies. The most mentioned dancers and academies on the tags turned out to be more important or significant in the dance industry in Bogotá; this helped me to see the broad picture of the sector and to exemplify the importance of the networking in the CCI.

Figure 5
Shaka's CV



LICETTE MARIA ROZO CONTRERAS
(Shaka Contreras)

Celular: 3042192994 - shakaded3@gmail.com.
24 de Agosto de 1990.

PERFIL PROFESIONAL

Bailarina autodidacta con experiencia en diseño y ejecucion de talleres y montajes en el campo artistico desde hace 7 años. Con facilidad para el trabajo en equipo, atención, orientación al dinamismo y creatividad planimetrica; por medio de la pedagogia en la enseñanza de tecnica de la danza urbana (hip hop old school) orienta su trabajo a la realizacion de talleres sociales de danza en la población juvenil, terecera edad y con discapacidad. A medida que su carrera avanza ha ido construyendo su propia investigación basada en un concepto experimental e interpretativo.
Ha obtenido reconocimientos a nivel distrital, nacional e internacional haciendo parte de diferentes compañias como Alzados en almas, Dunkan, Concepto ANVAR, D-three y Bila Colombia.

EXPERIENCIA LABORAL

VIVE BAILANDO
Bailarina y Formadora en Danza Urbana
Febrero 2018- Diciembre 2019
FUNCIONES: Formadora artística en la ejecución de los proyectos VIVE BAILANDO Madrid Fase I, "Canto y bailo, participo para el cambio" en Soacha y VIVE BAILANDO Madrid Fase II.

Source: Shaka Contrera, 2020

Chapter 3
Urban dance in Bogotá

3.1 A bit of history

Answering the question of what is urban dance do no constitute a simple task given the multiple artistic, symbolic and cultural values related to it. Broadly speaking, urban dance is an umbrella term that refers to dance styles that have recently emerged within the urban settings, and that shared a vernacular character. It means that they have born spontaneously and informally as an 'everyday culture' of 'ordinary people'; directly opposed to more formal, canonical or elitist cultural expressions.

More specifically, the Ministry of Culture in Colombia define urban dance as a genre where youth people can express their identities, and it is generally associated with resistance processes and urban community construction (Ministerio de Cultura, 2010, p. 54). The definition is itself interesting because although it is not explicit what these 'resistance processes' aimed at, it indeed reflects the marginal place that urban dance occupied.

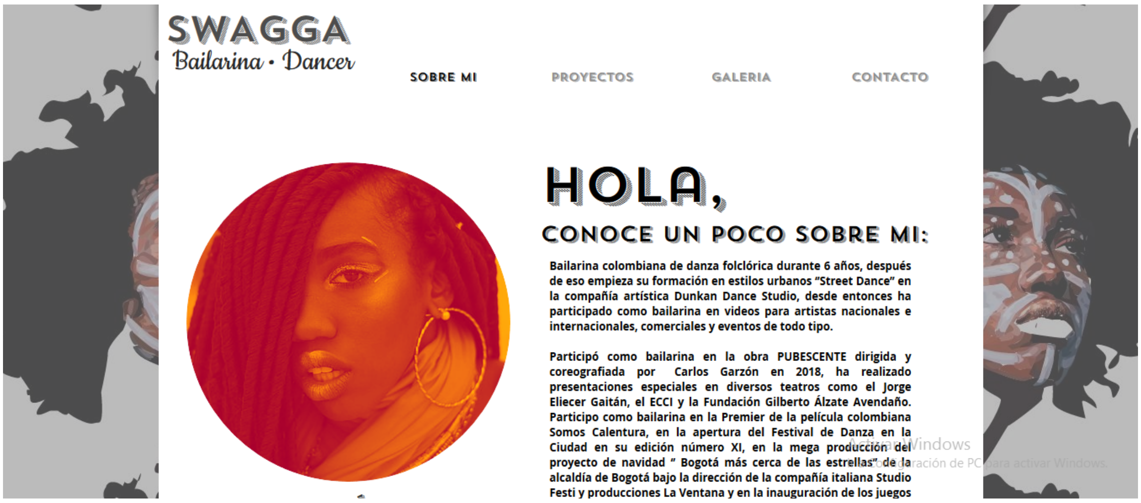
The rhythms that the Ministry includes here are the break-dance, the dance manifestation of the Hip-Hop culture; and the street dance, which groups several styles: Locking, Popping, Waacking, Krumping, Vogue, House, Afrobeat, Dancehall and Reggaeton came out during the interviews.

In Bogotá, break-dance culture started in Bosa around the '80s and street dance in Soacha in the '90s; two marginalised neighbourhoods characterised by its low socio-economic conditions. In both places, urban dance was a cultural expression of the youth that emerged under informal circumstances and was not meant to be a professional career either a job. It took the form of artistic work when passion, economic need and cunning of the dancers got together.

Since 2000 the urban dance started to expand around the city. During those years, groups and academies that have led the diffusion, circulation, and teaching of urban dance emerged: 'Dunkan Dance Academy' in 2002, 'Agrupación Anvar' in 2005, 'Project Urban Dance' in 2009 and 'D-thre3' in 2010 to mention some of them. These academies are the most prominent networks of urban dance in Colombia; they promote the development of the culture and concentrates the available jobs.

Nowadays, there is a consolidated urban dance industry in Bogotá. Even if it still conserved its informal and marginal character, there has been significant progress in the commodification of urban dance and the establishment of dance as artistic work. Swagga, the youngest participant, is a clear example of this process. Her testimony reflects the emerging specializations on the sector: *'I want to be an entertainment dancer'*, and her detailed online curriculum the professionalization of the work: personal description, links to all her dancing projects, look book and contact details are included there.

Figure 6
Swagga's online CV



HOLA,

CONOCE UN POCO SOBRE MI:

Bailarina colombiana de danza folclórica durante 6 años, después de eso empieza su formación en estilos urbanos "Street Dance" en la compañía artística Dunkan Dance Studio, desde entonces ha participado como bailarina en videos para artistas nacionales e internacionales, comerciales y eventos de todo tipo.

Participó como bailarina en la obra PUBESCENTE dirigida y coreografiada por Carlos Garzón en 2018, ha realizado presentaciones especiales en diversos teatros como el Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, el ECCI y la Fundación Gilberto Álzate Avendaño. Participo como bailarina en la Premier de la película colombiana Somos Calentura, en la apertura del Festival de Danza en la Ciudad en su edición número XI, en la mega producción del proyecto de navidad " Bogotá más cerca de las estrellas" de la alcaldía de Bogotá bajo la dirección de la compañía italiana Studio Festi y producciones La Ventana y en la inauguración de los juegos

Source: (Swagga, 2020) Available at https://ycortes6221.wixsite.com/swagga

Now, the question of what does it means to be an urban dancer is not easier. Following the advice of Akinleye on his analysis of the meanings of Black British Dance, perhaps presenting 'when, where and how' urban dance happens will avoid an oversimplistic definition. This, inevitable will underline *"the importance of the multiplicity of dancers 'own' stories"* (2018, p. xvi).

Therefore, I decided to let the richness of the dancers' histories to speak by themselves. Above I provide some snapshots of meaningful moments of what constitute the urban dancer experience. It was my way to emphasize on several essential themes: i) the centrality of dance in the constitution of the dancers' social identities; ii) the informal emergence and expansion of urban dance as a cultural phenomenon; and iii) the contradictory character of passion and precarious work.

2000

Andrés (IG: @andresanvar): It was a Sunday evening. Andrés, 19 years old by that time, walked inside the bar without knowing that he was about to find something that will change his life. The finals of a dance contest organized by the bar were about to start. Astonished, he saw a groups of guys imitating Michael Jackson performances and competing to win the prestige of being the best dancer (and the liquored award of course).

He hadn't seen anything like that before, but he immediately knew he wanted to do that too. To be part of the group, he needed to learn the choreographies of Michael Jackson concerts. Fourth months of watching over and over again the videos and practising by himself at home were the time that took him to be ready for his first performance.

That night, the crew went to one of the brothels in the north part of the city. He almost got late because of a last-minute problem in the painting store he was working. Dressed up with a blazer, shiny pants and a Panama hat, they danced in the middle of the place at the rhythm of 'Smooth Criminal'. After passing the hats around the clients, he realized that the tips they had made that night were almost the same as his weekly salary at the store. That was his first dancer work.

JayD (IG: @jaydrealoficial): For his seventh birthday JayD had prepared a performance to entertain the guests of his party. Influenced by her mom's passion for music and dance, he always had felt attracted to express himself with the movements of his body. With a *'Proyecto Uno'* merengue[4] song on the background, he did his first dancing show with family and friends as the audience.

2005

Andrés: Andrés was thrilled after being awarded winner of the First Urban Dance Festival organized by Bogotá's District. His newly formed dancing group 'Agrupación Anvar' had been training hard for that competition. The long hours of rehearsal at his grandfather's garage had been worth it, even if the award did not even cover the costume investment. Nevertheless, he was satisfied with the novel character of their performance. By that time, he was inquisitive to know other dancing styles he can include in their choreographies. By searching and downloading videos from the internet (YouTube didn't even exist at the time), he learned the basic movements of House, Locking and Popping, some street dance genres from the United States.

Yami (IG: @yamivasquez): Yami had recently graduated from high-school. A year ago, her schoolteacher had invited her to join a dancing group he was forming. It was called 'Dunkan Dance'. There she was learning Pop-dance; it was everything for her. As she didn't have a plan to study a degree, guided by her passion and supported by her family, she decided to dedicate her life to dance. That year she had one of her first jobs.

> It was tough […] we were the main show of that bar. So, we trained three times per week, and the payment was very little. We made three different shows in one night: 11pm, 12pm and 1am; Friday and Saturday […] We had to wait till the bar close at 3am or 4am to get payed and we were waiting, tired, with no sleep… sometimes they said: *Tonight people paid in plastic* [referring to credit/debit card], *we cannot paid you today, so go'*. Some people didn't have any money to go back home, and they went to work thinking they were going to be pay.

2015

Shaka (IG: @shaka_contreras): Shaka was walking in a shopping mall when they saw it. They has been looking for this their whole life. Finally, at the age of 20, they has found people that were dancing the rhythms that had inspired them since they was a teenager: Janet Jackson, Back Street Boys, Missy Elliot, Snoop-dog. Later they figured out it was an event called 'Dunkan Dance Festival', organized by one of the most important urban dance academies in Bogotá. It was a competition that grouped all the urban dance crews of the city.

I turned out that some of the groups that were competing there were also offering dance classes regularly. At that moment they was working on a call centre, so if they save some money maybe they can afford to pay some dance lessons. They decided to register at 'Agrupación Anvar', which was coordinated by Andrés. From that day, they started a more 'formal' dance formation that amazed them. All the movements they was learning by their self when watching music videos on TV now acquired a name, a technique, a history behind.

Zulma (IG: @l.a.s._dancer_zuulmavp): Zulma decided she wanted to do some fitness activity parallel to her studies Management of Service Institutions. She was sixteen, and she was starting her career although she was not wildly convinced with her degree choice. She asked her parents to register her in a dance academy. After that, she knew what she wanted for her life. During that time, her schedules were tied. University classes along the day, then at least 6 hours during the evenings moving at the groove of Hip-Hop and Dancehall at the dance academy. She wanted to quit her studies, but her family did not let her. At the end of the year, the owner of the academy invited her to participate in one event:

> 'Samsung was advertising something (which I don't remember), but they make us dance like three times per day in the shopping mall… So that was one of my first jobs. It was awesome! It was like: *For dancing one day I'll be paid 180.000 COP*[5]*?* Wow!'

2013

Yami: At the age of 27 Yami decided it was time for start her own dancing studio. She had been dancing with the same crew for nine years, and she decided it was time to migrate. She contacted several of her dancer friends (including Zulma) and they decided to form Hush Dance Centre. With this new crew, she was ambitioning to go the Hip-Hop International, a World Championship that takes places every year in the United States and groups only the best crews of each country. She didn't know it by then, but it would take her three years of hard training, commitment and investment to finally be there. It was worth it though, the emotion that you feel when competing is like a drug she said, you always wanted more and more.

Daniel (IG: @daniel_corredor): With 15 years old, Daniel was absolutely sure that his way of being in the world was though movement; it was his way to understand himself and to connect with others. The several years of dance lessons and workshops had helped him to arrive to that conclusion. Ballet, contemporary, urban and folklore was what he was learning.

At that moment he was getting ready for the big trip. His dance group had been invited to participate in several dance festivals in Europe, three countries in one month. It was to dance folklore, of course, which is a very sponsored style. The best part, all the expenses were covered except for the air-ticket.

2018

JayD: One day JayD received a call (he was 25 at that time). It was Felix, his friend from the crew. He called to tell him that their group had been selected to open Daddy Yankee's concert! Since he was a teenager, Daddy Yankee has been his favourite reggaeton singer. The knew all his songs, records, and albums. He is the father of reggaeton.

> *'Dude we are going to be in front of Yankee!'* I was shitting on my pants.

That night, the coliseum was full. Thousand and thousand of people were there to see Daddy Yankee and he was going to be there too. The adrenaline was running along his body and he could believe it. He could not wait a second more to be on the stage.

Swagga (IG: @swagga_62): At the age of 18, Swagga was already a successful dancer without really pretending to. She had decided to study International Relations despite their family support on her artistic career. But since she started dancing at Dunkan Dance Academy her dancing dreams come true. She was thrilled for have been selected on her first casting! It was for a commercial. That day she went to the studio, and she was amazed at the lights, cameras, producers, everything. She was feeling like a start. Nowadays, when reflecting on that day, she realized that several things did not go well.

> We were there the whole day, and we didn't even have a chair to sit. We had to sit on the floor while everybody had their own dressing room […] So just imagine, from 6am to 7pm, the whole day shooting it is very exhausting, and we were sitting on the floor.

2020

Andrés… is busy applying to dance government grants.
Yami… had to close her dance academy.

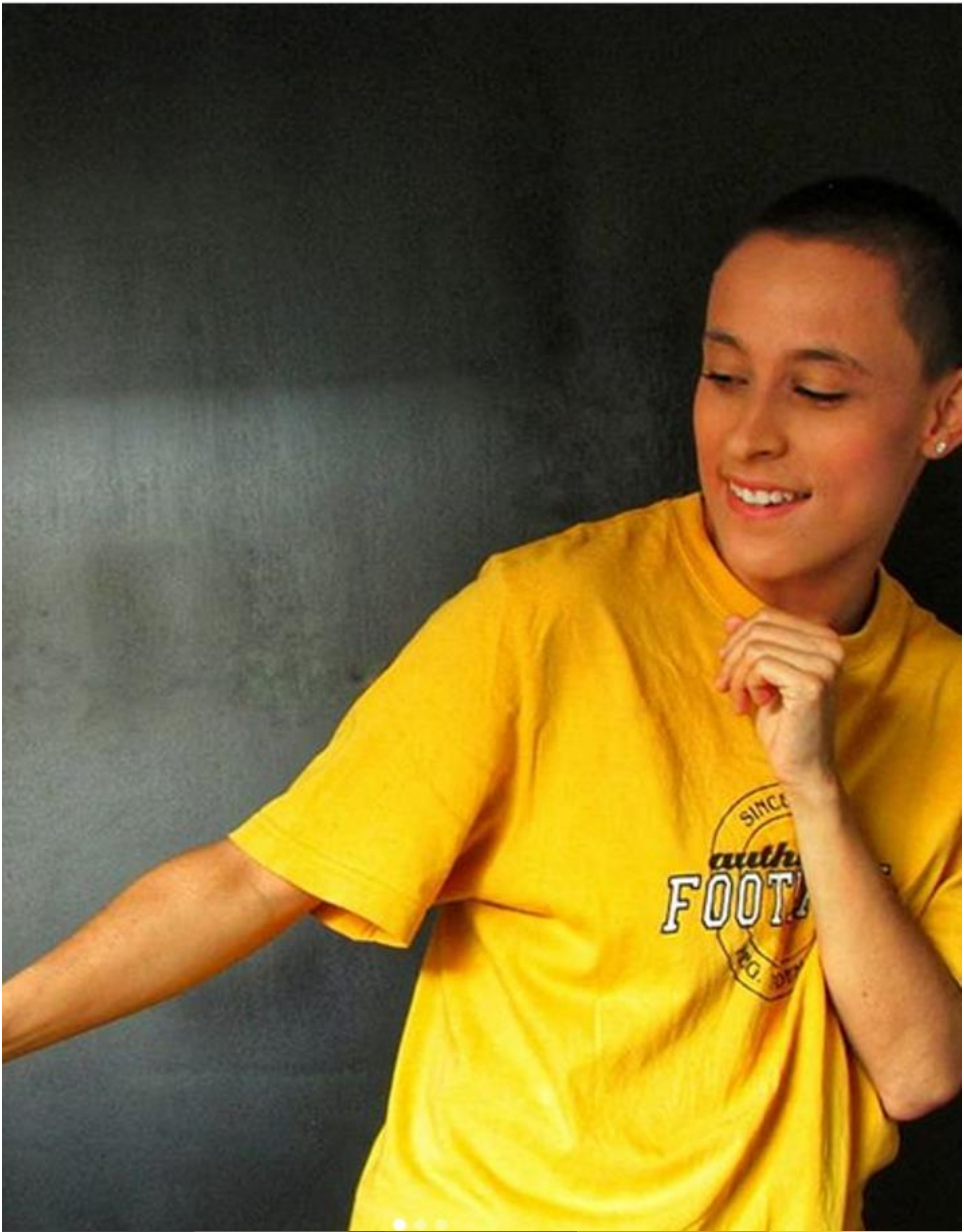
Shaka's… play was cancelled.

JayD… is constantly promoting reggaeton online classes.

Zulma's… concert was postponed.

Daniel… is feeling frustrated and completely disconnected from his students.

Swagga… is busy with her studies on International Relations, but she is missing dancing.



Chapter 4
How to live as an urban dancer?

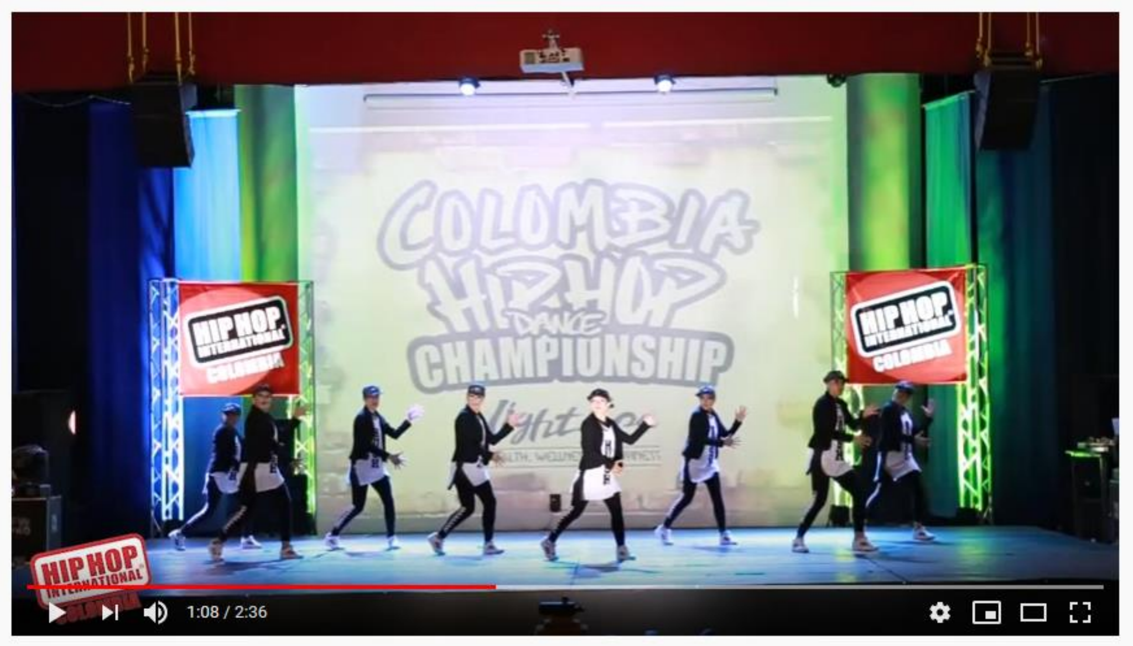
In this chapter, I present a critical analysis of the different ways on how dancers interpret their working conditions and strategies used by the dancers to guarantee their livelihoods while dealing with the uncertainty and insecurity of the material conditions of dance production. For the analysis, I put the voice of the dancers at the centre: how they interpret the use of each strategy according to their positionality and context, and how they use their agency to face dominant social structures. Along with the text, the implications in term of labour security and cultural justice are highlighted.

4.1 Cultivate your name and your network

Although all the participants described how they were fascinated with dance since they were little, there are different ways of how they started their artistic careers as the histories of Zulma and Shaka showed me.

When Zulma was growing up, her parents registered her in several dance academies and paid for her classes: *"they thought it was a just a hobby because I was starting"* she remembers. Also, when she began to participate in dance competitions, they helped her to cover all the expenses. Registration fees, costumes, air tickets, training and more are some of the associated cost of competing.

Figure 7
Zulma at Hip-Hop International Colombia 2015



Source: (Rodriguez, 2016). Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEfycDSTLB4

Without really knowing it, by paying for 'her hobby' they were helping her to cultivate her dancer career. With this support, she could not only improve her dance skills but also, she could spend time in academies and competitions. That investment in time and resources made her visible among dancers, helped her to create a name in the industry and to establish the right contacts. Those were vital elements when she was looking for dance jobs.

> I started to write to everybody. All of them knew me because I had competed with Hush, so I wrote to Mancho: *'Hey, I am giving dance lessons'*, to Chaverra… I started to knock doors, and that is how everything started. From dancing one hour per week to give classes every day in different academies. It was beautiful **(Zulma).**

On the contrary, Shaka didn't count with their family economic support to pay for their classes. To enter on their first dance academy, Shaka needed to save some money from their work on a call centre and paid for the lessons by their self. To be able to spend more time doing what they love, Shaka accepted the offer the owner of the dance academy where they was practising; teaching the beginner's class as an exchange for their own dance lessons. In that way, they started to cultivate a career too.

Labour scholars have conceptualized the centrality of the 'reputation' and 'networking' in creative work: *"in these settings, reputation becomes a key commodity, and networking and maintaining contacts a key activity for nurturing it"* (Conor et al., 2015, p. 10). For cultural workers, showing themselves around is an important way to secure their present and future job; the social capital is central, as described by Murdock: *"who you know is as significant as what you know"* (2003, p. 26). During my conversations with the dancers, the word 'contacts' emerged several times. All of them acknowledge that having good connections and knowing the right people is essential to increase their job opportunities. Those informal networks are crucial for them.

Now, even though Zulma and Shaka found a way of kicking off their artistic careers, class differences are relevant to understand their working experiences. To make their way into the dance industry, Shaka needed to start working as a teacher for free. Umney and Kretsos (2015) have described this phenomenon as part of the 'economy of favours'. Many times, cultural workers offer their products and services for free, or they exchange them at a low price to receive other non-monetary goods: make their work more visible, obtain other jobs in the future or gain social and cultural capital. This exchange logic has been catalogued as one of the multiples forms of creative labour precarity as the workers do not receive the necessary monetary income to resolve their daily expenses.

When remembering that moment of their life, Shaka described how happy and grateful they was for being able to teach and learn at the academy. Still, they also remember their economic struggles on finding money for basic expenses like transportation or groceries. Here, the passion and precarity dilemma is illustrated. Although Shaka does not regret the time they invest there, they recorded as a hard time in economic terms.

Critical studies about creative labour have remarked that reputational and network-based dynamics create inequalities based on the socio-economic background of the workers (Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Gill et al., 2019). Workers with family networks that can rely on are likely to spend more time in the cultivation of their name and contacts; therefore, they find better jobs or more efficiently, as Zulma. At the same time, those of lower classes or with short economic capital have more difficulties in investing time on these vital activities, so they tend to accept more insecure types of jobs, as the case of Shaka. These stories helped me to reflect on how insecurity at artistic work is related to the class of the worker and the resources they have to deal with it. Even though Shaka managed to get in the urban dance scene, it was at the cost of several monetary sacrifices.

Now, when analysing the broader picture of the urban dance industry, the influence of reputation and networking on artistic work precarity and inequality is more evident. After a few days of online fieldwork - following the dancers and the academies' Instagram accounts- I realised that several academies have very similar teaching staff. Later, I understood that dancers find their teaching works there because someone they know refers them; it means that their friends contacted them with sources of work. In the end, they support and help each other in job searching.

Nevertheless, as mentioned before, the most prominent dance academies operate as small monopolies that concentrate the teaching or entertainment jobs. Andrés described that if a dancer can place itself in a good 'Parche' (Colombian slang that means an extended crew or a close network), she or he will be able to have a sort of income stability and a constant flux on work. As Eikhof and Warhurst (2013) recalled, what means job security for some workers is creating barriers to entry and enhancing insecurity for others. This dynamic leads to a social justice problem that calls for redistributive measures, as argued by Banks:

> I consistently adopt the view that a more even distribution of positions and rewards in the cultural industries is defensible on the grounds of economic opportunity (everyone who wishes to should have a fair chance to enter, participate in and earn a living from cultural work) (2017, p. 2).

4.2 A 'Portfolio career'

When discussing with Andrés, the oldest participant, how people in Colombia can make a living as a dancer, his answer was simple. It is not possible. After 20 years of artistic career, he argued that being a dancer is not enough, but instead, to survive, it is necessary to become a dance artist. With this definition, he explains that there are several dance-related activities that dancers can do to generate income that goes beyond interpreting movements.

The dancers well know this necessary flexibility. All the participants I spoke with have done several dance-related activities to make money. This characteristic of cultural work has been called 'portfolio career' (Blades, 2019; McRobbie, 2009) which is their capacity to work on different roles or fulfil various tasks to increase their job opportunities. In general, the dancers acknowledge the necessity of managing a portfolio career as part of the job. Some of them enjoy doing diverse activities; others just accept it as a way to keep doing what they love, which is dance.

Only in the best cases, their portfolios include solely dance-related activities. Sometimes they need to have a job outside of the artistic realm that pays their bills. Among the participant, Andrés and Shaka have cross-subsidized their dance with other types of employment as they did not count with family economic support. As mentioned before, the socioeconomic class has a significant role. The necessity of finding jobs outside the dance scene *"constitute a double disadvantage, limiting the time available for creative work and curtailing opportunities for networking and sourcing work"* (Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013, p. 500).

Nonetheless, cross-subsidy their dance is only problematic when they cannot dance at the same time. For example, on one of their narrations, Shaka described a sad moment in their life when they was unable to dance at all: *"At that moment, I said: 'I can't do art anymore. I can't dance anymore. I am going to work in this call centre, and this will be my life of frustration'."*

4.3 Practice multi employment

Having a broad portfolio is only one of the required strategies to make a living as an artist; given the characteristics of cultural work, it is necessary to have multiple jobs at the same time, the multi employment. When analysing the most common dance jobs in Bogotá, there is a mix of relatively stable jobs with low economic compensation and others with significant payments but with sporadic frequency. According to their profiles and preferences, dancers usually are trying to find a balance between those to make ends meet. For example, Zulma clearly explained to me how to achieve a monthly income in the urban dance industry:

> When you are working at an academy you earned 35.000 COP the hour, but with a video clip you win 400.000 COP in one day, or the events are 200.000 COP for dancing 10 minutes. Did you get it? So yes, with the classes you are looking for a stable income, but the events help you a lot to level up the situation. So, if you had a bad month but the next one you have five events, well, that's it.

It is important to consider for a moment the prices that Zulma is describing here to understand the conditions of the dance production fully. Those amounts only constitute a reference as the prices of dance services are not fixed, and on the contrary, they tend to vary a lot. I expand on this subject in Chapter 5.

Table 1 Cost of dance services (reference)

	COST COP	COST USD (1 USD = 3.800 COP)[6]
Minimum wage (monthly)	877.803	231
Class (1 hour)	35.000	9
Event	200.000	53
Video	400.000	105

Source: Author

In Colombia, the monthly minimum wage is 877.803 COP (231 USD); it can be used as a parameter to understand the dancers' economy but acknowledging that the amount is often insufficient to cover a single person monthly expense. To achieve this amount, a dancer will need to give approximately 25 hours of teaching, performed at four events or shoot two videoclips. Giving lessons tend to be more stable as dance academies try to have a fix teaching staff, but the economic reward is low compared to the invested time. On the contrary, the events have a better payment, but they tend to vary a lot. Therefore, dancers' need to organize the finances along time for the good and bad months.

The good and bad months are a typical characteristic of cultural work. It has been studied and problematized as an example of the income instability and low control of the working time that cultural workers suffer. The description made by Conor et al. is illustrative in that sense:

> Generally speaking, freelancers in the media and creative fields live by the aphorism that 'you can't say no to a job'. This in turn leads to extremely long hours and to what Pratt (2002) has termed 'bulimic' patterns of working – feast or famine, stop-go, long periods with little or no work followed by intense periods of having to work all the time, in some cases barely stopping to sleep (2015, p. 9).

Moreover, Umney and Symon have called this phenomenon the 'projectariat', a combination of the project-based work and 'precariat', a term used by Standing (2011) to designate the economically exploited class that has precarious working conditions -precarity and proletariat. With this term, they are referring to *"workers who are 'precarious' insofar as their careers are contingent upon successfully accruing sequences of discrete, time-limited funded projects for which they have to continually compete"* (Umney and Symon, 2019, p.3). In this case, the performances, events or video clips can be considered short term projects for what the dancers are always looking.

Nevertheless, when discussing with the dancers regarding how they feel about multi employment, their impressions are significantly different. For example, in one story, JayD described how proud and happy he was for having several jobs at the beginning of his career:

Angela: Does it mean that during 2018 and 2019 you were running between academies?

JayD: Literally, and something really cool started to happen, well something cool for me. People told me:

> *'Hey Jay, can we have a class on Thursday?'.*
>
> 'No, I don't have space, I can't'.
>
> *'So what day are you available?'*
>
> 'No, sorry. I can't.'

I had a lot of work, thank God.

For JayD, having several jobs was a sign of proud and success, not necessarily exploitation; and it was the case for the other dancers as well. So, although the literature is characterizing a labour phenomenon, it is not speaking to the subjective experience of the dancers. Zulma, for example, told me that dancers always prefer the 'short-term but well-paid jobs'; and Yami, who now has her dance studio, described that because of the emotional reward, her best jobs were those fluctuating projects with artist.

Going back to the prices suggested by Zulma, it also can be said that dance is not necessarily poorly paid. A successful dancer can easily earn more than the monthly minimum wage. Some participants refer to other dancers that have been able to 'buy a car' or other expensive items only by dancing. The issue is that there are not enough job opportunities for all that are aspiring to make a living by dancing, and even more, the available jobs tend to be captured by specific networks as mentioned before.

Nevertheless, most of the dancers recognize the difficulties of this way of living. Even a young dancer like Swagga realised how complicated it could be:

> To make a living with the academies, you need to work in too many, and that is very exhausting [...] For example, if I am only working in one academy, and if I am living by myself, I can't even make the groceries with the payment. You need to be at least in six academies where you know you have a regular monthly income. Cover your basic expenses with that and then keep working and promoting yourself for commercials and videos.

4.4 Share expenses

When reflecting on Swagga's words, the part of **'living by myself'** bring another angle of reflection because it suggests the difficulties for cultural workers to achieve full economic independence. Giving the low economic compensation of some dance jobs and the 'good months and bad months' dynamic, most of the dancers relies on their family nets to buffer the bad months; the best way to do it is by sharing household expenses. Of the seven dancers I spoke with, only two of them were living independently from their families. Even though relying on family allows them to manage the uncertainty of dance labour, the extend this is problematic depends on the positionality of the dancer. For example, a young dancer like Daniel (22) briefly mentions his family on his narrations:

> My mom has always supported me with all that I love. With everything. She always has been like: *'What can I do to help you? I can look out for the money... for both of us...'.*

Although her mom's economic support is there, Daniel did not question it or reflect about it. However, older dancers like Yami (34) did. In her case, the fact that she straightforwardly mentions it several times describes how significant her family support is for her.

> I have full support. My parents have never said no to me. Of course, they have seen me very stressed, and now even more with all the COVID. But my father always said: *'What are you worried about it if you know this is your home? Someone is asking you for something?'* **(Yami)**

Several authors have argued the affectation of the life course cycles by the labour market insecurity (Morgan et al., 2013; Sefton-Green et al., 2020). *"Work precarity may well delay transitions to adulthood"* (Umney and Kretsos, 2015, p. 316). When understanding the economic independency as part of this transition to adulthood, we can relate with the case of Yami. Even if she has chosen to be a dancer and she still wanted to work in the industry, it has come at the cost of her economic independence.

4.5 Open your dance academy

One of the most common strategies used by the dancers to find some economic stability is to open their dance academy or studio.

Figure 8
Teaser of Hush Dance Centre, Yami's academy

Clases particulares / formación artística
0:02 / 0:52

Source: (Hush_Dance_Center, 2020) Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6oDed7dBuE&feature=youtu.be

Andrés, Yami and JayD have a space dedicated to teaching dance and profiting from that. Teaching is a way for many dancers not only in Bogotá but around the country to make a living with dance. Urban dance has an advantage compared to other genres because it is becoming increasingly popular: people want to practice it for recreational or fitness reasons or simply because they find it 'cool'. Therefore, it constitutes a business opportunity for these dancers.

However, the three of them described that the biggest challenge of having a dance academy is how to pay for the venue. As the renting prices are high, having your own space is a risky enterprise; your success depends if the amount you can charge per class will cover the fixed cost. Usually, having an academy could bring more stability but not necessarily is a good source of income. Moreover, as the COVID-19 situation is showing, they function on a day by day logic. With the lockdown, most of the owners were forced to shut down their places permanently. Like any enterprise, it has its difficulties like Yami recalled:

> This profession is very cool, but I can't lie. There are some days when you get tired. […] Sometimes, I would like to have a job, and that's it—one job where I can work from Monday

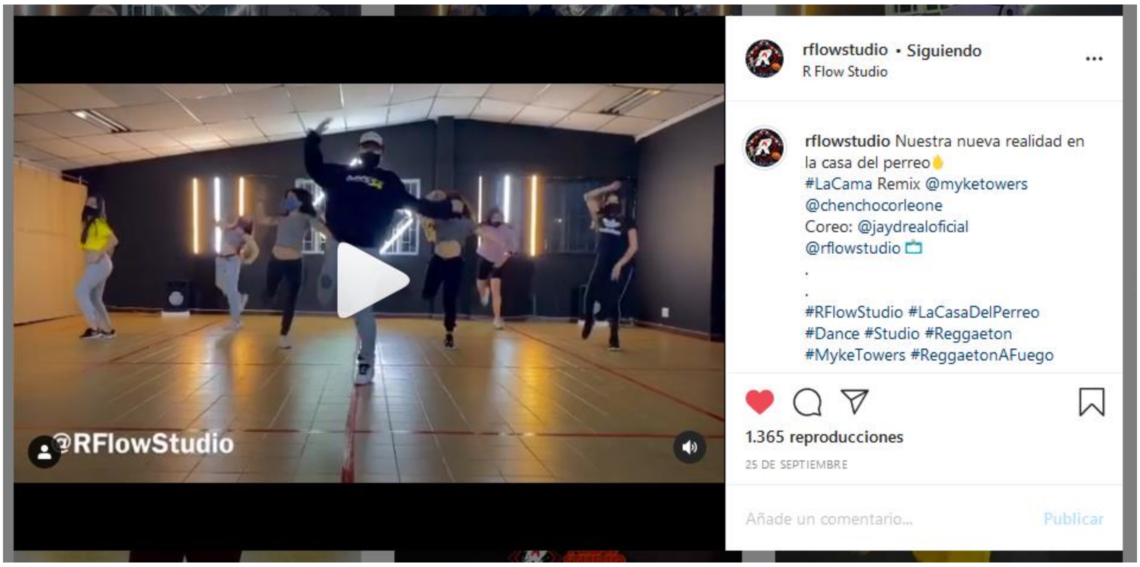
> to Friday. But then I think about it, and I say no. […] You know there are many benefits when you are an entrepreneur, but having your academy is complicated, and stay in time too…

Despite the relative stability that an academy brings, not all the dancers will like to have that responsibility. As Zulma argued, it is also a compromise that restricts the dancers' flexibility for pursuing other jobs, showing that not all the dancer are looking for permanent employment:

> My plan B will always be the academy, the dance academy. I want to do it in the future. Why not do it now? Because I want to seize my time as a dancer. If I start my dance academy right now, all my attention goes there, and it's not like if I can leave someone in charge of it. So, it would not be possible for me to dance at events. I want to see what other things come up now, and in the future, the academy.

4.6 Find yourself as a product

Figure 9
Reggaeton class in R Flow Studio



rflowstudio Nuestra nueva realidad en la casa del perreo
#LaCama Remix @myketowers
@chenchocorleone
Coreo: @jaydrealoficial
@rflowstudio
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.
#RFlowStudio #LaCasaDelPerreo
#Dance #Studio #Reggaeton
#MykeTowers #ReggaetonAFuego

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Source: (rflowstudio, 2020) Available at https://www.instagram.com/p/CFiqsmllJWk/

The video above is showing a dance class in R Flow Studio, JayD's dance academy. At the beginning of 2020, he was finally able to materialize this project: creating a space dedicated to promoting the reggaeton dancing culture in Bogotá. No doubt the achievement of his dream was possible with dedication and hard work, but other factors helped.

JayD recalls how fascinated he was with reggaeton since it emerged. He started to dance it and teach it to the point the people began to call him 'The King of Perreo[7]'. Luckily for JayD, it turns out that the reggaeton culture has expanded tremendously in Latin America, and now it is one of the most demanded shows in the entertainment industry. Because of his experience with this style, several teaching or performing jobs related to reggaeton are available for him. To summarize, the lucky combination of his passion and the industry demands helped him to define himself as a product and profit from that.

Now, dancers well know that the best jobs in terms of salary are to be found in the entertainment industry. However, histories like JayD's are not always easy to find. Aliened yourself to 'what the market demands' is not a simple task for the dancers. Here, categories like gender, type of body, age, or race collapse to define what could be a successful or unsuccessful dance career in the entertainment industry.

A common narration that emerged around the female dancers[8] was the importance of body, gender and sexuality when finding a commercial job. On the entertainment industry, there is a stereotypical image of the desired bodies and the gender norms around them. As dance is a visual work, dancing skills are not the only thing that matters while working on entertainment; the image does as well.

Yami, for example, claimed that in most of the castings, the producers are looking for thinner or voluptuous girls which she felt this is not her type of body; therefore, she was rejected from many jobs. Also, JayD narrates that when dealing with potential clients for events, sometimes he needs to ask the question: *"Are you looking for dancers or models? I know dancers that are good looking, but if you only want boobs and asses, well look somewhere else"*. Andrés claimed the same issue:

> "The choreographer does not make the decision but the producer of the commercial:
>
> *'I want her. She is pretty'.*
>
> 'But she doesn't dance well'.
>
> *'It doesn't matter; she is prettier'.*

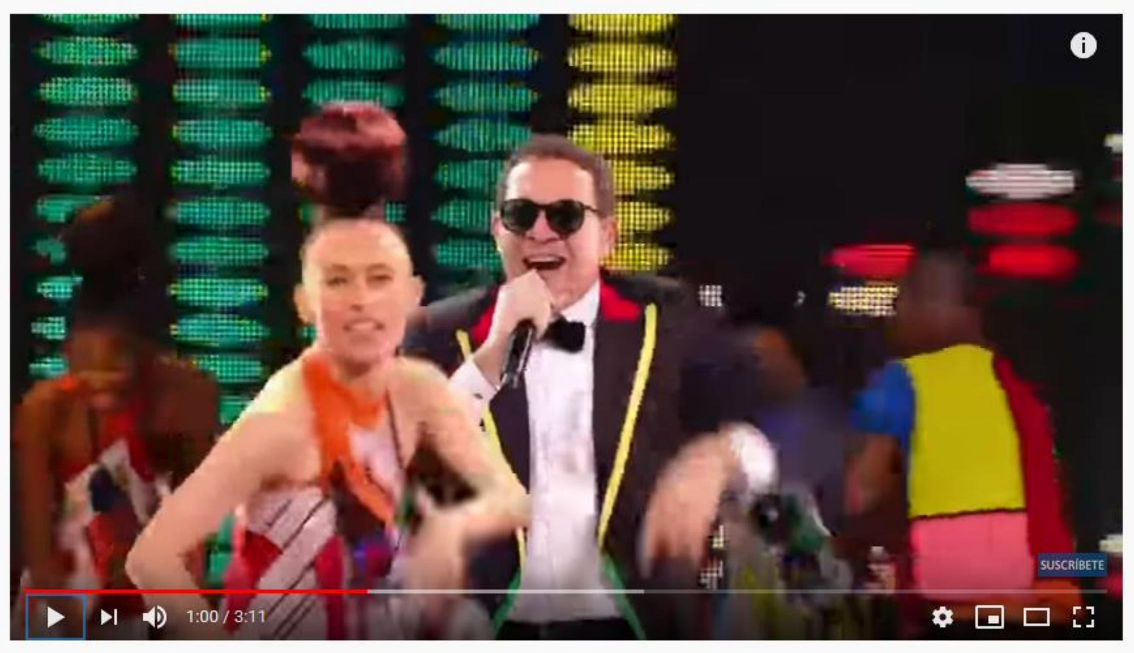
The stereotype of the body is not a minor situation for them. Several dancers were complaining that many good looking people but with no technique, training or experience dancing compete with them for the same jobs. They find the situation unfair. However, the informality of the dance scene enables many people to participate in dancing jobs.

Regarding sexual identity, the history of Shaka is illustrative to understand the compulsive heterosexuality in the entertainment dance scene and the challenges it presents for dancers like them. During my conversations with Shaka, one of the first things that emerged was that they identifies themselves as a trans nonbinary person. For example, they claimed that they likes to let the people wondering on how to refer to them, as a woman or as men. Nevertheless, as a dancing body, their queer identity seems to be out of the place:

> I always have this duality with dance. I loved to dance, but I always tend to feel very uncomfortable when performing because there is always a woman stereotype. To look like very feminine, very delicate, to be sexual. I am not like that.

The video below shows the demanded body and image of Shaka when fulfilling a gendered performance. Makeup, dresses and high heels are part of the show:

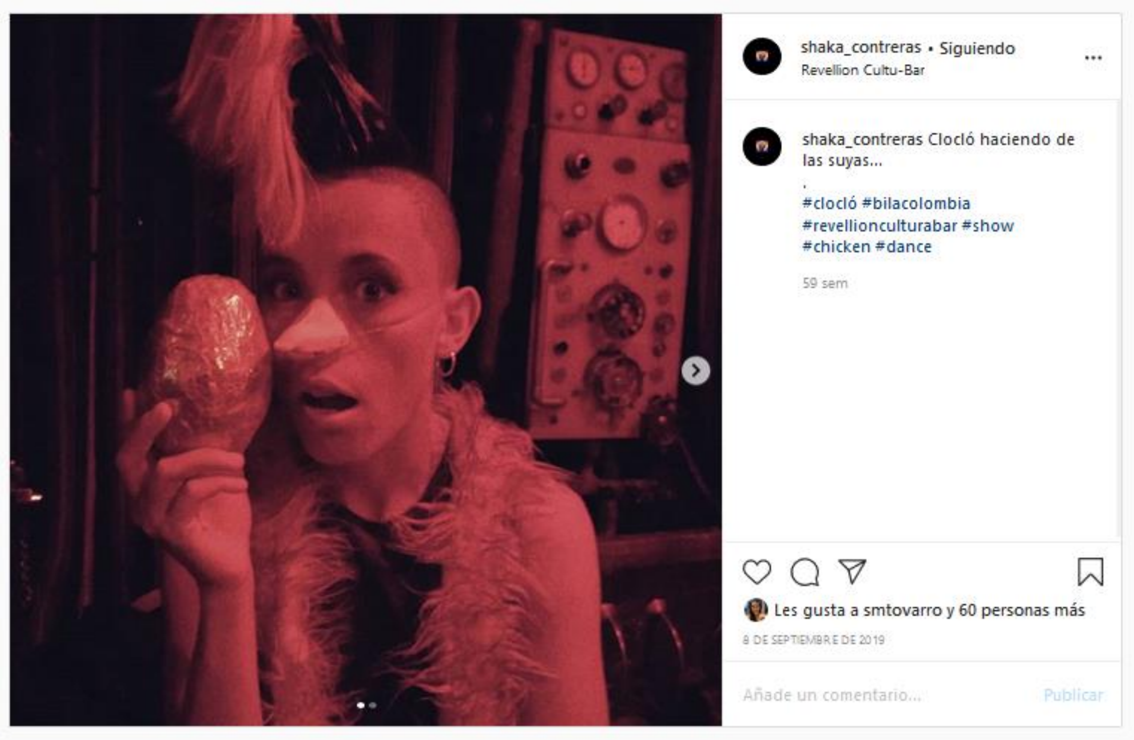
Figure 10
Shaka performing on a reality show in 2013



Source: (Caracol_TV, 2013). Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fydsr4qXkX0

Now, when asking them about their best job, Shaka describes that in 2018 they was participating in a play where they has the co-protagonist role of a crazy hen. Shaka told me they loves it because it was completely unrelated to the traditional gender binaries and stereotypical female roles that they usually needs to perform.

Figure 11
Shaka in *'Bésame Colombia'*



shaka_contreras • Siguiendo
Revellion Cultu-Bar

shaka_contreras Clocló haciendo de las suyas...
.
#clocló #bilacolombia #revellionculturabar #show #chicken #dance

59 sem

Les gusta a smtovarro y 60 personas más
8 DE SEPTIEMBRE DE 2019

Source: (shaka_contreras, 2019) Available at https://www.instagram.com/p/B2IqUi9ANKZ/?igshid=8tcsxyywnf4o

With their testimony, Shaka shows how they must negotiate their gender identity to find jobs as a dance interpreter on the entertainment scene. Nevertheless, their passion for dancing and the economic needs made them accept some jobs even if they does not feel entirely comfortable.

When considering how the material conditions of dance production affect minorities is not tricky to find exclusionary patterns in the industry. On the one hand, as the case of Shaka shows, the gendered character of dance performance is preventing some groups of people (like the trans nonbinary) from accessing the available jobs. To find a place in the industry, *"creative workers must negotiate received and accepted (gendered, raced, classed) images, practices and personae"* (Conor et al., 2015, p. 13). This acceptance not only creates a diversity and equality issue but also reinforce the dominant gender norms and stereotypical images (Broomfield, 2011, p. 125).

On the other hand, the insecure conditions that are typically part of being a cultural worker are enhanced when considering the intersect of aspects like gender, race or class. A feminist intersectional approach (Gill, 2014) allows us to see how the identity markers of the dancers are objectively and subjectively affecting their experience in the cultural and creative industries. This incidence was evident, for example, when contrasting the histories of Zulma and Shaka.

Zulma described herself as a none-commercial type of dancer. As Christian, she refuses to wear revealing or provocative clothes on her performances. She acknowledges that this preference complicates her job searching; therefore, she relies on her passion and ability to teach to find jobs. Moreover, she has counted with her family support, so she has the privilege of rejecting the jobs she dislikes. On the contrary, Shaka does not have that privilege. While both dislike the sexualized stereotype of women that is demanded by the entertainment industry, the family support and class appeared to be critical for their job choices.

Besides the stereotypes that prevent dancers from finding a job, Swagga described her experience as a racialized body and how it makes her feel:

> People think that because of our roots [afro-Colombian] we have an artistic gift and that everything comes easy for us and no! *'I also need to train; I also must take classes as you'*. In the industry, it is the same. For carnival, for parties, for reggaeton, our aesthetic is what is needed. *'We need curly hair; we need niggas'*… But this is not an inclusion quota; this is a predestination of what we can or cannot do in the industry which is based on stereotypes and prejudices.

With her words, she narrates the generalized perception of her 'superior' body in terms of arts and movements; these discourses are designating a place in Colombian society for the Afro-Colombian people. She is aware of the 'advantages' of her skin colour to find jobs in the industry; furthermore, considering the short time she has been dancing, she has had a very successful dancer career. She has participated in several music videos, commercial, concerts, plays, and she only started to dance four years ago. As a dancer, she is young, tall, beautiful, skilful, black; she is what the industry demands. Nevertheless, at the same time, she criticizes how this 'privilege' replicates the inferior racialized stereotypes of the Afro-Colombian people. This stereotype claims that black bodies belong to this exotic and folkloric places, and they deserve to be only there.

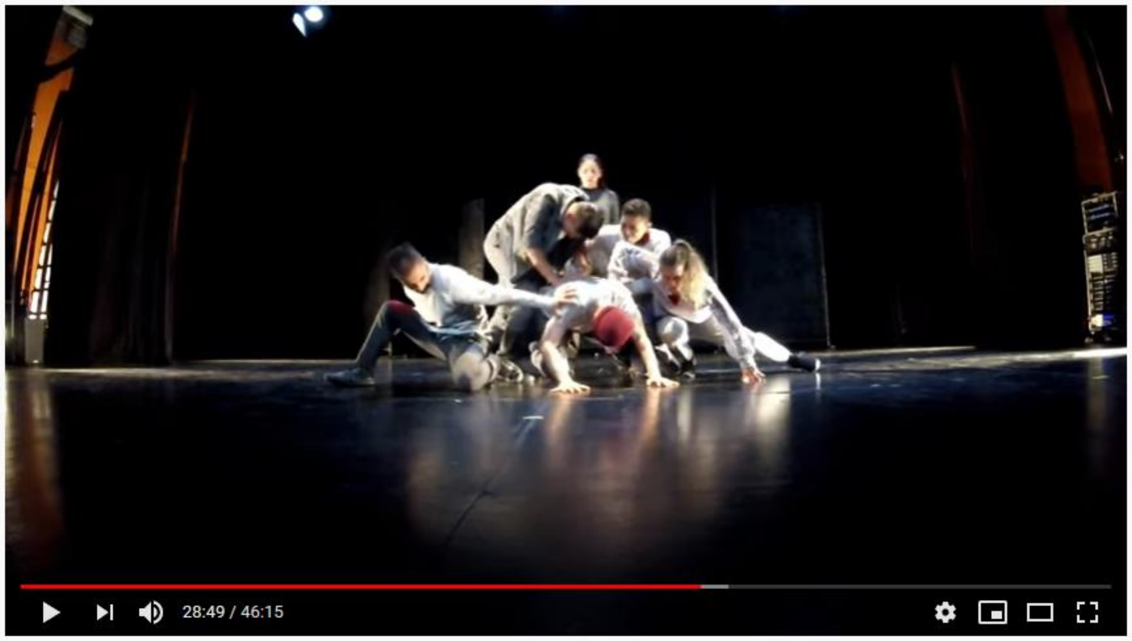
Finally, the literature develop about the role of race in the cultural work inequalities has been mainly produced in Western countries and it has claimed that there is a systematic underrepresentation of people of colour in the CCI (Conor et al., 2015; Gill et al., 2019). Therefore, a situated analysis for Non-Western countries that incorporate elements of the colonial racialized discourses, and that can visualize cases like Swagaa's is needed.

4.7 Apply to State grants

Another strategy used by the dancers to make a living is to apply to State grants. Both the District Institute of Arts IDARTES (Instituto Distrital de las Artes) in Bogotá and the Ministry of Culture in Colombia offer different sources of income for dancers. The District, for example, has a portfolio of incentives for dance creation, circulation or research. The most common incentives are i) a grant to develop an artistic project that is given to the best proposal; ii) an award that recognized the trajectory or talent of the artist; iii) a contract to execute a pre-established project of the local development plan (Secretaría de Cultural Recreación y Deporte, 2020). Despite the existence of this incentive program, all the participants highlighted several problematic aspects of it.

From the seven participants, Andrés was the only one that has directly applied and won several of these incentives. During our conversation, he recalled that back in 2005, he won the first urban dance creation grant offered by the District. Andrés described it was not an easy process for him. Applying for these grants required some basic knowledge in project management, familiarity with the District forms, and mastery of writing in the desired institutional way. Since then, he had won these kinds of grants on several occasions. The video below shows the play he presented in 2019 with a District incentive.

Figure 12
'El Otro Lado'. Winner of the IDARTES 2019 urban dance creation grant



Source: (Andrés Anvar, 2020) Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1HV1UQ5n_A&t=2431s

With almost 15 years of experience on writing proposals, he has found on the State grants a significant and stable source of income. However, he recognized the problematic nature of these incentives:

> I have won several of those grants. Unfortunately, this is like a war. *'If I win this project you can't win it'.* I want to live by dancing too; this is what I chose.

The metaphor he used here is impressive: a war. The chosen word represents the feeling of a fight for survival, where only a few will make it. It is a fireless competition: 40 presented proposals, only three selected, he said. With his speech, he clearly expressed the insufficiency of these incentives.

Besides Andrés, three other dancers have participated in these incentives at some point in their careers. They did not apply to them by themselves, and they said it was a sporadic rather than a frequent source of income. The rest have not to try to get it or benefited from it. In general, the participants argued that they do not have enough information about the subject; that they were no interested in participating; that are very competitive programs; that they do not know how to apply; always won by the same dancers-as Andrés' case shows-; won by those that can write better and not by the best dancers.

Without pretending to do an exhaustive analysis of how these programs are designed and implemented, the dancers' testimonies are useful to sketch the governmentality behind them. Specifically, "*how the governable subject is discursively constituted and produced through particular strategies, programmes and techniques*" (Kim Mckee, 2009, p. 468).

First, by asking for a written proposal, for example, the government is encouraging the formalization of something informal. It seems there is a disconnection between the dancer and the programs languages. The marginal and street origin of the urban dance appears to be counterintuitive to formatting and standardizing. Differently than other dance genres, urban dance is not performed at an academic or university environment; therefore, the written expression of this culture has been less developed, making it harder to access these programs. It does not mean to say that the urban culture is static, and it cannot evolve to more formal spaces, but the testimonies of the dancers are not describing this as an organic process.

Additionally, remembering the origins of urban dance as a culture emerged in marginalized neighbourhoods, broadly speaking, these dancers have had access to low-quality education. Therefore, the production of this type of documents is even more challenging for them. These particularities reinforce the inaccessibility of the grants for many dancers and create exclusionary patterns.

Finally, programs based on individual supports are individualizing dance labour and stimulating competition, factors that at the end, hinder collective processes, the cohesion of dancers as a working group, and exasperate the 'war' feeling that Andrés mentioned.

Programs like these are not exclusive from Colombia. The analysis made by Murray and Gollmitzer about cultural policies addressed the generalized individual-based support of the current policies; they claimed that the logic behind them is more to stimulate economic growth and employment than providing holistic support for the workers.

> Overall, policy programmes or instruments falling under the three categories of training, business support and awards are all directed at generating GDP from creative activities. In other words, contemporary creative industry policies are strong in offering voluntary measures, but rather weak in providing universal, stable and mandatory support in the areas of labour relations and social as well as income security (2012, p. 426)

4.8 Passion, Precarity and Inequality?

In summary, the life histories presented before had shown that a negative understating of the precarity around the urban dancers working conditions is oversimplistic. Dancers experience their work according to their positionalities. The intersection of different identity markers creates multiple subjective and objective labour circumstances; therefore, the ways they interpret insecurity and uncertainty differ, as well as the strategies they used to manage it. Driven by their passion for dance, all had found their ways to deal with the working conditions, showing the importance of their flexibility and agency. Nevertheless, the dynamics on which artistic work is structured create inequalities among workers: the intersectional sensibility that was used shows that the different experiences of insecurity and precarity demonstrate cultural justice problems. The stories above confirm Hennekam and Bennett arguments: *"there is growing evidence that precarity, competition and lack of regulation within these industries is exacerbating inequalities with respect to gender, race and class"* (2017, p. 417).

Chapter 5
An overview of the claims

In the following section, I present a synthetic analysis of the urban dancers' demands for support and regulation; their claims turned around their contradictory roles of artist and workers. Although the differences among their requests, their generalized complaints can be classified by their recognition or redistribution character.

5.1 Working conditions? Oh, yes. That too!

To open my conversations with the dancers, one of my first questions was "*How did you start to dance?*". From there, dancers took the floor and intuitively began to narrate their best dancing experiences. It is hard for me to transmit the passion, proud, energy and fun that the dancers convey when sharing their lives. Despite the negative aspects they may have mentioned, all the histories had that in common. With their stories, the passionate work described by the labour scholars was vividly illustrated to me. On the contrary, when asking them how they assess the working conditions of dance in Colombia, their answers portrayed something else: *"Complex", "Discontinuous and unattended", "Precarious", "Hard, cruel", "Difficult", "Unstable", "Informal"*. Their replies to my question also confirm what the literature describes as the problematic aspects of artistic work.

When analysing narrations, as argued by Ahmed, the structure of the narrative accounts could be as important as the content because it illustrates "*how people make sense of their experiences...*" (Ahmed, 2013, p. 233). In this case, the fact they include on their narrations both aspects of passion and precarity (and in that specific order) represents to me their contradiction of being artist and workers. This dilemma offers several points of reflection.

First, their stories were organized in a way that highlighted all their positive personal experiences. Even when referring to the difficulties they have encountered when trying to make a living as a dancer in Colombia, they presented themselves as 'survivors', and they were proud of it. Remembering that dance is part of who they are as human beings rather than their source of income, it is almost intuitive they introduce themselves like that. They want to be remembered by their artistic role and achievements.

Secondly, regardless of how they experience the insecurity of the dance work, all did an objective and detach negative assessment of the sector; they show they acknowledge the problematic aspects of dance. Here, they embrace their worker role, and even they refer to dance as a profession:

> I feel that year after year we are showing that art is a professional career, that you can make a living by dancing. Well, 'make a living' because it is tough **(JayD)**.

Finally, this dilemma of passion and precarity has a clear 'winner' if I can say so. On our conversation, Yami told me when discussing the role of the government on supporting dancers: *"Nobody is asking them to give us money. No. Here we work hard, by default, and we do face it with any means we can"*. Her words made me realized that she accepts the difficulties and challenges that came with the job. Based on our conversations and the structure of their narrations, their main personal interest seems to be how to keep dancing while paying the bills at the end of the month. Dance is what they lived for.

Nevertheless, dancing because they love it does not mean to say that they do not have any complaint about their working conditions. Only that is necessary to understand that in this middle ground between being artist and worker, is where the dancers' claims are placed. Any social policy that intended to support them needs to recognize this double role of artist and workers but identifying that their artistic necessities tend to prevail.

5.2 Unpacking dancers' demands

Depending on the positionality of the dancer, different kinds of claims emerged, showing the diverse ways dancers want to be supported, or not. In the first place, not all of them see in the government a role of support. Daniel was very emphatic on that:

> The government? Puff. That word is so fake. It is not there, it barely exists [...] How can the government help? [...] I don't know, and it is because I have never thought about it. I am not interested in government help. They are crazy; they do crazy stuff. I don't want them to involve in my art [...] I feel comfortable with that.

Him, with a very critical perspective, is showing the lack of legitimacy of the Colombian government and its failure of providing support for the dancers or citizens. Nonetheless, his political ideas need to be considered to his privilege position. Someone whose primary concern has been to explore his feelings and movements, and to secure his livelihood has been secondary.

On the contrary, other dancers pointed out clear ideas on how the government can support them. Each statement was framed according to the sector of the industry they were working on (entrepreneurism or employment support).

> Spaces. It would be great if they can support us with the venue. Everybody's dream is to have their own venue to train their people **(Yami).**

> Unemployment insurance because it is very easy to be out of work, with or without the pandemic. I mean, it can be that in one month a dancer has several jobs and the next one no events. Cero. It's tough. **(Zulma).**

Andrés described an interesting position. Him, the oldest dancer and the one with more experiences working with the State, argued that more than the role of the government, it is society who needs to have an active role. Among other things, organizing collective claims, participating in accountability processes and voting for the right governors.

But despite their individual requests (or not), there is a common ground of general complaints.

5.2.1 Recognition and Redistribution for artistic work

"Justice today requires both redistribution and recognition. Neither alone is sufficient" (Fraser, 1998, p. 1). These words of Nancy Fraser inspired me to understand the voices of the dancers. On her work, she addresses that some groups are affected both by socioeconomic maldistribution and cultural misrecognition; there are interconnected causes of injustice. Therefore, she argues that a real social justice process needs to contemplate both the political economy and cultural changes.

> It is too unfair because this is not even considered a job. But then, they want leisure all the time, they want entertainment, they want culture in Bogotá. Everyone wants to be reading a book, listening to music and learning how to dance. So, what about the writers, the artists? **(Andrés)**

This and similar claims repeatedly appeared during my conversations with the dancers. They reflect a deep feeling of injustice about how art in Colombia is undervalued, misrecognized and forgot. According to them, their position in society is a reason for their precarious working conditions:

> People give to arts a very low economic value. It's not that I care about it, but the sustainable environment that should exist to the artist can live is affected by that **(Daniel).**

Their misrecognition claims emphasized how society, the entertainment industry, and the government undermined their value and contributions. As illustrated by Eikhof and Warhurst, "*consumer demand for creative products is volatile, dependent on subjective taste, trends and fashions*" (2013, p. 497). Therefore, the dance will only achieve proper economic compensation by recognising their vital role in society. JayD, for example, sharply reflects on the importance of art during COVID-19 lockdown and how it has been forgotten:

> Everybody was sent to their homes to quarantine. People will go crazy after a week, obviously. But art, which they don't give a damn about, is the one that has been saving them [...] For example, this guy sing, so he made an online transmission and people watch it. [...] So, what happens? You realize that artists contribute a lot to the mental health of the people.

A clear example of the disregard of the government was made by JayD when referring to the RUT[9]. RUT is a document that every worker in Colombia should have for taxation purposes, and it described the economic activity of the worker. He was complaining that dance is not even considered on the list of economic activities that relate to culture (Appendix 3). According to him, this is an expression of the invisibility of dance at the eyes of the government.

The other set of complains highlighted the necessity of regulation for the economic aspects of their work as artists.

> I think that we, as an artist guild, we haven't been able to connect, talk, discuss. Be on the same page. How much are we going to charge? Why are we going to charge like this? The process has been very individual: *'I charge like this because I think this is my job'*. So, the prices tend to vary a lot, that makes that some dancers to be more selected than others, for the money and not for the talent **(Daniel).**

Among Daniel, several other dancers were complaining about the price instability of dance-related services and advocating for price regulation. The situation is such that Daniel, for example, described that even the unofficial average price of an hour of teaching is 40,000 COP, he has heard about dancers that are asking 5,000 COP (almost ten times less). Swagga also was complaining about the prices and asking for standardization. She described that younger dancers do not know how much to charge for their work, and therefore, they were diddle by the oldest producers. While part of the complaint is because this variation is not giving dance the place it deserves, they are also addressing a sectorial economic problem.

Nonetheless, a price fixation contradicts the informal operation of the CCI given the 'economy of favours' that was mentioned before. The non-monetary benefits (social, cultural, aesthetic) of artistic work need to be considered too. Even though the dancers argued to formalization on their discourses, they also present contradictions because they enjoy the freedom to charge differently according to the client, or to 'exchange favours' with other dancers:

> Your fee as a judge is 300.000 COP. The organizer said: *'No, look, I can't pay you your fee...'*. So, you talk to him. *'I'll do it at 150.000, but assure me that when I do my event, you'll come and judge mine for the same fee'*. I mean, you can always go beyond the money **(JayD)**.

Another example of their regulatory demands was about who has the right to be considered a dancer. This was a complaint mainly actively raised by the oldest dancers, those who have more time trying to make a living from dance. For example, the criticism of the models that 'know how to move' but they are not really dancer that was mentioned before, shows it. The words of Andrés detailed the situation:

> Someone takes two months of classes and then want to start giving lessons. They want to make a living by dancing; they want to be a teacher or instructor. There is not an equanimous filter to say who is in the position to be an artist, because we all are artists, but who really should be living from art and who shouldn't.

Within this reflection, there is a claim for formal standards in the dance scene that can enable or restrict access to artistic work and therefore, regularized the labour dance market. Indeed, several scholars have identified this as one of the causes of cultural work instability:

> Menger and others have convincingly demonstrated that the oversupply of artists and arts-related workers is due to a number of factors including the low barriers to entry (e.g., no license or degree required to practice) (Lingo and Tepper, 2013, p. 338)

Nonetheless, it seems interesting to me that even claiming for this entrance formalization is contradictory with the way that all of them became dancers, which was an informal and empirical process. Even more, by standardizing these processes (for example with the formal professionalization of the dance), it will be a tendency, as happen in other cultural industries (Eikhof and Warhurst, 2013; Gill et al., 2019), that the only those with the economic capital to support the insecure labour conditions will and fulfil the professional requirements will made it.

As an example of the misrecognition and redistribution necessities of the dancers, how the social protection policies operate is illustrative. During my conversations with the dancers, another discussed topic was their opinion about the existing social protection mechanisms, specifically the labour social security (health, pension and working risk). For some of them, the subject naturally emerged as part of their general complains about their working conditions; for the others, I intentionally brought the issue.

In Colombia, access to social security depends on having a labour contract or not. Giving the informality of the dance scene, it only occurs in some instances. This means that many dancers work without any social protection. Now, looking at the numbers of labour informality in Colombia, it is easy to realize that informal work not only concern to dancers, but it is also the way that 46,8% of the population work (Dinero, 2020).

But the fact is, the matter of having access to social protection was not among their primary concerns. More than asking for access, what they were complaining about was that when they have it, the way the policies are made is not responding to the logic of their type of work, a recognition issue.

When people in Colombia have a formal labour contract, the employer must pay the social security of the employees. All the participants claimed that this modality is scarce. With a service contract, it is the employee who needs to register by himself in the system and to pay the monthly contribution to receive their salary. The service contract is the most common modality for dancers, but it only occurs with big events (like concerts or video clips) or jobs offered by the government.

Now, the logic of 'good months and bad months' that is so characteristic of their working conditions is contrary to the policy, as described by JayD:

> Pum! I was picked for the commercial. When I send my invoice, they say: '*Sir, your registration?*'. So, I need to register for a month, pay the damn contribution, and then collect my money. But then next month. Can I contribute if no job comes out? No. So, I deregister myself. But in two months something else appeared. So again, I register myself… It is an exasperating issue **(JayD).**

The issue of the disconnection of the current social protection mechanism with the characteristics of cultural work has been highlighted by scholars studying cultural policy. This is a topic that certainly needs further exploration: *"social security systems are not designed to assist creative workers in managing short-term contracts, navigate portfolio careers and recurrent periods of joblessness"* (Prince 1996 in (Murray and Gollmitzer, 2012, p. 426)). Nonetheless, it shows that there is a need for recognition of the particularities of the cultural work that will impact the material circumstances of the dancers' work.

5.2.2 A summary of the claims

With this concise overview of the dancers' claims for support and regulation, I have shown that their demands are framed both in their role of artist and workers. They are demanding recognition processes that set arts it deserved place in society. The acknowledgement of the value of art will impact their working conditions in terms of fair income, societal respect, and government appreciation. Also, their demands are centred in the standardization of certain practices and process that with guarantee their minimum level of certain economic conditions, but some of these practices can contradict the informal logic of urban dance and create social justice issues.

C-17

Chapter 6
Conclusions

The progressive growth of the Cultural and Creative Industries in the world economy, and with it, the expansion of creative work, requires social policies that can effectively support these workers. Given the conditions that this type of work offers, the literature has pointed out insecurity, uncertainty, precarity as problematic and endemic aspects of cultural work that need to be addressed. Although, by analysing the urban dance industry in Bogotá, this research has shown that considering the subjective experience of the workers on the assessment of their working circumstances, and therefore on their social protection needs, is essential.

To understand how urban dancers in Bogotá experience the material conditions around dance production, I have critically analysed the different strategies they use to secure their livelihoods and how they perceived it. The analysis has considered various sources of provisioning (market, state, social networks) as relying on diverse sources is part of their ways to manage the insecure and inequal circumstances of their works.

I have shown how the concept of precarious working conditions needs to be unpacked according to the subjective experience of the cultural workers; it is not a static negative concept. By using an intersectional approach, I have analysed how the positionality and context of each dancer create a singular experience of precarity in artistic work. The intersection of different identity markers (class, gender, race and age) enable the use of different strategies to manage the insecurity and uncertainty of artistic work, creating different cultural job experiences. Moreover, focusing on subjective experiences have demonstrated the importance of dancers' agency to deal with the structural conditions of their work. Aspects like flexibility or entrepreneurial capacity have been underestimated. However, the different interpretations of the working conditions exposed some enrooted problems of inequality at cultural work and the urgent need for cultural justice.

Despite the different experiences of their working conditions, I have shown that dancers' concerns turned around their role of artist and workers. At the heart of their complaints, there is an enrooted feeling of the lack of recognition of art's value that affects the economic aspects of their work. Also, they are demanding some formalization process to address redistributive issues. Nevertheless, as it has been presented, some of these claims are contrary to the informal and flexible logic of urban dance. Eventually, formalizing certain practices will lead to the mutation of a vernacular practice that expresses identities, to a commodity service appropriated by those that have the resources to stay in the industry. It is also a matter of social justice.

In terms of social policy, the research has shown the relevance of policies that support the dancers to manage the market circumstances, as they create different experiences of insecurity, precarity, exclusion and discrimination. Moreover, with this study, I have drawn the attention that adequate support to creative workers starts with the understanding of the specificities of cultural work. Holistic policies that recognise artistic work importance both in terms of its cultural value (like in the identity formation and the reproduction of society), and its economic value (like a commoditized performance that secure livelihoods) are needed.

When reflecting on methodology, a significant conclusion is a utility of exploring the social networks of the participants. Even though along with the research it has not been explained in detail, analysing their online activity allowed me not only to see them dancing but also to illustrate some of the elements that came out during our conversations. Their passion for dance, the blurry lines between life and work, the centrality of networking and the role of the academies are some of the elements. Upcoming research about dance work needs to consider the online dimension of it.

Regarding the silences, further analysis of the relation of precarity and inequality in cultural work is needed. As the research has presented, both are problematic aspects that affect the workers' experience, but how they exactly influence or reinforce each other has not been extensively discussed. Unpacking the nature of this relation would contribute significantly to the understating of the negative creative work dynamics and possibly how to address it adequately. Also, this study has considered the working conditions of a group of well-established dancers in the urban dance industry in Bogotá, all of them belonging to the same big network. Therefore, a generalization of these findings for all the urban dancers in Bogotá would be naïve. Finally, an enormous debt in this study is related to the influence of the dancers' working instrument on their work: their body. The research has highlighted the body from an identity perspective, but their more material (physical) aspect has been explored lightly. Specifically, I am referring to the body wear and how this in a long term perspective will affect dancers careers and works.

Given the highlighted importance of the context to understand the cultural and creative working conditions, further research centred on the specificities of different sectors of the CCI (and especially in dance industry) in the Global South context, is imperative. Dance as a performative and artistic work has unique characteristics that make it dissimilar of other creative works, and these differences need to be stressed. Also, most of the research about the subject is analysing Western countries and using the lenses of precarity with the Welfare Regimes as background, which is not the case of most Global South and certainly not the Colombian one.

Moreover, these explorations should consider both deepening and generalizing. This research has opened the discussion of how the working conditions are subjectively experienced, but by covering several dimensions of cultural work has only provided a superficial analysis. Further research on specific aspects of precarity and inequality and how they are felt is needed. At the same time, studies that aimed to characterize, quantify and describe are also necessary; even though the establishment of objective categories presents their difficulties, as I mentioned before. I rely on Swagga's words to argue that:

> The matter of the State support is practically impossible because there is no register of us. I mean, how can be possible that in 2020 there is no record of us? There is not a Habeas data.

Finally, I will like to conclude with a reflection of the value of artistic work. What is the fair remuneration of artistic work? Dancers' movements are contributing to societal vital assess like identity and culture formation. Those are central goods to the reproduction of society as a whole. No doubt social policy should be concerned about how to support dancers and other artists, but a change in the societal mindset is also required; a shift toward the appreciation and valuation of those good and services with 'non-quantifiable value', like dance, is essential.

El Altillo de la Hacienda
I LOVE COFFEE
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Appendices

Appendix 1

Research Participants description

Name	Instagram profile	Age	Reported dance experience	Self-gender identification	Class	Race	Profile
Andrés	**@andresanvar**	39	Since 2000 (20 years)	Man	Low-middle	Mestizo	Dancer and Choreographer of Urban Dance. Director of Anvar (@agrupacion_anvar)
Yami	**@yamivasquez**	34	Since 2004 (16 years)	Woman	Middle	Mestizo	Dancer and Choreographer. Founder of Hush Dance Centre (IG: @hushdancecenter)
Shaka	**@shaka_contreras**	30	Since 2008 (12 years)	Trans nonbinary	Low middle	Mestizo	Empiric Dancer and Instructor of Hip-Hop Old School
JayD	**@jaydrealoficial**	26	Since 2010 (10 years)	Man	Low middle	Mestizo	Urban artist. Dancer and Choreographer. Director of R Flow Studio (IG: @rflowstudio)
Zulma	**@l.a.s._dancer_zuulmavp**	25	Since 2010 (10 years)	Woman	Middle high	Mestiza	Dancehall dancer and Instructor
Daniel	**@daniel_corredor**	22	His whole life	Prefers not to say	Middle	Mestizo	Always changing, evolving, and moving
Swagga	**@swagga_62**	20	Since 2016 (4 years)	Woman	Middle	Afro-Colombian	Dancehall and Afrobeats dancer

Source: Author

Appendix 2
Interview duration

Participant	Interview sessions	Amount of hours
Andres Anvar	1	2
Yami	1	1.5
Shaka	1	3
JayD	2	6
Zulma	1	1.5
Daniel	1	1.5
Swagga	1	3

Source: Author

Appendix 3
List of offcial artistic economic activities

CODE	ACTIVITY
9001	Literary creation
9002	Musical creation
9003	Theatrical creation
9004	Audio-visual creation
9005	Plastic arts or visual
9006	Theatrical activities
9007	Life music spectacles
9008	Other life performances

Source: (Leegales, 2020)

SINCE 1990

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Notes

[1] Musical genre originated in marginal afro Colombian communities.

[2] As Shaka identifies themselves as trans non-binary, I will use the pronoun 'they' instead of the traditional gender pronouns 'she' or 'he'.

[3] All the quotes included along the document were translated to English by me.

[4] Musical genre original from Dominican Republic

[5] 180.000 COP constituted at the time nearly one third of the minimum monthly wage.

[6] The conversion was made using the exchange rate of the 26th of October of 2020.

[7] Perreo is the groove of the reggaeton, is the combination of the strength and soft movements in the hips when dancing reggaeton.

[8] Interestingly, none of the masculine dancers I interviewed mention issues related to their bodies or sexual identity. Nevertheless, several researches have been done where the masculinities on dance scene are problematized (Broomfield, 2011).

[9] RUT Registro Único Tributario (Single tax register)

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