Artistic Practice: notes from the inside – One for One – Ruminative Walks by Vera Mantero & guests

Maíra Santos[I]
[I]Universidade de Lisboa – Lisboa, Portugal

ABSTRACT – Artistic Practice: notes from the inside – One for One – Ruminative Walks by Vera Mantero & guests – The article aims to discuss the critical force of the *Rather Less Than More* Project (2014) and the performance *One for One - Ruminative Walks* (2014) by Portuguese choreographer Vera Mantero. To this end, we began by utilizing the concept methodology *knowing from the inside* by the anthropologist Tim Ingold, and Maíra Santos' participation in the project as a performer. From an analysis of the process, the following is discussed: its choreopolitical forces, its projective temporality and a notion of the artist as a curator of him/herself. It is concluded that despite the tensions between art and the logic of production, the work provides several elements in which its force resides: a reflection on politics in art, notions of collaboration, proximity, community, self-learning and responsibility, which distance themselves from empty abstractions.
Keywords: Critique. Knowing from the Inside. Participation. Vera Mantero. Performance.

RÉSUMÉ – Pratique Artistique: remarques du dedans – Un pour un – Promenades Ruminantes par Vera Mantero & des invites – L'article se propose à discuter la force critique du projet *Plus en moin qu'en plus* (2014) et de la performance *Un pour un – promenades ruminantes* (2014), conçus par la chorégraphe portugaise Vera Mantero. En tant que méthodologie, on est parti du concept *connaitre dés l'intérieur* développé par l'anthropologue Tim Ingold et de la participation de l'auteure au projet comme performer. À propos de l'analyse du proccès, on discute notamment: ses forces choréopolitiques, sa temporalité projective et une notion de l'artiste comme un conservateur de lui-même. La conclusion c'est que malgré la tension entre l'art et la logique de production, le travail offre quelques élément dans lesquels sa force réside: comment penser la politique dans l'art, les notions de collaboration, proximité, communauté, auto-apprentissage et responsabilité, qui s'éloignent des abstractions vides.
Mots-clés: Critique. Connaitre dés l'Intérieur. Participation. Vera Mantero. Performance.

RESUMO – Prática Artística: notas de dentro – Um Pra Um – Passeios Ruminantes de Vera Mantero & convidados – O artigo propõe-se a discutir a força crítica do projeto *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014) e da performance *Um Pra Um - Passeios Ruminantes* (2014), ambas da coreógrafa portuguesa Vera Mantero. Para tanto, parte-se como metodologia do conceito do antropólogo Tim Ingold, *conhecer de dentro*, e da participação da autora no projeto como performer. Da análise do processo, discute-se, a saber: suas forças coreopolíticas, sua temporalidade projetiva e uma noção do artista como curador de si próprio. Conclui-se que, apesar das tensões entre a arte e a lógica de produção, o trabalho oferece diversos elementos no qual residem sua força: como pensar a política na arte, as noções de colaboração, proximidade, comunidade, autoaprendizagem e responsabilidade, que se distanciam de abstrações vazias.
Palavras-chave: Crítica. Conhecer de Dentro. Participação. Vera Mantero. Performance.

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Introduction

Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais [Rather Less Than More] – *a performance-installation-project* (2014) was a five-day event directed by Vera Mantero, held in Portugal, Lisbon[1]. The event took place in the theaters of Culturgest[2] and Teatro Maria Matos, situated in the central district of the city. It encompassed vegetable gardens, performances, an urban agriculture congress, concerts, workshops, installations, sound experiences, guided tours, documentary shows, picnic at dusk and dancing. The background to this project involves poetic and ecological concerns, encounters, partnerships and action. From the action, the improbable: it ranged from the production of a free event with art and training, to the creation of an urban agricultural imaginary that introduced city and theater spaces, and in fact gave rise to permaculture gardens in downtown Lisbon.

Knowing from the inside, which forms part of this article's title, is a direct allusion to the concept created by British anthropologist, Tim Ingold[3]. It was both through my participation as a performer in *Um Pra Um – Passeios Ruminantes* [One for One – Ruminative Walks] –, one of several actions from the *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* project (2014), and my voluntary role in implementing a permaculture vegetable garden, another facet of the project, that I was able to get to know Vera Mantero's work *from the inside*. Ingold's concept primarily relates to a methodological idea of combining anthropology with an attitudinal manner of considering human life. This idea, linked to Ingold's concept (2013a), consists in approaching learning as something other than a simple determination of facts about the world but rather an attitude of interaction. As we shall see below, *knowing from the inside* involves the following ideas: *learn to learn*; mark differences between anthropology and ethnography; design *participant observation*, a concept dear to anthropology, through an inversion that prioritizes participation so that it indeed becomes *participant observation*. Moreover, to employ a mode of thinking called *art of investigation* in which it is the relationship between thinking and doing that is at play.

In this article, I primarily seek to discover what the critical force of *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014) would consist of, a work that seemed to me to be faced with the tension between art and production logic.

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However, I would to place special emphasis on the creative process for *Um Pra Um - Passeios Ruminantes* to discuss the idea of really 'doing from the inside', as Ingold would say, a direction that could only be taken because my position as performer altered my role in the research process[4]. As such, I approach the political aspect of these projects based on André Lepecki's concept of Choreopolitics, drawing on suggestions from Mantero's work. As with the direction of this choreography, the idea of my creation process underwent intermediation between memory, body and collective, via the perception that we are our own curators and, in this manner, we *copy and paste* things that we save in our personal archives. Above all, there is the idea of a tension between creative forces and the institutional logic that provides them with the conditions for existence.

Um Pra Um - Passeios Ruminantes: notes from inside the fieldwork of artistic practice

My research work in the field required a great deal of involvement. More than that, it forced me into a full immersion. This is in fact usually the "condition for doing research in/with art" (Strazzacappa, 2014, p. 97), since art research is defined by the researcher's own practice, his/her understanding about the process that was incorporated and its products.

Sylvie Fortin (2009) states that the terrain of artistic practice corresponds to theaters, studios, workshops, and classrooms, which makes of ethnographic fieldwork a method to be used in research into artistic practice. The approach to this research originated from a doubly *insider* perspective, given that I was halfway between being the researcher and the dancer. I belonged to the trained dance communities and therefore took on the perspective of someone who knew the world of dance from within while doing fieldwork *at home* (Jackson, 1987). Moreover, as a way to bridge the abyss of the *outsider* perspective – which insists on the separation between observation and participation – I sought to approximate myself to Tim Ingold's anthropology. Further reading of Tim Ingold's texts indicated the need to rethink the very notion of the field as something that would allow us to *speak from the inside* or at least not require us to *go out* to refer to it *from the outside*.

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For Ingold (2013a; 2015a), in the participant observation process, or rather, in *participant-observation*, the *learning to learn* stance has an essential role. It requires casting doubt, shaking off everything that could impose an anticipated or predetermined form on observations. The so-called participant observation is not, according to Ingold, a data collection technique, nor is it something limited to anthropology. The cornerstone of this research methodology is the "[...] recognition that we owe our very being to the world we seek to know. In short, participant-observation is a form of *knowing from the inside*" (Ingold, 2013a, p. 5, author's italics).

Also linked to *knowing from the inside* is the idea of *learning to learn*, a phrase by Ingold (2013a) which comes from a deep knowledge of the Saami Lapland hunters, acquired when he carried out his ethnographic research in the extreme north of Europe. From the Saami he learned that it is "[...] by watching, listening and feeling – paying attention to what the world has to tell us – that we learn" (Ingold, 2015a, *e-book*). In this sense, for Ingold (2015a, *e-book*), moving, knowing and describing are parallel facets – "it is by moving that we know, and it is by moving, too, that we describe". The clue I followed in this investigation was to think of different manners of knowing things in unison with their thought processes (Ingold, 2013a; 2015a). Composing diaries in dialogue with certain images and photos was another form of engaging and taking an active approach to the research.

According to Ingold (2013a; 2015a), anthropology and ethnography are very distinct ventures[5]. While ethnography is concerned with descriptive precision, documentation and "retrospective temporal orientation" (2015a, *e-book*)[6], anthropology, as with artistic practice, has a "speculative, experimental and open character", permeated by the "prospective dynamic", which meets the "observational engagement of art" (Ingold, 2013a, p. 8). In order to prioritize an implication in the lived world, in the possibilities of human life that were within our reach, we chose, like Ingold, to substitute the idea of anthropology as a "study *of*" for a "study *with*" people, in which we also learn from them (Ingold, 2013a; 2015a).

By choosing the studio, the theaters, the wastelands, and the space between the theaters as our focus, we tried to escape a conception of fieldwork that was linked either to ethnography or anthropology anchored

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in comparative analysis, so that we could conduct its practice based on *participatory dialogue*.

Another viewpoint of this research was to ponder the flow between art and concept, and avoid separating the relationship between art and theory into two extremes. This is also linked to Ingold's *art of the investigation* concept, which consists of the relationship between thinking and doing. To paraphrase Ingold (2013a), it entails continuously following and responding to the flows of work materials which, in turn, are always advancing in real time. Thus, this method enables us to prioritize the transit between dance and theoretical framework in order to connect them, find resonances and observe the process as reciprocal.

It was through working with the vegetable garden that I began my creative process. This happened a little before I knew exactly what my role as an artist would be in Mantero's project. In any case, I began to inhabit this vacant lot, where later the garden and its surroundings would be installed; I got muddied, talked to people, picked up a hoe, carried stones and planted. As Flusser (2014, p. 104) reminds us, agriculture is also an "overture to the gesture of waiting": preparing the soil, digging holes, covering the seeds with earth and waiting. There is a quality to this waiting. It is "attentive, preventive, protective" waiting (Flusser, 2014, p. 101). Therefore, part of my creative process and poetic inspiration was becoming involved in the cultivation time and trying to master the earth with alternative agriculture (Figure 1).

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Figure 1 – Start of implementing the vegetable garden in the permaculture system, *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* Project (2014). Vacant lot alongside the railway track, Entrecampos, Lisbon, 2014.
Source: Photograph from the blog *Uma horta em cada esquina* [A vegetable garden on every corner].

The process with Vera Mantero, in Lisbon, consisted of three meetings and e-mail exchanges. In these meetings, we performers imagined situations and, above all, we talked. We talked about how we could transform the means of locomotion and forms of consumption; we outlined ideas for a more sustainable life, discussed the relationship between countryside and city, among many other subjects. For Ingold (2017, p. 97), conversations are the essence of "knowing from the inside", as they are always open, ongoing, and constantly lead to new developments. As they are dialogic, and take place between people, they allow knowledge to emerge continuously. He also stresses that conversation is a continuous activity, like life and knowledge, and that, as a process, they can always continue, are open and do not need a conclusion to finalize them. This is how the work was shaped, in a mixture of stories and narratives. There was an exchange of life experience and aesthetic ideas for the work.

The encounters were organized to ponder and decide together what would come to be the performance itself. The main idea was to walk with the spectators through the vegetable gardens. Mantero wanted us to try to give them time to contemplate and therefore enter different states. Those states could also be reached by focusing on the sensorial experience, for

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example: letting people lie on the ground, dig holes, plant, keep their eyes closed, and imagine vegetable gardens where there were none. There was room for us to propose actions. Mantero called us to her side to think about what those walking dramaturgies would ultimately be. She told us that this work arose out of a series of questions similar to those that broke out in our conversation. She told us that it was mainly her consultation with British woman Carolyn Steel (2013)[7] that provided the great impulse for the project to focus more on the idea of going back to producing food in the city.

In view of Mantero's problems and concerns, one of our objectives was to try to make this work a real, non-metaphorical movement of discovery: how could we implement alternative environmental forms that were guided by ideas such as food sovereignty and renewable energies? This all entailed a public reflection on these and other questions. The whole idea of the project was to foster artistic actions embedded in a sustainable environment – vegetable gardens that would have to be developed months before the event; the time needed for the food to actually be cultivated and then serve as scenario and theme for the performances; how to develop workshops linked to those forms of cultivation in the city. As such, from within the *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014) project, the *Uma horta em cada esquina*[8] project was born. It resulted in the cultivation of four vegetable gardens in different systems: permaculture, hydroponics, verticalization, and small plantings not done in the traditional form but rather inside the different specific ecological and biological actions.

The part of Mantero's project in which I participated as a performer was concentrated on the art of hodology and was developed on guided and performative visits between the theaters of Culturgest and Teatro Maria Matos also passing through all the vegetable gardens we created. This walk ended up as one of the actions in the *Mais Pra Menos Que pra Mais* (2014) project. As the name already suggested, *Um Pra Um – Passeios Ruminantes*, each spectator would be led along a sensorial/artistic/ecological route lasting one hour. We were not given any preset instructions for the paths. Performers could create whatever they wanted within these spaces and the stipulated time. However open the proposal was, it would not have made sense, in the creation of these paths, to invent something that was not

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associated with the project and its specific purpose. Consequently, all the paths unfolded in a somewhat predetermined way, which reveals an approach that weakened their potential by focusing more on the logic of production than creation. It is possible that the result veered away from the walk that Ingold had conceived as a *labyrinth*, whereby the path is taken as if it were a complete opening to the world, without commands, which would require a state of continuous attention, which differs from a *maze* walk: full of purpose, intention and direction (Ingold, 2015b).

The first meeting ended when Mantero showed us the spaces that the vegetable garden project would encompass. During my process, one of the experiences I had was walking through these spaces with my eyes closed. As I walked, I noticed in a different way the characteristics of the ground and the intense tactile sensation in my feet. Guide my spectator with closed eyes to give emphasis to the feet's touch and thus activate other senses: this was what was incorporated into my part of the path.

On the walk between the theaters of Maria Matos and Culturgest, I came across the *Old Vic Bar*, considered an historic bar in Lisbon. I decided I should do a micro dance in this place to escape a little from the *predeterminations* of the project. One of its entrances is near the fountain in Entrecampos, which Mantero had shown us on our first encounter. There is a large tile panel that shows us what Lisbon was like before: a vast crop field, a portrait of what no longer exists, reminding us of the presence of animals now banned from the city and the imaginary of popular representations. I was then better able to understand how the fountain was inserted between Portugal Telecom and the train line, which caused it to lose all activation of space as a *practiced place*, according to Michel de Certeau's conception (1998). It was an invisible space to the everyday gaze (Figure 2).

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Figure 2 – Image from the first encounter of the *Um Pra Um - Passeios Ruminantes* project with Vera Mantero, on the visit to the fountain tile panel art in the Entrecampos neighborhood, Lisbon, 2015. Source: Photo by Maíra Santos.

Therefore, from the beginning of the project there was a great desire to bring dance into the path and the creation. I dedicated part of the process to researching my movements linked to the pedagogical work of Mantero, the result of my doctoral research, and also to the improvisations permeated by certain structures that emerged from the lived experience in the dance studio, in the vacant lot, in the streets, in the *Old Vic* bar, and in the courtyard and lake that are inside *Fundação Culturgest* (Figure 3; Figure 4). The lake at Culturgest, which was to house the fourth vegetable garden (hydroponic cultivation), presented me with a slippery ground full of stones, meaning that all the precision of the feet constructed on the studio floor literally slid away into the water; on the other hand, it provided me with other qualities. During rehearsals, I ended up wanting to revisit some choreography I had composed for another occasion. So I dedicated myself to re-learning it or re-incorporating it. I concluded that I would improvise around a structure closed off to movement and in silence.

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Figure 3 – Still images of solo rehearsal for the *Um Pra Um - Passeios Ruminantes* performance in the scope of the *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* project (2014). Fundação Culturgest, Lisbon, 2014.
Source: Video recording by Maíra Santos.

From the perch of my office desk and my studio computer, I made the final decisions, arriving at different routes that would alternately compose my *Um Pra Um* performance. The choice of path would depend on the audience and numerous other factors, since the goal was not to have everything predetermined. I also put together a soundtrack that I would provide to the spectator during the route. We had planned on having a test-run amongst ourselves, but there was no time for that.

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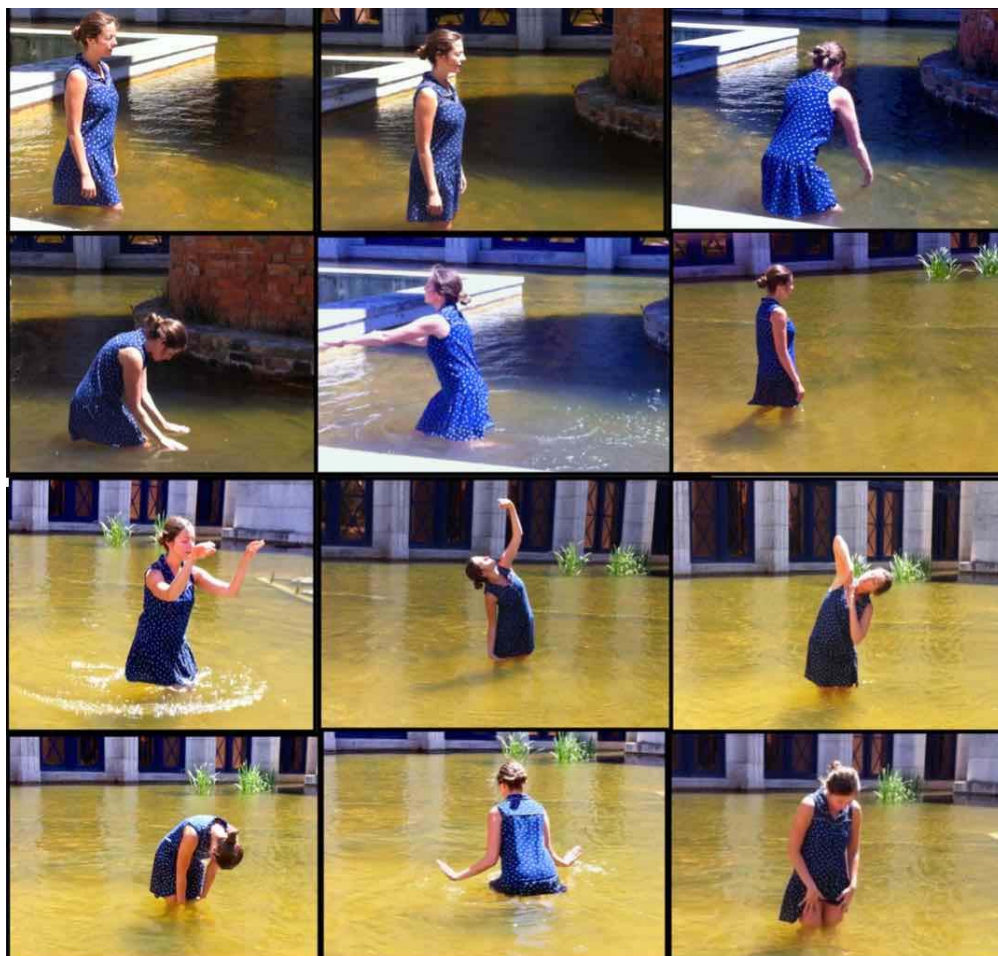Available at: <http://seer.ufrgs.br/presenca>

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Figure 4 – Still images from the solo rehearsal for the *Um Pra Um - Passeios Ruminantes* performance in the scope of the *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* project (2014). Fundação Culturgest Lake, Lisbon, 2014. Source: Video recording by Maíra Santos.

The work with the senses, along my path, was thought of as a way to highlight their interrelationships: "[...] vision has hearing, touch, taste and smell in common as a mode of active engagement with the world, not of isolated speculation" (Ingold, 2011, p. 325). So I tried to involve more than one sense in the sensory experience that would make up the performance, like walking with my eyes closed listening to the soundtrack, walking with my eyes open in silence, or being able to feel my feet in the water listening to the soundtrack (Figure 5). Meanwhile, I wondered: how does the whole body perceive in artistic practice? And also: how could I employ body and memory when working with old things from my personal archive? For example, did I have the need to perceive what emerges? What is the body that emerges? What formatted powers or abilities could be revealed? In the following topics I try to further expand on the question of where the critical

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force of Mantero's work lay, trying also to examine the tensions that permeated the work and creative process of *Um Pra Um*, which in turn refer to many of the *modi operandi* of artists in contemporaneity.

Figure 5 – Participant in the sensorial paths: *Um Pra Um - Passeios Ruminantes* in the scope of the *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* project (2014). Vegetable garden in the vacant lot alongside the railway track, Entrecampos neighborhood, Lisbon, 2014. Source: Photographs granted by Thaís Gonçalves.

Choreopolitical Forces

Nearly a year after the work was performed, Mantero reflected on *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014) in a conversation with the biologist Gil Penha-Lopes (2015), and assessed the performance based on the *project-performance-installation* triad. The idea of project, as we saw, was always present but was never considered part of the genre, which leads me to think that it imposed itself as a great force, judging by the very dimension that the performance as a whole assumed. This project, however, was part of another major project, *Create to Connect*, financed by the European Commission. It involved around thirteen institutions that were trying to remedy the crisis by funding artistic projects concerned, in their words, with *current problems*. Projects that could *educate the public* to develop *new production models* and *new innovative paths*. In it, there was also talk of creating a sense of community, as we were meant to witness a process of *citizens' disengagement from the public sphere*.

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Mantero was one of those chosen by the curatorship of the *Create to Connect* network. In the introduction to her page on the *website*[9], she contextualizes the work discussed here as true positions related to "environmental and economic sustainability, social cohesion and inclusion, and civic awareness"[10].

Lepecki (2011), in reclaiming authors who view dance as *social theory of action* and as *social theory in action*, states that this perspective leads dance to inevitably theorize its social context through the action itself. Dance theorist Randy Martin (1998), for example, works on the hypothesis that dance, when performed and seen by an audience, provides the means by which a mobilization is made. In this sense, the relationship between dance and political theory should not be understood as a metaphor for politics and the social. It has the capacity to question the context in which it emerges.

Lepecki, following the trail of these authors and the notion of a *politics of the ground*, as suggested by Paul Carter[11] – an "acute attention to the physical particularities of every element in a situation" which "are co-formatted in a composition plan between body and ground called history" –, proposes his understanding of dance and performance as "choreopolitics" (Lepecki, 2011, p. 47). According to Lepecki (2011, p. 49), "[...] a choreographic politics of the ground would pay attention to how choreographies determine the way dances drive their feet into the grounds that support them; and how different grounds support different dances, transforming them, but also transforming themselves in the process." In other words, the dance is a particular and immanent activity of action that relates to the ground and to history, which transforms itself and transforms us in the process; a process in which the movement is in the *in-between* – potency and action as space of freedom for the possible. Thus, the question would be: how do dance and performance relate to the ground they walk on? The understanding of choreography as expanded practice triggers various fields, such as the social, somatic, racial, esthetic and political. These fields, intertwined and forming particular planes of composition, are always in the paradox between disappearing and creating transformations.

Even when situated in the tension between art and the logic of production, as in the *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* project, dance in its

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expanded practice can produce critical force if we view it as raw material, according to Andrew Hewitt (2005 apud Lepecki, 2011, p. 48). Contrary to the metaphor, as Randy Martin suggests, or the reflexes of a determined social order, as per Hewitt, in this "[...] active epistemology of politics in context", dance and performance denominate and articulate "the links between artistic practices, society and politics" (Lepecki, 2011, p. 46).

In this sense, Mantero calls for responsibility in the sense attributed to the term by Hannah Arendt (1993): something equivalent to the promise of change and renewal made possible by the action. For Arendt, the purpose of politics is action. It is the same problem with dance and performance. What is the imperative to do? The imperative to do is to trigger memory into the present. To activate memory is also to engage it in cellular, affective and muscular terms and thus create other modes of dance and performance that escape habits. That was the main thrust of my creative process. I believe that this quest also traversed Mantero's project as a whole.

According to Rancière (2004), art is politics because it distributes the invisible and the visible. This "sharing and distribution of the sensible" emerges as something "immanent to the expressive force of the object" (Lepecki, 2011, p. 3). This is what illuminates the core of the relationship between art and politics in contemporary times. The activation of true divisions of the sensible, the sayable, the visible and the invisible is what, in turn, potentiates new perceptions and subjectivities, generating new ways of life. This way of conceiving art as sharing the sensible, combined with a politics of the ground, allows Lepecki to consider the formation of choreopolitics in the contexts he studies, because the performances reveal "[...] profound interlacing between movement, body and place" (Lepecki, 2011, p. 55). This interlacing can always result in the unexpected, since according to Hannah Arendt, as we saw, one of the meanings of the word *action* is the ability to take initiative, act and start something new. Politics and art through activation have the capacity to perform an action that can evade the expected, and thereby perform the impossible and the improbable. In Lepecki's analysis, it is from the fissure in the urban ground that choreopolitics emerges, the fissure seen as a place or ground that destabilizes, shuffles and sets in motion predetermined subjectivities.

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What is the crack in *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014) that makes it emerge as critical force or choreopolitics? Mantero reactivates the common, calling joint thinking to a reflexive arena. The *being together* can provide people with a *condition of*, that is, a return to sensorial abilities, a return to the *condition* for anything, such as sensing the smell of the air, the earth and the vegetable gardens. The idea of community and art intersect with life and activism, but Mantero is neither naive nor anachronistic. When the choreographer approaches, lives or thinks about the idea of community, what is also at stake is the debate of categories such as ensemble, creation, collectivities, collaboration, hierarchy, solidarity, and responsibility. It is a thought that, in her work, even when affected by the logic of production or neoliberalism, intensifies its lines of force, results in processes, and creates methodologies and practices.

Mantero does not only work with established artists, which according to Cvejic̓ (2005) is something that is contrary to the market. In the work we describe and analyze here, Mantero collaborated both with upcoming artists and those who were not, that is, those with little visibility. As such, Mantero is also authentic.

Vera Mantero, to a certain point, implemented something that Ingold (2017, p. 27) noted in the work of artist Wolfgang Weileder: she worked concepts such as sustainability, retrieving its significance from the "vacuous, rhetorical abstractions of environmental policy-speak". I see in Mantero what Ingold (2017, p. 27) says of Weleider's work: having the chance to approximate the concept to the materials with which you work, and moreover "[…] bring people together – scholars of different disciplines, artists of different persuasions, from different backgrounds and walks – in a shared and collaborative endeavour". In this sense, Mantero does not isolate herself from social context. On the contrary, her body of work confirms this direction and enables a set of actions and thought, placing them at the kernel of the process – whether short or long, the invitation is to a real opening and not to ideologies.

Vera Mantero is an artist engaged in her political and critical commitment, revealed in her posture in life and in the themes that pervade her artistic practices. However, it is important we note that the activism of an artist must not be seen as the principal point of the question. The central

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point should first be to activate "the body as relational potency", as "active conscience to create 'lifestyle'", this being a "political situation", since "the performance negotiates and creates body-here-and-now" (Fabião, 2008, p. 245). As such, for Mantero, in conversation with the Portuguese choreographer Mário Afonso (2016, oral report)[12], the performative arts differ from other arts in their capacity to construct "a puzzle of existence", since its place is being here, "being in the here that is the world". They permit the handling – in the craftwork sense of the practice – of these elements and various others with our bodies. Handling with other bodies and elements from the world in flow, and the force of the scene, which in my view is a large reflective arena.

In *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014) and *Um Pra Um*, this puzzle is constructed on the walk. It is through the walk that Mantero approaches the space: to walk as if through the sacred temple of theater, traverse the land, the sounds, gestures and senses. In *Um Pra Um*, as much as there are limits to the walk, since there was a need to transit between the vegetable gardens and the theater, which again was a tension imposed by the production logic, the space could open up and allow us to inhabit it, activating a field of sensitivity. Even if these experiences did not exactly contain *dance in the opposite direction on a cracked ground*, as per André Lepecki, the project by Mantero and her guests perhaps had the force of *less is more*, however great the event as a whole was. It may be there that we learned to be sensitive to *less* and to broaden the receptivity through the *less that is always more*. In the context of the project, the body, by producing actions, can always give way to what eludes what is expected, even in the dances that fail, either by the possibility of perceiving what is invisible in everyday life, or by the attempt to requalify the urban space.

What seems curious is that, while not being its main goal, Mantero's work tries to bring people and ground together and this may reveal part of its critical force. People only lightly touch all the pre-mapped space without, however, inhabiting it and therefore without "contributing to its formation through their movements" (Ingold, 2015a, e-book). On the contrary, what Vera Mantero does is to try to leave marks on the city[13], approximate us to its earth, its trees, its animals, its stones, and make the space "a practiced place" (Certeau, 1998). That is the meaning of the

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vegetable gardens and of taking the public to private grounds so that each one leaves a mark there. The process of forming and changing a place is inseparable from the effect of making it a place - a good place to live in.

Projective Temporality

According to Mantero, in conversation with Penha-Lopes (2015, p. 170), the artistic context was configured in the *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014) performance as a pretext to create sustainable initiatives in the city. Nevertheless, the project took on disproportionate dimensions and required, more than creation or sustainable initiatives, logistical processes articulated with curatorship, which often extended to opening day. In tension with the production logic, the project also seemed to be closely approaching a *design* idea, since in *design* there are always purposes to be achieved beyond art, and this demands prior planning, as in Ingold's notion of *maze-walk,* which prioritizes intention over attention. But the artist's role should not be the creation of an *end product.*

During the *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014) process, we frequently heard phrases such as "we don't have the schedule for that" from Mantero. It was as if we were in an era of "projective temporality" (Kunst, 2012, p. 37), which in the end is governed by an accelerated time in which the great goal of creation is to achieve its *final goal.*

> Even while projective temporality opens many possibilities, it does not produce the differences among them: at the end, what always arises is a completion of already projected possibilities. In such a temporal dimension, a link is forged between the work of artists and other creative forces on one hand, and the productive processes of capitalism on the other (Kunst, 2012, p. 37).

That which is projected, and therefore predetermined, seems to be the great contradiction with art. Perhaps the perversion of the capitalist system resides in this element. After all, this accelerated, projective time does not tally with the true temporal dimension of art in general, which requires time; time to imagine and invent. The projective time Kunst speaks about and the *design* thinking studied by Ingold seem to contribute to an impoverishment of creative processes. And they are at odds with Mantero's work. This temporality may dictate an increasingly flexible subjectivity.

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After all, as Marten Spångberg rightly put it (2010, n. p.), in the era of projects, "[...] whatever the circumstances, whatever the proposition is, we are all always available". The artist became "a pet", as Kroot Juurak proposed, "[...] a domesticated creature that bides its time, sits in cafés scribbling in a notebook or is busy sending e-mails" (Spångberg, 2010, n. p.). By this logic, we must always be available, and participate in several projects at the same time: before one has even finished, you need to be thinking about the next.

Spångberg (2010, n. p.) argues that, in the era of projects, artistic formation has specialized in preparing students for established markets, identities and belongings. Therefore, there would be no need for diverse paths that might entail the actual emancipation of the artist and a negation of those identities and belongings that confirm existing markets, thereby creating the possibility of taking paths that lead elsewhere. In light of this, the survival tactic of the freelance artist is to become a mediator, a "mediating machine producing productivity" (Cvejić, 2005, p. 3).

In this scenario, artistic work would move in different directions, with activities in different fields and formats. Indeed, in *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014), Vera Mantero and Elisabete Francisca[14] were choreographers directing activities in the fields of ecology and art, in the construction of networks and in a sphere of mediation, whether between the public and the event's proposals, or between art and the socio-cultural-environmental purpose. They also took on a curatorship position, since the guest artists did not strictly speaking go through any selection process. This situation allows us to identify another broader one. It is rare for an art worker not to occupy various functions at the same time in order to execute an artistic project, certainly with a great deal less support than Mantero's project, if any at all. One of the problems lies in the need for the artist to have a structure, and that means fighting for better public policies and individual responsibilities, such as showing solidarity[15].

The above question, posed by Cvejić (2005, p. 3), regarding the artist's need to be the producer of an autonomous network, indicates another necessity: the artist not only needs to accumulate contacts, but also to "belong". *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014) probably tried to address this, but seems to have fallen into the illusions of the network idea. She

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continues by claiming that the network renders the community inoperative since it is more connected to "commerce and communication" than "being together". In networking, which may be illustrated in a series of interconnected points, there is no true interaction, since there is in fact no correspondence, but rather a fixed structure that separates more than unifies, with no lines that intertwine. Moreover, the network creates the illusion of a quick and decisive entry into the international field of contemporary performance. Associations such as *Create to Create*, which fund projects like Mantero's, are networks of venues, festivals, research labs, and various platforms from showcases to online criticism. In short, it involves an "[...] institutional market in which makers are invited to seek a niche for a desirable commodity" (Cvejic, 2005, p. 2).

Based on the work of Jon McKenzie (2001) and Aleksandra ́ (2011), it would seem that there is a growing culturalization of the market economy itself, geared towards the tertiary economy (cultural tourism, festivals, advertising and film industries), which makes culture a central component of the market. When we hear in the same sentence the idea of *educating the public* and promoting a *sense of community*, as proposed by *Create to Connect* and the European Union, we should be wary. This gives reason to the idea of Cvejic that the notions of community or collectivity promoted by the network "[...] no longer appear as viable models of experimentation and critique as they are already subsumed under the institutional order and the cultural policy trend" (2005, p. 4). Hence the constant search for "impactful products" (Jovićević, 2011, p. 110) or in the words of *Create to Connect*, a valorisation of *new approaches, new production models, new innovative forms* – that is, a discourse tired of producing novelties. Even so, Cvejic (2005; 2017) asserts that the contemporary artist in this context occupies the place of creative and flexible freelancer, who innovates and is above all available.

In the "era of projects" and "projective time", Cvejic questions whether it would still be possible "to experiment with disregarding intentions or materials". Contact between subjects should be seen "as an opportunity for singular connections, frictions, and mutations between independent agents" (Cvejic, 2005, p. 4). I relate the first point to the care that should be taken with the intention of the form, in the sense of Ingold

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(2015a, e-book), the *labyrinth-walk* instead of the *maze-walk*. The second point relates to friction, that which would be capable of breaking habits and provoking the dispersion "of clichés that impoverish life and its affections". (Lepecki, 2011, p.44). In general, perhaps the very working conditions offered by the performing arts trigger this process of creation or a *copy-paste* mode, as we will see below.

In Mantero's project, since we were to receive only one payment relating to the seven performances, it was not expected that the artist would be able to indulge in a long process of creation, no matter how willing he or she might have been. In any case, this preparation and process time for the performance of *Um Pra Um*, even if minimal, would not be paid and would have to be completed. On the other hand, the idea of thinking together, which I experienced when participating in the process of *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014), corresponds to the construction of a thought that is translated into actions, so that "the product is not only something written or spoken; it is in fact the thought in action, an action that later will have more or less affinity with the thought" (Mantero; Gil, 1998, p. 35). This evokes another passage from the same *conversation-interview* between Gil and Mantero, in which thinking together was deemed "a much more difficult form than thinking against" (Mantero; Gil, 1998, p. 35). Thinking the same thing, but diversely, as Gil puts it, is a more sophisticated, more intelligent way of thinking, which also reveals the idea of community as opposed to the ideological.

According to Bojana Cvejić (2005, p. 5), this would also be a form of understanding the notion of community as solidarity, where there is no fusion of individuals but rather the "contact of singulars". Solidarity, in turn, requires the openness to think of what can't be thought alone. Mantero tells us that although a methodology prepares themes and ideas for creation, it does not do so by indicating to the interpreters what will be done, but instead it corresponds to the idea that the other may always challenge us to new understandings and apprehensions. As such, ideas "ramify" and can provide "the return of things we would never have thought alone" (Mantero; Gil, 1998, p. 35).

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The Artist as Curator of Him/Herself

In the first project meeting with the performers of *Um Pra Um*, Mantero suggested that we choose something we knew, like a text or a dance. We were encouraged to draw on our specialties, on what we had already done. This leads me to think how much this performance was related to an idea, in a narcissistic kind of way, in which the artist is a type of curator of him/herself. It is narcissistic because it favors "performances of the *self*" whose central scope is the artist's *self* and has "aesthetic individualism" as one of its modes (Cvejić, 2017, p. 6) – or would we analogously ask "how do we extract the person device from the performances?" (Mantero; Lepecki, 2012, n. p.)[16]. One response would perhaps be to wish to be a thing in the dance, letting the object disrupt the idea of the author or the spectator[17].

Retrospectively, I see that identifying the idea of the artist as a kind of curator of him/herself was part of my process. I consciously copied and pasted things from my personal archive so that they would be part of my creation. What appears interesting here is the posture we create and the resulting body when faced with an archive we *handpicked*. The best of our things, the body we create or the artistic gesture we make, is different from the body of the dancer who improvises in the studio or the painter in front of the white canvas. Another issue that remains when we work with already acquired material, with papers that can be quickly gathered at our desks, is dealing with something that possesses everything to be art, but exactly for this reason is not. We seem to be revisiting archives. Nevertheless, the way to create in the studio and the way to create at the desk are different paths for creating the new, even when we follow already familiar paths.

Ingold (2011; 2013b) addresses the copy and its relation to originality. On observing the process of learning the art of Chinese calligraphy, he tells us that the copy is present in all of its stages, since each of them is modeled on previous studies. Nonetheless, each one is "an original movement", even when the paths are already known, since the stages "carry the work", that "make it grow". That is why the last stage of learning calligraphy is the moment when "[...] all the learned rules are banished into oblivion and the heart becomes the only guide of the hand" (Yen, 2005, p. 123 apud Ingold 2013b, p. 307).

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Similarly, Myriam Van Imschoot (2005) believes the archive can be something live and the copy may produce a difference when the artist learns by copying recorded material. In this sense, she reclaims the idea of the performer "as mobile body-archive", and "living traces of experience" (Imschoot, 2005, s. p.). In other words, it would be possible to arrive at pathways for the creation of the new when taking already familiar paths.

In my process, the gesture of copying and pasting from my archive seemed at the start to be close to the idea of an *assemblage:* the juxtaposition of separate stages, which according to Tim Ingold (2015b, p. 45) would be the opposite of the process of doing and performance. In this regard, the journey in flow was missing, bypassing the "think first and then execute". Faced with this, I tried to retrieve Ingold's methodology of *knowing from the inside* or the *art of investigation*, that is, the idea of thinking by doing. I tried to detect, in the material of dance movement and in the paths created, what it was that changed upon each experimentation, and which memory was most affected. I sought a broadening of the choreographic "nexus" (Gil, 2005) between the known phrases of movement, treating them as an old friend not seen for a long time. During presentations, the spatially close relationship with the audience was also important. It became evident that the main goal was to feel the space between us and the manner in which we worked together. Above all, it was crucial to expose ourselves to a work that seemed *raw*.

In an attempt to circumvent the idea of simply copying and pasting, I also strove to weave the form of *knowing from the inside* in correspondence with the materials: land, movement, images, spaces, and instruments from the vegetable garden. Paying full attention to the path, I went along noticing and following the lines of the urban landscape. This led me to discover certain poetic details, for example, when I found a neon sign in one of the windows in Culturgest with the following phrase: *vê-se logo, logo se vê* [see yourself soon, you'll soon see yourself]. It was part of a work by Tim Etchells[18] that involved spreading phrases or expressions through the rooftops and corners of Lisbon. The playfulness of this particular expression lay in noticing that the road in which it was located is called *Arco do Cego* [Blindman's Arch]. I decided that in part of the performance I would walk with eyes closed in front of Etchells' phrase with the spectator (Figure 6).

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Figure 6 – Images registered during the creation process for the performance of *Um Pra Um - Passeios Ruminantes:*
Arco do Cego and the neon sign by Etchells, Lisbon, 2014. Source: Photographs by Maíra Santos.

Mantero's thinking prompted and stimulated a "process with ourselves" (Mantero, 2015, n. p.), which placed emphasis on the quality of the movement through other outlets, in the play on the senses, and the search for the intensive body never situated on an instrumental level. Mantero seems to value the individual identity of the people she works with. Indeed, "[...] the idea of individuality associated with a high regard for authenticity" is "greatly valued in contemporary dance" (Fazenda, 2012, p. 31). Whether in her way of working, in the teaching of her practices in the studio, or as a choreographer, Mantero appears to promote an ethic of "[...] not imposing universes and styles of movement on the performers that may be outside and alien to their experiences" (Fazenda, 2012, p. 31), based on the idea of individual identity. She also encourages the pursuit of knowledge through alternative paths of the body: "[...] knowledge of affectivity, which is the knowledge of bodies. Everything is, and everything passes through the body. Everything. Affection, behavior, the value of oneself: all this passes through actions, postures, and contact with bodies" (Mantero; Gil, 1998, p. 33).

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Final Considerations

While on the one hand, we are in the "era of projects", the "projective time" or the "artist as curator of him/herself", on the other, *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014) really sparked choreopolitical forces, giving us theoretical clues to consider certain elements of policy in art. One of them related to a certain utopia of a better life, allowing us to imagine another society, opening a door to private spaces, even a powerful bank (Culturgest) to release us on the urban ground. The process challenged us to see the green and burst forth from the sidewalk, giving us space to question whether or not "vegetables arouse emotions" (Barros; Oliveira, 2012, p. 18). On cue, as the last word or movement that signals the entrance of the next actor, a utopian and nostalgic sentiment, since today, in 2020, the Teatro Maria Matos has been handed over to private enterprise. Beyond the impotence, we are now seeing the continuing advance of cuts to arts subsidies, which leads me to think that a work of the dimensions of *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014) was in fact something approaching the impossible, representing a resounding act of responsibility, to draw once more on Hannah Arendt.

The project may have lost a little force in being conceived as part of the "era of projects" and almost always followed a logic of production, and it may have even fallen into the illusion of networks that do not unite, but Mantero, in her relationship with the community, seems to dismantle the figure of one who knows everything. As such, there is an Ingoldian *labyrinth-walk*, albeit a little buried, since there are sensory twists and turns, movement in flow and there is not-knowing. The process opened without the centralizing command of Mantero telling us the exact choreography to be danced. It provided everyone with the *condition of,* an equal base of collaboration.

Since the process was set up as a *great doing*, it is also clear that Vera Mantero was not concerned with ensuring knowledge. What she does is "branch out ideas and themes", promote "as much as possible thinking-together" (Mantero, 2001, n. p.). As she puts it, "think of ways of life, think of society, think of the systems in which we are involved" (Mantero, 2001, n. p.), which always meant questions and alternative actions to this way of life. From this point of view she is not interested in hierarchies, but

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in constant exchange, that which Bojana Kunst (2009, p. 83) called immaterial work. An exchange that involves affection, emotions, information, knowledge, proximity, criticality and belonging. As such, Mantero recognizes our historical responsibility and leaves the categories of artist, artivist, activist, project, performance, and installation in the background. To use her motto: what matters is "[...] to do the world, even if it is provisional, precarious, temporary or ephemeral, because it is important to compose the composition plan" (Mantero; Lepecki, 2012, s. p.)

Um Pra Um was the result of a meeting of different manners of working, meetings of the kind that "establish future ways of being" (Kunst, 2009, p. 87). There is a passage from *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, which I found in the voice of the character Riobaldo during the process of *Um Pra Um,* that talks to me about the process with Mantero: "*a colheita é comum, mas capinar é sozinho*" [the harvest is common, but weeding is alone] (Rosa, 1968, p. 47). She proposes singularity and difference as primordial questions that converge in a manner of living the open and collective body. To paraphrase Cvejić (2005, p. 5), they are the differences that constitute collaboration or community. In order for the community to say *we*, there needs to be contact between singulars, and the touch of this contact does not come as fusion but as separation.

Mantero's artistic proposals, including installations, performances, window cinema, listening to theatrical texts and music, picnics, and walks, placed body and food in the same frame. At the same time, they seemed to be a form of being able to rehearse "[...] another social order, other roles we don't play in everyday life that can help us imagine another society" (Cvejić, 2017, p. 7). Imagination is urgent in our lives. This reconfiguration does not have a small reach. It equates to an attempt to make habitable and alive again those spaces that were conditioned by a doing that does not allow marks to be left. Ingold (2015a, *e-book*) suggests something similar when he states that "[...] the reduction of pedestrian experience that has perhaps reached its peak in the present era of the car, is the culmination of a trend that was already established with the mechanization of the foot through the boot, the proliferation of the chair and the advent of destination-oriented travel". As they walk the streets,

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people "impress no tracks on a paved surface. It is as if they had never been". This indicates a distancing between people and the ground, a distancing that pervades the recent history of Western societies.

The investigation proposed by Vera Mantero also seems to constitute links between the cognitive and perceptive. Its procedures are based on self-learning and intensify attention, opening the way to new directions. Therefore, there is a prevailing interest in producing processes, much more than products, which would once more contradict market logic. Her work does not aim to either signify or resignify the world or things, but rather inhabit, attentive to surrounding relations, producing knowledge that is born of the subjects' sensorial perception. As with Ingold (2015a, *e-book*), knowledge is due to a restoration of the *heart of being*, an overcoming of dichotomies. Mantero sees this same heart, in being attentive to the surroundings, as traversed by objects and things, routes and paths, paradoxes and tensions.

Each time we come across performance art we need to develop its concept, the *concept that the performance asks of us*. Similarly, the concept in performance is constituted as "encounter" or "result of many encounters", a "critical apparatus capable of challenging the critique itself", as Lepecki comments (2014, oral information)[19]. The critical encounter that *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014) proposes is the force of the performative bodies, of the audience and the performer, whether they are in action or in process, something in the order of hodological, from the path that is labyrinth and sometimes maze.

Although *Mais Pra Menos Que Pra Mais* (2014) brings together themes that have already become commodities, and even if at times it approximates more the idea of design than art, her work carries weight and has value. It is also worth considering that Mantero's trajectory reveals a path of practice that is full of artistic achievements and conquests, the type of work that reaches critical mass. It is part of the journey of someone who has spent a lot of time in the studio creating, and continues to do so. Mantero does not want to *educate the public*, as *Create to Connect* wishes, or educate the artist according to her ideology. She is more concerned with placing art in the midst of life and providing an experience connected to doing (Mantero; Penha-Lopes, 2015, p. 170), awakening our senses and

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arousing zones of the body. Simply put, to allow "knowledge to grow in the unwinding of life" (Ingold, 2015a, *e-book*).

Finally, it is important to add that the idea that guided this article, of *knowing from the inside*, was not limited to something limited, as if it were inside a *container*, since the world we inhabit is not limited (Ingold, 2017). As such, I try to clarify that *knowing from the inside* is also related to being outside, *being with people*, but with materials too, knowing by doing and knowing by performing.

Notes

[1] Vera Mantero is a Portuguese professor, dancer and choreographer. She was a precursor of the so-called Nova Dança Portuguesa, a movement that emerged in the 1980s, and is known in European circles for her experimental practices in theatrical dance.

[2] Culturgest is a private law foundation, insituted by Caixa Geral de Depósitos, considered the largest banking institution in Portugal.

[3] *Knowing from the inside* taken from *Making: Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture. Knowing from the inside* is also a project in which Ingold participates. See at: <https://www.knowingfromtheinside.org>. Accessed on: May 21, 2020.

[4] This article is the fruit of my doctoral research which was carried out in the contexts of dance in Lisbon/Portugal and Berlin/Germany. Project: Full Doctorate Grant Abroad (CAPES/Brasil). See Santos (2019).

[5] "This is not to claim that one is more important than the other, or more honourable. […] It is simply to assert that they are not the same" (Ingold, 2015a, *e-book*).

[6] Ingold (2015a, *e-book*) tells us that "[...] art and ethnography do not combine well. The former compromises ethnography's commitment to descriptive accuracy; the latter shies away from the immediacy of art's observational engagement".

[7] Conference available at: <https://youtu.be/iivjP3gvR1c>. Accessed on: May 21, 2020.

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8 See at: <https://sites.google.com/site/umahortaemcadaesquina/mais-pra-menos-que-pra-mais>. Accessed on: May 07, 2015.

9 See: <http://www.createtoconnect.eu/vera-mantero-mais-pra-menos-que-pra-mais-rather-less-than-more/>. Accessed on: February 15, 2017.

10 See: <http://www.orumodofumo.com/pt/artistas/vera-mantero_2>. Accessed on: February 16, 2018.

11 Lepecki makes this consideration based on the reading of Paul Carter in *The lie of the land*.

12 Available at: <http://pratadacasa.pt/veramantero/>. Accessed on: March 10, 2018.

13 For an example of a mark left by Mantero, see: <http://hortafcul.wixsite.com/home/horta-do-baldio>. Accessed on: February 24, 2018.

14 Elizabete Francisca (Portuguese choreographer) is jointly responsible with Mantero for the conception and curatorship of the project. See complete artist background at: <https://www.orumodofumo.com/pt/acontecimentos/outrosprojectos/mais-pra-menos-que-p_10>. Accessed on: May 21, 2020.

15 This is an important discussion that gains even more traction in times of pandemic, when culture undergoes a moment of crisis. The idea requires further development, which cannot take place in this space.

16 For Lepecki, the epitome of *personalization* in art would be the work of performer Marina Abramovic in *Artist is Present* (2012).

17 These are ideas that require further development, which cannot be done in this space.

18 Artist, writer and director of the Englsh company *Forced Entertainment*.

19 Conference available at: <https://artmuseum.pl/en/doc/video-performans-i-cielesnosc>. Accessed on: March 25, 2015.

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Maíra Santos holds a PhD in Dance from the Faculdade de Motricidade Humana da Universidade de Lisboa (FMH/UL). She is a Dancer and Anthropologist and graduated in contemporary dance in formal and informal contexts of study. She has degrees in Anthropology from Universidade de Campinas, and Social Sciences from Universidade de São Paulo. She is currently doing a post-doctoral degree in Dance in Faculdade da Motricidade Humana, Universidade de Lisboa. Holder of Capes Full Doctorate Grant Abroad (2014-2018).
ORCID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3228-9350
E-mail: mairadomar@gmail.com

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