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Perception of Flux: A Study of Choreography and Bodily Consciousness under Socio-Ecological Changes

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary society is undergoing multiple socio-ecological transformations—including urbanization, digitalization, and the climate crisis—that have systematically reshaped individual perceptual structures. As an embodied art form, dance functions as a dynamic response of the body to ecological and social tensions. Grounded in Gibson's ecological perception theory and the social ecology framework proposed by Haberl et al. (2016), this study introduces the concept of "Perception of Flux", a mechanism through which socio-ecological inputs are transformed into regenerated bodily consciousness via choreographic practice. Through qualitative analysis and case-based validation, the research reveals how dancers embody environmental stimuli and social experiences into movement vocabularies, forming new ecological cognition within the interrelations of body, space, and society. The study further constructs a dual-cycle model of socio-ecological and bodily perception, offering an ecologically informed and socially oriented theoretical pathway for contemporary choreographic creation.

1. Introduction

Within the context of the *Anthropocene*, the convergence of globalization, urbanization, and the climate crisis has profoundly reshaped the structure of socio-ecological metabolism (Haberl et al., 2016). The accelerated reconfiguration of energy, material, and information flows has increasingly detached human perceptual systems from their surrounding environments. As bodies become entangled in the complex networks of digitalization, virtualization, and temporal compression, the continuity and depth of perception are gradually eroded.

Dance, as the most direct form of corporeal art, constitutes a vital arena in which individuals sustain perceptual equilibrium under social and ecological pressures. It not only reflects environmental transformations but also generates embodied responses to them through movement. When space becomes fragmented, temporal rhythms accelerate, and the material world is rendered alienated, dance reinstates the body's "presence," allowing disrupted perception to regain experiential density. Thus, choreographic practice is not merely an aesthetic undertaking; it also functions as a socio-ecological response mechanism—one that renegotiates the relationship between humans and their environment through embodied action.

2. Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, this study is grounded in three key pillars. First, Ecological Perception Theory, proposed by J. J. Gibson, forms the foundational basis. Its core concept of *affordance*—the action possibilities latent in the environment that can be directly

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perceived and utilized by an individual, that is, what an object "affords" one to do—reveals the direct coupling between perception and action. Gibson rejects the notion that perception is an internal representational processing of external stimuli; instead, he argues that perception is an action-oriented process in which the subject acquires information "directly" through interaction with the environment. The body is therefore not a passive sensory apparatus but an active generative medium that explores and outputs into the environment. Accordingly, the dynamic structure of *perception–action coupling* illuminates a potential isomorphism between choreographic creation and ecological awareness.

Second, the macro-perspective of Social Ecology (Haberl et al., 2016) provides a sociological complement to the theoretical trajectory of ecological perception. Social ecology views nature and society as mutually embedded systems in which energy and information continuously circulate. Within this framework, social behaviour, cultural practices, and even artistic activities are understood as components of the broader socio-metabolic system. Human creative action is not a cultural phenomenon detached from ecological processes; it is the outcome of interactions between ecological energies and social structures. In this sense, dance not only reflects the relationship between nature and society but also embodies the perceptual mechanisms within socio-ecological cycles through bodily labour and rhythm. From resource extraction and environmental transformation to corporeal adaptation, dance becomes a *sensor* within socio-ecological metabolism.

Third, the Phenomenology of the Body—particularly the thought of Merleau-Ponty—provides the ontological grounding for understanding *how the body perceives the world*. Merleau-Ponty contends that the body is not a spectator of the objective world but a "mode of being-in-the-world" (*être-au-monde*). Perception is thus an embodied becoming, a co-constitutive process between body and world. Dance represents a quintessential site of such "perception-in-formation": through movement, the dancer constructs relations with space, time, and others, continually reshaping the boundaries between self and environment. Bodily movement is not mere expression—it does not passively display emotion—but actively generates new meanings and experiential forms of existence through contact with the world.

Building upon these theoretical foundations, this study proposes the concept of *Perception of Flux* to articulate the dynamic reconstruction of bodily awareness amidst socio-ecological transformation. "Flux" refers not only to the continuous flows within natural and social systems but also to the body's ongoing adjustments of its perceptual modes in response to such flows. As an art of embodied action, dance renders perceptual change tangible. Throughout the creative and performative processes, dancers continually renegotiate the relationship between body and environment, allowing socio-ecological transformations to become manifested, absorbed, and transfigured through movement. In other words, dance not only symbolizes ecological change; it reveals the operational logic of human perceptual mechanisms.

Therefore, this study aims to demonstrate how contemporary socio-ecological flux is embodied, reflected, and reconfigured through choreographic processes. Through this lens, dance is no longer understood merely as artistic expression but emerges as a crucial window into human–environment interaction, socio-ecological feedback, and the transformation of perceptual structures.

3. Research Framework: From Socio-Ecological Transformation to Perceptual Reconstruction

Building on the theoretical foundations outlined above, *Perception of Flux* can be understood as a dynamic bodily response to socio-ecological transformation. Social ecology suggests that contemporary societal metabolic structures are undergoing a systemic transition—from high-energy, linear-growth models toward low-carbon, circular, and sustainable configurations (Haberl et al., 2016). As social and ecological systems are restructured at the macro level—for instance through globalization, digitalization, and industrial transitions—not only are mechanisms of economic operation, such as resource flows and modes of production, reorganized, but human perceptual modalities are also reshaped. This is manifested in the acceleration of temporal experience, the multiplication and fragmentation of spatial perception, and other shifting sensory characteristics. Meanwhile, in Gibson's ecological perception theory, the body's perceptual system relies on the "affordance network" offered by the environment; when socio-ecological conditions shift, the coupling between action and perception similarly undergoes transformation.

This study therefore proposes a *Three-Layer Cycle of Perception of Flux*. First, external transformations in socio-ecological systems function as the input layer, continually stimulating and challenging the dancer's perceptual system. Second, choreographic practice acts as the mediating layer, wherein bodily actions translate these external stimuli into perceptual experiences and movement vocabularies. Third, bodily awareness is reshaped through this process, forming the output layer, which in turn influences the perceptual structure of the socio-ecological milieu. As illustrated in the figure:

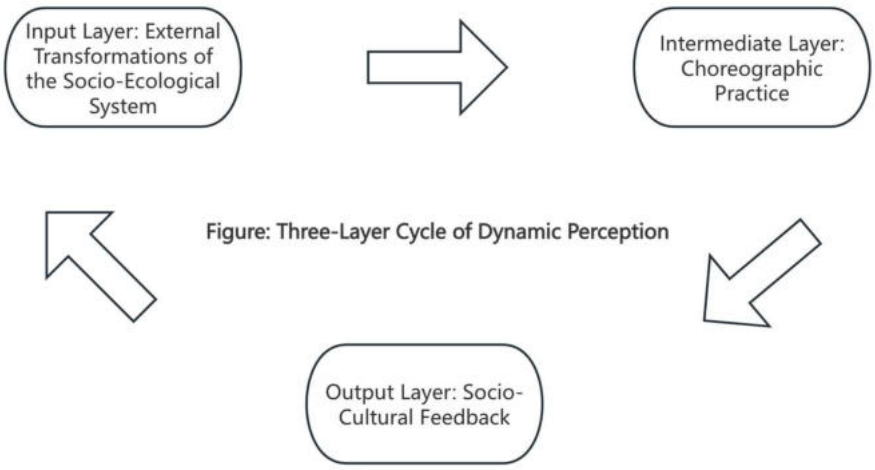


Fig. 1. Three-Layer Cycle of Dynamic Perception

Dance choreography is not merely the generation of an artistic language; it also constitutes a process of perceptual calibration within the broader socio-ecological context. The following section begins with external systemic forces, examining how socio-ecological transformations act upon the body through three types of stimuli—spatial, temporal, and material—thereby initiating the generative pathway of Perception of Flux.

4. Input Mechanisms: Embodied Stimuli and Perceptual Challenges under Socio-Ecological Transformation

From the perspective of social ecology, contemporary society is undergoing a profound metabolic transition. The reconfiguration of energy systems, spatial structures, and material cycles has fundamentally altered the modes through which humans interact with their environments (Haberl et al., 2016). Such transformation manifests not only on technological and economic levels but also leaves deep imprints on human perception. Sensory systems and bodily experiences are being reshaped by forces of digital logic, urban rhythms, and material alienation. As the most immediate form of embodied art, dance becomes one of the earliest perceptual interfaces where these socio-ecological pressures are made visible. In both creation and performance, the dancer's body functions as a "perceptual translator," rendering intangible socio-ecological pressures perceptible through movement, rhythm, and spatial relations.

This study categorizes the impacts of socio-ecological transformation on dancers into three primary stimulation mechanisms: spatial fragmentation, temporal acceleration, and material alienation. These stimuli do not operate in isolation; together, they constitute the dual tension of "perceptual rupture" and "consciousness reconfiguration" in contemporary choreographic practice.

4.1. Spatial Fragmentation and Perceptual Rupture

With the expansion of urbanization and the proliferation of digital media, the continuity of lived space has been disrupted. Individuals continuously shift between fragmented spatial nodes that lack a coherent sense of place. Human environments have shifted from holistic "places" to disjointed networked "spaces." Social ecology describes this process as *metabolic rift*: in the pursuit of efficiency and circulation, social systems gradually detach from the material and perceptual foundations of ecological environments (Haberl et al., 2016).

For dancers, this spatial rupture first manifests as weakened bodily orientation and reduced environmental responsiveness. They no longer move within a coherent spatial whole but instead must adjust perception across virtual–physical interfaces and between enclosed and open environments.

The transformation of socio-ecological structures deeply influences choreographic logic. As urban rhythms accelerate and digital media permeate daily life, spatial experience becomes functionalized and partitioned, fracturing social relations and sensory modes. Dance, as a reflection of social experience, no longer relies on stable spatial narratives but instead seeks new bodily vocabularies within fragmented realities. Movement shifts from linear progression to multi-point dispersion, using fluid rhythms, spatial breaks, and shifting centers of gravity to express modern experiences of environmental disorder.

This transformation is not a mere stylistic update; it exposes the imprint of socio-ecological transitions on artistic form. When the environment loses coherence, the body becomes the medium through which perception and meaning are reorganized. Dance no longer only represents space—it reweaves spatial perception through action, allowing the body to search for new orders and modes of existence amid imbalance. This creative turn exemplifies the sensitivity of dance as a social perceptual system: the body becomes a vehicle that responds to and reconstructs perceptual experience under socio-ecological pressures.

This tendency is evident in many contemporary works of the new century. Rafael Bonachela's *Frame of Mind* (2015) uses minimalist stage structures to depict bodies constrained by urban order, revealing the pressures and separations of modern life through spatial compression and expansion. Wim Vandekeybus's *TrapTown* (2019) constructs a "fractured space" between

virtuality and reality through dancer–video interaction, reflecting the instability of perception under digital mediation. Collectively, such works demonstrate that dance functions as a perceptual mirror of socio-ecological conditions, not only documenting spatial fragmentation but also responding to the alienation produced by urbanization and technological acceleration.

Thus, spatial fragmentation is not merely an external social phenomenon but also an internal perceptual challenge. It forces the body to seek order amid disorder, making choreography a practice of socio-ecological reintegration—an act of re-stitching fragmented spatial experience through movement.

4.2. Temporal Acceleration and Ecological Anxiety

If spatial fragmentation reconstructs the body's external relations, temporal acceleration directly alters its internal rhythms. Social ecology argues that the metabolic speed of modern society has increased exponentially with technological development, surpassing the regulatory rhythms of natural systems (Haberl et al., 2016). This "metabolic acceleration" manifests somatically as sustained tension and perceptual lag: the body continues to operate according to natural temporal rhythms, yet social time becomes compressed, forcing the body into high-speed cycles.

In choreography, this temporal dislocation is often embodied through rhythmic conflicts and energetic ruptures. What dancers experience is not simply accelerated movement but a loss of *temporal affordance*—before the body completes an action, the tempo of the environment has already shifted. This activates a persistent form of *ecological anxiety* within the body: rapid breathing, repetitive movements, and shortened pauses all reflect the mismatch between bodily and social temporalities.

Pina Bausch's *Kontakthof* (1978) illustrates this phenomenon vividly. Time appears compressed, looped, and socially driven. Repeated gestures—gliding, approaching, embracing, and breaking away—dismantle linear temporality and create a perpetually restarting "accelerated loop." This rhythmic rupture reveals bodily fatigue and anxiety under temporal pressure. Through deliberate elongation, compression, or looping of movement rhythms, the work allows audiences to perceive temporal tension directly. As dancers oscillate between acceleration and suspension, they embody a body "held hostage by time."

Such strategies are not merely formal experiments but choreographic responses to socio-metabolic acceleration. Through displacement and delay, dancers reclaim agency in time, reasserting their right to *delayed perception*. Temporal acceleration becomes both constraint and creative resource, prompting choreographers to reconsider the meaning of "the present." Amid temporal turbulence, dance becomes an art of deceleration, restoring resonance between body and time rather than surrendering to acceleration.

4.3. Material Alienation and Symbiotic Reconnection

Beyond space and time, the deepest effects of socio-ecological transformation emerge from the alienation of the material world. Industrialization and global consumption systems have blurred boundaries between natural and artificial matter—a condition ecology identifies as *material metabolic imbalance*. Haberl and colleagues note that contemporary energy and resource consumption exceed ecological regeneration, pushing human–nonhuman relations into disequilibrium.

In dance practice, material alienation manifests when the body is forced to renegotiate the boundaries of "life" through interaction with environments, objects, and waste materials. The body is no longer the sole locus of vitality; instead, it becomes part of a broader assemblage in which matter, environment, and energy co-constitute liveliness. Dancers co-perform not only with other bodies but with non-living entities—plastic, metal, fabric, dust, air—cultivating new forms of "material empathy." Such practices reflect an ecological mode of *symbiotic reconnection*: the body ceases to dominate matter and instead participates with it in shared energy flows.

In eco-dance or site-specific dance, dancers often engage with ground textures, move natural materials, or manipulate discarded objects to explore mutual dependencies between humans and their environments. The dancer "listens" to the responses of materials, generating movement through the interplay of bodily force and material resistance. This expands Gibson's notion of affordances: nonhuman matter also offers perceptual and action possibilities. Through such interactions, dancers rebuild trust in the material world and enact—artistically and ecologically—a form of metabolic repair.

Material alienation ultimately leads dancers to recognize themselves not as isolated entities but as participants in an ecological network. Performances of bodily–material symbiosis not only repair human–nature ruptures but also provide perceptual prototypes for socio-ecological reintegration—a shift toward ecological ethics realized through embodied practice.

In summary, socio-ecological transformation stimulates the contemporary dancing body across three dimensions: spatial, temporal, and material. On the macro level, these transformations reflect metabolic imbalance; on the micro level, they serve as catalysts for reorganization of the dancer's perceptual system. Through embodied practice, dance renders these socio-ecological shifts intelligible, perceptible, and reorganizable, thus laying the experiential groundwork for the subsequent mechanism of *perceptual transformation*.

5. Transformation and Generative Mechanisms: Dual Coupling Between Ecological Perception and Socio-Ecological Systems

Under the persistent influence of socio-ecological transformation, dance choreography is no longer merely an artistic expression. It becomes a process through which the body regulates, reflects upon, and regenerates its relation to both ecological and social systems. Social ecology (Haberl et al., 2016) argues that the socio-metabolic structure of human society comprises circulations of energy, materials, and information. Every fluctuation within this structure reorganizes individual perceptual systems. Ecological perception theory (Gibson, 1979), meanwhile, reveals the direct coupling between perception and action—individuals actively acquire environmental information through bodily movement. Together, these frameworks form the basis of the "transformation and generative mechanism" in choreography: external socio-ecological changes are perceived and translated through the body, generating new perceptual structures and artistic forms through movement.

5.1. Perceptual Retuning: From Visual Dominance to Multisensory Ecologies

Traditional dance training and theatrical structures are deeply rooted in visual-centric modes of perception. Techniques such as mirror work, spatial alignment, and visual correction shape bodily behaviour, positioning the body as a medium disciplined by visual norms. This regime not only structures movement logic but also frames the audience's modes of seeing, situating dance within the

primacy of visibility. Yet, within rapidly shifting socio-ecological contexts, visual dominance reveals its limitations—singular optical perception can no longer adequately respond to diverse, fluid, and often nonlinear environmental stimuli.

Gibson's (1979) theory of *direct perception* provides a crucial lens for rethinking perceptual mechanisms in dance. From an ecological perspective, perception is not symbolic interpretation of external information but an immediate interaction between body and environment. Individuals obtain action-relevant information through *perception–action coupling*, a process not dependent on visual mediation but grounded in embodied, situational experience. Perception begins not with "looking" but with co-creation between body and environment.

Within this framework, recent choreographic practices increasingly integrate somatic and improvisational methods to break away from visually dominated paradigms and activate multisensory potentials. Training systems such as Contact Improvisation, Body-Mind Centering, Feldenkrais, and Skinner Releasing Technique emphasize tactile, auditory, vestibular, and interoceptive awareness, establishing ecological connections between body and environment. Dancers rely less on external visual feedback and more on gravity, muscular tone, air flow, and interpersonal touch to generate movement.

This perceptual retuning shifts the dancer from a "body-to-be-seen" to an "agent within perceptual flow." Instead of reproducing pre-set sequences, movement emerges through real-time multisensory feedback. Breath, weight shifts, and kinetic flow are constantly adjusted in dialogue with environmental attributes—floor textures, temperature, airflow, and sound. The body becomes an open, ecological perceptual system: environment triggers movement, while movement simultaneously reshapes environmental perception, forming a continuous perception–action loop.

More importantly, this multisensory ecology reflects the body's adaptive response to contemporary socio-ecological rhythms. As digitalization and accelerated social tempos transform temporal and spatial experience, dancers redistribute sensory focus to regain resonance within complex environments. Vision loses its hegemony as auditory and tactile senses re-emerge as vital modes of world-engagement. This shift from "visual centrality" to "multisensory ecology" is not merely sensory expansion; it is a deep response to ecological, socio-temporal, and cultural restructuring.

Thus, perceptual retuning is both a choreographic strategy and an ecological practice. By resetting the perceptual system, dance becomes a medium for reconnecting individuals with the world. Through multisensory ecologies, dancers rediscover bodily temporality and spatiality, participating actively in the co-creation of environmental experience. Dance emerges as an experimental field for exploring co-existence between body and environment, marking a shift in contemporary art from ecological awareness to embodied ecological consciousness.

5.2. Movement Generation: The Embodiment of Socio-Ecological Feedback

The retuning of perception provides new ground for movement generation. Changes in socio-metabolic structures—accelerated rhythms, spatial fragmentation, resource tensions—are internalized into novel movement vocabularies. Instead of striving for overt power or continuous lines, contemporary dancers often develop movement strategies characterized by low energy consumption, circularity, and micro-movements. This constitutes both an "aesthetics of conservation" and an embodied ecological sensibility. Through redistributing energy and sensory focus, the body self-regulates under social and environmental pressures.

In choreographic settings, dancers iteratively test, adjust, and translate external socio-ecological feedback into bodily experience. For instance, in response to information overload and accelerated social rhythms, dancers may employ "delay," "pause," or "repetition" to reconstruct temporal and energetic scales. Confronted with spatial rupture and compression, dancers employ localized movements, floor-bound pathways, and confined energy flows to redefine spatial presence. These strategies are not mere formal experimentation but expressions of *perceptual metabolism*: through cycles of energy and movement feedback, the body establishes new modes of coexistence with its environment, rendering artistic practice a microcosm of socio-ecological processes.

This body–environment feedback manifests differently across cultural contexts. Rémy Héritier's *Une danse ancienne* (2024), for example, adopts an "embedded choreography" approach to respond to shifting socio-ecological rhythms. Performed repeatedly in urban regeneration sites, movements emerge from resonances among architecture, residents, and natural elements. The body becomes an ecological interface connecting social and spatial dynamics.

Simultaneously, McKechnie et al. (2005) observe that improvisation is not disorderly freedom but a continuous generation of movement within the perception–action cycle. Through delay, judgment, and subtle adjustment, dancers transform external stimuli into movement opportunities, maintaining openness and sensitivity—an ecological characteristic wherein perception itself is action.

Krug (2022) further demonstrates that "delay" and "synchronization" in group rehearsal function as key mechanisms for interbodily empathy and temporal feedback. Dancers rebuild collaborative structures by responding to others' movements with slight temporal displacement, generating rhythms of misalignment and rebalancing.

Collectively, these phenomena indicate that movement generation is a bodily embodiment of socio-ecological feedback. The body not only perceives but *participates in reorganizing* social rhythms and spatial structures. Whether in site-based choreography (Héritier), improvisational perception–action loops (McKechnie), or rehearsal-based temporal recalibration (Krug), dancers achieve ecological resonance with their environments through movement.

This ecological logic of movement reveals that contemporary dance is no longer tied to the stage or linear narrative. It has become a dynamic negotiation between body, society, and environment. Movement functions as *perceptual metabolism*: it regulates bodily energy and reorganizes human–world rhythms. Dance thus becomes an embodied microcosm of socio-ecological processes, generating new ecological orders and forms of survival wisdom through cycles of delay, energy circulation, and perceptual redistribution.

5.3. Empathy and Ecological Consciousness

Once the body re-establishes multisensory connections and translates external stimuli into movement, a deeper mechanism of empathy emerges. In collective creation, dancers no longer operate solely from individual experience but engage in *bodily attunement*—perceiving the presence of others and the environment through breath, rhythm, gaze, and spatial synchrony. Bodies form dynamic perceptual networks, generating a state of "socio-ecological resonance." This empathy is not merely sensory

synchrony but an ecological awakening: dancers recognize themselves as nodes within an ecological system, participating in broader cycles of life and energy.

In the Chinese contemporary context, the dance drama *The Crested Ibis* (choreographed by Tong Ruirui, 2014) exemplifies this eco-empathic shift. Through a temporal structure of "acceleration–collapse–restoration," the work enables dancers to re-experience human–nature symbiosis. In industrialized sections, densely packed rhythms and high-frequency energy symbolize socio-metabolic overload and ecological rupture; in scenes of natural return, rhythms slow and breath expands, allowing bodies to resonate again with the environment.

Breath, light, and sound co-create a fluid field in which "body–environment" empathy arises instantly, drawing the audience into a shared process of perceptual restoration. The dancer's body becomes a node of energy circulation—extending life across interconnected networks. This empathy is ethical as well as perceptual: it reorients individuals toward ecological interdependence.

The empathy displayed in *The Crested Ibis* represents not only coordination among dancers but an ethical reconnection. Bodies experience the structural roots of ecological crisis and respond through movement to socio-temporal imbalance. Dance thus becomes a site where ecological consciousness is generated—not through external instruction but through embodied "re-encountering." Empathy becomes a pathway toward ecological ethics and social reflection: a transformation of cognition and existence wherein dancers understand ecological crisis through bodily experience, rendering choreography an ecological act bridging body and society.

5.4. Summary of the Model: The Socio-Ecological–Perceptual Circulation Model

Based on the preceding analysis, this article expands the earlier concept of the *Three-Layer Cycle of Perception of Flux* into a more integrative *Socio-Ecological–Perceptual Circulation Model*. The three-layer cycle reveals the transmission pathway of socio-ecological transformation within choreographic processes: the socio-ecological input layer represents continuous environmental stimuli acting upon bodily perception; the choreographic mediation layer embodies ecological perception in practice, internalizing and transforming stimuli through bodily action; the bodily awareness output layer reflects the reorganization of perceptual structures, turning the body into a carrier of socio-ecological relations.

To further articulate the dynamic feedback characteristic of this process, the expanded model emphasizes that choreography functions as a mediator within a socio-ecological system, generating a continuous, cyclical, non-linear loop rather than a one-way transmission:

Socio-ecological input → Ecological perception mediation → Reconstruction of bodily awareness → Choreographic output → Societal–ecological feedback

As illustrated in the figure：

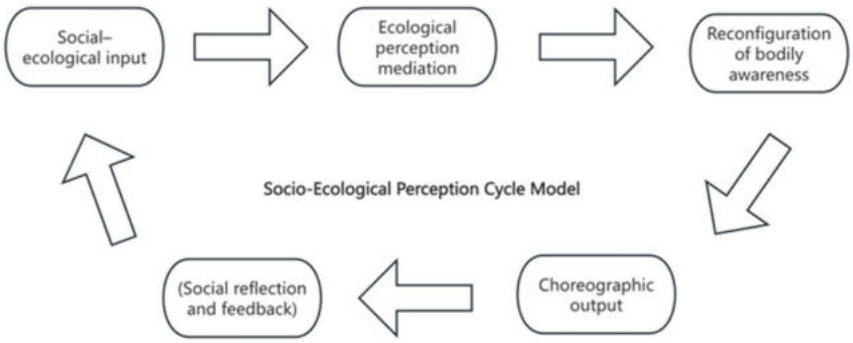


Fig. 2. Socio-Ecological Perception Cycle Model

This model becomes clearly observable in Pina Bausch's *Café Müller*. The work first captures the cold and estranged interpersonal ecology of modern society, positioning it as the core socio-ecological input. The dancers, embodying a painful and internalized collective unconscious, then serve as mediators of ecological perception, translating environmental pressure into visceral affective experience. This inward sensing ultimately crystallizes onstage as repetitive, mechanical, yet exceedingly fragile reconstructions of bodily awareness. These non-ordinary bodily actions constitute the choreographic output, compelling audiences to confront the emotional predicaments and relational fractures embedded in contemporary life. In the end, the work generates profound socio-reflective feedback on themes such as love, loneliness, and communication, confirming that dance, as a form of "embodied social commentary," can effectively transform abstract socio-environmental conditions into lived bodily experience and thus feed back into broader social dialogue.

Through this, we perceive the dual function of dance: on the one hand, it acts as a perceptual imaging device for socio-ecological transformation, rendering abstract structural shifts perceivable through bodily experience; on the other hand, it serves as a generative mechanism of ecological consciousness, enabling the body to become a mediator of socio-ecological reconstruction through cycles of movement and perception.

In sum, the "transformation and generative mechanism" elucidates how choreographic practice enables bilateral flows of energy and meaning between socio-ecological systems and perceptual systems. Dance is no longer merely an aesthetic representation but becomes an active node within socio-ecological metabolism—responding to, absorbing, and reorganizing the rhythms and structures of the external world through embodied perceptual action.

6. Dance–Perception–Socio-Ecology: A Reflective Discussion

6.1. From Naturalism to Socio-Environmental Holism

The concept of *Perception of Flux* proposed in this article emerges at the intersection of ecological perception and social ecology, aiming to reveal the systemic and generative nature of bodily awareness. Traditional ecological dance theories often center on "returning to nature," emphasizing harmonious coexistence between humans and nature and the awakening of sensory awareness. However, such naturalistic orientations frequently overlook the profound influence of contemporary social structures and technological environments on bodily perception.

Social ecology (Haberl et al., 2016) argues that human socio-metabolic processes have long exceeded the natural domain, forming socio-ecological composite systems driven by energy, information, and capital. Against this backdrop, ecological shifts in dance should not remain at the level of "natural representation" but move toward socio-environmental holism—namely, how the body acts, perceives, and generates meaning within socio-ecological networks.

Ecological perception theory (Gibson, 1979) provides micro-foundational support for this shift. A dancer's perception and action constitute direct responses to socio-ecological systems—perception becomes an active search for affordances rather than a passive reception of stimuli. In choreographic practice, the body reconstructs its relationship with its environment, mirroring the socio-metabolic process at the level of perception.

Thus, *Perception of Flux* not only extends the theoretical scope of ecological dance but also proposes a conceptual migration from "natural ecology" to "social ecology" within dance studies. The dancing body is no longer merely an extension of nature but a convergence point of social energy flows, information flows, and material flows—an embodied entry point into socio-ecological relations.

6.2. From Perceptual Interface to Action-Based Practice

As a perceptual medium within socio-ecological systems, dance not only reflects the rhythms of environmental and social interaction but also reveals the perceptual crises that humans face amid accelerated transformation. It renders the abstract notion of "metabolic imbalance" in social ecology into embodied form: through accelerated, repeated, and delayed movement, audiences directly experience the tensions and fractures of contemporary society. In this sense, dance becomes a "social perceptual instrument," exposing the urgency and fragility of the times and revealing the hidden logics of social structure, ecological imbalance, and emotional alienation.

However, the value of dance does not lie solely in representation. It also carries critical and reparative functions—through perceptual action, dancers question the operational modes of socio-ecological systems. Dance practices occurring in urban spaces, natural environments, or public settings are not merely artistic interventions but triggers for social reflection. Dance counters accelerated societal tempos through its posture of "deceleration," repositioning the body as the origin of perception and thought, enabling individuals to re-understand their relationship with their environment through aesthetic experience.

Therefore, the socio-ecological function of dance operates at two levels: it uses the body as a mirror to reflect socio-ecological conditions, and it uses the body as a tool for thinking, catalyzing new reflections on relations between humans and the environment, technology and nature. Dance renders reflection perceivable, transforming ecological consciousness from artistic appearance to a deep response to social reality.

In summary, the ecological turn in dance represents a dual innovation in theory and practice: on the one hand, it reconstructs perceptual logic, revealing the dynamic coupling between bodily awareness and socio-ecological systems; on the other, it advances the socialization and culturalization of ecological consciousness through bodily action and collective practice, positioning dance as a perceptual frontier in the construction of ecological civilization.

7. Conclusion

This study, situated at the intersection of social ecology and ecological perception theory, examines the mechanisms through which socio-ecological transformation influences choreographic practice and bodily awareness. It argues that contemporary ecological shifts—including spatial fragmentation, temporal acceleration, and material alienation—enter the dance system through ecological perceptual pathways, prompting the body to establish new regulatory mechanisms between perception and action. In this process, the dancer's body becomes a *perceptual interface* of socio-ecological change, generating movement and transforming awareness in ways that reveal the underlying logic of human–environment interaction.

Theoretically, this article proposes the *Socio-Ecological–Perceptual Dual Circulation Model*, which articulates the dynamic relationship among socio-ecological input, ecological perceptual mediation, and bodily awareness output. This model extends Gibson's ecological perception theory beyond the individual-level perception–action framework toward a social-level perception–reflection structure, offering a new theoretical pathway for understanding the socio-ecological function of dance.

Nevertheless, the study has limitations. The model is primarily constructed through qualitative analysis and case-based reasoning, requiring empirical validation across diverse cultural contexts and digital media environments. Future research may further explore cross-cultural variations in ecological experience, perceptual mechanisms in virtual environments, and the long-term impact of ecological dance on social education and cultural transformation.

In sum, as a perceptual agent within socio-ecological systems, dance not only responds to contemporary transformations but also, through its embodied ecological intelligence, offers new artistic paradigms for perceptual renewal and ecological coexistence in human societies.

Author Contribution

Zhiyi Lin contributed to the conception of the study, development of the theoretical framework, methodology design, literature analysis, full manuscript drafting, and final proofreading.

Keyu Shi contributed to research design refinement, theoretical supplementation, critical revision of the manuscript, coherence verification, and overall intellectual support throughout the writing process.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Not Required

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Competing Interest declaration

The authors declare that, to the best of their knowledge, they have no financial, personal, or professional relationships that could be construed as potential competing interests regarding the work reported in this manuscript.

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