Curating after world music: Contemporary and experimental practices between Lebanon and Germany

Irscheid, Rim Jasmin

Awarding institution:
King's College London

Curating after world music: Contemporary and experimental practices between Lebanon and Germany

by
Rim Jasmin Irscheid

Supervisor: Professor Martin Stokes

Department of Music
King's College London

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Word Count: 99,195

October 2023
London, United Kingdom

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Prof Gascia Ouzounian, Faculty of Music, University of Oxford

Prof Shayna Silverstein, School of Communication, Northwestern University

DECLARATION

I, Rim Irscheid, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

_____

Rim J. Irscheid
1 October 2023

COPYRIGHT DECLARATION

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without proper acknowledgement.

ABSTRACT

Combining ethnographic research and curatorial practice, this thesis is looking at the social and cultural implications of collaborations in the independent performing arts sector across Lebanon and Germany. The project aims to find out how musicians in emerging cross-border networks produce, showcase and experience experimental music in places that facilitate and amplify affective encounters between artists, researchers, administrators, and curators with shared beliefs and value systems marked by an antagonism against narrational strategies of world music productions at European festival sites. Outlining the impact of *MultiKulti* narratives and world music curation in Berlin since the 1980s and 1990s specifically, I will outline how performative inclusivity, ethics of care, and anti-world music sentiments at German festival sites feed into the affective dimensions of these multidisciplinary networks as well as the content which producers choose to distribute into the public realm.

Focusing specifically on trust, shared vulnerability, and uncertainty in collaborative music projects in the cities of Beirut, Berlin and Mannheim, my research aims to shed light on the significant role of location- and friendship-based networks that increasingly establish institutional structures outside of white dominated cultural institutions with a history of world music marketing in Germany. This entails looking at three specific institutional structures, including the Planet Ears festival (Mannheim), the Irtijal festival (Beirut) and associated grassroots organisations and artist-led collectives in Beirut, and Morphine Raum in Berlin.

In analysing the sonic profile, aesthetic choices, and the social dynamics within experimenting collectives, this project will demonstrate how networks of collaborating musicians, performance artists, administrators and curators navigate and initiate changing possibilities of instituting experimental music across Germany and Lebanon. I argue that this development is due to adapting cultural policy frameworks, a close social proximity of policy workers and diasporic musicians, and the aims of funding the independent performing art scene based on general turn towards performing anti-racist practises and diversity sensitive curation in Germany specifically.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INDEX OF PARTICIPANTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

This thesis is concerned with experimental practices, artist-led institutions, and emerging forms of affective and (world music-) critical curatorship across Lebanon and two cities in Germany. Presenting a multisited ethnographic study of experimental performance practices, I look at the way world music narratives and discourses on heritage and modernity shape the way institutions and festivals interact with diasporic musicians and their respective networks. Furthermore, I look at how musicians and curators build institutions and collectives outside the constraints of these narratives. I follow musicians across the cities of Berlin, Mannheim, and Beirut who play at events with different curatorial premises, seeing how they yet connect despite their narratorial diversity. I speak to policy makers, performance artists, administrators, musicians, and curators that share similar values and beliefs around world music and heritage preservation to highlight the way they respond to it in affective ways. In this process, I figured that of these figures many are occupying many roles at once. Hence, this thesis deals with new developments in the field of contemporary Arabic music, curatorial practice and cultural policy research that suggests considering the fluidity of musicians, administrators, researchers, and practitioners.

Looking for further training as a curator, I was struck by the lack of literature and training opportunities for curators in the music and festival context. There has been considerable scholarship that concerned arts curatorship, proposal writing, and critical curatorship. These findings often dealt with the curationist moment since the mid-1990s in which institutions rely on "often variously credentialed experts to cultivate and organise things in an expression-cum-assurance of value and an attempt to make affiliations with, and to court, various audiences and consumers" (Balzer 2015: 3). However, showing the possibility of curation, when done right, I want to complement these critiques with a focus on curation as a practice of activism and care. Looking for existing literature in the field of curation and contemporary music when I commenced my PhD in 2020, I came across merely two volumes that were dedicated case studies on the subject: Brandon Farnsworth's book on curating contemporary music festivals that looks at the curation of diversity bringing together festival studies and musicology (2020) and an edited volume by Sarah Baker, Lauren Istvandity, and Raphaël Nowak (2019) with a focus on the exhibition of pop music in the museum rather than the formation of alternative forms of curation that challenge heritage institutions. Their volume offers important insight, however, in the way curators tell stories, form narratives, and decide who is visible, audible, and represented in public. The authors outline the subjectivity and bias of curators and the role that nostalgia plays in shaping affective curatorial practice. In this way, curation is the key to representation and shaping of public discourse and narratives around minorities where the incorporation of one's subjective experience matters the most.

When researching this subject first, I wanted to know what role the world music discourse and *MultiKulti* narratives play in connecting these three cities as they kept appearing throughout literature and conversations with friends and colleagues in the context of migrant music productions. Considering the increase of external curators and experts organising music festivals, I was wondering what stance musicians take towards the discourses that determine

the way they are being "curated" at festivals and event series across Germany and in Lebanon. What changes when the same Lebanese musician plays a set in Germany as opposed to Lebanon, what can we learn from contrasting ways events are being organised, funded, curated, and networked?

Over time, I found that the first step to answer these questions is to take a closer look at the narratives and aesthetic hierarchies that have historically been tied to institutions programming diasporic music in Germany. In looking at policy reports and festival programs, critiques, and reflections from artists of festivals online, I considered how state-funded institutions imagined and program diversity, especially in the context of Arabic arts and culture in Germany, how they succeeded, how they failed, according to musicians themselves. This led me to pose the question to start this project with: How do migrant-led performance venues reach–or imagine– international exchange that posits itself against world music debates?

In doing this research, I noticed the prevalence of narratives on friendship and care that accompany the organisation of artist-led events in Berlin and Beirut to which Mannheim in its top-down institutional structures seemed a perfect point of comparison. Hence, I am asking: in which way does the affective dimension shape the networks that emerge? How do institutional structures such as Mannheim's Planet Ears festival, which eventually became one of my three fieldsites, aim to reverse power dynamics of world music through curatorial interventions? What is the role of curation in challenging existing narratives and colonial sites, and why are free improvised sets such a fruitful site to do this? What does it mean to be critical as a curator? This thesis looks beyond resistance and what modernism narratives and Western narratives *do* to the scene, suggesting that it is about time to look at the way these narratives gave rise to a new curatorial moment and physical spaces, rather than keeping on problematising what these narratives are.

This thesis looks at these questions in relationship to three cities, Beirut, Berlin, and Mannheim. In Beirut, I follow musicians and curators around Irtijal festival, Lebanon's oldest festival for experimental and free improvised music, and the recording studio Tunefork Studios in the Armenian-majority town of Bourj Hammoud located north-east of the Beirut municipality. In Berlin, I observe performances and curatorial practices around Morphine Raum, an artist-led recording studio, venue, and workshop in Kreuzberg founded by Lebanese producer Rabih Beaini. Berlin also forms the base for my analysis of cultural institutions and their funding schemes which includes Goethe Institute, Musikfonds e.V., Initiative Neue Musik and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). In Mannheim, I reflect on my involvement in the world music critical festival Planet Ears and its approach to narrating international contemporary music from the SWANA region. A more detailed account on each chapter will be outlined in my chapter structure below.

There are several studies concerning music in Berlin and Beirut, but little has been written about the city of Mannheim which lends itself as an excellent example for institutional approaches to diasporic and global music making due to its demographic and history of migration. Mannheim is a city in the Southwest of Germany close to Frankfurt am Main, with

just over 315.000 citizens (Statista 2023). The Southwest of Germany has a large population of people with a so-called "migration background" in which either they themselves or at least one of their parents did not have German citizenship by birth (Demografieportal 2022). Mannheim's population is made up of almost 50 per cent of those with roots outside the Federal Republic which is more than in Berlin.[1] The city of Mannheim, the second largest city in the state of Baden-Württemberg, is believed to be home to 170 different nationalities according to the city council's records (Stadt Mannheim n.d.). The history of the guestworker programme in the old Federal Republic pre-unification also explains this development and has been subject of researchers on the music of these workers (Papadogiannis 2014).[2] In many ways, Mannheim adds a crucial perspective to the study of music and migration in the field of contemporary festival studies as a social and urban environment that has been overlooked by scholars in the past due to the prominence of cultural phenomena in urban centres including Berlin, Cologne or Frankfurt am Main.

Comparing three cities with contrasting yet connecting ideas around curatorship and performing experimentalism in an institutional context will add a necessary dimension to binary comparisons of Europe versus Middle East and present the regional differences that occur in the Federal Republic of Germany when involving the same actors in different policy and performing contexts.

Arguments

Based on these theories I argue that there is great potential to observe the relationship between experimentalism and empowerment that lead to a rise of artist-led institution building across Lebanon and Germany. Bringing together the study of cultural policy, curation in the performing arts, and debates around the circulation, narration, and movement of artists from the Middle East to Europe, I want to analyse what happens when we think about contemporary music in the SWANA region from the viewpoint of contemporary arts, curatorial critique, and institution-building rather than the lens of world music. My argument takes a mention of world music in ways that show the persistence of its arguments in curators' and administrators' critical approach to selecting musicians, rather than musicians' practice itself. This does not mean that artists are not being instrumentalised in Euro-American markets and production sites to make arguments about diversity and tolerance, on the contrary. The way world music and the resistance narrative shape curatorial practice today is a major factor that keeps alive binary notions of tradition and modernity.

---

[1] In 2022, half of those living in Mannheim, 47,8 %, had a migration background and just under a third of the overall population of Mannheim held a foreign nationality (Stadt Mannheim 2022). See also: *Statistik Berlin Brandenburg* (2023) and *Institut Arbeit und Qualifikation der Universität Duisburg-Essen* (n.d.).

[2] As early as the 1950s until the 1960s, agreements between Turkey, former Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, South Korea, and other countries in Central and Eastern Europe led to a migration of workers to the industrial regions and urban centres of Germany. Specifically North Rhine Westphalia with its urban Cologne, Düsseldorf, Bonn, and other cities with large industrial sectors became home to large numbers of Turkish workers and their families. The German state of Baden-Württemberg, which is located in the east of the Rhine, is home to 17 per cent of people with roots in Turkey.

The three main points are the following: First, in comparing three different world music critical ideas articulated by curators, musicians, and institutional bodies in Berlin, Beirut and Mannheim, this triptych shows how newly emerged positionality of curation in festival spaces can shape the social dynamics of sound and sound makers. Second, the complex relationship between these three cities shows how affective networks and spaces that enable close relationships between musicians, curators and administrators can challenge conceptions of diaspora and citizen, migrant and cosmopolitan, local, and global and other oppositions. Third, to examine point one and two, one needs to employ a top-down and bottom-up approach, looking at institutional approaches to curation and artist-led, grassroots approaches to curation, to see how *performing* these ideas looks and sounds like. This becomes especially salient in the field of improvisation as a place of on-stage communication, emotional intensities, and performances that forge new affective alliances and processes that, in turn, feed back into narration-making and curation in the field of contemporary Arab arts and culture and the policies regulating its representation and visibility. Looking at curation as a site of care, activism, and reflectivity, I propose that curating in ethnomusicology and *as* ethnomusicologists helps to understand and perform our own ideas in ways that adds a necessary critical dimension to anthropological research.

My line of enquiry follows Andrew F. Jones approach to popular music research in which he is prioritising not the musicological or textual analysis but instead, explores the "discursive and social formations through which is was produced, understood and deployed as an agent of cultural struggle and ideological contention" (Jones 2001: 16). Considering curatorial strategies in the context of diasporic music productions in Germany, I argue that emerging critiques of "world music" in the cultural industries *and* changing contextual factors in the curatorial process forge (inter)cultural intimacy and new aesthetic ideals and ideologies in the context of experimental music. The sonic and visual manifestation of these ideals are often rooted in social processes of distinction (Bourdieu 1984), cultural policy decisions around municipal diversity development, and specific ideas around progress, agency, and networking in ethnic minority communities.

Methodology

The institutional ethnographies that form the bases of my argument on the German side are Morphine Raum Berlin, an artist-led venue and space for musical experimentation and instrument building and Alte Feuerwache Manheim e.V. (AFM in the following), a large cultural centre in the city Mannheim comprising of a team of administrators and external curators, rather than artists-as-curators. Following musicians around Irtijal festival and Tunefork Studios, a case study on the performing arts scene in Beirut looked at the self-sufficiency and care structures in the city.

I conducted semi- and unstructured interviews during fieldwork in December 2021 and May 2023. I undertook multiple short fieldtrips due to various factors including the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, travel restrictions due to Brexit and my non-UK passport, limited research funding post-Brexit, as well as the economic and political crisis in Lebanon, the political

situation since the October Revolution in 2019, the rising inflation and economic collapse since the pandemic and the Beirut Explosion in 2020 made a longer-term stay or stay during my doctoral studies impossible. As a Jordanian-German citizen of Palestinian heritage holding only the German passport and immediate family in Berlin, I was fortunate to be able to continue going back and forth to Germany even during the pandemic, albeit with significant losses of time for in-person research due to mandatory quarantining times upon entry to the country, which is why the fieldwork in Berlin was the most time and research intense and features heavily in the policy section and institutional ethnographies. Undertaking four field trips to the German capital lasting from two weeks to two months between 2021-2023, three fieldtrips to Mannheim in 2021 and 2022, and spending four weeks in Beirut in April 2023, I was able to observe and participate in sites of music production that approach contemporary music production from the SWANA region with new approaches of curatorship.

During the three years of this project, I carried out 70 interviews with musicians, policy makers, curators, and institutional administrators in Germany, Lebanon, and online on Zoom and spoke to a few musicians a second or third time over these years to learn about the changes in the performance or curatorial approach. Interviewing representatives of funding bodies including the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture Fund (AFAC), Culture Resource (*Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy*) and the Goethe Institute, Mannheim's Cultural Affairs Office, Musikfonds in Germany, among others, I inquired about the funding regulations and eligibility criteria for Arabic-speaking musicians in Germany and Lebanon, as well as the way musical expression is regulated, restricted, organised, and marketed once funding is secured. At institutionally run festivals such as Planet Ears, based at Mannheim's cultural venue Alte Feuerwache, I spoke about the selection process of artists for festivals, the terminology applied, and the marketing tools that generate interest to attend bespoke concerts and festivals. My time in Berlin was mainly spent in multiple performance spaces including Morphine Raum, Exploratorium and Arkaoda, and other places where social gatherings between German and Arabic-speaking artists take place to look at different ways of representing issues around home, difference and belonging in Germany. In evaluating the interviews with musicians and curators involved in these networks, I investigated the role that music plays in negotiating and forming these new identities and networks across three cities.

Alongside multisited fieldwork in Lebanon and Germany and participant-observation at festivals, artist-led cultural institutions, and above-mentioned funding organisations, I conducted online fieldwork during Covid-19 pandemic and observed performances on YouTube, digital archives and artists' social media accounts and curated a performance of two performing artists from Beirut and Berlin on the streaming platform Twitch. This experimental music performance of Rabih Beaini and Joss Turnbull took place at Morphine Raum Berlin in February 2021 and formed part of my thoughts on curation that consider the role of artist-led decision-making and curation. As part of this partly practice-led methodology, I was keen to explore the possibilities of developing a new vocabulary in the realm of (post)world music curatorship that does not fall into the "orientalist trap". Considering the reflexivity of these practices, I want to acknowledge that great inspiration and advice stems from the work of Martin Stokes. His ability to accurately describe the sensory environment, listen in, develop an

eye for unobtrusive elements of social interactions made me consider how people respond to my questions, what happens in between interviews, and what role sentimentalism plays in many of the situations we encounter.

When reflecting on my work for Planet Ears, I looked at flyers, videos, recordings, observations from admin meetings, concerts, and residency rehearsals and thoughts arising during the curatorial process and festival itself. I evaluated video and audio material of symposia, rehearsals, and final performances across three years, and analysed these findings in terms of the tropes and narratives around Arab musicianship.

Conducting fieldwork in Beirut formed a crucial part of this project that added a valuable perspective on the affective dimension of curatorial practices in Berlin and Beirut. It also shaped further engagement with sensory approaches to ethnographic material, interviews and friendships formed during research. The observations from fieldwork in Lebanon added a perspective on critical listening and listening as a methodology of care that shapes research and practice (Lavee 2021, Ratnam 2019, Ciucci 2017). It likewise shaped my perception on accessibility and inclusion in the context of researchers in the field and aspects of time and data collection. Fieldwork in Beirut proved to be more sufficient and easier than in any other city I previously sought for informants. I contacted three musicians in Beirut which I knew from their performances at Morphine Raum and was quickly introduced to about 20 more musicians working across the performing arts in Lebanon and Palestine in the first three days of my stay. This was a major change to previous fieldwork observations in Berlin and Mannheim at which gatekeeping seemed to determine large part of the social hierarchies in the cultural industries due to a precarity for, and competition among, freelance artists and curators in Berlin. These four weeks of in-person fieldwork was complemented with a year-long preparation and online interviews with Beirut-based musicians due to the complications regarding undertaking fieldwork in Lebanon in 2023. I was also there during Ramadan and Eid Ramadan, and during my first week, there were airstrikes between Israel and South Lebanon which did not affect but shaped the affective environment of my research stay in Beirut.

Preparing for a one-month intense stay with in-depth preparation and a packed schedule, I visited artist-run multiple festivals, such as Shatr Poetry festival, Irtijal festival and the showcase festival Beirut & Beyond supported event series Friday Night Live at the Grand Factory in Beirut. I visited three workshops, many on digital music production software, the use of analogue synthesizers and sound appreciation in experimental practices, led by experimenting musicians themselves. I visited Tunefork Studios, a recording studio and likewise collective founded by Fadi Tabbal who, by many, is described as the person "holding the scene together". Curious about the cultural spaces and institutions that provide the social and physical infrastructure for hosting Berlin-Beirut collaborative music projects, I visited and recorded performances at Mkalles Warehouse, Zoukak Theatre, Beirut Art Center, Ashkal Alwan, Ballroom Blitz, Mina Image Center, Barzakh, Haven for Artists and bars that likewise constitute important venues for queer performing arts, including Tota and Riwaq in the borough of Mar Mikhael. For this chapter, I also spoke to representatives of the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) and the Cultural Resource (*Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy*) and volunteer community

organisers such as Radio AlHara and the Tunefork collective consisting of Fadi Tabbal, Julia Sabra, and Anthony Sayoun.

After outlining the way my methodology shaped my research, it is crucial to outline my own positionality was a main factor that shaped my fieldwork. As a woman with mixed heritage and a curator that intervened in her own research, I certainly have blind spots and biases that led me to shape my own data. I was often surrounded by musicians in urban environments that are politically liberal, in their late twenties and thirties, female and/or queer. However, my efforts to speak to musicians in politically and culturally conservative venues, and musicians across different age groups, added a valuable perspective that helped me zoom out of the scene I was surrounded by in Beirut and Berlin. Each chapter will likewise draw on another aspect of my positionality as I occupy multiple roles as a mixed person with visible markers of Otherness in Germany–specifically dark curly hair–and privileges, elements of conversation, as well as linguistic markers, that clearly label me as a German citizen and UK resident when moving in an Arab-majority city. Reflecting on my own inbetweenness, distance, and proximity in each context, and my multiple roles as researcher, curator, administrator, and listener will be at the center of these discussions and form a core part of my arguments on how I see, listen, and reflect.

Structure

The order of chapters represents the introduction to these scenes from my research perspective starting through the lens of Euro-American consumption and the way my own narrative and thoughts about curatorial agency and diasporic music production. In many ways, the trifold focus became part of my methodology. Structuring fieldwork based on these cities and their networks helped me to decide where to go next based on conversations with musicians and administrators who pointed me in a direction and specific place that they felt represented a key place in the context of the musical and social developments we discussed. Presenting the case study first in Berlin, then Beirut, and lastly, Mannheim, the reader will be able to follow the process from the first sighting of the same network upon their arrival Berlin, their occasional return to Beirut and, lastly, their involvement in a regional music festival to support their visibility in Germany.

Chapter 1 is concerned with the cultural politics of diasporic music production in Berlin and takes a closer look at the policy and administration framework that diasporic music productions in Berlin are embedded in. Reflecting on conversations of the leading funding bodies for the *freie Szene*, Germany's international performing arts scene, I outline how institutional field sites become an important site to negotiate the aesthetics of modernity and experimentalism. The chapter will likewise outline the role of world music critique in shaping aesthetics that affect possibilities for funding and artist support in the field of experimental arts and music. I argue that performing world music critique as a social practice impacts the curatorial work that administrators undertake in their institutional environment and in-house selection processes for residencies and funding programmes.

which brings up questions around gatekeeping, accessibility, and the role of friendships between musicians and administrators in challenging power dynamics of earlier productions in Germany shaped by a specific idea around federal multiculturalism.

Chapter 2 zooms in on the affective dimensions of the *freie Szene* in Berlin and helps understand where self-described "scenes" begin, where they end, and how membership and belonging of experimenting networks are defined. The observations in this chapter consider the history of Berlin's *Echtzeitmusikszene* and discourses on gentrification, tourism, recent migration of creatives classes from Lebanon and urban development in the German capital. I look at different forms of belonging, civic belonging, city belonging, friendship, and meaningful connections between musicians, administrators, curators, and listeners that challenge sub-/high culture binaries and the idea of diasporic music as ethnicised cultural expression. This chapter also sheds light on aspects of class and social status in the experimental music scene to challenge ideas around elitism and inaccessibility of free improvised music, considering its historical ties to "high culture" expression in Germany.

Chapter 1 and 2 act as a discursive backdrop for chapter 3 for which we stay in Berlin. The case study takes a closer look at artist-led institution Morphine Raum in Kreuzberg. This chapter looks at two projects performed at Morphine Raum, Phantom Orchestra by Lebanese, Berlin-based visual artist Raed Yassin and a workshop on instrument making by Morphine Raum founder Rabih Beaini. These projects suggest considering how artist-led spaces offer new formats and curatorial models that present their institutional self-sufficiency through a strong network, industry contacts, cultural capital, and expertise in sourcing funding, dealing with all aspects of the organisational and planning process and involving different skillsets of friends and colleagues rather than third parties and contractors. By critically examining the curatorial process in the realm of diasporic music production in Berlin, I argue that it is necessary to redefine the notion of curation and consider its crucial role for shaping the sounding and listening practices in music venues involving newcomers to Berlin. Hence, I suggest that these venues are situating themselves outside the tokenistic and exoticist strategies of earlier diaspora music productions in Germany.

Chapter 4 and 5 seem more separate in terms of the location and policy framework and yet, rely on the findings of chapters 1-3 with regards to narrational strategies, affective ties between these three cities, and new forms of curatorial agency in diasporic communities. Chapter 4 presents a case study of experimenting musicians in Beirut and structures of care that establish as a result of political and economic crisis. I look at the connections between Beirut and Berlin and suggest that the outwards focus of Beirut musicians demonstrate a turn towards local empowerment rather than economic and aesthetic dependency to Europe. The study highlights the development of an independent local in which the outward focus turns its eye towards the Gulf region and countries with resources and commercial work to support the local music scene in Beirut. In analysing a song on the Beirut Port Explosion by Lebanese dream pop band Postcards, I suggest that Lebanese musicians around Tunefork collective and Irtijal may travel and move between Germany and Lebanon to tour but focus predominantly on continuing to build a national scene based on friendship and meaningful connections.

Chapter 5 then reflects on the third fieldsite and looks at institutional curatorial practices and world music critique in the Southern German city of Mannheim and its Planet Ears festival. I conclude the study of this triptych by looking at the top-down approach to diasporic music production. Following the organisational and selection process of the international music festival, I reflect on findings of chapters 1-4 and specifically the affective dimension of administering and curating festivals. This chapter includes the analysis of the festival's residency programme and the trialing of curatorial models for musical improvisation inspired by affective encounters between Mannheim administrators and Irtijal organisers as well as the affective residue these encounters and sonic experiences in Lebanon held for Mannheim's institutional workers. The thesis concludes with a summary of my findings and an outlook and recommendations to the research necessary in this field and for policy contexts.

Defining the Field

Firstly, it becomes important to define the broader categories I am situating this study in. I look at the scholarship on the world music discourse in the 1990s and 2000s, the developments in research since and studies on (post)migration and cosmopolitanism to examine the aspirations, involvement, of migrantised musicians in circulating experimental practices across Lebanon and Germany. I will also review positions on cultural policy research in Germany and the Middle East and curation and festival studies that regulate the circulation, production, and consumption of contemporary music. The affective dimension and sonic aspects of urban life are also a core of the way experimental practices are reflecting the surroundings (post)migrants and cosmopolitan Lebanese actors find themselves in. A following section on Arab modernity will look at the way we view and narrate contemporary music from the SWANA region, shaping curatorial practices and performances in these two countries. Reviewing existing positions in these fields will help situate my study in the web of these subject areas and show how this thesis aims to add a crucial interdisciplinary and intersectional perspective to the study of contemporary Lebanese music in Germany with intertwined aspects of class, race, language, religion, and gender.

The World Music Debate

My argument considers the world music discourse and criticism as crucial element to critical curatorial approaches of those cultural workers observe in this project. Reviewing the literature on world music and the global circulation of music, I look at approaches to the world music debate and scholarly approaches about the way the debate has been reflected on. James Nissen argues that the world music debate, seen in anxious and celebratory models of analysis, may have subsided (Nissen 2022: 236).[3] Yet, I argue that these sentiments are still shaping the

---

[3] Following Steven Feld's understanding of the narration of the debate in "Sweet Lullaby for World Music" (2000), anxious narratives are an interesting site to consider hegemonic power relations between artist and producer following neo-Marxists approaches while celebratory narratives outline the power of world music for "supporting new forms of hybrid creativity, anti-essentialist identification and political resistance" (Nissen 2022: 237).

thought processes, institutional structures, and decolonising processes in curatorial practice, and therefore narration of, music from the SWANA region in Germany. Drawing on these debates, Martin Stokes presents a necessary critique of neoliberal and neo-Marxist scholars on globalisation that either fetishise or abandon the notion of agency and hence leave no space for resistance to these systems (Stokes 2007: 8). Recent works such as Brandon LaBelle's *Sonic Agency* (2018) started to look at agency and cultural expression of the Global Majority once again and outline agency as a framework for experimental musical practices and noise.

Crucial works on the subject by Martin Stokes and Philip Bohlman consider the relationship between global circulation of music, technological development, and consumption of globalist imaginations and expressions of resistance embedded in these musics. Outlining the history of discussion around world music, institutional structures of power, and the impact of migration and movement on circulating musics, Bohlman and Stokes look at crucial historical moments in world music production across popular music and music in the Global South, arguing that the global circulation of music cannot be understood through a binary of rejection and appraisal (Stokes 2007). The aspects of alleged Western superiority and urges for categorisation (Bohlman 2002) and the effects of producers on consuming of world music are further outlined in the works by David Hesmondhalgh and Timothy Taylor that add an important perspective in the way world music is wrapped up in global markets (Taylor 1997, Hesmondhalgh 2000). Considering agency as a site for intervening in these structures while likewise outlining economic equalities, Burkhalter and Stokes aim to find out how musicians participate in their own marginalisation and dependency on metropolitan markets (Stokes 2007: 4, Burkhalter 2013) which will become crucial when looking at Beirut and the way economic dependency on markets in the Gulf Region can become a way to seek independence from Euro-American revenue streams.

World Music 2.0

The concept of "world music 2.0" becomes an important one to continue lines of thoughts connecting exploitation, global markets and Adornian notions on consumer and industry critique that accompany musical expressions labelled "authentic" and "local" (Erlmann 1996, Brennan 2001). Timothy Brennan and Veit Erlmann consider cultural and economic inequities, exploitative aspects, and profit mechanisms of music circulation on Euro-American markets that are sometimes overlooked in a debate that centers authenticity and locality over critique of its production (Gallope 2020). Furthermore, considering the work of Wayne Marshall and Burkhalter on world music 2.0, we can think about growing independencies of bedroom producers and possibilities of digital technologies while still bearing in mind effects of globalisation and capitalism, in which agency is on the rise but still embedded in the power of distributing industry bodies. However, as James Nissen points out in his reading of Aleysia K. Whitemore, even new classifications of world music in frameworks of a "2.0ism" still show that authors "who have rejected the world music label still rely on past debates, recycling and repacking these discourses without critical treatment" (Nissen 2020: 237, see also Whitmore 2020: 212-24).

Scholarship on digital mediations of music and different forms of interculture become a crucial dimension of the progression of the debate around intercultural productions. Shedding light on the complications of the economics of world music 2.0 as outlined above, Michael Gallope introduces us to the way recordings of old media, such as radio broadcasts and cassette recordings and their re-releases on trendy digital platforms such as streaming media, may contribute to the accumulation of cultural capital by identified artist while still leaving them in an economically precarious position (Gallope 2020: 164). World music 2.0 shows the ambivalent effects of digitisation of power relations and agency, as Georgina Born in *Music and Digital Media* points us towards the changes in music production and consumption, presenting a range of contrasting case studies that consider the various historical and social shifts accompanying digital transformations. Her edited volume shows us how different local repercussions of digitisation depend on regional context and the way communities engage with different digital mediations of sound, from fostering democratisation to further reinforcement of power structures (Born 2022).

German World Music and *MultiKulti*[4]

Andrew Hurley is one of the most prominent scholars on world music in Germany. Throughout its history from the 1950s until today, celebratory narratives can be understood in the context of anti-nationalist ambitions after WWII, whereby world music enabled musical encounters free from ideas of "pure" culture and race. Following the theories of Andrew Hurley, I argue that world music also provided a "surrogate for German domestic folklore" (Hurley 2009: 105). Despite the world music-hype in Germany since the 1960s, the branding of these organised cultural encounters has not escaped critique for rather unsuccessful facilitations of harmonic, counter-hegemonic space for "mutual communication, learning and growth" (Hurley, 2009: 106). Instead, German world music was criticised for its laboratory-like conditions of intercultural encounters and new age dogmatism that ignored the social, cultural, and economic reality that was propagated by world music media spokespeople (ibid.). Other critiques which formed part of the anxious narratives around world music in Germany were based on Gramscian thought and mention a disregard of the real "Other" at the time, that is to say, the musical activities of the *Gastarbeiter* ("guestworkers") in Germany. Instead, Hurley argues, "selected Others" dominated staged world music festivals, projects, and summits "benefiting wealthy German consumers, tourists and musicians" while little progress was made in supporting migrating artists or initiating changes in cultural policy and public discourse (Hurley 2009: 111).

The way this has affected migrant musicianship can still be seen today in terms of the ongoing modernist search for authenticity and purity of cultural expression as opposed to their "tainted" counterparts (Corbett 2000: 163) which disregards the socio-economic reality of diaspora music making in Germany and assume that migrantised musicians lack agency and judgement.

---

[4] Declaration: Parts of this section, and the following section 'Narratives in Post(World)Music Curatorship', will be published in Fuchs, M. and Mueske, J. (2023). *Yearbook Song and Popular Culture*, Center for Popular Culture and Music, Waxmann: Münster [*in press*] and E. King, S. Desbruslais, J. Rushworth and E. McCann (2023). *Music and Intercultural Practice*. Routledge: London [*in press*].

The types of diaspora music that receive performance opportunities and media attention in established venues across Germany are thus often either classical Arabic music, favoured for its contribution to cultural heritage preservation, or politicised music that contributes to a better understanding of political and economic realities of life in the SWANA region.

Germany's efforts of facilitating multicultural exchanges as an act of cultural diplomacy on the one hand, and the rejection of white saviour tropes by musicians and institutions on the other hand, play a major role in the formation of the (post)world music networks and critical listening practices in Berlin. As Michael O'Toole has argued previously, "musicians can be instrumentalised by politicians seeking to make broader arguments about multicultural politics in Germany" (O'Toole 2014: 199). The instrumentalisation that the author describes can be seen in the way in which world music projects act as portfolios for state-aligned institutions' multicultural credentials, reducing musicians to tokens in these portfolios. Consequently, musical discovery becomes a tool for self-fashioning that constructs difference through colonial power (Burkart 2016, Taylor 2007). To describe this phenomenon in Germany, Berlin-born Jewish writer Max Czollek describes this as the idea of an *Integrationstheater* ("theatre of integration") (Czollek 2018), outlining the specific role that minorities in Germany are assigned in order to stabilise modern German identity and the "fantasy of reconciliation" (*Wiedergutmachungsphantasie*) (Sieg 2002).

Despite the well-meaning efforts of cultural institutions to facilitate intercultural encounters, there is often a certain aesthetic or right amount of Orientalism, leaving audiences with a recognisable beat to dance to, and samples that make the cultural imagination of different sound worlds possible. In addition to these forms of Othering, Euro-American funding bodies often utilise the modernity-tradition paradigm and narratives around the alleged backwardness of music considered non-Western in order to promote their own values of their agenda of state building and achieve international diplomatic and foreign policy goals through the funding of cosmopolitan music projects as seen in Marina Peterson's account on experimental improvised music in an US state-funded Lebanese-American exchange programmes (Peterson 2013). In Germany, "the flaunting of difference as a constituent part of nation-building can be traced to at least the late 1990s, when young Black reggae and hip-hop artists gained visibility for works that expressed their experiences of belonging and alienation" (Silverstein 2021: 6). Nowadays, similar value judgements based on binary views of progress and backwardness of non-Western productions can be expressed in the funding allocation of Musikfonds e.V. and selection process of festivals with an explicit anti-world music focus such as the Planet Ears Festival in Mannheim. In both cases, commercial productions for the world music market in Germany are considered to be lacking a unique approach and implicit criticism of traditional music forms articulated in their sonic language among other production tools.

For these reasons, Germany is particularly interesting as a production site of diasporic music due to its historic *MultiKulti*[5] productions and flourishing world music market. These very productions, particularly the term "world music", often produce negative emotions and associations among communities of migrant and postmigrant musicians, curators, and listeners. After speaking with musicians and listeners involved with Morphine Raum in various capacities, it became apparent how specifically "deep listening" (Oliveros 2005) was viewed as a crucial practice to help evolve one's own playing style and expand one's listening repertoire. Furthermore, these critical listening practices forged a sense of belonging between musicians and listeners who seek inspiration for their own creative practice as well as contacts to music networks connecting multiple venues across Germany and the Middle East. Exploring the affective dimensions of diaspora music making is crucial to understand self-identifications and the positioning of diasporic musicians on the landscape of performance venues and funding bodies. Looking at the existing structures in which international musicians operate thus shows how the history of world music in Germany acts as a historical backdrop that creates certain sentiments towards genre identifications. This, in turn, creates networks of musicians with shared values, aesthetic principles and alignment with specific, yet fluid, scenes in Berlin.

Narratives in (Post)World Music Curatorship

As Darci Sprengel, Rayya El Zein and Shayna Silverstein point out, contemporary music studies focusing on artists from the SWANA region, as seen in today's world music productions with their well-intended aims towards the integration and representation of migrant communities, are often accompanied by Eurocentric and resistance frameworks or politically charged narratives such as those surrounding veiled women which changed from sexualised imaginations and depictions of women in Euro-American media texts to a recent investment in the liberation of women after the so-called "Arab spring" (El Zein 2016, Silverstein 2021). These and other neo-oriental frameworks often draw on essentialist binaries such as conservative/terrorist versus secular/progressive youth and disregard the role that Europe and the US play in maintaining and supporting these regimes and depict feminist struggles and patriarchal structures as being exclusive to the Middle East (Sprengel 2019: 209). The large body of literature on resistance and resilience narratives spans from music in Iran and inherent inequalities of class, gender, and race aspects in Palestinian, Syrian, Egyptian and Moroccan music production as reflected in the work of Darci Sprengel (2021), Laudan Nooshin (2017), Cristina Moreno Almeida (2017), Rayya El Zein (2016), Shayna Silverstein (2021), Zuzanna Olszewska (2013) and Ted Swedenburg (2012, 2013). While Darci Sprengel highlights the way this depicts patriarchal struggles as a phenomenon exclusive to Arab cultures, Dunya Habash suggests to not interpret strong displays of agency as resistance and resilience. This is because migrant musicians may act with agency but at the same time, "outward forms of resilience and resistance mask the inner struggles of displacement and emplacement" (Habash 2020: 1384).

---

[5] The term *MultiKulti* described the policy approaches to migrant population in Germany since the 1970s. It has been used as a slogan and marketing term in broadcasting and festival culture that been criticised for its tokenism of migrant voices and faces in signifying socio-cultural diversity and successful integration policy in Germany. It also draws on a binary of white Germans and migrantised Germans - so-called *Ausländer* ("foreigners").

As part of my thesis, I will thus address the different representational stages of a Middle Eastern imaginary, and the way musicians might utilise these imaginaries in a range of media texts that replace *MultiKulti* and German world music narratives with neo-oriental frameworks in (world music-) critical curatorship. This includes taking a closer look at the politicisation of Arab-German music collectives and neocolonial discovery notions in the context of streaming services (Sprengel 2021), as well as forms of neoliberal orientalism (El Zein 2016) as a theoretical framework to analyse musical phenomena in the Arab-speaking world and its diasporas. Despite the multiple genealogies and protagonists that shape what has been described as an Arab Avantgarde (Burkhalter et al. 2013), experimenting musicians often find themselves caught in the dominant European avantgarde paradigm with specific aesthetical precepts and performance conventions (Dickinson 2013: 9).

Mandel's and O'Toole's ethnography of Turkish diasporic life in Berlin (O'Toole 2014), Garcia's writing on affective citizenship in Berlin club cultures (Garcia 2016) and Kosnick's case study of postmigrant club cultures in Europe (Kosnick 2007) offer further invaluable contributions to the study of diasporic music making, migration, and belonging and likewise offer a critique on Berlin's self-branding as multicultural capital of Europe, as tolerant, diverse and "world-open" (*weltoffen*) (Mandel 2008: 14). Their studies offer an insight in the complex and instable identifications of migrants within Germany's cultural landscape and likewise point out its limits that prevent migrantised members of society from creating a sense of belonging and loyalty to their host country. Suggesting the notion of *city* rather than *civic* belonging, Luis-Manuel Garcia's writing specifically outlines the role that the "fantasy of belonging", mundane everyday activities, as well as Berlin's sonic and architectural environment, play in offering migrant performers and audiences an instant affinity with the city and feeling at home.[6] This sense of belonging is nurtured by newcomers' affective identification with the city's atmosphere, pace of life, urban soundscapes and sartorial styles, as well as sensory experiences in Berlin's electronic music scene (Garcia 2013: 122).

Looking at the urban element of the field of study, I will outline the role sound plays in shaping the field and expressions of music and belonging. Luis-Manuel Garcia points out different ways of belonging to Berlin from tourism to temporary ties to Berlin that *Zugezogene* ("newcomer")[7] experience before settling in the city. The ethnomusicologist observes an affinity to the city through the lens of intimacy and sensory experiences on the dance floor that make us think about different forms of "togetherness". Gascia Ouzounian work helps us reflect on our relationship to the sensory, urban, and sonic environment and the way we experience space (Ouzounian 2021). The relationship between noise in urban environment and minority empowerment and audibility are another field of literature that help understand the way imaginations of modernism, independence and collective experience and sonic expression of minorities are related and disrupt social order (Bijsterveld 2001, Novak 2008).

---

[6] This environment, specifically post-cold war urban planning in East Berlin, is described to offer an "Umbruchstimmung" (*atmosphere of transformation*) (Garcia 2013).

[7] The term is often used derogatory to describe an alleged inauthenticity of local knowledge and urban experience of newcomers who were born and raised outside the city.

Besides exploring the relevance of political-left anti-capitalism discourses in Germany with its intersecting anti-gentrification, anti-tourism and anti-migration sentiments following Berlin's urban renewal efforts, Garcia's study also highlights the challenges of migrants' self-identifications with the dominant cultural scene based on feelings of affinity to Berlin as a city that attracts left-wing intellectuals, bohemians, and artists (Mandel 2008: 6). However, it also highlights how DJs and performers experience feelings of alienation, mainly caused by a lack of language proficiency and current working conditions in the creative clusters in Berlin (Heebels et al. 2010) based on legal challenges for non-EU nationals through Germany's migration policy (Kontos 2014).

What is to say about the cultural history of narratives in migrant music productions in Germany is that it becomes apparent that migrant musicians have been historically left to operate in specific world music structures when it comes to funding for music projects, distribution channels, the choice of venue and their (self)representations for promotion and network purposes (Abbassi 2020). As will become apparent through each of the three case studies, diasporic musicians around Morphine Raum, Lebanese musicians in Beirut and international musicians visiting Planet Ears festival Mannheim may draw on aspects of their migration background in their music, visuals or generally as part of funding applications when in Germany, but likewise establish venues and networks entirely outside the German world music market and funding bodies with aims for cultural dialogue and *Multikulti* spectacles. It is important to note that the musicians involved in this research are not using sonic experiments as a disguise of imagined markers of Arab identity to counter world music productions consciously or to make a statement. Instead, they often mention curiosity and the drive to create new sonic experiments collaboratively, rather than resistance towards the world music label, as the main motivation for finding new ways of playing and developing a new sonic language while drawing on aesthetics of the *experimentelle freie Szene* and *Berliner Echtzeitmusikszene* which will be discussed in the case studies.

Migrant, Postmigrant, or Cosmopolitan?

Researching the representation and practices of Lebanese musicians' engagement with cultural institutions in Germany, I look at literature on the role migrants play and stabilising modern German identity and the way agency is articulated at different stages of the production and consumption process of experimental practices. Especially terminology is important when thinking about the way we classify musicians from the SWANA region. My studies draw on literature on postmigrants in Germany, combining Kosnick's approach to postmigrant youth cultures and Reitsamer's 2014 account of hip hop as a translocal and postmigrant practice in Austria. Kosnick defines postmigrant residents in Europe as the descendants of direct immigrants whose histories and multiple affiliations enable them to "claim home and belonging in European urban centres" (Kosnick 2014: 8). She outlines the importance of this linguistic marker, which distinguishes the home-making processes of second and third generation migrants from those of their parents. The term postmigrant likewise emphasises the importance

of their transnational affiliations and social mobility. What also separates these generations of migrancy are the pressures of assimilation and mimicry first generation immigrants in Germany had to endure following the visibility of Turkish immigrants in Germany as a result of the guestworker programme in Germany since 1955 (Kosnick 2007, Mandel 2008).

Martin Stokes and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing introduce crucial thinking to this debate by outlining the debate of cosmopolitan versus migrant as one of responding to the world we are living in–migrant–and one as active world making–cosmopolitan–shaped by globalist aspirations (Stokes 2007). Again, agency, specifically sonic agency (LaBelle 2018) and creative agency (Fossum 2023, Wozniak 2023) offer useful frameworks to understand the relationship between marginalisation and creative expression.

In the previous section I argued that it is necessary to locate postmigrant experimentalism within the German world music discourse, as well as considering current socio-economic working conditions for musicians in Western Europe. Considering musical collectives at Morphine Raum, I am not looking at Lebanese musicians in Germany as an isolated entity for subject formation, but collaborations between Arabic-speaking musicians *as well as* German-born musicians that went through world music education programmes and made meaningful connections with musicians during their tours and collaborations according to the logic of Slobin's affinity interculture in which "musics seem to call out to audiences across nation-state lines even when they are not part of heritage or of a commodified, disembodied network" (Slobin 1993: 68) and research on implicit affiliation through listening practices (DeNora et al. 2017).

However, I would argue that these pressures of assimilation and mechanisms of exclusion remain, perhaps precisely because of these socio-economic precarities in postmigrant communities. Yet, they are articulated in different ways such as through fetishisations of ethno-national identities and the establishment of a social hierarchy of foreigners in Germany through institutional race-making processes (Sprengel and Silverstein 2021). We can see that literature on postmigrant cultural production not only associates postmigrancy with a cosmopolitan rootlessness (Hannerz 2006: 21) or in-betweenness (Hall 1995, Bhabha 2004) but can conversely also reproduce binary views of host versus home country (Reitsamer 2014). In the context of postmigrant hip hop, Reitsamer refers to Bhabha's concept of the "third space" or "in-between space" in which rappers are subverting expectations of racial classification and stigma by "finding ways of being both [cultures] the same as and at the same time different from the others amongst whom they live (Hall 1995: 206, as cited in Reitsamer 2014: 255). What seems pertinent in both Kosnick's and Reitsamer's accounts on postmigrant cultural production is the generational divide between ethnicised members of German-speaking societies and their transnational and local ties to urban creative clusters in Berlin and the SWANA regions. In my thesis, I will occasionally use the term postmigrant to denote not only these generational differences between citizens with direct and indirect migration experiences, but to include German nationals with no kin relations but close ties to the SWANA region who engage with postmigrant cultural production by way of affiliation.

Belonging and Inclusion in Germany

My approach to Arab musicianship in Germany combines ideas around affective citizenship (Berlant 1997, Jones 2001, Mookherjee 2005) with conceptualisations of affective labour, the sensorial and material dimensions of professional musicianship (Hofman 2015: 30) and racial and class dimensions of creative labour in migrant communities (Garcia 2013, Gallope 2020, Silverstein and Sprengel 2021, Withers 2021). Monica Mookherjee's conception of affective citizenship "recognises the emotional relations through which identities are formed" (Mookherjee 2005: 36) as well as the experiences of social disadvantage which form a social bond between members of minority groups. Her postcolonial and feminist approach to citizenship and belonging explains how experiences of pain, humiliation, and loss allow minorities to form emotional bonds with multiple, intersecting communities (ibid.: 37). German postmigrant club cultures and their various modes of cultural production, including the pop-avantgarde (Burkhalter 2013: 17), occupy these very positions, operating outside elitist Euro-American understandings of avantgardism and musical experimentalism (Levitz and Piekut 2020). Instead, articulations of a vernacular avantgarde (ibid.) or cosmopolitanism "from below" (Stokes 2007: 9) in Germany's experimental music scene shed light on a neglected branch of diasporic music making in Germany.

According to Kosnick, postmigrant performers might belong to a "highly mobile and privileged creative class" (Kosnick 2014: 15) but depending on the affiliation with certain venues, institution and distribution channels, these privileges can easily be replaced with social disadvantages and legal barriers in Berlin's club culture (Garcia 2013). However, recent writing on Berlin's urban renewal policy fails to include postmigrant perspectives that move beyond the criticism of "creative classes" (Florida 2002) and "creative clusters" (Heebelst and Aalst 2010) as "elitist and exclusionary" (Peck 2005). This disregards the group of diasporic artists that are part of Germany's sound art and pop avantgarde scene which achieve their social mobility and income not through class privilege or family inheritance but belonging to, an involvement with, a small group of like-minded musicians and curators with shared biases towards the whiteness of Germany's world music industry and cultural policy.

These disadvantages form the basis of the barriers of belonging and inclusion in Germany for migrantised (El-Tayeb 2016) and ethnicised (Mandel 2008) residents. In using these terms, both El-Tayeb and Mandel suggest a process-orientated approach in the use of the terms ethnicisation and migrantisation that challenges the idea of monolithic diasporic communities and the way migrantised Germans experience exclusion and discrimination. Ruth Mandel's ethnography on the Turkish diaspora in Germany challenges ideas around affective citizenship and belonging in Germany. She points out the barriers that complicate feelings of belonging and loyalty to a single nation state (Mandel 2008: 15) through the "double negation of place" in which Turkish Germans are always aware of the place they are not (ibid.: 18) through social, political, and legal mechanisms of exclusion, spatial seclusion as well as expectations about minorities' appearances and proprieties (Caldwell 2008: 513). This becomes apparent in Mandel's detailed account on aspects of post-war (West) German cultural history and historical milestones such as Germany's unification with its social hierarchy of Otherness, spanning from

the inner German *Aussiedler*[8] to ethnicised German residents with Turkish heritage that often find themselves at the bottom of this social ladder (Mandel 2008: 146). Looking at Muslim migrants in Germany, Esra Özyürek's study presents an important perspective on ways Muslim minorities help shape German memory culture, being included, and excluded at once (Özyürek 2019: 5).

Not only migration scholars and ethnomusicologists exploring diasporic cultural expression in Germany, but migrant voices in contemporary German literature and popular culture brought criticism on German understandings of integration, and the pressure of assimilation based on white Christian ideas around Germanness in the public sphere (El-Tayeb 2016, Czollek 2018, Aydemir and Yaghoobifarah 2019). Discussions around postmigration and postmigrant cultural practices address with the resistance to these expectations and past forms of reflexive mirroring of German cultural practices as seen in first generation migrant communities that reinforce ideas around German national identity and belonging (Mandel 2008: 4, see also *mimicry* in Bhabha 1984) in order to "fit in" to mainstream German society (ibid., see also Mbembe 2019). Thus, literature on diasporic Turkish life in Germany insists on a generational difference between first generation migrants and guestworkers and their mimicry practices that aim to please expectations of German dominant society to resistant cultural practices seen in postmigrant communities that reclaim urban architectural, sonic, digital, and social space (Mandel 2008, O'Toole 2014, Reitsamer 2014, Kosnick 2007, 2014).

The resistance of postmigrant residents in Germany is articulated through socio-cultural practices such as codeswitching on digital platforms (Tahiri 2015), utilising stereotypical representations in rap music through "ghetto-masculinity" (Reitsamer 2014: 264), subverting assumed identities through the reclaiming of derogative linguistic markers of Otherness (Zaimoğlu 1995), auto-ethnicisation and self-Orientalism (Mandel 2008, Abbassi 2020), provocative blogging, podcasting and alternative publishing (Mandel 2008: 4, see Tunay and Imad 2016, Czollek 2018, Aydemir and Yaghoobifarah 2019, Ohanwe and Aburakia 2021), as well as through musical practices (O'Toole 2014) in which musicians and music institutions offer creative interventions that challenge "the public opinion about cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity in contemporary Germany" (O'Toole 2014: 5). Michael O'Toole's ideas around sonic citizenship highlights the importance of musicians' creative practices, their transnational urban networks, and cultural connections to metropoles such as Istanbul that shape their sense of civic belonging which expands beyond national borders (ibid.: 88). He argues that the very nature of Turkish German musicianship, which he describes as explorative, collaborative and multilocal "demotic cosmopolitan practices" (ibid.: 204, see Mandel 2008) can thus challenge the German Enlightenment model of cosmopolitanism.

What is important to highlight are the changing forms of resistance to nativist and xenophobic tropes, white German moral panic and populist rhetoric concerning Muslim migrant life in Germany. These sentiments formed the core of the 2010 German best-seller book by right-wing politician Thilo Sarrazin *Deutschland schafft sich ab*: *Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel*

---

[8] Ethnic Germans that emigrated from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to the Republic of Germany.

setzen ("Germany abolishes itself: How we put our country at risk") that gave rise to anti-Muslim conspiracy theories, Islamophobia and German nationalist ideologies. Changing identity constructions of Arab musicianship in German performance curation are often implicitly and explicitly responding to such views by way of articulating sameness and cultural proximity to European values and aesthetics.

How identities can be constructed in the domain of popular culture and likewise inform collective habits is the subject of Martin Stokes' writing on cultural intimacy, affect and sentimentalism in Turkish popular music. Just as queer pop star Zeki Müren opened possibilities for audience and performer to connect and bring other kinds of identities in the public sphere in 1990s Turkey (Stokes 2010: 69), Arabic-speaking music performers discuss underrepresented aspects of their identity in Germany as part of their musical and curatorial practice. By doing so, they connect with postmigrant audiences and likewise open up possibilities for both the performer and local diasporic community to connect over ambiguous identity conceptions. These conceptions differ from neo-orientalist and politicised cultural representations in Germany's migrant media (Mohamedou 2015) that form the basis of German cultural policy decisions.

Cultural Policy Research

My first chapter considers literature on institutional processes and musicians' experiences of alienation and inclusion. Looking at the specific regional context of three cities, the case studies in this thesis look at the way cultural policy regulates the circulation and production of local cultural expression. Authors such as Michael O'Toole, Max Czollek, Kira Kosnick, Shayna Silverstein and Marina Peterson all outline the role that migrants in Germany have been instrumentalised for political arguments and debates around German identity, integration, and multiculturalism. Sara Ahmed's work on the politics of stranger making in institutional spaces, Shayna Silverstein's critique on *MultiKulti* narrative in the context of Syrian migrants (2021), and Ruth Mandel's reflection on assimilation politics and belonging in Turkish communities in Berlin (2017) will give perspective to the stranger making and racialisation that Arabic-speaking migrants are subject to when engaging with white-dominated cultural institutions.

Necessarily, I will consider the constraints and failings of German cultural policy and pedagogy reflected in the work of Kira Kosnick (2007), and Patrick Valiquet (2019) that show the inequalities persisting in cultural production in the Euro American context when contemporary cultural expression becomes subject to separatist understandings of culture as either ethnicised or de-ethnicised connotations. Özlem Canyürek is another important voice that writes about the lack of diversity in German cultural landscape and outlines the role of cultural policy in enabling access and participation in the performing arts scene (Canyürek 2022). The lack of inclusion goes back to decades of exclusionary mechanisms that concerned specifically the Turkish migrant population. Martin Greve describes how musical relationships between Europe and Turkey stated *before* the guestworker programme and influx of Turkish workers in the 1960s; and I will go back to this point in arguing that Germany's engagement with musicians migrating to Germany enables a movement of both sound and people (Greve 2003).

In the field of strengthening cultural ties in NGO work, I consider studies on donor relations and institutional dependencies in Germany and Lebanon that outline the power of narratives to shape policy discourse and funding causes itself in which art and music are "at the service of politics" (El-Ghadhban and Strohm 2013: 176).

Curation in the Festival Context[9]

Curatorial studies have largely been situated in the field of visual arts and museum studies with Brandon Farnsworth study on music festivals being an important milestone in bringing together ethnomusicological scholarship and curatorial studies (Farnsworth 2020). In social research, curatorial discourse has been a subject in the work of Lisa Gaupp (2020, 2021), the subject of panel discussions at festivals and symposiums in German-speaking Europe in particular.[10] Germany is particularly interesting as a fieldsite for examining curatorial practices as it reveals institutional power dynamics in the field of *MultiKulti* music making and how racialised narratives on migrants deeply embedded in curatorial strategies of concert halls, festivals, museums and exhibitions. The term has only recently been used in the context of music festivals, playlist curation and independent radio programming.

Many of these authors demonstrate that polarising narratives are at the core of curatorial practices. The curatorial leitmotifs that "curated a region" such as the Arab World (McDonald 2017) are necessarily embedded in the narratives widely circulated on social media, newspaper reports and public discourse in each local context that shape public opinion. In Germany, we can see how the involvement of migrantised musicians and international artists flown in for festivals are often curated in a way that stress the tropes outlined above. Curation, therefore, can act as a powerful tool to display and arrange knowledge in new ways and challenge, or reinforce, modernity tradition paradigms in contemporary Lebanese music or resistance tropes. In today's world where curators have accumulated a large amount of cultural capital and range of industries they "curate" (Balzer 2015), we need to consider alternative models of curation and recognise curation in the festival and music context as a prominent way to assert power and organise knowledge in a way that instrumentalises musicians or can act as a way of gatekeeping (Gaupp 2020). In contrast, Noel Lobley looks at communal curation as a way of "working together to build a sustainable environment" and suggests linking local, national, and international artistry in creative collaborations in order to overcome common sensory blind spots of individual ethnographic perspectives and observations (Lobley 2020).[11]

Questions on the politics of curatorship have formed the base of the research practice of ethnomusicologists Thomas Burkhalter and Hannes Liechti who engage with curation as a field of enquiry in the context of popular music, experimental electronica, and sound art (Acciari

---

[9] Declaration: Parts of this chapter will be published in E. King, S. Desbruslais, J. Rushworth and E. McCann (2023). *Music and Intercultural Practice*. Routledge: London [*in press*].

[10] Panels such as "Distributing Power equitably: News Ways of Music Curation" at M4Music Festival in Zurich; festival-accompanying symposia that discuss "Global Music Festivals: Curation and Anti-racism" in Mannheim; panels such as "Ethics of Appropriation" as part of Pop Kultur Berlin festival; or collectively curated symposia such as "Cultural Work today: Diversity, Access and Empowerment" in Heidelberg.

and Rhensius 2023). Across various disciplines, curation has been dissected into phases of the position of the curator with regards to their engagement with audiences and institutions, while outlining the complex understandings of the curator as both an individual professional worker, empowered minority musician with a migration background (Kosnick 2014) or a "dynamic of network" rather than a single figure (Mørland et al. 2015). The latter interpretation stresses the variety contextual factors curators have no control over which includes community tensions, economic conditions, including those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as donor involvement (Mørland et al. 2015: 16).

While curatorial discourse has mainly been understood as "institutional critique" in the 1990s and 2000s (e.g., engaging with the "white cube ideology") today's curatorial politics, specifically in the context of international music festivals, are often concerned with issues of accessibility, intersectional matters and enabling long lasting exchange and awareness of Germany's cultural diversity. These new festival approaches are shaped by corporate sponsorship, public funding, marketing agendas, public relations and working conditions of musicians and institutions' changing diversity politics alike (Mørland et al. 2015: 7). More importantly, looking at curatorial strategies at an artist-led cultural institution will reveal the influence of the organisational structures of German world music and the narrational strategies with regards to ethnic minorities in Berlin that impact diasporic music production today. After (re)defining the notion of curatorship, I will outline the ways in which diversity and exchange are performed and engaged with through different curatorial strategies and network formations.

Previous literature on the work of curatorial programming of diversity in Berlin addresses the critical engagement with the city's Carnival of Cultures with its demonstration of Berlin's cultural diversity. For that matter, ethnic groups are often "put on display" while representing their cultural distinctiveness as a tourist spectacle (Kosnick 2007: 94). The criticism on curatorial practices can most prominently be seen in David Balzer's *Curationism* (2015) and the cultural history of the "curationist moment" since the mid-1990s. While the curator in the 1960s and 1970s acted as a collector and cataloguer, curators since the 1990s such as Swiss curator Hans Ulrich Obrist have become "stars" with authorial positioning. Since the 1990s marked the "supervisibility of the curator" (Balzer 2015: 55, O'Neill 2012), curators have taken an active role as "charismatic, magical organiser of exhibitions" (Balzer 2015) that mediate between artists and institutions.

As a "powerful mouthpiece of big institutions", the role of the curator has changed from their passive engagement with politics and social change to becoming "connoisseurs of tastes and trends*"* who determine the socio-cultural values attached to tastes and styles in today's art world (Deller 2016). The bridge metaphor, describing the curator as a bridging element between audience and institution–or audience and artists–has been an important element of critics of the hegemonic power relations between festival curators and musicians as Lisa Gaupp outlines in her ethnographic study on international performing arts festivals (Gaupp: 2020). According to Gaupp, the curator acts as a power broker, gatekeeper, and cultural intermediary (Bourdieu 1984). In Gaupp's words: "Cultural intermediaries in Bourdieu's sense reveal how conventions are not simply routinised procedures but rather formed and legitimised by taste.

(...) The curator's work as a taste maker reconfirms his own cultural capital and thus his position as cultural intermediary. He reproduces and legitimizes social stratification through notions of taste" (Gaupp 2020: 10).

As a tastemaker, curators draw "from their personal habitus which includes cultural capital and subjective dispositions" (Gaupp 2020: 6). Specifically, during the formative period of a festival, with the process of selecting, recruiting, and funding in cooperating with other cultural institutions and, funding bodies and festival networks, gatekeeping through curators becomes a major problem that persists in the "complex field of organisations that influence ideas of taste" (Gaupp 2020: 5). Gaupps's criticism engages with the impact of curators' influence on the representation of socio-cultural diversity. Looking at institutionalised festival networks in the EU with its Eurocentric-biases, she outlines ongoing issues of access restriction of non-Western or non-European artists through the figure of the curator (Gaupp 2020: 8). This can be seen specifically in world music programming, in the way musicians or listeners are considered "different enough to fulfil the demand for the unfamiliar while not too different from the known" (Gaupp 2020: 11).

This becomes apparent in cases where migrantised artists are not booked at *MultiKulti* festivals due to a lack sonic or visual signifiers of Otherness. They fail to act as tokens for socio-cultural diversity and thus are unable to contribute to the exposure of minority identities in German society. Other critiques are raised by artists themselves who engage with the issues of the power dynamics between the curator and artists in the context of the previous Documenta exhibitions in Kassel in the artist-led publication "The Next Documenta Should Be Curated by An Artist" (Hoffmann et al. 2004). In a collection of essays and reflexive statements, a group of practitioners shed light on the issues of exhibition practices involving professional curators while outlining the fetishisation of the curator in chapters titled "Where Are the Artists", "Artist as Curator" and "A Doctor Could Curate It Too" (ibid.). While in the realm of contemporary art, we can draw valuable conclusions that apply to the field of music and the performing arts: artists and institutions alike increasingly engage with exhibitions' and festivals' Eurocentric politics of inclusion and representation and call for a critical inquiry into the subjective aims and selection criteria and more democratic and pluralistic curatorial practices (Hoffmann et al. 2004, Abramović 2004).

In Canyürek's study, she outlines what this "dramaturgical failure" in the realm of curation can look like in practice: "Five white dramaturgs sit down and write a migration- or inclusion-related concept [...] But where are the migrants or disabled people in this process? Who are they doing it for? It doesn't work if they do it here on the drawing board without involving the people it's about. In doing so, they reproduce an alienated view of marginalised people and tell stereotypical stories. This does not appeal to the new target groups" (Canyürek 2002: 253). Decision-making in the curatorial process have a direct impact on the aesthetic direction and personnel choices which display inherent ideas around class and belonging in German society and cultural heritage (ibid.: 245). The author also outlines that "the function of the artistic director is crucial for the reciprocal relationship between aesthetics and institution, as the theatre management is endowed with extraordinary power. (…) The institutional aesthetics

regulated by the artistic director and resulting from the white norm of the public theatre structure seem to be one of the barriers to access for e.g., non-white artists" (ibid.: 245). Ways of combatting the, almost 200-years old (ibid.: 251), exclusionary structures because of the "whiteness" of organisations are often described as a "lack of motivation" while the need to diversity is often widely understood, creating a dissonance between concept and practical implementation for possibilities that lead to internal organisational changes such as the composition of cultural institution staff (ibid.: 259).

The performativity of care involved in curatorial practices becomes an important idea in that context in which "Alibi-Tools" replace structural changes to enable more diversity (ibid.). The often-used phrase "communication at eye level" thus often remains an empty promise (ibid.: 273, see also Terkessidis 2019). Often, delegating the decision-making by way of commissioning migrant artists with the task of curation or artistic direction may seem like a reversal of power. In practice, it does not cure the issues stemming from the internal side of a cultural institution.[12] What we can see, however, is that curation becomes an area of agency, control and social springboard that has been utilised in the context of diasporic music production in Germany. However, as we can see at global contemporary art exhibitions such as Documenta Fifteen in 2022 and the developments in Berlin's *freie Szene*, there is a move towards collective and artist-led curation as an "anti-racist practice" (Bayer et al. 2017: 66), as well as allowing for local productions from the Global South to be shown at an exhibition with a history of prioritising Euro-American collections. What we can learn from current discussions on curating diversity in Germany is that the abdication of curatorial responsibilities comes with its own problems as seen in exhibited imagery sparking a political controversy around antisemitism and a lack of traceability (Greenberger 2022).

Outlining different notions of curatorship in the performing arts sector on both artist-led and institution-led side, it becomes clear that curatorial discourse has become an emergent subject of frequent debate in both academic research and the cultural industries as articulated in their implicit or explicit mission statement. The following section will thus engage with the programming of diasporic music productions through the lens of curatorial discourse and postcolonial strategies of cultural institutions. I will investigate how artists organise themselves, and how artist-led formations blur the boundaries between curator, musician, administrator, grant writer and listener.

Contested Modernisms and the "Arab Avantgarde"

My project is looking at Lebanese and German musicians engaging in sound art, electroacoustic and free improvised music who describe their music predominantly as

---

[12] This includes implementing measures such as awareness-training of staff for diversity-sensitive cultural work, the formation of steering groups and updated mission statements addressing diversity development, diversity-oriented hiring process for staff, and the improving internal communication and working structures. On the side of the audience, access-increasing measures include the creation of diversity-sensitive content and productions, the inclusion of (post)migrant perspectives, the introduction of participatory formats, the use of existing scientific research on audience participation as Canyürek outlines in detail and shows in her study of various cultural institutions Germany (Canyürek 2002: 249).

"experimental". Most of my interlocutors are of Lebanese descent and settled in Berlin in the past ten years and have previously been classified as belonging to an "Arab Avantgarde" (Burkhalter et al. 2013) that considers the genre's association with innovation, newness, progressiveness, and challenging of music form and conservativism through compositional and improvisational techniques.

The choice of looking at experimental practices is to look at the affective and communicative dimensions of improvisation on stage and the way experimentalism can be interpreted in relation to discourses around modernity and resistance in the SWANA region. But what do I classify under "experimental music"? In this project, I look at experimental music as sound design, electronically mediated acoustic practices, free improvised music sets and performances including preparations of instruments. In extending conventional playing styles in diasporic and international music productions often branded as "global music productions" due to the ethnicity of the performers or ethnicisation of certain instruments, Kay Dickinson would argue that these artists found a way to resist commodification and thus directly responding to the neo-Marxist criticism. This is because Avantgardism adds a "surplus of unexplainable" that is necessary for these scenes to function in the first place (Dickinson 2013: 29).

Across her edited volume she published with co-editors Benjamin Harbert and Thomas Burkhalter in 2013, she considers different ways of understanding avantgarde, criticising the dominant European avantgarde paradigm as a way to introduce different musical practices in the SWANA region. Avantgarde is not a term I will use throughout the thesis but one that has been used to subsume a range of practices from heavy metal in Egypt, Sayyed Darwish's music and anti-imperialist struggle in Egypt in the 20th century (Muhssin 2013), experimental practices in Lebanon (Burkhalter 2013) or the music of Ziad Rahbani and his way of challenging of musical traditionalism through drawing on his routes and roots (Asmar 2013). Other ideas around the Avantgarde include Michael Khoury's study of Halim El-Dabh as one of the forefathers of the Arab Avantgarde among other classifications of the term as an umbrella for Western notions of progress (Dickinson 2013). The author criticises the dominant European avantgarde paradigm and suggests that postcolonial and diasporic cultural expressions and realities are another route into challenging the bias towards Western universality models of the avantgarde (Dickinson 10213: 9).

Tradition-Modernity Paradigm

An important perspective on contemporary music from the SWANA region are Kay Dickinson's thoughts on the tradition-modernity paradigm that shapes the debate on the Arab Avantgarde. Similar to the writing of Philip Bohlman (2002) she draws on the legacy of the Cairo Congress that established the distinctiveness of modernity and tradition as one of its major outcomes in Arab music research and practice that reinforced the notion of Arab music's own backwardness (Dickinson 2013: 21, Bohlman 2002: 48) and European music as a promising source of knowledge, which Bohlman explains in his summary of the Cairo Congress and modernity debates:

"Tradition, however, meant that European and Arab music stood apart in world music history, it meant that they were different, but even more that they belonged to two distinctive historical epochs, one–Arab music–prior to modern history and the other–European music–coeval with modernity itself. The task of the Europeans as humanists, musicians and musicologists was to respect and maintain this distinctiveness."
(Bohlman 2002: 48-49)

It is not surprising then that the notion of tradition in the context of an Arab Avantgarde is used as a synonym for Arabness and the category of Arab as a "rallying ground" for identity discourses (Dickinson 2013: 27). This rhetoric of development and progress was cemented since the Congress but remains, as I argue in this thesis, visible in cultural policy framework that regulate the cultural heritage preservation and likewise become judges on what is considered contemporary Arab cultural expression. Certain types of assumed progressiveness of experimentalism thus can run the risk factor in neocolonial policy making that uses value judgement similar to colonial notions of modernity to give visibility for only certain types of cultural expression steered by these hegemonic and capitalist flows.

But when can tradition be useful as a notion? Dickinson argue that tradition can be seen as a "defensive tactic" or response to cultural marginalisation and colonial struggles, so tradition can be either seen as resistance (Dickinson 2013: 14) and marker of self-determination (ibid.: 15) or "commodity fetish" (ibid.: 16). Making her argument for reconsidering "tradition", the author draws on Jonathan Shannon's study on authenticity in Syrian music-making in which "the purity of form claimed by certain musical heritages comes with distinctly post-Nahda priorities and political agendas" (Shannon 2006: 60). Tradition can also often be found as a rhetoric in diaspora music making and literature on homeland orientated diasporic music making in Berlin dealing with subjects of dislocation and displacement (Güney et al. 2014).

The arguments for cultural heritage preservation and anti-Western stances can also be seen in the work Habib Touma who proclaims a suspicion of modernity seen as something from outside Arab world with universalising claims towards Arab music (Touma 1975: 15), or as born outside the region according to some Arabic thinkers (Dickinson 2013: 21) that stresses the "unevenness of access to the scene" (ibid.: 20) partly also due to expensive music education, a lack of multilingualism and financial security of punishment (Harbert 2013). The access inequalities also reflect in aesthetic hierarchies promoted by cultural institutions through institutional pedagogies (Valiquet 2019) or political agendas of music project as state building measures (Peterson 2013).

Experimental Practices

The musicians using self-descriptors such as experimental rather than avantgarde are thus not only "keen to uncouple experimentalism from local music making" (Dickinson 2013:12) and elitist Euro-American avantgarde scenes (Levitz and Piekut 2020) but move outside the popular conceptions of contemporary diaspora music productions being home-land orientated music as predominantly depicted in writing on diasporic cultural production. In using "experimental

music" as an umbrella term for various sonic and visual experiments, I hope to encompass creative practices in which some form of (electronic) mediation has taken place.

Based on Dickinson's points regarding an Arab Avantgarde and the lack of usage of the term by musicians themselves, my thesis will refer to musicians as experimenting musicians and experimental practices. I argue that experimental music is not limited to instruments in the traditional sense, as loudspeakers and self-built tools can likewise function as the primary instruments. The use of different musical references and melodic idioms across time and space also fall under the realm of musical experimentalism. Based on informal conversations with my friends that move in these networks in Berlin, Mannheim and Beirut, experimentalism is often described as being part of the presentation, meaning the stage set up that encourages or discourages audience interaction with artists in the physical or digital space.

Other aspects of musical experimentalism are articulated in the social mediation which includes unconventional of working together, the mixing of media techniques or disciplines, including dance, or improvisational techniques; but also, interpersonal tensions that arise in rehearsals and performances as a result of collaborations which can influence free musical improvisations. Furthermore, a crucial role in the creation of experimental musical works is occupied by the incorporation of arts and crafts such as woodwork as additional mediums of expression that accompany sonic artworks. Musical experimentation in postmigrant music production can also refer to the use of instruments and include the preparation and electronic mediation or distortion of sounds to their extremes. Specifically, the use of glitches, white noise, and distortion in 1990s computer music has established an "aesthetic of failure" (Cascone 2000) that has been utilised as forms of sonic activism of (post)digital communities and contemporary computer music (Haenisch 2021, Cascone 2000). Haenisch argues that these sounds have served as a sonic tool to express the illusion of infallible technology in the 1990s and 2000s but, in recent years, become a mere sonic "ornament" and commodified element in improvised electronic music and sonic art productions since Ableton's most crucial software update in 2015 (Haenisch 2021).

The socio-political value and meaning behind today's sonic distortions and ornaments will be examined as part of my ethnography. Looking at the aesthetics of noise music, Novak furthermore argues that "Noise became a nexus of romantic aesthetics that reinstated the potential of Music to become unknowable, mysterious, indescribable world of pure sonic experience" that "escape[s] meaningful classification" (Novak 2013:120). In order to find out how noise aesthetics relate to articulations of diasporic identity in Germany, I will consider this very association of noise with the unknown, the dissimulated, and the subversive. This way, I aim to find out how references to early noise music and glitch serve experimenting musicians as a powerful sonic tool to conceal imagined markers of Arab identity that are based on its demarcation to white Christian ideals of Germanness.

However, Patrick Valiquet proposes that experimental and electroacoustic music is likewise steered by hegemonic, capitalist flows and institutional performance conventions that shape its aesthetic and cultural value. He argues that experimental and electroacoustic practices are thus

not the product of an organic mutation of cultural production but the result of negotiations by producers and policymakers in a specific historical and cultural context (Valiquet 2019). Following this line of enquiry, as well as Silverstein's observations of race-making processes in Syrian-German *MultiKulti* projects, my project aims to take a closer look at the specific actors and institutions that shape the performance conventions and aesthetic expectations of experimental music making in Lebanese-German collectives in Berlin and Mannheim. This includes looking at beliefs around agency and cosmopolitan imaginaries to examine the relationship of diasporic musicians to ideas around secular Lebanese identities and the aesthetic and political category of the *modern* in experimental practices and cultural policy.

Chapter 1: Cultural Politics of Diasporic Music Production

This chapter is concerned with the cultural politics of diasporic music production in Germany, focusing on experimenting artists from Lebanon that live in Berlin. As it became apparent when I first started researching this subject, one cannot study experimental diasporic productions in Berlin without studying the experimental scene in Beirut, and vice versa. Hence, I will be looking at the appeal of Lebanese musicians coming to Berlin, how they integrate in the Berlin scene upon arrival and how they may actively change the cultural landscape in the German capital. Cultural policy may sound like a mere political backdrop but plays a crucial role in understanding why, specifically in the last decade, Lebanese musicians decided to pursue creative labour in Berlin in the first place.

I argue that cultural policy can be one of most powerful tools to shape the environment in which musicians create music. The power to implement specific criteria regarding access and representation, cultural policy, and state-funded schemes in the arts and culture sector can create opportunities, and likewise deny access, to spaces that become instrumental for diasporic music production in Germany. It is crucial to look at cultural policies as they emerge and implement changes on regional and municipal levels for diasporic musicians, rather than analyse the results of mismanaged arts and cultural work that exclude them. In doing so and speaking with both policy bodies and musicians operating in these frameworks, it becomes possible to extract information about what works–and can be improved–and find out how cultural institutions can extend or change their efforts in supporting the arts and culture scene in Germany.

Those working and executing cultural policy aims for diversity also mix frequently with musicians in shared social circles, which is why I will put my focus on the friendship- and location-based social networks in state-supported cultural institutions. Cultural policy manages to support, connect, and structure the Beirut-Berlin connection and also helps understand the cultural logic of Arab identity articulations of Lebanese musicians in Berlin, meaning why, or often, why not, they do not identify with other Arabic-speaking subscenes in Germany and consider their musical productions adjacent to the aesthetics of the so-called *freie Szene* in Berlin rather than a diaspora scene or ethnically determined Arabic music scene. The following chapter will thus look closer into the inner workings of this friendship-based network and the affective dimensions of collaborative sound projects across Beirut and Berlin.

In this development, we need to consider the rising proximity, and affective relationships, between artists, curator, and administrator to see how selection processes and administrative formations come into being. This helps understand how policy regulates cultural representation of diasporic musicians, for example, in seeing how funding is distributed, how social events and network building are encouraged. Curation is a key concept throughout as I look at administrators in their role as curators, and programmes in which administrator encourage musicians to curate themselves. What becomes clear throughout this chapter is that curation can be an immensely powerful tool and executing arm of cultural policy that makes these issues visible; curators become a bridge between institution and musician, and policy body and

consumer. I suggest curatorial agency as a useful framework to look at institutional efforts to encourage musicians to shape their own narratives and institutional frameworks as well as artist-led institution building.

A key factor in this development is the increasing fluidity of roles in this line of work. I draw on examples from fieldwork in which musicians become curators, administrators, jury members and are increasingly responsible for dedicating funding. I also look at administrators that strengthen their ties to the performing arts scene with dedicated budgets to build meaningful connections as a way to increase the efficiency and proximity of cultural institutions to the arts scene which is believed to help make better decisions in funding allocation. But in which way can this become problematic? Gatekeeping, the issues of artists having to become bureaucrats, and blind spots will be looked at in analysing different funding programmes throughout this chapter.

I will reflect on fieldwork in institutional fieldsites in Berlin that regulate and foster cultural expression in Germany through funding schemes, workshops, and other opportunities that facilitate greater access, diversity, and equality of diasporic and German-born musicians in the independent performing arts scene in Berlin. During fieldwork in Berlin, I spoke to administrators of Initiative Neue Musik (INM), the *Berliner Künsterprogramm* of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Musikfonds e.V., and Goethe Institute to find out how musicians born outside the Federal Republic are involved in the cultural landscape in Germany. In each section that discuss the work of institutional fieldsites, I identify recurring themes of their cultural activism that will be summarised in brief headlines and discussed in each institutional profile. Reflecting on interviews with administrators of above-mentioned institutions, as well as their personal investment and previous history of scene involvement, I outline role of past cultural diplomacy aims regarding *MultiKulti* representation in Germany, and the role current funding schemes for international music in Berlin play in holding the scene together, as well as building it through the provision of resources, aesthetic norms, and institutional infrastructures.

Labels and terminology play a major role in shaping the language and fundable causes of cultural institutions. Looking back at the modernity-tradition paradigm and the German world music debate, I consider how world music critique plays into selection processes. I argue that the world music debate in Germany greatly impacts decision of German administrators over who is considered progressive, modern, and traditional, and who is believed to be rather embedded in world music structures with unequal relationships between musicians and producer.

Local Context

I argue that Lebanese experimental artists who arrived in Berlin in the past decades are sonically embedded in the aesthetic and compositional goals of Berlin Reductionism of the so-called *Echtzeitmusikszene*, Berlin squatter culture and industrial architecture (Garcia 2013, Blažanović 2012) rather than previous migrant music productions as seen in *MultiKulti*

productions involving Arabic-speaking musicians (Silverstein 2021, Kosnick 2007). Given this context, this development sheds light on the ways in which Lebanese experimental musicians shape cultural policies and vice versa. However, world music critique and German *MultiKulti* productions, including past and current institutional racism towards Arabic, specifically Syrian and Palestinian musicians, still play in building the sentiments and aesthetics that defines the Lebanese cultural production in Germany. This includes the division of naturalised "high" *culture* and ethnicised *cultures* in broadcasting and cultural policy contexts (Kosnick 2007). My literature draws on approaches to German cultural policy, cultural diplomacy, diversity discourse and the (self-)organisation of the independent performing arts community in Berlin (Canyürek 2022, Gaupp 2020, Ahmed 2012, Maschat 2006, Kosnick 2007).

In her comparative study of different cultural institutions and their approach to diversity, Canyürek's study sheds light on the different aspects of the diversity discourse in Germany, as well as the challenges, misconceptions, and political implications of implementing "diversity". She does so by looking at national and international diversity-oriented cultural funding programmes, as well as their inherent instruments and pillars of programmes set up with the aim of increasing and implementing "diversity". Reading her study, it intrigued me in how many ways diversity has being interpreted which often included very little engagement with migration-related diversity. Especially the question on what approaches to migrantised musicians we can extract from current policy frameworks in the performing arts in Germany.

In terms of the networks, I look at the *freie Szene* [independent performing arts community][13] in Berlin and the way cultural institutions employ diversification strategies in their interpersonal and professional involvement with experimenting Lebanese and German-born musicians. After outlining what the defining characters and social structure of the *freie Szene* with focus on partaking Lebanese musicians, I will examine the social dynamics that musicians employ when dealing with institutions, funding schemes and occasions in order to pursue musical collaborations and installations in the field of sound art, free improvised and experimental music. I argue that that stereotypical representations of–specifically Lebanese–migrants are a major incentive for cultural institutions to encourage a new Arab experimentalism that diffuses the visual and sonic expectations of German listeners and institutions based on world music aesthetics and past *MultiKulti* cultural productions in Germany. In conversations with coordinators and administrators of Germany's leading funding schemes for the independent performing arts scene, it will become clear how cultural organisers and curators view their own job role, impact and involvement in the scenes and how much they can actually achieve versus how much the scene can achieve through artist-led forms of sonic and curatorial agency; in addition, how agency is encouraged, distributed and reconfigured by

---

[13] The characteristics of the *freie Szene* concern the financial, spatial, aesthetic, and social condition in which musicians operate in Germany. The so-called *freie Szene*, or independent performing arts community, has been a phenomenon across all artistic scenes and has been flourishing since the 1960s specifically (Blažanović 2012). Seeing itself as a progressive alternative to bourgeois music culture, scene might be considered, and has been translated to, "independent arts scene". The scene is known for the development of their "own aesthetic concepts" as a form of social protest, as well as a composer-as-performer working concepts that offers an antidote to the commercial cultural scenes.

both Lebanese-born musicians and those they involve in artist-led, state-funded collaborations. Looking at different institutions across Berlin and Beirut, I argue that the institutional funding of diasporic self-organisation can act both as a form of institutional self-critique and power redistribution, as well as acts of performing care.

Performing care is hereby defined as a form of social reward and affective state improving one's own well-bring and feeling closer to a social group. Recent writing on performative allyship since Black Lives Matter has been addressing these issues further. In 2021, Anna Fosberg writes that effective allyship requires individuals and groups to be uncomfortable, to listen rather than amplifying one's own voice, and to follow through with genuine actions that benefit a marginalised community to reach social change. On the contrary, performative allyship evolves around white saviour tropes while utilising performative actions for self-gratification and credibility maintenance resulting, especially in the realm of social media activism, in the "memeification of social justice activism" while "no substantial progress toward diversity, equity, and inclusion" is made (Wellman 2022). Providing agency as third wave institutional self-critique will be at the centre of the chapter.

As I will outline in my section on belonging to what musicians just describe as *Die Szene* ("the scene") it becomes clear that the network is tied together by their support of similar institutions with values adjacent to their corporate identity and the German world music debate. Often, administrators in these institutions and funding and cultural exchange schemes will either be in the music networks themselves as former and/or current musicians or conduct what is called *Szenebeobachtung* ("observation of the scene") as part of their job role, similar to a scout that will befriend musicians as build meaningful connections to members of the network. Budgets for involvement in scenes and network building enable the merging of roles between administrator, musician, organiser, and curator. With this, it can make us reflect on the social hierarchies of previous world music productions in which white organisers programme migrantised music and art for white audiences. The phrase *auf Augenhöhe* ("at eye level") frequently crops up when discussing the changing conditions for diasporic musicianship in Germany.

Further questions I concern the sonic standards and quality criteria that funding bodies employ for the selection of experimental music, specifically when assessing experimental music projects produced by migrant musicians in Berlin. I also ask not only which criteria they employ but how they *extract* new aesthetic criteria and detect trends based on the observation of self-sufficient institution-building of the migrant musicians. I ask how these processes respond to questions around power, agency, hegemony, and neo-Marxist discussions of intercultural music making–and how institutional critique and studies in contemporary art might be more suitable to deal with these processes on a conceptual level. Based on research on migrant music making, curatorial studies and policy-in-practice, specifically the findings of Özlem Canyürek, Sara Ahmed, Kira Kosnick and Guy Schwegler, I ask:

How does cultural policy, diversity aims, and diasporic cultural practice inform one another? What aesthetic expectations are associated with Berlin-based Lebanese musicians, and why?

What are political or societal developments that spark new funding programs or "fundable" music styles produced by Arabic-speaking musicians in Germany? How (neo)colonial are these institutional structures, and what sentiments do state-funded Lebanese artists and feel towards these institutions, and how do administrators solidarise with these musicians? How dependent are musicians from funding bodies and the goodwill of funders in the first place?

My findings are contextualised using a theoretical framework involving Brandon Farnsworth's findings on curating diversity at music festivals (Farnsworth 2020), Sara Ahmed's research on racism and diversity in institutional life (Ahmed 2012), Kira Kosnick's work on migrant broadcasting in Berlin, Shayna Silverstein's writing on the legacy of *MultiKulti* music making and race-making processes in Germany, Guy Schwegler's writing on the performativity of cultural production (2022) and Canyürek's work on the federal and regional interpretation of a cultural policy of diversity. Drawing on their research findings, this chapter will shed light on how institutional self-critique, the academisation of cultural productions and political reflection become the driving force and main incentive for the formation of new migrant-led institutions and white dominated institutional infrastructures in Germany. It also examines emerging migrant-led venues depend on artist-led collaborations and friendship between administrators, curators, and musicians as well as their multiple, fluid roles in the independent performing arts scene which I will write about using its official German term *freie Szene*. As will become clear over the course of this chapter, friendship and social bonds influence the emergence and maintenance of Berlin-Beirut networks. After outlining the role friendship plays in forming collaborations and institutions in Berlin's diasporic music scene, I will look at mechanisms of gatekeeping, access and class situated in the German high- and sub-culture debate.

German Cultural Policy as Integration Policy?

As an ethnomusicologist, I was new to the scholarship on cultural policy and quickly realised why specifically examining cultural policy-in-practice and the way institutions interact with musicians is so important in the study of experimental practices in the Lebanese diaspora. Exploring diaspora music making in Germany, cultural policy can also be considered the country's "integration policy" due to its policies of inclusion of migrantised musicians (Canyürek 2022). This also corresponds what international musicians such as Jordanian-born Zeina Azouqah or Palestinian-German artist Jamila Al-Yousef described. In conversations with both artists, we spoke about the role of visibility, equal pay and the stigma surrounding different Arab identities, as well as the way festival organisers, promoters and German-born curators utilise narratives on Palestinian and Syrian musicians for the inclusion or exclusion of certain groups of musicians based on cultural diplomacy claims that reinforce German identity and political allyship with Israel. At the same time, Muslim minorities can be considered essential in transforming and (re)producing German Holocaust memory in relation to Islam (Özürek 2019).

Looking at the studies on diversity and policy-in-practice, I was surprised to learn that "intercultural diversity" is not a major goal of cultural policy at the federal level (Canyürek 2022:257) but rather dependent on independently formulated goals to include regional

inclusion of foreigners (so-called *Ausländer*) in theatre productions, arts and music venues that is decided by each of the sixteen federal states and therefrom, at municipal level, as it is the case with the legislative procedures concerning education policy and regional planning as outlined in the *German Grundgesetz* (German Constitution).[14] In other words, the federal structure of Germany means that, in practice, diversity development in cultural productions are differently regulated on the federal, state- and communal level. For example, in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), notions of opening and access concerning cultural productions are ruled a major cultural policy aim, whereas any of the other 15 German states could rule other aspects of their local cultural landscape more heavily, depending on the social structure of their regional communities.

This is an important aspect of German cultural policy and becomes relevant for examining how Lebanese musicians may or may not become visible and audible on different German stages and media outlets, how they are represented, promoted and likewise able to navigate the regional funding systems. The way cultural administrators such as Gregor Hotz, director of Musikfonds e.V., interact with migrantised musicians is often based on these local policies and mission statements that address anti-racist, anti-discriminatory measurements, and strategies such as the delegation of curatorial directorship to revert power hierarchies through leadership that can be seen in many Berlin-based projects.

In summary, cultural policy not only review and regulates cultural production by way of publishing reports, examining institutions' ways of working, and financially supporting the performing arts sector, but also regulate who can access and participate in the creative sector in the first place. Executing bodies of federal cultural policy that I spoke to, including coordinators of artist residency programmes and funding schemes for international artists at the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Initiative Neue Musik (INM) and Musikfonds e.V., openly promote regional cultural production and this likewise reveals what is considered relevant, representative, and innovative cultural phenomena in Germany in the first place. As communal and state policies work differently to federal policy executing bodies, I will look at specific venues and funding bodies that are concerned with the diversity development and the inclusion of international musicians in Berlin's cultural scene in particular.

Administering the *freie Szene*

In the past decade, diversity has become the focus of cultural policy attempts to improve access to arts and culture for minority groups which includes the migration of Arabic-speaking artists (Canyürek 2022). In the German policy context, the term "minority" describes specifically

---

[14] Article 70 of the *Grundgesetz* [German constitution or "Basic Law"] regulates the division of power between the German Federation and the *Länder* [federal states] which states that "(1) the *Länder* shall have the right to legislate insofar as this Basic Law does not confer legislative power on the Federation" and that "(2) the division of authority between the Federation and the *Länder* shall be governed by the provisions of this Basic Law concerning exclusive and concurrent legislative powers." (Federal Ministry of Justice 2023)

BPoC, PoC, migrantised people, those fleeing and in exile, and people with disabilities. Analysing policy approaches to diversity development in Germany are crucial because firstly, policy makers and funding administrators have been part of the *freie Szene* as musicians or organisers before entering the administrative side. By their involvement in the scene, they blur the boundaries between those executing, and those shaping and changing the cultural policy approaches to migrantised musicians in Germany. Secondly, during fieldwork it quickly became apparent how the way funding is distributed to migrantised musicians is a significant way of providing visibility and deciding over what musician is representative of a style or cultural phenomenon as part of a German Hochkultur ("high" culture")[15], and who might be part of a lower, ethnicised, culture exerting minimal influence on the sonic environment of the city. These ways of decision making, selecting who does and who does not receive funding for freelance-based creative labour heavily shape, and reveal, the aesthetic hierarchies, values, taste, and preferences for the concepts and sounds that migrantised citizens in Berlin bring in the public space.

Looking specifically at the selection criteria of funding bodies that support the *freie Szene*, one can see that the way in which the sonic, technical, and conceptual quality of diaspora musicians' cultural productions is assessed reveals values and beliefs of continuous Eurocentric aesthetic ideals of institutions and shows what is deemed to be an "innovative", "challenging" and "unique"[16] sonic development spanning across Berlin and Beirut that currently dominates the Berlin venues.

In the interviews, administrators express their aims for not only supporting the *freie Szene* but encourage curatorial agency and self-organisation through the way the grant schemes are structured. As cultural organiser and researcher Mathias Maschat has previously pointed out, self-organisation is a defining factor of free improvisation scene in Berlin (Maschat 2006). I draw on his crucial findings around this development since 2006 and extend his approach to the recent development in migrant-led projects and Beiruti musicians setting in Berlin since 2015. In doing so, I bring together literature from migration studies, ethnomusicology, and cultural policy research, and likewise outline the changing dynamics and power hierarchies in Berlin's diasporic music productions as well as the crucial role their exchange with the Beirut independent performing arts scene plays.

In outlining diversity as a tool to ease equality of chances and access and develop anti-discriminatory knowledge and skills, sociologist Özlem Canyürek points out the difference between diversity and internationalisation which becomes crucial in describing the way cultural

---

[15] In Germany, aesthetic and other value judgements on migrant music productions are often part of a binary division of sub- and high culture which has historically formed part of the curriculum of music degree programmes, broadcast culture, academic scholarship, and music journalism. However much these binary views are being challenged, they are often still apparent in discussions around Berlin's experimental scene by critics and musicians when locating themselves within the social hierarchy of different forms creative labour in Germany. Considering the social positioning of Lebanese musicians in the German cultural landscape, many diasporic musicians regard themselves outside these social and discursive contexts of high- and subculture as outlined in the following two chapters.

[16] I am using the terms administrators mentioned by interviewees themselves.

institutions engage with Lebanese musicians in Berlin (Canyürek 2022: 305). Rather than being a temporary trend, diversity policies addressing migrating artists critique the lack of visibility and access of communities subject to discrimination and are now core aims of many cultural institutions in Germany with regional and communal reach.[17] Structural access to the performing arts sector and other sectors of cultural integration is often caused by waiting for, and hearing back from, bureaucratic and complicated application procedures which cause not only feelings of boredom but uncertainty and "stuckness" (Canyürek 2022: 300, Schulte 2021).

Similar to Leonie Schulte's research that looks at notions waiting in home-making practices such as language learning, Canyürek outlines the relationship between decision-making and agency (ibid.: 301) which is useful in looking at Lebanese musician's approaches to the curation of their own performances and those of their befriended collaborators. In the past two decades, there have been increasing efforts to research the lack of diversity in juries and committees for grant schemes that become an access barrier for incoming musicians, as "that whiteness, masculinity, heterosexuality and rejectionism are the dominant characteristics in the cultural landscape, including in the field of performing arts" (ibid.: 247) while "people with a migration background and people with disabilities are the most underrepresented groups among employees" (ibid.: 247). These studies show the connection between diversity development and the role that cultural institutions and policy making plays in challenging institutional racism, stigmatising and discrimination in the arts and culture sector that may or may not affect incoming Lebanese musicians.

The multiplicity of roles occupied by musicians who are administrators and vice versa, as well as the increased communication and collaboration between institutions and musicians funded under their schemes, further challenges the blurring the different social spheres on a non-hierarchical level. The proximity of administrative apparatus and cultural producer helps to no longer "obstruct [the] communication between the institutionalized culture and the "underground" (Blažanović 2012: 117) as it has been the case in past productions involving the *freie Szene* in Berlin. This improved communication is supported by increasing funding for international musicians in Berlin, since the Covid-19 pandemic specifically, which reduces the usual competition for funding and performance opportunities as Berlin-based musicians Magda Mayas told me in our conversation. The lack of competitiveness helps built a sense of collectiveness, a possibility for failure and likewise eliminates pressure of result-based productions, supporting the time and spatial needs to create free improvised practices and long-term collaborations. In our conversation, she explains that "the scene in Berlin is open because there are many places, and because not everyone has to fight for one well-paid gig or concert,

---

[17] Özlem Canyürek's research approach to the diversity discourse in German cultural policy is based on Foucauldian discursive theory that place diversity as a dispositive. The policy researcher looks at the way discourse, non-discursive practices and institutional manifestations of diversity interact and are implemented (see also Schwegler 2022). Canyürek draws on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, as well as Sara Ahmed's research on institutional approaches to diversity. She poses the question of what diversity is considered to be the answer to, how it is defined, interpreted, and implemented by cultural institutions. Analysing how diversity understood and implemented, she outlines the conditions for challenging structural access issues for marginalised groups on different policy levels in the field of performing arts, which includes the bureaucratic processes, programming, personnel, and leadership structure of national, state, and communal cultural institutions.

as is the case in other cities - in New York, it's a completely different story" (Magda Mayas, Interview, 20 October 2022, online).

Besides the support and funding of international experimental practices in Berlin as a specific policy aim for diversification, her comment explains why the cultural scene in Berlin appeals to many international musicians and becomes a major incentive for the migration of musicians to the capital. Dahlia Borsche from the DAAD's Artists-in-Berlin programme also explains how institutions were working closer together with what she spoke about as "free spaces" (*freie Räume*). These independently run institutions are spaces in which musicians of the *freie* Szene produce and showcase their works and develop networks and look for inspiration, meet local musicians and possible collaborators as main incentive, often paid according to the ticket sales on the evening (commonly referred to as *auf Einlass spielen*). In the past decade, cultural institutions are no longer seen as merely an entity of dependence and financial provision but likewise a steering body of sonic trends and new artistic concepts. Despite " things work[ing] differently in an institution", she explains that "there is a difference is the permanent employment, the bureaucracy and work processes, of course. This is because there are other administrative processes in institutions than in the *freie Szene*, but I no longer see as big of a rift between the content produced by institutions and the musicians in the *freie Szene*" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

What will become clear in the examination of the different cultural institutions is that a personal background in the *freie Szene*, as it is the case for Dahlia Borsche, really helps to develop trust with the fellows and musicians in the *freie Szene*. In helps not only built contacts but accrue and demonstrate credibility as a curator and networker in Berlin's art scene. She takes a moment to think, "well, things haven't changed much in terms of my network since I joined an institution. They see me as "one of them" and usually call me so we can discuss matters in an unbureaucratic way". How the unbureaucratic and personal communication, as well as the perception of administrators as "one of them" plays into the emergence of a friendship-based networks of experimenting German and Lebanese musicians will be the subject of the following section.

Institutional Fieldsites

The funding bodies and institutions involved with experimental Lebanese musicians in the *freie Szene* are Initiative Neue Musik (INM), Musikfonds e.V., Exploratorium Berlin, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and Allianz Kulturstiftung, among others. Focusing on the social relations in institutional life and resulting institutional working processes in which migrated musicians operate in Germany, it is crucial to take a closer look the administrative and, in general, social dynamics of cultural institutions with a clear organisational hierarchy culture on the one hand, and artist-led institutions and networks such as Irtijal, Syrphe Music, Morphine Records, Space21, Women* of Music on the other hand.

As will become clearer throughout this chapter, the conceptual approaches to experimental practices by musicians from the SWANA region that define current curatorial strategies are

closely tied to a critique of earlier German *MultiKulti* productions, world music critique and anti-racist and pedagogical approaches to intercultural project work. Speaking to above-mentioned Berlin-based institutions and the *Kulturamt* Mannheim, I observed notions of institutional (self-)critique which can become an act of political activism, or, if not implemented sustainably, ethnical self-fashioning or performative care work in the cultural sector "if not done correctly" as Elise Erkelenz from *Outernational*, a music project for transnational music in Germany, points out (Elise Erkelenz, Interview, 8 November 2022, online).

A "correct" approach, as all administrators agreed, involved the redistribution of agency and decision-making, ideally the encouragement of artists' self-organisation and institution-building, support at the application and accounting stage of projects and general bureaucratic support, availability of administrative staff at these institutions, the options to read and fill in forms in English alongside German, and the implementation of sustainable funding structures. Furthermore, as outlined earlier, an elimination of the hierarchy between musicians and administrator, and what administrators described as the *klassische Projektförderung* ("generic project-funding-based programmes") in Germany that removes the proximity between those funded and those funding cultural productions. In addition, some institutions aim to eliminate the binary view of Germans and non-Germans, Western and non-Western music by using different categorisation systems, e.g., not having a label such as global [often used as a descriptive label for non-Western musics in Germany] as an option in their application forms.

Labels and Terminology

In Germany, not only the term world music sparks a range of affective responses by cultural workers, interestingly, rather than musicians themselves, but other labels used to describe music produced by musicians migrated to Germany. The way language, labels and terms can be used to hail Arabic-speaking musicians as Othered subjects follows the logic of Althusser's theory of interpellation and is part of ongoing debates around the decolonisation of language in the international arts scene in Berlin. Terms such as transtraditional, outernational, and other variations of both can be found frequently in the programmes and brochures that feature international guests in Berlin's *freie Szene*. Providing musicians with the option of choosing their own self-descriptors and label may often not be possible, as will become clearer later in the section on Musikfonds and *field notes* but is seen as a crucial tool to encourage agency and self-determination of migrantised musicians, specifically in the field of sound art, free improvised and experimental electronic music.

These debates lie at the core of the work of Lisa Benjes from Initiative Neue Musik (INM), a platform for free improvised and experimental music in Germany. The platform is one of the most frequently mentioned ones by musicians I spoke to and will be discussed further later in this chapter. Lisa Benjes is one of the administrators and publishes the newsletter and concert calendar *field notes*, one of the most comprehensive guides on concerts, workshops and development opportunities for artists and curators in the field of experimental music in Berlin. Speaking about language in her work for *field notes*, she says "Some musicians feel

pigeonholed by labels, and it's clear that they want to distinguish themselves from them, especially people like Rabih [Beaini]. But also, some people think that it is important to have labels, like Trickster Orchestra, who work a lot with terminology so that they can describe themselves and don't have to put up with the description of others" (Lisa Benjes, Interview, 17 October 2022, online).

However, many musicians agree that the sensitivity of terminology is disguising many important issues. One of the key actors of this thesis, Lebanese DJ and producer Rabih Beaini who founded Morphine Raum, a workshop, venue and recording studio will be at the center of my case study on artist-led venues in Berlin. I met Rabih Beaini at his studio while we discussed the terms that prominently appear in the policy sector. After speaking about his work for the performing arts community in Berlin and reflecting on the projects that international musicians from Beirut carry out in Berlin, he stresses that, "In the times we're living in where there is a lot of discrimination, still a lot of racism. People fixate on things like terminology while we can do much more at a different level like fighting discrimination, cut all these barriers [of access]" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

Due to this ongoing debate and the occasional discursive necessity of locating diaspora musicians inside or outside any of these terms on the German cultural landscape, as it is the case for my PhD project, administrators and I simply used "experimental" as the prevailing term. Over the course of the project, I found the term useful to describe a wide range of practices that many musicians in the *freie Szene* identify with. The term is looser than the one of contemporary music to sound art and free improvisation yet can be used to incorporate the latter. In many ways, I draw on the understanding of the term that Dahlia Borsche described in our interview. Dahlia Borsche is the administrator of the DAAD's *Berliner Künstlerprogramm*, a prominent residency programme for international artists with which many Lebanese artists such as Mazen Kerbaj, came to Berlin and connected with the city's performing arts scene. Speaking to her, I noticed her careful use of terminology. Asking her how she would classify the German term *experimentell* ("experimental") that features heavily in conversations around Lebanese musicians supported by the DAAD, she takes a moment to think, and then replies: "everything else that is contemporary, that has no commercial aims or is to function for music for advertising or film. It is music that tries to break it listening habits, but a lot of styles falls in that category" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

Despite the variety of genres and musical styles incorporated in this term, ranging from free improvised and noise to prepared acoustic pieces, there are multiple elements that bring musicians together outside of institutions.

Firstly, appearing on the same platforms for experimental music and playing at the same venues that act as anchoring structures for this network. This includes websites for cultural non-profits that deal with increasing visibility of sounds and visual art from the Global South, as well as event calendars, newsletters such as *field notes* or the online event calendars such as *echtzeitmusik.de*. Thereby, belonging through association and belonging through acknowledgement and credibility may partly be achieved through appearance on these

mediums among other social networks that are structured and funded by Berlin's cultural institutions. These instances of location-based belonging will be further explained in following chapter, backed by a range of ethnographic observations and examples which demonstrate how musicians in these circles share similar taste and values in which traditional music is seen as tied to institutional dependency–specifically white-dominated institutions–rather than artists' curatorial agency and self-sufficiency. The aesthetic of self-sufficiency is reflected in the curatorial approach that places values upon spontaneity and failure over perfectionism, also seen as clean sound, as well as the process of musical discovery over technical mastery of an instrument.

Curating Diversity

The term curation has now frequently appeared across this chapter. I will demonstrate the usefulness of this concept in the context of cultural work in the *freie Szene*. During online fieldwork, I noticed that many Lebanese musicians in Berlin, or those involved with Lebanese musicians working in the *freie Szene*, had often not only performed at, but *curated* an entire programme, event series, festival, or panel. I was struck by the term cropping up again and again, and as we will see in the following section, the term "curation" becomes crucial in the context of diasporic cultural productions, institutional diversity development and power (Balzer 2015, Gaupp 2020, Lobley 2020). This is because curators are responsible for selecting participants in projects and programming events play a major role in the way diversity and inclusion are realised in the performing arts sector. Previously, curatorial studies have largely been situated in the field of visual arts and museum studies. Yet, the term has being frequently used in the context of music festivals, playlist curation and radio programming.

It is important to note that by many of my interviewees, the term has been described as critically, overused, and known to be a relatively "new invention" in the field of music. In various conversations, critiquing the role of the curator as prominent figure who takes the credit for cultural productions has been brought forward. Many simply prefer using the "programming", "producing" or "directing" rather than curating as cultural worker Mathias Maschat from Exploratorium tells me. The resentment towards white European curators and their powerful role is outlined in a range of discussions on the changing structures and hierarchical working processes in the world of contemporary art as outlined by David Balzer (2015), Lisa Gaupp (2020) and Marina Abramović (2004). Cultural workers such as cultural organiser at the German venue Exploratorium Mathias Maschat also points out that curators often use their role to display values, networks and contacts in order build up their professional profile.

In my practice-led approach to curatorial critique in chapter 5 on Mannheim, I will demonstrate how using the word curator helped me to gain access to different institutions while likewise producing anxious sentiments regarding the selection process for Planet Ears festival. Especially when seeing efforts to democratise the act curation in the last decade, I noticed the tendency of festival organisers to dismiss the curatorial work volunteers and jury members undertook while using their public profile to present themselves as the sole content creator and

network anchor. The popularity of *curating* in the independent music and arts scene in Germany can traced by the growing popularity of curatorial residencies have been on the rise, as seen in the DAAD Curator-in-Residence programme, the curatorial residency at SomoS[18] that encourages international curators to research, and produce an exhibition in Berlin, the Curators in Residence programme at the KfW Stiftung and other curatorial residencies organised by state-funded cultural institutions and non-profit organisations working across the arts, culture and heritage sector.

Those programmes become a major incentive for international musicians to engage in this field and settle in Berlin with a curatorial residency. Dahlia Borsche, responsible of the music and sound branch of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin programme, stresses exposure and involvement in the scene from the side of curators and administrators as the most important way of producing quality performances. In addition to planning a room, planning panels, writing texts, and designing booklets, curation presupposes active involvement in networks. She explains that to her, the quality of work greatly benefits from curators "going out as much as possible and listening to as much as possible and speaking to as many people as possible." She explains that "from this cosmos you got to know, choose things that go well together. And you cannot do that if you're not moving actively in these networks."

Dahlia Borsche is equally critical of the term and despite carrying out tasks that could be seen as curatorial work, she outlines the differences between sustainable and impactful curatorial work and curatorial work as a temporary programming of performative diversity to build up institutional or personal professional profiles to gain access to the art world. The way music curation is thought of it as an active networking task with going out at the core of the work of a good curator. Dahlia describes how it as the "sunny side" of the job which "doesn't feel like work" when she is spending time with "exciting people from all over the world". She stresses that successful curators still not only go out themselves to keep their networks alive, but to "activate and expand them" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

Curators can be individuals, collectives or institutions and be used in the same context as an artistic director and ethnographers looking to display their work in a way that privileges the perspective of those displayed rather than curatorial leitmotifs such as resistance and resilience. Dahlia's thoughts on curation outline a crucial aspect of today's understanding of a curator, which is that of participation, kinship, personal as well as professional involvement and one that requires contacts and friendship networks. As she outlines good curators are those actively moving in the scenes which explains the increasing involvement and kin-relations between cultural producers and administrators in the *freie Szene* in Berlin when producing quality productions. Good curators would have access to spaces and networks to assist cultural producers and if necessary, work for free, based on friendship and favour-bases. This can be seen in the way Rabih Beaini is organising performances at Morphine Raum, merging curatorship with grassroots cultural organisation, and thereby challenging the pre-eminence of

---

[18] Non-commercial artist-run art space near Kottbusser Tor, Berlin.

white curators. He works mainly with friends and volunteers that know or are able to fulfil the multiple task necessary to organise experimental music performances.

> "In the smaller independent performing art scenes, I always noticed how people who are part of the scene themselves would, by chance, have access to a space or know people who run a venue and say, 'let's do something with him, he's cool, he's interesting, or so-and-so is in town, let's collaborate.' And someone would print flyers and things would just happen really hands-on because there are no other funds to do things differently, or to separate the tasks. And obviously that's why things work really well because people know what they are doing and know their own scenes so well and it happens through their networks. But this *dependency on networks* we can also see when these jobs are separated and well paid, because without a network you cannot curate well" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online, emphasis added).

In the following sections, I am looking at both institutionally driven implementation of diversity and integrative measures, as well as what Canyürek describes as the "diversity-oriented bottom-up approaches" on the side of the diasporic music producers and their self-organisation such as seen with Morphine Raum and INM (Canyürek 2022: 304). My ethnographic account of three institutions in Germany and Lebanon focus on Morphine Raum Berlin, an artist-led venue and space for musical experimentation and instrument building, the network around Tunefork Studios and Irtijal Festival Beirut, Lebanon's oldest festival for free improvised and experimental music, and in comparison, Alte Feuerwache Manheim e.V. (AFM) in chapter 5; a state-funded cultural centre in the city Mannheim comprising of a team of administrators and external curators, rather than artists-as-curators.

In comparing different cultural institutions, I look at different notions of the curator and their programming of performances, as well as the selection of, and engagement with, representative artists and sounds that display values and ideas of a curatorial strategy. The study of both a large cultural institution and an artist-led project that engage the very same artists and share the same network of musicians allows for a comparative study of "top-down", and "bottom-up" approaches to world music critical compositions and programming. This includes looking at the ways in which associated audiences, funding structures, political values, and the space as such, among other factors, influence the curatorial practice of intercultural music projects and the sounds that are produced at or for the two different institutions.

Looking specifically at grassroots movements in the case of Irtijal Festival, Tunefork Studios and Morphine Raum, I examine the way personnel, programming and audience targeting is easing access for migrantised musicians as well as develop new audiences by identifying "strategies for recognition, appreciation and validation of different forms of aesthetics" (Canyürek 2022:254) other than those who are subject to Eurocentric aesthetic coding as a colonial continuity. In the following sections, I will speak about different approaches aiming to give back agency to migrant musicians, leading to the instituting of migrant music, specifically Lebanese music, in Berlin. This includes the DAAD's openness to results and administrative proximity to the *freie Szene*, INM's network building approach, Goethe's

curatorial organising in foreign countries only and the recognition of their role as executing arms of cultural imperialism in the past.

Institution 1: DAAD and the Berliner Künstlerprogramm

Speaking to Dahlia Borsche from the DAAD, it became apparent that the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin residency programme (*Berliner Künsterprogramm*) is one of the main ways international artists, specifically those are already established in their artistic practice, emigrate to Berlin. This has been the case for trumpeter Mazen Kerbaj whose who came to Berlin through his residency as part of the *Berliner Künsterprogramm* in 2015. Mazen Kerbaj, co-founder of Irtijal festival Beirut, is seen as one of the key figures in the Lebanese diaspora in Berlin that built strong ties and various collaborations with members of the *freie Szene* in Berlin, as mentioned by various musicians and cultural workers I spoke to. Arriving in Berlin in 2015, he is one of the earliest Lebanese musicians from the network that established between the cities of Berlin and Beirut to settle in the German capital. A few years earlier, in 2011, Rabih Beaini moved to Berlin but operated primarily in the experimental electronic music scene, which has since the inception of Morphine Raum 2019 integrated musicians from the free improvised scene by becoming a key venue for experiments between international and German-born musicians and a place of previously thought of as rather separate scenes.

This was followed by the arrival of Irtijal co-founder and artist Raed Yassin in 2015 for a research fellowship at the Akademie der Künste in Cologne, who later moved to Berlin, Tony Elieh in 2019 and Egyptian artist Yara Mekawei who was awarded a fellowship by the DAAD in 2021. The DAAD Artists-in-Berlin programme has become one route for international artists, especially artists from an Arabic-speaking background, to prove their status and professional credibility as freelance working artists to German visa authorities and develop strong ties to German cultural institutions. One way of doing so is by the service offered as part of the residency programme. Head of Music at the Artists-in-Berlin residency, Dahlia Borsche, coordinates the programme, introduces artists to one another and provides contacts to the appropriate contacts and venues in Berlin. The networking aspect is part of the institutional mission and with Borsche as coordinator, paired with sufficient in-group knowledge to pick the "right match" of venue or collaborating artists due to her background in the *freie Szene*, having been a curator at the CTM festival, a well-respected annual festival for experimental sound and visual arts in Berlin taking place at the famous Berghain among other places across the city.

The DAAD[19] describes it as "one of the world's most respected artist-in-residence programmes for established artists working in the fine arts, film, literature and music" (DAAD n.d.). It is considered a "classic high culture institution" or "lighthouse funding" with elite aspirations

---

[19] The German Academic Exchange Service, or short DAAD, was founded in 1925 to support academic exchanges between international academic institutions. As an association of German Higher Educational Institutions, it is supported by state and federal funding offering study and research opportunities in Germany and for German nationals abroad. This is in form of scholarships and awards for academic exchanges based on merit, rather than offering courses or study programs such as the Goethe Institute offers.

aiming to build bridges to experimental scenes and freelance actors in Berlin with whom they work as Dahlia Borsche points out in our interview: "In the past, there were people like Cedric Fermont who would have been more reluctant to work with an institution like the DAAD, because that puts you in a certain terrain, which is actually the enemy, but I have the feeling that these fears are no longer there, and we work with many of these people now - we now even made a record with Rabih [Beaini]" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

The Artists-in-Berlin programme was founded in 1963 and as described on their pages "sees itself as a platform for artistic and cultural exchange throughout and beyond Europe." (ibid.) The programme provides funding for 20 scholarships for a residency in Berlin lasting about one-year in the divisions of literature, film, music, and visual art. When the programme was founded in the 1960's the focus lay on classical contemporary music in the tradition of European art music as Borsche describes.[20] This was also due to the leadership during that time with the programme being led by a West Berlin curator who focused primarily on Western Europe and the USA. As Borsche explains:

> "In the 60's, the political world order was still different and "the global" was 'smaller packaged' so to speak. Contemporary European music was seen as the most important and most developed form of music, and to the right and left of it there was nothing, it's where the international scene stopped. International artists outside these areas where only invited when they were representing that music and trained in the style, as in, in a conservatoire. For example, we had people from China and Argentina but only when they trained at conservatories in USA and then came to Germany" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

Around the year 2000, the programme expanded to sound art while Julia Gerlach led the music division at the DAAD of the Artists-in-Berlin program from 2012 to 2018. During that time, she initiated and directed *Mikromusik. Festival experimenteller Musik und Sound Art* and worked with Ensemble Moderne, an international German-based groups formed in 1980 that is considered one of the leading ensembles of contemporary music in the world. During Gerlach's time, Mazen Kerbaj joined the programme as one of the fellows in 2015 which, as outlined above, marked a key year for the increasing migration of Lebanese experimental musicians to Berlin that followed suit. Due to Gerlach's expertise in fields outside Western contemporary music, the programme expanded further to the areas of sound art and improvised music. Nowadays, since Borsche took over the division in 2019, the programme opened increasingly to international fellows that are may often not be formerly trained in the Western classical tradition but have a strong background in the fields of either experimental club music, electroacoustic and free improvised music. As often mentioned by many of my interviewees, these different areas are more closely moving together in Berlin, stylistically and in terms of their social spheres. In a radio interview from 2017, Rabih outlines that "where a few years ago electronic music and experimental improv scene

---

[20] Translated from German: "Traditionell förderte der DAAD klassische zeitgenössische Musik in der Tradition der europäischen Kunstmusik".

were quite distinguished, they are now opening to each other in a very creative and substantial way" (FBi Radio 2017).

World Music Critique[21]

> "This is somehow in the best sense exactly what world music used to want, this 'global thoughts, fusing things and building bridges', that is already in there, but I would never call it world music and Yara [Mekawei] would probably laugh her head off if this term were foisted on her, she probably wouldn't know what to do with it and what it is supposed to do in her practice." (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online)

I met Dahlia Borsche for the first time in May 2022 during an academic workshop entitled "World Music in Postcolonial Perspective: Current Debates in Research and Practice" in Freiburg im Breisgau, a popular tourist destination in the Black Forest, bordering Switzerland, and France. During our conversation, Borsche pointed out how she felt that speaking about the residency programme in the context of anything relating to world music would be the wrong context and not doing justice to her fellows' work. Her presentation, "Curating Polyphony. The Berlin Artists-in-Residence Programme as a Resonating Space of Contemporary Music Practices in the World", started off by stating these thoughts and declaring her surprise that she was invited as her programme has "nothing to do with world music". Her clear aversion towards the term "world music" and her being associated with a programme using the term, was uncomfortable but necessary for all speakers to reflect on their research being positioned in world music spaces, even spaces that chose to engage with the term from a critical and postcolonial perspective.

Speaking in the breaks between presentations, it became clear that contrary to many other papers, she worked with musicians in Berlin that have strong ties with the Beirut arts scene. While discovering the shared contacts we had, we both agreed that this network is seemingly not producing experimental sounds as an "anti-world music act" or postcolonial activism but react dismissively to the term itself while not "wanting to have anything to do with it" due to its historical reputation in Germany. The aversion goes as far as excluding oneself from spaces relating to world music histories and relating postcolonial criticism and reappraisal but never reaches into their conceptual approach, as far as musicians are concerned. Musicians I spoke to often argued that there is no "reclaiming" as the spaces they engage with have never been occupied by world music histories in the first place.

In our interview, Dahlia outlines that the reference of world music mainly comes from white-dominated organisations as part of their diversity mission and decolonising efforts. An important point she makes is that the replacement of the world music term with the *MultiKulti* narrative and, following this, diversification, is part of a similar dynamic of listening and producing music based on overarching themes of happy hybridity. From "world" to "global"

---

[21] Declaration: Parts of this section will be published in Fuchs, M. and Mueske, J. (2023). *Yearbook Song and Popular Culture*, Center for Popular Culture and Music, Waxmann: Münster [*in press*].

to "hybrid" music, these terms, as she outlines, are used mostly by German institutions, rather than migrant artists:

> "Diversification" [*Diversifizierung*] has replaced the term *MultiKulti*. And *MultiKulti* is also a bit... it just has this touch of naïve, middle-class, mostly women, of course I'm talking in the absolute clichés now, who somehow say with batik cloths and long hair 'yes, we love everyone'- these are these colour-blind Germans who can't diversify and can't differentiate and who have never really understood structural racism and have worked it out for themselves and somehow question their own patterns and say 'we are one world after all, and we all love each other, and I love all people'. That's what I associate with the term *MultiKulti*, this 'we are all one' and then someone plays his *oud* beautifully, and like, 'look how he drums' [*guck mal wie er trommelt*], and the whole world is music, and music unites. Also, this idea 'music connects' and that is a language... is also total non-sense. Sure, music connects, but that music is a global language I think is total nonsense because music is simply a very specific language that is very dependent on the background and the environment - where it is played, by whom, because music is simply not disconnected from the context in which it happens. And the context simply determines what is transported and what is associated and what is attached to it, and one can only understand this well if one knows this context well, or the language of the music changes if one changes the context, and so on. That's why I think *MultiKulti* is a bit outdated, also in terms of the idea, and has now somehow been replaced by this concept of diversification, which is of course also used more by German politics, or by German institutions, than by migrant actors (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

Speaking about the work of Egyptian-born, Berlin-based artist Yara Mekawei, she stresses that: "Nothing comes from the artists themselves in terms of world music critique, but they engage with different issues that are far more complex and way more interesting, for example, you mentioned the subject of religion earlier in our conversation. Yara managed in a really beautiful way to speak about Sufism in her exhibition and that encouraged so many people to learn more about that subject who were German with a non-Muslim background, and they would have never dealt with this topic otherwise" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online). The aversion towards "world music" seems to be related to its associations with exoticism and stereotypes, as well as its commodification and use by mainstream popular culture to increase sales. Experimental music offers a space to resist these tendencies and create something new and innovative, free from the constraints of this industry and its tentacle arms in German performance venues.

In many ways, the association of international music projects with world music say more about the current anxieties of cultural institutions that reflects in language and terminology discussions, that it says something about the kind of issues it tries to tackle.

> "What I find unfortunate about these attempts [world music projects] .... it's just not interesting to me because it is rather poppy, commercial music that somehow tries to make it sound the same with an overarching "paste" and mastering, and then sometimes people integrate a few "traditional" instruments. What I find much more interesting about what Rabih [Beaini] does in the Morphine space, for example, or what

the people in the Berlin [DAAD] artists' programme bring with them is that it is not oriented towards a global production logic or a marketing logic, but that it is a genuine and individual musical language. And that's something else, so the way in which traditional instruments are integrated or traditional is usually a totally radical translation into the present and somehow future-oriented and not... or just a transformation of tradition into the present. Quite different from poppy fusion samba pieces from Brazil or something. There is not so much creative or critical transformation, so I am not so interested in it" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

It seems as if Dahlia Borsche argues that, by rejecting the associations of world music and instead creating something new and unique, experimental music can offer a space for reflection and creativity that is not limited by dominant cultural norms, trends, or expectations for musicians from the SWANA region. Instead, experimenting musicians are able to freely draw on, and utilise, themes, sound, images outside the often essentialising expectations of white-dominated cultural institutions favouring world music as a one-way system to the integration of diaspora musicians in Germany. What is considered, and named, a creative, unique, and innovative sonic practice is often subject to urban aesthetic trends, taste and value attached to certain sounds produced in the *freie Szene*. However, broadly speaking, the DAAD encourages international artists to develop their own sound language, rather than reproduce already existing musical structures and themes found in music productions that prioritise cultural heritage preservation. She outlines that, if musicians draw on their own heritage, "they are not doing it with traditional instruments in an 'authentic' way but translating it into a contemporary practice." Dahlia describes:

> "Then there is world music that explicitly refers to traditional folk music, but that was never part of the programme, and I would never include it, because we have world music in the programme because the people we invite come from all over the world. That's why for me it's something like world music, but I would *never* use this term in connection with my work. I would also keep it *completely* away from our fellows, I don't want to have anything to do with it, not even in the delimitation. I don't even want to say, 'this is anti-world music' or we're doing something else, but it's already so *beyond*. These are just international, incredibly exciting artistic practices that we invite and, if possible, bring with them an artistic practice that challenges our listening habits here a little more or brings something new to the table or that can convey things to the Berlin audience that we don't see here every day anyway. Of course, the more international Berlin becomes and the more we see everything here all the time and the more networked the world becomes, the more difficult it is, but that's why for me it's basically the ideal situation of world music 2.0 or 3.0, which I would never use this term for, because it has connotations of so many things that I would like to see abolished long ago. That's why I find it so difficult when this [world music] discussion is started again and again. For example, I wonder why I was invited to a world music critical workshop [at Freiburg] because nothing in my work is world music or has anything to do with it" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online, emphasis added).

When speaking with Lebanese, Palestinian, and Jordanian musicians, I noticed that many describe the institutional self-critique and diversity efforts as a trend and focus their own efforts

on fostering curiosity and preventing personal and professional stagnation for both musicians and listeners that engage in experimental practices. This also concerns the framing of experimentalism seen in diaspora communities exclusively as decolonial activism which disregards the intended message and impact of many of these projects curated by musicians themselves.

Institutional Expectations

As becomes clear in the above section, residency programmes such as the Artists-in-Berlin programme enable artists to reside in Berlin, connect with local artists, and freely decide whether to embark on new sound or art productions. The fellows are provided with a fully paid for flat, a salary above the national average wage, as well as access to production venues and tools and resources needed for their creative work. The only requirement during their stay to be in Berlin during that period and credit their productions during that time to the DAAD programme but there is no requirement to produce a piece of work during the entirety of the residency. In doing so, the programme gives their fellows the opportunity to use their time in Berlin to make connections, build a network of collaborators and friends and utilise the venues and resources the city has to offer to realise existing or new projects. Dahlia outlines that: "Most of them [fellows] come from a cycle of production and have the pressure of always having to make and produce something. Some of them are totally exhausted when they come here. After a while they 'come down' [*runterkommen*] and can think about artistic practice in peace, without pressure" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

The programme privileges artistic wellbeing, a creative environment free of the pressure to constantly produce, and vulnerability as key aspects of artistic development in the experimental scene which is increasingly recognised by many other venues and event series across the city. The crucial term here is the *Ergebnisoffenheit* ("openness to results") which opposed the forced results of happy hybridity and allow musicians to focus on personal development, getting settled and expanding their network.

In that way, the expectations in this programme lie with the organising institution rather than the artists. As the funding comes with an educational mandate by the state (*staatlicher Bildungsauftrag*) the DAAD must report back how funds are being used. The mandate itself aims at an internationalisation of the Berlin scene, impact in their respective home countries upon their return, the support of alumni to provide a sustainable support structure during and after the one year of residency. Sustainability becomes a key word that covers the area of building contacts, curating with care, and networks. This is openly communicated and actively encouraged. Other expectations are that there should be a long-lasting public and visible social impact (*Öffentlichkeitswirkung*) not only in Berlin but outside of Germany. The educational mandate is as important as diversity policies that took the centre stage of new funding schemes and changes to old ones. Aiming at the inclusion of foreigners into the cultural sector the past decade showed an increase in residency programmes, panels and funding schemes including international artists that resulted in the growing visibility and influence of international cultural producers in Germany's cultural landscape.

What has changed in the way these programmes respond to the discourse of postcolonial curatorial critique is that institutions such as the DAAD provide musicians with agency as institutional self-critique that is radically opposed to the production mechanisms, aesthetics and an exploitative dynamic between producer and musician in German world music productions. In the 21st century, the DAAD not only opened up to styles outside classical Western art music but also musical practices that come from informal production contexts and made by artists that have not been trained at conservatoire or art school which used to be relatively unusual and now started to become a regular route into the fellowship programme in the field of music and visual arts. There are, however, certain criteria that determine the belonging of the scene. The programme administrators I spoke to mention a variety of quality criteria that kept reappearing and distinguish the scene from what has been described as the "mainstream". Many administrators, including Borsche, often describe the funded music in terms like "transformation" and a future- rather than past-related approach that translate innovative thinking and progress into sound and visuals. In the experimental scene around Berlin, artists such as Austrian-born, Arabic-speaking artist Stefan Frauenberger specifically outline how "exploring themes of transformation" has become a center for contemporary artistic practice (Frauenberger n.d.). She however was aware of the dogma of new music that is based on Western teleological ideologies in New Music about their ideas around newness. In her view, innovation can also include the development of one's own distinctive sonic language (*eigene Klangsprache*), self-reflexive practices, and socio-political statements in which sound should reflect one's subjective experience rather than commercial potential.

Aesthetic Agency

What Borsche describes here is what Dunya Habash (2021), Saba Mahmood (2005), Maja Korac (2009), David Turton (2003, 2006) have outlined in their research on agency in the field of forced migration and refugee studies, specifically in Dunya Habash's reinterpretation of agency in her research on Syrian refugee music in Turkey. Looking at the way displacement influences articulations of agency, Habash examines the emotional cost and inward negotiations of refugee musicians who adapt to new host context as a form of agency. Reflecting on the conversation with Dahlia Borsche, musicians' agency is thought of in terms of the ability to find and maintain a unique sound language and expression which can be conceptual approach, use of materials, theme or most commonly, specific technique worked with as seen with the trumpeting technique of Mazen Kerbaj. Agency is also thought of as acts of networking and self-promotion and actively encouraged through experimental formats and funding schemes such as the DAAD one or, as synonymous to independence from institutions: "Even though Yara has DAAD fellowship, she's already so independent and doesn't need any more support. She is a super professional promoter, it's rare that one takes advantage of this opportunity so cleverly" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

By looking at acts of independent networking, diasporic self-organisation and institution building, I expand on Habash's findings on integration of Syrian refugees in their new host society, in her case, Turkey, through emplacement practices that extends frameworks focusing

on disempowerment, vulnerability, victimhood due to historic, economic and material challenges (Habash 2021: 1372).[22] In the case of international musicians in Berlin, the low cost of living, networking opportunities, growing community of Lebanese musicians since 2015 and international funding schemes for experimenting foster ability to try things out, fail, be curious and start multiple projects based on interest rather than demand which aims at reversing world music history dynamics of power and hierarchy between producer and "migrant musician". Against the researcher's expectations when looking at emplacement practices during fieldwork, Habash did not find "nostalgic dwelling" but instead, "reveal[ed] that change in performance settings, change in the physical embodiment of 'doing music' disrupts nostalgia and challenges subjectivities" (Habash 2021: 1374).

Looking at both inner affective states and interpersonal struggles vis a vis seeming articulations of agency through the creation of opportunities for oneself, she determined how interpersonal struggles of refugee musicians might be embodied and projected into public life and music making in new societies. This could be finding "new places to work, taking up a new cultural practice of street performance, opening their own studios and music schools and forming bands and ensembles with other Syrian musicians" (ibid.: 1375). Interestingly, she finds that agency becomes an irrelevant concept in the context of Syrian refugee musicians in Istanbul. This is because strong displays of agency are often followed by the inability to keep up demands of working in a similar position as one did in Aleppo. This is due to socio-economic circumstances and musicians leaving the city - leaving her with the question "Are these real examples of agency if the acts of resilience are unsustainable?" (ibid.: 1383). In Habash's view, we need to be careful to interpret strong displays of agency as resistance and resilience. This is because migrant musicians may act with agency but at the same time, "outward forms of resilience and resistance mask the inner struggles of displacement and emplacement" (ibid.: 1384).

Her research raises important points regarding the different levels of cultural and educational capital, experiences including trauma, and the variety of reasons why Arabic-speaking musicians engage in home-making practices and cultural productions abroad. Despite coming to Berlin for improved socio-economic circumstances due to the political and economic crisis in Lebanon it shows that diversity-driven cultural policy infrastructure in Germany, and merit-based, yet relatively open, eligibility criteria for the DAAD residency provide musicians both with agency and the possibility to show and engage with their respective backgrounds, experiences and themes surrounding vulnerability likewise.

In this context, vulnerability is not seen as a result of victimisation by the host society, but an openness to the creative direction of artistic development due to the freedoms Berlin state-

---

[22] In her ethnographic study of Syrian musical practices in Istanbul, Habash draws on those on place-making and regaining control (Turton 2005) and Mallki's (1995) finding on 'emplacement is the flipside of displacement'. Affective inner lives during the emplacement process in Berlin are crucial in that they encourage a mentality of radical unintentionality and aesthetic demands based on the *Berliner Echtzeitmusikszene* and the industrial aesthetics of electronic dance music spaces with certain affective responses towards the previous restraints of migrant musicians of the first generation encountered. Stokes further writes on affective experiences and their role in the study of placemaking and identity that shows "powerful affective experience in which social identity is literally 'embodied'" (Stokes 1994: 12).

funding enables. While following musicians in the resettlement process and looking at the ways in which Arab musicians come together, I was intrigued by the lack of nostalgia or references to identity and heritage in their projects. It seemed as if many musicians have not engaged in traditional music in any audible way. In conversation with sound artist and theorist Budhaditya Chattopadhyay discusses this question with Irtijal founder Sharif Sehnaoui, drawing on Sehnaoui's love for jazz music and turn to experimental music following the popular route of free jazz to electroacoustic, prepared acoustics, and experimental electronics. He describes that Arabic music has always been "in the background" while growing up in Lebanon, yet he "never practised it or intended to practice it" (Chattopadhyay 2022: 70). In the interview, he described the aversion towards Arabic music and the affective responses to both traditional maqam-based music and music from outside Lebanon:

> "I think I am coming from a specific scope of Lebanese culture where we lean more towards occidental music than oriental. You have a graduation here for people who are totally into tradition. Some people are allergic to oriental music, to the extent that they hate it. Some Lebanese people can be really pathologically against oriental music and will have an immediate reaction. If you play popular Arabic songs, they feel bad. And this has to do with identity. Luckily, I was never in that extreme and on the contrary, I always enjoyed Arabic music" (Chattopadhyay 2022: 70).

It thus becomes important to look at why, and how, cultural identity becomes articulated and why Lebanese musicians may decide to disengage with traditional music in favour of experimental practices inspired by free jazz in Lebanon, *Berliner Echtzeitmusik* and the aesthetics of New Music from Europe and North America. This is why questions on creative class movement and affective labour become more helpful than frameworks in forced migration and music focusing on expressions of nostalgia and memory. Hence, I extend Habash's and Bohlmann's understanding of emplacement and aesthetic agency by looking into how creative networks utilise and build cultural capital through relocating, codeswitching and exerting agency through institution building. I also shed light on how identity, self-worth and reputation as musician are tied to affiliations with certain physical spaces and their respectability in the following chapter.

The social processes of place-making and affective citizenship are further elaborated in Luis-Manuel Garcia's study on affective communities in Berlin's Techno scene (Garcia 2013). The author outlines the difficulties of homemaking in Berlin while considering the impact of the city's architectural environments and aesthetics on experiences of togetherness. Papadopoulos and Duru further outline the connection between space and music, stressing that "musical practices are also closely connected to space and place. Settings of performance, listening, rehearsing, and sharing are entangled with the histories and material and physical qualities of space and place. Therefore, 'doing music is physical and inherently spatial and embodied' (Papadopoulos and Duru 2018:21, in Habash 2021:1374).

Often, Lebanese musicians engage in similar place making practices by affiliation to existing spaces for musical experimentation such as Morphine Raum. However, some musicians prefer to not integrate in existing structures but rather build new artist-led institutions from the ground

up. This is due to historic and political profile of many institutions that are still not fit for integrating international musicians into existing event series and performance programmes without drawing on cultural diplomacy strategies, rather than musicians' artistic quality, as a main aim for providing visibility and exposure for freelance musicians. As will become clearer in the case study on Morphine Raum, many cultural producers already have more suitable resources and production spaces due to their cosmopolitan upbringing, international network, interdisciplinary skillset, and resourcefulness to build a performance place for aesthetic development outside existing German institutions.

Administrative Proximity

In the following section, I address the relationship between cultural producers, curators, and administrators in the development of the experimental music across Berlin and Beirut. Dahlia Borsche has been working for the established CTM festival for contemporary music and visual arts in Berlin providing "open door to the CTM" for the DAAD fellows to engage with performance opportunities and venues in Berlin. Describing the network aspects of her work almost as an extension of her professional relationship with the artists, it seems as if an almost maternal role, friendship, and mutual connection become a main driver for the successful integration into the Berlin scene. The rise of funds for scene observation and attendance and befriending, seeing the necessity a development towards more trust and closeness between musician and administrator. It also shows the influence of passion and taste, and their personal, as well as affective, investment in these scenes that can be partly a result of their own musical practice and experience of setting up of spaces for musical experimentation involving migrant musicians, as it was the case for the Ausland venue founded by Musikfonds director Gregor Hotz.

During our interview, Dahlia speaks about her connections to the *freie Szene*, seeing herself as a part of it as well as a spokesperson for the fellows of the *Berliner Künstlerprogramm*. She describes how musicians see her as "one of them" due to her work for CTM festival for over a decade. As the first intern of CTM, she quickly worked her way up from a fan of the festival and intern to producing the festival in the following year. The trust that bookers and producers put into her, taking up her suggestions and advice, becomes the main tool to build a network through organising collaborations across festivals and cities. While describing her work for the DAAD, she talks about the way she connects the international fellows with Berlin institutions: "The trust is very high. They know that when I offer the something, it will fit there and that will all work out somehow. That's why it's a good starting point for working together, and it's good for my fellows too" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online). Speaking about her ideas around access, trust, and collaborative work she stresses the role she plays in connecting the different social spheres.

> "You can't develop the content of projects or lead a section if you're not also active in these scenes and are part of them yourself and understand the inner logic. This also comes from my work for the CTM festival, rather than from the institution. I moved from the *freie Szene* into the institution but was in the *freie Szene* for so long that the change was not taken amiss and the relationship of trust, which I have with CTM, is

not simply gone once you have built it up. It's more along the lines of 'she's one of us is in the institution and now we have a different approach to it'. It's not the foreign institutions where musicians have the attitude of 'you can get money there' but rather 'she is one of us'" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

As we can see, a large factor that bridges the institutions as and musicians are administrators such as Dahlia Borsche, Lisa Benjes or Gregor Hotz whose role is not purely processing applications for residencies but to "observe" the scene, support it and be driven by its developments. These responsibilities are often carried out those who have been part of the *freie Szene*. In her research of the *Berliner Echtzeitmusikszene*, Marta Blažanović outlines the scene's "lack of commercial potential" and exclusivity, are responsible for the development of musicians' own, crucial aesthetic concepts as pioneers of local developments. This is because the *freie Szene* is viewed as having a specific audience "which appreciates openness and confrontation and identifies itself with the broadened idea of culture" (Blažanović 2012:47). Drawing on Bourdieusian ideas around the relationship between class and cultural production (1996) she finds that the "relationship between the independent musicians and sources of funding"–in this case the city or the state– "thus still does not exist". She stresses that "because of various (social, habitual, aesthetic) constraints that happen to obstruct communication between the institutionalized culture and the so-called underground, it often happens that the more autonomous sectors (avantgardes) of different fields or genres connect and collaborate, which has as its effect a stronger opposition between the two poles of the one genre than between the different genres themselves (cf. Bourdieu 1996: 120f)" (Blažanović 2012: 117).

This gradually proving untrue today as musicians and music fans are increasingly placed in administrative positions and thus drawing closer ties between the source of funding (administrators, funding coordinators) and cultural producers (independent musicians) as the boundaries between curator, producer, audience, and administrator become increasingly blurred. This is further exacerbated by people like Dahlia Borsche and Gregor Hotz in positions of power and power hierarchies shifting through more informal communication and multiple roles, as well as many people claiming status as curator, in that past ten years since Blažanović's dissertation has been published. In the past decade specifically, as Dahlia Borsche points out, changes to the cultural policy landscape resulted in a change of the infrastructure of the *freie Szene*. Unfortunately, the discursive context in which many migrant musicians are embedded has not caught up and still uses frameworks from diaspora music studies that place musicians in nostalgic dwelling rather than focusing on the changing infrastructures of the creative class in Berlin as outlined earlier in this chapter.

Institution 2: Initiative Neue Musik (INM)

Probably one of the most crucial organisations that structure and support the networks and collaborations resulting from the Berlin-Beirut connection is INM. Founded in 1991 shortly after the German reunification, the Initiative Neue Musik Berlin e.V. (INM) remains one of the central funding bodies and open networks of the contemporary music scene in Berlin. Alongside state-funding support through annual funding calls, INM produces the magazine *field notes* in form of an online event calendar. It also appears as a physical copy distributed

among key venues for experimental music, free improvisation, music theatre and jazz in Berlin and it likewise posted to the homes of INM members that signed up on the institution's website. It works as a platform and bi-monthly resource with the aims to connect, strengthen and support the multiple networks in Berlin by offering workshops, events, and consultations at no cost. This includes help with application procedures, bi-lingual content and introducing the funding application process on Germany to newcomers, and even free workshops for freelance artists that allow them to navigate the German bookkeeping and accounting systems.

Understanding itself as both a collective voice and aesthetically and structurally open institution, INM likewise aims to improve the working conditions for Berlin-based cultural producers working in the field of independent contemporary music. The organisation brings together not only multiple scenes but working bodies, such as musicologists, cultural managers, composers, and ensembles under the umbrella of independent New Music. Despite state-funding which is distributed by the Berlin Cultural Senate, the institution is seeing itself as an independent, organic network as well as an institution encouraging the creation of further independent networks outside its institutional structures. The independence lies its selection and governing principles based on grassroots democratic systems with regards to selecting the board committee, as well as the jury that selects and allocates funding. These efforts to redistribute and reflect on the way power is exerted in funding programmes, among other working processes describe in the following, are based on their self-criticism as a white European institution and institutional critique (Farnsworth 2020).
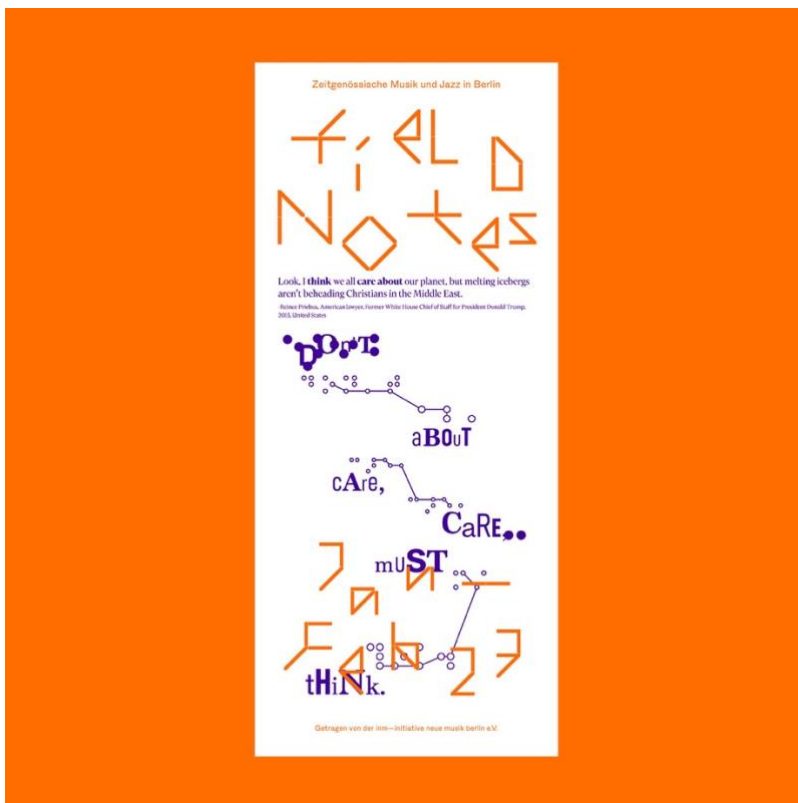
Cover design of field notes magazine. Issue 30, January/February 2023.

I spoke to *field notes* director Lisa Benjes, who currently lives in Sweden, via Zoom. She seemed very passionate and somewhat struck me not as a cultural worker or administrator but activist who is deeply invested in remaining passive as an institution in order to enable musicians to become active. Her passion for setting up and shaping the platform *field notes* is something that stood out to me, and something that other administrators had mentioned when referring me to her as a key person in the emerging field of artist-led platforms in Berlin.

In our conversation, Benjes outlines the different ways in which INM, and their platform *field notes* aims to redistribute its power to the members it funds and supports and is consistent of in terms of governance and decision making. Outlining the working mechanisms of INM, she states "we don't actually do our own projects but support the scene in its own project work" (Lisa Benjes, Interview, 17 October 2022, online). *Field notes* is funded separately from its overarching institution INM, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with its mission to enhance mobility, innovation, locally led developments that "reduce economic, social and territorial disparities" and increase sustainable urban development and tourism (European Commission n.d.). As the fund is administered by the EU's governing committee in Regional and Urban Policy, it becomes clear that the musicians and cultural producers are funded on the merit of increasing *sustainable* urban development that benefits the tourism and portfolio of Berlin as a city of mobile, accessible, and socially inclusive musical developments.

The subcultural phenomena that are all the sudden not only a branding aspect of the city's subcultural activeness but become an incentive for mobility and migration from abroad. In an interview, musician Ute Wassermann stresses that "the high culture benefits hugely from the subculture" (Ute Wassermann, Interview, 6 February 2023, online). As a recipient of such a funding scheme, the profile of the INM, as well as the way funding is allocated, will necessarily be shaped by the grant providing institution. In the case of the INM and *field notes*, they need to report back to the Cultural Senate in Berlin in which ways the funded projects contribute to the cultural development to Berlin. This includes providing the expected number of visitors, and proving information about how diversity, inclusion and sustainability criteria are being met. With ERDF as its choice of funding, *field notes* and the INM aim to support the scene structurally and helps build and maintain the networks, venues and event series that are so crucial to the local cultural landscape in Berlin. INM provides the social and financial means to create structural backdrop to an intentionally unstructured field of cultural production. This structure increases the visibility created by barriers of access and redistributes agency in various aspects of cultural production, from help with funding application to workshops and advice on professional matters and qualifications as outlined above.

Platform *field notes*

In the past five to six years, *field notes* became a model platform for artist-based networking and institutional (self)criticism. It does so by increasing visibility, networks and raising awareness for their looking at biases of institutional taste, aesthetic preferences, and its underlying values, as well as criticising the power of institutional decision making itself. The editorial, "Opposite Editorial", a musician, cultural producer or researcher would write

introductory reflections on the cultural landscape in Berlin as opposed to a member of the editorial board. Rabih Beaini wrote the opposite editorial for the 29th edition, published in October 2022. In just a few paragraphs, he eloquently summarises not only the major developments in the production of experimental in the "wealthy West" but points out the process character of the development itself. He outlines that the rising productions of musicians from Africa, South Asia, the Middle East, and other countries categorised as the "Global South" are not a hype, trend nor a "crack", but a transformation with revolutionary character that leads to the redistribution power and agency in cultural production. In this process, musicians who would formerly be categorised as a minority in need of help, as opposed to a global majority and source of sonic innovation and leading figures of change. These musicians now help cultural institutions and policy makers to establish sustainable change and improved their own production and working conditions in Germany.

The example of INM and *field notes* helps to understand the crucial assessment criteria for the implementation of EDI policy measures. Hence, I looked at questions such as, how are decisions made regarding funding and support? How aware are institutions and administrators of their own musical and visual taste? How does each institution and governing body assess the quality of collaborative experimental practices? How are power dynamics and agency shifted towards international musicians?

Lisa Benjes is passionate about the grassroots democratic structure of the organisation itself and frequently mentions that the aesthetic values, institutional decision making, and discussions and content development of the platform are shaped, carried and led by the scene itself. In the 2022 edition of their annual conference *Soundings*, the *field notes* team and INM remained what Benjes calls a "silent partner" that are involved as little as possible and merely provide the resources and their own institutional infrastructure and networks. Benjes describes how the INM "does not want to dictate from above but leave it up to the scene to set the wherever possible" (Lisa Benjes, Interview, 17 October 2022, online). This means likewise a shift of power. In this way, the institution is redistributing agency by way of redistributing the decision-making process and the curatorial agency with regards to the cultural productions. The act of curation entails a steering committee of cultural workers making programmatic decisions, "curating" the programme and choosing the appropriate content format, while INM aims to contribute as little as possible in terms of content.

She explains that "as a white European institution, we try to make our structures available as far as possible with planning and implementation issues, so that we do not bring our perspective into the process at all. It's about shifting power from curators or those who have always held positions of power in these institutions and who have resources and how that can then be passed on to other networks who then pass it on to other networks. One of the results was *Soundings*". INM's current understanding of what a network entails have been the result of an ongoing process of self-reflection, outreach work and active listening which will be touched on in more detail in chapter 4. Composers, researchers, and musicians like Sandeep Bhagwati, Budhaditya Chattopadhyay and Cedrik Fermont have been either affiliated, or opposed, the INM as an

institution and created *Soundings* as a way of trialling different models of diversification of the *freie Szene* in Berlin.

The *Klassische Projektförderung*

Transparency of institutional processes and inner workings, accessibility of funding, access to popular promotional channels, networks, and self-description as a form of empowerment remain powerful mechanisms of inclusion that INM builds on. Speaking about the way music is labelled in *field notes* magazine and event calendar, it becomes apparent that the act of self-description and selection of labels of the event calendar are not only marketing tools but can be "crucial to someone's existence how someone is labelling oneself" as Benjes states. It influences decisions of bookers, promoters, the possibility of collaborations and an ideological positioning within or outside of a discourse such as the world music debate. The act of label selection, which in the case of INM are a binary selection of contemporary and jazz, followed by a selection for up to four categories including *Echtzeitmusik*, electronic music, sound art, improvisation and in opposition, composed music, music theatre, "discourse" [symposia/ conferences/ talks], concert, performance, open rehearsal, open stage, workshop, and long play [installations/ exhibitions or extended performances].

List of supported musical styles on the website of the Initiative Neue Musik (INM).

The use of these labels is an integral part of what Benjes and Borsche described as the "typical project funding scheme" (*klassische Projektförderung*) which has historically been divided into categories that segregate migrant music from Western music while reducing Othered musics to the terms of world music, or in recent years, "global". As Benjes stresses, the problem of the "genre-fication" of experimental practices, specifically migrant music making, is aiming to be more "aesthetically open" as it may otherwise lead to the institutionalisation of musicians and their styles by way of hailing them as political subjects (Althusser 1971) which may have an influence on the music in return when funding calls require specific content, identity to be

articulated or aesthetics to be demonstrated. What migrant musicians do, as opposed to how they identify, should be at the centre of efforts to support the international music scene in Berlin. This may lead musicians with migrant background to hail their music as an act of political reconciliation, intercultural effort, or cosmopolitan masterpiece rather than allowing musicians to develop subjects based on their interests and expertise. Most administrators I spoke to agree that terminology plays a major role in shifting the power dynamics in Germany. This leads to not only a shift in labels used for diasporic music productions, but such also as intercultural being replaced with transcultural, world music with global music as well as considerations of abandoning the separate categories altogether (Gregor Hotz, Interview, 11 August 2022, Berlin).

Institutional Gatekeeping

In looking at the DAAD and INM so far it becomes clear that funding administrators have found various quality criteria that allow musicians to access funding, including having a unique sound language and innovative conceptual approaches to reflect on their own background or the world around them. However, many administrators are wary to not give funding to the same people they already know, similar to a social credit system by which association with already funded musicians become beneficial to their application. The critical approach to curation extends to the realm of self-criticism of institutional administrators likewise. This includes the criticism of mechanisms of gatekeeping, specifically in the building of artist-led networks based on friendship, where social, emotional, and cultural intimacy as well as similar socio-political ideologies can be a powerful community-building tool but also exclude cultural practitioners lacking affiliations and contacts to musicians already involved.

Asking about the inclusivity of the INM as a network, Benjes stresses that for her, "it's important that it's understood as a network, but that it's not meant in a delimiting way, that everyone who wants to get involved or is interested in these topics can also be part of it. Ultimately, if you break it down to a very practical level, it's a mailing list that you either want to follow or not" (Lisa Benjes, Interview, 17 October 2022, online). Another mechanism of distinction in the Bourdieusian sense that reveals the class dimension of the specific taste and aesthetics of experimental music and the educational, cultural, and social capital attached to it favoured by cultural institutions, is the awareness of funding providers in their role as taste makers. Funding schemes can shape, and reproduce, already existing trends and set new aesthetics ideals by providing cultural producers with the resources, visibility and public space that may present musicians as representative of cultural, styles and whole movements.

In the interview, Benjes stresses that she wants to "try to represent the scene in the selection process, regardless of our own taste", she continues "even when people annoy the hell out of me, I try not to let it affect my work and still put them in the magazine. It is important to be aware of this and to make decisions against your own preferences." Another mechanism to prevent gatekeeping is to visit as many events in Berlin as possible as this helps to assess the quality of musical projects and see how long someone has been dealing with the topic or has been working with the material, how the people adhere to what is written in the project texts

which may become an assessment criterion." She would also look at which standards musicians set for themselves, how they are adhered to how thoroughly people work. She concludes: "Of course, the challenge is not only to represent those you already know and from whom you know the work, but to try to include new actors from whom you don't know the work, there is no way to vouch for it! But that's the fun part!" (Lisa Benjes, Interview, 17 October 2022, online).

In conclusion, through redistributing the editorial as a social commentary and authoritative voice commenting on the scene, as well as the redistribution of decision-making processes and curatorial agency, the use of self-descriptors and grassroots democratic processes of network formation, INM and *field notes* are an example of the role that funding bodies and state-funded policy schemes play in levelling the playing field and opening the cultural landscape for newcomers. It also shows the multiple roles that migrantised musicians play as advisors, spokespeople, board members and administrators and taste makers. The role of friendships and networks becomes clear, with networks being understood as fleeting, organic and often practical social and digital infrastructures that emerge in connection *and* demarcation with the institution in which self-organised artist networks are supported by the administrative and financial resources of white European institutions. The latter are criticising their own role, taste, and power, including gatekeeping processes according to EDI policy requirements and anti-racist initiatives of their administrative staff.

Institution 3: Goethe Institute

The Goethe Institute is one of the organisations that aim to reverse power imbalance between cooperation partners. I spoke with Nathalie Feldmann who administers the International Coproduction Fund (IKF). When we spoke via Zoom, I perceived Feldmann as an administrator in the traditional sense who worked for a larger cultural institution in an office setting. Our conversation took less than an hour, and in contrast to previous interviews in which there was small talk involved and discussions with administrators around upcoming events of shared contacts that fostered a sense of familiarity, this interview seemed more careful in the choice of words and critical discussion around her institution. It was different from the self-critique that Benjes mentioned and from the work of INM administrators who seemed part of the scene and excited about my research and the institutional critique involved.

With regards to social proximity, both Lisa Benjes from INM and Dahlia Borsche from the DAAD presented as someone equally involved in performing arts communities through her previous and current curatorial work at CTM festival. In contrast, Feldmann as a coordinator (*Koordinator*in*) and a *Sachbearbeiter*in,*[23] which in German, translates into case worker, official, or administrator, struck me as an official representative of a cultural institution concerned about issues of diversity, yet stuck in the bureaucratic apparatus of the institution despite her involvement in the scenes. She stresses the crucial difference between the two is the term *Sachbearbeiter*in* still describes a role in which there is little involvement in the

---

[23] The gender Asterix [*Gendersternchen*] is part of gender-neutral language use of German nouns and refers to all genders and non-binary people.

scenes on the ground, Feldmann seemed keen to put these terms into question as they carry bureaucratic hierarchies and constraints that distance administrators from musicians simply through the way each job role, either *Koordinator*in* or *Sachbearbeiter*in*, is structured.

International Coproduction Fund (IKF)

The IKF is the Goethe Institute's international funding scheme that aims to address former hegemonic relationships between European producer and colonial subject by giving back leadership and resources to cultural producers in "developing" and "transition" countries (Nathalie Feldmann, 9 September 2022, online). These labels that many understandably view as problematic often influenced by the language used in the cultural policy guidelines from the Federal Foreign Office supplying most of the funds. As the cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Goethe Institute has been promoting the German language and culture through intercultural exchange projects, funding schemes, language classes and events. It was founded in the 1950s to restore the idea of Germany and culture in Germany after the Second World War, starting with language schools and local cultural work as separate sectors. In the beginning, the Goethe Institute functioned as an export mechanism to carry German culture abroad and later strengthened the strand of cultural exchange project rather than acting, as Feldmann outlined, "as a one-line mouthpiece to the outside world". Nowadays, the Goethe Institute and other institutions are starting to turn their back to a promotion of German inclusivity and performative cosmopolitanism or projects involving migrants merely by way of inclusion in Western classical music projects with their "oriental" instruments as sole way of including migrantised and international musicians.

The Goethe Institute has local offices worldwide and is regarded an important body that implements cultural policy strategies at the federal level. Alongside organisations such as the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (*ifa*), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Berlin Cultural Senate with executing association Initiative Neue Music and BKM-funded[24] Musikfonds e.V., the Goethe Institute is one of the most important cultural institutions in the realm of cultural promotion and foreign cultural policy implementations. It uses public funds by the German Foreign Office with no obligation to reflect Germany's values and ideology or act on cultural heritage preservation, yet the content loosely reflects the Goethe Institute's motto "Language, Culture, Germany" (*Sprache, Kultur, Deutschland*).

There are no thematic requirements for projects e.g., to reflect on anything German as the reference to Germany is given through cooperation with partners in Germany as Feldmann stresses. In their general strategy, the Foreign Office can have a say on the allocation of funds, but no the content, decision-making on projects taken on under the umbrella of the *Internationaler Koproduktionsfonds* (IKF) which will be discussed in the following sections. The Goethe Institute acts as a government-funded intermediary organisation, it plays a key role

---

[24] BKM stands for *Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien* (Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media), an overarching governmental body in charge of cultural and media matters in Germany.

fostering cross-border collaborations between German musicians and musicians in countries that the Goethe Institute considers as "transitioning and developing countries" through schemes such as the IKF. With developing strategies regarding EDI policies, it also becomes an interesting site to examine notions of institutional self-critique and postcolonial activism from the side of the institution. Past projects included a decolonising panel with Kofi Agawu and a long-standing cooperation with world-music critical platform for global sound phenomena, Norient, for their *Timezones* podcast, which resonates with Feldmann's observation that "the concept of world music is viewed very critically in the music department" (Nathalie Feldmann, 9 September 2022, online).

Curatorial Agency

I interviewed Nathalie Feldmann online as part of my institutional ethnography on the funding apparatus of Berlin's *freie Szene* when I noticed the Goethe Institute logo frequently appearing on flyers, websites, and concert posters across town at venues experimenting Lebanese musicians would perform. Noticing the involvement of the Goethe Institute in the cultural productions of international artists in the experimental scenes across Berlin in Beirut, I had to reconsider my assumptions regarding musician's alleged "anti-institutionalism" as often described in the anarchic sentiments of the *freie Szene*. The question forming concerned the role that these institutions play today in shaping the cultural landscape, as well as the dominant aesthetic, in the independent arts scenes in both Berlin and Beirut. On the point of "independence", how independent were musicians from the demands of cultural institutions, were they merely making use of the funds with a sense of "reclaiming power"? Upon closer examination, it became apparent that many federally funded institutions were actively encouraging institutional critique and non-involvement as part of their mission statement which changed the way Lebanese musicians engage with white-dominated cultural institutions in Berlin. Lines between administrators, curators, decision-makers, and musicians became increasingly blurred.

In conversation with Feldmann, I learned that in recent decades the Goethe Institute has actively tried to question their role as an institution with cultural imperialist heritage.[25] Goethe became a space that actively aims challenges the historic power relations between cultural institution and musicians from the Global South in the way diversity policies are interpreted and implemented in their resources management and decision-making processes. Where these changes of an active challenging of institutional hierarchies appear is in (a) the composition of jury members selecting fundable projects, (b) the way finances are distributed and managed by giving sole responsibility to non-German artists (c) the relocation of decision-making power to non-German musicians. Many of those decision-making processes have been described as an act of "curation". Curation, as described in my chapter on curation and curatorial critique, carries the historical baggage of "star-curatorship" (Balzer 2015), and the power imbalance

---

[25] Lisa Benjes discussed this point in our interview: "They are already very aware of their role as cultural imperialists and also often question themselves in their projects and funding policies" (Lisa Benjes, Interview, 17 October 2022, online)

between European curators and those involved in a performing arts festival or exhibition format.

Going forward, I will speak about this specific strategy for artist empowerment as "curatorial agency". In 2017, in Tehmina Goskar and Emmie Kell speak about curatorial agency in their joint paper "Collaborative leadership and the democratisation of curation" which draws on the relationship between decision-making, knowledge-making and power in context of curation. Discussing the curation of the Cornish National Collection by the Citizen Curators programme, Goskar writes that "if we follow our philosophy of a curator as part knowledge maker, part communicator it is logical that curatorial agency has the potential to carry much power. That power can be used for change, or it can be restrained to resist it. I won't make a value judgement as to whether change is necessarily a good thing or not" (Goskar 2019). Curatorial agency in the Institute's IKF fund this lies with coproducer which can be collective–usually two to four individuals–an individual musician or institution.

To explore how cultural institutions, encourage specifically *artist-led* curation and co-production as a form curatorial agency through leadership based on diversity-oriented cultural policies, I looked at the International Coproduction Fund (IKF) which was set up in 2016. Feldmann has been working as the coordinator of the IKF since June 2021 after having joined the Music Division of the Goethe Institute in 2020 as a trainee. She outlines the difficulties of changing approaches to cultural funding in an institution with tight bureaucratic structures and whose mission was established sine the 1950s. Feldmann stresses that "these are structures that cannot be changed overnight".

The Goethe Institute's IKF promotes music, dance, theatre, performance projects, interdisciplinary projects and provides 70 to 80 per cent of the funding for these projects, supporting projects on a pro rata basis with a maximum funding amount of 25,000 EUR. In our interview, she describes the mission of the IKF and the idea of distributed responsibility and diminish gatekeeping for resource management in the performing arts sector. The IKF promotes collaboration and sustainable network connections between German and international artists in their respective scenes as the key aspect of the institution's postcolonial strategy. Feldmann tells me about the idea behind the IKF:

> "It was set up as a funding programme to explicitly promote cooperation between artists and cultural workers worldwide, and it is very important that this shift goes to the perspective of foreign countries. Applications and initial project ideas must come from abroad, originate abroad and cultural workers abroad must look for project partners in Germany or already work together with them." (Nathalie Feldmann, Interview, 9 September 2022, online).

In the evaluation of the applications, the selecting jury looks especially at the interpersonal, alongside professional, relationship between cultural producers with a focus on the affective nature of the artist exchange process and asked questions about the collaboration in the consultation meetings prior to applications. This is to evaluate if artists cooperate at "eye level" and whether IKF's eligibility criteria for a specific distribution of power are met. In practical

terms, this means looking at the distribution of fees in the financial plan to understand in which form musicians have been reimbursed, how each project participant is involved with the budget plan being the best indicator to evaluate claims for a power redistribution. The way the jury is put together is another aspect that reflects institutional accountability. The IKF appoints international artists as part of their jury which are newly appointed for each funding round. In doing so, the Goethe Institute aims to keep a low profile in the jury process to limit their own influence in the final decision-making process. The jury consists of five members: one colleague from a Goethe Institute abroad, two advisory board members, one advisory board member for dance and theatre, and two international experts covering all genres - performance, dance, theatre, music, possibly media art or visual art- are covered and equipped to deal with a variety of applications.

By the end of each project, at least one performance must take place abroad. This is to make sure artists are not only creating an insular project but ensure a sustainable implementation of their project findings so that networks between Germany and partner countries can be created. This coincides with Goethe Institute's idea of a network as a web of multiple local institutions that provide multiperspectivity and access to local scenes rather than consisting of singular actors within a local scene. The institutional networks are utilised to provide migrantised and international musicians with agency. When German-based artists are born outside of Germany, the Goethe Institute would look at the ways they are connected or associated within musicians, venues, and independent scenes abroad to assess eligibility for the IKF. This may potentially lead to similar issues of social elitism as outlined in the section on DAAD's artist residency programme because the IKF is aimed at professional artists who are already somewhat established in the respective scenes.

As Valiquet's research on the electroacoustic scene in Montreal points out, aesthetic hierarchies are often "negotiated by producers and policymakers in specific historical and cultural contexts" rather than a product of organic mutations of local scenes (Valiquet 2019). With Goethe Institute acting on the foreign policy aims of the Foreign Office, the IKF evaluates project not based on specific concepts, musical genres, or sonic aesthetics but on artists' relationship to the discourse, e.g., migration narratives, identity questions, reflected on in the project. This concern was validated in my interview with Feldmann, as she explains: "Goethe Institute plays on a high discursive level, although of course we often have discussions internally about the extent to which you support discursively strong projects in comparison to the so-called artistic quality" (Nathalie Feldmann, Interview, 9 September 2022, online).

The inception of funding schemes such as the International Coproduction Fund (IKF) in the past decade show how influential institutions aim to revert former power hierarchies and empower international and migrantised musicians in Berlin. By being responsible for managing and distributing resources on behalf of the German Foreign Office, they execute the cultural policy aims for diversification based on trends, aesthetic hierarchies, and regional developments in the different federal states. In doing so, they become an integral part of the experimental Arabic networks that form across different nation states. Cultural institutions such as the Goethe Institute not only provide their own infrastructure for these networks to evolve,

but through shifting the decision-making and curatorial agency to the *freie Szene*, reduce the barriers for gatekeeping in the local scenes that are formerly based on white curators and institutions' decision making and pre-eminence for resource management in Germany. Similar to Dahlia Borsche's advisory role for musicians throughout the application process, Feldmann aims to be available as administrators for consultations regarding the IKF. This is further supported by encouraging administrators' involvement in the scene through funded scene observation (*Szenebeobachtung*). As seen with INM and DAAD, Goethe Institute likewise aims to blur the strict boundaries between allegedly being an unreachable institution and being part of the creative class in Berlin themselves.

White Saviour Tropes

From conversations with administrators and musicians, institutional curators in Germany may increasingly engage with anti-racist approaches as part of diversity policies as outlined in the funding schemes by INM, Goethe Institute and DAAD, however, many white dominated cultural institutions fail to see the intersectionality of different forms of oppression in Arabic-speaking communities and begin their decolonising efforts by critiquing world music in Germany. Particularly the past decade, efforts of involving Syrian musicians in programmes specifically drawing on narratives on Arab struggle are often dismissed by migrated musicians as white guilt or a trend towards decolonisation that does not aim for long-lasting change. In addition, Berlin-based composer Zeina Azouqah stresses in our interview that in many well-intended projects there are select issues that white producers and audiences choose to engage with. Gender inequality and sexism, rather than racism, are predominant issues of interest as white audiences and cultural producers may also be impacted by these disparities.

Discussing these issues with musicians in Berlin, I learned that many feel as if world music critique in Germany is often the result of decolonising efforts and aims for diversification in one's programme, thus often accompanied by a sense of tokenism in cases where musicians with various Arab backgrounds are subsumed under the label "oppressed minority", as Jordanian-Circassian musician Zeina Azouqah outlines during our interview in Berlin: "They try to do the whole thing of 'we're working with Arab women' but I'm sorry, I'm not the same as an Arab woman that's a refugee, or an Arab woman that's born and raised in London - there are all different. You can't just lump all the Arab women together and say "we're working with them and oppressed. It's unfair to people that face multiple intersections of oppression that play into each other" (Zeina Azouqah, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin).

Many musicians appreciate the resource management and funding provision by INM, Musikfonds, Goethe Institute and the DAAD, but criticise the fixation on terminology and concepts of diversity that do not deal with the root of issues that Arab musicians experience in Germany. In our interview, Rabih outlined: "I'm more concerned with day-to-day problems rather than conceptual stuff. I think all these things are vanishing soon, all these conversations we have, we don't know what the future holding, maybe nobody will care about these problems [decolonisation] and everyone will get tired to talk about the problems in the Arab world and

we move onto something new, the post-Covid thing" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

Musicians like Khyam Allami, Raed Yassin, Rabih Beaini and Cedrik Fermont all stress that these issues seem rather be dealt on a temporary nature and seem more like a trend rather than sustainable change in the way Arab musicianship is experienced in Germany, arguing that that "counter-world music narratives" are neither efficient not afforesting the real access issues including sexism, anti-Palestinian racism and discrimination towards migrantised Germans in the music industry, and the low pay of female musicians as opposed to their male opponents. Azouqah outlines how the musicians visible in Germany often come from the same background which leads to the gatekeeping mechanisms that even internationalising efforts cannot tackle if barriers of access are not addressed, bringing up issues of class and diversification in these institutional efforts:

> "Most people are from similar social background. Similar class, race, training is basically the same. Even if it's international, by the way, I don't see international as being diverse because if it's all middle-class white kids it's not diverse. But it's a structural thing, because I went through the whole thing of trying to find different people to play with and I realised that sometimes, when you're looking for migrants from a similar social background or people that have been structurally oppressed, there is a whole other level of social responsibility without having the training for that (Zeina Azouqah, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin).

Performance of care and social responsibility is often neglected in these projects, especially when dealing with musicians from lower economic backgrounds and those facing multiple intersecting forms of oppression at once. Hence, class plays a major role also for Zeina Azouqah as many orchestras include white Germans as players as orchestras do not have the tools to help them nor the interest, nor have refugees the tools to express how they may be feeling. Often, it is other migrated musicians doing the sustainable diversity work in connecting with other migrant musicians as a form of activism. Azouqah described how many do not understand the social responsibility of doing actual anti-racist work: "Some people have good intentions and say, 'yay let's work with refugees' this kind of "optimistic mindset, they were not thinking of this aspect of 'you're dealing with extremely traumatised people who for the most part don't have the tools to express themselves about the trauma or are repressing it.' So, they end of in hospital, physical symptoms, chronic pain and at the end of the day, the ensemble is, again, just an international mostly white middle-class orchestra" (Zeina Azouqah, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin).

Tokenism

Many musicians are also aware of the tokenism with some being more interested to talk about this subject than others. While many white-dominated institutions criticise their anxieties of cultural appropriations, other musicians of Arabic backgrounds mention that "it's just fun, not orientalist" when white spectatorship maps onto Arabic-speaking spaces. When I discussed the

work of Habibi Funk[26] with Rabih Beaini, the producer is keen to oppose the many anxieties that white-curators and audiences feel over cultural appropriation and cultural voyeurism. Beaini believes that, even if the rising interest of booking Arab musicians is a trend, it would not concern him because, if one's music is "good enough", one's conceptual approach and quality of style would still be sufficient in securing opportunities to perform. His awareness and lack of concern surprised me and helped me understand how the building of artist-led infrastructures such as his Morphine Raum studio enable musicians to function outside of orientalist trends and tokenistic booking requests at festivals that increase the diversity of their respective line-up:

> "It doesn't bother me. I know what they mean when they say they're just booked because they are... but it's something that grows in the head like "what if I wasn't Lebanese or what if this is a wave and it will go" well if you are a good musician, you will stay. If you're not a good musician, you will go, whether you're Lebanese, Egyptian, German, or French. That is how I view things. Now, there is a trend, that's a different thing, I don't have a problem with that. To be honest with you, and straightforward, there is a trend, where I'm being booked at where some of the bookers and promoters calling me because of the trend and because they want Arabic musicians, and they include me - zero problem. Because I have the trust that, when the trend stops, I still have enough... I'm not a victim of it, and I don't victimise myself. That's what I try to explain to all these other musicians. Why do you even reject this? Like, embrace it! Talking about these things became a trend as well" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

With a musician that wishes to stay anonymous, I speak also about the tokenism and the utilisation of Arabic musicians with refugee backgrounds and Babylon orchestra. They report that orchestras and other projects that involve Arab musicians do not have a good understanding of the psychological needs of musicians that are part of marginalised communities that often display their own name on top of the programme and receive full credit for work that Arab musicians have create it but not been credited for. Even though the artist-led institutions I look at in this thesis operate outside exoticist demands of structures like Babylon Orchestra, musicians yet outline that there are in fact still issues which musicians from the SWANA region experience which often happens not in club scenes, but in international programming: "Festivals are the issue when it comes to creating stereotypes and exoticism: When I say the festival scene, it's the festival curators. It's the more curated, when there is a series for example, about people coming from different places from outside of Europe, and I don't mind that, because I don't play more than before. I always find a balance between these two things. The club scene doesn't operate like this, not yet. They operate like "this thing has the energy to make me dance, it can be anything, if it's weird and make me dance, that's fun" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

This section allowed an insight into the current realities of many diaspora musicians in Germany that face intersecting forms of discrimination. From a dismissal of one's voice to

---

[26] German-born producer collecting and remixing classical Arabic recordings.

"well-intended" comments about appearances, Zeina Azouqah notes that she has been made very conscious of her role as an Arab woman in Germany:

> "Discrimination based on names in Germany and class facial features is very real. Didn't get a lot of jobs because of name, obviously, it's only theory. But for example, I emailed about jobs and cc'ed people with more Western names, that sounded more like John Smith, so people would mostly write back to German colleague, and I would never even get the email. 'It's an effort to reply to someone in cc, delete the name of the person who send the email.' Or random comments about how my name is spelled from colleagues or professors, that sort of thing. This total disregard of the existence of my culture. Or they are this thing of them using my appearance to make themselves more comfortable because I was more of a practicing Muslim when I was in Nuremberg–fasting, didn't drink, didn't eat pork–and it made people uncomfortable. They would be like 'you look Jewish, or you could be French', like using my appearance to make them more comfortable and to have something to connect to. I was like, 'well I could be but I'm not'. Anti-Arab racism, the anti-Slavism, the anti-Muslim racism. A lot of people have fair skin but there are living through this very real discrimination that is preventing them from working, finding housing and leaves them to be shunt from a lot of social conscience, so, in the case of Germany, it's unfair to focus solely on skin tone - you're not that black, you're one of us. Making them more adjacent to something they are comfortable with, while completely denying their cultural identity" (Zeina Azouqah, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin).

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter on the administrative and socio-political framework surrounding diasporic music productions, we can see how cultural productions of Lebanese musicians are embedded in a range of diversity-sensitive practices that aim to provide Arab musicians with curatorial agency. Looking closely at the funding schemes of INM, DAAD and Goethe Institute that Lebanese musicians engage with, one can see that funding administrators are equally keen for networks to develop from within the scene by providing the following structures.

First, distributing resources by putting formerly marginalised musicians, rather than funding administrators, in charge of the curation, artistic direction and distribution of the funding. Second, institutional administrators make a conscious effort of institutions to take a back seat in the organisation of performances, panels, and network meetings. Third, we can see a diversification in the formation of selection juries that decide over funding for international musicians. Four, platforms such as INM show how institutions aim to support anchoring structures of the scene by providing resources, networks, and material support. Five, there is a greater openness to results and lack of pressure to produce final performances, as seen in the residency programmes and funding scheme of the DAAD's Berliner Künstlerprogramm. Six, through a provision of free workshops, professional advice, bi-lingual support in administering grassroots projects to support the scene, institutions are able to shape artist-led networks in ways that encourages curatorial agency. In the following chapter, I will be focusing on affective and sentimental reasons of experimental music practices becomes a productive way to understand the motivations and goals of Lebanese musicians in Berlin's *freie Szene*.

Chapter 2: Affective Dimension of Berlin's *freie Szene*

The previous chapter outlined the policy frameworks of diaspora music making in Germany. In this chapter, I look at musicians and curators that produce sound within, and outside, these infrastructures. Specifically, the focus will lie on the affective dimension of Berlin's *freie Szene* and the way curators, administrators and musicians interact with one another throughout the curatorial process. This includes analysing the work of bi-national performance duos that challenge the binary logic of ethnicised and de-ethnicised music. I demonstrate how diasporic and German-born musicians work together in friendship-based networks, how they share resources and care structures during the pandemic that blur the boundaries between performance spaces as public and the home as private. Finally, I will consider how associations around social elitism of improvisational practices, and the history of experimental music in Germany, map onto debates around progress, tradition, and modernity as well as the aesthetic judgements that musician and curators hold when following these colonial frameworks.

The *freie Szene*

When speaking to musicians and administrators, I explored previous and current mechanisms of exclusion of migrantised and international musicians in Berlin. My aim was to shed light on the socio-historical and political factors that tie musicians together as part of the *Berliner Szene*. Some people refer to the *freie Szene* in Berlin as "the Berlin scene" to describe the independent performing arts landscape in the city. The label *freie Szene* goes back to a cultural movement with general left-wing ideology operating outside of larger institutions and developing specific aesthetic markers since the 1960s in Germany. As Veronika Darian has pointed out, the *freie Szene* in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as rooted in the "amateur sector" and was "characterised by protest and social commitment" while today's *freie Szene* is associated with an increasing professionalisation and academisation (Darian et al. 2022: 191). This can be seen in the tendency of sound artists and musicians to pursue PhDs, organise event series in higher education institutions, or hold academic posts in sound studies or musicology.

In addition to this development, members of the *freie Szene* are considered key players in aesthetic development of the cultural landscape, and the increasing internationalisation of the German cultural landscape and an opening of funding schemes to migrating musicians. Musicians I interviewed who consider themselves part of the *freie Szene* are often freelance musicians working across institutions and countries yet report different forms of affiliations with other musicians which causes social networking effects. They mostly describe forms of *city* belonging, as well as a social affiliation to specific venues, networks of institutions which I will in the following describe as *institutional* belonging. In the *freie Szene*, many musicians associate themselves with the aesthetic of the *Echtzeitmusikszene*, a sub-group of the Berliner Szene that emerged in the mid-1990s (Blažanović 2012) alongside the Berlin-based Splitter Orchester since 2010. Hence, what becomes important for studying the *experimentelle freie Szene* in Berlin is the association with, and ties to, these very networks and their affiliations to Berlin's sonic urban aesthetic that will be outlined later in this chapter.

This brings me to the political function of the independent scene. The *freie Szene* has previously been described as a crucial tool for the "aesthetic development" (*ästhetische Weiterentwicklung*) in Germany. Often, artists in the *freie Szene* "decidedly cannot realise their art forms in existing institutionalised [theatre] structures, as they exist in the German municipal theatre system" (Canyürek 2022: 254). This is why for "aesthetic reasons", as the policy researcher describes, many artists grow increasingly responsible for developing new sonic structures and formats outside these systems which later will be implemented in the structures of the municipal funding systems. Therefore, long-term funding structures should exist so that independent artists have planning security and social security "in order to take on the critical function of aesthetic development, which is also in the political interest of the municipality or the state, sustainably and effectively over longer periods of time" (Canyürek 2022).

In processes of aesthetic development, which will be outlined in the following, I will look at beliefs around trust and what has been described as "long-term fundamental trust" (*langjähriges Grundvertrauen*) between musicians and cultural institutions. I argue that trust put into diasporic project work enables a relative self-sufficiency for artists and allow artists to have greater flexibility for long-term planning when working with multi-year funding structures. The development towards institutionally funded and friendship-based collaborations show how the *freie Szene* organises itself within private and state-funded public structures that allow for sustainable development of its own infrastructures and social resources. Alternatives to develop infrastructures from institutional side are current endeavours by administrators like Gregor Hotz from the German funding body of Musikfonds e.V. to build sustainable and long-lasting funding programmes that are necessary for the maintenance of the *freie Szene* and for those independently working in the field of performing arts.

Echtzeitmusik

Marta Blažanović was one of the first researchers to study the *Echtzeitmusikszene* and its social and discursive context as a particular phenomenon emerging in, and markedly shaping, the cultural landscape in Berlin. I argue in the following chapter that Lebanese experimenting artists are connected to the aesthetics and cultural history of the *Echtzeitmusikszene* and social network of the *freie Szene*, rather than ethnicised musical scenes other diaspora musicians might find themselves in when emigrating to Germany. As Blažanović describes, the documentation of the *freie Szene*, specifically its social and cultural impact and influence on international scenes such as the one in Beirut, has rarely been subject of academic research. The *Echtzeitmusikszene* is important as a development within the *freie Szene* due to the aesthetic approach and history connecting it to the political left, Berlin squatter culture and ties to the Jazz and experimental electronic music scenes, as well as the New Music scenes with which the *Echtzeitmusikszene* "shares certain aesthetic features, funding and a similar marginal position in the field of culture" (Blažanović 2012).

Aesthetically connected to John Cage's compositional theory and principles of collective, free improvisation, it is "often labelled as 'Berlin Reductionism' and identified themselves as 'composer-performers'." (Blažanović 2012: 63). This connection to New Music, as opposed to

popular music, is important for reasons outlines in the following section. The ideology of post-cold war East-Berlin squatting culture becomes especially important when looking at the way spaces and associated aesthetics emerge based on the industrial architectural in which international musicians in Berlin find themselves in. After the fall of the Berlin Wall the creative class in Berlin occupied empty buildings in Berlin and was marked by its "alternative, anarchist and left oriented, squatter culture partially overlaps with the so-called "left scene" (cf. Golova 2011, see Blažanović 2012). In Blažanović's own words:

> "The young people who occupied the empty spaces of central East Berlin in the 1990s, even though they were most often rebellious anarchists interested in alternative lifestyles, were also largely interested in alternative culture and experimental arts. Next to techno and punk-rock, that allegedly dominated the music scene back then, a lot of space opened for more 'seriously' oriented musical and artistic ideas as well" (Blažanović 2012: 51).

The *Echtzeitmusikszene*, first as a collective, then label and later website and concert calendar, was distinct yet related to the free jazz and free improvisation scene in Berlin yet developed an approach to musical improvisation that is formative for the sound of the Lebanese artists around Morphine Raum. The aesthetic principles were tied to a set of "unspoken rules" that produces its particular sound as Gregor Hotz tells me in our interview. Gregor Hotz, director of Musikfonds e.V. and founder of the venue Berlin venue *Ausland*, is a former member of the *Echtzeitmusikszene* in 1990s Berlin. We meet at his office in Wedding when he tells me about his past involvement in the *Echtzeitmusikszene*, describing the way *Echtzeitmusik* distinguished themselves from the free jazz and New Music scenes:

> "It's a bit of an art concept, and we used it consciously at the time. We wanted to set ourselves apart a bit, I think. We were all still quite young and we thought we were reinventing the wheel, which is not true of course [laughs], but we wanted to distinguish ourselves a bit from the free music production [free jazz record label]. But those were the classic free jazzers. Hardly any women, almost only men and everything from black American free jazz, which was also taken up in Europe and led to a revolution (…) I also remember a trumpet player who came from Ensemble Moderne [New Music ensemble], came to Berlin, got fed up with all the New Music shit and said "enough, I'm doing *Echtzeit* now" (Gregor Hotz, Interview, 11 August 2022, Berlin).

Dahlia Borsche from DAAD further explains that the *Echtzeitmusikszene* has an extremely strong aesthetic framework. She highlighted that, "it is very clear what was possible and what was not. For example, it was very clear that any normal rhythm is not possible, any melody, in the classical sense, is a taboo, any harmonic progression is an absolute no-go... that has slowly softened. But that's the framework within which you move. Nobody has written it down or said it, but these are already unwritten laws according to which we work and produce" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

The way Lebanese musicians are docked onto the *freie Szene* and *Echtzeitmusikszene* is primarily through musicians such as Mazen Kerbaj who arrived in Berlin in through the DAAD's *Berliner Künstlerprogramm* (see chapter 1). It is through singular actors as well as

networking opportunities at experimental, free improvisation and free jazz music festivals that the main group of Lebanese musicians got to know administrators such as Gregor Hotz from the *Echtzeitmusikszene*. Furthermore, ongoing collaborations and exchanges between the Lebanese Irtijal Festival with Berlin venues such as Ausland and Exploratorium allow for a solidification of the ties between both countries. Gregor Hotz describes:

> "I know Lebanon primarily through Mazen Kerbaj. I got to know the Irtijal Festival, Sharif Sehnaoui, Mazen [Kerbaj], and Christine [Abdelnour] through the Free Production Music Festival in the 90s. I hadn't been here that long, Sharif and Christine were still in Beirut. Mazen was still in Beirut - we met in the audience because we were somehow sitting near each other, since then we knew each other. I've known people like Magda Mayas for a long time - I know a lot of people who have been to Beirut several times for Irtijal, so I know Mazen [Kerbaj], Raed [Yassin], Sharif [Sehnaoui], Tony Elieh. I also have a connection to an event space that I co-founded a long time ago, which is *Ausland* in Prenzlauerberg. There was Irtijal Berlin Edition which took place at *Wabe* which *Ausland* organised" (Gregor Hotz, Interview, 11 August 2022, Berlin).

Since the 1990s, the *Echtzeitmusikszene*'s ties to prestigious state-funded grants and programmes meant the challenging the binary of sub- and high culture productions that distinguish anti-state and anarchist sentiments from those considering itself part of German cultural heritage and their funding pots. Blažanović describes that "The *Echtzeitmusikszene* is one of the phenomena that on first sight do not fit into any of the mentioned categories. However, for more than one decade the scene has declared itself as related to New Music, and since the late 1990s has been structured and [financially] supported through *INM Initiative Neue Musik Berlin*. Blažanović describes that, "the *Echtzeitmusikszene* has thus not been perceived as a separate entity with fundings of its own, but individual musicians from the scene apply for realisation of their singular projects" (Blažanović 2012: 46).

These singular musicians from the *Echtzeitmusikszene* are often collaborating with members of the Lebanese experimental scene including Mazen Kerbaj, Raed Yassin, and more recently Tony Elieh. Thus, there is not a coherent network but a specific aesthetic and collaborative approach that experimenting musicians with Lebanese background are involved in. Drawing similar boundaries around these musicians, by looking at the collaborations, appearances in certain event calendars, publications (*field notes*) who work as advertising channels to the specific audience and funding schemes, results in what I, and others, loosely describe as *Die Berliner Szene* or the *freie Szene*.

As my fieldwork findings will point out, diversity is seen as an inherent characteristic of the *freie Szene* that is less institutionally driven and more a social phenomenon coming out of artist-led institution building (Canyürek 2022: 276). However, the aesthetics associated with this artist-led diversity, as Patrick Valiquet points out, are less part of this social development and mainly policy and institutionally led (Valiquet 2019). In other words, the mixing of musicians from different ethnic backgrounds is due to their networks while the sonic aesthetic in these networks is influenced by the educational institutions e.g., Jazzhochschulen, and

funding pots, they apply to, the venues they perform at and the musicians they collaborate with, which, in turn, are subject to the same taste-making processes. Since the funding increase for the independent scene in the past decade from 182.584.800 EUR in 2013 to 289.200.700 EUR for publicly funded cultural activities (*Kulturförderung*) in the 2021 policy proposal (Schmidt et al. 2022: 763), we can see the influence, visibility, and social impact of the independent performing arts sector reflected in the cultural landscape, the authors argue. Both the *freie Szene* and the state-funded institutions with their cultural diplomacy mission are more closely connected in terms of their networks which shaped the way institutions may require certain aesthetics or draw them from within the *freie Szene*.

Attracting not only tourists, but creative labour more globally to the city, the support for these kinds of music underlines what previous studies have found as the "central selling points for cities that aspire to global city status" (Kosnick 2014:15; see also Florida 2003). Unlike earlier *MultiKulti* projects, Lebanese musicians and those belonging to the *Echtzeitmusikszene* are not framed by their identity or background when showcasing their sound experiments but seen as assets to the cultural scene by bringing cultural capital, networks, and contacts to the city. The musical styles produced by diasporic musicians is thus nurturing the city's subcultural appeal which is tied to specific venues and funding schemes as grassroots projects help generate economic capital and provide cultural productions to tourists and newcomers who travel to Berlin for its vibrant subculture. For example, posters for concerts and professional flyers are displayed across the city's coffee shops and bars, clearly displaying the logos of federal funding bodies on the front page, almost proving the legitimacy and superiority of experimental music in Berlin as an act of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984).

Looking closer at the curatorial processes behind experimental performances of diaspora musicians across the city, it became clear that the affective dimension of this lose network, the cultural webs of significance (Geertz 1973) spun around specific "underground" institutions and the habitus of audience members associated with a specific scene all shaped the sonic atmosphere and listening practices in (post)migrant venues in Berlin. The way these performances came into place also created an aesthetic of collaboration that determined the style of playing according to the respective formation and venue. Based on these aspects, networks emerge through a specific social affordance, in which credibility and trust is built on the selection of musicians and listeners through scene-specific promotional channels, venues and sonic aesthetics. Therefore, the curation of (post)migrant performances must be thought of in terms of a framework that privileges network effects, social interactions, and non-human agents such as the performance spaces and city itself over the single figure of the curator.

Funding and (In)dependency

This section will deal with questions of funding and perceived (in)dependence of artist-led diasporic music productions from the aesthetics and performance of cultural institutions. In conversations with musicians, I noticed strong opinions about funding and how being tied to arts funding may enable and likewise both restrict and govern experimental practices. I will find out how the (in)dependence from schemes may aid the development of the Berlin-Beirut

connection and likewise foster artist-built diversity outside institutional infrastructures. If institutions are involved, I examine how they still encourage agency despite funding requirements.

An anti-commercialist agenda that may be extended to an anti-state-funding stance in parts of the scene, has been mentioned as an integral part of the unwritten set of rules of the *Echtzeitmusikszene* and today's *freie Szene* when I spoke to administrators and musicians. However, the funding has certainly increased as the "underground culture scene" becomes a major marketing point of Berlin's cultural tourism and innovative hub for new approaches to diversity and accessibility. The increased funding for the *freie Szene*, specifically since the pandemic, has led to musicians that would consider themselves anarchist or anti-establishment using funding bodies of state-support, considered high culture due to affiliated audiences and promotion channels.[27] Dependency on institutional funding thus seen as a limitation to new ideas in the field of experimental music and innovation. One of the prevailing questions has been whether funding applications and the expectations of (re)producing certain aesthetics or works has influenced the creative process.

Nowadays many musicians may still not apply to the funding schemes available to them and are aware of the dangers of committing to a funding scheme that limits their output as tombak player Joss Turnbull describes in our interview: "I can say that for me I don't see it as problematic anymore, simply because - we're just out of the age... or let's put it this way: yes, there is the danger that funding applications influence you, definitely, but for me I can say that I don't see it as problematic anymore. Simply because - I think if it doesn't fit, I don't do it. And if it fits, I do it, or if I have to make it fit, I make it fit, but I still do it the way I want to do it and then it still works because it doesn't completely leave the framework. But I never develop projects just to suit a funding call." (Joss Turnbull, Interview, 7 January 2022, Berlin). Turnbull is one of the musicians who established a strong connection between Beirut, Berlin and Mannheim as will be outlined in chapter 5 in detail.

The approach to funding refusal to remain independent from institutions is less so today as the *freie Szene* is increasingly and often exclusively supported by state-funding. Musicians like Cedrik Fermont might criticise the bureaucratic systems that inhibit him from making spontaneous decisions and long-term travels often necessary for the kind of networking he tries to facilitate, but they are increasingly applying to the funding available. Cedrik describes: "It's easier for me to be independent like this because if I had the money, I'd just book my flights and go and that's it, it'd earn a bit of money with gigs, sometimes not, but I was free to do

---

[27] One of these channels is INM – Initative Neue Musik –, alongside Musikfonds and Goethe Institute. INM also publishes the event magazine f*ield notes*. Marta Blažanović who conducted an ethnography on the organisation, explains: "*INM –Initiative neue Musik* was founded in 1991 with support from the Berlin Senate in order to represent and protect the interests of the Berlin free music scene. It claims to be aesthetically and structurally open. *INM* is directly funded by the cultural affairs department of the Berlin Senate and further distributes funding to the chosen applied projects. The distribution of funding is decided by the jury selected from the members of *INM* every two years. *INM* also publishes a concert calendar for contemporary music in Berlin" (Blažanović 2012).

whatever I wanted and I didn't have to report to anyone" (Cedrik Fermont, Interview, 30 December 2021, Berlin).

The musicians I spoke to often emigrated to Berlin since 2015, some after the 2020 Beirut explosion and, due to the already large Lebanese community and friendship groups in Berlin, get involved in the city's experimental music scene by way of residency programmes, collaborative projects and funding support by the Senate, Goethe Institute, DAAD, *Auswärtiges Amt* (Foreign Office) or other state-funded projects dedicated to the development of diversity in the cultural sector in Berlin. In an interview with Lebanese-born musician and photographer Tony Elieh, he expresses his surprise about being granted a freelancer residence permit for three years to pursue his career as an artist in Germany.[28] Elieh moved to Berlin with his wife and son, and stresses that the availability of funding schemes, performance opportunities and artist networks he has built since have indeed been a motivating factor and shaping factor of his identity as a musician:

> "In Beirut, at the end, I was more of a commercial photographer, and I really hated it at the end. I don't want to stress myself over a shampoo bottle. I was thinking, what the fuck, it's just shampoo. Spending two to three weeks stressing about it. I decided, when I move here, I'll take small projects in photography, like documentation for friends or bands when they want photos or even architecture, but anyway I don't want to do a lot of photography here. I want to concentrate more on the music because concentrating on the music is bringing me a lot of stuff. (…) I was thinking what I need right now. In Beirut I was out of projects all the time, the solo artist Tony Elieh. And when I moved to Berlin, I really concentrated on creating this identity, this Tony Elieh, like, the musician, and I succeeded in that, you know? But what I wanted from this year is something like shape. Networking, with festivals, residencies, with touring agents and all that stuff" (Tony Elieh, 9 August 2022, Interview, Berlin).

Outlining the variety of projects, he is working on, among a composition for Neue Vocalsolisten Stuttgart which will be premiered in Oslo, he mentions that he has been busier and more productive in a year in Berlin than in years spent working as a solo musician in Beirut. He attributes this also to the funding situation in Germany and Berlin specifically.

> "That's what I'm saying about the funding. They really want that here, it's not a joke, really, on the contrary. They appreciate it a lot. That's why the city is so vibrant. I have many projects and am touring all of September, that's great. My life got really much busier and that's wonderful. And that's what I was dreaming of all my life. Just because I moved here, it's happening to me. In Beirut, it wasn't happening because I was more concentrated on how to get money, how to live–Beirut is so expensive. I can't concentrate only on the music; I have to work more in photography to… yeah. And here, everything shifted and in one year: boom! So just to understand how the place can affect you. You can judge yourself all the time saying, "I'm not good at it" but maybe

---

[28] However, many musicians with shorter careers or portfolios often report extremely negative experiences with the *Ausländerbehörde* ("German Immigration Office") in their application for a freelancer residence permit. For example, they report that decisions are made on the day and only based on the assessment of a single *Sachbearbeiter*in* ("case worker") which usually has no background in assessing the cultural significance music or art production for immigration purposes.

you're great and it's only where you are" (Tony Elieh, 9 August 2022, Interview, Berlin).

When I spoke with Dahlia Borsche from the DAAD *Berliner Künstlerprogramm*, she outlined the reasons why musicians might want to refuse funding from an ideological standpoint. This can be due to anti-capitalist ideologies, for example, seen in the stance some East German musicians take. The curator calls this "a real shame" when she outlines the lack of expectations from the side of cultural institutions today and the relative independence over creative expression musicians hold in these funding schemes. Borsche does, however, briefly touches on the lack of independence for musicians engaging with any subject relating to Palestine and/or the BDS-campaign in Germany:

> "There are actually very few barriers, except for the one red line, which of course is getting thicker and thicker due to all the Documenta discussions about the Israel-Palestine conflict. Some musicians applied to the CTM to speak about BDS in the discourse programme but were radically cut out by all the funding bodies we applied to. This is something that the German state does not promote at all. This word [BDS] must not appear, everything in this field… There is a total censorship barrier. But apart from this complex of topics, one is absolutely free. I don't think that one can be taken over or is cut in when one uses state funding" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

Restrictions for, and an aversion to, funding applications drawing on Palestinian struggles in public discourse impact many Arabic-speaking diasporic music producers when engaging with their international contacts. In the following, I will outline the role that friendship and subsequent gatekeeping plays in maintaining and forming networks of experimental musicians across Berlin and Beirut while building strong ties between cultural institutions and migrated and migrantised musicians.

City Belonging

Musicians in these scenes also feel very connected to the city of Berlin, rather than Germany, and identify with the cities rather than country of residence as a main influence on their music making and amplifying factor for their collaborative work. In 2012, Blažanović included artists, writers, bands, jazz musicians, orchestras and theatre groups in the *freie Szene* whereby "this high-energy scene is constantly in flux and benefits not only from Berlin's low cost of living and its space and freedom, but from public funding for the arts."[29] As Gregor Hotz from Musikfonds e.V. describes: "That's why a lot of people come to Berlin, because here you can work in a more relaxed way as a musician, you can afford a rehearsal room and so on. And there are also many who come here from London" (Gregor Hotz, Interview, 11 August 2022, Berlin). Many musicians I spoke to agree on their sense of belonging as liked to their

---

[29] In 2012, "Estimates suggest that around 5,000 artists, 1,200 writers, 1,500 bands (pop, rock, and world music), 500 Jazz musicians, 103 professional orchestras and music ensembles, 1,500 choirs, 300 theatre groups, and 1,000 dancers and/or choreographers of contemporary dance live and work in Berlin" (Blažanović 2012: 45).

identification with cities rather than nationalities, especially with a place they have spent a long time at.

I thus argue that affective citizenship and city belonging markedly shaped the rise of international artists migrating to Berlin. Regular Morphine Raum audience member and musician, Lucy Park, British national, moved to Berlin in her early 20s to become a musician. In Luis-Manuel Garcia's study of techno tourism and techno migration to Berlin, he describes how "musical, sonic, and more broadly sensory experiences of Berlin provide the ground for an ambivalent sense of civic belonging for a cadre of migrants affiliated with the city's local electronic dance music scenes" (Garcia 2013). Park describes why she moved to Berlin in 2020 in similar terms, explaining "I had butterflies about Berlin. Every time I came here, I knew I'd need to move here. […] And yes, the whole thing, transcendental moments on the dance floor, yeah! Like when I used to come here, I just partied. I came here for weekend parties and never saw the day" (Lucy Park, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin).

When she moved to Berlin, she fled a Brexit-torn Britain, as well as a lack of affordable housing in London and tightening conditions for British nationals moving after the cut-off date including requirements for newcomers to hold 10.000 GBP in their bank account. Another reason for the growing creative class is a sense of freedom, openness and lack of pressure that may be felt in London. "In London, I was always asked what my plan in life is, for jobs, financial plans, I have never been asked that in Berlin" (Lucy Park, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin). She describes how in Berlin, the underground "became the mainstream" as the raving culture and the music is associated with the major incentive of young creatives moving to Berlin. Hence, when you say you live in Berlin "it comes with that smug smile". The perceived openness of the city and its citizens encourages the musical experimentalisms due to the way class works in Berlin and the way openness is encourages and high salary jobs are looked down upon. She explains: "I didn't come here with a plan but because I feel like I could have the life I wanted. In London, I felt self-conscious that I'm young and not sure what to do with life, and I don't have to justify this here" (Lucy Park, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin).

Furthermore, many newcomers to Berlin argue that Germans seem to value creative over financial capital. The educational, cultural, and social capital thus stands in harsh contrast to the financial capital acquired in the jobs she describes. This raises another important argument regarding the class dynamics in Berlin which have a major effect on the way creative practices and cultural productions are encouraged through the cultural capital associated with the creative class, rather than the corporate elite. In our conversation, Park describes that in Berlin, "there is bigger social pressure to do something you love and be satisfied. We hate the tech bros, same with bankers and landlords. I feel like, in Berlin it's even looked down upon if you don't do something you love. I don't think it punches down here; it punches up. And money doesn't matter really, money doesn't give you respect, it's about living authentically and being happy" (Lucy Park, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin).

Friendship and Meaningful Connections

"When things don't work: When a curator proposes a theme and puts works by a large group of artists together without establishing any relationship between them" (Abramović 2004:9). This is a statement of Marina Abramović's reflection on the *Documenta 11*, an international contemporary art exhibition in Kassel, Germany. Her critique forms part of an email correspondence among 31 artists to a question posed in an eponymous publication entitled *The Next Documenta Should Be Curated by An Artist* (2004). In her written statements, Abramović, one of the most prominent artists from Belgrade known for her work in the field of performance and endurance art, views successful curatorial work through the lens of affective encounters and the emergence of dialogue and artist networks. Ideally, different artists who are brought in a project through the person of a curator would "feel a connection" to one another (Abramović 2004:9).

As many artists involved in curatorial critique of German festival and exhibition practices, she opposes the common model of grouping artists at international exhibitions merely through the superficial measure of an overarching concept or theme which draws on the often-mentioned critique of international festivals that lack long-lasting connections, rather than visual and audible spectacles for multiculturalism of a temporary nature. Instead, she notes how "when artists choose to show work together at the same time and in the same space, this type of group show has a certain chemistry in its togetherness" (Abramović 2004:10). In the following section, I will outline the role of affect, friendship, and meaningful connections on the distribution of cultural capital in diaspora music scenes and state-funded (sub)cultural entrepreneurship. I will likewise outline the social dimensions of Morphine Raum play in the taste-making by audiences and musicians likewise. In the case study on Berlin in the following chapter, I will evaluate the ambivalent meanings of curatorship in the context of production sites of migrant music in the German capital.

When discussing the role of friendship, many musicians and cultural workers draw on their affective relations and friendships with other musicians as mutual empowerment and care. Hence, I outline the role that friendship and kin-relations play in the forming of these affective networks, specifically the networks between Berlin and Beirut. Even if I concentrated on different scenes and locations, I noticed that actors in these networks called it a "bubble" or "family" which exposes the relative intimacy of these networks. Being aware of these blind spots that emerge when focusing on a single bi-national network, I also interviewed musicians and artists that operate *outside* experimental music scenes in both countries to learn more about external views of the experimental music scene in Berlin, Mannheim and Beirut and reasons for their lack of contact with these networks and their perceived impact on changing the way Lebanese musicians are viewed from outside the *freie Szene*.

The circulation and exchange of music and curatorial concepts between the cities of Beirut, Berlin and Mannheim is heavily tied to the mobility of single musicians that attend festivals, workshops, performances, and interdisciplinary projects in these three cities. The connections that form from these professional encounters then shaped the professional development, stylistic direction and conceptual approach to music making which is the case for Lebanese-

German duo Asfourieh which includes Ute Wassermann and Mazen Kerbaj, or the Lebanese-German collective Stella Banger. The latter works remotely and involves the musicians Abed Kobeissy, Ali Hout, Joss Turnbull and Pablo Gīw who are connected by their shared taste, influences and way of working that enable similar references during improvised sets as Turnbull stresses: "There is sometimes so much more that connects me with musicians from Beirut, for example, than with the musician here in my neighbourhood - especially when I talk to Ali [Hout] about music - then I feel incredibly connected to him because we have very similar approaches and actually also similar influences in many cases. so, we both somehow have a similar influence also within pop music which is exciting because we can fall back on references" (Joss Turnbull, Interview, 7 January 2022, Berlin).

Many of the musicians and administrators I spoke to mention the overlap between friendships and professional relationships in Berlin's *freie Szene*. Feeling an emotional closeness, connectedness and intimacy are just some of the sentiments that musicians bring up. Social bonding, cultural intimacy and kinship seem to not only arise from artist-led collaborations, institution building but become a necessary prerequisite for successful network building in Berlin's *freie Szene*. Lisa Benjes from Initiative Neue Musik (see chapter 1) describes the lack of separating these social realms when we spoke:

> "The *Berliner Szene* is very friendly with each other, there are people who live in the arts and make no distinction at all between what is work and what is in the flat share, in the marriage or whatever, I think there are very close networks. I sometimes ask myself how important it is, whether you don't surround yourself with people you find professionally interesting anyway. I've rarely had the experience that if you don't find people professionally great, you're not also close friends with them. When there are overlaps in the areas of interest, a certain intimacy and closeness develops" (Lisa Benjes, Interview, 17 October 2022, online).

Mazen Kerbaj and Ute Wassermann

Benjes' statement resonates with what experimental musicians in the scene, Cedrik Fermont, and Magda Mayas, describe as a certain "chemistry" while German vocalist Ute Wassermann goes as far as describing a strong bond between her and Lebanese musician Mazen Kerbaj which grew into a concept for their experimental duo. The project *Telepathic Music* emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic and is an improvised piece involving Wassermann's vocal techniques and improvisations of Mazen Kerbaj on the trumpet. Listening to their first recorded session on Soundcloud, I was surprised by the coherence of the two sonic tracks despite their rather intuitive recording process.

With wooden whistles and her own voice, Wassermann produces grunting and whistling noises, resembling an urgent inhale, growling, ocean-like sounds while sharply hyperventilating and only narrowly releasing her airways. On the recording, Wassermann's rasping, breathy vocals form an ominous drone that is overlayed with the soft playful melodic figures, the smacking and slurping sound of the trumpet that surprisingly finds its climax at the same time as the peak of Wassermann's ventilating technique that includes not only her lips,

palate, and tongue but the force of her entire upper chest as the body from which the detailed, frangible, yet powerful, and swiftly changing soundscape emerges. The recording is a result of two separately recorded tracks of a one-minute solo, improvising on their respective instruments while thinking of the other person, with no editing or cuts to the original recordings. The telepathic duos were subsequently released as an album and were performed live while maintaining the idea of spontaneity, with both performers playing inside a soundproof glass box on stage "and only the audience hears in real time the final mix of the duo" (Kerbaj n.d.).

The project marked an important development in the experimental music scene in Berlin that sets the anxieties of the pandemic, the isolation, resilience and likewise the vulnerability as well as cultural intimacy between collaborating musicians into music. Ute Wassermann is a good example for a German musician collaborating with multiple Lebanese experimental artists at once. Ute Wassermann currently has a duo with Raed Yassin, another duo with Mazen Kerbaj titled *Asfourieh*, founded in March 2020 during Covid-19 lockdown, and a trio with Magda Mayas and Raed Yassin which I observed at Exploratorium in January 2022. Wassermann recently started working with Tony Elieh and former another collective with Tony Buck, Magda Mayas, Racha Gharbieh and Mazen Kerbaj entitled *Smallest Functional Unit* which was founded in 2020.

As Lisa Benjes outlines in the above statement, it is not rare that partners or friends share a musical project. The best examples are Ute Wassermann's project in which she collaborates with two couples, Magda Mayas, and Tony Buck, as well Mazen Kerbaj and his wife Racha Gharbieh. Apart from the social and personal involvement and the proximity of the social and professional, it is also the communication and musical relationship that emerges in these collaborations and makes them possible in the first place. One example is the project *Revisitations* that was developed during the pandemic. The performance was commissioned by artistic director Kamila Metwaly, who lives in Berlin and Cairo and involved with *Donaueschinger Musiktage* and the independent exhibition space *SAVVY Contemporary*, for the New Musik festival *Märzmusik*. The piece is inspired by the work of Halim El-Dhab and was discussed via Zoom which is when their "musical relationship" emerged as Wassermann describes it. For *Revisitations*, the two musicians sit opposite each other at a long table with different objects in front of them, including whistles, percussion instruments such as rattles, cymbals, mallets in different shapes and colours, as well as everyday objects, including brushes, saucepan lids and a wired head massager and synthesisers.

In this piece, Wassermann uses a range of bird whistles, small percussion objects, including a self-made drum, Kutu Wapa which produces sound by hitting the metal tube with a rubber mallet. In other pieces, she frequently uses a so-called forest devil, frog buzzer or friction drum, a percussion instrument made from bamboo and goat skin producing a rattling sound when pulling the nylon string while simultaneously turning the wooden stick. Wassermann is known for using extraordinary, experimental vocal techniques and instruments that are able to imitate nature sounds but likewise creates "interactive objects for [her] voice, using transducers and different kinds of microphones and aquariums, metal foils, brass megaphones" (Ute Wassermann, Interview, 6 February 2023, online). For this piece, the cameras are filming from

different directions with the bird's eye view exposing the table as a game board and a digital timer.

The filming process becomes part of the musical process in which the use of different instruments and the change of camera angles follows a temporal structure the musicians communicated to the camera people that is involved in maintaining the musical structure of the piece, as they were instructed to change cameras or cut as sound is transitioning to new phases of the compositional framework on which the duo would improvise, making a "compositional connection between image and music". This way, the duo wanted to challenge the habitus of spectatorship in experimental music performances in which the observer and listener is drawn to "where the action is" (Ute Wassermann, Interview, 6 February 2023, online).
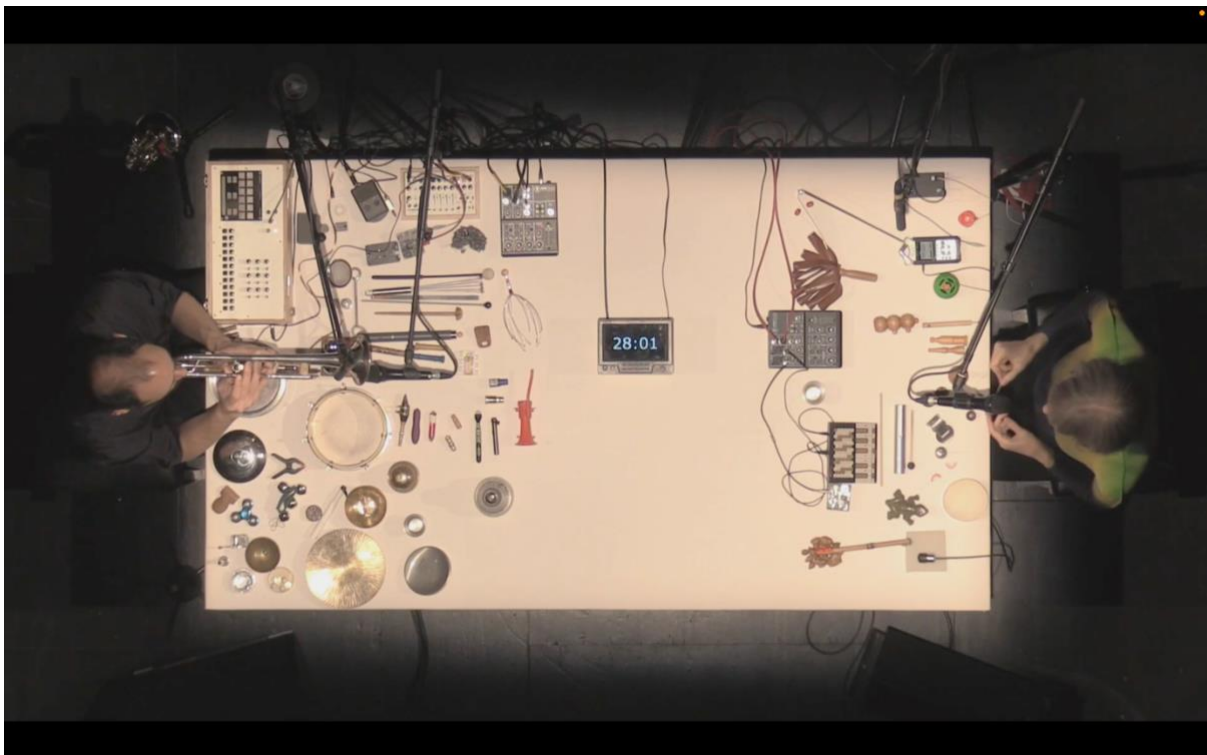
Mazen Kerbaj (left) and Ute Wassermann (right) performing Revisitations at Savvy Contemporary (Berlin) 2021.

This way, the musical interaction is not only the product of improvisation, but musicians lead the recording through their organic communication in which composed parts inspired by Egyptian-American composer Halim El-Dhab and mindful improvisation leads the musical process. The short recording of the powerful voice of El-Dhab is underlaid with initial minimal instrumental support, seeming almost like a respectful and deferential gesture, but is shortly after followed by a slowly emerging vocal drone and the spinning of a marble on a plastic dish that Kerbaj keeps spinning in rhymical motions. The bird-like, as well as humming waves produced by forming the words "wowowow" with her lips, the vocals rise and out of her body and introduce a part that is based on the different sound of the human breath, mediated both by the trumpet, tubes and hand gestures that either reveal or conceal the soundwaves. The heavy outbreaths through the body of the trumpet coincide frequently with the crescendo of the vocal digeridoo, revealing a satisfying and yet surprising coincidence of gestures.

Despite the lack of a large instruments, Wassermann is using a black grouse call, a bird whistle that imitates the rustling of feathers during the male's courtship dance, tracing the sounds of the trumpet and creating an even more powerful soundscape that one would expect the human body to produce by making the simultaneous vocal sound almost unlocatable, brushing right and left of the microphone as the bell of Kerbaj's trumpet follows the swings of his head from side to side. The process continues, with the simultaneous in and out breaths reveal an accuracy that almost appears coincidental and improvised, but deeply personal to the sound, non-verbal communication, and the deeply personal relationship that Kerbaj and Wassermann share. The circular motions are frequently accompanied by more and more sound sources and their variations, which gives the appearance of an enhancement, rather than interruption, of the soundscape that swings between chaos and planning.

Towards the end of the piece, Kerbaj deconstructs his trumpet, removing the mouthpiece and replacing it with a red rubber tube onto which he attaches a shiny metal clasp. Swinging the clasp manually by hitting it one way to swivel around the tube, one can follow the bouncing of the different materials as Wassermann continues responding with tube and electronics that resemble the sound of an electric razor at times, while her operatic vocal seems to come from nowhere in particular but rounding off the performance drawing on expressions of tension and relief.

Mazen Kerbaj (left) preparing his trumpet with a rubber tube at Savvy Contemporary (Berlin) 2021.

Describing the piece as "precise and open at the same time", Wassermann writes that the performance "leads to unpredictable shifts, incredible coincidences and absolute simultaneities–in the tension of minimalism and chaos, control and loss of control, improvisation and composition" (Wassermann n.d.). The piece ends with intense eye contact, yet gentle, few seconds of eye contact in which I felt almost too uncomfortable and external to

the performance to keep observing the performers in this moment after the musicians share their vulnerability and gratitude towards one another. Ute Wassermann describes that "the eye contact emerged intuitively from the shared connection" between the collaborating performers (Ute Wassermann, Interview, 6 February 2022, online).

"The eye contact emerged intuitively from the shared connection" (Ute Wassermann, Interview, 6 February 2022, online) about the ending of Revisitations, performed at Savvy Contemporary in 2021.

Ute Wassermann, and musicians such as Joss Turnbull, Magda Mayas, Rabih Beaini and Tony Elieh all mentioned the role of friendship and social bond that emerges through artist-led and curated festivals and Beirut editions, stemming, in this case, from multiple collaborations of people in the experimental Lebanese scene in Berlin and their interweaving–Wassermann calls this a "nest". This is also a phenomenon emerging from the small unit regulations, and resulting musical projects, formed during Germany's Covid-19 regulations for socialising. Asking musicians about the social and professional aspects in their collaborations, Wassermann speaks about the way connection and a relationship are being built in her collaboration with Mazen Kerbaj:

> "I think it's both, I'm interested in the culture, and it's also totally great to hang out with them [Mazen and his wife], have a party, it's totally nice, personally it works, it's totally nice, and of course it mixes. At least in the scene, *Echtzeit* and improvised experimental scene, it mixes a lot, the social with the artistic. Making music with someone you don't get along with, that's first of all... ok we also have well-paid gigs now, but first of all it's like that you play in a club, you just meet up, you invest your time to try something out together, I think you also like to do that with someone you get along with, otherwise you don't necessarily have the need. It goes hand in hand, I think that's nice, that you also spend your free time together and that it merges into each other like that. When I met Mazen for our joint composition, we ate together afterwards

and the three of us partied. At the lockdown we were like a little family and danced with his wife, Racha, after dinner, it was so nice" (Ute Wassermann, Interview, 6 February 2023, online)

Improvising together, "trying things out" what some musicians describe, is seen as the main way to connecting that leads to a collaboration between two or more musicians. The way musicians meet in the first place is by way of visiting the same venues that include KM28, Ausland, Morphine Raum, Exploratorium, AuTopsi Pohl, and Radialsystem, among others. Sharing the same spaces and striking up a conversation, seeing the same faces again, leads to affiliation with the scene and its values and aesthetics.

In these instances, the selection of the inspiration that led to this performance of Halim El-Dabh stems from Mazen Kerbaj who shows how diasporic musicians can suddenly become connection points to Kerbaj's own repertoire of Arabic music. At the same time, it is a pan-Arab reference to an alternative modernity which the duo interprets through free improvising techniques, adding another layer of an imagined Arab modernity through interpreting practices considered modern and progressive and a breakaway from El-Dabh's embeddedness in diaspora music making.

The way musicians come together is often described as an "organic process" in which musicians meet one another at concerts or festivals and invite one another which will eventually create an infrastructure that enables mobility of different collectives and solo artists that circulate between the same festivals and venues as Mayas describes: "You get to know each other through conversations, that is, that it happens organically, just as it usually does when you have the same interests and get into a conversation, except that the private and the professional overlap, because of course it is important that the chemistry is right, and that you are interested in each other, that friendships develop and that you play together, it happens to a lot of people" (Magda Mayas, Interview, 19 November 2022, online). Fandom and admiration can also lead to collaborations when musicians approach their idols or those with close conceptual approaches to oneself to inquire the possibilities for collaborations. The informality of the scene, and relational credit utilised through the act of dropping the name of an intermediate person, also helps establish a non-hierarchical way of making connections.

> "Magda [Mayas] had curated a festival with Lebanese musicians from abroad that took place at *Ausland* [Berlin venue], ages ago, and apparently, Raed [Yassin] had me on his radar for a while! I met Raed and Mazen [Kerbaj] at that festival and in 2014 Raed approached me, he had a commission from the Delphina Foundation in London, he had a residency and was able to do a project as part of this residency and the residency was about food and politics, then he wanted to write a piece about me [...], drawing on Christian, Muslim recipes and graphic score and cafe OTO, and also played Beirut. Then friendship with Raed [Yassin] came out of that project" (Ute Wassermann, Interview, 6 February 2023, online).

The way musicians are integrated in these venues in the first place would be through recommendations and word-of-mouth of friends, as events are not heavily advertised outside the channels such as the venues Instagram accounts or online platforms such as *field notes* or

Echtzeitmusikkalender. The integration in these venues also happens through institutional mediators such as coordinator and cultural worker Dahlia Borsche in which artists in residence, as it was the case for Mazen Kerbaj in 2015, are introduced to the *freie Szene* in Berlin through institutions as the federally funded by the DAAD which is when Ute Wassermann met Mazen Kerbaj. Wassermann reflects on this development:

> "In Berlin there are so many clubs, then you meet again and again, try something out together, it's very... it's actually easy to make friends because you meet again and again, at concerts or because you play together again and again. And then a friendship developed with Mazen, we met and improvised together, also with various other musicians, then a duo developed out of it and then I had a [musical] thing with Raed and that with Mazen" (Ute Wassermann, Interview, 6 February 2023, online).

Cedrik Fermont, networker, musician, and researcher describes how the artificiality of curated collaborations is easily outweigh by the benefits of a meaningful connection between collaborators that befriend one another before or during the process of experimenting and free improvisation. His description also outlines the role of fandom and shared taste that are frequently mentioned by musicians in the *freie Szene*. Phrases like "I saw him and wanted to play with him" or "I was really fascinated by what she was doing" frequently pop up, revealing the flexibility and openness of musicians, once they have the contact, to test out different ways of working based on their taste and cultural capital, such as credentials and shared contacts that can be communicated by word of mouth, or displayed on platforms such as Instagram under the "followed by" section that is necessary to access these networks in the first place. Berlin-based composer and sound artist Cedrik Fermont says:

> "Almost all my collaborators are friends, they are people I know of I met, it's not a collaboration that has to be made artificially like 'let's invite this person, let's do something together, then we publish something and then it's over' or it leads us to something. It's just people I met there, like Hanoi or Lebanon, and we became friends because I liked what they did, they liked what I did and thought 'hey, why not doing something together' or we performed at an event together and it was an improvised music session and all of a sudden by the end of a gig we did thing and thought "It worked fine so let's do it again and a again, why not" (Cedrik Fermont, 30 December 2021, Berlin).

Lisa Benjes, director of *field notes* magazine who advertises and organises a majority of events involving Lebanese musicians outlines the flip side of a lack of formalised and easily accessible networks, describing that the "problem is that everything always works through friendships and acquaintanceships, and you only ever see each other at some events and then that's the "networking" but that's not really professionalised." (Lisa Benjes, Interview, 17 October 2022, online). Her quote raises questions about gatekeeping and friendships that not only built but select the different pillars of new musical developments in diaspora music productions in the *freie Szene*.

The merging of the personal, meaningful social connections and the professional side of creative labour in Berlin is defining factor of the *freie Szene* that reveals mechanisms of

accessibility, opening and care work when migrated musicians are involved. Zeina Azouqah outlines the way the social sphere and Arabic collaborations may be results of, or result in, active gatekeeping of these assumingly friendly networks. The acts of forming collaborations with musicians that share professional relationships as well as friendships also bring up questions around the ethics of care and boundaries of interpersonal relationships. Jordanian-Circassian composer-musician Zeina Azouqah outlines the difficulties in bringing together an ethic of involving not only friends, but musicians outside of her circle as an act of anti-gatekeeping, as well as "holding space" and caring for specifically fellow Arabic musicians fleeing from war, seeking stability, and pursuing creative labour in Germany. Azouqah outlines that mixing the different social spheres, especially through acts of cultural intimacy such as musicking, may lead to the following personal challenges in the realm of cultural organisation:

> "Of course, it's logistically easier to procure people who already play together and bring each other into the project. It's a structural thing. Something you can't really escape. Someone like me who tries to do whatever speaks to them, whatever language or genre it is, it's hard to find people who are into that. I found a percussionist who wants to play with me, but finding other Arab women to play with was a bit of a challenge for me. From day one I have always been about 'living the way you think' and it also means not playing with whoever is available and whatever is the most logistical thing, I want to have a conversation with someone on stage. But I also noticed if the music and social sphere, which I actually wanted, are mixing too much and I almost have to hold space for a lot of personal problems and not really accomplishing the music aspect. For example, working with Syrian musicians putting them unwillingly in situations where I cause them to have a flashback, and they are ashamed to talk about this because it's traumatic, because things remind them of something that they went through. Like, someone could be so amazing on stage and, one moment later, almost crippled and unable to play, and because they wouldn't tell me because they were either ashamed or didn't have the tools to tell me so I had to figure this out on my own thinking 'oh god, I am so inconsiderate, coming from there and now you're leading them into a basement studio', of course, they'd have a hard time. I just picked up on the cues like 'I have to leave early', or 'what is this space you brought us too haha' like a nervous laughter, and so it's challenging to find people to play with you are socially compatible with and aren't in some elitist circle of the trained musicians" (Zeina Azouqah, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin).

It struck me to hear that she actively aims to "not play whoever is available and whatever is the most logistical thing" which mixes different kinds of agency that she articulates and enables. It encourages the empowerment of musicians that are less integrated in these networks and providing them with opportunities of equal decision making in her collaborations, as opposed to Western orchestra that may tokenise them, but also works as a form of anti-racist activism and collaboration in which she aims to actively diffuse, and rebuild, networks that help her achieve cultural intimacy and musical expression suitable for her musical concepts and freelance project work.

Similar to Zeina Azouqah's active efforts based on an anti-racist approach to collaborative musical work, cultural organiser Rabih Beaini mentions that the diversification and openness of cultural collectives can be also a result of his own curiosity, aim to take others out of their comfort zone for their own benefit and musical development, supporting innovation and

"mandating" change as part of his curatorial and sonic conception for Morphine Raum as a "social experiment"[30] as Rabih Beaini call this process. In order to maintain these networks and institutions, many of my interviewees described certain musicians that are firmly anchored in an institution's monthly programme, as well as certain venues, as anchoring structures which likewise can act as gatekeepers. This form of what Lisa Tuyala and Thomas Burkhalter described as "positive gatekeeping" of these anchoring figures that curate spaces such as Morphine Raum reveals the importance of trust resulting from the time, effort and vulnerability put in musical collaborations as curator and cultural worker Dahlia Borsche points out:

> "Of course, this also has its disadvantages, so you only get in if you know people, but I think there's something totally human about it, we just work like that, we're social beings and you have to earn trust first. Of course, you also have to make sure that you don't become too exclusive and practise nepotism, that's always the downside, that you only invite the usual suspects and work with the same people if you know them anyway, but most people are open-minded, interested and also want to get to know new people" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

The issue of gatekeeping in trying to establish ethical, anti-racist and diversity-sensitive curatorial practices has become the key component in discussions around grassroots creative networks, as well as its largest contradiction. Trust circles can be seen as a way of friendly, well-intended gatekeeping and likewise a way of maintaining values and norms in the scene. In other interviews, my conversation partners describe the relative openness and fluidity of these networks that are perceived as fleeting, welcoming and organic, yet structured by musicians' affiliation and belonging to institutions and venues, creating a dynamic of location-based social networks as well as friendship-based social networks. Research by Pelechrinis and Krishnamurthy on the idea of "affiliation networks" help to understand the relationship between locations and friendship that become crucial to the dynamic between Beirut- and Berlin-based musicians (Pelechrinis and Krishnamurthy 2016). The way affiliation networks may be structured is challenged by anti-racist curatorial practices as cultural worker Lisa Tuyala points out on a joint panel with Norient founder Thomas Burkhalter that formed part of the Planet Ears symposium in 2022. Instead of thinking of networks as a spider-web of interconnected musicians, Tuyala suggests the concept of network in which actors branch out from the middle, being less connected to one another outside the center which becomes the main connecting point of social-spatial affiliation networks in the field of experimental music.

Many musicians do not see themselves part of a network or scene at all, and rather share singular friendships with musicians within a network. Tombak player Joss Turnbull for example does not see himself as part of a scene, and many other musicians I spoke to prefer to see themselves outside of a scene altogether due to their lack of affiliation with the aesthetic of either popular music or free improvised music scene such as composer Zeina Azouqah. During my interviews, I found that musicians either expressed affiliation to a specific German tradition based on their work in ensembles or composed music, for example *Ich komme aus der*

---

[30] This will be outlined in detail in the following case study on Morphine Raum Berlin.

Echtzeitmusik/ klassischen Musik ("I come from *Echtzeitmusik*/ classical music") or expressed affiliation with a specific branch of experimental music by outlining their musical background or musical training such as Lebanese musician Tony Elieh who is based in Berlin. However, what many musicians had in common was either the dismissal, or lack of interest, in the aesthetics and industry of world music. There are other musicians who want to be separate from these scenes altogether and define their artistic brand through disaffiliation with any scenes in Berlin and stressing their individuality.

My initial aim to draw boundaries around the musicians or network(s) I was looking at became increasingly difficult and lead me to the conclusion that there is no singular network at all. Some outline the nature of diversification that makes it impossible to draw any boundary around these musicians, Rabih Beaini outlines how specifically the *freie Szene* "diversifies by definition" as Rabih Beaini tell me, and yet needs constant changes of personal nature as well as challenging to not stagnate. He explains how "you're in a scene that's by definition, the diverse, the different scene, the subculture. But within the scene things become stagnating. If someone is doing something interesting, they'd spent 20 or 30 years doing the same thing, still interesting, but still the same thing. At some point, it becomes the regular, within this box. This is what I think should evolve." The way the stagnation of the *freie Szene* and the Lebanese musicians that identify with the scene is prevented through active social intervention and inbuilt challenges on the side of the curator, in this case Beaini, will be outlined in the following chapter on Morphine Raum. One can see, however, a serious of connections and affective ties that bring together, even if fleetingly, musicians with shared interests and approaches to music making.

To add onto the complications of this matter, cultural organiser Dahlia Borsche outlines the difficulties of specifically the *freie Szene* in Berlin which is "not just a division into two, but a multiple division." She continues that "Berlin has different islands that stand for themselves, like the club scene, but which is totally multi-layered in itself." While attempting to investigate the structure of the scene, she found that the overlap and mix in the past ten years, specifically the fields of free improvisation, contemporary composed music, and club scene, "so that one could hardly perceive the islands any more even though some sound would indicate which scene one would roughly be in" as Dahlia Borsche tells me. However, Berlin commercial club scenes and other scenes increasingly overlap. There are many ways to talk about the "experimental music scene in Berlin" whatever that may be, some musicians such as Niko Lefort who I spoke to in Berlin prefers to talk about different "generations" rather than scenes that are determined by different styles of experimental music that ranges from sonic responses to the atmosphere in post-war Lebanon to *Echtzeitmusik* and the current trend of spatial compositions and the use of modular synthesizers.[31]

---

[31] This idea is also underpinned by the biography of many of the diasporic Lebanese musicians with their background in rock music and later turn to experimental music, as with the German musicians from *Echtzeitmusik* to collaborative projects outside these networks.

Discussing the segmentation of the *freie Szene* and Lebanese musicians' changes made so far in Berlin, Lisa Benjes notices that the musicians such as Mazen Kerbaj bridge different sub-scenes, regardless of alleged cultural hierarchies of musical styles in Germany. She says, "Berlin is so big, that's why there are so many sub-scenes, because the bigger a scene is, the more segmented it is… And the community around Irtijal is not used to the fact that the scene itself is so segmented, and that they simply spin their festivals and concert programmes without the boundaries that we feel so strongly, and don't perceive them so strongly and totally mix them up, so for us in Berlin it is totally trusting when we have people who mix it up now and then" (Lisa Benjes, Interview, 17 October 2022, online).

Concluding Thoughts

I outlined in this chapter that friendship, admiration, inspiration, location-affiliation and shared taste and similar conceptual approaches to creative labour become the main driving force for collaborations and curatorial efforts between artists from Berlin and Beirut. The different ways of coming together show that there may not be a coherent network, but a dynamic of network with rather stable anchoring structures including cultural institutions as well as social affiliations with prestigious, state-funded funding bodies of the *freie Szene* that builds the location-based network dynamic. This dynamic of a friendship-based network also is reflected in the anecdote of Rabih Beaini who outlines the personal commitment to the friendship and social bond that accompanies his curatorial work at Morphine Raum: "During the instrument series [Morphine Raum, 2021], there was the case of one instrument builder who accepted immediately but then the day before the performance he wrote an email saying 'look, I don't want anyone to touch my instrument, I'm saying it now before you book the hotel or whatever, I can stay home'. This particular musician, I really personally wanted him here and I said 'whatever happens, I want you to be here. I want to see you, I have you in the room, I want you to be with us, and whatever happens, it's fine'" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

After discussing how musicians find together through institutional and interpersonal dynamics drawing on (performative) acts of care and anti-racist activism, gatekeeping, and fandom, I will outline the role that trust, uncertainty, curiosity, a longing for harsh noise and sensory experiences, as well as boredom play in the internal dynamics of collaborations in the following case study on Berlin. This chapter also outlined the way musical pieces are composed or realised in joint improvisational performances that require a meaningful social connection between musicians.

Chapter 3: Berlin

In the following section, I bring together the findings from my discussion of the cultural politics of diasporic music production and the social and political context Lebanese experimentalism is embedded in. Based on Sara Ahmed's *On Being Included* (2012), I look at the way Morphine Raum emerges as an artist-led institution that provides its subjects with curatorial agency. My understanding of Morphine Raum is inspired by Ahmed's definition of institutions as processes, things and effects of process that require thick description. I aim to demonstrate how musical activities shape Morphine Raum's sense of institution, and institutional sense, considering its routines, procedures, conventions, roles, strategies, organisational forms, and use of technology (Ahmed 2012). In doing so, I argue that Morphine Raum can create a space that establishes specific values, aesthetic frameworks, and trends in collaboration with members of the *freie Szene* in Berlin. This includes looking at the institutionalisation of Morphine Raum through its curatorial approach, affective networking, and organisational structure. Describing Morphine Raum as exemplary for diasporic institution building in Berlin, I will look at the ways in which organisers' curatorial approaches may be representative for migrant-led institutions in Berlin and Beirut. My research questions include: How theoretical, and how intuition-based are migrant musicians' curatorial approaches? And how are these new institutions for diasporic music production embedded in Berlin's *freie Szene*?

Morphine Raum[32]

The activities during my time in Berlin involved observing performances each week at Morphine Raum, speaking to listeners and practitioners and visiting exhibitions that deal with curatorial critique in contemporary music and art in Berlin. As part of my fieldwork, I visited the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art in 2022 to look at ways in which contemporary art and contemporary music scene in Berlin, historically very much separated sectors in Germany, streamline their approaches and practices to migrant art and music through third wave curatorial critique. Furthermore, looking at the representation of guestworkers in Germany that deal with portrayals of Otherness in Germany enabled me to look at how Arab migrants in Germany, specifically female and queer Arab migrants, and art practitioners, utilise other disciplines such as literary critique to find their voice to speak out about the treatment of migrantised citizens and institutional racism in Germany.

The venue and recording studio Morphine Raum was established by Lebanese-born Rabih Beaini. After moving to Berlin in 2011, Beaini has been running the record label *Morphine Records* for 13 years. Due to his involvement with people that built their own instruments as part of the work at the label, Beaini aimed to create catalogue for the label in which artists would release an instrument as opposed to an album. This involved creating a workshop where instruments could be prototyped and replicated based on their pre-sales. After putting together a business plan, he found the warehouse space in February 2020 "randomly" as the founder describes. The warehouse is home to booking agencies, print shops, painting studios, and other

---

creatives that take on long-term leases. Two weeks after moving into the space, Beaini created a plan for establishing a space to run his label, a recording studio and support local artist communities. Morphine Raum has since become a popular place for international and Berlin-based musicians to master and mix their music which Beaini describes as a "win-win-situation" since he had most equipment for mastering and mixing already thanks to his close friends that play and record in the studio.

The studio is located in a warehouse complex which used to be an industrial site now hosting studios for creatives. In Germany, renters can modify spaces as they please and leave their mark on the spaces unlike UK renter's situations (Johnson-Schlee 2022). This gave Beaini the space to not only leave his mark on the space, but rip out the windows, door, walls and transform the space into a workshop. When hearing about the space at first, I did not realise the meaning of the word "workshop" and assumed it would be an event space, not an actual workshop in which carpentry is carried out. The work on the space involved intense renovations and modifications of the space to suit cater to the sonic needs and clean wood-based DIY aesthetic of the workshop.

In the past four years, the space has become known as a major venue where experimental music and sound art are recorded and was founded by Berlin-based producer Rabih Beaini. Beaini, previously known under his stage name Morphosis, grew up in Byblos, Lebanon, moved to Italy in the early 2000s and later settled in Berlin. Beside his musical career, Beaini owns and runs the record label Morphine Records and works not only as a DJ, music producer and co-curator for Berlin's CTM festival, but started to get involved in carpentry, building his own studio equipment and new instruments for experimentation. Beaini fosters good connections to main venues in the UK, Germany, Lebanon, and Southeast Asia. He also regularly organised concerts and live streams on Twitch during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In his DJ sets, Beaini layers different melodies and rhythms on top of each other using sampling techniques that listeners can experience as conflicting at times. The way this plays out on the dancefloor is that people will dance to different rhythms at the same time, depending on what they feel familiar to or comfortable with, based on their musical knowledge and dance practice. In that sense, it seems that the engagement with migrant identity played out in the establishment of new spaces in which experimental music distorts notions of a Middle Eastern imaginary. This is achieved through musical unpredictability, sampling techniques and a lack of ethnic signifiers found in past world music productions. Furthermore, through the sonic layering of samples from different musical traditions, times, and spaces. At first glance, Beaini exemplifies a form of "postmigrant organiser" which Kosnick described in her account on postmigrant club nights in Europe, in which postmigrant subjects take the leading role in curating club nights to subvert the power dynamics of earlier *MultiKulti* projects and narratives (Kosnick 2014). According to Kosnick, postmigrants, claiming European urban centres as their central residence, have multiple transnational affiliations which applies to the majority of migrant musicians in Berlin to an even larger extend.

In recent years in Berlin, musicians like Beaini have been working together with cultural institutions and musicians across Germany and the Arabic-speaking world, specifically Lebanese festivals, and collectives, to organise concerts independently from world music cultural project facilitators in places such as Berghain, HÖR or Berlin's annual CTM festival. As most of the musicians within his network of experimenting musicians, Beaini has established himself as not only as a prominent producer and label director himself but connecting point to the experimental music scene in Lebanon and international artist communities in Berlin.

Looking at the way in which predominantly white curators act as gatekeepers for socio-cultural diversity at German festivals (Gaupp 2020), one could assume that in this case, that act of curation by a member of previously deprived and segregated communities as it is the case for Arab and Turkish migrants in Germany, forms an act of resistance. This could prove especially pertinent when considering conceptualisations of sound projects produced in social formations involving ethnic minorities as weak and vulnerable, powerless and in need of sonic support to let the subaltern speak (LaBelle 2018, Spivak 1988). However, conceptions that emanate from migrant musicians' subaltern status do not provide a sufficient framework for the social dynamics at Morphine Raum and associated (post)migrant music spaces in Berlin. Following a Spivakian logic it is that, once equipped with sonic means, minorities utilise the political potential of sound and listening. While the concept of sonic agency is certainly useful in cultural contexts that involve migrant and refugee musicians such as Berlin's Babylon Orchestra, it helps to think about the potential of sound to trigger "affective processes intrinsic to finding a place" in diasporic communities (LaBelle 2018: 2), notwithstanding the actual reality of these spaces which are never exclusively migrant spaces, but rather attract mixed audiences with shared ideas around musical experimentation and shared networks.

Further, while researching experimental music through the lens of postcolonial theory and migration studies, I noticed recurrent themes that examined migrant music through the prism and discursive logic of world music in Germany. I also noticed an often exclusive focus on their socio-economic status rather than the realm of friendship groups and other forms of social formations in the private lives of musicians and listeners. This included the repeated examination of the role of hegemonic power relations in the music industry and the active involvement with diasporic musicians' identity which neglects the crucial role that social networks and social uplifting play. Following Kosnick's argumentation, there is a striking gap in the literature on migrant music that examines what musicians with migrant backgrounds "*actually do*, as opposed to how they identify" (Kosnick 2014: 10). As outlined above, the studies of diasporic music productions in Germany have concerned the relation between sound and nostalgia, sound and resistance, victimhood and exclusion that stressed homeland-orientated narratives on migrant musicians rather than their agentive power in shaping the cultural industries in Berlin. In the following section, I will outline the impact of affective network building on the curatorial process in spaces for migrant music productions in Berlin.

The warehouse complex in Köpeniker Straße accommodating Morphine Raum, Berlin Kreuzberg.

Phantom Orchestra

The pandemic plays a major role in the way the space has been developing and changed since its inception. The lockdown in Germany hit just two weeks after Beaini acquired the space and commenced on the construction work. Hence, most of the carpentry work has been carried out by himself, self-taught. A few weeks after the lockdown was announced, Beaini launched two major projects in the space which was itself a work-in-progress. The projects led to more recording sessions and included the recording sessions of the Phantom Orchestra and an instrument building series. Looking at these first few projects launched at Morphine Raum, it becomes clear that the subject of isolation and the collaborative nature of the free improvised music scene has been a core motivation for music making in the Arab-speaking diaspora since 2020.

Phantom Orchestra, initiated by Beirut-born musician and visual artist Raed Yassin, describes the project as a collective project that "captures and archives a distinct musical moment in recent history: the sounds of experimental improvisers developed alone and in isolation. Improvising musicians are used to constantly collaborating with others in new settings and new sonic environments, but the recent situation forced them to improvise in a solitary manner, often in closed domestic places. Here, the result of this unique experimentation is performed, recorded, and pressed onto vinyl records, then played together as a kind of *Turntable Orchestra*, where the disassociated sounds are heard together and somehow reconnect in an alternative way. The project aims to mimic our present moment, in which we emerge from isolation and must relearn how to be together in the world again" (Yassin n.d.).

Phantom Orchestra serves as an excellent example of an artist-led initiative that combines conceptual ideas around connection, togetherness and communality in Berlin's free improvised music scene and united musicians through their isolated performance using video clips that were disseminated on YouTube in June 2022. Phantom Orchestra, as well as the state-funded instrument series which will be described below, show the exceptional role that the Covid-19 pandemic played in both encouraging and further fostering resourcefulness distinguishing the *freie Szene* from the commercial music scene, and creating the space in a time where artist-led agency and state-funded support went hand in hand and built a system of support that is the social and material connection between the German bureaucratic arts funding systems and grassroots institutions that have never been stronger.

Campaigns such as *Ohne (K)uns(t) wird's still* [33] encouraged discussions around sustainable arts funding and the role that independent art and culture projects play for civic well-being. The campaign gave a voice to the large numbers of artists employed on a freelance basis in Germany and highlighted the precarious working condition of the arts and culture sector. Facebook profile picture frames kept cropping up among my Facebook friends, however, none of the migrated artists seemed to be as involved as German-born musicians that displayed this slogan. Instead, it appeared as if the Lebanese scene has already found solutions to these issues and worked around them in ways that highlighted the social and economic potential of international music networks around Morphine Raum.

Campaign poster from *Ohne Kunst wird's still* from September 2020. Source: Seidel 2022.

Raed Yassin's Phantom Orchestra was one of the projects that ran throughout, and due to, the pandemic and benefitted from the richness of ideas of the organiser that utilised isolation in the home as a trope running throughout each performance clip as a golden thread. However, when performing the project, the listener became aware of the pandemic and the threats of public

---

[33] "It will get quiet without art and culture" with letters in red highlighting the word *uns* ("us") in *Kunst* ("art").

space once again. The seating during this period in the pandemic was limited to just a few people per square metre. This meant that sixty people could attend the recording and the maximum amount of people attended and opened Morphine Raum to the Berlin community during lockdown. While the Phantom Orchestra project exposed the agency and conceptual agenda of Raed Yassin and his colleagues in terms of showing the possibilities of collaborative music making independent from white curators and facilitators, the second project, the instrument series, corresponded with the growing trend of self-organisation and community building from within the diasporic community that set a trend for German institutions as both Lisa Benjes and Mathias Maschat point out (Maschat 2006, Interview with Lisa Benjes, 2022, Berlin).

Instrument Series

In 2021, the space hosted a hugely successful instruments series organised by Morphine Records in which musicians built their own acoustic and electroacoustic instruments using scrapyard metal, coils, motors, strings, and deconstructed pianos, among other materials that musicians brought along to the workshop (Kirn 2021). The series stretched over ten nights and involved ten instrument builders. Rabih Beaini created the project to overcome the dependency of musicians to their instruments and encourage musicians to expand familiar and deeply engrained playing styles on not only their own, but newly built instruments. He explains:

> "Musicians always said they ended up in a moment where they became the slaves of the instruments, as opposed to the other way around, so it was becoming something that they completely depended on that instrument instead of being a tool for them. By developing an instrument, you start becoming stuck with the idea and some features that you make and some choices that you make on the instrument become part of what you're doing, so you're basically trapped inside the instrument" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

Each night, musicians would introduce their instrument, showcase it their own way while speaking about the building process and on occasion, call an audience member to test it before Beaini as the curator would call musicians, purposefully from a different practice, to play on the instrument. It showed the multiplicity of roles that diasporic musicians take when self-organising project and setting up institutions like Beaini does who takes the role as not only musician, but producer and curator. The second public project was *Instruments by Morphine Records*. During the project, instrument builders would come to the studio, showcase their instruments to the audience and likewise let the other attending musicians play their instruments "on the spot, without testing". While research on diasporic music making has often highlighted identity and race-related issues for music making and pointed out experimental music and sound as a tool for resistance, the interviews and observations of musicians and audience members at Morphine Raum showed otherwise.

The series, which was supported by Berlin's *Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Europa* ("Senate Department for Culture and Europe"), was hosted by Rabih Beaini during lockdown. During the weeknight concerts I observed in 2022, the sonic landscape at Morphine Raum ranged from

electronic music to electroacoustic sets, free improvised music, vocal experiments, and live electronics. The electronic sound generated by musicians in Morphine is often raw, grainy, and textured and resonates with the exposed structure and industrial aesthetic of the venue itself. During concerts, audience members would find themselves sitting on exposed flooring and small wooden chairs rather than neatly arranged rows of seats listening and watching musicians turning the knobs of a mixing board or connecting outputs on a modular synthesizer.

The artist will oftentimes not look up at all, adjusting volumes and textures ever so slightly which might appear to observers as a public rehearsal in which musicians create a specific sound for the first time until settling on a drone, often accompanied by flashing visuals projected on a screen. This set-up can last for an extended amount of time while listeners sit or lie on the floor, eyes closed, experiencing the emergence of an organic soundscape that could either be experienced as minimalist or overwhelming. It is often that extreme volume stands in harsh contrast to the lack of sonic variety, creating a challenging and yet almost meditative atmosphere. Speaking to different musicians and listeners at Morphine Raum, it became apparent the quality of the musical experiments is entirely judged by the personal experience and sensations emerging during the performances which create meaning and pleasure through the allowing of an organic evolution from scratches and glitches to harmonic drones.

It also became apparent that "deep listening" (Oliveros 2005) forms a crucial aspect of both the way musicians approach the musical experiments and the near-pedagogical effects on audience members who get used to these very sounds and curiously seek out the even more extreme, slowly changing their listening habits. Musicians and listeners associated at the space all expressed their curiosity for searching for new sonic experiences and ways of playing that does not necessitate formal musical education. Furthermore, these loose networks, built around fans, collectives, and their associated acts, seemingly fostered a diversification of listeners, musicians, and the dominant sonic atmosphere rather naturally, drawing on their international contacts, friendship groups and production tools that extend Western musical traditions and harmonic systems (Allami n.d.).

Reception

> "The critical side of the world music is nothing I think of in relation to my engagement with Morphine. I don't consider myself as a white girl in a kind of migrant space, I never think in those terms and I have kind of generally a disposition against most arguments for cultural appropriation, it doesn't make sense to me on a philosophical level" (Lucy Park, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin).

Morphine Raum is visited by a range of listeners that find out about the space via word of mouth, Morphine Raum's Instagram channel, as well as event calendars such as *Echtzeitmusik.de* and INM's *field notes*. Speaking to a musicians and cultural workers of both German and Lebanese backgrounds at Morphine Raum, no one has viewed the space as a "migrant space" or a space that is focused on Arabic music, but rather an international scene from across the Middle East, Europe, North America, Australia, Southeast and East Asia. I spoke about this with musician Lucy Park, regular at Morphine Raum, who said:

"Morphine opened my eyes to adjacent scenes like the one in Beirut or Egypt - because I'm like 'ah ok this kind of thing isn't just Berlin specific taste but it's an international community'. It helps me to see there are other scenes like this in other places. But I don't think I fuse Morphine with my daily walk down *Sonnenallee*."[34]

When I asked why, she outlines the differences in class between specifically Muslim migrants in Germany and the way in which experimental Arabic cultural production may be viewed as elitist:

"It's also the difference between me and my friends and the random people in the street. Sonnenallee feels like the normal people and then there are people that come from the same countries like the people on Sonnenallee but then they are operating in this experimental scene, and I don't think–which might be some weird bias. I don't think I see them all as migrants in one group, but I see Morphine with a certain type of… [pauses] 'elite' is such a loaded word cos I don't see it in a negative way but is has more a sophisticated highbrow crowd. I wouldn't class them as the same as the guys that hang out in shisha bars with really bright lighting and that's just the same difference as some women in the Kneipe and my friends. It's just different types of people and that's just a class thing as well" (Lucy Park, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin).

Morphine Raum seems to strike a chord with the affluent international community in Berlin but at the same time, helps reveal the potential of local scenes outside of Europe and North America to become trendsetters and aesthetic models based on its friendship-based networks. I asked about the subject of friendship as a way of this network coming together, but Lucy said it was rather friendliness as opposed to friendship. When discussing perceptions of free improvised music in Berlin as part of highbrow culture in Germany, she says:

"It's not a pretentious space at all but do think I probably project some sense of imposter syndrome in the situation on my part. I never felt anything.... I guess I feel slightly less open in that space than I am in *Passenger Coffee*[35] for example. I haven't made friends there, but everyone is friendly, not straight-faced crowd. Rabih [Beaini] is the only one I have become friendly enough to hug hello. I am just a fan of Morphine than of the artists, that's why I go" (Lucy Park, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin).

Park explains: "I don't think Morphine is accessible in so far as it's friendly, not judgemental and doesn't matter who you are, but it doesn't falter in quality by trying to make the line-ups easy. And I think that's ok. If exclusivity means you have a more intimate space." The musicians explains that Morphine is accessible in so far as is invites a friendly, non-judgemental audience where it "doesn't matter who you are." To her, exclusivity gives rise to a more intimate space for those who are willing to listen to challenging sounds which enables a high-quality line-up. She also outlined the "fan relationship" she has with Morphine Raum, which many listeners spoke about. In outlining their relationship to Morphine Raum, many interviewees stressed their almost parasocial interaction with the venue, or a fan-idol

---

[34] Popular and busy street in Berlin's district Neukölln, known for large Arabic-speaking community and shisha lounges, Syrian restaurants, small shops, and sports bars. In Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) and other news media in Germany, the street was titled *Die arabische Straße* ("the Arabic Street").
[35] Local coffee shop at U-Bahnhof Schlesisches Tor, Berlin.

relationship, that drives visitors to get emotionally involved with the space itself due to their excitement about the spatialised sonic experiences and the social, material, and economic networks attached to it:

> "Morphine is one of my biggest, most respected things happening right now, it's one of the best things I know about. It has my heart. I like having this kind of die-hard fan relationship. All the musicians I like are dead so I can't really have this fan relationship with anyone, but I have it with Morphine. Rabih is so amazing, he has such a good thing going and we should ask him for some merchandise and then we can wear it in the house [laughs]. This is exactly where I want my money to go" (Lucy Park, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin).

This is because according to her and many other listeners I spoke to, a sonically challenging, as well as interactive performance that encourages uncertainty, discomfort, and sensory experiences between performers and listeners in the space that may require a selected body of listeners based on mutual trust and shared taste. It turned out that for Lucy Park, as there are fewer objective parameters to measure the quality of the sound as it may be possible for the realm of popular and composed music, the success of a performance at Morphine Raum is more based on audience members' affective experiences of the sound in the space it is composed for. When we spoke about what quality means to her, she explains that she developed a specific taste and opinion on different club musics based on sonic parameters she could explain, while she would struggle to talk about the quality of improvised performances at Morphine Raum based on objective and measurable criteria.

Curatorial Approach

Asking musicians around Morphine Raum for their motivation for music making, most interviewees described being led by curiosity, innovation, and local trends within experimental scenes that encourage uncertainty and trust building. In many ways, Rabih Beaini is responding to the failures of the world music industry by providing accessibility and utilising his international networks as a form of careful audience development and institution building. In addition, experimenting artists often describe an urge for deeply rewarding explorative, instinctive, and sometimes impulsive ways of working in the development of projects. Rabih Beaini tells me:

> "I'm quite animalistic in my approach. I like things to happen so if I see that I can make connections I will totally do that physically and personal but on the other my own approach to thing is much rougher. I don't have rules or didactical background to explain what I'm doing, even to myself. I'm much more animalistic and impulsive in a very instinctive way. I can't count myself with these researchers or people that spend a lifetime on something, developing it. I'm just impulsive" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

The instrument series is something that evolved from this impulsiveness and response to his research as Beaini describes. He aimed to make instruments more accessible to a global audience and develop the project as a response to limitations of common instrumental techniques seen in acoustic and electroacoustic music making.

Rather than of curation, Lisa Benjes from INM suggests speaking of Morphine Raum as "extended networks" based on friendship, shared interests, and common working processes. She explains, "I think it's nicer to talk about extended networks and friendships in this context. Rabih creates a space there, an anchor structure and gives the network a way to play in it, then of course it is connected to those you know and those you are connected to through projects."

In the context of Morphine Raum, curation is seen as a way of building a profile for a specific project while utilising and expanding existing networks and sourcing materials from Germany and abroad. The cultural and political profile of Morphine Raum is thus built through its affiliation with specific networks, institutions, and through the selection of cultural productions by Rabih Beaini himself. The way Beaini is "curating differently", as Benjes tells me, is that his selection process of performances and recordings at Morphine Raum develops through relatively open and "organic networks" rather than "in the sense of classic festival curation, when white curators make a selection, distributes commissions and very strongly follow their line" (Lisa Benjes, Interview, 17 October 2022, online).

For Beaini, curation is first and foremost a form of selection. A selection of instrument builders for a performance series, a selection of contrasting artists to collaborate and a selection of sounds for a DJ set.

> "What I keep saying in every interview: Everything I'm doing is a DJ set, what you heard that night (at Planet Ears) is in everything I do. In the curation of the label, in the space here, in production of bands and artists, everything. It's a selection, that's the most important thing. The selection and the curation of the sound, and how these sounds can fit together, that's the principle of music" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

Taste also plays a large role in the curation of the programme at Morphine Raum. In this context, curators' taste making and the impact of aesthetic hierarchies in the *freie Szene* contribute to gatekeeping processes as much as to community building at Morphine Raum. Despite focusing on globality and access, the selection of artists and curation of a programme is often subject to personal taste and personal liking of musicians. He describes that the music he releases and engages with is "mostly the stuff I like", however, there is no restriction in genre or musical style. The music at Morphine Raum on what Beaini describes as an "open stage" and artists released on Morphine Record are extremely diverse in musical style. The commonality is an anti-commercialist ideology and dominant aesthetic principle which is one that he describes as a lack of aesthetics:

> "The aesthetics of it is the *lack* of aesthetics. It's like minimalism. It exists, it's something. The fact it lacks most of the superfluous elements doesn't mean it doesn't exist. And that's exactly what the aesthetics is. What's superfluous? What is not important? What is unnecessary? Gone from the music, from the playing, from the philosophy of the musician or the band" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin, emphasis added).

The producer describes his curation as political as it is not only an anti-commercialist venture but a means to diversify Berlin club culture. Curation runs from small to large scale selections around musical, social and aesthetic potential while forming the physical and sonic environment, as well as organisational infrastructure, as an artist-led institution. The potential of these choices is thus dependent on this social and material infrastructure for his newly established space that forms an institution as an effect of processes, strategies, conventions, and routines (Ahmed 2012). Beaini's curatorial approach follows the networks and connections to and from Beirut and actively transforms the funding structure and culture and diversity work that historically white institutions have been carrying out by presenting a sustainable model of artist-led project management and curatorial practice.

Diaspora Identities and Experimentalism

My ethnographic fieldwork dealt with the question why musicians experiment, why they don't engage with traditional musical styles and why that might be political or due to factors that have nothing to do with notions of resistance towards regimes. I argue that we must consider social factors specific to the diasporic condition that are more complex than resistance-narratives in performance curation of sound art from the Middle East can account for. Reasons for experimental music making are not always linked to an engagement with one's own roots or routes but can be out of affiliation and belonging to institutional networks, arts funding requirements or an urge to escape the constraints of economic and bureaucratic production structures. Motivations can be entirely affective and almost sensual, or linked to personal encounters with musicians that influence one another in their professional and personal development. Curiosity, inspiration, and passion often came up during conversations, raising way more interesting questions about why musicians in general make experimental music, giving more room to their multiple identity factors as a whole and not just their origin which would neglect more interesting parts of their artistic identity.

Specifically in Germany, the articulation of diasporic identity in the second, not first, generation of migrants has become an important part of combatting the specifics of anti-Palestinian racism in Germany as Jamila Al-Yousef explains:

> "Especially in Germany we have a strong emerging anti-Palestinian racism, which means it is even more important for me to say, 'I am Palestinian, I have Palestinian diaspora history.' The articulation of Palestinian identity differs massively from the articulation of Lebanese identity, as many musicians from Beirut don't identify so strongly with the fact that they have an Arab background. I think that's because the sound colours of this experimental music scene have already reached such an internationalised level. They are not so different in their sound language and their Arabness than other experimental musicians, so it is of course easier to mix it up" (Jamila Al-Yousef, Interview, 3 November 2022, online).

Yet, solidarity with Palestinians in exile and those still residing in the occupied territories can be seen as a political stance uniting many Lebanese musicians in Beirut and Berlin. This can be seen specifically since the Palestinian online radio station Radio AlHara launched *Sonic*

Liberation Front, a platform featuring many Lebanese, Palestinian, and German musicians who I interviewed as part of the project. As seen in Caroline Rooney's work on activism and authenticity in Palestinian Hip-Hop, "solidarity generated by its musicians' decisions to work within this particular genre" (Dickinson 2013: 12) brings scenes together as it enables safe spaces for cultural broadcasting for those affected in Palestine, and those keen to support Palestinian diaspora communities living abroad.

Palestinian-German singer and curator Jamila Al-Yousef established *Arab* Underground*, a programme at Fusion festival[36] that which aimed to increase the visibility of contemporary music from the Arab world in Germany. Al-Yousef, who also works as an anti-racism coach, was involved in the festival with its self-ascribed countercultural character and describes her experiences with the organisation's inherent cultural hierarchies and ideological framing:

> "The German Left is divided between pro-Palestine and anti-Palestine and that has this division has become more prominent in the past years and that became apparent also within the organisational structures of the Fusion. For example, there were incidents where one of the main organisers didn't allow me to get security because this group was anti-Zionist. Because I was one of the leading figures in this I was always at the receiving end of things. I worked at Fusion festival for years and over these ten years this anti-Palestinian racism has also become stronger and stronger. There is a lot of it. We had our own space at the Fusion and then they marched up there with Israel flags, started not only to burn our programmes but beating people up, so that was really crazy. Because I did a programme every year where there were Palestinian perspectives every year, I can really say that I saw how it increased over ten years. It's a very German thing, but I've heard from people there that France is also very tough. And what is exciting about it is the interface between self-censorship and one's own activism" (Jamila Al-Yousef, Interview, 3 November 2022, online).

Articulating identity is important to her to increase the visibility of Palestinian identities in Germany. Some Jordanians coming to Germany also often identify as Palestinians rather Jordanians as they identify with the cause. Zeina Azouqah, singer, composer and producer based in Berlin, mentions that this is the case for Palestinians in Germany, in which "art and activism going together. If you are Palestinian, it is going to trump the Jordanian part of the identity because that cause is so important" (Zeina Azouqah, Interview, 19 August 2022, Berlin).

As Nayla Abiaad,[37] wrote to me, her feeling is that she Lebanese musicians in Berlin see themselves more adjacent to the German experimental scene than an Arabic scene (Nayla Abiaad, Email Interview, 27 September 2022). Lisa Benjes from INM outlines that she even "has the feeling that they [Lebanese musicians] don't want to see themselves as 'migrant artists' and people like Rabih Beaini have a lot of problems with that, which I totally understand" (Lisa

---

[36] Festival with subcultural character showcasing music, arts, experimental performances, and theatre in Lärz, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Northeast Germany.

[37] Wife of experimental musician Tony Elieh. Both Nayla and Tony emigrated to Berlin from Beirut with their son when Tony Elieh was awarded a fellowship by *Weltoffenes Berlin*, a programme funded by the Berlin *Senate fur Kultur und gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt* ("Senate for Culture and Social Cohesion").

Benjes, Interview, 17 October 2022, online). Despite the differences in identifying with Lebanese, Palestinian or Jordanian identity, and the lack of articulating it in music, there is a commonality in which Arab identity becomes important in the bureaucratic sector. It is not uncommon that Islamophobic sentiments and prejudice against musicians from the SWANA region feed into visa decisions and settlement, as well as assimilation, processes. In the administrative sector of visa applications, this can look as follows: "As is always the case with German offices, it always depends on the individual case worker and whether she's up for it or afraid of a bearded man. There's a lot of racism and arbitrariness involved, and they can just decide ad hoc at the appointment" (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

Uncertainty, Tension, and Failure

Earlier in this chapter, I outlined the aim for listeners to be challenged by listening to uncomfortable, tense sonic environments. In providing a soundscape that refuses melodic runs, traceable rhythmic structures and instead uses prolonged drones, layered soundscapes and improvised structure gives back responsibility and agency back to listeners that can shape the soundscape with the improvising musician. Rabih Beaini explains this phenomenon with its possibilities and failures:

> "The thing is with DJs is that they have always been the provider of the click for people to dance to. What I do is I break this click and I create different layers where you initially will be confused but then you are basically forced to find your own rhythm, your own click within this music. And it shouldn't be following what I'm doing. It's your own rhythm. And this is something I discovered and developed together with the crowd. Every time I was doing that weird mix of stuff I was like 'ok they're gonna need a click'. Instead, there was an initial shock of 'what's going on here, what should I do, is this even danceable' but then there is a groove that becomes in your mind it's something that you... and their experience of DJing keeps the groove in what I do. So, you either catch it, or you're out. And if you're out, I'm sorry about it but next time you will be in. This is the hard exercise and that works most of the time, but not all the time. I'd say 90 per cent. I'm angry and sad if it doesn't work [laughs]" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 31 October 2022, Berlin).

The issues of waiting, patience, and uncertainty become a major part of the empowerment of engaging in experimental listening practices. In this way, uncertainty is used as a tool of audience education and the encouragement of what coins as hyper-listening, a practice in which sounds can "trigger a multitude of associative throughs, imaginings and personal memories" through listeners' engagement with their sonic environment (Chattopadhyay 2017).

The selection of sounds for his DJ sets are intended to create tension, as does the selection of artists experimenting on their prepared instruments. Tension creates uncertainty which according to Beaini holds the potential to trigger personal and artistic development which lies at the core of artist-led diasporic cultural productions in Berlin, as well as Beaini's curatorial approach. In the instrument series, he outlines that: "There was a huge amount of tension, both from the musicians and the builders, and from me in the beginning - and the audience was just like 'what's going on here, we don't know what's going on'. The musicians were asking 'what's

going on' and I had no answers because there was no plan behind it. You couldn't make a plan. There was no precedent" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

Rabih Beaini's curatorial approach becomes important because diasporic musicians are no longer session musicians, providing exoticist imaginations and victimhood narratives in world music productions, or merely exercising ideas of a project. Instead, they create new forms of curatorial concepts, sonic tools and affective responses to sound that become the breeding ground for practicing mindful, engaged, hyper-listening practices. At the same time, the expected, and intentional, creation and endurance of uncertainty as a productive sensation provides musicians with the ability to (re)shape their instruments, compositions, and style of playing each time again. It likewise builds trust between musicians and curator during the performance as the openness of results also leads to an uncertainty of how a performance will go. The instrument series as one of Morphine Raum's flagship projects makes space for the possibility and transparency of failure. It encourages failure as a gateway to agency. Providing space for experimentation and an openness to results becomes part of Rabih's vision and curatorial approach. Uncertainty is also intentionally felt by the curator as Beaini leaves things open. The instrument series provides an excellent example for this:

> "On the first night of the instrument series, we opened the doors at 7.30 and started at 8pm, we had to start. At 8pm I was trying to figure out how to do that with the musicians and we were having this huge discussion with the musicians where they were panicking and I had to give them answers I didn't have, as in, 'how many sets? When do we start?'. And then I said 'we are improvisers, and we're gonna improvise. Let me be with you on stage and I guide you through the process and we see where it goes.' And I felt a lot of discomfort and a lot of stress. Especially when I said that, because they discovered that I didn't have a plan. The only thing that gave me courage to do this and I was telling the others just to give them courage just that 'something like this is such an experiment that your career as a musician will be fine. You are not doing a show blind folded. You are not doing a performance of your own music. You are testing something. If it goes bad, it's part of the process, it's exactly what we wanna know. Where it goes right, and where it goes wrong, for the builders. And you will be fine, you're not gonna ruin your life if something goes bad, if you don't play well, that's not what you normally do.'" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

Beaini describes how openness to not only uncertainty, but failure, specifically in the context of instrument building, provides opportunities to find new styles of playing and likewise helps builders discover the limitations of their instrument, as well as ways to adapt to these failures productively:

> "There was an instance where one instrument didn't break but basically, it jammed. It was a string instrument that was connected to the computer via microprocessor, and the microprocessor was jammed, because the musician was just touching the buttons too quickly while playing the strings, and it started creating this ultra-loud white noise and the musician used the white noise of a source in the room and it became an amazing different instrument in the moment. The failure of the instrument became a different feature of the instrument itself. This impulsive approach also served the builder to see what the limitations of the instrument are but also what

can come out of these implications, and we were discussing this with the public, there was a lot of talks and discussions and interventions from the public, questions, and sometimes there were other instrument builders that were interacting, and it was very interesting" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

He describes this approach as a social experiment. A failure can be understood in terms of a lack of playability, jamming, breakage or the instrument being able to be played at all. But failure can also be understood as a curatorial failure in which the reality on the evening of the performance fails to live up to the concept. The importance Rabih's approach to failure shows is his prioritisation of the social, and his ability to adapt to a conceptual failure as one of the musicians failed to take part, worrying their instrument would be damaged. Not being able to share your instrument created tensions among musicians who were expecting to play the instrument which was extremely fragile:

> "And there was a lot of tension because the other musicians were expecting to use his instrument and he wouldn't let them, and it was clear why. The instrument was extremely fragile and the only way to play it is like him after 50 years of developing that instrument. That person is the only person that can play it. So, we found a way that others can process the sound, and then they can play with him, and that was a special case. That was the only case where I failed to have an instrument that can be played by others. But my failure in that sense had huge advantage of having that legendary musician, a person I don't see for a couple of years but he's on the label, I'm very connected to him. And I was just like "come, whatever happens, we can fight, we can do whatever we want, but I want you to be here" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

Beaini explained that not partaking in the experiment felt like a missed opportunity to the musician and proved Rabih's point, in which his acceptance of failing to make the instrument available for playing by other musicians helped his befriended colleague understand the value of the social experiment of instrument building and testing. The fragility and way of caring for instruments, however, is increasingly questioned as part of this process, as Beaini points how: "It's just an instrument, it can break, and you can fix it, you can build another one. And was like, "You're right, this is a missed opportunity". In these ways, instruments embody a changing notion fragility and care in which both instrument and instrument operator become open to failure and tension as a means to developing new ideas, showing how curation can encourage new ways of caring as an act of progressing one's practice and abilities.

Trust and Vulnerability

> "And then if you find out that you have the power of trust that these people put in you, it's almost like if I take advantage of it and the worst part is that I don't feel bad about it. I literally don't because it's something I care about." (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

Trust plays a major role in maintaining and building the networks around Morphine Raum. The musicians involved in the instrument series did not come together merely by way of shared

interests. Instead, by being recommended or invited by other musicians who trust and support each other or have previously worked together on shared projects. One of my interviewees called this "relational currency". Part of the currency of belonging to the scene is to share contacts or mention one's relationship to key figures in the *freie Szene* in conversation to prove belonging, knowledge of the network, and trustworthiness. The way musicians and audience members come together in this network is through personal judgement of character and a seeming social affordance, in which credibility and trust is built by the judgement of one musician over another musician's work. Beaini outlines the selection and recruitment process and curatorial process:

> "I was explaining in very few words what the idea was, and I had the advantage that a lot of people know me, most of these musicians know me, and there was a base of trust from the start. They knew I wouldn't do something that was silly, or stupid, or not relevant. Everybody had an immediate positive response except for the ones that couldn't participate because there weren't in Berlin for those dates, but they will be part in the next edition. So, there was this base trust that's necessary for a project like this. The second thing is that I felt that people wanted to be part of an experiment." (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

There are many affective dimensions of artist-led curation and the role that Beaini takes with his approach to project management. What he jokingly describes in a few words as "mandating", musicians being "completely naked" on stage, exercising what Rabih Beaini jokingly called a "sadomaso approach", and having "the power of trust" points to his position within the scene. Likewise, the statement later points to his care and mission to diversify the club scene and make instrument building and musical experimentation more globally accessible to users outside the Berlin bubble.

Other affective dimensions concern the discomfort of being part of a collaboration is accepting criticism and failure as possibilities that may occur in collaborative projects involving musicians that have never improvised together and do not share a previous history of friendship as experimental guitarist and Planet Ears regular Claus Boesser-Ferrari tells me (Claus Boesser Ferrari, Interview, 19 October 2022, online). These situations reveal one's vulnerabilities and require musicians to decide who takes the leading role of a collaborative project and who might take a backseat which are highly delicate subjects and are part of a programming by curators in the field of free improvised music. After speaking to musicians in the *freie Szene*, it appeared as if the various sentiments and intimacies arising during improvisations are not related to identity politics or technical challenges, but to emotional and personal challenges generally accompanying freelance musicianship in Germany, specifically in the free improvised music scene by exposing insecurities and openness to failure as part of the stylistic and aesthetic principles.

Affects that might arise are confidence, lack of confidence, anger, and resentment towards other members of a collective, or a perceived hierarchy and respect due to fandom that play into the improvisation process. Because improvisation is seen as a deeply personal practice, not reaching audiences can be a deeply devastating experience as Beaini describes when

curators have not understood the difference between the spaces associated commercial, and those associated with experimental crowds, rooms, and environments. He recalls one of his concerts: "It was a disaster. I was like 2 days of almost depression for me. They put me in the wrong room. It's the thing of where you put your acts in the club, that's not my problem, but at the same time you start questioning a lot of stuff." (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 31 October 2022, Berlin).

These sentiments reveal the impact of affective and social aspects of musicianship in the *freie Szene* that influence the sound production of experimental collaborations. Confidence, tension, and discomfort specifically play a major role in shaping the sound in musical experimentation between diasporic musicians and German musicians, rather than their different identities. These affective, rather than ethnic differences, conduces the tension for the social environment of musicians as Beaini point out.

We see that trust can be useful or taken advantage of in these environments. In many ways, affective musicianship in the *freie Szene* around Morphine Raum so far reflected in the articulations of trust in the instrument building process and performance process that allow for, and encourage, failure as part of one's personal and professional development. In the instrument building workshop, instruments that failed to operate in their expected way led to outcomes that were more productive than the initial concept and yet show that failure is an elusive concept that is dependent on its interpretation as a productive failure. Failure, for example in the case of Beaini's performance, shaped his experience of failure not as productive but external mistake by the curators and organisers assigning him the wrong room.

Globality and Access

I hope to have demonstrated so far that Lebanese cultural heritage and negative sentiments towards the world music industry are not the primary motivation for emerging sound experiments and institutions in Berlin's *freie Szene*. Instead, I described the role of cultivating to endure, enjoy and create uncertainty as an aesthetic and tool for professional development. When speaking with informants about their relationship with world music as a label, many either responded with boredom or negative sentiments. Some engage with the term in their academic writing but not their musical practices as musician and educator Cedrik Fermont demonstrates (Cedrik Fermont, Interview, 30 December 2021, Berlin).

Even if musicians did not aim to engage with questions around globality and world music, they did often mention their endeavours to engage in globalising attempts and the production of a new global music. Cedrik Fermont is a key figure in the *freie Szene* who works on multiple projects and travels often to engage in, and form, collaborations with musicians from across the world. His label Syrphe works as a platform to showcase experimental, noise, electronic music from Asia and Africa that encourages South-South collaborations. When I spoke with Cedrik over the three years of my PhD, he was rarely in his flat in Berlin, but on planes, trains and across Indonesia, Lebanon, Iraq, and other parts of the world. His aim to build extremely wide-meshed global networks across continents started as an obsession and is now both

activism and mission to prove wrong the claims of an absence of noise and experimental musicians in the Global South:

> "It was an activism but obsession according to my old friends, but I was convinced there were people outside Western Europe and North America that were doing this kind of music [noise]. I did not see this as a political thing. I was young, I mean I was a teenager in the 80s. However, I turned it, not voluntarily, into a kind of struggle so to speak and I extend it to a lot of things, for example the gender issue. Women in Southeast Asia, people told him he'll find no women when he published compilation with women from East Asia and Southeast Asia. Of course, I did!" (Cedrik Fermont, Interview, 30 December 2021, Berlin).

The growing scene of diaspora music producers in Berlin, specifically around Morphine Raum and independent networkers from an international background like Cedrik Fermont, help create a network that diversify the *freie Szene* in Berlin due to its growing international contacts. Creating an environment for growth and spontaneity similar to Fermont, Beaini forces musicians to have a real exchange, as Cedrik stresses by saying "I always want there to be an exchange, also on a personal level. I work like this with my friends here in Berlin as well. I listen to them; they listen to me it's not only about imposing ideas" (Cedrik Fermont, Interview, 30 December 2021, Berlin). Not only personal exchanges, but exchanges of instruments and the potential to make them globally accessible was one of the core ideas of the instrument series. In this way, globality does not only apply to networks, contacts, and resources, but the instruments built from scratch. The main idea of the instrument series was to make instruments accessible, affordable, and share knowledge on playing techniques while expending them at once.

Accessibility is thus also thought of in terms of the possibility for home sound production as instruments at the workshop should be made from paper, elastic, rubber, rubber bands and items you would find at home and would be able to source as a non-musician. The idea of the instrument series was to create instruments for public use that integrate electronic, electroacoustic, and acoustic elements that should not only be made for and by instrument builders themselves but globally accessible. Providing a place where instruments would be prototyped and replicated based on pre-sales, Beaini followed a curatorial approach that privileged accessibility before artistic virtuosity. His concept addresses the provinciality of instrument making in Europe, as well as the like-mindedness of instrument builders and the small communities instrument building is practiced in which he called an "in-fed thing like a small club or clan that operates around an idea." His vision for the instrument series was to actively oppose this gatekeeping process and make instrument building and playing accessible, explaining:

> "We're taking about a scene or a group of people engaging in something that is very personal and build for a certain necessity or choice. And what I want from these people is to make it global, to make it accessible for everybody else. Like, you don't have to build a string instrument that's accessible for a guitar player: that's not the point. It should be accessible to someone that's *as* curious as you are with exploring the sound.

And that can explore the instrument his own way. It doesn't have to be an instrument that's globally *playable*, because globally *accessible* is a different thing. You can be anyone with a laptop or synthesiser or sequencer and you can play a string instrument and introduce it in your own set of sounds" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin, emphasis added).

Providing accessible spaces and making instruments that can be used globally put diasporic musicians like Rabih Beaini in the position of becoming the producers in ways in which formerly world music producers acted. The difference is, however, the way materials and personnel are sourced which is based on accessibility, internationalism, friendship, common sentiments, and affinities as well as a business-like mindset using codeswitching in which musicians navigate the search for spaces, funding, and evaluation of free improvised formats. This can be seen in the way the instrument building workshop has come into place and the way curation is thought of as a practice of selection, diversification and building of a social and material infrastructure. There are, however, individualistic aspects of creating musical instruments, as members would build instruments based on the limits of one's own practice, their experiences of failure during the testing process itself.

I hope how the independence in the curation of workshops such as the instrument series enables grounds for an aesthetics of failure and chaos (Cascone 2000) that lead to musicians' engagement with their own playing styles, established routines, and anxieties. Rabih Beaini argued that the only way chaos can be achieved is through the building, rather than playing, process. The building process of the instrument involves both personalising it–making instruments one's own–and making them global and accessible at the same time. The curator outlines: "Most musicians that build instruments don't want something that sounds nice and clean. That's not what they're looking for. What they're looking for is basically chaos. And you can only obtain chaos by taking something apart and building it again in a completely different way and making it your own" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 16 February 2022, Berlin).

Innovation, Noise, and Curiosity

Projects like the instrument series are often described as driven by innovative approaches to sound production in a global context. As German music journalist Julia Neupert points out in our interview, "innovative thinking" in Berlin's *freie Szene* is not only encouraged but becomes a marker of quality and aesthetic maxim that cultural institutions and funding bodies expect (Julia Neupert, Interview, 20 October 2022, online). Morphine Raum encourages electronic and electroacoustic rather than purely acoustic improvisation. Thus, these spaces extend ideas around innovation beyond prepared instruments and sound art into the realm of noise and draw on genres such as breakcore, club culture as well as references of popular culture. The relationship between club culture, pop music and experimental music becomes an important one in this context.

It is not the commercial side of pop music, but alleged lack of innovative thought and lack of potential for personal development and curiosity that builds ideological boundaries around experimental and popular playing styles. Thus, the notion of innovation becomes synonymous

with quality. What innovation entails is a different question and has been described as either individual sonic language, a way of "not just recalling a pattern" (Claus Boesser-Ferrari, Interview, 19 October 2022, online), transdisciplinary elements, and inclusion of formats that focus on inclusion, e.g., people with disabilities, audience participation, and pedagogy, e.g., involving children (Julia Neupert, Interview, 20 October 2022, online).

While speaking about the multiplicity of Rabih Beaini's multiple roles, it became apparent that his motivation for running Morphine Raum stemmed from an urge for development within the scene, his own curiosity and impulsivity that prevents boredom and stagnation. The boredom also expands to the musicians he engages with, in which he will not only push himself but encourage collaborators to leave their comfort zone. He explains:

> "I like to think of myself as a producer that wants to see things happening and evolving. I get easily bored, easily, even from the most interesting stuff. After seeing or doing them several times I move on, because it's one lifetime and I don't want to see it on one thing. The fact that I'm not repeating myself is also something that I want to mandate to others. I want to see people doing it, I want to see people evolving within their own practice and I'm so happy to see this happening… I always wanted to play something different, otherwise you become a number, you don't pop out. Somehow you have to promote yourself or put yourself always in the scene in order to work, you have management - I have none of this. I have a structure or a name, I need to have a product. I need something that is special and that can be popping out. This is the rational thinking about it. But simply, I just got bored. And this is what happens to me. And what happens is I think: How can I destroy all this? And how can I keep it interesting and build it in a different way" (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 31 October 2022, Berlin).

In this way, noise becomes a form of activism and way to combat boredom and stagnation, but not in the sense Brandon LaBelle in *Sonic Agency* (2018) or Legacy Russell in books such as *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (2020) described. It is not the sonic disruption that becomes a form of activism, but the desire for the pleasures of sonic disruption and noise and aim for curiosity as a guiding principle for collaborative projects, that forge collective pleasure (Novak 2013). Layering sounds, out of love for these sounds and by providing visibility to certain sounds that may not otherwise be heard, can become noise due to the layering, not due to the nature of the sounds themselves.

Beaini describes that it is less a political activism or forms of sonic agency when producing complex soundscapes, but more about incorporating influences carried over from different collaborative projects. In addition, many musicians in Morphine Raum are keen to design sound and explore its possibilities through electronic mediation. The urge of experimenting musicians to change listening habits and reconsider the function of loud noise as providing pleasure is frequently brought up in conversations around the motivation for the noise experiments heard in the diasporic music scene. Sound artists Cedrik Fermont describes: "I love to listen to noise, it's not a protest to me at all, it's not resistance. It's powerful to me, it's beautiful, it gives me pleasure, especially when it's loud. Of course, sometimes you have a person behind a laptop and there is no performance just noise but often you have people moving

violently, crushing things, squeezing, and shouting, it's like a theatre. There is the show, and it can be wonderful, but I care less about that. To me it's the sound I care about, and I love it. To me it's music, it's not disruptive" (Cedrik Fermont, Interview, 30 December 2021, Berlin).

Experimental musician and tombak player Joss Turnbull describes his longing for loud music and noise in similar terms while having to using an instrument that in itself, is not able to cross these sonic barriers without electronics, saying, "I have a longing (*Sehnsucht*) for blatant beat music sometimes, I have a longing for extremely loud output, I have a longing for noise - but I play tombac, which doesn't happen at all in such contexts... Yes, and so I start to realise that anyway, and that's how I end up making this music that I make or combining electronics, or that's how I find myself with Stella Banger[38]" (Joss Turnbull, Interview 7 January 2022, Berlin). Displaying the ability to enjoy harsh noise, glitch, dark ambient drones, and the sporadic nature of sound production of free improvised performances as a form of sonic education distinguish listeners of experimental musical styles in the *freie Szene* from electronic music considered commercial, predictable, and purpose-built and plays into tropes of distinction, masculinity, and toughness.

Drawing on findings of noise theorist Karin Bijsterveld from the early 2000s, one can see how these tropes of noise tolerance can be both a symbol for strength and power, and likewise a way of alienating different listeners through controlling noise and silence. Bijsterveld outlines how unintentionally produced noise has historically been considered as a disruption of social order and social danger which occurs in rather primitive or even "barbarous societies". In contrast, loud and rhythmic noise are considered a symbol of strength, power, masculinity, progress, prosperity while silence is seen as a sign of control, wisdom, and justice (Bijsterveld 2001).[39]

Affective Labour

> "I really like the idea of "labour art" because there is a sort of dedication and meditation of work behind it - you're the artist actually working on building the thing and not just purchasing something that is already made by somebody else." (Rabih Beaini, Interview, 31 October 2022, Berlin)

In order to build and maintain a sustainable infrastructure, there is labour required from those engaging in the institution building of Morphine Raum. The term "labour of love" is often mentioned in the context of artist-led projects in which musical experimentalism is understood as a form of cultural activism and affective labour. Beside the understanding of creative work as labour, it is the changing self-understanding of musicians post-Covid and general trend in

---

[38] Collective of experimental musicians including Joss Turnbull, Abed Kobeissy, Ali Hout and Pablo Gīw that works across Lebanon and Germany.
[39] Noise and silence have thus established a set of cultural hierarchies that were utilised before the 16th century that explain the lower-ranked, such as woman, children and servants as a source of intentionally noise producers as these groups were meant to remain silent, whereas men held the privilege of the powerful and were seen as noise producing to represent power, strength, and control (Bijsterveld 2001: 44) or strength and toughness (Bijsterveld 2006).

funding policy framework that were confronted musicians in the *freie Szene* with a neglect of the arts and culture as it has been argued as an optional, rather than necessary good or essential part of the city's economic infrastructure.

Writing on music as labour before the funding cuts in arts and culture education and the sector at large have been looking at the connection between the two concepts since the beginning of late capitalism. In these readings, authors outline that modern musicianship not only includes the musical education, the working conditions and cultural policy, but in today's time and especially in the context of experimental music projects and ensembles I am looking at, ability to manage self-promotion, branding, music production - generally, what it takes to become, and work as, a musician. My approach combines the ideas around affective citizenship with musicianship. The concept of affective citizenship has been formulated by Monica Mookherjee in 2005 among others, and "recognises the emotional relations through which identities are formed". In the realm of music, another important idea following the affective turn of musicology is Martin Stokes' notion of sentimental citizenship describing "collective habits and self-identifications" in the context of Turkish pop music and Turkish nationalism as well as the notion of music (as) labour within the framework of affective labour in her case study of professional female singers in socialist Yugoslavia (Hofman 2015).

Looking at music labour and gender in socialist Yugoslavia and the working conditions and work subjectivities of female professional singers, she sheds light on reappropriations and issues of stigmatisation and marginalisation because of shared somatic, gendered, and affective aspects of musicianship. Hofman describes "professional musicianship as both material practice and a sensorial experience, taking into account that they are in constant flux, changing and transforming" that needs to be contextualised on the basis of local historical and socio-economic circumstances. They contribute to the construction of musicians' ethnicity and sense of belonging. Especially in the German context, with a long-standing history of German world music festivals, degree programs and distribution channels, Lebanese musicianship and work subjectivities in Berlin do not only reflect, but are constructed around, the material and socio-economic conditions of music production and consumption that play a major role in the way musicians within diasporic networks connect and interact in their music and extra-musical work.

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter looked at the ways in which newcomers utilise social networks to set up spaces for musical experimentation by way of network building, friendship, sharing of resources and codeswitching in the attainment and distribution of cultural capital among members of affective communities in Berlin. Care is also another important dynamic that steers interactions among Lebanese, Jordanian, and Palestinian musicians in Germany, and those abroad, which will be in the focus of the following chapter. Cultural institutions such as Morphine Raum should be thought of as combining different curatorial notions and proves curation as an affective and political practice in which politics relate to anti-commercialism, diversity policies, and ideas around experimental music. These are imagined symbols of technological and musical

innovation and progress. In Gaupp's understanding of the curator, Rabih Beaini, as the owner of the space, enables a closeness between artists and musicians through the spatial set up and associated deep listening practices. The space itself provides musicians with the opportunity to construct relationships between listeners and producers on a qualitative level. In that way, the curatorial process should be thought of as a collaborative process involving material and non-material resources as well as different affective experiences. The use and distribution of resources cannot be tied to a single person's responsibility or curatorial strategy. Instead, different listening habits, urge for intense sonic experiences, an aesthetic of collaboration, the connotations of the warehouse as a venue, as well as cultural significance of different musical styles based on the type and amount of governmental funding support and their adjacent attitudes, behaviour, and imaginations all feed into the curatorial process of a diasporic sonic aesthetic. The curatorial figure is not absent but often comprises a group of people familiar with the way the space is laid out, the subcultural appeal and reputation of a place which determines the experience of listeners and musicians alike. What was formerly determined through the single figure of the curator in the context of (post)migrant cultural productions in Germany is now determined by a large network based on friendship, shared values, and other relational affordances. The subcultural appeal of these places is created through the collaborative curatorial effort and spin the webs of significance of these places in reverse.

Chapter 4: Beirut

"Beirut is not a very understandable place; you will always miss out on something. The moment you think it make sense means that you don't understand it" (Charbel Haber, Interview, 11 April 2023, Beirut).

This case study draws on research conducted in April 2023 during fieldwork in Lebanon. During four weeks of participant observation and semi- and unstructured interviews in the region, I spoke to cultural practitioners and listeners across urban communities in and around Beirut and residents in the village of Majdal Anjar at Lebanon's border with Syria. Drawing on these findings, I aim to outline the social dynamics and cultural specificities of experimental practices in Lebanon while tracing the relationship and friendship-based and professional festival networks to Berlin and Mannheim. In this study, I aim to make five points. One, to study Lebanese experimental practices, one needs to apply an anti-narrational approach that privileges incoherency and aesthetic fluidity as the cultural logic over a coherent narrative that merely mentions political resistance, resilience, and struggle. Considering the work of Ted Swedenburg, Yara El-Ghadhban, Kiven Strohm, Darci Sprengel, Anne Elise Thomas, and Lorella Ventura, I look at the way narratives on liberation politics and modernity in Lebanon have shaped and continue to shape the productive capacities, emotional labour, and care work, of musicians, institutions and NGO funding for arts and culture in the SWANA region. Instead, ambivalent feelings about "home" acts as a crucial counter narrative around musical practices and reflects on Beirut as both a psycho-social and physical space and ways to feel home in the uncanny (Freud 1919, Clack 2008). The chapter will present an analysis of *Home is so Sad*, a song by Lebanese dream pop band Postcards, inspired by Philip Larkin's poem of the same name to consider ambivalent experiences of belonging in relation to home-making practices in times of crisis and pertaining affective dimensions of political corruption, loss, displacement, and Lebanon's colonial legacy. Considering the economic and political context of this chapter, I take a closer look at practitioners and spaces translate non-acoustical information such as memories and visual images into sound by way of sonification (Ouzounian 2017) and musicians that express ambivalent feelings towards home in productive spaces that enable social intimacy of those involved in the production process (Bates 2012).

Two, if political resistance and anti-hegemonic politics are not the main incentive for collaborative and experimental practices, one needs to understand the driving force for creative practices using sensory ethnographic methods, unstructured interviews and partaking in social activities of musicians in which interviewees speak about creative input and inspirations during the undertaking of these very practices.[40] Drawing on theories of noise and listening to spaces and human voices, I will outline listening as a methodology and an act of care that is shapes research and practice (Lavee 2021, Ratnam 2019, Ciucci 2017).

---

[40] Sarah Pink describes sensory ethnography as a "reflexive and experiential process through which academic and applied understanding, knowing and knowledge are produced" and stresses the possibilities of sensory reception, perception and reflexivity in ethnographic research (Pink 2015: 4).

As will become clear later, my own positionality as a female German-Arab researcher will continue to influence and shape the way I experience Beirut, its soundscapes, interactions with musicians and home-making practices expressed in experimental cultural productions. This approach led me to understand that it is not the economic circumstances and post-war thematic, but the change in mental health and the workaround with limited resources that feed into the sound of collaborate experimental practices and artist-led institution building. At a later point, I argue that the economic and political crisis in Beirut fosters collaborative work, brings social solidarity, often at the cost of social and mental exhaustion which feeds into creative practices in Beirut.

Three, it is not a bi-directional influence from Berlin to Beirut but a sharing of resources, contacts, skills and friendship-based "ways of working" across the Lebanese expat communities in multiple centres of Europe, Canada and the US that inform the practices in each urban hub based on the amount of funding and resources available at each performance to enable mobility and exchange. Four, practitioners' anti-institutional stance and the priorities of NGO funding schemes for performing arts in the Levante foster the emergence of cross-border collectives across Lebanon and its expat community in Berlin and the strengthening of international festival networks. I will point out the reasoning for an institutionally critical and self-sufficient methodology of Lebanese cultural practitioners later in this chapter.

Five, the terminology remains an important part of my methodology. Not using terms such as migrant musicians, but expats or cosmopolitans helps to understand the social and economic positional, intention and skillset that leads Lebanese musicians to move to Berlin. Instead, revisiting the term cosmopolitan and adjacent globalist aspirations can be useful in this context to highlight the embeddedness of independent Lebanese music scenes in Euro-American narratives around its alleged Westernisation. The distinction between migrants and expats, or, cosmopolitans, becomes crucial when studying the music of Lebanese musicians specifically in the diaspora. As Stokes and Tsing argue, the term cosmopolitan, as opposed to migrant, signals an active practice of world-making rather than a "passive response to systems", hence, it centers human agency in the conversation around identity constructions within global systems centering enlightenment ideas of culture and exchange (Stokes 2007: 8). Furthermore, going back to the term cosmopolitan can also help understand the connection between class, taste and nationalist ideologies or colonial residues in contemporary practices and pedagogies in the SWANA region (ibid.). This is a way to classify on the nature of these exchanges and the relationship of Lebanese musicians with international networks, institutes and most importantly, their often-varying articulations of agency in a pan-Arab cultural policy landscape looking to uplift local, rather than alleged Western-oriented, cultural expression.[41]

---

[41] I draw great inspiration from Martin Stokes' article on musical cosmopolitanism that looks at the colonial legacies, hegemonic ventures, nationalist and globalist ideologies of institutions, gatekeepers and other channels that distribute and perform different cosmopolitanisms in musical styles as diverse as rai, world beat, and arabesk. Drawing on Turino's thoughts on nationalism and cosmopolitans as mutually constructing and reinforcing one another, Stokes suggests that national developments in musical cultures not only showcase national developments of musical cultures, but can likewise be seen as a counter hegemonic protest to colonial and sexualized dimensions of migrant cultural productions in the Global North (Stokes 2007: 9).

Bearing these points in mind, I argue that Beirut presents an interesting case in which the local scene can be seen as a cosmopolitan, vulnerable middle class that is deeply invested in a strong local ambition for development, centering national resources and anti-colonial, global aspirations of their musicianship, to strengthen these local resources. Bringing this back to Stokes' point on the use of the term "cosmopolitan" in the context of national ideologies and intellectual formations (ibid.: 17), one can say that the opposition of these cosmopolitans lies not in their colonial struggle or an anti-hegemonic sentiment, but their resistance to a fixed idea of modernity, cultural heritage and "Arabness" that SWANA funding schemes exert in their policy frameworks that relate to outdated beliefs around modernity established since the Cairo Congress. In this way, one can trace a current development in Beirut in which "re-cosmopolitanising" (ibid.: 13) does not only constitute a rediscovering of Lebanon's multicultural heritage but a re-definition of heritage and identity itself that considers the colonial influence and naturalising of Western instruments and musical styles that I showcase in the work of the Beirut-based band Postcards as part of modern secular Lebanese identities. However, this is often strongly tied to Beirut and urban centers in Lebanon such as Tripoli with a growing number of young musicians engaging with the urban and architectural heritage of their cities.

Noise and Listening in Beirut

I spent one month in Beirut, first in the popular tourist borough Gemmayzeh which formed a handy connection point between Downtown Beirut and the former cultural center of Hamra with the streets of the affluent Christian neighbourhood of Ashrafieh and cultural center Mar Mikhael. My stay in Gemmayze was followed by a 10 day stay in the booming cultural district of Mar Mikhael in a side road of the popular Rue Arménie that connects Gemmayzeh's Rue Gouraud and to the majority-Armenian suburb of Bourj Hammoud. It was in Mar Mikhael where I met with most of the musicians and artists involved in Irtijal and other related events at the local bars, venues, and theatres. I arrived in early April, intending to merely visit Irtijal festival, Lebanon's oldest festival for experimental music. While speaking to Elyse Tabet, one of the founders of the Beirut Synth Center, as my first interviewee, I was pointed into the direction of different venues, grassroots institutions, and people outside of Irtijal. Irtijal was described as a network, and institution, and looking outside of the festival as an already established institution in the region allowed me to understand the social dynamics of experimental collaborations between Lebanon and Germany, specifically how artists institute experimental practices before a community project becomes an institution–or is believed to become an institutional structure.

In the field, I collected the voices of musicians, curators and art administrators and noticed the very interdisciplinary approach of many artists spanning across sound art, poetry, and dance; the pace, as well as the volume of the city which I was made aware of prior to my stay in Beirut. The city's lack of a legal limit for noise control and "noise pollution" in Mar Mikhael specifically encouraged public health scholars to conduct a study on "involuntary and persistent environmental noise" and its impact on physical and mental health as well as hearing of

Lebanese citizens pointing out that local residents exposed to the noise of power generators, motorcycles, honking cars often experience "irritability, anger, headaches, and sleep disturbances due to noise annoyance" (Fooladi 2011). But this is just one dimension of the way noise, or what I perceived as noise, tied to the sensory experience of those in Beirut and the experimental musical practices that derive from the physical spaces in the city. At first, I was walking around with protective ear plugs that dimmed everything down to a good base level, from supermarkets to concerts, I walked around Beirut in between performances, interviews, until I decided to experience noise and electronic disruption as part of my experience in a Beirut marked by its political and economic crisis.

During interviews, I would often notice flickering lights due to the electricity cuts and the overall volume of the traffic and building sites to which one interviewee replied "We are numb. Sonically we are so loud as a country. We're loud. We talk loudly, we move loudly, we clap, we are loud, there is never a quiet moment in this country, everything is so fucking loud it's so annoying" (Fadi Tabbal, Interview, 6 April 2023, Beirut). Fadi Tabbal, music producer and owner of Beirut's most established recording studio Tunefork Studios, described this experience as a nationwide one: "I am doing a documentary with bodyguards of politicians for an Arte thing, and we went south of the border, there is nothing there, I was like "I am gonna get silence in Lebanon" and as soon as I pressed play there was a building construction work. It is impossible. As soon as you enter the country. I am aware of the noise, I filter it but I need to live with it. This is part of how I disconnect with my music" (Fadi Tabbal, Interview, 6 April 2023, Beirut).

Before I knew it, my own noise perception and way of listening in Beirut shaped the way I experienced performances, interviews, and the city itself. Thomas's article on noise and white experiences in Arab spaces stress that European travellers experience Arab music as noisy, "a complaint commonly lodged by those in power against any style of music that is perceived to threaten the social order–and therefore suggestive of "insurrection" (Thomas 2007). I was left to reflect on my upbringing and the sonic experiences of my own "Arabness" in Germany, as well as my affective experiences towards pertaining noise as and audibility as much as possible. Walking through Beirut as a Palestinian-German woman born and raised in one of the world's most noise-regulated countries with its longstanding history of anti-Palestinian and anti-Muslim racism, I reflected on Arabness and Palestinian identity practices as something that shall be both audibly and visibly contained to the private rather than public sphere. My perception of noise and sound in Beirut was very much tainted by longing to express and experience belonging through difference, noise, and sonic novelty in the Levante in which difference and sonic discomfort to me would make me feel closer to, and more comfortable with, the sense of difference and Otherness I experience within.

The sound of the traffic, people passing by or street fights during interviews left an "affective residue" (Kassabian 2013) on my ethnographic experience, accompanying interviews with practitioners and their accounts on the urban and affective aspects of everyday life in Beirut

that shape music productions.[42] At the time, I did not pay much attention to the role of inattentive listening in Beirut of everyday life in the city or my judgement of noise as a disturbance to my experience to the city. It has, in fact, become a crucial and inseparable part of the city itself. In 2017, Kapchan suggests how sound studies let us think about methodologies and epistemological issues in writing about sound as "a kind of format, a method of data arrangement" (Kapchan 2017:11). She describes listening is a method that foregrounds intuition rather than analytical approaches to the tonal qualities of sound. Outlining the importance of affect, music appreciation and sonic sensibility, she argues that "what we listen depends on how we listen and what we listen for" (ibid.: 5).

In the second week, I started *listening* more to the sonic profile of each pocket of Beirut, rather than trying to dim the noise with my earplugs, and started recording the music from cars, neighbourhood gardens, the resonance of people shouting and blasting music on speakers during a protest in Downtown Beirut I walked past, and the soundscapes of cafes. These all became part of my experience of Beirut with entangled class and social aspects of each borough of Beirut, its historic religious separation by borough, and the village of Majdal Anjar with its predominant Sunni community during the month of Ramadan. The cafes I recorded my interviews in usually captured a crowd of people switching between English, French and Arabic, displaying a certain part of Lebanese society, usually urban, queer, liberal, very specific to Beirut, and part of an educated class with cultural, yet, due to the economic crisis and the nature of freelance creative work, low financial capital. In essence, listening, noise, and listening *to* and *with* noise revealed to be a crucial part of musicianship and everyday practices of the experimental and free improvising music scene in Beirut.

Alessandra Ciucci points out, to really *listen* means to train one's year to "recognize which sound is meaningful, invested with significance, given emotional weight" (Ciucci 2017). Based on her reading of Ochoa-Gautier's *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (2014), the ethnomusicologist argues for the importance of listening to rural sounds through a historical lens and recognise its "web of relationships and interactions" to become proficient in both emic and etic modes of listening (Ciucci 2017). I aim to use process of listening as a qualitative research approach (Lavee 2021, Ratnam 2019, Ciucci 2017) and as a way to theorise the ethics of care in performing arts communities and artist-led curatorship. This entails identifying some of the current social and affective pillars of Lebanese experimentalism which, as I will outline in this case study on Beirut, can be understood as social and institutional anchoring structures.

Authors such as Sprengel, Novak, Bijsterveld and Thomas have written about the colonial and classist logic behind quietness and loudness and Western consideration of noise as

---

[42] Kassabians (2013) understanding of listening acknowledges the *affective* qualities of everyday, the ubiquitous, listening practices that are not always attentive. Yet, ubiquitous listening is physiological and identity-constructing by producing affective responses to all kinds of subjects, objects or groups we listen to – with how ever much attention – that shape our identities from moment to moment due to the "residue" they leave after every moment in which sounding subjects or objects around us inscribe affect in us. She writes that "the residue accretes in our bodies, becoming the stuff of future affective responses" the more you repeat the action.

unsophisticated and related to unwanted or marginalised communities to disrupt of social order (Bijsterveld 2001). Bijsterveld focuses specifically on the relationship between noise, gender, class, and cultural hierarchies, considering the connotation of noise and technical sounds, the history and anthropology of noise as well as noise-abandonment campaigns from 1900-1940. These authors showed how different articulations of the quiet and the loud can construct a productive third space[43], disrupt social order or forge a collective experience (Bijsterveld 2001, Novak 2008) while the ability to endure noise and discomfort could be seen as a way to showcase strength, control, and power (Bijsterveld 2006)[44] as well as a radical attitude towards non-conformity and noise as "future sounds" (Russolo 1913).

Following the aesthetic logic of noise that these futurists gestured towards, Joseph Nechvatal, describes noise as a form of art (noise art/cultural noise) and cultural protest, as well as a symbol of personal or collective power and resistance that strengthens the individual imagination and critical thinking to oppose cultural simplification caused by consumer-orientated entertainment and mass media consumption. Nechvatal describes noise art as a psychological experience and necessary "nervous ecstatic break out" which stand against authoritarianism, the controlling technical world and the "world's blandness and self-destructiveness" (Nechvatal 2011: 57). Recontextualising noise and sound in Beirut as a tool communication and rendering method rather than communication itself (Ingold 2007), I look at sound as a medium to articulate ideas around urban identity, coloniality and power that exist in specific local and national histories that can reveal the "uncanny" in our daily experiences.

The Ever-Evolving Fieldsite: Irtijal, Beirut Collectives, and the Berlin Connection

The Irtijal International Festival of Experimental Music in Lebanon is the longest-running music festival in Beirut, Lebanon, and advertising its organisation on their website as "the largest structure of its kind in the Arab world" (Irtijal 2021). Founded in 2000 by Sharif Sehnaoui, Christine Abdelnour and Mazen Kerbaj, Irtijal features artists that work across experimental electronic music, sound art, free improvised music, contemporary classical music, post-rock, and free jazz and encourages musicians to experiment within these genres. The festival aims to "assist projects that do not fit within the Lebanese mainstream" (ibid.) while both local and foreign artists are expected to interact with one another through collaborative ways of working. The edition I visited operated its entry fee policy on a "pay as you want" basis and worked with only minimal and short notice advertising on social media channels of those participating as performers. The whole festival felt very convivial, small, and down to earth as Postcards frontwoman Julia Sabra explains, with attending musicians sleeping at other musicians' houses rather than a hotel. Julia tells me that "Irtijal feels like three people are running it" whereas larger festivals such as the showcase festival *Beirut & Beyond* with its

---

[43] Suggesting an ethnomusicology of the inaudible, Sprengel looks at the sonic absence of independent music after the military return to power in Egypt in 2014, arguing that exhaustion is not only a part of political exhaustion but that "self-care, exhaustion, sleep and quietude are just as much a part of (political) life as other more celebrated activities, though each in their own ways and in their own contexts." (Sprengel 263).

financial support by the Norwegian Embassy has a large team, a large backstage area, buffet, and other things that one would not see at Irtijal.

It is curated by Sharif Sehnaoui as director and other Lebanese musicians including Fadi Tabbal who suggested musicians for the programming for the 2023 edition. Due to its pivotal role in the experimental music landscape in the Arabic- and Kurdish-speaking world, the festival's social circle formed of the central networks I observed and interacted with during my time in Lebanon. Irtijal also became responsible for the frequent exchange between Berlin and Beirut the festival enabled, with two of core members residing in Berlin since the 2010s. The festival has also been the subject of many scholarly works and monographs (LeVine 2022, Nickell 2020, Burkhalter 2013) and became part of a network of experimental music festivals and one-off collaborations with other festivals. Planet Ears, the Mannheim-based festival which forms part of my PhD thesis and curatorial work, came into place due to a collaboration with Irtijal festival in Beirut and the Al-Balad theatre in Amman, Jordan. Several listeners at the 2023 edition also visited from Germany, Switzerland and the US and were either planning collaborations between platforms and festivals or had Lebanese artists signed on their label. Most curatorial choices are made by the director of the festival, Sharif Sehnaoui who will request musicians and artists that perform at each year's edition. Listening with and to potential acts of each festival is one of the crucial parts of Irtijal's curatorial process.

Other suggestions will come from some of the social core pillars of the community, including Mazen Kerbaj, Ziad Moukarzel, Fadi Tabbal which shows the lack of clear hierarchies and collective aspect of the curatorial process as well as bringing up questions around the biases and friendships that influence the selection of new artists of each festival edition. This may also, however, lead to gatekeeping processes and a lack of diversity and new faces as Fadi Tabbal points out: "Sharif just needs a small push to look for new faces but there is a lot of new faces so, it is a bit unfair to say it is always the same people" (Fadi Tabbal, Interview, 6 April 2023, Beirut). This is so there is a balance between keeping the community aspect, strengthening friendships through the curatorial process (as this may be the only time musicians meet between Berlin and Beirut) and not excluding new faces due to these aspects. However, the scene, which in the following will be used as a term that musicians themselves use to describe the experimenting musicians in and around Tunefork Studios, Mkalles Warehouse and other venues run by collectives of performing artists. Julia Sabra mentions that the acts at Irtijal are often the same because the friendship- and location-based network forming around these spaces and anchoring structures, as well as Beirut itself, is so small.

Considering Alessandra Ciucci's thoughts on listening as a crucial practice, listening to not just the musical sounds itself but the suggestions by fellow curators and practising musicians presupposes a certain amount of trust and credibility to stay aurally involved and likewise emotionally invested in the multiple developments in contemporary music in the SWANA region. Informants in Beirut mentioned the importance and surprise that "Sharif really listens" and, despite being disconnected in some ways due to a busy schedule, maintains invested and active in going to concerts to discover musicians to mix up the otherwise stable line-up. As will become clearer in the chapter on Planet Ears where the curatorial process consists of

selecting a pre-curated musicians based on agency suggestions and availability and there is no listening to suggestions or concerts due to the time constraints and disconnect of administrators and musicians due to bureaucracy-practice divide (unlike Irtijal), it is reflected in the curation.

In Berlin, as became clear in the chapter on German cultural policy, visiting performances as an administrator or funding director is part of gaining credibility and trust in the performing arts community that strengthens the affective quality and potency of networks between curators, administrators, and musicians. Only when one listens and learns how to "appreciate sound" and its qualities, as Fadi Tabbal explains in our interview, it is possible to stay connected to mission statements and build a platform for new developments in contemporary music. Listening, as a gesture of care, can be overserved in the small-scale, e.g. the Irtijal collaborations of free improvising musicians in which musicians leave silences and space for others to play and listen to one other (Paed Conca, Interview, 20 April 2023, Beirut) to electronic sets in which musicians aim to not take up space electronically by using different frequencies, playing with parameters of sound to balance out a set as Frequent Defect founder Sfeir explains (Joseph Junior Sfeir, Interview, 17 April 2023, Beirut).

Listening also means to listen to other musicians needs, suggestions and looking at one's own methodology when addressing music in post-crisis environments. Listening cannot be forced but encouraged as I learned from Fadi Tabbal, which thinks about listening as a "muscle you can exercise" in order to appreciate sound. Others use sound installations in public spaces to "make people listen" to "develop a different ear" as Hardi Kurda explains (Hardi Kurda, Interview, 16 December 2022, London). As part of the annual Space21 festival for experimental music and sound, he installed an installation in a public bus with the public being unaware of the installation until they entered the vehicle. He says: "when audiences come, they decide what they like, I just give them the opportunity, it's like developing a different ear. It's like eating in McDonalds for 20 years and now eating what you eat". He points at my sourdough slice with avocado, eggs, and few leaves on the plate as we are sitting in a café in New Cross, Southeast London. He continues: "They develop a taste and curating an experience for audiences to listen to sound first and how they translate it to music or whatever is their choice." Listening as a researcher became part of the methodology and a key part of my ethnographic observation in Beirut. In unstructured interviews during fieldwork, I would always ask about their experience being interviewed by researchers or journalists. While speaking to Julia, she stresses that she felt that Beirut has been used as a site at which narratives on independent music, gender and resistance have been subject to deductive research approaches that confirm an already existing theory on the logic of music making in Beirut.

> "I just feel like I've been used as a pun for an academic paper that doesn't reflect at all what's been happening here and this guy [researcher] was living here for 5 years and he's been at every concert. You have to get the feel... maybe it's the fact that you are part Arab, you get some things that other... no matter how much a Westerner is aware of the language and stuff and the other guy spoke perfect Arabic, I think he was a spy [laughs], there is something that you have to get, you have to be from here to get, and I think it's that reading between the lines that make things just fall into place no matter what you're transcribing or writing about. I feel like sometimes they are so disconnected no matter

how much time they spend here, no matter how many interviews they do, it's just like this connection and the way of framing things that's not accurate just to fit into whatever thesis they have, their theory, nothing that's been written about here has been accurate. Not in books, not in PhDs, the scene is always overromanticised or under.... I don't know. It's so hard to capture though, I don't blame them. It's such a non-academic subject, it's so fragile and emotional" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

My own positionality helped unravel some of the more affective sides of music making. My positionality also led to assumptions about the perceived sonic and social proximity between Berlin and Beirut. One reason for my assumption was that the founding members and current organisers of Irtijal themselves now live in Berlin and keep an active connection between the two cities. However, it is mainly the organising group rather than the current performing arts scene in Beirut. There is also, to my surprise, not a large mentioning of the influence of what could be described as a sound of Berlin to current Beirut music scenes. The younger generation tries to establish something of a self-sufficient local, a community-led social development "sped up" by the explosion, in which Berlin is merely useful in terms of networks and funding sources through those Lebanese musicians residing there: "I don't feel influenced at all, I don't even know what's happening in Berlin. Even the German label found us by chance on Spotify and then he started booking us. It influenced us in general, Krautrock and that, but in the modern sense, no it hasn't influenced us at all - there hasn't been this exchange like the older generation of Irtijal has because they played with these musicians for years" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

When speaking about the infrastructure of the musicians surrounding Irtijal and those active in contemporary performing arts, it seemed as if it was structured not hierarchically but by "generation" and by those considered "core pillars of scene", which often included the mentioning of Fadi Tabbal, Mazen Kerbaj (now in Berlin) and Ziad Nawfal who recently relocated to Montreal, Canada. Fadi and Ziad founded the independent music label Ruptured while Fadi Tabbal, sound engineer, producer, musician, and owner of Tunefork Studio. With many of the productive forces behind the promotion, production, and professional support for musicians in the electronic music scene leaving Beirut just before or during the economic crisis, Fadi Tabbal seems to occupy the current roles as the core pillar of the scene.

Fadi was mentioned in each of the 20 interviews, with Mayssa Jallad summarising the emotional support and importance of Fadi as "the local superhero" running both Ruptured and Tunefork Studio (Mayssa Jallad, Interview, 18 April 2023). He has also been mentioned to be almost a maternal figure that is actively building bridges between different social circles in Beirut as well as musical styles in his role as a producer, Julia describes: "Fadi is like the mother of the scene, he wants everyone to listen to good music and to support each other and he encourages other people to discover other bands, he's always trying to build these bridges. And anytime a band needs a bassist he puts people in touch and mixes two worlds together" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

Fadi Tabbal also introduced Postcards to Irtijal festival as the band was just starting out as a pop band. Encouraging the musicians to listen to experimental sound, shoegaze and ambient,

he took the group to the Irtijal festival in the early 2010s to observe experimental sound production. Julia Sabra from Postcards remembers the event: "I was thinking "what the hell is this? I didn't even get it, not even post-rock, I was so alien from it and Fadi is the bridge to this kind of work, he is very much a mentor to us". Not only were Postcards introduced to experimental practices but, over time, were visited by more and more experimental musicians started visit their concerts themselves, merging two different "generations" or social circles: "Because before that, the experimental scene they didn't even... now they all come to the concert, even if it's pop, the appreciate it, they know how to appreciate it. But before that, we were really at the side lines of this [experimental] scene. And we weren't commercial enough, poppy enough, for the mainstream pop that people want, and we are not crazy enough on the experimental side. Even the bands like they all like, like Sonic Youth and the Velvet Underground, we sound... we're in that category. But before that, there wasn't this bridge, and Fadi is the big reason why people take us more seriously and respect us, it's really cool" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

When speaking about "generations" is it not necessarily age but friendship groups, shared collective projects and shared performances and happenings resulting from the period in which musicians were collectively active as well as a phase that tied musicians to certain spaces and locations across Beirut. For example, Fadi Tabbal, is merely 5 years younger than the "older generation" which he jokingly describes as "the oldies": Mazen Kerbaj, Sharif Sehnaoui, Raed Yassin and Tony Elieh. It is crucial to note that Mazen, Raed and Tony now all live in Berlin. The relocation of these former heads of a movement to Berlin heavily encouraged an exchange between the "older generation" and the current musicians in Beirut and keep ties across borders. With many of the older generation having children, it explains the move to Berlin especially during the crisis, both Fadi and Charbel point out as changing personal circumstances and economic hardship shape the challenging aspects of musicianship in Beirut. Asking Fadi why he still stays in Beirut, he replies "They have kids, so I understand why they left. It's sad because they are great musicians and they aren't here anymore, but they are somehow still, everybody still comes or is involved in some ways. Everybody like Raed, Mazen, Tony can bring us paid jobs, they bring it back to Beirut, they never *actually* leave. There is no judgement" (Fadi Tabbal, Interview, 6 April 2023, Beirut).

The strong social and sonic ties between Berlin and Beirut are therefore partly based on the close friendships between the Lebanese expats and the Beirut-based cultural producers, shared projects, the distribution of funding from the Goethe Institute or other German funding bodies between the cities as well as the sonic aesthetic that forms as a result of this exchange. In recent years, interest in collaborating with Irtijal has risen drastically and festivals such as Another Sky Festival and Sonic Matter include musicians from the festival. For example, Jad Atoui, Beirut-based sound artist, will be included in these festivals in an almost symbolic way by acting as an ambassador and representative for Irtijal festival.

However, beside the economic bond and the sharing of resources, it is mainly the "older generation" that is thought of maintaining this strong bond between Berlin and Beirut, rather than the musicians around Tunefork Studios and their current efforts for building the local

music scene after the Beirut explosion as an independent community project. This is also due to musicians relocating their skills, aesthetic values and contacts to another urban space and build and expand the scenes in other European and North American countries. In many ways, it seems as if musicians don't leave but keep strong emotional ties to Beirut and leave Beirut to source and establish more skills, contacts and networks benefitting the current scene in Beirut.

Therefore, it is not an escape, a giving up, but a geographical, yet not social and emotional relocation but musicians establishing two social and economic bases. Other than the expansion of networks rather than escape or exile, it is not much of a sonic dependency of Beirut to Berlin. Some musicians mention the influence of Germany on the bar scene, and the Techno culture, others look at me puzzled and almost offended, mentioning that Berlin has no influence in particular. Beirut has instead been described to exert enough influence and sonic development within itself to be independent from Berlin scene, rather influences by all other travels and international ties than just one. Instead, Beirut musicians make Berlin scene flourish based on reverting narratives on the sound of the SWANA region and bringing scene together as they relocate their working mechanisms and understanding of what constitutes experimental practices and utilise their networks and contacts to make Berlin scene flourish (Dahlia Borsche, Interview, 17 August 2022, online).

Past the Destruction and War Narrative: Perceptions of Beirut's Music Scene

Scholarly approaches to the Lebanese music scene and Irtijal at as the international flagship of the region, are increasingly engaging with the independent music scene in the city of Beirut (Ibrahim 2023, Nickell 2020, Burkhalter 2013, El Kadi 2010). These writings provide various insights in the musical culture of Beirut while cities outside the Lebanese capital often fall short in scholarly engagement as residents in the east Beqaa Valley point out. Speaking to local business owners and their families in the Sunni villages of Bar Elias and Majdal Anjar, perceptions of the cosmopolitan nature of Lebanon's music and art scene, specifically experimental and free improvised styles, are very much a Beirut-based phenomenon.

Asking informants about their previous involvement in research projects, many mentioned the depiction of war and destruction in Lebanon, the popularity of photo projects and graphic novels showing destructed building, pain, suffering and resilience that the comic authors themselves experienced (Kerbaj 2017, Abirached 2014, see also Ricard et al. 2013). When I went to Lebanon for fieldwork, a colleague of my part-time job asks me "how was it in Yemen?". When I replied I went to Lebanon, he replied with "it's the same thing, some war-torn country in the Middle East". My own frustration and the lack of a variety on narratives led me to understand the urgency of responding to these framings of Lebanon with a now approach that outlined fluidity, community, friendship, international networks, and an innovative performing arts scene that utilises the resources from different art forms.

Many interviewees in Beirut mentioned the focus on a narrow post-war narrative and the framing independent music productions in the world music paradigm instead of situating the

productions outside of Eurocentric scholarly frameworks in ethnomusicology. Lorella Ventura argues that narratives of the so-called Arab spring is a "striking example of the persistence of Orientalism." This is because democracy and Western models of modernity are depicted as the peak of social progress (Ventura 2017: 282). She criticises Euro-American media and their representation of the Arab spring as a singular, unifying movement across the Arab world of "Arabs in general" (ibid., see also Anderson 2011). This reinforces a binary logic of the West as a state of development, efficiency, wealth, and democracy as synonymous to modernity and the East, symbolising tradition, stagnation, inefficiency, despotism, and desertification (Ventura 2017: 296), fed through the depiction of youth movements and technological aspects of the revolutions in media reports (Ventura 2017: 290). Same goes for the labelling of absence of sound in Western media as "Arab Winter", classifying quietness and the absence of sound in the music scene after 2014 with "defeat, inactivity, or repression" (Ventura 2017) or "naturalised and unquestioned attitudes towards Muslim migrants" in global music productions" (Stokes 2007: 12) that accompany political framing of cultural productions by NGOs looking to support them (El-Ghadhban and Strohm 2013). To counter these developments, Darci Sprengel suggests quietness and the affect in (sonic) absence as a third space that can be meaningful and productive and likewise challenge dominant frameworks on loud and quiet politics (Sprengel 2020: 246).

These findings that theorised the scene through a postcolonial lens were however useful in outlining the socio-economic complexities and challenges that Lebanese musicians find themselves in on Euro-American markets, I aim to extend his findings in my approach to these productions utilising findings from performing arts, cultural policy-in practice, critical race theory and thick ethnographic description (Geertz 1973) that provides subjective context to the field descriptions from a position of a German-Arab researcher. In an interview with musician and DJ Samy Serhan stresses that Lebanese experimental music is "past the point of imitation". He outlines however that is a shame that many go abroad where people are more appreciative of these scenes, as it is also easier there to access resources and markets (e.g. many are on European labels, such as Anthony Sayoun on a US-American label, Julia on German label), Ziad Nawfal's and Fadi Tabbal's label *Ruptured* is one of the only records labels for independent music active in Lebanon.

Even those approaches are merely a moment in time of scholarly trends and approaches until new theories and approaches are formed. Hence, I am acutely aware about the temporality of my PhD and hope that future research will adapt their narratives to the ever-changing situation in Beirut to which writing needs to be able to adapt to give justice to the emotional and creative labour that musicians and cultural workers perform; specifically, because it captures a community of music practitioners continuing to build the scene after the Beirut explosion. Inspiration to this chapter comes from my conversation with practitioners in Beirut and a specific conversation with Charbel Haber.

I read about Charbel in Burkhalter's Arab Avantgarde and as a 19-year-old undergraduate student in the South of Germany, was fascinated with Charbel's band Scrambles Eggs, a popular punk band that formed in Beirut in 1998. As a young person growing up in Germany

with its ever-growing anti-Muslim sentiments and being a child of assimilation politics of those growing up with a migration background but without speaking Arabic, I was happy to be able to understand the lyrics, get a glimpse into the life and thoughts of what I imagined as the underground punk scene, and was intrigued by the raw sound of the band. I heard about Charbel from Tunefork founder Fadi Tabbal and texted Charbel about conducting an informal interview.

After just a minute after I texted him, he replied instantly and suggested to meet at Internazionale in Mar Mikhael. I have been to many cafes in Beirut and always passed Internazionale, which always seemed to have a gloomy atmosphere about it, it was always loud, open, extremely casual, charmingly grubby, with people chatting across tables, laughing, or watching the busy Armenia road while motorbikes cruised around the honking cars. Upon my research on the interviews conducted on Charbel, I was surprised about the images and words used to described him. From what I read, he seemed like a rockstar, an intellectual, all seemingly fit the cliché of a "troubled musician", with photos of cigarette buds and Christopher Hitchens book photographed on a messy glass table in his apartment in news articles.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright concerns.

Photograph from news article from 2012 interview with NJ Stallard. Photograph by Tanya Traboulsi.

I realised I would have let Charbel lead the way in our interview and use an unstructured approach. I walked to Internazionale and went to the bathroom to freshen up, but when I went back to the main room, Charbel was already there seemingly out of nowhere, I was only gone for a minute. I knew it was him without having seen a recent picture of him that wasn't ten years old at least. He looked effortlessly casual, eccentric, a well-dressed, tall, and slender

figure, tattooed arms, pilot sunglasses, scanning the room quickly while grabbing a chair, apologising that he was late. He was perfectly on time. He asked if I wanted coffee in Arabic, probably because of my name, and I replied using half Arabic half English, feeling self-conscious of my role as a researcher from a UK institution but likewise felt different to interviewing in Germany, I somewhat felt the rage that led me to speak to him about the narratives on Lebanese musicians in the first place.

Instead of ordering from the waitress that smoked a cigarette and chatted with another customer on the table next to us, he ran behind the counter, operated the coffee machines, made two coffees, and grabbed a croissant in a napkin on the way back to the table where he swung himself on the chair. I thanked him for the coffee, took a sip, and lay my field recorder next to the ashtray on the beautiful stone table that was covered in small pieces of dried pieces of ash and crumbles of fresh rolling tobacco. I instantly fell in love with the place, it was casual, a meeting point and a place that allowed musicians and creatives to meet, briefly greet each other, play with the cat that roamed around the café, and drink their coffee in silence before the busy hour at 11am.

The conversation started casually. We spoke about where to buy the best Manouche [popular Lebanese street food], atheism, anger, the crisis. The overall tone could be described as dark, humorous, depressing, hopeful and angry, all at the same time. The first half an hour we talked about the German guilt, Nazi Germany, the treatment of Palestinians, his college years, the political situation in Lebanon, with him mentioning frequently "I don't care anymore" or "I get angry sometimes at the stupidity of the human species" as a response to many of these subjects. We spoke about his trio Malayeen with Raed Yassin and Khaled Yassine (2014) in which they reinterpret the work of Egyptian guitarist Omar Khorshid that was published by Discrepant, a British record label.

It was likewise released with the Lebanese label Annihaya in 2013, set up by Hatem Imam, Sharif Sehnaoui and Raed Yassin. The label website outlines that they "specialize in the displacement, deconstruction, and "recycling" of popular or folkloric musical cultures." (Annihaya n.d.) He explained that he eventually got picked up by another label as he "cannot function just in Lebanon" (Charbel Haber, Interview, 11 April 2023). We talked for what felt like a long time, and I quickly realised that this was probably one of the most insightful interviews, probably due to the lack of approach and agenda I usually bring to my interviews. Charbel kept apologising about being incoherent, which he really wasn't, saying he "can give me the same bullshit narrative as he did give other interviewees". What he meant was a reproduction of a politicised narrative around musicianship in Beirut, specifically the independent scene that has been theorised frequently:

> "I gave them this... it's very funny, now you asked me to talk. What do you want, you want me to play the role of the musician? The experimental musician? I have much more coherent discourse concerning the whole thing. I can play the role, I played it so many times. If you read the press releases, the "character" is there, in fact, but I find that the coherent me is just a replica collage of what other people think I am and what other

people want me to be. I can use all these words, talk about the conflict between the West and the East, I talk about injustice and put myself in a place where I am fighting against it, suffering from it, and I can be my incoherent self, which is the "me". The incoherence is the truth, not the coherence. I've been doing this for the past 20 years; this is my job. It's not the music that you do, not the music you make, it's what you project to people, so you get the money, so you are able to do it, this is what all my friends have been doing, this is why I disagree with them. If you want, I can repeat the narrative to you right now, I've repeated it for years. It would be much more presentable. I can say, I am resisting through music to the harshness of life and corruption and injustice, and I fight for Palestine, and I believe in the Palestinian cause, and I am anti-Israeli, and that I hate the Germans. But it's all stupid, it's just one narrative. Because if you flip the roles, everyone would do the same to other one. So, you have to accept the chaos. And nobody cares if you suffer" (Charbel Haber, Interview, 11 April 2023, Beirut).

Throughout the interview I felt that Charbel warmed up to me and I might have caught a glimpse of the incoherent Charbel that I felt he wanted me to see. However, I was struck by how unbothered and yet caring, pessimistic, angry, and yet numb he seemed, tired and highly alert, almost as if he was driven by a motor. We talked about existing volumes about the Lebanese music scene which Charbel responded to by saying that scholarly narratives often merely "scratched the surface". He said it was the same with researchers "praising the scene" but that at the end, it's just "we're just human beings trying out best". In essence, the way the scene has been written about is perceived by the scene itself to be either too colonial to too one-dimensionally and uncritically. Researcher, architect, and musician Mayssa Jallad goes even further and says people overfixate on new narratives while people do not look at the sound itself and analyse the music present in the scene which is a shame, so she encouraged me to do so. She mentioned how people tend to use sociological approach to Beirut musicians and miss out on the actual sound (Mayssa Jallad, Interview, 18 April 2023, Beirut). It can also be draining if musicians are always asked about experiences of war, displacement and suffering and it is counterproductive when they merely want to act on their creative input.

As part of performing ethics of care, I spoke to some of those individuals that administer and represent these anchoring structures like Tunefork Studios in an attempt to understand how the act of listening to fellow musicians, attending concerts of peers, suggesting bands to listen to as a way to connect different parts of the arts seen, can be seen as a form of solidarity, friendship, and communal care. I argue that developments in the Lebanese performing arts scene should be seen as temporary reflections results of collaborations across sectors and as derived from a close social intimacy between musicians and producers. The cultural logic is one that is rather bipolar, one of rapid changes, unpredictability, and often lean towards science-fiction tropes as we can see in both the popularity of comic books, graphic novels and queer science-fiction literature and poetry as well as musical words created in an aesthetic of utopia, marked by fluidity and readaptation to change as can be seen in the developments in experimental publishing. In a 2020 interview about his graphic novel *Beirut Trilogy*, author Barrack Rima describes: "Today, I know that both extremes are true when it comes to Beirut, that those extremes are constantly present and that they mingle: idea and reality, narrative and

daily life, the ideal city and ordinary violence, utopia and dystopia" (Calargé & Gueydan-Turek 2020).

How this bipolarity is expressed in music is through a rapid change of the dynamic in sound formed part of many of the improvised performances in which musicians played together in a certain formation for the first time. On the third day of Irtijal, which took place at Zoukak Theatre in Beirut, Paed Conca (clarinet/electronics), Petr Vrba (trumpet/electronics), Tony Elieh (electronic bass) and Malek Rizkallah on the drums, started on a shockingly loud volume, merging their sound sources to an almost inseparable wall of sound, while dimming the volume notably towards the end of the set, leaving listeners who gathered around the quartet in the middle of the room, slightly numb and likewise energised. The contrast can be seen likewise in the affective states of musicians outside the performance context as Charbel Haber points out. Numbness, or indifference, would be worse than agitation or anger, he describes:

> "At one point you get tired at screaming at society and screaming at shit and you let go. And letting go is also punk. You either fight, or you let go. I am still very much angry, but I don't care anymore. Anger sometimes brings indifference, and indifference is the harshest kind of anger. You know, when you fight with someone, when you hate them, it still is love, but inverted. But if you're indifferent, means you don't care anymore, this is where it hurts. You've been with someone before I'm pretty sure and you fought, you hated them and they hated you, but when you hate each other and there is still this bickering going on means it's still connected. Usually, the people become angry if the other becomes indifferent. I am indifferent to this world. My soul does not demand anything anymore, I just wait for things to end" (Charbel Haber, Interview, 11 April 2023).

These rapidly changing contrasts can be found in the popularity of the concept of "utopian worlds" that many young writers express through narrative agency by combining experimental poetry, ambient sound and visual art seen in publications such as Outpost magazine, and Barakan and Samadal publishing. Many musicians mentioned the popularity of Sci-Fi tropes in queer and other countercultural imaginaries of Beirut's poetry and music scene, reminding us of Freud's ideas of fairy tales to eliminate the uncanny through "wish-fulfilments, secret powers, omnipotence of thoughts, animation of inanimate objects" (Clack 2008: 254). In the lyrics, there is wishful thinking that collides with stoic attitudes towards the explosion in cultural productions which some researchers have labelled as resilience without considering emotional cost, exhaustion, and labour, as well as mental health dimensions that go into this world making in precarious environments.

Contrast can also be seen in the cityscape itself mosque will be next to a Christian neighbourhood, coworking spaces in air-conditioned cellars with young professionals working on iMacs next to a group of older men in white plastic garden chairs counting the beads of their *misbaha*. The noise, the speed of movement, the frequent appearing and disappearing of venues and bars, changing management, the speed at which people come, leave and the speed at which community organisers set up an organisation or charity project I something I found remarkable in the city. The performing arts seem to be closer together, there is more of a fluidity of scenes,

in which all subgroups are merging since the Beirut explosion. One musician explains to me: "After the explosion, the egos like "puff!". Everyone calmed down and everyone was there for each other" that changed meaning of music. But after the explosion, with the Beirut Musicians Fund that we did, there was trust again and people just wanted to do things and offer services." In the following section, I will outline the role of social anchoring structures both on an individual and collective level and outline the role of affective networks and friendship on development of the performing arts community in Beirut.

In essence, I aim to argue for the emotional and collective, rather than individual, tolerance of incoherence as the logic of how the music scene in Beirut produces sound. However, I aim to show that there is no coherent narrative of resistance or activism, but that sound remains a site of reflection. Reflection to personal circumstances which in Beirut have be tied to economic and environmental crises in the past decade. It is important to note that musicians not all responded to the crisis, many have left the country or focused their creative energy on other projects. Fadi told me that his creative process is one influenced by his "fear of stagnation" and current hyperfixation, in which he is currently "obsessed with Aquariums", he explains: "It is soothing but at the same time, it's a prison also, it's the double feeling of... technically you are going to see a prison of fishes. Every time I am working on a new album there is this main idea that comes in and I research about it and I live with it. One of my albums was about German architectural Russian utopia in post communism to see "what are the fake cities we build for ourselves" (Fadi Tabbal, Interview, 6 April 2023, Beirut).

Cultural Policy and the Issue of the Lebanese "Local"

> "Funding applications require a lot of words, and if I had words, I would use them, but that's why I use sound to express myself" (Fadi Tabbal, Interview, 6 April 2023, Beirut).

As outlined in the case study on Berlin's contemporary experimental practices, cultural policy is a major factor in shaping what forms of sound become audible in the public sphere and what, from a governmental level, can be considered relevant as a representation of cultural heritage and/or new cultural developments. This also includes considering the role of non-governmental funded cultural practices, following ideas from the work of Audrey Wozniak, Yara El-Ghadban and Kiven Strohm. Looking at different funding contexts in Turkish choir music, Wozniak (2023) suggests cultural productions independent from government funding as sites of agency, kinship construction and creative freedom of part-time musicians. In Beirut, it is the economic and social condition musicians in Beirut find themselves in that shapes their sound production which mainly are part-time activities or described as emotional labour or 'labour of love'.

Yara El-Ghadban and Kiven Strohm describe how specifically NGOs act as curators as brokers that (re)produce a distinct set of discourses that politicise music production in Palestine as either "culture as survival, culture as resistance, and culture as a site for humanitarian intervention and development, positing "art and music at the service of politics" and within the paradigm of liberation politics (El-Ghadhban and Strohm 2013: 176). The authors also point

out different articulations of the Palestinian movement in the realm of music that helps think about motivations of NGO and donor involvement in the SWANA region. One of them is the folklorist movement for collection and preservation of life histories and Palestinian heritage. In NGO work in Lebanon, one can observe a similar development where cultural funding is distributed to musicians who creatively engage with local musical heritage, poetry, or the *maqamat* as part of a neocolonial and westernised vision that has dominated the policy landscape since Cairo Congress. However, this tendency can limit the creative expression of musicians that aim to re-define musical modernities in the SWANA region and reproduce a binary of Western and Orient in emphasising heritage preservation as opposed to musical styles that challenge what has been considered heritage in modern Lebanese history.

The main funding bodies for musical projects in the region are AFAC (Arab Fund for Arts and Culture), the Cultural Resource (*Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy*), Mophradat, as well as those connected to foreign embassies such as the Goethe Institute, Institute Français, British Council or USAid. Events such as Irtijal festival would be supported by a range of those funds. In 2023, the festival was supported by AFAC, Goethe Institute, the State Fund of Culture of the Czech Republic, Tunefork Studios, Ruptured, among others. The annual showcase festival Beirut & Beyond in 2023 was also supported by the Norwegian Embassy in Beirut, AFAC, the British Council, and Institut Français du Liban. AFAC itself is funded by a range of donors, national embassies, NGOs, and private foundations. This includes Germany's Federal Foreign Office, the Norwegian Ministry of Social Affairs, philanthropic organisations such as Open Society Foundations, private banks such as the Bank of Palestine, HSBC, and Swiss investment group HBK Investments Advisory, as well as the Dutch NGO Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development and Spotify, among others.

Open Society Foundations remains one of the main private funding sources for the arts and culture community in Lebanon as it supports both the Cultural Resource and AFAC financially and through the support for research and professional development. On their website, Open Societies Foundation promotes their work across different projects in the SWANA region and Lebanon specifically that provide research on legal issues, equality and gender justice, regional development. As will become clearer later, the variety of donors enables the funding of large grants for local music projects but might likewise be restrictive when it comes to the understanding of what constitutes the "local" and "local sound" supported through regional development funding for the arts and culture. Festivals such as Irtijal secure funding by working together with musicians and arts institutions across the SWANA region. Fadi Tabbal speak about how this may be fundable due to Irtijal's very apparent mission "which may strengthening international and regional collaborations". This would be working well in funding applications, he stresses, but also mentions that funding for regional projects with a lack of signifiers regarding heritage preservation and political agenda would struggle to secure these funds: "If I applied with my ambient stuff or Postcard, I will never get funding. I can bullshit something about my ancestors, but no" (Fadi Tabbal, Interview, 6 April 2023, Beirut).

Sabra points out the jury system in which previous funding secured, and aspects that Tabbal describes as "first degree orientalism" must be given, this concerns the language sung in.

Postcards sing in English, and the use of language is key here. The Modern Standard Arabic, also known as *Fus'ha* or classical Arabic is understood across the three regions divided by economic, historical, and cultural aspects, North Africa, the Levante, and the gulf. It is the official language of law and legislation, literature, print, and popular media including news channels such as Al Jazeera. It is taught as a formal subject at school but barely used in everyday conversation. *Ammiyya*, or colloquial Arabic, is spoken in the daily life for communication but not formalised and dependent on the regional context. The dialect of the gulf, commonly known as *khaleeji*, may have entirely different words, pronunciation and proverbs that can differ widely from the *maghrebi* Arabic that is spoken in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, and other part of North and Western Africa. During my PhD, I started learning *shami* or Levantine Arabic which is widely spoken across Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Jordan. Another dialect is *masri*, colloquial Egyptian Arabic.

Sabra explains why she chooses to sing in English. This is because *fus'ha* sounds very formal and *ammiyya* is a daily language, sounding almost "cheap" as Sabra describes. In *ammiyya*, the subtlety, and an evocative and poetic tone she aims to achieve cannot be expressed in what are two ends of a stick. There is also a lack of cultural references as not many artists, besides rap artists such as El Rass, know how to use *ammiyya* in a cultural production context. *Fus'ha* is considered to not only be too formal but has been described to be a language on a pedestal that feels difficult to put into the experimental sound context. Musicians such as Sabra "wouldn't know where to start", arguing that "in English I am technically in between." Being raised in a middle to upper class household in Lebanon[45], many feel the effects of internalised colonialism in their households, as well as colonial dominance of Western education in their homes as well as throughout their entire school career with a "mentality to leave"[46], going to an international university, as she outlines.

Singing in English enables precise and subtle expression, a play with words on a formal and informal level and the possibility to use lyrical content as a way of expressing emotion and "angst" how Sabra explains.[47] The colonial identity and upbringing that reflects in the choice

---

[45] In Lebanon, cultural class and capital are increasingly subject to changes in the class structure of a country torn by two decades of a civil war and an ongoing economic crisis affecting all areas of local social and cultural life. It also needs to encompass debates around religion, ethnic heritage, cosmopolitan affiliation and, most importantly, belonging to a political party in Lebanon, and how these aspects affect belonging to higher- or lower-class systems as Lebanese-born Amara Hatoum outlines in our conversation. Now, buzuq player Abed Kobeissy explains that class is dependent on having family members or employment outside of Lebanon that can send USD. Hence kind of job does not play as much of a role than the international ties as economic crisis really shifted class hierarchies in Lebanon.

[46] "Everyone here grows up expecting to leave. that's the kind of mentality. That's why there is the focus on English, French, these kinds of languages, you need to be at the top of your class so you can go to university abroad and leave, that's the kind of goal. You think you're better off when you leave. The country has been in chaos so long that you're not expected to stay. I can't imagine myself anywhere else really" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

[47] "It's an outlet, there is angst that needs to come out in the music. The lyrics is the other part. I am a product to middle to upper class Lebanon, we all went to English or French schools, the culture, at home, we speak Arabic but the culture westernized. The movies aren't dubbed, the books I read are in English, the music I listen to is French or English, my parents don't listen to traditional Arabic music, they listen to Arabic music that sounds a bit western. So, it's very different to the way others grow up" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

and comfortable use of English is, thus, in essence part of Lebanese heritage and the country's colonial identity:

> "Singing in English is the best way to express myself most genuinely. And it's a very hard thing to explain to the West because they think we are just ripping someone off and that's not true. I was growing up listening to this music, I feel *very* comfortable writing in English, and I studied literature as well so it's like, how else am I going to say it. And it's not... I have this existential crisis where I think, you I stop everything and invest in Arabic? But it would take me so long because, a language is not just... I know how to speak it and how to write it, but it's the baggage, the tone, the in-between-the-lines, the poetry. In English, I know what I want to say, and I say it, and in Arabic, I don't have it as much because I don't read enough and haven't been exposed to the music for decades. Whereas in English, I know when something is cheesy, I know where the fine line is, it's hard to explain, but there is so much beyond the language itself that comes with writing that's why I do it's in English. I don't want to change that, feel like that's also part of Lebanese identity, it's the fucked-up Lebanese identity were our identity is completely lost, completely scattered and they raise you to learn Arabic as a foreign language. Our music, regardless of how western as it may sound at first glance, it does sound like us, and it does sound Lebanese" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

From my conversation with the Tunefork collective it seemed as if language used in the sonic pieces is often a deciding factor in funding and cultural policy contexts, setting apart aspects of imagined Lebanese cultural heritage and identity from foreign culture. Sabra's quote makes clear that the use of English and French is not an assimilation or imitation of Western popular music but part of everyday practices in Lebanon. It rather demonstrates the changing "local" and the neocolonial identity of Lebanon with the naturalised and adapted elements which can be seen in the use of language, instruments, and other aspects of performing arts. Therefore, she feels that funding bodies such as AFAC would be "out of touch" as they disregard that harsh criteria fail to see popular music, especially concerning the funding of popular music and sound production rooted in electronic experiments, independent music, and English-speaking traditions. She explains: "I don't like these big funders because they're always out of touch and they have no idea and basically you have to sweet talk them, at the Goethe [Institute] included, no offence. You know how many times we have contacted them? We go to Germany every year, how can you help, how can we do something... but never. We are never considered because we sing in English. We also never received funding because we are a pop band" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

When touring abroad, the fact of being Lebanese and singing about Lebanese life and identity lacks imagined Arab identity, Postcards feel not "different enough", or "oriental enough" to fit into categories that funding bodies supported by the Foreign Office would recognise as representative of music from the SWANA region that sounds Lebanese or is representative as a form of Lebanese music. The judges in Lebanon are professionals that are not immediately seen as part of the "scene" that is to say, the performing arts community in and around Tunefork Studios, Tota, Riwaq, Barzakh and other venues that host experimental, contemporary, and free improvised music performances in Beirut. Julia continues:

"They have no idea, and they get judges, sometimes the judges are really out of touch, sometimes it's a mix. They are not really in the scene but the judges that they get are kind of outdated or older... I don't know a lot of the judges but the ones I know are always like... out of it. I'm sorry, *bas enno* the process of funds is absolute shit, it's so hypocritical. And you never know, even if you have a project that's like - not even talking about Postcards, because we sing in English so whatever, but even a project that's really rooted here and it's in Arabic. I don't know what they want because every year it's like a different set of judges, but it feels like these are not people who are here listening and knowing what's happening. And a lot of the time they give funds to first timers, they do an album and then they disappear, or they keep giving it to the same person. It's actually a pretty shitty system. *Mawred* is very specific, it has to be under 35, it has to be a heritage thing, at least they are specific about it "we want traditional music, and we want young people, we want first timers..." (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

The musicians I spoke to outline that decision makers that are responsible for the distribution of resources and funding to support experimenting musicians are not listening, meaning that there is a lack of social engagement with the performers in Beirut and a lack of engagement at social occasions where experimental contemporary worlds can be appreciated and experienced. This includes that funders are considered to not be listening and not seeing the developments in the arts scene due to a lack of proximity and a social, as well as spatial, detachment of the performing arts community. In Berlin, musicians and funding administrators made clear that the social proximity and shared values between musicians, administrators, curators, and funders enables the instituting of experimental practices.

Here, self-sufficiency and the instituting of practices due to the economic security of commercial jobs and other part-time activities enables an independence from large cultural funders and strengthen the performing arts community through intimate friendships, strong social bonds, and the sharing of resources. This way, individuals such as Fadi Tabbal provide the logistics and carry out emotional labour that make new collaborative projects and the structural support of practicing musicians possible. This influences the make-up of projects, the encouraging to incorporate different sounds, and feeds into the sound of Beirut musicians as music becomes not the main way to sustain oneself, but the passion that is funded through other jobs. Postcards have not yet received cultural funding but play sets at weddings to sustain themselves financially throughout the year. The band itself "doesn't make any money but individually as musicians playing in different things, doing sound and the studio we all make a good living, but Postcards itself is not sustainable" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

While Berlin-based Cedrik Fermont (see chapter 3), Lebanese musician Charbel Haber and Iraqi-Kurdish curator-musician Hardi Kurda share anti-institutional sentiments for ideological and logistical reasons, other musicians such as Fadi Tabbal outline their negative experience with funding bodies. Tabbal outlines that there is orientalism in a sense that connects assumptions about Lebanese regional identity with sound that does not fully represent the range of regional identities. Despite the collective nature and the way Tunefork Studios provides

community support, institutions may be registered as a company for legal reasons and were not eligible to receive AFAC funding due the legal framework in which Tunefork operates. Fadi explains:

> "I have real problem with funds because they are really... they have like a political agenda what they want to hear about and how to present it. You need to have a project, and the projects have to be most of the time oriental, in the first-degree sense. There is another problem because Tunefork is a collective, but it is also a company in my time for legal issues because in Lebanon if you are a small business, they fuck you over [laughs]. It is not an NGO but a one-man company, but we operate it as if it was a collective because there is nothing like a collective in Lebanon - everything is shared between the collectives in terms of the fund, but I am the manager and need to present the papers to the government. Before 2019 if you weren't an NGO, you couldn't make funds because in their head, you are a company and technically I am making much less money than any NGO, we are barely making it every time [laughs]" (Fadi Tabbal, Interview, 6 April 2023, Beirut).

Musicians I met with in Beirut frequently mentioned a distance between administrators and musicians as opposed as an integration of administrators in the music scene as curators and practitioners themselves as it is the case form Musikfonds, INM and DAAD Künstlerprogramm. Many musicians in the realm of experimental and electronic music worked multiple jobs or corporate roles to fund their sound projects or worked as installation artists to fund their musical activities as a passion rather than a profession (Jad Atoui, Interview, 6 April 2023, Beirut). Fadi Tabbal outlines that the narrow understanding of "Lebanese identity" and Arabic heritage based on "first degree orientalism":

> "The problem is that they all want some sort of Arabic heritage thing, almost all the time, as in, first degree, like a voice in Arabic or an Arabic instrument. They don't understand that, say, Postcards, on paper a dream pop band that are a perfect example of pop versus experimentation and actually get to the core of it. And in terms of the form, it's the heaviness versus the sweetness, sang by a woman that lived in Beirut all her life... but this is what it means... that's what we are. They don't go that far, and that's disappointing. They want a quick sparkly thing that sounds Arabic" (Fadi Tabbal, Interview, 6 April 2023, Beirut).

In this, the producer ultimately poses the question about what it means to be Lebanese and as producer and close friend, front singer Julia Sabra, encourages individual expression and a bipolarity of expression that reflects his conception of Lebanese cultural expression. Producers and organisers such as Fadi Tabbal and from Space21[48] founder and curator Hardi Kurda found ways to work around larger cultural institutions and private donors. Being financially self-sufficient is not only a necessity due to the infrastructure for funding in the SWANA region but also a way of securing the freedom of decision making, curatorial choices and spending for valuable cultural activities whose outcome cannot be measured in the short term as Hardi Kurda, curator of Space21 who frequently works with the Beirut community and Irtijal, points out that the lack of large audiences and high ticket sales in his festival organisation is not a

---

[48] Festival for experimental and improvised music in Sulaymaniyah, Iraqi-Kurdistan.

measure of quality or impact but irrelevant until the local infrastructure and demand changed over a longer period of time:

> "We are not satisfying the cultural policy desire for culture like, we are not part of a large scene, we don't have large audiences, because they always ask how much audience you have and the impact. And the thing with "impact" is really interesting because they [funding bodies] expect a quick response, a quick impact, they wait for "as soon as possible we want to see the impact" but what we do we can maybe see in two, three or four years. Even in Sweden [his previous country of residence before he moved to the UK], when I worked in the Arts Council there, we had this discussion and did projects in schools and there you can see a change in ten years. When cultural politics thinks in this way [cultural policies and politicians is how he described of what is believed to be 1 body] the culture will develop. In two or four years we cannot make any changes" (Hardi Kurda, Interview, 16 December 2022, London).

Beside issues with measuring impact and lengthy application procedures, it is often the actual role of funding bodies whose money comes from formerly colonising nations and those with specific political alliances which musicians may find contradicting to the content of their project proposals as Mayssa Jallad tells me during our interview. Staying independent also ensures a more sustainable funding structure as Kurda believes as a structure build on friendship, social support, resource sharing and widespread international connections seem to provide a more stable framework for long-lasting and sustainable cultural exchanges between Sulaymaniyah, Beirut, Berlin, and other cities for the purpose of festivals, ensembles and musicians securing independent income streams. This is because he believes that if people "do not find a way to be independent from the government money, some day they will fail" (Hardi Kurda, Interview, 16 December 2022, London).

What is important here is the economic and social self-sufficiency as a way to secure creative agency and prevent the failure of artist-led institutions by way of building sustainable funding structures, professional networks, and international income streams. This self-sufficiency is therefore a result of the social and cultural detachment of funding bodies to the performing arts community that musicians experience. The lack of funding, as well as the opposition to merely apply for cultural funding leads to the emergence of artist-run collectives that outline the emotional and social value of music for community building and musicians' mental wellbeing, sense of stability and familiarity. The self-sufficiency is not only a result of the current financial infrastructures for arts and culture but a result of state corruption and the inability to reply on political authorities that strengthened throughout Lebanon's economic crisis. As Julia points out: "there is no government, so you will have to find ways to function on your own, that's how everything functions here." Musicians will often have other part-time jobs in commercial advertisement, film, composition, graphic design, or other jobs that sustain creative practice. In the following section, I will outline how this institution building feeds back into the sonic dimension of collaborative experimental practices.

Sound, Materiality and Space in Artist-Run Institutions

In the following section, I will outline the role that collectively run cultural institutions have on the visibility and sonic archiving of affect and temporary cultural expressions in Lebanon. This entails analysing how the spatial conditions in which cultural producers create sonic materiality of trust, vulnerability, and anger that musical collectives incorporate in their sound collages. I will analyse these affects and their sonic qualities when put into sound while focusing on Tunefork Studios as an anchoring structure and social network. In doing so, Tunefork becomes a bridge that connects the sound world of musicians with the listening expectations of funding bodies, as well as a connecting point between listeners and musicians themselves, as well as musicians and unfamiliar sounds. Postcards were introduced to Irtijal by Fadi Tabbal, who likewise introduced free improvising musicians to the popular music of Postcards who together encouraged the funding provider AFAC to listen the experimental practitioners after the explosion. Tunefork Studios itself became a place of sonic transformation and community in which popular music producers such as Mayssa Jallad and Julia Sabra were introduced to experimental practices in the production of their albums at the studio. Rather than forcing this transformation to young musicians, Mayssa and Julia outline the friendship-base that was established during the recording process:

> "With Fadi it's more human and emotional as opposed to business but he really gets people to like... but he gets us interested in each other and points out people you might not have heard of in the scene or abroad, it doesn't matter. He's amazing, but he's exhausted, emotionally exhausted that I can tell you, he's the best, he's my best friend, he's the best person ever, honestly. If anyone speaks shit about Fadi it means they are a bad person, that's a rule, you can write that down in your PhD! If you speak to anyone and they badmouth Fadi, it means they are a shit person, and I had proof to that throughout my life. There is like 3 people, but yeah. He's literally a sweetheart" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

Two points become important here when thinking about sound: One, home becomes central in post-explosion Beirut as a space where musicians produce music, write about and record as well as seek inspiration from due to the impermanence of the architectural structures outside the home. It also becomes important in understanding Beirut as "home" as a term that frequently emerged in conversations as artists in the context of experiencing both pain, estrangement and a sense of community and belonging between art practitioners. Two, the sonic archiving of space before it becomes destroyed becomes a core of music making practices that redefine ideas around musical heritage in contemporary music. The theoretical background is based on Bates' findings on studio spaces that facilitate specific interactions between human and non-human actors as well as a meeting space for social performance (Bates 2012). Gascia Ouzounian's writing on acoustic ecology in which she outlines the concept of sonification, a process in which non-acoustical information is translated into sound based on Bianchi's and Manzo's volume on environmental sound artists (Ouzounian 2017: 6). The sonification of affect, specifically affect around the idea of "home" in the younger generation of Beirut artists that do not relate to Berlin in the same way as the Irtijal community, as well as the reasons for this emergent local self-sufficiency of Tunefork's community and distinction from Germany, will be at the center of this section.

The Uncanny

Many artists describe the feeling of "home" in Beirut as ambivalent, as feeling a deep connection, yet alienation from the city and a sense of unease, yet love and emotional dependency due to its community, some spoke about their feelings towards Beirut as "Stockholm Syndrome". German psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud argues that feeling 'uncanny' at home, and within oneself, is part of being human in which the sensation of helplessness, homelessness (*Heimatlosigkeit*) and foreignness in both the domestic and outside world that create anxieties of the unconscious from both early parental relationships and [natural] disasters lead to a "fear of a threatening world" (Clack 2008: 250). As a by-product of intellectual uncertainty, the uncanny, it its literal translation from German, describes the unhomely, in opposition to homely (*heimlich*). In German, *unheimlich* describes something 'scary' and 'eerie', something to be feared due to being unknown and unfamiliar. The unhomely, is something that, literally, means something that evokes fear and dread due to its the unfamiliar and the unknown (ibid.: 251).[49]

In contrast, the homely (*heimlich*) describes an environment that is comfortable, intimate, private, secure, domestic(ated) and hospitable and "belonging-to-the-house" (Freud 1919: 222). The comfort and security of what that four walls of a home may stand for is reflected in the view of the home as a place to 'avoid the alienating effect of the world outside' and Proust's retraction to his Parisian apartment, as Marx describes on man's regressing to cave dwelling (Johnson-Schlee 2022: 128). Home can become both a trap and escape, or as Walter Benjamin writes, a "protection and space formed to entirely enclose the body of its inhabitant. It is an idea that is at once monstrous and inviting" (Johnson Schlee 2022: 57).[50] The perception and experience of safety in one's home and the perpetrating nature and the way the explosion's pressure forced its way into people's homes, springs to mind, the one place where one should feel safe.

Belonging

Many authors have looked at the literal translations and Freud's understanding of the term 'uncanny' as inwards looking. The uncanny exists within oneself, as the unconscious in psychoanalytical terms (Clack 2008: 256). Freud argues, as a condition in which "anxiety results when the familiarity of the everyday collapses and becomes strange" (ibid.: 255). Our

---

[49] Heidegger writes about uncanniness as *Unzuhausesein* ("not-being-at-home") or, in Hubert Dreyfus' interpretation of Heidegger, a condition of radical unhomeliness and estrangement" (Clack 2008: 255).

[50] In his essay 'Living Rooms', human geographer Samuel Johnson-Schlee considers Freud, Proust and Marx' conceptions based on the colonial histories of British homes and the changing meanings of the objects and routines of a home. Johnson-Schlee writes "in my home, I can become temporarily oblivious to the horrors of the world outside, held fast by the comfort of soft furnishings.' Looking at our interior life, he argues that the unconscious experience and cultural meaning of domestic interior, for example Chintz, helps decipher the colonial imagination and wish fulfilment of a white middle-class bourgeoisie in the UK (Johnson-Schlee 2022: 21).

human condition means that we are not at home (ibid.: 254), this is also true in the face of displacement, migration, political crisis, and war. The diasporic dispersal of Lebanese citizens, and the colonial condition of Lebanon's political and cultural landscape, that looks outwards, and the emerging urban rootedness, that looks inwards, shows the foreignness within oneself in which internalised colonialisms, contested modernities, and Arab identities become at odds with one another. Let alone the estrangement from one's oneself in the diaspora. This extends to the condition of those living in Beirut amidst an economic crisis which reminds us of Marx conception of the "unhomely character" of a home in modern life marked by an impermanence of place as Marx of rentier environments describes (ibid.: 254).

Home has been a popular trope in contemporary literature to describe the struggle of so-called "third culture kids" or "third culture individuals" who are either children of expatriates or those raised in a culture other than their nationality for a significant part of their childhood (Jones et al. 2022). Authors such as Nina Mingya Powles look at home separated by oceans, reflecting on what it means to belong to two cultures and to occupy a space in between living in a white-dominated society as an Asian-American woman. For Amy Key, home can be a place for practices self-care and 'life making' while likewise grieving and longing for a different life in the absence of romantic love. In Isabel Waider's novels, home has been described as a site of class struggle, hostility and alternative worlds making for queer working-class people. For Samuel Johnson-Schlee, home can be a place of instability and precarity for low-income renters and likewise one that displays colonial power in its domestic interior trends. In Otessa Moshfegh's thought experiment of narcotic hibernation in her 2013 novel, home is a place for rehabilitation, numbness, alienation, and isolation from the societal constraints of the outside world. In all these accounts on home in contemporary literature written by female, queer, working class or third culture individuals, we become aware what home can reveal about ourselves, how it becomes a space for projection of dreams, wishes, hopes and likewise the pain and suffering we experience when we are at our most vulnerable, in our home four walls.

Tunefork Studios

Tunefork Studios is a recording studio and likewise collective, founded by Fadi Tabbal. The collective consists sound artists, musicians, composers, and sound engineers and is run without grants for sound production from the SWANA region (see above). The studio is located just off the Beirut Highway, off the busy main road of the Armenian quarter of Bourj Hammoud with its jewellery shops and clothing stores with bright neon clothing and printed shirts, little cafes and shops selling rolls of curtain material.

View from the entrance to the studio onto Beirut Highway, coming from the city center.

Getting out of the taxi, I found myself on a corner building, one office building and one selling bathroom appliances. I took out my phone and re-listened to Fadi's voice message on WhatsApp "It's the entrance facing the highway, 7th floor". Getting lost on the 10th floor of what turned out to be the wrong, rather abandoned building with a suspiciously looking security guard, I received a voice message from Fadi: "Rim, you sure you're in the actual building"?! After spending a few weeks in Beirut up to this point, I did not feel as embarrassed and disorientated as I did in my first weeks in Lebanon. There are no official street numbers or specific addresses in Beirut, hence the popularity of map making, visual maps and flourishing market for personal maps and emotional landmarking (Chakar et al. 2010). There are landmarks to orientate oneself by which can be shops (that frequently change), buildings (that frequently change) or, most reliable, photographs of street corners and buildings with a digitally drawn circle or arrow on the photo pointing on the correct entrance. Getting lost in buildings and exploring the mistaken buildings was something I learned to enjoy. It let me discover often abandoned office blocks, small roads with roaming cats and small shops selling Manouche and Saj. Once I found the correct door, Fadi greeted me and showed me around the studio.

View from the control room into the recording studio and kitchen area. Source: Tunefork Studios.

Tunefork Studios has offered productions free of charge and on a "pay as much as you want" basis due to the economic crisis and most recently, the complications and financial hardship faced by many musicians since the explosion. As so often Fadi looks content, determined, yet exhausted, while he sips on his coffee, looks up through his glasses and explains:

> "Since day one, productions are for free at the studio. Why? Because we believe that knowledge is free, so the concept is to pass and take information and knowledge on. And it's like a collaboration, so we never took 1 dime for any production. We have more than 300 productions since 2016 and we used to take studio fees for hourly fees until 2019 when we decided for local artists is zero to "pay as you want" because the situation is catastrophic, a lot of people left, and the artists that are here are still struggling. So, the place is open to them. How do we get by? We do a lot of shitty jobs. All of us in the collectives are full time musicians. And we are not into grants or anything, we had one grant in 15 years - the one after the explosion. We have corporate jobs in the Emirates, Saudi and stuff, and using that money we do projects here" (Fadi Tabbal, Interview, 6 April 2023, Beirut).

Julia Sabra, Studio Manager and frontwoman of Postcards, explains that it feels "network-y, collaborative and very soft" to work with the collective, outlining how musicians would pass jobs onto one another to help each other where they can. She says: "We work by taking money from big ad companies and then offer services for free, trying to 'Robin Hood' a little bit" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut). The architecture, the physical effects on the space from the explosion and the way it is designed become important here. Fadi built the studio by

himself and decorated the space in the control room with Marvel figures, Super Mario and other action figures that can be seen on the official photos on the website.

We chat about the "Tears of the Kingdom" game being released and his excitement to be able to take holiday to be emersed in the world of Zelda, I speak about my recent purchase of a Nintendo 3DS and my recent introduction to video games. The studio has been designed in ways that show the lack of permanence and the precarity of homemaking in semi-permanent buildings and environments. The way the studio had to be built for legal reasons is that the physical space needs to be semi-permanent. The workaround is a room-within-a-room a collective imagination of permanence and stability that is underlined by the decoration that was clearly undertaken with a good eye for detail, functionality, yet care, affection and love for small details that allow for the unfolding of personal preferences. Even the physical structures reflect a sense of homemaking in which Tabbal operates in a structure of semi-permanence and through ways of decorating and unfolding in the physical space, making himself feel home in the uncanny amidst precarious rental and economic conditions.

Eliot Bates' research on recording studios in Istanbul finds that "studios can be redesigned in ways that fundamentally alter the potential kinds of social and musical interaction that can transpire within" (Bates 2012). As "place makers" which four walls reflect the sonic trauma (Safa 2022), memory and local restrictions to homemaking and stability that those involved in the space incorporate in their sound. Bates likewise reflects on Watson et. al. in their understanding of studio environments as "local anchoring points in the cultural metropolises of the global urban network" (Watson, Hoyler and Mager: 2009: 867, in Bates 2012). This becomes true of Tunefork Studios in which the studio becomes a pilgrimage site for musicians in Lebanon across musical styles and "generations" (see above) and becoming a social portfolio of the developments within the scene. One can follow the development of solo artist and their subsequent group projects, the number of projects by one person and the dissolvement of collaborations over the years. Artists that did the mixing or recording at the studio involve varied artists such as the indie rock band Mashrou' Leila, Scrambled Eggs, Julia Sabra, Rust Duo, Sandy Chamoun, Fadi Tabbal, Sarah Mansour, Two or the Dragon, Sharif Sehnaoui and a Compilation of Beirut&Beyond among other projects.

Large parts of the studio have been destroyed in the explosion, this includes the balcony and the door to the studio. Those inside the studio on the day of the explosion also got injured while witnessing the blast from the balcony before being thrown backwards by the pressure. Fadi recollects the memory of the blast: "Tunefork got horribly destroyed by the explosion. We saw like a mushroom but being both really curious we didn't move…" - Fadi laughs while speaking about this. I notice whenever we talked about the explosion, I'd hear his distinctive laugh, but he'd get serious and continue the story nonchalant just seconds after. He relayed the whole story in the most matter-of-fact way, as if it didn't mean anything. In his work on Sri Lankan refugees and asylum seeker, human geographer Charishma Ratnam looks at the way the process of her own listening as a methodology to understand the presence or absence of emotion when listening to difficult stories in her research on home-making practices. In my case, ethnographic description of my observations during my listening became part of my

methodology and a way to understand and convey the meaning of these conversations for the affective network that formed around musicians with similar experiences (Ratnam 2019). Maybe Fadi talked about the events on that too many times, maybe it was the number of crises he has experiences since is lifetime living and working in Beirut. That sentiment is shared by most people who work in precarious economic situations in Lebanon, and the arts and culture scene in particular. However, I could tell that he has been deeply affected by the way his friends and the space he built for the community have suffered injuries, displacement and for some, the loss of friends or family members. He continues:

> "We got thrown with the intensity at the wall behind us. The whole balcony and the main room got completely fucked and Anthony got his eye cut from the explosion. It was an intense day. Two other people from Kinematic [Lebanese rock band] had the reflex to go hide inside. We didn't move, it's so interesting [chuckles]. So we know who would die first in a nuclear attack [laughs]. The studio is technically a kilometre away, maybe within least. Now the room within the room shifted, so you can hear sound coming out, but I don't have the money to fix it. If anyone complains, it's their fault, I can't afford it, I can't re-do it" (Fadi Tabbal, Interview, 6 April 2023, Beirut).

After the explosion, Fadi Tabbal set up the Beirut Musicians' Fund and not only managed to raise sufficient funds to get all the lost instruments replaced for local musicians but compiled a list of affected practitioners that AFAC used to distribute their funds from the Lebanon Solidarity Fund. The consulting role that Fadi Tabbal took with AFAC was one only a person active in the community would have taken, someone "on the ground". Fadi had the knowledge and network to bring together a set of data to get funding from AFAC which also helped rebuild parts of the studio space. The appeal, which is available on the website, reads:

> "As you all know, our entire community is shaken by the horrific explosion at the port of Beirut on August 4th. Reasons: the incompetence, negligence, and corruption of our own government. Countless lives lost. Countless houses destroyed. We are hurt, both physically and emotionally. Fortunately, amid the chaos, everyone rushed to help. So, we took it upon ourselves to contact musicians, producers and sound engineers living in the blast area and to inventory all music gear, instruments and recording equipment that was destroyed. The damage so far adds up to USD 38,255 (the extensive list of damaged gear is available upon request). All donations will be managed by the studio team and divided proportionally between those affected" (Tunefork Studios, n.d.).

The anger and frustration become very visible when reading this, and turned into action as he raised sufficient funds totalling $73,267 which helped replace the gear of 28 musicians and engineers and 77 pieces of music production gear in what he called the "first phase". After the initial goal was reached, Tunefork Studios started to utilise the further funds to fund musical lessons in a local music hub for an entire year "due to shifting priorities and a worsening economic crisis" in two further phases. This included the rebuilding of a local music venue in

Achrafieh, free *oud* lessons for Syrian and Palestinian refugees, the support of a local buzuq maker and his business, and the structural support for Beirut Synth Center[51].

Pictures taken at the reinstated Beirut Synthesizer Center at its temporary location at Mkalles Warehouse, Beirut.

Again, listening becomes crucial here. Listening to the musicians, what is needed and listening to Fadi Tabbal, trusting the studio owner in the distribution of funds. Listening and trust are closely connected, on which the studio's dynamics are run. Fadi Tabbal explains that it is not easy to operate in a scene that does not listen. There is no pre-assessment of the credibility of each musician or those wanting to record and mix their sound at the studio, because, in the words of the studio engineer, "there is no preconception, it's not credibility based because you never know. We trust, then we see, this is kind of the motto of Tunefork."

The trust and openness ensure that musicians can enter these usually gatekept communities more easily. Describing himself as an introvert, Tabbal outlines that trust is the only way to "take people into the scene that are normally not able to push themselves". He despises the idea of relational merit in which musicians become visible or audible merely because they know someone already visible in the scene. He explains: "There are some people that are clearly shy and unsocial and introvert which is me. There are no preconceived ideas of everybody. We

---

[51] Beirut Synth Center is currently located on the upper floors of Mkalles Warehouse and offers free workshops and classes on synthesizers and electronic music production since June 2021. The space is open for complete beginners, and I was able to undertake two workshops during my time in Beirut, one on using analogue synthesizers led by Ziad Moukarzel, and one on sound design using the software Reaper with Berlin resident Cedrik Fermont who has become a local Beirut artist for his frequent performances at Irtijal.

always find the time to listen to the records people send us and find time for new faces and new trials" (Fadi Tabbal, Interview, 6 April 2023, Beirut).

The solidarity that developed due to the crisis is also seen in other community projects where resources and spaces are opened to the performing arts scene. I spoke to Liliane Rahal from Tota, a café, bar, and hub where people meet, drink coffee, Zoom, charge their phones during the electricity cuts, hold meetings. The space was lending musicians equipment and grew the venue into a space where young musicians could start out and forming ideas while Tunefork offers the space to mix and produce these ideas.

Home is so Sad: Sonic Archiving of Affect in Beirut

> "I had a dream a couple of weeks ago that I am a sinking ship, and I figure out that the ship is sinking, and I jump on another ship that is next to it only to find out, that this ship also sinking. So I jump on another ship, and that ship is also sinking. I keep jumping from one ship to another until I get to land. I jump on land, I feel like I'm fine, only to find out that the land is also sinking" (Charbel Haber, April 2023, Beirut)

In conversations with musicians during my stay in Beirut in 2023, 'home' came up frequently when speaking about the developments in the performing arts community in the past five years. What it means, how it has affected the musicians not as musicians, but as individuals living in Beirut. In an interview for Palestinian community radio station *Radio AlHara* in which they address the Beirut Explosion, Canadian journalist Stefan Christoff asks Tony Elieh "how does an event like this affect artists?". Elieh, who now resides in Berlin and shortly left with his family after the explosion (see chapter on Berlin), replies: "Honestly, I don't think you can separate yourself as an artist in such a situation. You are not an artist anymore, it's that the whole thing around you is getting vanished. Family, friends, streets, areas, history, everything vanished around you. You're no one at that point really, you don't think as an artist, you think as a human being really who wants to protect himself" (Free City Radio 2023).

In this last section, I look at the sonic archiving of affect in Beirut, specifically after the Beirut explosion. This is because the musicians I saw at both Irtijal festival for experimental music and Shatr festival, a poetry festival by a Beirut-based collective established in 2023, produced noise, ambient soundscapes and poetry nights described as "outlet" and affective response to the events. Furthermore, I argue that the social bonds formed since the economic crisis and the explosion led to a diversification of musical styles inside collaborations as anchoring structures and individuals such as Tunefork founder Fadi Tabbal suggest cross-genre collaborations and personal encounters as an act of solidarity and sustainable, artist-led institution building in times of crisis. This can be seen in increasing social solidarity and institutional workarounds securing economic stability for independent performing arts sector, e.g., seen in Tunefork's commercial work for the gulf states.

It also affects not only the kind of motivation and resources to produce music, but the meaning of sound and words that capture the precarious materiality of space, and specifically "home". It also leads musicians to sonic archiving as Sandy Chamoun explains. In a performance at

Shubbak festival in London in June 2023, she explains that the process of using field recordings in her music can be seen as a response to the governmental aims to erase the collective memory. She says explains that the recordings are a way to archiving memories and feelings, as a way of creating a personal archive that outlasts the erasure of collective memory and trauma. While I was in Beirut, film maker Firas Hallak who now lives in Belgium did a site-specific sound recording at the Tripoli dome, an unfinished architectural structure build by Brazilian modernist Oscar Niemeyer, which large parts of the performing arts community took part in. When I asked one musician why they recorded there now, she said "The whole thing is to kind of archive the sound of the dome before it changes, gets destroyed or whatever happens."

The fear of things disappearing or being dismantled is always there it seemed. It made me think of the day I spoke to Fadi and asked him about the exploded building that was still there. This is when Fadi Tabbal stressed the meaning of retaining actual physical structures such as the port as a site of collective memory, a memorial for damage done to the citizens of Beirut. One day, my taxi driver drove down the motorway and suddenly stopped, while cars were honking behind us as he turned to the shoulder of the motorway. I wondered why Abou Ali, who has always been a rather silent driver, suddenly stopped and pointed to the port. We spoke for a bit and starting to explain what had happened to him that day when we drove back to Gemmayzeh. We just stood there for a few moments and got out of the car. I have seen the port a few times, but not as exposed as this day. We looked at the different paintings that covered the wall separating the motorway from the port area. The writing inside the white painted flag reading: "politics divided us, catastrophe united us".

The exploded Beirut port photographed from the motorway, April 2023, Beirut.

I will outline the effects of a lack of architectural and emotional stability and "home" in the aftermath of both explosion the corruption, as well as the social effects of clientelism that defined not only the neoliberal urban developments of downtown of post-war Beirut (Makarem 2014: 87) but the economic and social infrastructure of Beirut's citizens today. Thinking about the most representative collective memory expressed in sound and words, I chose Postcards song *Home is so Sad* as it is a song that shows both the way artists respond to these events, create a sonic archive, and reinterpret the understand the notion of home and belonging in post-explosion Beirut. Postcards as a study subject also helps understand the way in which subjective insights to collective experiences are dismissed for their popular music references and English-language lyrics by both local funding institutions in the SWANA region as well as international funders abroad as non-representative for local sonic expression in Lebanon.

After listening to *Home is so Sad* on my headphones during my time in Beirut, I saw the band Postcards for the first time live at Gretchen, a concert venue in Kreuzberg, just across the U-Bahnhof Mehringdamm. The group describes itself as making "dream pop", an umbrella term that describes their references to shoegaze, pop and the "experimental" that stems from a personal introduction to musical styles. It also incorporates a certain artistic freedom in the use of noise and ambient to convey affective states such as "anger, fear and aggressivity" as front singer Julia Sabra explains during our conversations. Just a month after I returned from Beirut, Postcards gave a concert in Berlin, and I only knew Julia Sabra from our interview and the albums on Spotify I listened to while I was walking through Mar Mikhael.

The group formed in 2012 with Julia Sabra on guitar and vocals, and guitarist Marwan Tohme and drummer Pascal Semerdjian who are cousins. During the concert, Julia explains how the lyrics for *Home is so* Sad came to her after an exchange with her cousin who sent her the Philipp Larkin poem of the same name. The lyrics were written shortly after the explosion in Beirut, Pascal was badly injured in the blast. In an interview with Ziad Nawfal, Julia Sabra explains that "home" has more than one meaning, as "it's about the damage done to everything that stands for a home–my partner, the actual home I live in, my city" (Nawfal 2021). While Sabra explains the origin of the song, I look up to Pascal, Julia's now husband, who looks briefly at Julia, while only feeling a glimpse of how much this group, and the couple, has experienced in just the past four years. She looks down to the audience and ends the story jokingly with the words "we didn't steal the title, let's say, we got "inspired", laughing. A short silence, and Pascal starts hitting the snare like a military drum while an electronic version of this marching beat continues throughout the entire song, slowly getting louder while the synth plays a simple melody of a-b-a-g on the synthesizer.

Philipp Larkin: *Home is so Sad* (1958)

Home is so sad. It stays as it was left,
Shaped to the comfort of the last to go
As if to win them back. Instead, bereft
Of anyone to please, it withers so,
Having no heart to put aside the theft

And turn again to what it started as,
A joyous shot at how things ought to be,
Long fallen wide. You can see how it was:
Look at the pictures and the cutlery.
The music in the piano stool. That vase.

Postcards: *Home is so Sad* (2021)

You were lying where　　　　　　　　*Home is so sad*
You had cut my hair
Right beneath the table　　　　　　　*There's a hole*
Where we eat the bread you make　　　*Where your knee should be*
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　But I am not afraid
Home is so sad　　　　　　　　　　　*I am not afraid*
Home is so sad
Glass in our coffee　　　　　　　　　*Home is so sad*
Towels on trees　　　　　　　　　　 *Home is so sad*
Blood from your nostrils　　　　　　 *Home is so sad*
Blood from your ears　　　　　　　　*Home is so sad*
Soil splattered on the walls like drops of
blood　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*It stays as it was left*
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　As it was left
Home is so sad

Philip Larkin wrote the poem after a visit to his mother in 1958, with *Home is so Sad* being striking for its simple, raw, poetic clarity and stylistic choices and the powerful notion of "home". The first stanza draws a dark and intimate image of home as a place that fails to comfort those who were once experiencing the powerful comfort and stability of its surroundings and everyday objects. The personification of the home understands home as a suffering being with "home is so sad" possibly gesturing towards the emotion experienced by those it hosted and the space. The enjambement ending the first stanza in "Having no heart to put aside the theft*"*, Larkin draws the home as a living organism whose times of familiarity and comfort have been stripped away. The home is left empty, the heard removed, as a person that has lost its life. In the second stanza, Larkin uses his popular stylistic device of listing a variety of items, in this poem, objects that constitute its understanding as a "home": a vase, cutlery, pictures that show a glimpse of the life it once held, "a joyous shot at how things ought to be". The meaning of home, especially when thinking about Larkin in this context, adds associations of belonging, family, and associations with the past of the author (Larkin) and the singer (Sabra) that describe a feeling and aesthetic by listing objects and the physicality of the space. The uncanny in this song presents in form of a past that is opposed to the homely and presents an ambivalent aesthetic of special vastness, helplessness, courage and the uncanny at once.

As a mixed person living in a third country not related to either of my parents' birth places for almost a decade, Larkin's poem was something that I, as a researcher and reader, could very much connect with. Living away from the place one grew up and feeling a sense of the uncanny upon returning to the parental home(s), adds to the cultural references of domestic objects reminiscent of a very British home that I can connect with. The colonial nature of European domestic interior unsurprisingly can become something that readers in Lebanon will undoubtedly pick up on when reading Larkin's poem. The way Postcards first engaged with the poem, being disseminated via a global social media platform, shows how far these

references and words can travel and be shared by globally dispersed users that connect and identify with Larkin's word in their own ways.

Let's think about the aesthetics of the uncanny for a moment. The *unheimlich* in Postcard's song is in the visual description of a scene of objects splattered, shattered, and thrown out, "towels on trees, blood from your nostrils, blood from your ears, soil splattered on the walls like drops of blood." The home has been raided and suddenly becomes scary, creepy, unhomely in the literal sense. The fascination with the ugly and grotesque can be seen in noise and harshness as tool for sonic home-making practices, as an aesthetic of anxiety that is confronted with numbness and utopian dreams and wishes which, according to Freud, are supressed by society, here, the government and the result of negligence of its citizens. From reading the lyrics, we learn relatively little about Postcard's notion of home. Its homeliness in the uncanny is rather achieved by describing the details of what has happened to it, rather than the domestic interior which vanishes in the explosion and becomes invisible and lost in the process. Freud's notion of the uncanny as a feeling of homelessness and repetition here extends to real homelessness since the explosion in which the "uncanny" becomes graspable and likewise part of Postcards experience of "home". Disaster suddenly is not a fear or anxiety but becomes part of a collective memory, as well as domestic and interior life of those experiencing it.

Postcards' play with a personification of Beirut as home, with the city being that older brother or friend that has been through a lot of challenges and now had to be taken care of. The song starts with a simple melody a-b-a-g on the synth with prolonged notes, while drummer Pascal Semerdjian is drumming a marching beat on the snare. The explosion resulted in Pascal injuring his leg, and as he was unable to play the kick, he used the snare drum as a beat instead (Nawfal 2021). At times, the acoustically played drums will disjoint from the electronic sample, which can be noticed when Sabra sings the words "home is so sad", slowly unsettling the listener about this unsettling change in a before rather stable march. The workaround affected the choice of instruments and the lyrics that reflect the musicians' lived experiences.

The shift from D-minor to G-major on the guitars draws the soundscape on top of which the listener is introduced to a scene where the person is thrown under the table, drawing a scene of horrific events while underlining the meaning of this place that was filled with memories and acts of care. Cutting the lyrical subject, eating bread, reminiscent of the Covid-19 pandemic and the sourdough bread making or a gesture towards familiarity and self-sufficiency, accompanied by a slight shift from E-minor to F-major. The singer lets us inside the home with "glass in our coffee", presenting a brief glimpse of the outside view from the window "towels on trees", shifting to the immediate moment of "blood from your nostrils, blood from your ears" using an anaphora to reiterate the urgency and depict what is being seen, felt, smelled, experienced while ascending to a melodic line of e-d-e-g-e to sonically emphasise each syllable of these words.

The list of objects that Larkin used in his description of a blueprint of a home, a place of permanence, material comfort and belonging, is changed into a list of things that are not materially permanent, but emotionally permanent, lasting, with experiences that leave a mark.

"Glass in our coffee, towels on trees, blood from your nostrils, blood from your ears", the list appears in the first stanza–a shocking beginning of the song that is contrasted sonically with the soft vocals of Julia Sabra that underline the act of care that will have followed between the lyricist and the person that wounded their knee. Unlike the enjambement in Larkin's first stanza, the shocking images are presented bluntly, as a list (like Larkin's second stanza).

The chorus reiterating "home is so sad" is now being sung on the higher octave, with a short guitar solo announcing the shift in how the home is sonically experienced, stagnating on just two notes. The short interlude is followed by a modulation back to the initial D-minor on a long a, describing "there's a hole, where your knee should be" while softly descending to "but I am not afraid" and reiterating "I am not afraid". The song ends on a repetition of "home is so sad", while the synthesizer melody ascends over the D-minor shift to G-major, while growing a powerful soundscape with the guitar and drums solemnly ending the song after Julia sings the only other phrase taken from Larkin's poem "it stays as it was left".

The almost monotonous repetition on drums is layered on top of electronic snare samples playing the same beats, while another layer of drums is played around the other two (Nawfal 2023). In Ziad Nawfal's interview with Julia Sabra, she outlines what he described as a song "that stands on the threshold between painful anger and majestic discharge", while Julia explains "I wanted to have that violent feel throughout the song, with no release. I think there was a lot of emotion that needed to come out at the time." (Nawfal 2021) The song was also a way to deal with the explosion with the musicians in the community that attended the concerts and contributed the album sound. Julia explains that "a lot of people that left super quick after the explosion never dealt with it. If you left right after the explosion, you never gonna be at peace" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

The lyrics and its origin in Larkin's poem convey well the interior life of both the city of Beirut and those it is, or was, home to. It also sonically and lyrically conveys way the notion of "home" shape-shifts and adaption becomes a part of that. The affect behind community is based on sentiments of solidarity and care, and as producer Fadi Tabbal outlines, "the community concept is the concept of how we operate and how we shape-shift all the time". Talking about his idea of "controlled randomness" that defines his music, he outlines how "it's just at the moment whatever is happening and there are no general rules or anything - we have to change and shape-shift to be able to keep a scene". Home and community are an interior, both affective and spatial interior life, that needs to be able to adapt.

Julia Sabra wrote *Home is so Sad* after the explosion. She and drummer Pascal were in their flat when the port which they lived close to, suddenly exploded. While Sabra was standing next to a wall that prevented her from getting injured, her partner stood in the middle of the room, windows and doors breaking under the pressure, throwing Pascal into a bookcase. He injured the right side of his body and broke his leg, Julia explains, which followed an operation at one of the hospitals in the suburbs of Beirut as hospitals in central Beirut such as the St George Hospital, were likewise damaged or partly destroyed. The first person she calls immediately after the event is Fadi, she recalls the events: "You couldn't call anyone, all phone lines down

cos everyone tried to call. But I was so quick, I called Fadi and said: 'Fadi, they bombed our house, Pascal is injured you have to come'. She smiles, and then adds: "He actually ran all the way from Bourj Hammoud to Mar Mikael. Everyone thought their building got bombed, it felt so close to everyone."

Home is so Sad deals with this horrific explosion that she describes as the most traumatising event in her lifetime. In the summer of 2006 during the Lebanon War between Hezbollah and Israel, she has not been that affected as she has been by the explosion, it did not feel so close to her as she spent the summers in the mountain and barely remembers it. 2005-2009 did not feel as scary either. "It didn't feel as immediate as the explosion" whereas this explosion felt "close to home", a space of privacy, security, and intimacy. "This was so close to home, we were in our own home, and we could have died", Julia says, "I didn't go to any dangerous place. There was no warning, it just happened out of the blue, I don't think I experienced anything that traumatic. You'd think a war would be more traumatic, but because we didn't grow up in the south, we weren't really affected, I wasn't really in Beirut at the time." Readapting and working through the event emotionally helped her deal with the event. After being told about a deadline for a musical project with friend and colleague Fadi she continued writing. She explains:

> "Throughout the chaos and going to fix the house and having a cry for like an hour, we were making music, it was just continuous, and with Postcards we were right in the middle of writing an album and we just kept writing it and Pascal was kind of able... he didn't even use his feet. The first song we wrote, there wasn't even a kick because he couldn't play with his foot, but he was playing with the toms, and we went up to his house and had a set up. So I think is was more like... that's also a kind of specific experience because I know people that were too depressed to play and I understand that, but naturally for us in our personality, I wanted to express what I went through, I want to cry, I couldn't stop writing, I couldn't stop playing so, and then in the sense of logistically, how to play, most of the venues are closed, how to do it, we would lend everyone speakers and do DIY concerts, part acoustic and whatever, playing in tiny bars... I loved that aspect and now it's starting to go back.... Not everything of course, the experimental has always been on the side line." (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

The way music is played, adapted to and the way the soundscape unfolds, and lyrics shape the instrumental parts show the affective dimension of living in the city of Beirut. This is a moment in time in which solidarity with fellow musicians nurtured a collective logistics. Music is a product of the time and spatial, as well as emotion, conditions the musicians find themselves in. The reason why musicians can express this is that for precisely the reason that there are no mandates in terms of aesthetic expression or sound as Julia is not bound to an institution or funding body. "There is a lot of anger, noise and aggressively as well that needs to come out within that softness. That's a product of living in Beirut obviously. It's like the way you'd imagine someone living on Hawaii their whole life playing guitar and you can hear... that makes sense, *bas enno*, I can't be making that music, it doesn't make sense for here, I need to find something that reflects my feelings here" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

These events made some musicians even more attached and invested in the community. In this way, the explosion worked almost as a reset of social dynamics in which musicians offered services for free as Julia explains: "Even with all the shit that's happening, it feels like home, and I've gotten weirdly more attached to it, it's like a Stockholm Syndrome or something, or when you're in love with the toxic kidnapper" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut). Many musicians started to return to the city after trying to build their life abroad. For freelancers, the cost of living while earning US dollars from outside of Lebanon is bearable, while musicians outline the community, friends, and family aspect of staying in the city.

Postcards rehearsing at Tunefork Studios, Beirut, in April 2023.

In many ways, *Home is So Sad* is the most representative song of the time spent in Beirut which I wanted to incorporate in this chapter, it is quintessentially Lebanese in its sentiment, sonic and lyrical character. It is the contrast of the heavy versus the sweet, the harsh and loud soundscape vis-a-vis the delicate vocals, the clarity and static drumming versus its own layering into three indistinguishable patterns that blur the boundaries between what is produced by Postcards and what is produced electronically. And throughout the concert, the audience listened, even if it wasn't a filled venue, but it seemed that Postcard appreciated those who came. While speaking in Beirut, she outlined that she always preferred the smaller crowds to "have everyone be intense with you" while playing at bigger stages became a large event where "no one cares".

Talking about post-explosion Beirut, she states: "There was something nice about it when there was a moment where it felt like we all needed it, we all wanted it, and there was a thirst for it" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut). This concert to me ended my fieldwork in Berlin, not Beirut, showing the impact of what Tunefork Studios, their community work, and the building of a self-sufficient local. When asking Julia why she decided to stay in Beirut she talked about precisely the community aspect:

"That's why we don't want to leave because I don't feel like, no matter what, this is my home and it's too hard to ... I know if I have to leave, I have to rebuild my life from scratch and I already have a network and a community here and I am literally living the dream. I am doing music, full time, I have my community, I have my friends, I have my network to go abroad and play music. With Postcards we play abroad constantly anyway. And I know, if, say, Tunefork closes, I have a part-time translation job, that stops, whatever, I know I can find something else. I have so many friends that can help out, I have people, *khalas*, you know you're well supported, and for me that's more important than anything" (Julia Sabra, Interview, 10 April 2023, Beirut).

Postcards present home as both something to hold onto, and as an uncanny environment in listing the damages of their domestic and emotional interior. Considering Freudian ideas around "palliative measures"[52] in the face of anxiety in the uncanny, one could briefly look at the human and physical structures of care established by musicians. I argue that creative practices embedded in deep personal and emotional relationships between practitioners can provide not only pleasure but a sense of escape and relief from a "sense of defenseless vulnerability" (Clack 2008: 250). In the context of home and belonging, Sabra and other musicians in Beirut mentioned Tabbal as the 'mother of the scene', a parental figure described as caring, loving, providing a deep sense of security and protection against external disasters. In opposition, Beirut is helpless forever, it suffered, and is often personified by those inhabiting it, similar to Larkin's description of the home as a suffering creature. Yet, ambivalence is felt to the fatherland, that fails to protect its citizens. Attachment to a parental figure is a way to achieve what Freud describes as "tranquillized self-assurance", here through friendship and relational affordances (ibid.: 253). The providing of unconditional trust and care relationships in the music industry should be considered as a structural phenomenon that challenge the very core of asymmetric power relationships that make up transnational ties in Lebanese music making.

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter is clearly shaped by the economic, political, and affective aftermath of the Beirut Explosion and should be read as such. It also aimed to show the collective, not individual, tolerance of incoherence as logic of sound production, rather than individual anger and emotion as primary motivations for sound production. I argued for the importance of individuals that set up economic and affective anchoring structures that manage to achieve multiple goals at once. One, they provide an economic and social infrastructure to develop experimental practices in a shared space that becomes a site for interaction between different musicians and sound words. Two, these anchoring structures exert influence on different members of its community that can act as bridges between musicians and policy makers, musicians and listeners, and musicians and unfamiliar sounds. This way, encouraging people to listen becomes a core element of the curation of a scene that Fadi Tabbal undertakes in his aim to

---

[52] Love, intoxicating substances and spiritual experiences are part of his argument around religion as curing the sense of homelessness, helplessness and unrooting, anxiety and 'fear of a threatening world' (250) as part of a sensation of having something experienced before and establishing routines to provide a sense of agency and control, such as religious (Freud calls this "repetition compulsion", *Wiederholungszwang*).

build a community for those who decided to remain in the city post-explosion. I was expected to observe gatekeeping to these social circles whereas, other visiting researchers and I were quickly introduced and incorporated in these social circles as listeners shortly after my arrival, showing the trust that musicians had from the very start. Listening is closely connected to a gesture of care.

Postcards and their female front singer Julia Sabra reflect on home and belonging in their lyrics while prioritising cosmopolitan aspirations in their engagement in their sourcing and production process, thereby establishing modern, secular and an urban Lebanese identity. Cosmopolitanism is hereby understood as a vernacular cosmopolitanism rather than one of an economic elite, signifying the changing understanding of middle class as an unstable and vulnerable part of society unless communal action towards a shielding of resources is taken. Postcard's cosmopolitanism is both anti- and neo-colonial in nature, dependent on the socialisation of musicians in a Euro-American educational system established by French and American education systems, cultural dominance, and funding channels and yet naturalised as a Lebanese product of its modernity worthy of being recognized as a cultural practice beyond imitation and Westernisation narratives. However, Postcards show that amidst these conditions, agency is present the way the bands operate financially and internationally, from intentionally not choosing cultural funding by colonising nations and rather use skills and talents to establish a nationally orientated, communal system of care and support that produces agency and artist-led institutions in a leaderless movement with multiple key players.

The links to the experimental music scene in Berlin remains predominantly with the founding members and "older generation" of Irtijal festival while the local Beirut musicians aim for a self-sufficient local that responds to their everyday experiences through sonic and poetical reflections including field recordings. This does not mean there is a rejection of heritage or "tradition" but a view on current political events as part of heritage making, the shaping of Lebanese history and a recording of current history through sound that aims to prevent the erasure of collective memory. The artist-led institution building is underlined by an anti-institutional stance and a utilisation of commercial jobs to fund music, community work and self-sufficiency of spaces associated with experimental practices. This also shows how musicians use multiple talents and skills in absence of grants which, in turn, can be seen as a result of a specific set of aesthetics and sounds associated with the "local" which may disregard more experimental forms of local expression rooted in popular music styles and English-language music.

However, Berlin and other urban cities with a large infrastructure for arts and culture funding remain important international ties to expand and build regional scenes through utilising social bonds and building networks between different artist-led institutions such as Onassis, Irtijal, Borderline Cyprus and Space21 Kurdistan in the recent edition of Irtijal 2023. Artist-led spaces for music production (Tunefork Studios) and music performance (Irtijal festival) become anchoring structures that showcase a curatorship of care, the impact of intimate human relations on institution building and consider musicians as not only artists representing a tradition but performing collective experiences that forms part of the Lebanese experience. However, this

can also bring about an emotional exhaustion and lack of boundaries in which live, and work are entangled, offering musicians little separation between their activism and personal sphere, and affecting the well-being of those active in building those institutions.

Chapter 5: Mannheim

Planet Ears is a festival for global contemporary culture organised by the cultural institution Alte Feuerwache Mannheim (in the following AFM) since 2019. The research of this chapter is informed by my work as the curator of the Planet Ears symposium and jury member of the festival's residency programme. In my capacity as researcher, I curated a symposium each year involving artists that perform at the festival, researchers, industry representatives from the world music sector and those critical of the term and its economic repercussions for international artists in Germany. Reflecting on conversations with cultural workers, administrators and initiating figures of the festival and my own positionality, I argue that the primary aim is regional development of the local music scene and serving as a response to administrative positions and institutions rooted in the cultural logic of world music.

The secondary aim that crystallised over the course of the four years is to show that that the festival presents a form of institutional self-development by way of engaging in the curatorial process of free improvisation formats through the assembling of new collaboration formats that are believed to aid musicians' personal and professional development. Analysing a performance of free improvising musicians Christine Abdelnour, Emilie Škrijelj, Joss Turnbull and Claus-Boesser Ferrari at Planet Ears festival in 2022 in this chapter, I look at the way my own intervention as symposium curator and the intervention of the festival director through the artist selection process affected the social, and sonic, dynamics of their performance.

The chapter likewise explores why the notion of "curation" suddenly became a thematic focus of Planet Ears, and how my own research and curation of the symposium and adjacent lectures and installations impacted power dynamics and institutional decision-making. Looking at the political aspects of "curating" and its historical baggage (Balzer 2015), gatekeeping mechanisms (Gaupp 2020), narrational power (McDonald-Toone 2017) and failure to include those that are being "curated" (Canyürek 2022) I look at ways administrators and cultural workers interpreted the term as a way of enabling closer relationships between regional and international and/or migrantised musicians. Exploring the way "curating encounters" worked out on stage, I consider Salomé's work on "uncurating" and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's ideas around productive "friction" as a generative tool to understand how "aspirations for global connections come alive" (Tsing 2004: 1). As outlined in the chapter on Morphine Raum, curation has played a major role in the discussions around power, agency and impacted the way experimental collaborations have come into place. I argue that curatorial gestures of organising knowledge and power, even if not labelled "curation", are a persisting element of the selection and programming process of a festival and often intertwined with institutional (self-)critique and dynamic "in which the curator is but one out of several players" (Degot et al. 2015).

Considering this case study against the backdrop of my previous two case studies, this chapter shows how Irtijal festival served as a model and template festival for a regional, world music critical festival in Germany. This crucial development shows how cultural policy aims for diversity in Germany and institutions enforcing them engage with SWANA region festivals in imitating models of curator-artist and care relations. In doing so, festival collaborations can

establish strong ties between two cities through the exchange of the festivals' performers, a shared passion, and ideas for social experiments in the field of free improvised music and consulting relationships in the performing arts sector. This also shows how two festivals, one drawing on world music critique and one drawing on care work in the field of artistic practice, can share very similar formats and performance practices despite being embedded in contrasting policy frameworks and discourses on arts and culture development in their respective region.

As a cooperation with the Cultural Affairs Department of the City of Mannheim, rather than a festival organised by the AFM alone, the festival also aims to serve as a regional flagship that sets an example for representing municipal diversity in an institutional setting marked by its ability to shape regional and municipal cultural policy. The chapter therefore looks at the way regional festivals involving experimenting musicians and international pop artists alike respond to gaps identified in cultural policy reports and discussions that aim for wider involvement of the city's so-called "migrant communities". Literature on cultural policy and the relationship between policy makers and actors of the community (Paquette and Redaelli 2015) will serve as a backdrop to understand the roles of NGOs and cultural initiatives in Mannheim that influence the way Planet Ears tries to implement diversity and anti-racist principles in their curatorial and artist selection practice before they become a cultural policy. This will also involve looking at reports produced by NGOs and cultural initiatives that suggest ways to engage with diverse migrant communities in Mannheim by way of encouraging access and inclusion in festivals and other cultural productions. Drawing on Shayna Silverstein's study of Omar Suleyman's techno dabke, I will then look at the ways in which Planet Ears appeals to policy bodies' visions of a multicultural urban identity and Western listeners' desires for cultural tolerance, authenticity, political activism that shape their engagement with Otherness in the context of live concert experiences (Silverstein 2016: 268).

These discussions will be followed by a reflection on conversations with the team which I worked with over these four years and my own role in shaping the festival through my curatorial intervention and research endeavours. As part of the core team of the festival, I observed what could be described as a "labour of love" that extend the role of administrators outside the four walls of the institution. I will likewise reflect on administrators' understanding of their own whiteness and prevalence of white saviour tropes as well as the institutions positioning towards the Irtijal festival in Beirut and the Norient platform as collaborating partners.

First, I will outline the social and economic conditions in which Planet Ears festival is placed. This includes looking at the social infrastructure and the festival's rooting in administrative and economic constraints of Alte Feuerwache as a non-profit cultural institution with municipal cultural funding and its adjacent agenda for regional development. In doing so, I consider how diversity and representations of "Arabness" and migrantised "Other" in German festivals can be seen as a result of friendship- and location-based network, world music critical sentiments as well as a policy-driven agenda. Second, looking briefly at the festival's residency programme and the curation of social dynamics for collaborations between different

improving musicians, this chapter will shed light on the institutional decision making as a way of addressing the power dynamics between established male, regional performers, and female sound artists from the SWANA region.

Planet Ears Festival

Planet Ears festival was founded in 2019 by Mannheim's cultural institution Alte Feuerwache Mannheim gGmbH in cooperation with the *Kulturamt*, the Cultural Affairs Department of the City of Mannheim.[53] The Alte Feuerwache is one of the largest music venues in Mannheim and runs flagship festivals in the region such as the literature festival *Lesen.Hören* and the internationally renowned jazz festival *Enjoy Jazz* and works closely together with cultural institutions in the region such as the Nationaltheater Mannheim. The AFM does not have a target audience in mind for many of their regular events, yet some administrators described the crowd to usually consist of those over 30 and in full-time employment rather than students or those from lower economic backgrounds. The apprentice in event management notes that the AFM does "have a younger audience, but it's more of a white millennial and boomer generation, especially with all the jazz stuff, but then there are exceptions to the usual audience when we have the *Sommerbühne*. But the spectrum is not as mixed as it could be for Mannheim." (Lilly Schott, Interview 29 March 2022, Mannheim).

Planet Ears came into being in 2019 as a festival that aimed to challenge the narratives that marketing campaigns of the German world music production and broadcasting industry have established (Kosnick 2007) and attract different audiences that the institutions would not reach in their regular programming. The festival's inherent anti-world music sentiments are placed in the centre of the Planet Ears residency and festival and formed the center of my semi-structured interviews and discussions during my fieldwork in Mannheim. In their grant application to Allianz Kulturstiftung in 2021, AFM fundraising officer Maria Kretzschmar writes that "the project has set itself the goal of drawing attention to imagined divisions between German and musicians with a migration background." (Maria Kretzschmar, Interview 27 September 2022, Mannheim).

The first series of Planet Ears emerged in collaboration with two central cultural institutions in Jordan and Lebanon, the Al-Balad theatre in Amman and the Irtijal festival in Beirut. Both institutions organise performances of popular, contemporary, free improvised and experimental music from the SWANA region. As part of the annual festival, I organised conversation-based formats and participant-led installations to accompany the main programme of the festival. In 2021 and 2022, the symposium included film screenings, interviews and panel discussions with musicians featured at the festival, ethnomusicologists, cultural workers and representatives of the world music industry and its critical counterparts.

---

[53] The abbreviation gGmbH stands for "gemeinnützige Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung", making the Alte Feuerwache non-profit company with limited liability under federal law. In Germany, many cultural, educational and healthcare institutions are now run as gGmbHs as it combines both the administrative and financial infrastructure and planning security of a company with limited liability as well as the benefits of tax breaks that non-profits in Germany receive.

In the past, Planet Ears invited members of WOMEX, the Stuttgart collective Women* of Music, the Swiss platform Norient, directors of Irtijal festival, and Al-Balad theatre, Kassel's Center for Intercultural Music, the Philharmonie Luxembourg and representatives of European cultural funding bodies such as Allianz Kulturstiftung. In discussions with musicians, DJ's, funding bodies, curators, producers and researchers, the symposium aimed to spark a critical discussion around the issues of the world music term and the developments of diasporic musicians Germany that involved members of the Arabic-speaking diaspora and members of the Global Majority. Panel discussions that brought musicians, curators and academics together dealt with issues of curating diaspora music making with the key question of: How can we avoid cliches and stereotypes in the curation of global event series? Involving funding bodies and administrative personnel of cultural institutions in these discussions aimed to understand and showcase how (world music-) critical projects are funded, administered, and marketed in a way that avoids essentialist binaries between the Orient and the Occident as often seen in *MultiKulti* project work. The symposium was free and open to all, with some of the concerts taking place as Open-Air concerts at Mannheim's riverside walk *Neckarwiese* in order to avoid accessibility issues and encourage the local community to attend.

Planet Ears' inception is closely linked to the growing personal connection between Sharif Sehnaoui, director of the Irtijal festival, and Sören Gerhold, director of AFM from 2012 to 2022. After Gerhold's visit to the Irtijal festival together with Joss Turnbull, the first Planet Ears festival was able to launch as a collaborative project between the two festival organisers and the Al-Balad theatre. Both Gerhold and Sehnaoui shared the same musical taste, networks and visions regarding world music critiques which led to the establishment of a network of curators, musicians, bookers and producers between Beirut and Mannheim that frequently visit each other and exchange their contacts to sound artists from Germany and the Arabic-speaking world. Following this collaboration, artists such as Rabih Beaini, Joss Turnbull, Claus Boesser-Ferrari, Christine Abelnour, Oum, 47 Soul, Sharif Sehnaoui himself and other Arab and German artists shared stages or played alongside one another at the Planet Ears and Irtijal festival. German-born tombak player Joss Turnbull and Lebanese-born Sharif Sehnaoui commented on this phenomenon that it would feel like a "big family" but could sometimes lead to "the usual suspects only" appearing at these occasions. The festival has started as a "project between friends" and can be seen as a cultural institution with arts funding and organisational structures and resources to keep the festival running.

The institution AFM is organised as a gGmbH, a subsidiary company of the city of Mannheim itself. The AFM building also hosts other companies such as the children and youth theatre section of the Nationaltheater Mannheim as well as a free radio station *bermuda.funk* that operates in the Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region. The regional aspect will play out in this chapter as the distribution of cultural funding and performance and residency programmes usually exceeds the cities borders and extends to the Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region. The regional focus also becomes a part of an agenda of regional cultural and urban development which is reflected in the proposed impact of Planet Ears festival. Another interesting aspect is that the cultural producers cross over between festivals and each festivals serves likewise as a showcase event in which musicians, artists and writers are introduced to the region. Based on

the visibility of artists at many of these festivals spanning literature, jazz, and world music, alongside the opposing Planet Ears project, the artists' reappearance at different festivals in Mannheim determines their representativeness for the region as can be seen in the presence of guitarist Claus Boesser-Ferrari and tombak player Joss Turnbull. Their regional link is not only based on professional engagement and friendship with the organisers, but dependent on their biographical ties to Mannheim's Orientalische Musikakademie (OMM), Popakademie and the Nationaltheater. These ties to the city can be useful in drawing in a guaranteed number of audiences due to the musicians' popularity in the region but can likewise lead to gatekeeping processes in the artist selection process as lesser-known musicians will be less successful in securing listeners from the region and therefore affect ticket sales and attendance numbers.

The regional aspect likewise reflects in the curation of artists, in which artists are discovered by administrative staff of Planet Ears on such occasions, or online, rather than spotted through the visiting of events outside the region. Thinking about interactions between migrantised artists and curators with Western listeners and administrators, I take inspiration from Silverstein's study of techno dabke that looked at how Western listeners in Belgium engage with an artist's appearance and sonic articulations of Otherness in ways that "assured audiences of a globalized network of cultural resistance and solidarity that appeals to aesthetic and activist visions for a more inclusive Brussels" (Silverstein 2016: 275).

At Planet Ears, artists and migrantised musicians and curators, such as I, serve a function in promoting the vision of Planet Ears as a festival that aims make difference audible and visible in the public space. Sameness, which would be migrantised musician producing Western music with beats and melodies not considered "oriental", have not previously appealed to the festival mission of curating the region as a multicultural space marked by its productive friction. Otherness serves a function here as "friction" (Tsing 2004) is believed to nurture new listening practices. This is to oppose the notion of easy listening and music tuned to the Western ear that is generally associated with world music audiences in the Euro-American context. In other words, even if alienation and sonic difference are put in the spotlight at Planet Ears, it serves a function. It is aimed to make audiences experience tolerance and solidarity to shed light on stereotypical curatorial leitmotifs in Germany and discriminatory industry structured for migrantised artists. However, this approach may fail to normalise difference in the festival context, and instead, runs the risk of fetishising difference in ways reminiscent of colonial notions of discovery and display. This well-intended approach may likewise fail to sustainably translate affective forms of solidarity outside the festival context, making feelings of solidarity, accessibility, and tolerance as temporary as the format of a time-bound festival itself.

When travelling and speaking about my work for Planet Ears at other festivals I attended, many criticised the lack of a web presence or booklet, but as one of many festivals, there are limited resources, time and staff capacities in which collaboration partners likewise take over the programming work and research EDI issues and conduct diversity-sensitive curation in the field of contemporary music. The former AFM director Sören Gerhold stresses that as an institution that runs about 300 events a year, "there is not 100 percent power left for Planet Ears but that is something you do in addition. That's why we are glad that we have you, Norient,

because otherwise we don't have the extra energy." (Sören Gerhold, Interview 25 October 2022, online interview). The limited capacity of involving and sourcing artists outside previously contacted networks has been described as a budget- and time-related issue. Touring artists might be willing and able to play in Mannheim, whereas scouting new artists at smaller, niche festivals might not be feasible in this model of curation and selection that is dependent on a regionally working booker who deals with agencies rather than individual artists. In terms of funding and the lack of visitors the institution expects for more experimental performances, those are being economically "carried" funded by popular music acts to bring two notions of progressiveness on stage without any drawbacks in the programming. The duration of 10 days has also been criticised at attendance decreases or is unpredictable due to the free admissions scheme. The reason for the duration is, according to the organisers, necessary to show the variety of artists.

The City

In this section, I will outline the social make-up of the city and the cultural policy background that impacts the dedicated world music stance that Planet Ears takes in PR management, visual marketing, and programmatic orientation of the festival. Mannheim and its history of guestworkers have shaped the association with the city as a space where diversity is woven into its social fabric. As Thilo Eichhorn, former music administrator of the *Kulturamt*, points out, Mannheim has been talked about almost negatively, stemming "from the guest worker milieu when other cities talked disparagingly about Mannheim in the past whereas now, the diversity is seen as a strength and potential rather than a weakness." (Thilo Eichhorn, Interview 1 April 2022, Mannheim). Talking about the assumption of diversity as opposed to statistical approach in his work when discussing Planet Ears, he explains: "I've written so many speeches for the mayor or anyone else where this is emphasised again, how great Mannheim is in the area of diversity, that at some point you just think that without verifying it every time." The observation and belief around Mannheim's diversity has become part of his repertoire of communication the role that Planet Ears might play in benefitting the city's social sphere.

Mannheim, with cultural institutions such as the Popakademie Mannheim and the Orientalische Musikakademie Mannheim (in the following OMM), also offers spaces in which the impact of cultural producers and audiences with migration experience becomes visible in the cityscape and its cultural and commercial infrastructure. However, Planet Ears has been seen as a "gap" in the cityscape. The idea of Planet Ears festival emerged when Thilo Eichhorn was hired by the *Kulturamt* for an administrative position for the area of "(Welt)musik", world music with "world" in brackets. The position came out of a policy demand for greater diversity development, making diversity "tangible" (*greifbar,* another term also seen in policy reports: *erlebbar*)[54] through employing an expert for the field of (world)music how the administrator describes. He explains that these personnel decisions are "often connected with this romantic

---

[54] *Erlebbar* translates to "able to be experienced" which includes all types of sensory experiences, such as viewing, hearing, smelling, tasting cultural difference and being involved in ways that include participation in events showcasing diversity in Germany.

idea, also from the city, of 'there comes someone who takes care of world music and brings the people together and the musicians and they make music together'."[55]

World music was seen as an addition to three focus areas of regional cultural funding that went to projects in the field of classical music, jazz, and pop in the region. Eichhorn points out: "But there is another area that falls through the cracks, and no one cares, and no one is responsible for it." Eichhorn describes how the former AFM director Sören Gerhold proposed a similar idea at the same time and decided to set up Planet Ears as a cooperation between the *Kulturamt* and the Alte Feuerwache: a festival that involves international and regional to showcase the city's diversity, yet, leaving out the branding of the festival as world music and avoiding stereotypical representations of Otherness. This was primarily seen in the language used in the marketing and panel discussions during the festival. Since 2022, none of the flyers include artists' country of origin which was seen as a step towards a world music critical festival that sets itself apart from festivals such as WOMEX and WOMAD that advertise artists by country. Organisers likewise tried to avoid visual cliches when choosing the images for the brochures. In one of the meetings, the booker describes the discomfort when seeing that one of the artists promo photographs send to the team for the performance of Isaac Birituro & the Rail Abandon, showed the band on wooden percussion instruments sitting in a straw hut which, for them, highlighted the groups Ghanaian background. In this way, Planet Ears was seen as a festival that brought something to the city which has "missing": a sonic experience of the regional diversity in Mannheim in an attempt to de-ethnicise its presentation.

This was suggested to be tackled by extending Mannheim's more traditionally oriented musical initiatives in the city with a "progressive branch" (*einem progressiven Musikbereich*) as Gerhold and Eichhorn describe. The other two large institutions that were considered to engage with the city's diversity through music pedagogy and performance studies were the OMM and the Popakademie Mannheim, a public university for popular music and creative industries. While the OMM offers lessons on instruments from South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa for maqam- and raga-based musical styles, the Popakademie launched a degree in *Weltmusik* ("world music") which became subject of much critique by the administrators of the AFM for its ethnicisation of musical styles and instruments, feeding into the festival's distinctive focus. Planet Ears thus shows an ideological demarcation between institutions that teach and present traditional music styles under the umbrella of German "world music" and institutions that aim to approach music through the lens of cultural heritage preservation.

After discussions with the Planet Ears organisers who were initially keen to collaborate with the Popakademie, the administrators decided to set up the festival in collaboration with the

---

[55] "And there was always this cliché sentence "music is a language that everyone understands". And I had the feeling that it doesn't work that way, and the only way is to actually bring people together, but to get them out of a cultural, perhaps protected comfort zone, and to try something new that somehow means new territory for everyone, and to have a common communication on this level and to create something that is really at eye level and ultimately develops a common language. But to do that, you kind of have to move forward. If everybody sticks to their traditional thing and just tries to juxtapose or just mixes things, then it doesn't work. Of course, you can learn each other's languages and kind of communicate, but you can never be able to communicate at the same level and there's always going to be some imbalance." (Eichhorn 2022).

Kulturamt instead to offer a space for "progressive music trends" (*progressive Musikströmungen*) which can be seen as a supporting "musical currents that are not being expressed at traditionally oriented institutions." Sören Gerhold stresses the anti-world music sentiments that formed almost a political mission when looking for partners. To him, "progressive" musicians are those criticising Anglo-American trends and colonial narratives through humorous cultural references in their lyrics as he explains using Ghanaian music duo Fokn Bois an example. Interestingly, the involvement of Arab artists in Mannheim came from a clear world music revisionist standpoint, rather than being completely removed from the discourse as it was the case in the cultural workers who I spoke to in Berlin such as Dahlia Borsche. Here, "it was about 'please no world music' and how we can present that under a different umbrella somehow what is going on somewhere else." (Sören Gerhold Interview 25 October 2022, online).

In this way, Planet Ears developed out of a cultural policy need for a de-ethnicised "world music" and tangible diversity experience in the city. Communicating the idea of Planet Ears in press releases, the administrators would often work with questions rather than descriptions, such as "Why is a Belgian composer from Berlin exploring Asian noise? What does electronic "musique concrète" by a Japanese sound designer sound like? What are post-industrial banga [sic] rituals? And what is the difference between global music and globalized music?". These appeared in the opening of the funding application that successfully granted the festival 39.000 EUR from the *Allianz Kulturstiftung für Europa* and similar questions were cited by local news outlets when reporting on the festival. The question-based format was understood to convey the mission of the festival to an audience that is curious, critical yet not familiar with academic discussions around neocolonialism in the creative industries.

Consulting Irtijal Festival

Irtijal festival has been described as the main inspiration for Planet Ears when talking to former director Sören Gerhold. Like the figure of Fadi Tabbal in Beirut, connecting musicians, institutional bodies and listeners, Joss Turnbull has been frequently mentioned as a key figure in building a bridge between Mannheim and Beirut. Joss Turnbull, trained on tombak by internationally touring, and now Berlin-based Mohammad Reza Mortazavi, was playing in Ensemble Asil with Mustafa Said and was involved in music making in Beirut through the ensemble context. Currently, two German-born musicians, tombak player Joss Turnbull an avantgarde guitarist Claus-Boesser Ferrari, are considered "regional" for their ties to the city's cultural institutions and connected to the music scene in Beirut.

Both have performed at Irtijal festival, Turnbull in 2015 and 2019 and Boesser-Ferrari opened for Irtijal in 2018 with his solo performance. The two musicians met in Alte Feuerwache and started connecting over shared ideas in the field of free improvisation and other subjects which they felt they could freely discuss. The connection to Irtijal, which would later become the first collaborating partner for Planet Ears in 2019, solidified when Turnbull, Eichhorn and Gerhold flew to Beirut together. The former AFM director recalls that he only had a professional connection with the tombak player that was one between musician and organiser, and first met

privately while on the flight to Beirut and started bonding over similar subjects. He recalls: "In Beirut, we were more on a kind of 'bonding level'. We even thought about naming the festival after the hotel we were in, *Meshmosh,* because that was such a cool place where we met great musicians each night, and that was a place of inspiration during the festival."

Irtijal has been described an inspiration for scouting acts and ways of working, exchange partner and model of which the former AFM director important ideas around experimental music making. While the *Kulturamt* is responsible for regional diversity development, the AFM wanted to have a strong focus on free improvised music through the assembling of different regional and international musicians through the director as the curator. The programme likewise inspired the first festival series, with artists such as Rabih Beaini being invited to perform at the first series. That same year, the focus of the festival symposium relied on music from the SWANA region which has changed since collaboration partners changed. Gerhold describes the improvisation acts as one of the most important parts which may not be the best events in terms of publicity, but in terms of outcome for the musicians' personal development (Sören Gerhold, Interview 25 October 2022, online). Throughout our conversations it remains unclear whether his motivation is based on previous concert feedback and their internal dynamics, his personal motivation to leave an impact, or one aimed to model the curatorial model of Irtijal festival in which musicians would rotate in different collaborations at each festival series.

Nevertheless, Irtijal festival is frequently mentioned when discussing the intentions and motivations for selecting performances in the field of free improvised and experimental music at Planet Ears. Irtijal founders Sharif Sehnaoui and Christine Abdelnour both played at Planet Ears in the following years, with Rabih Beaini being the most discussed set since. Sören Gerhold remembers that Beaini's DJ performance set an example for the festival concept: "The set of Rabih blew us away. We realised that this is so futuristic, or in other words, that what we do in West Germany is really just bumming around and we all agreed that if something like Rabih were to take place in Mannheim, then no one would get it, because it has such power, and you dance where there is actually no clear rhythm, and you are totally lost." Progressiveness is now considered a main factor in the selection process of artists performing at Planet Ears, orientated on Beaini's initial performance and the artists which AFM administrators sighted at Irtijal.

When visiting the first Planet Ears series, current director of the festival, Sharif Sehnaoui, "affirmed and encouraged us that we are on a good path", providing advice and recommendations that shaped the experimental section of the Planet Ears festival. Other ways Irtijal influenced Planet Ears can be seen in the organisers' intent to rebrand experimental music as a non-academic musical style and removing it from high-culture associations as Gerhold describes when speaking about access issues that might occur when programming free improvisation I Germany:

"At Irtijal, it's not academic. You don't feel a barrier. There are young people who just party and Claus [Boesser-Ferrari] said, 'they danced to my music, how is that even possible?'. When I heard something from festivals in Berlin, it was always so cliché high culture and how it doesn't appeal to me at all. And at Irtijal it's so down-to-earth, rough, anyone can go there, it was a very mixed audience, and that was what I found so cool about the whole thing. They somehow managed to inspire a really mixed crowd of people. That's exactly what we want. We don't want to present what we are doing under such a snooty high culture aspect, on the contrary. I thought it was totally crazy how they did it. I'm not saying 'Irtijal is the crowning glory of creation' but for us it was so important to see how they communicated and dealt with one another[56]. And the opportunity that someone like Pablo Gīw or Joss Turnbull were given. At Irtijal, you really noticed they do it with passion and heart and that works for everyone" (Sören Gerhold, Interview, 25 October 2022, online).

To the administrators of Planet Ears festival, the nature of the social interaction in the circle of free improvising musicians Beirut was as influential as the music absorbed. The infrastructure of care that emerged specifically after the Beirut explosion has been outlined in the previous chapter but is likewise of importance here. The question that arises from this anecdote is how the infrastructure of care is translated into the German, policy-driven, context of festivals with a strong focus on diversity and regional development.

A Labour of Love?

During the festival, administrators stressed the importance of the project not only for the socio-political reasons outlined by the administrator of the city council's music division, but for the regional artists' personal development; specifically, through musical experimentation as a way to combat different power dynamics expressed through volume, density of sound and presence on stage. In conversations with members of the marketing and PR team of the festival, it turned out that the project has been of somewhat personal importance to administrative staff of the AFM. Public relations became an intended act of care in itself and a space in which German-born administrators aimed to reach members of communities corresponding to the nationality of musicians. This was both to draw visitors who would normally not attend concerts at the AFM to the performances and to likewise hope that a co-presence of Germans and those read as migrants might connect. Public relations officer at the same, Johanna Hasse, describes: "Our goal was for the audience to mix and for the *deutsche Kartoffeln*[57] to hop around with the people who have a migration background."

Johanna Hasse and the apprentice in event management, Lilly Schott, visited multiple local business owned by members of the Global Majority in an attempt for audience targeting. Hasse and Lilly both outline the difficulties to target audiences from local migrant communities and describes the targeting process as following:

---

[56] Translated from German "miteinander umgehen"
[57] *Kartoffeln* ("potatoes") or *kartoffelig* ("potato-y") is a term of ironic self-criticism of white Germans themselves used by those without a so-called "migration-background" to acknowledge one's own whiteness or lack of visible otherness. The term is mainly used by white Germans themselves rather than a derogatory term as often assumed.

"Actually, we didn't want to think in clichés but for South African DJ Lag and Fokn Bois [Ghanaian music duo] and bands that come from Ghana we went to Afro stores and for Dakha Brakha to some Slavic supermarkets and took the flyers there. We thought that's kind of the target group. I don't think the marketing has that much an effect on the people you want to have there for these concerts in the way it's done normally because you don't want *MultiKulti* high culture there. Some people didn't want the flyers and said, "there's too much paper here anyway", and others were very sweet, and we always stressed that the concerts were free. I didn't know it marketing was done that way, but we tried" (Lilly Schott, Interview, 29 March 2023, Mannheim).

The institution aimed to target local communities in parts of the city that are neither connected to the AFM as regular audience members nor seen as spectators of "world music" performances. Outlining the institutions own shortcomings in involving culturally and economically diverse audiences, the administrators aimed at visible difference and those businesses offering ethnically coded services in health, beauty, and hospitality in the city. When I asked about the motives behind the racialised audience targeting for DJ Lag, Hasse explains: "We thought it would be nice if the African people who live here could hear something familiar again. We wanted to invite people who come from this cultural area, that's why we flyered in African stores" (Johanna Hasse, Interview, 27 September 2022, online).

In discussing the process, she sees the "naivety" as she describes but likewise underlines the intentions of the public relations carried over in the public space. Both Lilly Schott and Johanna Hasse are aware of the problematic assumptions that came from advertising South African musician DJ Lag in West African stores and likewise stress the limited capacity of a team of German-born administrators to successfully target audiences from their own positioning and the social implications being white in Black-owned businesses. Johanna Hasse says: "None of this was very well thought out, and we didn't do any market research or target group research. In retrospect, it was also a little naive, we looked up 'Dakha Brakha come from the Ukraine, where are there Ukrainian touchpoints in Mannheim?' And looked up Ukrainian clubs and restaurants, and even googled for the Ukrainian consulate" (Johanna Hasse, Interview 27 September 2022, online).

The need to support musicians through sourcing listeners and a diverse body of visitors for the festivals has been a recurrent theme in team conversations that eventually addressed the possibility of administrators falling into "white saviour" sentiments. The director points out that the way he approaches performances with small amounts of visitors changed throughout the four years running the festival. Inspired by the performance-lecture of Norient director Thomas Burkhalter entitled "The Politics of Curatorship" based on their publication (Acciari and Rhensius 2023), the former AFM director Gerhold argues in our evaluation meeting that he learned to "sit in the back row", "listen" and, how he said, "shut up as privileged people" rather than trying to support musicians with resources and services they might not need or require but are assumed to be necessary to their success, as "they don't need our help. It is rather problem of encrusted industry structures because international bands have not found large agencies that support them yet" (Sören Gerhold, Interview 25 October 2022, Online).

The festival has been described as a *Herzensprojekt*[58] by those administrators involved, adding an affective dimension to the bureaucratic processes that many describe. Thilo Eichhorn from *Kulturamt* notices that this is a "very personal project, become everything that is important to me personally and likewise connects with my job role." It is not the funding policies but "about more, about human encounters, which of course is emotional in a way". Eichhorn stresses that even if he would not be involved in the festival in the capacity of cultural administrator, he would volunteer or participate in other ways due to the "great significance and meaning it has for those who participate".

Describing Planet Ears as a labour of love, former PR officer Johanna Hasse explains how the conversations that arose from Planet Ears, about cultural appropriation, stereotypical representations of musicians, bands that play at the festival, were continued during lunch hours and outside the office, shaping the playlists and musical taste of administrators throughout the years they participated in the festival. As opposed to the festivals organised by AFM, Planet Ears would be more connected "with tension and excitement about how this will be received at all, so will people come? And will artists be able to make it? Because all the artists come from abroad." (Johanna Hasse, Interview 27 September 2022, Online) The tension also stemmed from the 2020, 2021 and 2022 series in which the pandemic and travel restrictions, as well as regional regulations during the Covid-19 pandemic deeply affected the festival, causing low ticket sales and attendance. These complications were accompanied by delays in the obtainment of visas as one of the artists of the 2022 programme explains, holding an Eswatini passport.

During the concerts, the PR team would encourage visitors from the street to join the indoor concerts by opening the large folding doors to the concert venue and offering free admission, although most concerts were free of charge, specifically those involving Ukrainian musicians during the first year of the war. Johanna Hasse outlines that this corresponds to the idea of Planet Ears, in which people "walk by, listen, stop, get curious". Expecting a spontaneous reaction to join in from outside was seen as part of the festival's mission encourage people would not normally listen to enter the space and listen. While some people walking past the AFM building did join the concert, some were unable to enter due to the Covid restrictions in the 2021 series although those walking buy did not make up a large amount of the audience.

Hasse explains the process of encouraging those walking past, and her own excitement she performed inside and outside the building for the purpose of pulling in audiences. This lead also to more intense social bonding and casual encounters between the administrative staff themselves:

> "We encouraged people to come in, but also come to each concert to support artists and the vision of the festival. It stressed me that there was not so much going on at DJ Lag, because I would have wished him and us to have more going on. I think it was out of my public role that I wanted more people to come. I knew how much blood,

---

[58] Translates to labour of love, lit. translation from German is "project of the heart".

sweat and tears[59] went into the organisation and people just came from far away and I wanted something to happen. I thought it was such a pity that something cool was happening and just not enough people noticed it. I was also in a difficult situation because I was new and didn't want to be the center of attention in front of my new colleagues like 'come on, I'll get everyone on the dance floor', but on the other hand I thought it was a really cool program and I wanted something to happen. This is also why I went to each of the concerts" (Johanna Hasse, Interview 27 September 2022, online).

The growing affective dimension and pedagogical effect of the administrative work for Planet Ears may be out of an urge to perform care and support for those involved in the festival which extends to the private lives of those administering the festival organisation. Those involved described that their listening habits changed, as well as their Spotify algorithm and many are more aware of problematic tendencies to save or support musicians unsolicited. However, it was stressed by some administrative staff members that this is not a sign of permanent change but a step into the direction of a more inclusive programming and awareness if more international programming in a white-dominated cultural institution is accompanied by anti-racist training for staff members.

Regional Focus

As an initiative co-organised and funded by the city council itself, the *Kulturamt* will have part in the decision-making process. The *Kulturamt*'s decision-making power is dependent on mainly one person who is the responsible administrator for a given project. The Kulturamt of the City of Mannheim is a municipal institution that supports Mannheim's artists, cultural associations, institutions, and festivals of the independent arts scene in Mannheim. In their online presence, they outline their role as "advisor, moderator, promoter, cooperation partner and organiser for cultural projects and artistic initiatives in all areas of the independent arts in Mannheim and contribute to a lively, diverse cultural offering in Mannheim" (Stadt Mannheim n.d.).

The role of the *Kulturamt* is to support, network and consult, and likewise identify thematic gaps in which the institution itself may become a cooperating partner, as it was the case for Planet Ears.[60] Two different pots are supporting the scene. One, a grant pot for specific projects and institutional funding that needs reapplying every year. In these cases, the city cannot have a say in the programming, mainly for reasons of tax reasons and corresponding laws regarding the involvement and decision-making in largely subsidised projects in which the city council would risk acting as a commissioning body. The second pot, that funds Planet Ears, is the city's budget for those initiatives that the city is actively involved in and those benefiting the social and cultural development of its own citizens. It thus has the aim to deliver benefits for the regional community. In this way, Planet Ears acts as a gatekeeper and "explainer" of

---

[59] German wording "Arbeit und Herzblut", own translation.
[60] Interestingly, the *Kulturamt* used to be the main body administering the building of the Old Fire Station (Alte Feuerwache). Then it became subject of a municipal administration and subsequently, an independent GmBH owned by the city of Mannheim.

cosmopolitan visions that shows the anxieties at play in an industry structure "defined by colonialism and its aftermath" (Stokes 2007: 6).

The regional element that Eichhorn in his work for the city envisions concern both changing the listening habits of the "Mannheimer", a term he used to describe those not directly involved in the independent performing arts scene, as well as the professional development of local artists. The festival should "open a new perspective to the 'general Mannheim people' on how to listen to the music of other cultures, but also to show something to the music scene, even if we have these high-quality academies". The non-academic focus is seen as a tool for accessibility and is approached in a programming that involves high profile popular musicians, mixed with DJ sets and experimenting artists in one festival. Thilo Eichhorn assumes that otherwise, Planet Ears would run the risk to approach the subject of cultural diversity from an elitist standpoint, leaving out the citizens that it should target in favour for experimental music making involving established artists in the jazz and contemporary realm (Thilo Eichhorn, Interview 1 April 2022, Mannheim).

The festival is thus used as a pedagogical tool for both musicians looking for inspiration from outside the regional borders and to form new networks with international artists, as well as an attempt to present international music in a de-ethnicised context. Eichhorn stresses this when he says that he involves as many local musicians in the festival as possible as it is "mainly about supporting Mannheim's cultural scene, not its citizens." However, both go hand in hand, "because if the artists are thriving, the citizens all get something out of it." And local artists likewise bring their own friends and fans to the concerts, benefitting ticket sales. This is especially important considering the intraregional migration towards Germany's urban centres such as Berlin, Leipzig, or Hamburg. The festival likewise helps the local economy during the time of the festival and should become a platform in which the local scene meets "inspiration from outside", not just in form of concerts but ideally through meeting musicians informally before and after concerts and being out into collaborations by the director.

When I asked Eichhorn if he and the AFM disagree in any areas, he pointed out that preferences are different, as he prefers liveness and collaborative live events over digitised music as he considers live music to have more added value in terms of achieving a cultural exchange, saying that if he "had the choice between laptop act and band", he "would always take the band". The *Kulturamt* administrator assumes that this preference stems from different artistic backgrounds of administrators themselves with Thilo Eichhorn being in a band and Sören Gerhold, former AFM director, and Ubbo Gronewold, AFM booker, having been DJs in the past. In this way, both the format of performances in terms of its analogue or digital set up, and the international profile of the festival, is shaped by the different preferences of AFM and *Kulturamt* in which AFM books international artists thanks to their ties to international agencies while *Kulturamt* takes care of the regional music scene.

Funding Festivals as a Regional Development Tool

In the last decade, several proposals on the widening of access to cultural activities, diversity development and urban cultural policy have been put together (Köhl et al. 2020). One of these reports, put together by non-profit associations and *Mannheimer Bündnisse*[61] in collaboration the city's delegate of integration and migration, stresses the role of municipal cultural policy as an umbrella term that includes not only the promotion of arts and culture but likewise consider urban planning and development, cultural heritage preservation, the promotion of cultural diversity and cultural education and the creative industries as a matter of regional cultural policy development (Asche et al. 2014:10). The regional aspect and state-involvement on the municipal level is the main force for cultural activities, in terms of funding and programming decisions, and reflects the state, and further need, for the involvement of migrant population in Mannheim's cultural activities. The following section outlines in the relationship between Planet Ears, funding policy agendas and the demands of independent networks of local cultural institutions in their demands and suggestions for more engagement with the diasporic communities of the region.

In a 2015 report of the association of cities and towns Baden-Württemberg, the authors lay out an agenda and recommendations for guidelines concerning future fields of action in municipal cultural policy. The reports demand increased participation and access for projects in the region of Rhine-Neckar. This shows the political engagement of NGOs and cultural initiatives and the role that Planet Ears plays in responding to an insufficient cultural infrastructure to implement these suggestions, even not formally mandated by funding bodies' policies.

What becomes important is the festival's focus on cultural diversity that utilise conditions of urban centres such as Mannheim that present a fertile ground for diversity orientated project work, grants and development programmes funded by the municipality or state. The measures that the report by the newly formed bonds of different regional bodies (Köhl et al. 2020) outline guidelines that suggest how developing a more internationally oriented music scene in Mannheim could be achieved through facilitating access to cultural institutions and events for social groups that would normally not be visible at events at the main cultural institutions. Measures suggested are the ease of language barriers, changes in ticket pricing structures, and participatory formats. It also includes the education of staff to deal with different needs of those participating in events, specifically considering people with "migrancy biography". The paper does not only suggest the inclusion of different audiences but likewise producers with a migration background, while recommending utilising "the potential of these people as multipliers and networking of actors and communities" (ibid.). Encouraging the active invitation and involvement of external producers and networks from outside the regional, communication and networking becomes a central point in this report. It considers diversity-oriented change as a necessity and suggests a set of criteria to evaluate these guidelines on an institutional level.

---

[61] The *Mannheimer Bündnis* an institutional network of NGOs and different independent institutions that can apply to be part of the network.

These reports will become relevant for Planet Ears as a festival co-founded by the *Kulturamt* in Mannheim. In many ways, these recommendations circulate not only in policy reports but were one of the main debate points in discussions among administrative staff when discussing the ticketing, cooperation partners, symposium language and PR prior to the festival. In these instances, cultural policy acts as a subsector of governmental intervention that determines the distribution of resources to different public agents (Paquette and Redaelli 2015:59).[62]

Interestingly, the funding guidelines of the City's cultural affairs office did not address any of the extensive recommendations of the report by Köhl et al. 2020, and instead, outline 'equality and diversity' briefly as one of many requirements. The first of the three points made in the funding guidelines on artistic and cultural projects in Mannheim is indeed its rootedness in the region (*Ortsbezug*), explaining that projects will be considered "if they relate to the city of Mannheim, the current urban society with its challenges and/or its history and/or its special traditions (site-specific/ location based)" as outlined in *Stadtrecht der Stadt Mannheim* (2020:9). The second point evolves around the idea of the "innovative", outlining that ideally, projects will show a "creative aesthetic, formal or structural innovation in terms of events or themes or structural innovation (innovative)" and lastly, there is a mention of equal participation. Projects should "make an active contribution to equal participation in cultural and social life" (ibid.). The eligibility criteria are held relatively open and show two things.

First, it shows the rootedness of Planet Ears' ideologies, linguistic structures, and communicative action in planning discourse (Portugali and Alfasi 2008). Looking into the planning and decision-making process of the festival that is deeply connected to the city's social and political environment, it becomes clear that the communication within the team, general public, and the interaction listeners, alongside linguistic considerations, aim to challenges structures of inequality and stereotypical representation in local cultural industries through the use (or avoidance) of certain terms to foster a vision of tolerated differences. The regional focus aims to include those left behind and those not participating in the main cultural institutions of the city. It also suggests a networking with those outside the region, drawing a strong binary logic of regional and the "outside".

Second, policy recommendations are not abstract, but function as almost a useful guideline for institutions' and festivals' decision making. In Berlin, international networking and the strengthening of networks and social bonds stood at the center of funding guidelines, as well as a strong anti-world music sentiment that determined what is considered innovative. In Beirut, it was an infrastructure of care following the explosion as well as a strong local with international ties to build and expand artist-led institutions. In Mannheim, Planet Ears as a festival organised by Alte Feuerwache serves as an excellent example of an institutional structure that may be driven by aims for international networking and diversity, yet it comes

---

[62] Drawing on the work of Heidenheimer (1990), Richard and Smith (2002) on cultural policy as public policy, Paquette and Redaelli define public policy as "an action (inaction) or decision (indecision) made by an official agent or organisation of the state and that can be interpreted as its position" (Paquette and Redaelli 2015:59).

from a policy recommendation with a strong inwards focus on regional development rather than outwards driven one.

In this way, Planet Ears, and its collaborations with partners in Lebanon, Jordan, and Luxembourg, among other countries, somehow contribute to the social and cultural fingerprint of the region, showing the strengthening of regional development and the city's internationalisation in the cultural sphere. This internationalisation can, however, mean that Planet Ears merely shares similar sets and performances which lead to a portfolio-like and friendly network, rather than long-lasting professional relationships. This shows that cultural policy recommendations by local cultural institutions, even if not fully implemented, can be a major incentive for regional administrating bodies such as the *Kulturamt* to fund festivals with a focus diversity and exchange. The satisfaction of these eligibility criteria likewise determines whether or not institutions and festivals will receive funding, largely based on external demands for critical engagement with regional migrant populations which, here, translates to world music critique. The critique of world music forms the core of Planet Ears' mission statement and are more personal and sentimental than policy-driven, yet, equally, policy-influenced and -influencing.

The funding application to the largest external grant the festival received so far, approximately 40.000 EUR from the Allianz Kulturstiftung, the grant writer outlines the participatory formats, the possibility for dialogue and exchange and the active "dismantling of stereotypes". This is achieved through the running of workshops which are an integral part of the festival, as well as panel discussions in which artists are able to "describe themselves" and speak to listeners, rather than being described by others.[63] The phrase "public space" appears rather frequently and describes Planet Ears as a Platform in the public space in which musicians from Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Morocco and other urban European centres come into dialogue. This is complemented with cross-country project work in which local cultural institutions and educational institutions come into "cultural exchange" with the regional musicians and listeners at Planet Ears, as well as festival organisers, researchers, and local creative industries.

In terms of target audiences, the grant application lists "representatives from cultural institutions and the music event sector, press, open listeners" in which the open-air concerts, free of charge, become a major drawing point for the "local community" as the grant application states that would normally find themselves at Alte Feuerwache. This is to "to make the musical diversity accessible to all parts of society, regardless of financial or academic background, which goes hand in hand with Mannheim's cultural diversity." Again, regional cultural diversity becomes a large part of the appeal and impact of this festival and furthermore, donor relations. Grant writing, often described in conjunction with fundraising (Paquette and Redaelli 2015:36) has been studied in relationship to donor behaviour, donor relations (O'Neil 2007) and power imbalances and inequality in which one partner exerts control over financial flows in contemporary development agendas (Reith 2010). While Julie O'Neil outlines the impact of strong public relationships on the amount and frequency of donor support for non-

---

[63] Translated from: "Eigen- statt Fremdbeschreibung und -darstellung durch Musikbetriebe".

profits, Kelly (1998) outlines the crucial role that stewardship plays in the fundraising process. Theorising a five-step relationship ROPES (research, objectives, programming, evaluation, and stewardship), Kelly describes stewardship as the key step that helps build relationships and nurture financial sustainability with donors and funding schemes. Reith outlined that strategies of NGOs in funding applications and grant writing can be used where trust issues show that relationships are "based on patronage and control" rather than forming equal partnerships (Reith 2010:447-448). The AFM is dependent on the funding of the *Kulturamt* and therefore keen to uphold to continue the regional development of artists and the international partnerships with other festivals that, in turn, support the economic development of the city which is in the interest of the *Kulturamt*.

In a previous chapter, Hardi Kurda outlines the benefits of cultural producers being financially independent from larger institutions, justifying his anti-institutional stance as a way of artistic survival in a precarious cultural funding landscape. Here, we can see that Planet Ears occupies a similar position as the festival is relatively independent in terms of outcomes, revenue generation and performance selections thanks to the guaranteed funding for certain festival editions. The funding is likewise dependent on individuals Sören Gerhold and Thilo Eichhorn's advocation in the *Kulturamt* and their own focus set each year. Now, that both resigned from their posts, the future of Planet Ears might be dependent on the successful fundraising of the institutions internal grant writer, Maria Kretzschmar, and the support by the *Kulturamt* should they decide to continue their cooperation for the festival. This shows how the aims of the festival are clearly shaped by individuals and their ideas around diversity representation in Germany, the policy mission of each funding source, affective sentiments in the organisation and external inspiration from cooperating institutions and their recommendations and advice relating to the programming.

The Symposium

My own positioning likewise shaped the symposium and the festival. As a German citizen of Jordanian-Palestinian heritage, the symposium consisted of different panels that discussed the experience of diasporic musicians in Germany, the Othering of musicians read as Muslim, and issues of white German curatorship. Speaking to administrators, it was pointed out that my research on the festival informed the way they approached the subject in meetings and after the festival. Fundraiser Maria Kretzschmar points out that "the research side of the festival questioning helps institutions like us to see things that we might miss. By bringing you in as the 'scientific perspective', the festival automatically went into a different direction. I am very grateful for that, because we can question the festival because you have questioned it for the last three years." (Maria Kretzschmar, Interview 27 September 2022, Mannheim). Other pointed out in an evaluation focus group that they got more excited and curious about the concert when you get to know the people on the panel. The symposium also raised questions about accessibility, as my titles of the talks and those by Norient director Thomas Burkhalter have been described as "too academic" but likewise been praised for being useful in funding proposals when describing the impact and research coming from the festival organisation.

In the first year in 2019 when I curated the symposium for the first time, I was not a PhD student and instead, worked full-time as an event assistant in a university department. One day at the office, I received a message from Maria Kretzschmar, the fundraising administrator from the team at Alte Feuerwache. I knew Maria from my time working at the café of Alte Feuerwache as an undergraduate. The director at the time, Sören Gerhold and his team, often held their meetings at the café during my shifts and one day asked me about my plans. When I told them about my proposed research about music in the Lebanese diaspora, they suddenly listened carefully. A year later, I would be asked to get involved in the festival as a research assistant supervising a symposium, focusing specifically on the definition of "world music" and its state of research. The wording of the project, that would later be called Planet Ears, intrigued me. It read "We are planning to initiate an art platform for contemporary traditional music in September, which will invite annual musicians and music creators from the field of world music who combine contemporary trends with the respective musical traditions." (Kretzschmar in January 2019).

The first series involved musicians and festival directors who were present or in the region for the first series due to the programme while following series involved activists, cultural workers and representatives of cultural institutions and made higher budgets necessary following an attempt to represent current debates in the field of performing arts with the aim of making visible the intersecting inequalities that musicians in Germany today. It was at this first series that I was introduced to Joss Turnbull and Rabih Beaini of Morphine Raum, as well as Irtijal director Sharif Sehnaoui, who would all become central to my research. In many ways, my research started before my 2020 start as a PhD candidate and commenced with this first introduction and experience curating a symposium in 2019. The collaboration was not a permanent one that established strong ties between Irtijal festival and Planet Ears but rather served as a network and pool of artists and concepts to explore in coming festival series during which Planet Ears collaborated with other institutions across Europe. The most recent, and most permanent collaboration is currently with Norient festival which has been involved since 2021 and received their own budget to curate a full weekend at the 2022 Planet Ears series. Norient has since presented their ideas around networks and curatorship in various formats in their programme at Planet Ears. This programmatic focus, alongside my own research on curatorial critique and institutional self-critique, has place the notion of "curation" in the center of many series of the Planet Ears festival itself.

The programme has incorporated current events and responded in the programming and focus of the symposium each year. Following a rather male-dominated first set of panels in 2019, I aimed to invite a larger number of women and queer cultural producers on stage while balancing the choice with my dependence on a small budget and limited resources. Since the invasion of Russia in Ukraine in February 2022, we hosted a panel on music and activism in Ukraine and will do so in the upcoming series in 2023. This has sparked internal discussions around the nature of the symposium as either a platform for giving visibility to those affected by current events and points made about performative activism and the sustainability of the discussions. The aim was to avoid giving a platform to negotiate "trendy subjects" (*trendige*

Themen) or "buzzwords" (*Modeworte*) and instead, use the symposium as a platform to reflect current affairs (*aktuelle Themen*) in the realm of sound and its ties with memory and identity.

The worry I had was that curation is heavily based on the funding available each year and that the decisions about my suggested panels each year were based on who has been already visible and audible in the public space. In many ways, my own judgement on what I consider relevant has been shaping my curatorial practice. After meeting with Rabih Beaini in Berlin and actively working on expanding a network across different musical directions, I aimed to actively oppose my own aesthetic bias and what I think is relevant and genuinely innovative in terms of musician's sonic language and storytelling. This is because my own positionality as someone born and raised in Germany with temporary ethnographic visits to the region would always be limited. It would be as limited like every curator-researcher's perspective would be. A good curator will always be someone that is aware of their own positionality, taste and bias that determines their practice and should aim to make clear that the curatorial narrative is one of many perspectives on a given subject.

I felt that my own position as someone "Arab-ish", and my role as researcher, affected the way I was involved in the festival and the way advice was sought. In meetings with German-born administrators, I was asked to advise on terminology, the right or wrong of saying or labelling things, and how I judge situations or decisions regarding cultural representation at the festival. In a way, I felt that, because I was there, there was already an element of diversity that justified a lack of diversity in the team as well as during the decision-making process. In encouraging an inbetween-ness of difference and assimilation, the director of the festival seemed to favour performers who possess a specific degree of cultural difference and avoids those who are closely aligned with Western practices or, conversely, music groups considered too traditional; or closely aligned to the world music market.

In other words, something that is different and likewise able to be contextualised in drawing on Western discourses around sonic discomfort and noise as a way to enable collective experiences and imagine future sounds.[64] Conversely, for the festival director and other members of the team, "too traditional" meant that folkloristic music was not involving forms of electronic or electro-acoustic mediation or an inbuilt critique of racial discrimination in the lyrics, leaving audiences to listen to sound too close to a world music experience, rather than a sonic critique and resistance *to* world music.

In order to be as accurate as possible and as open towards self-representation of artists at the symposium, I would speak to musicians one-to-one via Zoom before each festival series, asking them what subjects they are working on right now, which topics they are comfortable to address, and which subjects they do not want to address publicly which became more important in my conversations with Ukrainian artists since 2022. Outlining my approach to musicians during these conversations, I aimed to make musicians aware of the role that musicians are often placed in these panels based on my observations on panels at festivals with a "global"

---

[64] For a discussion on noise, the tolerating of noise and noise perception, see previous chapter.

approach. I did not want panellists to feel that they are spokesperson on racism or feminist struggles and likewise aimed to allow a space to discuss the subjects that are reflected their performance.

Being a researcher-as-curator as opposed to musician-as-curator, I likewise understood how beliefs and values of certain genres that are shaped by my own network and the limited capacity to fully be immersed in certain scenes. Hence, I relied on recommendations, my own judgement as a researcher and subjective listener. This led me to consider that the incompleteness of representation is part of the process and revealed the challenges to represent movement and their temporary nature based on sampled works or musical pieces. Aspiring to all-encompassing representation and a sense of completeness can only lead to tokenism and the artificial creation of networks that can never last. Hence, I find it useful to keep my eyes and ears open and look at already existing structures that exist outside of formal cultural institutions.

The pressure I as a "diverse person" nurtured my internal critical dialogue in which I wondered whether I, daughter of a Jordanian-Palestinian immigrant, yet, born and raised in Germany, was diverse enough to provide a platform for conversations about racial discrimination in the music industry. I would ask myself: will my curatorial suggestions and input do justice to all (post)migrant and international artists involved in the festival? The critique that followed these thoughts often addressed the choice of formats for symposia and the selection process for panellists which was a matter of funding and resources. For example, discussions would often involve representatives of organisations that were believed to be crucial for the Planet Ears network, a common practice in the cultural industries, while my own intention was to involve musicians that have not been born and raised in Germany to broaden perspectives outside my own, migrantised German-born one.

In addition, the lack of funding for the symposium would result in choosing the same musicians each year as musicians representing a movement or cultural development, acting as spokespeople for different subjects. However, this enabled a structure and network of familiarity and gatekeeping, believed to be similar to the anchoring structures and people at Irtijal, but with less intention to establish a structure of care to expand limited resources with different skillsets of these anchors. However, working with limited resources and still present a vision of anti-racist advocacy was a primary aim for showcasing diversity at the festival and necessary undertaking. In conversations with Thomas Burkhalter and Lisa Tuyala (Women* of Music) at the Planet Ears symposium in 2022, the two curators discussed the concept of "positive gatekeeping" that aims to build institutional structures based on the same actors to establish a familiarity and smooth way of working first, before expanding more globally. Even if Planet Ears wanted too much at once, it aimed to build a structure that enabled cross-institutional networking and presented a vision of a platform that challenged existing cultural productions and institutions in the region which has not previously existed.

Curating Encounters: Free Improvisation at Planet Ears

In my section on curatorial critique (see chapter 3), I discussed the way curation and power have been tied together historically across music festival and performance practices. Based on these discussions and my way of involving the discourse around curation in the Planet Ears symposium, the term became a subject of much debate over the past years. Many administrators, including CEO Sören Gerhold, criticised the use of the term generally for its alleged overuse and the historical baggage associated with curators. Similar to Voegelin's approach to curation, I had the urge to challenge existing narratives and ways of seeing and hearing as part of my role. This became somewhat of an incentive for me and justification to use the term throughout my involvement with Planet Ears.[65] This is also because curation as an anti-racist practice (Bayer et al. 2017) is a crucial tool specifically in the display and visibility provision of arts and culture in the SWANA region as a way of challenging essentialist curatorial leitmotifs that continue to "curate the region" (McDonald-Toone 2017). In essence, even if administrators did not realise it, intervening in processes is a form of curating encounters based on the exercise of institutional power, multicultural imaginaries, and personal preferences.[66]

While the support of regional artists from Mannheim is mostly advocated by Thilo Eichhorn from the *Kulturamt*, the invitation of internationally touring bands from West Africa, South Africa and West Asia is mostly organised by the booker Ubbo Gronewold from Alte Feuerwache Mannheim. In the following section, I will look at the third focus area of the festival of free improvised music, and the way collaborations emerge through institutional decision-making. Sören Gerhold, former director of Alte Feuerwache Mannheim that oversaw Planet Ears festival from its first series in 2019 until its fourth series in 2022, outline the importance of bringing together international artists in the field of free improvised music, as well as regional musicians attached to the Alte Feuerwache through longstanding professional relationships. Two of these musicians will be in the focus of this section, tombak player Joss Turnbull and guitarist Claus Boesser-Ferrari.

Based on the observations of director Sören Gerhold at Irtijal and observations at concerts at Alte Feuerwache, Gerhold selected musicians based on their personal characteristics that blend into their sonic profile. Claus Boesser-Ferrari, who performs regularly at AFM's *Enjoy Jazz* festival as well as Planet Ears in different formations, can be seen as one of the core figures and recurring artists at Planet Ears. In 2021, Boesser-Ferrari performed the poems by Lebanese artist Etel Adnan together with Irtijal director and guitarist Sharif Sehnaoui and German jazz

---

[65] In her essay "The Unperforming the Curatorial", Salomé Voegelin suggests an "uncurating"; not as a rejection of curation but an "untethering of curatorial practice from its politico-historical frame" and new way of thinking about the organisation of knowledge and power (Voegelin 2022: 40).

[66] Drawing on the work of Aníbal Quijano, Sara Ahmed and David Balzer, Voegelin criticises the political position of the curator, the "colonial pattering", and thus a, enabling of curation as a "colonial project" (Quijano 2007, see Voegelin 2022). She suggests a restaging knowledge and power by "taking patriarchal conventions of seeing and messing with its display" (Voegelin 2022: 43) which resonated with the way even those unwilling to use the term "curation" did, in fact, "curate" and "intervened in the collaborations between musicians through their decision making.

singer Jutta Glaser. The performance was based on Etel Adnan's texts and drawings and Sharif Sehnaoui's personal connection to Etel Atnan and an homage to the artist after her passing in 2021. In February 2023, Boesser-Ferrari and Jutta Glaser performed the poems in Beirut's Metro Al Madina Theatre as part of a symposium on Etel Adnan taking place at the American University of Beirut. The performance of Jutta Glaser and Claus Boesser-Ferrari took place as a collaboration with Sharif Sehnaoui, Rayya Badran, Fadi Tabbal and Postcards' drummer Pascal Semerdjian. The latter are subject of the case study on Beirut. These constellations serve as a good example how performances that are produced for Planet Ears can be used spaces to test ideas and new social formations that often leads to touring of these same formations primarily to Beirut due to the involvement of musicians from the performing arts scene in Beirut.

Stian Westerhus and Joss Turnbull

These social set-ups are often strategic and with a longer-term goal for new formations between musicians and for the development of professional relationships between musicians with shared approaches to musical experimentalism as Gerhold points out. The former AFM director put in touch Joss Turnbull and Norwegian avantgarde guitarist Stian Westerhus, who Turnbull describes as one of his biggest idols. Gerhold suggested a free improvised performance in which the two musicians are put together on stage without previous rehearsals in which nervousness, tension and later trust became part of the performers' dynamic on stage. More importantly, Planet Ears becomes a platform in which the budget and space offer an opportunity for first-time collaborations as *Kulturamt* administrator Thilo Eichhorn points out, stressing that "sometimes you have to initiate it very specifically like with Joss and Stian and 'force' an encounter because people naturally wouldn't play with each other. You obviously cannot to this with every musician and it is more exemplary. But it helps to do it like that for festivals such as Planet Ears that are so long that you do not run into each other naturally and you almost must persuade people to stay a day longer for concerts that are relevant for the musicians." (Thilo Eichhorn, Interview 1 April 2022, Mannheim).

The encounter at the performances themselves therefore are thought to make up for a lack of socialising opportunities outside the performance context and seen as a more productive and impactful tool for cultural encounters between musicians with shared approaches to improvisation. Since their performance, the two musicians stayed in touch and thought about touring together. This is an example of a what administrators at AFM described as a successful organised encounter between two musicians in which success is measured by the social bonding between musicians and the professional opportunities that arose from the singular performance. In the following, I will outline how performance's success can be measured differently by administering staff and musicians themselves, specifically in instances where musicians are experiencing tension and uncertainty during the performance.

Emilie Škrijelj, Christine Abdelnour, Joss Turnbull, and Claus Boesser-Ferrari

In 2022, Sören Gerhold decided to initiate a performance between four musicians for the first time. Accordion player Škrijelj and alt-saxophonist Abdelnour are both based in France and worked together for the first time in February 2022 at the "Un Pavé dans le Jazz" festival in Toulouse with drummer Tom Malmendie who is part of the duo with Škrijelj. Planet Ears would take place in September of the same year, and Sören Gerhold was keen to connect the two male performers with the two French instrumentalists as a "social experiment". Gerhold described in the evaluation meeting that he finds it "more exciting to bring people together and have this very raw improvisation, when you don't know what's going to happen." The former AFM director describes the uncertainty of improvisational set-ups as an "added value" to musical encounters in which exchange is achieved through an intervention by the organiser of the festival.

Abdelnour was not happy with the initial idea and not keen to perform with Boesser-Ferrari when Gerhold rejected her suggestion to perform with her own project and perform in this formation instead. Despite being given a "carte blanche", Abdelnour expressed her doubts about the director's suggestion for the quartet while Gerhold undertook the decision to create a productive environment out of the disagreements that would eventually bleed into the sonic dimension during the performance. Gerhold explains that he found that Claus Boesser-Ferrari "overtook" musicians sonically on multiple occasions, "overpowering" them with dense soundscapes, high volume and a lack of silences that give space for the other performers rather than listening to them to respond with his own instrument.

This observation was based on previous performances at Planet Ears as Gerhold describes: "it was a really exciting idea for me, because we just had the feeling at the last concerts with Claus and Sharif, Claus overruns everything and has just such a superiority where others cannot really exist. I have also discussed this with him, and he has totally seen this as his own problem. So I said 'hey, check out Christine because you withdraw yourself more, because otherwise Christine will not be audible. It's because she works very delicately, and Claus was cool with that. And of course, what comes out of it is another thing, but in any case, there was a lot of controversial discussion, which is great." The idea behind the organised musical encounter was a pedagogical one, as well as a decision that puts musicians in unexpected situations, hoping for a musical outcome of this social disagreement and help musicians likewise to understand the power dynamics that naturally occur when putting different individuals on stage. The performance was entirely acoustic which was an intentional decision to even out the sonic output of each performer.

To Gerhold, enabling "friction" between musicians enabled the most productive forms of interaction between cultural practitioners. The "messiness" of these interactions, as Tsing describes, can be instrumental in co-producing cultures in "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference" (Tsing 2004). The "awkward coalescence" (ibid.: 249) and friction is not interpreted as resistance, but key to cultural production. This friction that may arise from grouping together musicians with no or little

personal liking became the key focus of this collaboration its sonic messiness, rather than melodic and rhythmical harmony, the intended outcome of the performance.

I met Claus Boesser-Ferrari for the first time on Zoom while preparing for a panel he was going to be on in 2021 and spoke again in 2022. I instantly felt that Boesser-Ferrari seemed to wear his heart on his sleeve. He sat across me, wearing his white hair chin-length, adjusting lose strands of hair that flew around while gesturing enthusiastically. The guitarist was very direct, open, and vulnerable when speaking about his own approach to music making. Boesser-Ferrari seemed attracted to intense experiences on stage, quick-witted, very much responsive to those thoughts and impulses arising in the music production process and free improvisation session, yet with a very distinct playing style that incorporates tapping on the body of the guitar, the use of objects to prepare the instrument and frequent changes between delicate plucking of arpeggios, slide guitar, and dynamic strumming of rhythmic dissonant passages, while utilising the entirety of the instrument's neck as a percussive tool. He also struck me as someone who is very passionate, curious, keen to keep making new connections, and likewise not shy of critique and self-critique.

I felt there was something very paternal and comforting around his presence in his urge to be clear and understood, managing a situation, and trying to look out for those around him. We spoke about his ties with Irtijal festival and love for Beirut as a city, his approach to guitar music and his detest for guitar festivals, and the way he improvises. This led us to the subject of power and visibility. Boesser-Ferrari saw the initiation of "uncertainty" as one of the biggest potentials for both musicians and audiences, describing how "as an artist, you should try and strip away the comfort and safety from time to time. For example, making artists arrive on different days or encouraging to play an instrument they usually don't" (Claus Boesser-Ferrari, Interview 19 October 2022, online) which can then lead to "trust-building mechanisms" (*vertrauensbildende Maßnahmen*). These observations would blend into the performance at Planet Ears and expressed in the social dynamic on stage as I will outline in the following section.

Sound, Power, Manspreading

In the discussion about uncertainty, we spoke about power and the way it is expressed through sound and technique. Boesser-Ferrari outlined that to him, power is stripped away once the electronic amplification is gone. To the guitarist, an acoustic set makes musicians vulnerable, audible and reveals a fragile, delicate side of performing. Power can be also taken or given through silence. Muting a sound, or pausing to give space to another performer, are ways to give the power to an artist while likewise exposing their vulnerability. The Planet Ears symposium, artists discussed how narratives and structural power imbalances also impact the way musicians perceive the social dynamics on stage. In a panel I gave the title "Women in the Avantgarde", the two female artists joined me on the panel. Christine Abdelnour spoke openly about her initial distrust in the constellation of the four musicians that Sören put together, creating a brief moment of discomfort for me as someone involved in the organisation process, and for the administrators sitting in the first row of the panel discussion. Her openness was not

only appreciated by the audiences but became an interesting point of discussion. With Joss Turnbull and Claus Boesser-Ferrari attentively listening in the second row, Abdelnour opened up about the struggles of womanhood and childcare as an experimental musician that creates unequal opportunities of exposure for female freelance musicians as opposed to male ones, as women might lose years of their career on stage when taking care of children and other household chores during maternity leave.

Abdelnour and Škrijelj also outlined the lack of visibility of women in the creative industries and their own preference to play with women. Abdelnour explains that she was around men when she first started making music up to the age of 30. Since then, she prefers being around female musicians, saying jokingly "I like to play with women, they're nicer and more fun… no but honestly, it has nothing to do with music, it's just human relations." When I ask the female musicians how they felt around performing mainly with men prior to their current collaborations, Škrijelj jokes that "it's like manspreading", which she understands as sonic manspreading in this context. The musician acknowledges that women might also overtake collaborations through the dominance of volume, but Škrijelj explains how men always play louder than her when playing with her. Asking what we can expect from the performance following, Abdelnour ended the symposium with the words "it's gonna be a blast".

The interview served as an introduction to the concert that followed and allowed audiences to get to know musicians and ask questions prior to their performance. This outcome was one of the major motivations, and ideal outcome for me, to justify why I intervene in the festival with a symposium and talk-based formats: in order to give transparency to the festival's production process, question its decision-making process on stage, and shed light on the power dynamics intertwined in the curatorial and collaborative process. In many ways, it seems as if the four musicians just got to know each other during that panel and likewise established the roles assigned to each performer which played out in the performance following and a narrative for listeners to hold on to when watching the dynamic on stage.

This is just one example how formats such as open interview formats scan influence subsequent performances and the level of comfort or discomfort musicians experience, as well as the level to which musicians feel like they are being heard and understood, for example in relation to the message they want to bring to audience. It can also make musicians feel closer to listeners and more confident in their own role, e.g., Abdelnour while discussing feminist struggles and became more confident in her own role. It can likewise cement the role that individuals have as core pillars on the institution when they are visible and audible each year, as it was the case for Joss Turnbull appearing on panels almost each year.

During the performance, all four musicians sat in a row. Joss Turnbull on the left, Emilie Škrijelj and Christine Abdelnour in the middle of the stage and Claus Boesser-Ferrari on the right. In many ways, it was not only a framing of the musicians through the way the chairs and positions were arranged. In addition, Boesser-Ferrari's silent play and Turnbull's delicate percussive play were somewhat overwhelmed by the tapping, clicking sounds of the accordion and the screaming interventions of the saxophone, leaving Turnbull and Boesser-Ferrari with

the role to frame Abdelnour's wave of sudden, dynamically ascending melodic patterns and the percussive play of Škrijelj on the accordion, bouncing her left leg restlessly while tapping the body of her instrument with the ring on her finger producing a pervasive background sound throughout the performance she would come back to frequently.

The metallic clicking noise and sliding along the body of the accordion with a felt mallet so that every time she would slide along the black keys of her instrument, one would hear a sound reminiscent of a bouncing ping pong ball. Meanwhile, Turnbull and Boesser-Ferrari occasionally interject with small rhythmical patterns but never long enough to make them seem entirely comfortable in the set up. In some way, it seemed as if the make performers tried to listen carefully to find a space to fit in, making it an imperative to claim only the space they needed rather than the space they would otherwise occupy if they hadn't listened to Abdelnour's and Škrijelj's critique of sonic manspreading earlier. Or at least, it seemed as if anxieties were at play. I would try to listen for their presence but would be left with a sense of "hearing out for them", almost expecting them to remain silent due to the discussion on the panel and noticed how the narrative on "sonic manspreading" has shaped my entire perspective and focus of what I listened out for at the performance.

At times, Boesser-Ferrari is briefly in the foreground when he strums arpeggios and modulates frequently while producing a razor-sharp sound. I look at his guitar and the tools scattered across a small table behind him and see, while he slides along the frets, long, spiky, untrimmed guitar strings hanging loosely from the neck of his instrument. Throughout the performance, Turnbull's frame drum is only occasionally audible with a singular beat or a short pattern, he seems hesitant and almost overthinking his presence. Abdelnour remains silent, adding to the tension in the room, and slowly starts to showcase her characteristic repertoire of smacking noises, breathwork with and without the mouthpiece and percussive play with the keys of her instrument.

This image has been redacted by the author due to copyright concerns.
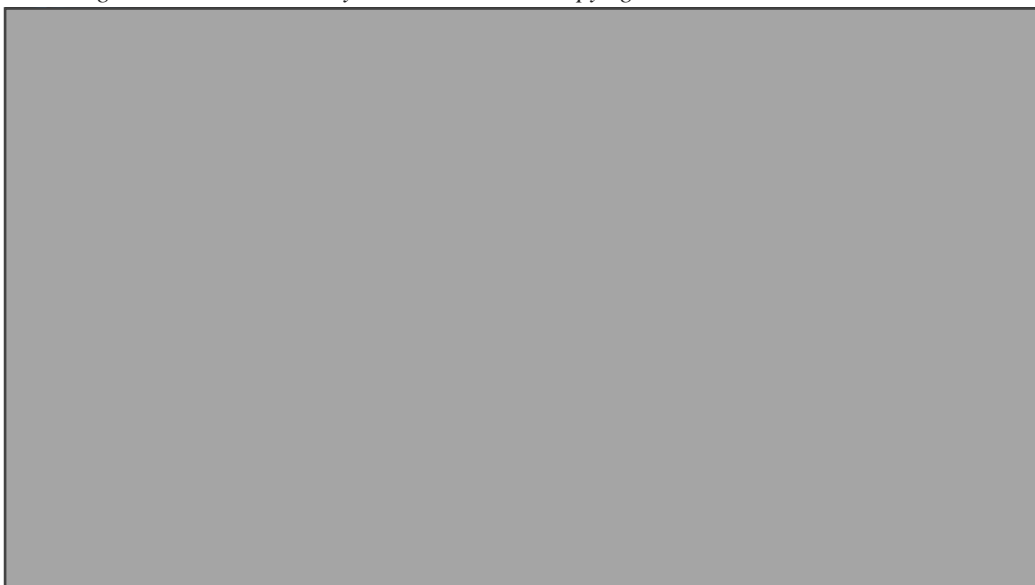
Performance at Studio Feuerwache, Planet Ears 2022, Mannheim (Tröster 2022).

What became very clear to me as a viewer of this scene was the complete lack of eye contact. I could see Boesser-Ferrari trying to initiate eye contact, watching the performance as a listener himself, sitting on the edge of his chair facing the three performers while Christine remained stoic, static, and performed most of the set with her eyes closed. Movement came from the restlessness of the two performers on the left, while Abdelnour, barely moving besides when adjusting the shoulder strap and mouthpiece, seemed indifferent and detached from Boesser-Ferrari who seemed to dynamically change techniques, seating positions and tools to manipulate the banjo and guitar.

The narrative about the improvisation I built in my head at this point of the performance is one that is a clear power play and attempt to reclaim audibility from the view of the female performers, and one to give space, be respectful and listen, from the male set of performers. This dynamic is one that could be entirely fictional, but it is common to find a narrative to fit in what is being heard or seen at free improvisation set and explain "what is happening" in the process of sonification, in which social dynamics are translated via the performer's instrument into sound. To me, this performance showed Abdelnour's discipline of stoically sitting in one posture while performing a range of techniques, Škrijelj's wide range of playing styles, an insight into how Turnbull's shyness and reflexivity translate into his performance practice, and audio and visual presentation of Boesser-Ferrari's attempt to showcase his ability to insert himself into a sonic dynamic only if necessary. Bearing in mind the script that I created as a listener to narrate what was happening during performance, I thought that this was a great way for audience to see how female performers took space on stage.

In informal discussions after the performance, both the organisers and musicians seemed somewhat surprised about the outcome, yet content that there was a very visible and audible outcome to the social dynamics that were clearly reflected throughout the concert. Boesser-Ferrari noted that "it was good that we did it that way, I learned a lot, what works and what doesn't work for me." He seemed content about the role I temporarily occupied but likewise keen to move on from there. At the time I am writing this, Joss Turnbull is still in touch with Škrijelj to plan a collaboration together (which I was surprised to hear) while Boesser-Ferrari has outlined the benefit it had for his development as a musician. Abdelnour did not regret the concert as much as we foresaw, and it seemed as if the learning effect on what is permissible and what is a "waste of resources" as other administrators called it behind closed doors, could be of a great learning effect. It yet becomes important, however, to listen to musicians' suggestions and comfort level or at least figure out through formats such as panels because musicians may experience an imbalance of power.

In addition, performance sparked conversation around the term "progressiveness" and "improvisation". Through the concert, it became clear that "nothing is ever improvised" as many improvising musicians I spoke to in Berlin have stressed in their interviews. Instead, certain patterns are merely collected and recalled while audiences will always look out for something "spectacular" such as the use of tools to prepare an instrument, such as Boesser-

Ferrari's hand fan, and see something progressive in the absurdity of certain tools.[67] Improvised performances can be based on patterns that change and adapt over time through changing influences musicians experience during collaborative projects and likewise always entails a level of curation from the side of the event organiser such as in this case, for political and pedagogical reasons of ensuring equal roles or the reversal of power dynamics during improvised sound production.

Discussing the concept of "instant composition" and strategies of free improvisors, Berlin-based improver Niko Lefort talks about the possibility of either deciding before the performance about the roles or having an "adapt" and "oppose" approach in which musicians respond to their collaborations based on the others' melodic patterns, textures, dynamic and rhythmical structure (Niko Lefort, Interview 1 October 2023, Online). This could be clearly seen in the use of familiar patterns that clearly signify Abdelnour's dominant and distinctive style and the way in which Turnbull and Boesser-Ferrari aimed to adapt to her and Škrijelj's play based on the briefing they received by the former AFM director, consisting of his critique of Boesser-Ferrari' sonic dominance and the lack of audibility of women in the avantgarde context.

The Limits of Curation

The symposium sparked discussions around the term "curation", not only because Norient was publishing "Politics of Curatorship", and Thomas Burkhalter presented his chapter at the Planet Ears festival but also due to internal discussions about what elements at Planet Ears constituted curation in the first place. It also produced negative sentiments among administrative staff that used the term to describe my own work as they were aware of the cultural capital attached to curators and the conventions that require curation as a diversity-sensitive selection and "curation" of a programme. Former director of Alte Feuerwache, Sören Gerhold, describes it as a "conflated word" while others prefer to use the term "compilation" or "selection" based on the booking procedure the festival (Interview, Muath Isied, 27 September 2022, Mannheim)

In the context of the performance of the quartet outlined above, specifically the decision-making process, Claus Boesser-Ferrari stresses the role of Sören Gerhold as a curator in this instance, outlining that "Sören dares to bring together what does not belong together and therefore intervenes in the creation of the collaboration curatorially, but he just doesn't call it that". In this instance, the curatorial process lies in the formulation of an idea and concept behind it as well as the decision-making process and anticipated pedagogical impact of the improvisation section of the festival for performers and listeners alike. The other sections of the festival are rather based on a selection of artists in which the booker is dependent on agencies, artists availability and touring states which will be ultimately decided by the director of the AFM. It becomes a sorting-through-options rather than selection based on content curation. This is a result of limited funds and capacity of administrative staff working at Planet

---

[67] "Dieses vermeindlich Spektakuläre ist dann gleichzeitig das Progressive" (Claus Boesser-Ferrari, Interview, 19 October 2022, online).

Ears as one of many of the institutions projects. Selection from a pool of options is the reality of many institutions and even independently working curators. Describing the decision-making process as a collective effort in which you allow input, Gerhold describes that "Planet Ears' programme is not in one day where we think 'ok, the pot is full', but it comes little by little, and at the end you decide based on what is musically and socially relevant".

The administrators believe one can only see oneself as a curator when there is an unlimited budget, no issues in terms of availability and an abundance of resources and likewise a political stance and certain taste, which they believe to be easier when working in a fine art institution or non-human objects. Working throughout the pandemic and the visa requirements of touring artists complicates the political activism that could otherwise be achieved through festival organisation. The stages of the festival curation are firstly, the "curation of the heart" (*Herzenskuration*) as fundraiser Kretzschmar describes in which the preferred artists are listed and contacted. In this stage, the organisers would select artists based on their networks and resources that they feel convey the spirit of the festival. The second stage is dedicated by the requirements and obstacles outlined above and results in a "non-curation" as Maria Kretzschmar describes and takes place in the assembling of individuals in one project. These factors also influenced the way I was able, or unable, to assemble the programme for the symposium. The factors that influenced my own curatorial work were based on the contacts I had, the involvement of artists outside the music programme that the institution could afford financially and timewise, the research I did on subject matters and organisations, peoples' own internet presence, the funding I was given and especially the impressions from travels and fieldwork that I carried into the symposium planning process alongside availability.

As described in my earlier chapter on curatorial critique, the function of curatorial discourse as a practice of institutional critique highlights the importance that curation has as on changing dynamics within institutions and specifically in AFM, internal discussions on EDI politics and anti-racist communication. This shows how the festival may not function as a structure of care (Beirut) or institutional self-critique and artist empowerment (Berlin) but gestures towards the empowerment of artists in the institutional landscape and within tight bureaucratic procedures, resources and inherent aims for regional development as opposed to individual artist empowerment as it is the care in Berlin's residency programme and funding schemes. In this way, the festival functions as an important pedagogical practice site for audiences as much as those involved that help administrators to deal with migrantised musicians in a way that is anti-racist and diversity sensitive. This need for institutional development is likewise tied to regional cultural politics that do address, yet not actually heavily involve, the city's "migrant population". The artists and institutions worked involve the same performances and agents but are not as strong in terms of affective quality as they are yet embedded in an institution in which administrators separate their cultural work for multiple festivals each year, and their life outside the institution, even if those grow closer.

The Residency Programme

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, the Planet Ears festival 2020 was postponed. Instead, the organisers used existing arts funds to establish an online residency programme. In my role as a jury member, observer and participant in the administrative processes, my positionality allowed me to not only evaluate the organisation of the residency programme but assess the selection and rehearsal process as a form of gatekeeping and regional development programme. The Planet Ears residency and exchange programme encourages local artists to collaborate with musicians outside of Germany, "preferably outside of Europe" (Alte Feuerwache 2021). The idea, according to the *Kulturamt* who administered the full budget for the residencies, was to connect regional artists from local institutions such as Popakademie Mannheim with artists with far reaching international networks and new musical influences. The financial incentive of signing up for a residency was strategic as Eichhorn outlines, explaining that the residency and its association with Planet Ears and the festival's mission might attract local artists to get involved and interested to perform.

The requirements are that collaborations should include up to four musicians, of which at least two would have to be based in the Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region. Within these constellations, the musician(s) overseas were asked to take the leading role of the project, either as the producer, composer, or musical director. As seen in accounts on *MultiKulti* project work and residency programs it is not uncommon to have a final concert that acts as a goal to showcase the results of the collaboration or, in other words, demonstrate to municipal arts administrators and funding bodies that the money is well spent and that cultural institutions "successfully" facilitated an intercultural exchange. However, the residency artists were not expected to deliver any results or present final works but might be considered as acts for the Planet Ears festival. Instead, artists were offered project space, as well as the technological and financial resources (1200 EUR per person), to collaborate around six hours a day for five consecutive days in the facilities of the AFM.

By providing funding and performance spaces for the formation of collaborations in a space that encourages failure as part of the creative process, the AFM aimed for more participatory models of intercultural music making that abandoned institutional expectations for an "authentic" and "harmonic" result and focus on interpersonal exchanges between German artists and artists outside of Europe. The organisers hoped that this could help take off the pressure of institutional expectations to produce results that act as portfolios for multicultural competence. As Eric Petzhold postulated at the 2021 Planet Ears Festival, it is not the musical end results that reflect successful acts of cultural diplomacy but the encounters before and after the music making process, as well as alternative, extra-musical forms of exchange, that become invaluable for creating meaningful connections between musicians. These exchanges of the residency programme should focus on mindful interpersonal exchanges and personal development alongside musical collaboration to overcome the representational issues and pressure of achieving a seamless cultural hybridity that the world music industry created (Burkhalter 2011).

As a member of the jury of the Planet Ears residency programme, I advised the organisers of Planet Ears on the selections of applicants based on what has been described as the "spirit" of the (world music-) critical festival (*Der Planet Ears Gedanke*). There were no requirements regarding the musical style that decide whether a group of applicants are the right fit for Planet Ears. However, the jury usually agreed on the selection of artists if they seem to convey a genuine interest in collaborating with one another with a non-German artist at the centre of the project, rather than having a German musician in the leading role which might convey a "world music" spirit based on unequal power relations between Euro-American producers and Othered musicians.

The main idea behind the residencies was thus to facilitate "real" exchanges between musicians with no pressure of producing or recording music that aids the marketing or branding of the organising cultural institution itself. This freedom, which can sometimes be interpreted as radical unintentionality, was believed to help musicians to experiment with musical and extra-musical materials without external pressure. The residency's focus on the affective honing of skills was meant to help musicians take charge of their representation. This could be through either performative acts of self-Othering, through a lack of signifiers found in past "world music" productions, or even through distorting notions of Otherness through musical unpredictability that might leave audiences confused or even annoyed about a lack of the "exotic" elements. However, the reality proved to be slightly different to the postulated ideals of the selection process and worked well in some collaborative projects and less so in others as I could observe at the recent Planet Ears festival in September 2021.

One of the residency collectives involved German-born musician and producer David Julian Kircher, German Krautrock band Karaba and Turkish-born songwriter and *saz* player Ozan Ata Canani, son of an Anatolian guestworker who arrived in Bremerhaven at the age of 12. Canani, who reached fame with his appearance on the compilation "Songs of Gastarbeiter Vol.1", performed his hit *Alle Menschen dieser Erde* ("All people of this world") as part of the Planet Ears festival performance in 2021, accompanied by Karaba's drummer, pianist and bassist and Kirchner on vocals and guitar. Between songs, Canani made announcements that thematised xenophobic sentiments and the exclusion and discrimination experienced by migrantised members of German society before launching into his next songs that humorously used polemic phrases such as *Ausländer raus* ("foreigners go away") addressing the migration discourse in Germany.

The organisers of the festival including myself seemed happy about the apparent direct message that Canani conveyed during the performance which seemed to combine interpersonal exchanges between Canani and the German band members, political satire, the use of not only electric guitars but *saz* and lyrics that addressed the stereotypical narrative around Turkish-Arabic communities. However, only later we learned that the group had struggled with the roles each member of the collective was assigned and that the collaborative aspect worked in the musical realm but less in the interpersonal one. David Julian Kirchner was keen to organise and structure the project which led to a dispute between Kirchner and Canani as some members of the administrative team told me.

In the short video produced for the residency, I looked at the dynamics of the residency collaboration before it went on stage. In the clip, Kirchner opens with an announcement, wearing a costume consisting of a wig and a large suit while holding a wooden poll and microphone as if making a protest announcement. In this announcement, which doesn't appear in the recording of the album but the video to advertise the residency, Kirchner advertises his band (Kirchner Hochtief) and forthcoming album (IG Pop) in a statement that is humorously tied to the residency song *Papierkramland* to introduce the scene that resembles the inside of a German civil service office with a woman with large glasses and a formal suit typing on a typewriter, tables scattered around the room and a large sign *Anmeldung* ("registration") in the background. The announcement Kirchner makes says "My name is Georg Renfranz. I am chairman of the works council of Kirchner Hoch Tief Band AG and chairman of the board of the *IG Pop* music union. We stand up for more human rights in pop music, for more rights in making pop music. Come and join us at our plenary meeting"[68] after which Ozan Ata Canani is briefly visible for short periods of time, strumming along the chords of the song while the camera pans 180 degrees around the room to capture the scene.

Ozan Ata Canani is neither introduced nor particularly audible in the clip that presents the residency's collaborative efforts. Instead, the clip seems like an advertisement for the band's forthcoming album in which Canani appears as a featured artist rather than collaborating partner. In the video clip, one can hear the strumming of the melody on the *saz* and sing along to the melody, but the clip is very different to Canani's usual work that incorporates long interludes on the *saz* reminiscent of 1970s Turkish psychedelic folk. One member of the Planet Ears team commented on the collaboration that "it was more a German than Anatolian song" in which Kirchner's song was performed rather than a song that incorporated equal influences by both artists.

The song appeared on the band's album IG Pop and, despite Canani's modest presence in the song, the lyrics were relevant to the theme of Planet Ears in which challenges for migrantised Germans are made visible. The lyrics of the clip are: "Germany is a paperwork country. Welcome to paperwork country. Identify yourself, or we will deport you. Register, deregister, re-register, re-register. On, off, on - register, register, register, register, register!"[69] and address the bureaucratic issues that many *Ausländer* (foreigners, here: those without German residency or citizenship status) face in Germany.

When the song and the other repertoire that Canani prepared was performed on stage, the members of Karaba seemed rather unengaged with Canani's activism, chatting and smoking

---

[68] Translated from German: "Mein Name ist Georg Renfranz. Ich bin Vorsitzender des Betriebsrats der Kirchner Hoch Tief Band AG sowie Vorstandsvorsitzender der IG Pop Gewerkschaft für Popmusik. Wir treten ein für mehr Menschenrechte in der Popmusik, für mehr Rechte beim Popmusikmachen. Kommen Sie doch mal mit auf unsere Vollversammlung."

[69] Translated from German: "Deutschland ist ein Papierkramland. Willkommen im Papierkramland. Weisen Sie sich aus, sonst weisen wir Sie aus. Anmelden, Abmelden, Ummelden, Nachmelden. An, ab um, nach - melden melden melden melden!"

cigarettes on stage while Canani made emotional announcements about his experience with racism which audience members experienced as "disinterested" and "disrespectful" towards the musician. Discussing this performance with Johanna Hasse, the PR officer describes: "The dynamics of the band on stage bothered me the most. I thought they radiated something completely arrogant, as if they cannot be bothered whatsoever. And then also this constellation of David and Ata, you really noticed that it didn't harmonise. And that has nothing to do with the music genre." David Julian Kirchner and Ozan Ata Canani yet released a record together which Eichhorn describes as a productive collaboration. Other residency artists, such as the duo Mahlukat that collaborated with Bulgarian DJ COOH, have continued to work together, and produce music, telling administrators of Alte Feuerwache that the residency "changed their life". Others went on to produce music together on stage as acts of the Planet Ears festival. Whether or not residencies are successful is not subject of the affective quality alone, yet the affective quality says something about the way productivity and collaboration can be interpreted by artists themselves.

This specific residency was an interesting case that shows how social and cultural hierarchies between regional and migrantised musician, as well as the perceived roles within a musical collaboration: how they play out on stage and are understood by (world music-) critical audience and shape the "success" of an intercultural collaboration. The residencies let administrators question the institutional expectations of what is considered a "successful exchange" and the nature of negotiations during the rehearsal and production process. It helped us take a closer look at the distribution of roles in future residency programmes and be more mindful and aware of the value that is placed on the musical contribution of the non-German participant in the project. It also let us consider the way the overall project is marketed, perceived, and evaluated by local members of the press, audience members and the AFM as a facilitator.

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter presented a case study of Planet Ears as a platform and music festival that aims to present international musicians outside the world music context. Planet Ears thus serves as an example of how world music critique and municipal policies for diversity development are used to change institutional habits and put into practice. It is also an example for the challenges and failures that occur when diversity development is outsourced to musicians and curators that are used to make visible and audible institutions' missions. "Failures" to accomplish equal power dynamics in residency programme and improvisation formats are shown as either productive and part of a curatorial mission to enable "friction" as seen in the performance of the quartet, or a way of showcasing the ongoing inconsistencies that migrantised musicians like Canani face when collaborating with German musicians in the production context. Involving individuals of Irtijal festival in an advisory and consultancy role, the festival suggests a shift in the narrative around the superiority of Western art music and likewise the issues in translating the social dynamics of SWANA region festivals into the German context with its bureaucratic constraints and desires for authenticity and Otherness to promote the vision of a global festival.

In outlining different stages of the festival, its administrative procedures and decision-making process, I aimed to show the variety of purposes that local festivals can serve both for as a response to regional cultural policy goals, benefitting a city's local arts scene and its citizens, and for pedagogical purposes for listeners and administrative staff that are directly connected to the critique of "world music" marketing in Germany. It also showed the role that institutions and NGO's can play as a pioneering cultural policy prior to their implementation by the municipality. The chapter likewise aimed to show the tensions between white German administrators, their impressions and engagement with Othered musicians in the marketing and audience targeting and shows the areas of development that needs to consider the involvement of administrative staff with appropriate diversity-sensitive training and ideally, non-German background.

The distinctive role in shaping the festival's aims for impact, outreach and regional development, social bonding and music making as a form of creative self-development for individual musicians are based on distinctive actors that work towards each aim. The *Kulturamt* as an executing body of the city council and its political goals oversees the financial support and representation of Mannheim-based musicians and help musicians create ties with networks outside the region. In addition, Alte Feuerwache carries the responsibility to source, target, and market previously Othered music groups while removing ethnic markers from the institutions' distribution channels, visual representation, and wording in order to represent a notion of culture that is contemporary and progressive. This is also achieved in the use of panels as platforms to address Othering as a prominent experience of international artists that tour Germany and operate within its structurally discriminating industry structures.

Planet Ears can be understood as a festival benefitting musicians through the curation of encounters in the realm of free improvisation and as an affective intervention that implements principles of care and institutional self-critique in administrative cultural work. The symposium and residency programme act as an incentive and further medium for introducing audiences to sonic discomfort and power dynamics and while it likewise serves as an example of how limited resources can lead to gatekeeping in the curatorial process. The way of listening to improvised music is shown to be influenced by talk-based festival formats that provide transparency, allowing for brief moments of awkwardness between curators and musicians, and the forming of mental scripts that help the listener interpret the social dynamics during a performance.

Contrary to Irtijal festival in Lebanon and Morphine Raum Berlin, Planet Ears is not an artist-led festival but a one of many festivals organised by a larger cultural institution, initiated by full-time administrators in the field of event management. While Morphine Raum's Rabih Beaini can work with individual artists in a friendship-based network based on the curators' own interest and curiosity, Planet Ears liaises with bookers and agencies and acts more through institutional, policy-based interest. These administrators are not only tied to their institutions in terms of decision making but in terms of the organisational and financial constraints of the cultural institution. This also shapes the temporary impact that the festival has and

demonstrates that areas of improvement, such as online presence and impact outside the festival period, is only possible upon the festival's economic independence, sustainable, long-term funding, and sufficient workforce.

In outlining the curatorial aspect, I hope to have demonstrated the associations with the term curator, the increasing importance of, and interest in, *curating* and the way decision-making influences power dynamics and sonic outcomes of collaborations. My own involvement in the festival in the capacity as curator, researcher, and person with mixed heritage, has shaped the festival's focus and engagement with migrantised artists and has ideally fostered a more affective and impact-based engagement with Lebanese musicians and its representation in Germany. It also showed how the involvement of a researcher and migrantised German person is believed to make up for a lack of sustainable diversity development of the institution outside the festival context. The changing focus of each year's symposium also reflects the change of relationship with the subject of "Arab culture" and my changing from a curiosity around Arabic-speaking music due to my own cultural background, an emotional solidarity with diasporic cultural producers with roots in the Levante. It also helped me understanding my role as a white-passing Arab-German curator role, the privilege of the passport I hold, and my own passion in changing narratives of curatorship in the context of Arabic arts and culture festivals.

Conclusion

I want to conclude with a summary of my findings. I argued for the impact of the affective residue that German world music discourse and its related *MultiKulti* productions leave on curators, musicians, and administrators. This highlights the shared sentiments, values, and beliefs of those active in the *freie Szene* that challenge earlier structures of power between the curator and those "curated". This is accompanied by an increasing fluidity among multiple roles, e.g., the diasporic artist as curator, producer, grant applicant. This development becomes a key factor in identifying the potential of empowering those whose narratives have been told through the lens of German world music and binaries between Germans and *Ausländer*. The fluidity allows for a socio-political, and often economic, self-sufficiency of artist-led institutions that draw on, and likewise further generate, exchanges between networks across Beirut, Berlin, and Mannheim.

The analyses of contemporary cultural practices across these three cities looked at different notions of the curator and their programming of performances, as well as the selection of, and engagement with, representative artists and sounds that display values and ideas of anti-racist and (post)migrant curatorial strategies. This included looking at the ways in which venues are associated with specific audiences, funding structures, political values, and the architectural aesthetic. These factors influence the curatorial practice of intercultural music projects and the sounds that are produced *at* or *for* artist-led cultural institutions. The study of both a large cultural institution and an artist-led project that engage the very same artists and share the same network of musicians allows for a comparative study of top-down and bottom-up approaches to world music critical compositions and programming. This included looking at how performances in spaces loaded with affective residue and discursive baggage influence the curatorial practice, and vice versa.

In addition, curatorial narratives are increasingly being told by not only artists, but musicians as curators, choosing their own representation as this thesis aimed to highlight. Aesthetic hierarchies persist and shape beliefs around an imagined Arab modernity, assigning improvised music as a superior form of musical style to popular music that enables encounters, communication, and the negotiation of power dynamics between German and Lebanese musicians on stage as the quartet at Planet Ears festival showed. There is an increasing movement within institutions to critically assess colonial legacies, as it is the case with Goethe Institute. INM likewise encourages a structure of artist-led institution building by providing resources, knowledge, and administrative tools to the *freie Szene*. World music debates play a role, but sometimes only become apparent as an element of curatorial strategising by German-born curators: as discursive no-go zone, shaping the selection process, funding access, and the language that is to be used–and to be avoided–in administrative and application procedures.

This thesis showed the generative capacity of three performance sites across two countries to express ambivalent feelings of belonging in contemporary cultural practices. They ultimately rely on belonging to affective networks and institutions that are formed between German and Lebanese musicians and administrators supporting these formations in some cases. Morphine

Raum becomes a site that combines different curatorial notions that establish self-sufficient artist-led institution building, sonic atmospheres and listening practices while Planet Ears shows the way the same musicians can function as representatives for diversity to respond to regional and institutional development goals. Lebanese musicians are now able to become gatekeepers and tastemakers that change the power dynamics between (artist-led) curation and institution and provide inspiration and models for inclusion and improvisational formats.

I outlined the impact of narratives around diaspora music making and belonging that shape the sound in the Lebanese music scene in Berlin. Looking at examples of coverage on Muslim migrants in German popular media and academic research, I highlighted the range of often changing, yet harmful, cultural representations of "Arabness" in broadcasting and curatorial practice which shapes audience perceptions of diasporic sound worlds. The study of affective networks of musicians around the venues and cultural institutions highlighted how racialised cultural representations are reflected and/or challenged on an institutional level in Germany and how the binary logic of heritage and modernity is produced and challenged in Lebanon at once.

The findings showed how curatorial storytelling on resistance and resilience in the field of Arab arts and culture are increasingly complemented with narratives around the progressiveness of Lebanese musicians in which noise, glitch, and other electronic mediations of sound, are interpreted as forms of resistance and future sounds. This can likewise be problematic due to establishing of cultural hierarchies between musicians producing electronic mediations of Arabic poetry, folklore, and classical music and those acoustically interpreting them as part of home-land oriented diaspora music making in Germany. The case study in Beirut also shows that musicians in Beirut are keen to abandon narratives about their cultural activities altogether and instead focus on chaos, fluidity and change as major themes of their productions. In observing their practices, one could see how a self-sufficient local is set in opposition to cultural heritage funding with an agenda marked by the effects of Euro-American discourses of what constitutes Arabness, which is to say, a preservation of language, sound, instruments, and performance conventions that views Westernised practices not (yet) as naturalised cultural expressions.

The affective dimension of diasporic networks shows the changing demand for diversity-sensitive cultural work and non-human agents which can be seen in the use of the subcultural appeal of performance spaces and city itself to engender new narratives on Berlin's migrant music spaces as superseding the cultural logic of high- versus subculture. World music and narratives surrounding migrant musicianship in Germany still play a role, not as curatorial leitmotifs but clear negative examples of how *not* to curate which can lead to rejections of "traditional" music as synonymous to backwardness, reinforcing a logic of colonial models as seen in the modernity tradition discussions since the Cairo Congress. The key to understanding these affective networks are anchoring structures that can be individuals such as Fadi Tabbal in Beirut or Rabih Beaini in Berlin, coordinating the production, recording and performance process, showing their involvement, and care, for building a scene independent from the constraints of state-supported and NGO-funded cultural bodies. In the case of Mannheim, one

can see the opposite, when productions and performances are equally policy critical–and highlight shortcomings in municipal cultural representation–and be a direct response to regional development and showcasing of diversity as an act of cultural diplomacy.

I hope to have demonstrated that institutions and cultural producers attached to policy bodies encourage diasporic expression and musical projects produced by Germans with mixed heritage and those with strong friendship-based networks in the SWANA region, as opposed as curating encounters based on curatorial narratives. In doing so, and specifically targeting artists who are subject to assimilation politics in Germany, new curatorial models that offer artist-led productions become a way to foster self-development, self-expression, visibility, and audibility of migrantised residents as part of the German public sphere. In this way, institutions can become aware of the complexity of cultural expressions already existing in Germany and not question, police, or regulate its alleged authenticity, but rather encourage the international and process-orientated, rather than result-orientated, production and build an infrastructure of resource sharing and international networking across Germany and the SWANA region.

Bibliography

Abbassi, N. (2020). 'Self-Orientalism in Arab Pop Music'. *Norient Online*. July 9, https://norient.com/nermin-abbassi/self-orientalism-arab-pop-music.

Abirached, Z. (2014). *I Remember Beirut*. New York: Graphic Universe.

Abramović, M. (2004). 'When things work and when things don't work', in: J. Hoffmann & M. Abramović: *The next documenta should be curated by an artist*. Frankfurt am Main: E-Flux/ Revolver, pp. 8-10.

Acciari, M., & Rhensius, P. (2023). *Politics of Curatorship: Collective and Affective Interventions.* Bern: Norient Books.

Ahmed, S. (2013). *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham NC: Duke University Press Books.

Allami, K. (n.d.). *Apotome: Khyam Allami x Counterpoint,* https://khyamallami.com/Apotome-Khyam-Allami-x-Counterpoint.

Althusser, L. (1971). Translated by Ben Brewster. 'Ideology, and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)', *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, in: Monthly Review Press.

Amico, M. (2018). La fabrique d'une musique touarègue. *L'Homme*, (227-228), pp. 179-208, https://journals.openedition.org/lhomme/32979.

Annihaya (n.d.). Annihaya Records, *Bandcamp*. https://annihayarecords.bandcamp.com/.

Asche, S. et al. (2014). 'Kultur und Stadt–die zukünftige Kulturpolitik der Kommunen Baden-Württembergs: Hinweise und Empfehlungen', *Städtetag Baden-Württemberg*, https://www.staedtetag-bw.de/media/custom/2295_6391_1.PDF?1396956174

Asmar. S.W. (2013). 'Challenging the Status Quo in War-Torn Lebanon: Ziad Rahbani, the Avant-Garde Heir to Musical Tradition', in: T. Burkhalter, K. Dickinson & B. Harbert (Eds.), *The Arab Avantgarde. Music, Politics, Modernity*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 145-164.

Aydemir, F. and Yaghoobifarah, H. (2021) *Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum,* Berlin: Ullstein.

Baker, S., Istvandity, L., and Nowak, R. (2019). *Curating Pop: Exhibiting Popular Music in the Museum*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Balzer, D. (2015). *Curationism: How Curating took over the art world and everything else*. London: Pluto Press.

Bates, E. (2012). 'What Studios Do'. *Journal on the Art of Record Production* (7), https://www.arpjournal.com/asarpwp/what-studios-do/.

Bayer, N., Kazeem-Kamiński, B., & Sternfeld, N. (2017). *Kuratieren als antirassistische Praxis*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Beaini, R. (2022). 'Opposite Editorial: Rabih Beaini', *field notes*, November 1, https://www.field-notes.berlin/en/magazine/opposite-editorial-rabih-beaini.

Berlant, L. (1997). *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Bhabha, H. (2004). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Bijsterveld, K. (2006). 'Listening to Machines: Industrial Noise, Hearing Loss and the Cultural Meaning of Sound', *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 31(4): 323-337.

Bijsterveld, K. (2001). 'The Diabolical Symphony of the Mechanical Age: Technology and Symbolism of Sound in European and North American Noise Abatement Campaigns, 1900-40', *Social Studies of Science* 31(1): 37-70.

Blažanović, M./ Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. (2012). *Echtzeitmusik. The social and discursive contexts of a contemporary music scene.* [Doctoral Dissertation]. https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/bitstream/handle/18452/17633/blazanovic.pdf.

Bohlman, P. (2002). *World Music: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (2nd edition), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Born, G. (2022). *Music and Digital Media: A Planetary Anthropology*. London: UCL Press.

Brennan, T. (2001). 'World Music Does Not Exist', Imperial Disclosures (23)1, pp. 44-62.

Burkart, P. (2016). Musical discovery as self-fashioning. *Popular Communication*, 14(3), pp. 191-191.

Burkhalter, T., Dickinson, K. and Harbert, B.J. (2013) *The Arab avant-garde: Music, politics, modernity*. Middletown, C.T.: Wesleyan University Press.

Burkhalter, T. (2013). 'Multisited Avant-Gardes or World Music 2.0. Musicians from Beirut and Beyond between Local Production and Euro-American Reception', in: T. Burkhalter, K. Dickinson & B. Harbert (Eds.), *The Arab Avantgarde. Music, Politics, Modernity* Middletown, C.T.: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 89-120.

Burkhalter, T. (2011). 'Weltmusik 2.0: Zwischen Spass- und Protestkultur', *Norient Online*, January 27, https://norient.com/academic/weltmusik2-0

Calargé, C. & Gueydan-Turek, A. (2020) 'Utopia and Dystopia in Beirut: A Conversation with Barrack Rima'. *Words Without Borders*. Feb 20. Available: https://wordswithoutborders.org/read/article/2020-02/utopia-and-dystopia-in-beirut-a-conversation-with-barrack-rima/

Canyürek, Ö. (2022). 'Diversität als Chancengleichheit. Ein responsiver kulturpolitischer Rahmen für einen heterogenen Bereich der Darstellenden Künste', in: Wolfgang Schneider (Ed.), *Transformationen der Theaterlandschaft: Zur Fördersituation der Freien Darstellenden Künste in Deutschland* (2nd edition). Transcript: Bielefeld, pp. 243-312.

Cascone, K. (2000). The Aesthetics of Failure: Post-Digital Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music, *Computer Music Journal* 24(4): 12-18

Chakar, T. et al. (2010). *Beyroutes: A Guide to Beirut.* Amsterdam: Archis.

Chattopadhyay, B. (2022). Sound Practices in the Global South: Co-listening to Resounding Plurilogues. London: Palgrave McMillan.

Ciucci, A. (2017) 'Proficiency: Listening, Society for Cultural Anthropology', July 19, *Society for Cultural Anthropology*, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/proficiency-listening.

Clack, B.R. (2008). 'At home in the uncanny': Freud's account of das Unheimliche in the context of his theory of religious belief, *Religion* 38(3): 250-258.

Caldwell, M. L. (2008). 'Reviewed Work: Cosmopolitan Anxieties: Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany Ruth Mandel', *European Journal of Sociology* 49(3), pp. 512-521.

Corbett, J. (2000). Experimental Oriental: New Music and Other Others, in: G. Born & D. Hesmondhalgh (Eds.), *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 163-186.

Cobb, R., Ross, J. K., & Ross, M. H. (1976). Agenda building as a comparative political process, *The American Political Science Review* 70(1): 126-138.

Czollek, M. (2018). *Desintegriert euch!*. Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag.

DAAD (n.d.). 'The DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program', *DAAD*,
　　https://www.daad.de/en/study-and-research-in-germany/scholarships/programmes-
　　music-art/daad-artists-in-berlin-program/.

Darian, V., Gruß, M., Haß, A. and Sodhi, V. (2022) 'Kooperation Macht Arbeit: Förderung
　　von Kooperationen', in: *Transformationen der Theaterlandschaft: Zur
　　Fördersituation der Freien Darstellenden Künste in Deutschland* (2nd edition), W.
　　Schneider (Ed.), Bielefeld: Transcript, pp. 161-243.

Degot, E. et al. (2015). *Curating and Politics: Beyond the Curator - Initial Reflections*, H.
　　Amudsen and G. E. Mørland (Eds.), Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag.

Deller, R. (2016). 'Book review: Curationism: How Curating took over the art world
　　and everything else by David Balzer', *LSE Review of Books*, April
　　26, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2016/04/26/book-review-curationism-
　　how-curating-took-over-the-art-world-and-everything-else-by-david-balzer/.

Demografieportal des Bundes und der Länder (2022). *Bevölkerung mit
　　Migrationshintergrund*, https://www.demografie-portal.de/DE/Fakten/bevoelkerung-
　　migrationshintergrund.html;jsessionid=016038CA6B28996E090402A0732FDFB8.int
　　ranet252 (Accessed: 05 August 2023).

Demos, T. J. (2015). 'Curating Against the Apocalypse: Documenta 13' in: G. E.
　　Mørland & H. B. Amundsen (Eds.), *Curating and Politics Beyond the Curator: Initial*
　　Reflections Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, pp. 71-90.

DeNora, T., Clarke, E. F. and Vuoskoski, J. K. (2017). 'Music listening evokes implicit
　　affiliation', *Psychology of Music* 45(4): 584-599.

Dickinson, K. (2013). 'Introduction: "Arab" + "Avant-Garde"', in: T. Burkhalter, K.
　　Dickinson & B. Harbert (Eds.), *The Arab Avantgarde. Music, Politics, Modernity*
　　Middletown, C.T.: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 1-36.

Echtzeitmusik. (n.d.). *Echtzeitmusik - Kleiner Berliner Konzert Kalender*,
　　https://www.echtzeitmusik.de/index.php?page=calendar.

El-Ghadhban, Y. and Strohm, K. (2013). 'The Ghosts of Resistance: Dispatches from
　　Palestinian Art and Music', in: *Palestinian Music and Song: Expression and
　　Resistance since 1900.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

El Kadi, R./ University of Alberta. (2010) *The Free Improvised Music Scene in Beirut:
　　Negotiating Identities and Stimulating Social Transformation in an Era of Political
　　Conflict* [MA Dissertation], https://era.library.ualberta.ca/items/dc27a967-3d1f-4b45-
　　8cc2-84346ea9ae4d.

El-Tayeb, F. (2016). *Undeutsch. Die Konstruktion des Anderen in der postmigrantischen
　　Gesellschaft*. Bielefeld: Transcript.

El Zein, R./ City University of New York. (2016). *Performing el rap el ʿArabi 2005-2015:
　　Feeling Politics amid Neoliberal Incursions* [Doctoral Dissertation].
　　ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Erlmann, V. (1996). 'The Aesthetics of the Global Imagination: Reflections on World Music
　　in the 1990s', *Public Culture* 8(3): 467-487.

European Commission. (n.d.). 'European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)', *EU Funding
　　Programme*s, https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-
　　programmes/european-regional-development-fund-erdf_en.

Exploratorium Berlin 2020. 'imp[or]trait #1: Mazen Kerbaj + the Irtijal International Festival
　　of Experimental Music in Lebanon', *YouTube*, 25 June,
　　https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCLpp9FmcMY&ab_channel=exploratoriumberl
　　in.

Faber, T. (2021). '*Decolonizing electronic music starts with its software*', Pitchfork, February 25, https://pitchfork.com/thepitch/decolonizing-electronic-music-starts-with-its-software/.

Farnsworth, B. (2020). *Curating Contemporary Music Festivals: A New Perspective on Music's Mediation*. New York: Columbia University Press.

FBi Radio (2017). 'Interview: Berlin-Via-Lebanon Experimental Artist Rabih Beaini', *FBi Radio*, February 20, https://fbiradio.com/interview-berlin-via-lebanon-experimental-artist-rabih-beaini/.

Federal Ministry of Justice (2023). 'Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany in the revised version published in the Federal Law Gazette Part III', Classification Number 100-1, as last amended by the Act of 28 June 2022, *Federal Law Gazette I,* p. 968, https://www.gesetze-im- internet.de/englisch_gg/englisch_gg.html#p0321.

Feld, S. (2000). 'A Sweet Lullaby for World Music', *Public Culture* 12(1), pp. 145-171.

Fermont, C. and della Faille, D. (2016). *Not Your World Music: Noise in Southeast Asia*, Berlin & Ottawa: Syrphe & Hushush.

Florida, R. (2003). *The rise of the creative class: And how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. London: Pluto Press.

Fooladi, M. (2011) 'Involuntary and Persistent Environmental Noise Influences Health and Hearing in Beirut, Lebanon', *Journal of Environmental and Public Health* (2012), https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3195529/.

Fosberg, A. (2021). 'How do you distinguish effective allyship from performative allyship?', Pennstate Law, February 26, https://pennstatelaw.psu.edu/news/effective-allyship-part-one.

Fossum, D. (2023). 'Authors and burners: Imagining creative agency in Turkey's musical folklore', *Ethnomusicology Forum* 32(1): 52-72

Frauenberger, S. (n.d.). 'About', *Stefan Frauenberger*, https://stefan.fraunberger.at/.

Free City Radio (2023). 'Radio Alhara الحارة راديو - Interview with musician and photographer Tony Elieh', *Soundcloud*, July 7, https://soundcloud.com/freecityradio/radio-alhara-interview-with-musician-and-photographer-tony-elieh.

Gallope, M. (2020). 'World music without profit', *Twentieth-Century Music* 17(2): 161-195.

Garcia, L. (2013). 'At home, I'm a tourist: Musical migration and affective citizenship in Berlin', *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies* 2(1): 121-134.

Gaupp, L. (2020). 'The 'West' versus 'the Rest'? Festival Curators as Gatekeepers for Sociocultural Diversity', in: V. Durrer, & R. Henze (Eds.), *Managing Culture: Reflecting on exchange in global times*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 127-153.

Gaupp, L. (2021). 'How to Curate Diversity and Otherness in Global Performance Art', in: L. Gaupp, & G. Pelillo-Hestermeyer (Eds.), *Diversity and Otherness: Transcultural Insights into Norms, Practices, Negotiations,* Munich: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 289-320.

Geertz, C. (1973). "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture", *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books: 3-30.

Geertz, C. (1973). *Interpretation of cultures*. London: Fontana Press.

Goskar, T. (2019). 'Curating as an agent for change', *Curatorial Research*, April 24 https://curatorialresearch.com/good-curating/curating-as-an-agent-for-change/.

Greenberger, A. (2022). 'Taring PADI partially covered another Documenta work after allegations of anti-semitism', *ARTnews*, August 17, https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/documenta-taring-padi-mining-work-altered-1234636752.

Greve, M. (2003) *Die Musik der imaginären Türkei: Musik und Musikleben im Kontext der Migration aus der Türkei in Deutschland* (2nd edition), Berlin: J.B. Metzler.

Güney, S. Pekman, C, and Kabaş, B. (2014). 'Diasporic Music in Transition: Turkish Immigrant Performers on the Stage of "Multikulti" Berlin', *Popular Music and Society* (37)2: 132-151.

Habash, D. 'Do Like You Did in Aleppo': Negotiating Space and Place Among Syrian Musicians in Istanbul. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34(2): 1370-1386.

Häberlen, J.C. (2020) 'Flight to freedom? Narratives of Muslim women fleeing to Germany', *Clio. Women, Gender, History* 51: 155-166.

Habib, T. (1975). *The Music of the Arabs*. Bradford: Amadeus Press.

Haenisch, M. (2021). 'Hybrid Entanglements. On the Mediation of Subject, Technology and Musical Material in Postdigital Improvisation Practices', Lecture at Music and Encounters Conference, Rainy Days Festival, Luxembourg, November 19.

Hall, S. (1995). 'New Cultures for Old?' in: D. Massey and P. Jess (Eds.), *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 175-213.

Hankir, Z. and Amanpour, C. (2020). *Our Women on the Ground: Essays by Arab Women reporting from the Arab World*. London: Harvill Secker.

Hannerz, U. (2006). *Two Faces of Cosmopolitanism: Culture and Politics*. Dinámicas Interculturales Series (7), Barcelona: Documentos CIDOB.

Harbert, B. (2013). 'Noise and Its Formless Shadows: Egypt's Extreme Metal as Avant-Garde', in: T. Burkhalter, K. Dickinson & B. Harbert (Eds.), *The Arab Avantgarde. Music, Politics, Modernity* Middletown, C.T.: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 229-273.

Heebels, B., & Van der Aaalst, I. (2010). 'Creative clusters in Berlin: Entrepreneurship and the Quality of Place in Prenzlauer Berg and Kreuzberg.' *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 92(4): 347-363.

Heidenheimer, A. J., Heclo, H. & Adams, C. T. (1990) *Comparative Public Policy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2013) *Why Music Matters*. Malden: Wiley.

Hoffmann, J., & Abramović, M. (2004). *The next documenta should be curated by an artist*. Frankfurt am Main: E-Flux/ Revolver.

Hofman, A. (2015). 'Music (as) Labour: Professional Musicianship: Affective Labour and Gender in Socialist Yugoslavia', *Ethnomusicology Forum* 24(1): 28-50.

Hurley, A. W. (2009). 'Postnationalism, Postmodernism and the German Discourse(s) of Weltmusik', *New Formations*, 66(66), pp. 100-117.

Ibrahim, H. (2023). *Beirut's Underground Music Scene*. Berlin: Heinich Boell Foundation.

Institut Arbeit und Qualifikation der Universität Duisburg-Essen (n.d.). 'Ausländische Bevölkerung in ausgewählten Großstädten 2022', *Sozialpolitik Aktuell*, https://www.sozialpolitik-aktuell.de/files/sozialpolitik-aktuell/_Politikfelder/Bevoelkerung/Datensammlung/PDF-Dateien/abbVII54.pdf.

Ingold, T. (2007). 'Against soundscape', in: A. Carlyle (Ed.), *Autumn leaves: sound and the environment in artistic practice*, Paris: Double-Entendre, pp. 10-13.

James, M. (2020). *Sonic Intimacy. Reggae Sound Systems, Jungle Pirate Radio, and Grime YouTube Music Videos*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Johnson-Schlee, S. (2022). *Living Rooms*. Washington, DC: Peninsula Press.

Jones, A. F. (2001). *Yellow music: Media culture and colonial modernity in the Chinese jazz age*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Jones, E. M., Reed, M., Gaab, J. and Ooi, Y. P. (2022). 'Adjustment in Third Culture Kids: A Systematic Review of Literature', *Frontiers in Psychology*, Nov 28, https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.939044/full

Kassabian, A. (2013) *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kapchan, D. (2017) *Theorising Sound Writing*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Keller, S. (2023). 'Mannheim - Einwohnerzahl bis 2022', *Statista*, https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/375304/umfrage/entwicklung-der-gesamtbevoelkerung-in-mannheim/.

Kelly, K. S. (1998). *Effective fund-raising management*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kerbaj, M. (2017). *Beirut Won't Cry: Lebanon's July War: A Visual Diary*. Seattle: Fantagraphics.

Kerbaj, M. (n.d.). 'Asfourieh', *Mazen Kerbaj*, https://mazenkerbaj.com/asfourieh/.

Key, A. (2023). Arrangements in Blue: Notes on Love and Making a Life. London: Jonathan Cape.

Kirn, P. (2021). 'At Instruments series by Morphine Records, physicality and improvisation meet invention', *CDM Create Digital Music*, November 1, https://cdm.link/2021/11/at-instruments-series-by-morphine-records-physicality-and-improvisation-meet-invention/.

Kontos, M. (2014). 'Restrictive integration policies and the construction of the migrant as 'Unwilling to integrate': The case of Germany.' *Contesting Integration, Engendering Migration*, pp. 125-142.

Korac, M. (2009) *'Remaking Home: Reconstructing Life': Place, and Identity in Rome and Amsterdam.* New York: Berghahn Books.

Kosnick, K. (2014). *Postmigrant club cultures in urban Europe.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag.

Kosnick, K. (2007). *Migrant media: Turkish broadcasting and multicultural politics in Berlin*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Köhl et al. (2020). *Mannheim auf dem Weg zur inklusiven Kulturstadt: Handlungsempfehlungen zur Stärkung der Kulturellen Teilhabe*. Available: https://www.einander-manifest.de/files/Mannheimer%20B%C3%BCndnis%202021/Handlungsempfehlungen%20Kulturelle%20Teilhabe.pdf.

Kranz, D. (2011). 'Kranz on Kosnick, Migrant Media: Turkish Broadcasting and Multicultural Politics in Berlin', *H-SAE, H-Net Reviews*, https://networks.h-net.org/node/21311/reviews/21602/kranz-kosnick-migrant-media-turkish-broadcasting-and-multicultural.

LaBelle, B. (2020). *Sonic Agency: Sound and Emergent Forms of Resistance*. London: Goldsmiths University Press.

Larkin, P. (1964/1958) 'Home is so sad'. *The Whitsun Weddings*. London: Faber and Faber.

Lavee, E., & Itzchakov, G. (2023). 'Good listening: A key element in establishing quality in qualitative research', *Qualitative Research* 23(3): 614-631.

LeVine, M. (2022). *We'll Play till We Die: Journeys across a Decade of Revolutionary Music in the Muslim World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Levitz, T. and Piekut, B. (2020). The Vernacular Avant-garde: A Speculation, ASAP Journal, September 3, https://asapjournal.com/the-vernacular-avant-garde-a-speculation-tamara-levitz-and-benjamin-piekut/.

Lobley, J. 'Sampling Between Safeguarding and Renovating, Norient Online', May 22, https://norient.com/noel-james-lobley/sampling-between-safeguarding-and-renovating.

Mahmood, S. (2005). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. *Princeton*, NY: Princeton University Press.

Makarem, H./ London School of Economics. (2014). *Actually Existing Neoliberalism: The reconstruction of Downtown Beirut in post-civil war Lebanon* [Doctoral Dissertation].

Mandel, R. (2008). *Cosmopolitan anxieties: Turkish challenges to citizenship and belonging in Germany*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Maschat, M./ Universität Hildesheim. (2006). *Frei improvisierte Musik im Spannungsfeld von Selbstorganisation und öffentlicher Förderung Studie zu Musikerkooperativen und zur kulturpolitischen Verankerung der improvisierten Musik in Deutschland* [Diplomarbeit].

Mbembe, A. (2019). *Necropolitics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

McDonald-Toone, E./ University College London. (2017). *"Curating the Region": Exhibitions, Geopolitics & the Reception of Contemporary and Modern Art from The Arab World & the Middle East* [Doctoral Dissertation].

Mohamedou, M. (2015). 'Neo-Orientalism and the e-Revolutionary: Self-Representation and the Post-Arab Spring', *Middle East Law and Governance* 7(2015): 120-131.

Mookherjee, M. (2005). 'Affective citizenship: Feminism, Postcolonialism and the Politics of Recognition', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 8(1): 31-50.

Moreno Almeida, C. (2017). *Rap beyond Resistance. Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mørland, G. E., & Amundsen, H. (2015). *Curating and politics beyond the curator: Initial Reflection*, H. Amudsen and G. E. Mørland (Eds.), Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag.

Moshfegh, O. (2013). *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, London: Penguin Books.

Muhssin, S. (2013). 'The "People's Artist" and the Beginnings of the Twentieth-Century Arab Avant-Garde', in: T. Burkhalter, K. Dickinson & B. Harbert (Eds.), *The Arab Avantgarde. Music, Politics, Modernity* Middletown, C.T.: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 121-145.

Nawfal, Z. (2021). 'Postcards', *Beehype*, May 29, https://beehy.pe/postcards-home-is-so-sad-lebanon/.

Nechvatal, J. (2011). *Immersion into Noise*. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press.

Nickell, C./ New York University (2020). *Masculinities Under Pressure in Beirut's Independent Music Scenes* [Doctoral Dissertation].

Nissen, J. (2022). ''Give us a voice!'. Voice, envoicement, and the politics of 'world music' at WOMAD', *Ethnomusicology Forum* 31(2): 236-259.

Nooshin, L. (2017). 'Whose liberation? Iranian popular music and the fetishization of Resistance', *Popular Communication* 15(3): 163-191.

Novak, D. (2013). *Japanoise. Music at the Edge of Circulation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Novak, D. (2008). '2.5x6 Metres of Space: Japanese Music Coffeehouses and Experimental Practices of Listening', *Popular Music* 27(1): 15-34.

Ohanwe, M. and Aburakia, M. (2021). 'Kanackische Welle', *Funk*,
https://www.funk.net/podcast/kanackische-welle-12221?viewtype=podcast

Oliveros, P. (2005). *Deep listening: A Composer's Sound Practice*. Boomington, IN:
iUniverse.

Olsewska, Z. (2013). 'Classy Kids and Down-at-Heel Intellectuals: Status Aspiration and
Blind Spots in the Contemporary Ethnography of Iran', *Iranian Studies* 46(6): 841-
862.

O'Neill, P. (2012). *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, Cambridge, MA.
MIT Press.

O'Neil, J. (2007). 'The link between strong public relationships and donor support', *Public
Relations Review* 33(1): 99-102.

O'Toole, M./ University of Chicago (2014). *Sonic Citizenship: Music, Migration, and
Transnationalism in Berlin's Turkish and Anatolian Diasporas* [Doctoral
dissertation].

Ouzounian, G. (2021). *Stereophonica: Sound and Space in Science, Technology, and the
Arts*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Ouzounian, G. (2017) 'Rethinking Acoustic Ecology', Editorial, *Eventual Aesthetics* 6 (1): 4-
23.

Özürek, E. (2019) '*Muslim minorities as Germany's past future: Islam critics, Holocaust
memory, and immigrant integration', Memory Studies* 15 (1): 139-154.

Papadogiannis, N. (2014) 'A (trans)national emotional community? Greek political songs and
the politicisation of Greek migrants in West Germany in the 1960s and early 1970s',
Contemporary European History 23(4): 589-614.

Papadopoulos, A. and Duru, A. (2018). *Landscapes of Music in Istanbul: A Cultural
Politics of Place and Exclusion.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Paquette, J. and Redaelli, E. (2015) *Arts Management and Cultural Policy Research*. London:
Palgrave Macmillan.

Peck, J. (2005). 'Struggling with the Creative Class', *International Journal of Urban and
Regional* Research 29(4): 40-770.

Pelechrinis, K. and Krishnamurthy, P. (2016). 'Socio-spatial affiliation networks', *Computer
Communications* 73(PB): 251-262.

Peterson, M. (2013). 'Sonic Cosmopolitanisms: Experimental Improvised Music and
Cultural Exchange', in: T. Burkhalter, K. Dickinson & B. J. Harbert (Eds.), *The Arab
Avant-Garde: Musical Innovation in the Middle East*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan
University Press, pp. 185-208.

Phantomorchestra (n.d.), 'Phantomorchestra', *YouTube*,
https://www.youtube.com/@phantomorchestra4127

Pink, S. (2015). *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Portugali, J. and Alfasi, N. (2008). 'An Approach to Planning Discourse Analysis', *Urban
Studies* 45(2): 251-272.

Powles, N.M. (202§). *Small Bodies of Water*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books.

Quijano, A. (2007). Coloniality And Modernity/Rationality. *Cultural Studies* 21(2): 168-178.

Ratnam, C. (2019) 'Listening to difficult stories: Listening as a research methodology',
Emotion, Space and Society 31: 18-25.

Reith, S. (2010). 'Money, Power, and Donor-NGO Partnerships', *Development in Practice*
20(3): 446-455.

Reitsamer, R. (2014). 'Postmigrantischer HipHop in Österreich Hybridität. Sprache. Männlichkeit', in: E. Yildiz and M. Hill, *Nach der Migration: Postmigrantische Perspektiven jenseits der Parallelgesellschaft*, Bielefeld: Transcript.

Ricard et al. (2013) *Beirut 1990: Snapshots of a Civil War*. Los Angeles, CA: Humanoids.

Richards, D., and Smith, M. (2002) *Governance and Public Policy in UK*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rooney, C. (2013). 'Activism and Authenticity: Palestinian and Related Hip Hop in an International Frame', in: T. Burkhalter, K. Dickinson & B. Harbert (Eds.), *The Arab Avantgarde. Music, Politics, Modernity* Middletown, C.T.: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 209-229.

Russell, L. (2020). *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto*. London: Verso.

Russolo, L. (1913/2018). *The Art of Noises* (Futurist Manifesto). New York: Pendragon Press.

Safa, M. 2022. 'Reverberations and Post-War Trauma: The Sustained Aftermath of Aerial Strikes on Lebanon in 2006', *Sound Studies* 8(1): 73-99.

Schmidt, T., Eichenlaub, M., Hartmann, V., Rasche, R. and Sinka, E. (2022). 'Gegenwart und Zukunft von Kultur- und Theaterentwicklungsplanung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland' in: W. Schneider (Ed.), *Transformationen der Theaterlandschaft: Zur Fördersituation der Freien Darstellenden Künste in Deutschland* (2nd edition). Transcript: Bielefeld, pp. 697-821.

Schulte, L./ University of Oxford (2021). *Learning to Integrate, Waiting to Belong Language, Time and Uncertainty Among Newcomers in Germany* [Doctoral Dissertation].

Schwegler, G./ Universität Luzern (2022). *Die Theorien in der Kulturproduktion: Aspekte der Performativität oder "How to do things with theory"*. [Doctoral dissertation].

Seidel, A. (2022). '*Ohne Kunst & Kultur* wird's still viral campaign', *Fonts in Use*, Nov 5, https://fontsinuse.com/uses/36429/ohne-kunst-and-kultur-wird-s-still-viral-camp.

Shannon, J. H. (2006) *Among the Jasmine Trees: Music and Modernity in Contemporary Syria*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Sieg, K. (2002). *Ethnic Drag: Performing Race, Nation, Sexuality in West Germany*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Silverstein, S., & Sprengel, D. (2021). 'An (Un)Marked Foreigner: Race-Making in Egyptian, Syrian, and German Popular Cultures.' *Lateral*, 10(1), https://csalateral.org/forum/cultural-constructions-race-racism-middle-east-north-africa-southwest-asia-mena-swana/unmarked-foreigner-race-egyptian-syrian-german-popular-cultures-silverstein-sprengel/.

Silverstein, S. (2016). The Punk Arab: Demystifying Omar Souleyman's Techno-Dabke, in: M. E. Veal, and E. T. Kim (Eds.), *Punk Ethnography: The Sublime Frequencies Companion*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 265-287.

Slobin, M. (1993). *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Spivak, G. C. (1988). *Can the subaltern speak?*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sprengel, D. (2020). 'Reframing the 'Arab Winter': the importance of sleep and a quiet atmosphere after 'defeated' revolutions', *Culture, Theory and Critique* 61 (2-3): 246-266.

Sprengel, D. (2019). 'Loud' and 'quiet' politics: Questioning the role of 'the artist' in street art projects after the 2011 Egyptian revolution. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 23(2): 208-226.

Statistik Berlin Brandenburg (2022). *Einwohnerbestand Berlin*.
https://www.statistik-berlin-
brandenburg.de/kommunalstatistik/einwohnerbestand-berlin ;

Statista (2023). *Verteilung der Ausländer aus der Türkei in Deutschland nach Bundesländern 2022*. https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/165266/umfrage/verteilung-der-tuerkischstaemmigen-bevoelkerung-in-deutschland-nach-bundeslaendern/.

Stadt Mannheim (2022). *Einwohner mit Migrationshintergrund*,
https://www.mannheim.de/de/stadt-gestalten/daten-und-
fakten/bevoelkerung/einwohner-mit-migrationshintergrund

Stadt Mannheim (no date) *Kulturamt Mannheim*. Available:
https://www.mannheim.de/de/kultur-erleben/kulturamt-mannheim.

Stadtrecht der Stadt Mannheim (2022). *Richtlinien der Stadt Mannheim zur Förderung kultureller Aktivitäten von Vereinen, Initiativen, Künstlerinnen und Künstlern in Mannheim,* https://www.mannheim.de/sites/default/files/2020-08/s04-11_0.pdf.

Stallard, N.J. (2012) 'Charbel Haber', *Friends of Friends / Freunde von Freunden (FvF)*.
July 18, https://www.friendsoffriends.com/profiles/charbel-haber/.

Stehr, N. and Ericson, R.V. (1992). *The culture and power of knowledge: Inquiries into contemporary societies.* Berlin: De Gruyter.

Stokes, M. (2010). *The Republic of Love: Cultural Intimacy in Turkish Popular Music*,
Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Stokes, M. (2007). 'On Musical Cosmopolitanism'. The Macalester International Roundtable 2007. Paper 3. http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/intlrdtable/3.

Stokes, M. (2004) 'Music and the Global Order', *Annual View of Anthropology* 33: 47-72.

Swedenburg, T. (2013) 'Palestinian Rap: Against the Struggle Paradigm', in: *Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa*. W. El Hamamsy and M. Soliman (Eds.), New York: Routledge.

Swedenburg, T. (2012). 'Egypt's Music of Protest: From Sayyid Darwish to DJ Haha',
Middle East Report 42(265): 39-43.

Tahiri, N. (2015). 'Ethnolektales Codeswitching und Identitätskonstruktion:
Deutschmarokkanerinnen auf Facebook', *Zeitschrift für angewandte Linguistik* 63(1): 293-326.

Taylor, T. D. (2007). *Beyond exoticism: Western music and the world*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Terkessidis, M. (2019). 'Kulturelle Teil-Gabe. Das Prinzip der Kollaboration'. In: *Nationaler Kulturdialog* (Eds.). Zürich: Kulturelle Teilhabe.

Thomas, A. E. (2007) 'Intervention and reform of Arab music in 1932 and beyond',
Conference on Music in the World of Islam. Assilah, August 8-13.

Troester, T. (2022). 'Treffen bei Planet Ears aufeinander (von li.): Joss Turnbull, Émilie Skrijelj, Christine Abdelnour und Claus Boesser-Ferrari.' *Mannheimer Morgen*. https://www.mannheimer-morgen.de/kultur_artikel,-kultur-unbekannte-klangwelten-bei-planet-ears-in-mannheim-_arid,1997401.html.

Tsing, A.L. (2004) *Friction: An ethnography of global connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tunay, Ö, and Imad, M. (2016). *Migratenstadl.* Münster: Unrast.

Tunefork Studios. (n.d.). 'Beirut Musicians' Fund'. *Tunefork Studios*, www. tuneforkstudios.com.

Turton, D. (2003) 'Conceptualising Forced Migration', *RSC Working Paper No. 12*, Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre.

Turton, D. (2005) 'The Meaning of Place in a World of Movement: Lessons from Long-Term Field Research in Southern Ethiopia', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 18(3): 258-280.

Valiquet, P. (2019) Remediating Modernism: On the Digital Ends of Montreal's Electroacoustic Tradition. *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 144 (1): 157-191.

Ventura, L. (2017). 'The "Arab Spring" and Orientalist Stereotypes: The Role of Orientalism in the Narration of the Revolts in the Arab World', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 19 (2): 282-297.

Voegelin S. (2022). 'On Unperforming the Curatorial'. in M. Acciari and P. Rhensius (Eds.), *Politics of Curatorship: Collective and Affective Interventions*. Bern: Norient Books.

Waider, I. (2019). *We Are Made of Diamond Stuff*. Manchester: Dostoyevsky Wannabe.

Warner, M. (2002). *Publics and Counterpublics*. Durham, NC: Zone Books.

Wassermann, U. (n.d.). 'Revisitations', *Ute Wassermann*, https://utewassermann.com/.

Watson et al. 2009 'Spaces and Networks of Musical Creativity in the City', *Geography Compass* 3(2): 856-878.

Whitmore, A. K. (2020). *World Music and the Black Atlantic: Producing and Consuming African-Cuban Musics on World Music Stages*. New York: Oxford University.

Withers, P. (2021). 'Ramallah ravers and Haifa hipsters: gender, class, and nation in Palestinian popular culture', *British Journal for Middle Eastern Studies* 48(1): 94-113.

Wozniak, A. (2023). 'A Discipline for the Nation: Turkish Classical Music Choirs in History and Practice'. Talk given at *International Workshop for Doctoral Students in Ethnomusicology*, Centre for World Music, University of Hildesheim, June 20-23.

Yassin, R. (n.d.). 'Phantom Orchestra', *Raed Yassin*, https://raedyassin.info/phantom-orchestra/.

Zaimoğlu, F. (1995). *Kanak Sprak. 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft*, Berlin: Rotbuch.