

keõja Think Tank  
Sustainable Strategies For The Nordic-Baltic Dance Field  
2012 - 2014

# END REPORT

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Tanssin Tiedotuskeskus  
Dance Info Finland



NORDIC-BALTIC  
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## INTRODUCTION

Think tanks are activities where a certain theme or topic is discussed and elaborated by leaders and professionals from different fields and with different viewpoints. Think tanks gather competent and motivated people to analyze different issues within the scope of the overall theme or topic.

Dance Info Finland has coordinated two Think Tank activities within the keđja 2012-2015 project:

- keđja Think Tank 1: Sustainable strategies for the Nordic-Baltic dance field
- keđja Think Tank 2: Touring network for the Nordic-Baltic region

During 2012-2014 these keđja Think Tanks have worked toward finding concrete action plans, models, suggestions and recommendations for improved practices in order to develop the infrastructure of the dance field in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

### Background

After the keđja 2008-2010 project, the partners decided to expand the co-operation with activities that would build capacity and strengthen the field on many levels, involving professionals and experts from different fields. The keđja Think Tank activities were planned for analyzing and subsequently creating strategies for concrete actions concerned with expanding the possibilities for Nordic-Baltic co-operation that would improve the operating conditions in a sustainable way. Inherent in the Think Tank activities were that developed ideas for strategies should initiate actual activities.

Sustainability has become a key issue in almost all areas of society in the past decades. It is a much-discussed topic in different forums, but not very often with a goal-oriented starting point. The understanding and use of this concept varies and has been far less spoken of from an arts and culture point of view than for example in economy, business and politics. Although sustainability is one of the key themes when forming new strategies, it is quite rarely realised in today's funding decisions, for example.

The dance sector is suffering of many financial and structural shortcomings, such as inadequate funding schemes, short-lived productions and short-term solutions. It is obvious that the operating conditions of the dance field and its organisations and artists need to become more sustainable in order for the art form and its makers to survive, let alone thrive in the economic and political realities of today and in the future.

### Aims and objectives

The task of the keđja Sustainability Think Tank was to discuss and debate the topic of sustainability in the context of the dance field during a series of meetings in 2012-2014. The overall aim was to provide concrete suggestions for more sustainable operational strategies and practices for the Nordic and Baltic dance field. Initial questions that required answers were, among others: what all can sustainability mean in arts and especially in contemporary dance? How do we define sustainability? Could we form sustainable strategies in terms of long-term projects and funding? Can dance artists work in more sustainable ways? How could touring be more sustainable?

The Sustainability Think Tank gathered experts from different areas within the dance field, the arts or the society in general. Including different national perspectives, experiences and systems, as well as involving both practitioners and policy makers, was crucial. The aim was to find people that have knowledge in or a vision of sustainability and furthermore would have a strong motivation for creating strategies that could develop the field further in concrete ways. It became clear early on that while different backgrounds and experiences from both inside and outside the dance field were extremely

important, a goal-oriented work toward sustainable strategies required the participants to have a deep understanding of the Nordic-Baltic context or be part of it.

### Think Tank participants

The Think Tank participants from the beginning on were **Riitta Heinämaa** (EE/FI), director of the Finnish Institute in Estonia, **Sari Palmgren** (FI), freelance choreographer and dancer, **Torsten Schenlaer** (SE), head of the Cultural Department of the city of Lund, and **Ragnar Siil** (EE), chair of the European Union Expert Group on Cultural and Creative Industries and former undersecretary for fine arts at the Estonian Ministry of Culture. **Tove Bratten** (NO), director of Performing Arts Hub Norway, and **Audronis Imbrasas** (LT), director of the Lithuanian Dance Information Centre and Arts Printing House took part from the second meeting onwards.



*Copenhagen meeting, 2014  
Photo: Vahid\_doubExpose*

The first meeting in Tallinn was moderated by **Marie-Christine Duréault** (FR), independent governance facilitator in sustainability, co-construction and collective intelligence together with **Julie Teyssou** (FR), tour manager for David Rolland Chorégraphies. **Sanna Rekola** (FI), director of Dance Info Finland, took over as moderator from the second meeting onwards.

**Katarina Lindholm** (FI), project manager at Dance Info Finland, conducted the overall coordination and communication throughout the project.

## OVERVIEW

The keđja Sustainability Think Tank met four times during 2012–2014 in order to work toward its goals. Additionally, different sharing sessions or workshops were held during each of the keđja Encounters: in 2012 in Tallinn, in 2013 in Klaipėda, and in 2014 in Mariehamn. In these sessions the thoughts and the work of the Think Tank was shared with a wider audience consisting of members of the Nordic-Baltic dance community.

The first meeting took place in September 2012 in Tallinn, Estonia, during the keđjaTallinn Encounter. The aim of the two-day kick-off was to start the work process by discussing and defining the concept of sustainability and setting the overall framework. The working day was followed by an open session for the Encounter participants.

The second meeting took place in Lund, Sweden, in April 2013. The aims of the two-day meeting were to sharpen and further elaborate the key themes that were articulated in Tallinn and to focus on sustainable mobility, sustainable funding and sustainable structures in the dance field. The idea of producing a concrete end product containing recommendations came up.

A workshop related to the work of the Sustainability Think Tank and aimed at dance artists in particular was organised in June 2013, during the keđjaKlaipėda Encounter.

The third meeting took place in Helsinki, Finland, in September 2013. The aim of the two-day meeting was to work toward the envisioned final document by digging into two core areas of sustainability in the dance field: sustainable strategies for the dance community and sustainable funding.

The fourth and final two-day meeting took place in Copenhagen, Denmark, in March 2014. The aim was to tie up loose ends and make decisions on the form and content of the final document.

A fifth working meeting was held in Helsinki, in May 2014, between the Sanna Rekola, Katarina Lindholm and Ragnar Siil in order to work on the final document together.

The Sustainability Think Tank presented its work and results in several different ways during the keđjaMariehamn Encounter in August 2014. The Think Tank members were engaged in one main seminar talk, one discussion on sustainable funding and two Think Tank members held separate workshops for the dance community.

Individual meeting reports were made after the three first meetings and they can be retrieved on the keđja and Dance Info Finland websites.<sup>1</sup>

## THE WORK PROCESS

### Tallinn 2012 – Setting the framework

The purpose of the kick-off meeting was to build a basis for the Sustainability Think Tank and its working process for the following years. The aim was to discuss and define the overall theme, set the overall framework and pose the key questions. As an outcome, the concept of sustainability and its meaning within dance was articulated through five principal themes, focusing on the life of productions, communicating value, artistic practices, the funding and support of dance as well as the structures in the dance field.

The kick-off meeting was followed by an open session during which the key issues were discussed and members of the dance community were invited to contribute.

### Defining and envisioning sustainability

The participants focused on defining sustainability in the context of dance as well as envisioning different sustainable strategies, practices or improvements to current conditions or phenomena.

The dance field should be seen as an "ecosystem" with different surrounding structures and conditions. The need for increased awareness and self-awareness was discussed, as well as the need for transparency and honesty, yet avoiding institutionalisation and structural inflexibility.

The nature of dance as an art form was perceived to be strongly associated with change, innovation and a continuous search for the new. Tradition was perceived as both oppressive and restrictive as well as a source for innovation and creativity. Long-term planning, which might create rigid and restrictive structures, should instead incorporate flexibility and encourage innovation.

Strong self-governance and the consequent lack of joint governance within the dance field was seen as a risk of staying as a too closed and self-preserving system, which easily means staying "off the table" e.g. in funding decisions. Opening up the field was considered necessary and a strategy for that is needed.

The need of better and more strategic communication both inside and outside the dance field was seen as crucial when it comes to communicating results, the spill over effects and intrinsic values of dance as an art form. The dance field should find a joint communication strategy. More efficient communication both within the dance field as well as outwards was seen as an important and initial step toward a more sustainable future.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.kedja.net](http://www.kedja.net) and [www.danceinfo.fi](http://www.danceinfo.fi)

### Five key issues

The concept of sustainability and its meaning within dance was articulated through five principal themes, focusing on the life of productions, communicating value, artistic practices, the funding and support of dance as well as the structures in the dance field:

- Describing, understanding and managing the ecosystem
- Long-term planning with the readiness for change
- Getting out of self-governance and opening up the dance field by inviting more people in
- The need of communicating and having a communication plan
- Value, process and work-in-progress, the need of constructive discussion and also disagreement in order to develop and increase self-understanding.

### Open session for kedjaTallinn participants

An open session for kedjaTallinn Encounter participants was held the following day. The session showed a clear interest in the topic among dance artists and professionals. Questions and issues around the many different aspects of sustainability were perceived as highly relevant. There was a lot of discussion about the need for increased communication with audiences in terms of audience development, accessibility and attracting new audiences. Also the discussion on how to get out of self-governance was seen as a question of how to make dance more communicative and accessible rather than a question of how to open up dance organisations to professionals outside the dance field.



*Open session during Tallinn meeting, 2012  
Photo: Katarina Lindholm*

### Lund 2013 – Sharpening the focus

The aims of the Lund meeting were to sharpen and further elaborate the key themes that were articulated in Tallinn with consideration for the wider impact of the art form and its reception in relationship to its environments. Particular focus was put on the questions of sustainable mobility, sustainable funding and sustainable structures in the dance field.

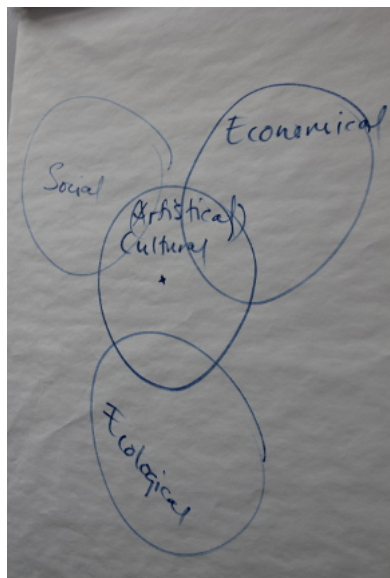
A key outcome that concerned all of these interrelated issues was the importance of time and flexibility as a precondition for sustainability. For example, with enough time granted funding can be used more wisely and give better results, and flexibility should replace regulations and restrictions.

The Think Tank participants also looked at the possibility of producing a final document with concrete suggestions and recommendations for a sustainable Nordic-Baltic dance field.



## Elaborating the idea of sustainability

Sustainability was considered to have ecological, economical, social and cultural (artistic) dimensions and that any of these could be considered a central viewpoint when speaking of sustainable development.



Sustainability was defined as having a long-lasting and wide-reaching impact, as a process rather than a goal and strongly linked to a sense of responsibility, sharing and trust. Sustainability was also identified as "slow profitability", as it takes time (and money) to work sustainably. The word "ecosystem" was found to be a good alternative for "sustainability", because in an ecosystem one needs to make use of his/her resources in the most efficient way and these are different for each artist.

The following definitions of sustainable artistic practices were made:

- Having enough time to do things well and using the time efficiently
- Opening the doors to different groups and include them in the process
- Shifting the dynamics within the working group so that everyone can have an input
- Sharing as part of the performance or after it

In order to maintain a sustainable dance field, also people in management (e.g. producers) need better means of survival, for example through adapting tools from the creative industries (e.g. incubators, help desks, hubs).

Communicating about dance and being able to define it in a way that people from outside the field understand was considered important. In particular, opening up the dance field by e.g. including people from outside the dance field in boards of dance organizations, was seen as necessary in order to survive in the future. Attention was also given to the fact that the dance field easily uses a defensive and negative rhetoric that marginalizes dance and makes it seem "young and poor", when instead its strengths and spill over effects (e.g. physical health) on the society should be emphasized.

## Mobility and internationalization

The ecological viewpoints of sustainability were discussed with particular relevance to mobility. Mobility and international activities could become more sustainable if they were contextualized, i.e. if something on top of the performances was added to a tour, for example workshops or staying in the region for a longer time. Organisations or regions should be encouraged to act as hubs and share costs and information.

Residency activities were considered important for sustainable internationalization. There should be mobility programs specifically for residency activities and work done with local communities.

Practical ways of making mobility more ecologically sustainable would be e.g. travelling by train whenever possible. In order to make mobility ecologically and economically more sustainable, time and flexibility – in other words the possibility for long-term planning – would be required, which again depends on funding structures.

Mobility and internationalization was also discussed in terms of income and business opportunities, as international activities (licensing, branding, etc.) form a big part of the economy of some companies. However, while internationality is essential for some companies, the local market is more

important for others, and many operate somewhere in between. Far from all artists are interested in branding themselves and thinking in terms of business.

The mobility of artists is strongly affected by the national funding systems, which are very different in the Nordic and Baltic countries. Mobility can also be seen as a redistribution of means, especially for Baltic artists looking for work and income opportunities abroad.

It was concluded that there exists a diversity of mobility and that these activities are very scattered in the different national systems, have different purposes and answer to different needs.

### Funding matters

Funding was identified as a core issue in finding sustainable strategies for the dance field as it's intertwined with nearly all matters, such as artistic practices, communicating, the relationship with the society as well as mobility and internationalization.

The Think Tank participants were of the opinion that funding systems can create awareness and induce certain kinds of activities, for example with their emphasis, criteria and decision-making. It was discussed whether certain indicators of sustainability should be taken into account in funding criteria. On the other hand the funding systems already include many requirements and should rather be made more flexible. For example, restrictions for making a profit could be dismissed so that any profit could be used for upcoming projects and regulations demanding that the money has to be spent during the same budget year could be taken away. Even if the Nordic-Baltic funding system does not enable long-term planning, it was nevertheless seen as a good model in that it welcomes applications twice a year and the grants can be used for up to two years.

Many parallel funding structures as well as funding criteria were seen as necessary in order to generate flexibility. The Think Tank called for an ecosystem of grants instead of grants with a lot of criteria.

Lastly, the different economical and structural realities in the Nordic and Baltic countries need to be acknowledged and addressed when dealing with funding and sustainable strategies.



Lund meeting, 2013  
Photo: Katarina Lindholm

### Helsinki 2013 – Digging into core issues

The main agenda for the Helsinki meeting was to dig into two core areas of sustainability in the dance field: sustainable strategies for the dance community and sustainable funding on a national, Nordic-Baltic and EU level. A great deal of focus was put on the envisioned final document and a significant amount of additions were made to its content.

The main points that came up dealt with seeing the dance artist and the dance field as part of a larger context (the art field, the culture field as well as society at large), the idea of the compost as part of the ecosystem of the dance field and the need of communities and collective endeavours. Furthermore, the (non-) sustainability of national, Nordic-Baltic and EU funding structures was scrutinized.



## Sustainability for the dance community

The Think Tank participants discussed the dance field as part of larger contexts; the society at large, the current political and economical climate, and to which extent the dance field shares different issues with other art fields. It was concluded that the dance field should see itself as a part of society and that it shares many problems with other sectors. It was also stressed that the dance field needs to find new alliances outside the sector.

The need of communities and collectiveness within the dance field was also considered crucial for increased sustainability. Working within a community of some kind, e.g. a co-operative, would help artists in sharing resources and knowledge, offer peer support and create a stronger entity, which doesn't necessarily need funding as such. Politicians should be made aware of the beneficial consequences of communities and collective endeavours.

The idea of implementing a "compost" in the dance field was discussed in detail. The term was used by the Think Tank participants to mean an ending point or an exit for ideas, initiatives or institutions that have "grown old" and for artists to have the possibility to stop, take a break or rest, for example in between professional identities, without falling out from the system or the dance field. "Composting" would be a natural way of recycling e.g. financial resources, making them available for newcomers.

However, "ending up in the compost" should not be regarded as failure, but perceived as a natural and inevitable part of the life cycle in the so-called ecosystem of the art field, as financial resources will not grow (and are, in fact, already insufficient). Rather, it would pave way for new ideas and initiatives. It should be regarded as a possibility for artists to exit the field or their current position or profile in a good and valuable way. Tools and criteria should be invented to support this ending phase.

Education-related issues were also briefly looked at. Professional dance education should be optimized to real-life demands and adapt to changing realities. New skills and tools are required on a regular basis. There is a need for further education in the dance field. Dance education should promote self-managing skills and do more matchmaking between artists and producers.

## Sustainable funding

Funding and the sustainable versus non-sustainable practices and traits were discussed on a national and Nordic-Baltic as well as a EU level.

On a national level, indicators of sustainability were identified as flexibility and variety, both in terms of levels (national, regional, municipal), sources (government, organisations) and types (project grants, travel grants, artistic development, etc). Non-sustainable practices were identified as rigidness in re-dividing money, inflexible or incompatible schedules for applications and expenditure of grant money, as criteria that excludes new initiatives, and as overly complicated bureaucracy.

Non-sustainable elements on a Nordic-Baltic level in particular were identified e.g. as the lack of real long-term funding. The EU funding system could be more accessible and more flexible, i.e. include at least one strand with less rules and which hands out smaller amounts of money.

The lack of sufficient national co-matching funding was seen as a major problem for collaboration. It was suggested that the national systems should be harmonized to the extent that co-matching funding would exist in each of them.

Also the lack of a touring system and funding for such was seen as a non-sustainable condition, as having one would increase income opportunities for artists, prolong the life of productions and correct the balance between the independent sector and institutions.

The Think Tank participants were of the opinion that there should be funding for other kinds of activities than just new productions. There should be funding for things that fall in between categories on all levels; there should be “fast money” with which new initiatives and momentums can be funded before they pass. It was clear that recommendations for the funding system and for the artists should be synchronised, so that the system would enable sustainable practices and working conditions for artists.

The reporting process should be developed, as it is important in creating mutual trust between the dance field and the funding bodies. More opportunities to discuss before and after funding decisions are made would be needed instead of just applying and reporting on paper.



Helsinki meeting, 2013  
Photo: Katarina Lindholm

The Think Tank participants called for a core change in financial policy-making: to move from single-project logic to more strategic thinking and long-term development. New financial models and tools as well as seed money is also needed. The main improvements would be to harmonize the national systems to an extent where participation in cross-border collaboration within the Nordic-Baltic region is not only possible but also equal and sustainable. In addition, increasing flexibility and variety in funding is crucial. The core message would be that same amounts of money could be used in a better way with a different logic.

## Copenhagen 2014 – time for decisions

The fourth and final meeting in Copenhagen focused on tying up loose ends and making decisions regarding both the form and the content of the final document. The participants prepared for the meeting by giving their input to a set of much discussed but still unsettled questions regarding different key issues. These issues and the answers were scrutinized during the meeting and decided upon.

Finally, details regarding the content and time plan of the final document were discussed and the possibilities for sharing some results in the upcoming kedjaMariehamn Encounter were discussed.

## Life cycle thinking

The Think Tank participants called for more life cycle thinking when speaking of funding, artistic practices and careers and developing the structures in general. The key concepts of growth and composting were discussed in detail.

It was agreed that growth as such is not sustainable. Economic and societal growth is linear, while instead growth applicable to the arts is circular. There are furthermore many kinds of growth, e.g. horizontal and vertical, all of which is not measurable or articulated in numbers. It was concluded that more sophisticated indicators are needed for measuring and articulating growth in dance and arts in general.

The Think Tank participants returned to the need of “composting” in the arts. As emerging and growing are natural phases in any life cycle, so is composting, or dying out. The concept of the compost also incorporates the idea of giving birth to something new and recycling resources, whether they are economical or other kinds of resources. However, when speaking of the career of an artist, for example, the thought of “ending up in a compost” can easily be perceived as failure and is therefore a sensitive subject to address.

The Think Tank participants were of the opinion that successful composting will require criteria, carrots and tools of implementation, perhaps even some structures. In the same way that there are incubators and coaching for people entering the field, there should be aiding tools and social guarantees (e.g. competence centres, salary for artistic development) for exiting the field or rethinking your activities, in other words being in the compost, in the final phase of the life cycle.

This led the Think Tank participants to question the arm's length principal that funding bodies in general follow. In other words, perhaps funders should in some cases and to some extent have more dialogue with the applicants, through e.g. coaching, pointing out new possibilities, give feedback. The Think Tank group urged for a shift from passive decision making to interactive decision making.

Education and survival skills for dance artists were also discussed again briefly. The participants agreed that the final document should not give specific recommendations on dance education, but instead emphasize skills and competencies that artists need in order to survive and manage in today's world and its realities. Lifelong learning and further education opportunities were considered to play an important part in that as well.

### Recommendations on funding

The Think Tank participants decided to pin point elements and indicators that would make any funding system more sustainable in the final document. For example, rules and criteria should be transparent. It was also agreed that a variety of sources and types of funding is an indicator for sustainable funding.

It was agreed that application dates and deadlines of both national and Nordic-Baltic funding systems should be synchronized as much as possible. Both Nordic funding bodies and national arts councils should be recommended to take notice to each other's application deadlines [also EU deadlines] and understand the relation between them.

The Think Tank participants spoke more in detail about the existing Nordic and Nordic-Baltic funding and which amendments should be recommended. The conclusion was to suggest that the Mobility programme (which is Nordic-Baltic) should be expanded with a separate strand for touring, especially since the embassies and cultural institutes no longer serve that purpose to the same extent as before and the support for touring is very unbalanced and unequal between the different Nordic and Baltic countries. Also the existing funding systems should be recommended to look into possibilities for long-term funding.

Finally it was agreed that there should be a sufficient amount of coaching on all different funding levels, although it will need to be elaborated further whose task it would be to provide this. Transparency and dialogue between the funders and the artists was, however, seen as a two-way street; while funding organisations are expected to be transparent with their criteria and decisions and provide some amount of feedback, the artists should be expected to report back. The matter of how much of these reports should be made public was debated. Publishing the reports online would increase transparency and generate more understanding and awareness, but on the other hand they can be misused or create privacy issues. Besides the importance of reporting, the need for collecting similar data in all Nordic and Baltic countries was also emphasized.

### Sharing sessions and workshops

The keđja Sustainability Think Tank has shared its thoughts and work process with the dance community on several occasions during 2012-2014. One public session was held already in connection to the first meeting in Tallinn, during keđjaTallinn 2012. In keđjaKlaipeda in 2013 Think Tank participant Sari Palmgren held an open discussion for dance artists in particular, together with Sanna Rekola and Katarina Lindholm. In keđjaMariehamn in August 2014 two separate workshops were held on the topic and additionally the thoughts and results of the Think Tank were presented in

one of the keynote seminar and in a discussion on funding. All in all, around 80 people have taken part in the different workshops and sharing sessions and around 100 people in the seminar talks.

The discussion at the keđjaKlaipeda Encounter was about the sustainability of artistic practices and working preconditions (“How do I make my art more sustainable”). The main issues that came up among the artists were the need of survival skills (how to survive in the society as a dance artist, from managing your time and budget to overall employer/employee skills, etc.), the need of spaces and training opportunities, the need of communities, giving productions a longer lifespan, recycling and sharing resources and knowledge, and, by and large, having more time and security to do things well.

Sari Palmgren held the same workshop in keđjaMariehamn in August. The issues that came up there were sustainable art works and what they require in terms of time and resources, the concepts of ecosystem and the compost and responsibility.

The Sustainability Think Tank organised also another workshop in keđjaMariehamn, hosted by Think Tank participant Torsten Schenlaer (“Recycling artistic knowledge”). The workshop focused on sharing knowledge and the possibilities of creating a composting structure for it. The workshop concluded that while sharing and recycling knowledge is a good and beneficial idea per se, transferring it into something structured, like a compost of some kind, would be much more problematic.

The key outcomes of the Sustainability Think Tank were presented in the opening seminar at the keđjaMariehamn Encounter (“Sustaining Our Community”). The panel included several Think Tank members and addressed both the past and the future of keđja and the Nordic-Baltic dance community by envisioning a more sustainable dance field. Furthermore, the Encounter programme included a panel discussion on sustainable funding structures that based on the ideas of the Sustainability Think Tank (“Sustainable funding – is there such a thing?”)



Opening seminar at keđjaMariehamn, 2014  
Photo: © Uupi Tirronen. Kedja Mariehamn 2014

## OUTCOME

During four meetings in 2012–2014 the keđja Sustainability Think Tank has gone from discussing the concept of sustainability and the ecosystem of the dance field to dealing with concrete issues regarding funding, mobility and internationalization, skills and competencies, artistic practises and careers, structures and institutions, communication and rhetoric, the relationship between the dance field and the society and other art fields, coaching and incubating, to mention a few. Furthermore, the Think Tank participants have worked in a goal-oriented manner toward a concrete outcome; a final document with recommendations for increased sustainability.

The Sustainability Think Tank has also shared its work on a regular basis with the dance community through open discussions, workshops and seminar talks in the Encounters in Tallinn (2012), Klaipeda (2013) and Mariehamn (2014). Additionally, the “1000 words” documents<sup>2</sup> that were produced for the very first keđja Encounter in Vilnius in 2008 were updated by request of the Think Tank group in summer 2014 as a mapping of the circumstances in the Nordic-Baltic dance field.

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<sup>2</sup>A summary of the institutions and infrastructure of the dance fields in each Nordic and Baltic country, including dance companies, festivals, dance education, funding structures and relevant data.

## The final document

During the second meeting in Lund in 2013 the Think Tank group decided to work toward a final document that would consist of suggestions, recommendations and guidelines for sustainable strategies and practices. This final document would address the dance community as well as policy and decision makers on a local and a Nordic-Baltic level.

The working agendas of the third meeting in Helsinki in 2013 and the fourth meeting in Copenhagen in 2014 advanced the final document by elaborating further on its key areas and unsolved details. It was clear from early on that the final document should not only state the needs of the dance field but also analyze the difficulties and provide solutions. It was also agreed that the final document should be accessible, easy to read and understand, as well as very concrete in its suggestions and recommendations.

The final document was written by one of the Think Tank members, Ragnar Siil, on the basis of the notes from all four meetings and discussions with Sanna Rekola and Katarina Lindholm in May 2014. Further revisions were made during summer and autumn 2014 based on comments and input from the other Sustainability Think Tank members and a handful of experts from the different Nordic and Baltic countries and in different positions in the dance field and in cultural policy.

The final document will be finalized and published in the beginning of 2015. The publication will be accessible online and distributed widely to key target groups.

## SUMMARY

Dance Info Finland has coordinated two Think Tank activities within the keōja 2012-2015 project; one on sustainable strategies for the Nordic-Baltic dance field and one on forming a touring network for the Nordic-Baltic region. During 2012-2014 these Think Tanks have worked toward finding concrete action plans for improved practices in order to develop the infrastructure of the dance field in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

The task of the keōja Sustainability Think Tank was to discuss the topic of sustainability in the context of the dance field during a series of meetings in 2012-2014. The overall aim was to provide concrete suggestions for more sustainable operational strategies and practices for the Nordic and Baltic dance field.

The Sustainability Think Tank gathered experts from different areas in the dance field, the arts or the society in general, including different national perspectives, experiences and systems, as well as involving both practitioners and policy makers. The Think Tank participants were **Riitta Heināmaa** (EE/FI), director of the Finnish Institute in Estonia, **Sari Palmgren** (FI), freelance choreographer and dancer, **Torsten Schenlaer** (SE), head of the Cultural Department of the city of Lund, **Ragnar Siil** (EE), chair of the European Union Expert Group on Cultural and Creative Industries and former undersecretary for fine arts at the Estonian Ministry of Culture, **Tove Bratten** (NO), director of Performing Arts Hub Norway, **Audronis Imbrasas** (LT), director of the Lithuanian Dance Information Centre and Arts Printing House and **Sanna Rekola** (FI), director of Dance Info Finland, as moderator. **Katarina Lindholm** (FI), project manager at Dance Info Finland, acted as coordinator.

The keōja Sustainability Think Tank met four times during 2012–2014 in order to work toward its goals. Additionally, different sharing sessions or workshops were held during each of the keōja Encounters: in 2012 in Tallinn, in 2013 in Klaipėda, and in 2014 in Mariehamn. In these sessions the thoughts and the work of the Think Tank was shared with a wider audience consisting of members of the Nordic-Baltic dance community.

The aim of the first meeting in Tallinn was to build a basis for the Think Tank and its working process by discussing and defining the overall theme, setting the overall framework and posing the key questions. As an outcome, the concept of sustainability and its meaning within dance was articulated



through five principal themes, focusing on the life of productions, communicating value, artistic practices, the funding and support of dance as well as the structures in the dance field.

The aims of the second meeting in Lund were to sharpen and further elaborate the key themes that were articulated in Tallinn with consideration for the wider impact of the art form and its reception in relationship to its environments. Particular focus was put on the questions of sustainable mobility, sustainable funding and sustainable structures in the dance field. A key outcome was the importance of time and flexibility as a precondition for sustainability. The Think Tank participants also looked at the possibility of producing a final document with concrete suggestions and recommendations for a sustainable Nordic-Baltic dance field.

The main agenda for the third meeting in Helsinki was to dig into two core areas of sustainability in the dance field: sustainable strategies for the dance community and sustainable funding on a national, Nordic-Baltic and EU level. The main points that came up dealt with seeing the dance artist and the dance field as part of a larger context (the art field, the culture field as well as society at large), the idea of the compost as part of the ecosystem of the dance field and the need of communities and collective endeavours. Furthermore, the (non-) sustainability of national, Nordic-Baltic and EU funding structures was scrutinized. A significant amount of additions were made to the final document.

The final meeting in Copenhagen focused on tying up loose ends and making decisions regarding both the form and the content of the final document. Answers were found to a long list of concrete questions, which further shaped the form, content and the specific recommendations of the final document.

Between 2012 and 2014 the keđja Sustainability Think Tank has gone from discussing the concept of sustainability and the ecosystem of the dance field to dealing with concrete issues regarding e.g. funding, mobility and internationalization, skills and competencies, artistic practises and careers, structures and institutions, communication, with consideration to the relationship between the dance field and the rest of the society and the different dimensions of sustainability.

Furthermore, the Think Tank has worked in a goal-oriented manner toward a concrete outcome: a final document consisting recommendations for sustainable strategies and practices, addressing the dance community as well as policy and decision makers on a local and an international level.

The final document will be published in 2015 and be accessible online and widely distributed to target groups.

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## CONTACT

Dance Info Finland  
Project Manager Katarina Lindholm  
katarina.lindholm [at] danceinfo.fi  
www.danceinfo.fi