

CODE Forum 2026

Introduction to the Papers and Workshops

Damian Ostermann

Practicing Coexistence: Community Dance in Times of Social Polarization

This contribution starts from the observation that social polarisation is not only visible in political debates. People withdraw from each other, feel insecure when meeting strangers, and lose trust in shared spaces. Polarisation can be expressed through community dance, which is not understood as a harmonious community practice, but as a fragile and situational form of coming together. People with different biographies, physical abilities, expectations and insecurities meet in shared movement and performance. Expressions do not exist separately from social encounters and bodily experience. They develop through them. On this background, the contribution asks whether and how community dance can create temporary spaces for experience and expression in which forms of social coexistence can be explored in unusual ways. From the reflective inside perspective of an involved organiser, the contribution examines a larger choir-dance project, with aspects like attention, non-verbal communication, closeness and distance, visibility, guidance, participation, trust, irritation and vulnerability. Can community dance create spaces in polarised societies in which people connect not mainly by shared opinions, but by shared presence, attention and embodied practice? How may the creative representation of such experiences change perceptions?