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Unheard voices in Vienna's art scene: Exploring the positionality of artists and cultural workers in the Viennese cultural sector and the challenges of representation

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Šejla Džuzdanović BA

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The city of Vienna is often portrayed as a multiethnic city and a growing cultural metropolis. According to the official city documents, at the beginning of 2020, more than 1.9 million people lived in Vienna (Stadt Wien 2020:7). In 2019, 45.9% of Vienna's population had a migration background, making it "*a modern immigration city within the European Union*" (Ibid.).

Vienna is also well-known for its rich cultural heritage, especially its connection to classical music. Composers like Ludwig van Beethoven, Gustav Mahler, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart continue to influence the city, with many cultural events featuring classical music. Institutions like the Vienna Philharmonic or the Vienna State Opera reflect this musical heritage, while museums such as the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* or famous theaters like the *Burgtheater* are additional displays of the city's culture.

However, the city's rich history of immigration is not fully reflected in its prominent cultural institutions. While the Vienna State Opera to a certain degree displays diversity in its ensemble, the question of the diversity of its audience remains open (Wiener Staatsoper Ensemble 2024). Nevertheless, in my thesis I will not focus on the classical music scene but rather on theater and the independent art sector.

When visiting exhibitions or theater, I often find myself searching for artists with names similar to mine. Most of the time, I do not succeed at this attempt, unless I specifically attend cultural events of the artists with ties to the region where I grew up in. This is the main reason why I chose to explore the current situation for artists and cultural workers in the Viennese cultural scene. I will focus on one specific group, namely the artists and cultural workers who engage with migration related topics, either through the themes they touch upon in their work and/or through their personal experiences. Even though these artists and cultural workers have connections to migrations, either because their parents or they themselves migrated, I will not label them as migrant artists or migrant cultural workers, and certainly not as a minority. I avoid such categorizations because they contribute to further segregation in the art sector, creating a divide between *us* and *them*. Additionally, with such categorizations, the artistic creation no longer stands in the foreground, but rather one's national or ethnic identity. Due to this, throughout my thesis, I will use the term

underrepresented or marginalized artists and cultural workers. However, I must note that much of the literature I have used focuses on migration and culture. Therefore, in the theoretical framework, terms like *migrant* or *post-migrant* artists will be used until a new approach emerges, depicting these classifications as outdated.

The precarious and underrepresented position of the artists and cultural workers is evident in the literature, and this issue is not a recent one in the Viennese art scene. Back in 2011/2012, there were attempts to diversify the cultural sphere and make marginalized artists visible, for instance through the project series „Pimp My Integration“. This event, which consisted of roundtable discussions, performances, and theater plays, serves as the starting point of my research. „Pimp My Integration“ will help me provide the reader with a broader perspective on the issues of invisibility and marginalization faced by artists and cultural workers. A more recent initiative, „Museum of Migration“, or short MUSMIG will further help provide a wider view of the current debates surrounding the previously mentioned issues. The initiative itself started in 2019, but the most recent events from 2023 will be used in my thesis, as they most accurately give us insight into the present situation in the art scene. Additionally, these two projects will give a historical context for my research, as they laid the groundwork for self-historicization and efforts to include underrepresented voices in the cultural sector in Vienna.

My primary data comes from interviews, participant observations, and informal conversations. I have conducted these interviews with artists and cultural workers active in Vienna and I have received additional input through events, such as discussions or (theater) performances involving underrepresented artists, complemented by secondary research.

Specifically, my research aims to answer the following research question:

What is the current position of artists and cultural workers engaged with migration topics in Vienna's cultural scene?

Additional topics that will be addressed in the thesis include a comparative analysis of the situation for artists and cultural workers in 2011/2012, using insights from the „Pimp My Integration“ event, with the current situation identified through my research. This comparison will clarify changes over time, thus showing the effectiveness of past and present strategies. Furthermore, I will explore strategies for diversifying the audience in cultural

institutions, such as audience development or implementing quotas. Not only will the approaches for diversifying audiences in cultural institutions be addressed, but also possible ways to include underrepresented voices within the structures of these cultural institutions.

In the second chapter, I will introduce the theoretical framework relevant to this research, covering literature on migration and artistic production, hegemonic discourse, and the images of migration in the media and public discourse. It will also include theories on representation, marginalization, and power dynamics within cultural fields, as well as relevant cultural policies for the city of Vienna. Following this, the methodology will be presented in the third chapter, including an overview of the attended events, and conducted interviews. Contextual background for the research will be offered in the next part, including an overview of the situation in 2011/2012 and present-day context. The fifth chapter will offer my empirical findings. Here, I will include a detailed analysis of the attended events and the ten interviews I conducted, as well as the key themes that emerged from these interviews. In the sixth chapter I will contrast the situation in 2011/2012 with the situation today based on my own findings. I will further connect my empirical findings to the presented theoretical framework. Additionally, I will discuss the ongoing challenges and potential opportunities for underrepresented artists and cultural workers in Vienna.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

In the following chapter, I will present the relevant literature, which is organized into three categories.

First, I will introduce theories on migration and culture, which will help to understand the impact of migration on cultural producers and practices. This section will also include literature on how migration is framed in the media and public discourse. The second category of literature will focus on representation, marginalization, and power dynamics within cultural institutions. Since this topic is central to my thesis, I will introduce one relevant empirical study in this subchapter. The study focuses on the exclusion of immigrants in mainstage theaters in Berlin and Vienna. Lastly, relevant cultural policies will be introduced to help us understand how cultural fields are influenced by political factors.

To conclude, I will present a summary and overview of the key studies and literature.

2.1. Migration and culture

Historically, migrants were primarily viewed as workers contributing to the economy rather than individuals who participate in cultural activities. It was only in the late 2000s that the connections between arts, migration, and migrants gained significant attention from European migration researchers. Consequently, migration started to be perceived as a cultural phenomenon, and not only as an economic or demographic one. Migrants are now seen as both consumers and producers of art. This approach challenges the common victimizing and stigmatizing narratives around migrants, and *“helps to ‘rehumanize’ migrants, who are too often ‘dehumanized’ and reduced to statistics in current debates and policies”* (MARTINIELLO 2022:10). Although artists have been migrating for years, their artistic work was mainly seen as a reflection of their communities of origin. Only in the 1990s was their artistic work perceived as a challenge to fixed ideas about culture, nation, and ethnicity, with the artists themselves being seen as agents of cultural change.

When the categorization of migrants as migrant artists, rather than simply artists, was first introduced, it had quite a different goal than how the term is used today. Namely, the artists from former colonies who settled in Europe faced discrimination both in daily life and in the art world. To raise the visibility of their artistic work, they formed movements such as the negritude movement in the 1930s in France or Black artists’ associations in connection to the 1960s Black Power movement in Britain (SIEVERS 2014a:307). In this context, these artists often reclaimed derogatory terms and used them as symbols of resistance, leading to categorizations such as guest-worker literature (SIEVERS 2014a:308). In that regard, these terms were originally used to combat exclusion and highlight the work of marginalized artists (Ibid.).

Hegemonic discourse and the dominant knowledge production on migration play an important role in the use of these categorizations nowadays. These approaches also raise questions of who is represented and how. One obstacle in the process of the cultural diversification is the Western concept of art, which has often denigrated non-Western art, by labeling it as ethnic and denying it acceptance as true art (SIEVERS 2014b:334).

“How migration changes citizenship depends to a large extent on how states and their citizens perceive migrants” states Bauböck (BAUBÖCK 2002:2). Put differently, social change

is linked with cultural change that involves reimagining communities in new narratives that move beyond homogenous national identities. These narratives are not about who we are, but rather about who we want to be (SIEVERS 2024:13). In this sense, through artistic interventions, migrants and their descendants are no longer objects of study but subjects who tell their own stories.

It has been advocated for abandoning a culturalist approach in migration research and moving towards post-positivist, post-ethnic, and knowledge-reflective approaches. These approaches should view migration as “*conditio humana, a fundamental social fact and transformative force*” (HESS 2012:118). Such a shift would move beyond ethnic and national labels, as well as origin debates. In addition to breaking hegemonic regimes, telling the history of migration from the perspective of migration would also allow previously untold stories to emerge. This perspective positions migration as a central and transformative dynamic that shapes society (Ibid.).

The importance of empowering artists who work with migration topics to authentically portray their individual experiences is often highlighted in literature. For example, an installation shown at the 2003 Venice Biennale titled “Speak of Me as I Am”, featured a Black man seemingly selling fake design bags in front of the US Pavilion. Unaware that it was a performance, the police intervened, thinking he was an illegal vendor. The man, a tourist from Senegal, was hired by Fred Wilson, the artist behind this work, and the bags were artistic creations. Wilson noted that the police action stimulated viewers to question their own prejudices by revealing the invisibility of the “Other” in art. The performance showed how skin color and racial distinctions may result in instant exclusion from the art system, yet it forced the audience to acknowledge the “vendor”, and that was the whole point of the piece, says the artist (KARENTZOS 2012:144). This installation, presented from the perspective of a Black person, highlights the daily challenges faced by Black individuals, many of which often go unnoticed.

Another important aspect is the public invisibility of immigrant communities, which was addressed by the Austrian artist Lisl Ponger. Ponger observed that these communities are present in Austrian media “*but always as a topic defined and discussed by the Austrian majority population as a ‘problem’ and always in a negative light*” (KARENTZOS 2012: 156). She argues that immigrant communities rarely, if ever, get the opportunity to speak for

themselves. In our own reflections, Ponger suggests that we should always question what images of migration are produced and, most importantly, by whom.

Sociologist Erol Yildiz additionally remarks that in the public discourse, the constitutive contribution of migration movements is hardly acknowledged, and the topic of migration is either ignored or sensationalized (YILDIZ 2012:254). He believes that stereotypes regarding migration will remain, as long as the emphasis remains solely on crises and deficits rather than the complex everyday realities. However, the next generations are developing new perspectives and telling their own stories. They engage with the migration history of their ancestors and their own living situations while simultaneously developing new strategies for societal positioning. This process leads to the emergence of hybrid life designs, cultural overlaps, irritations, borderlands, and in-between spaces (YILDIZ 2012:266).

The cultural participation of migrants is however often portrayed as insufficient. This may not be entirely due to a lack of interest or resources, but rather to the content of cultural events. Birgit Mandel, in her book, includes an example of a journalist of Turkish origin who went to the theater with her father. She realized how disconnected the theater was from her own environment, only when her father got bored sitting next to her. This was not because they had never seen a play or read books together before, but it was rather because of the content of the play. The play depicted Leonce's lethargy and indecision in a romantic setting, which contrasted strongly with her father's reality of factory closure, unemployment, and financial struggles. Additionally, the theater consistently showcased the same plays, directors, and artistic directors, thus attracting the same audience.

"My father wasn't there, not due to a lack of interest in theater, but because this kind of theater didn't engage him" (MANDEL 2011:111).

2.2. Representation and marginalization

In the 18th century, language became one of the instruments through which a sense of belonging among people who spoke the same language was created. This led to the notion of language becoming a property of a group of people. In the process of nation-building, those who did not speak this language as their native language were regarded as incapable of becoming creative in it (SIEVERS 2024:26). Up until today, there are still clear distinctions made between native and non-native speakers. This distinction is not necessarily based on

the proficiency of a particular language, but rather on the acceptance from self-identified native speakers. Additionally, ethnicity, gender, and class are some of the factors that affect this process (SIEVERS 2024:27). The immigrants thus needed to gain acceptance for topics, considered outside the national scope, such as immigration or their experiences of immigration. Additionally, their contributions to national discourse were often not regarded as authoritative voices on the issues.

Sievers believes that in this context the perceived incapacity of immigrants is present due to the above-mentioned exclusionary mechanisms that were established during the period of the nationalization of cultures. Even though Sievers focused on the literary fields in reference to Bourdieu, she believes that this approach may be helpful to identify similar dynamics in other (artistic) fields. Through her empirical study, Sievers found out that migration for a long time was not seen as a suitable subject for literary writing. This lack of knowledge regarding migration was an additional challenge for the first authors, who dealt with this topic, since they had to convince critics that migration should become an acknowledged topic in the literary field. Still, the barriers against immigrants and their descendants within the Austrian literary scene and society are not abolished. Given that certain Austrian political parties uphold such boundaries in order to win votes, this is not surprising. Sievers emphasizes: *“As we know from Bourdieu, cultural fields are subordinate to political fields”* (SIEVERS 2024:36).

In a comparable context, when looking at neighboring Germany, even though German politicians recognized the country as a land of immigration only in 2001, the cultural institutions have not yet adapted to this reality. Joanna Jurkiewicz and Jens Schneider are exploring the disparity between the demographic and cultural changes brought by migration and the absence of structural institutional responses to these changes. The authors aim to help us understand why widespread demands for institutional change do not take place. According to Jurkiewicz and Schneider, the main reasons contributing to the institutional inertia are firstly the narratives and the discursive framings of how diversity, migration and culture are created within these contexts, and secondly the ways in which these narratives are intertwined with institutional structures. They examine how this relationship perpetuates structural non-change in cultural institutions and how it affects the implementation of institutional change, often described as “opening up”. (JURKIEWICZ and SCHNEIDER 2024:78).

According to the authors the cultural institutions are not only organizational entities with employees, facilities, and exhibition spaces, but they also represent institutionalized discourses and narratives that are embedded in a larger social, academic, and historical context. They believe that today's narrative on migration in cultural institutions is rooted in these established structures. On the other hand, implementing long-term structural change in these cultural institutions is challenging. The institutions often cite a lack of staff or funding as obstacles, viewing diversity measures as additional tasks. But it is also about developing a new discursive framework that includes more contextually relevant notions of social differentiation, rather than sticking to static definitions. This further involves considering the invisibility and demographic importance of younger generations due to their diverse and hybrid background and cultural preferences (JURKIEWICZ and SCHNEIDER 2024:92).

Despite migration being a recurrent topic in the public debates, the viewpoints, and opinions of migrants in this context have frequently been overlooked. Umut Erel for example remarks that one of the issues is that in the public discourse, migrants are often cast as the topic, and not as actively involved participants of the discourse. This creates the sense of migrants as outsiders of society, who need to be accepted if they prove their value (EREL 2024:195).

2.2.1. Empirical study on immigrant exclusion in mainstage theaters of Berlin and Vienna

Wiebke Sievers has also addressed the problem of the mainstage theaters remaining closed to immigrants and their descendants, be it as actors, directors, or playwrights. She compares the situations in two cities, Berlin, and Vienna, which share a similar post-war immigration history. These two cities are also regarded as significant European theater capitals. However, even if there were attempts to keep up with immigration in Austrian and German societies, the theaters *“still largely address a white middle-class audience, with directors and actors recruited in the same milieu and a repertoire mainly consisting of Western works”* (SIEVERS 2017:68). In other words, the mainstage theaters in Berlin and Vienna do not mirror their demographic diversity. But despite that, there are differences regarding the exclusion of immigrants in the mainstage theaters in these two cities.

In this context, the history of the establishment of theater as a cultural institution in Germany and Austria plays a significant role. Publicly subsidized theaters have become institutionalized in the process of nation-building, which led to these theaters being representative of a particular nation onstage. In the 19th century, theater helped to normalize this concept of differentiating between those representing the nation and those regarded as not belonging (SIEVERS 2017:70). Additionally, in certain regions where there is a variety of dialects that are not always mutually understood, theater played a significant role in the emergence of national languages. In this sense, theater has developed a specific term to refer to this language, *Bühnensprache*, which is used to describe the regulated pronunciation of the German language on stage (WILMER 2008:17).

“It is this particular institutional background that is translated into a habitus excluding immigrants and their descendants from mainstage theater up to the present day” (SIEVERS 2017:70).

To overcome this, diversification of cultural institutions on all levels is essential. The process of diversification implies removing the barriers that could prevent any individual from accessing these institutions, and as such cultural institutions must cater to the entire population of a country (TERKESSIDIS 2010:126).

In 1918, Vienna became the theatrical center of the newly created Austrian nation-state, including a hierarchical structure, with its highest level being represented by the *Burgtheater*. *Burgtheater* became independent in the 1990s, yet it remains fully subsidized by the Austrian state. Additionally, this theater house is still described as one of the representative stages of the Austrian Republic and it remains legally mandated to promote Austrian art (SIEVERS 2017:72). Alongside the *Burgtheater*, the *Theater in der Josefstadt* and the *Volkstheater*, two other mainstage theaters are also subsidized by the Austrian state and the Viennese municipality. These theaters aimed at offering national cultural education to middle-class audiences excluded from attending the *Burgtheater*. Even if there have been a few attempts to promote diversity in the Viennese theater landscape, the focus still remained mainly on fringe theater.

Berlin, on the other hand, and its institutional framework is less hierarchical, with more flux, and thus more open to change. Additionally, the city of Berlin has been less central to German nation-building in comparison to Vienna and Austrian nation-building. In Germany,

culture is managed by the federal states, with municipalities handling most of the practical work. Despite the state's limited role, it gained more importance in Berlin post-unification. Before the early 2000s, cultural policies had little awareness about immigration and were not adjusted to reflect the societal changes caused by immigration. Since theater was seen as handling universal topics beyond national preferences, it seemed that theater was not important for cultural policies. However, in 2006, this perspective changed when the German National Integration Plan revealed that immigrants and their descendants were underrepresented in cultural life (VITTING-SERUP & WIEGAND 2019:199). The following year, the Berlin integration concept declared that cultural institutions must go through a process of diversification. Shermin Langhoff plays an especially important role in making the theater landscape more inclusive and diverse in Berlin.

Langhoff engaged in political activism from a young age and has refused to accept the dominant conditions in society. She founded the organization *Kultursprünge* to promote overcoming the ethno-national understanding of art in order to make artists of immigrant origin more visible.

"Only if these artists are no longer reduced to representing their country of origin or ethnic group will they be accepted as artists on a par with their Western colleagues" (SIEVERS 2017:75).

In Berlin's district Kreuzberg, with a large number of immigrants, Langhoff was offered to lead the *Ballhaus Naunynstraße* theater in 2008. Even before this, local institutions in Kreuzberg have been dedicated to displaying diversity and involving the local population in participatory projects. In *Ballhaus Naunynstraße*, Langhoff together with her team developed post-migrant theater, creating narratives that move beyond ethnic boundaries, and even if they aimed at portraying migration and identity, they did it in a broader context, within the framework of German society as a whole. In 2013, Langhoff, together with Jens Hillje, would take over the leadership of the *Maxim Gorki Theater* with a dedication to diversifying a mainstream theater. They opened the theater to immigrants and their descendants on all levels, from the audience and staff to programming and guiding ideas, motivated by their principle that theater should cater to all the city's inhabitants.

In 2015, Vienna made a similar attempt when Ana Badora took over as director of the *Volkstheater*. She believed *Volkstheater* needed to adapt to the diversity brought by

migration. Yet, Badora understood this diversity rather as attracting a more diverse audience. She did not develop a specific strategy to achieve this goal of hers, but instead aimed at Europeanizing German-speaking theater by inviting directors from across Europe to work at her theater. From 2015 to 2018, *Volkstheater* organized a series of festivals, which would take place on the secondary stage *Volx/Margareten* each November. This series of festivals welcomed guest performances by theater directors from Zagreb, Mostar, Tirana, and Belgrade to address current sociopolitical issues in their home countries. The festival was thus named Der Serbische (Serbian), Albanische (Albanian), Kroatische (Croatian), and Bosnisch-Herzegowinische (Bosnian Herzegovinian) November (DAVIDOVIĆ 2022:75). This strategy of the *Volkstheater* seemingly worked, at least during the festival. The theater was filled with people from the above-mentioned countries living in Vienna. However, these groups have not yet become part of the team of playwrights, actors, and directors at the *Volkstheater*. Even today, upon looking into the team of the *Volkstheater* on their official website, it is evident that little has changed. For example, the majority of people with surnames ending in “ić”, which suggests they may be from former Yugoslav countries or their descendants, are to no surprise of mine, found listed under Reiningunskraft (cleaning staff) (Volkstheater Team 2024).

Another example of a temporary cultural space, to specifically bring post-Yugoslav perspectives into the European discourse, took place in 2020 in the *Kasino am Schwarzenbergplatz* under the name *Europamaschine*. A two-month interdisciplinary event series curated by director Oliver Frlić and philosopher and activist Srećko Horvat emerged as a collaboration with the *Burgtheater*. Oliver Frlić said that with this project, he wants to open the institutions for different people, “*who are most of the time excluded this way or that way from the institutions*” (DAVIDOVIĆ 2022:79). Frlić also wished to bring together the people from his homeland living in Vienna. However, even if this approach aims at making an underrepresented group more visible in the Viennese cultural landscape, temporary visibility does not contribute to a sustainable, structural change.

This comparative approach of Berlin and Vienna shows that diversifying mainstage theaters requires more than just including immigrants and their descendants. It requires a complete institutional change. The process of diversification is challenging existing norms and requires an open framework, as well as artists who are critical of existing, exclusionary structures. On

the example of Berlin, Langhoff and her team have succeeded at normalizing diversity in their theatrical works. Despite the fact that mainstages acknowledge the impact of immigration on societal changes, such as the *Volkstheater* in Vienna, immigration still remains a secondary issue in the institutions (SIEVERS 2017:79).

2.3. Cultural policy and politics

Although art and culture can bridge different cultures, they can also serve as a medium for separation and exclusion. To develop strategies for cultural participation, it is necessary to first understand the cultural interests and potential barriers of the target audience (MANDEL 2011:112). Unfortunately, no empirical studies on art and culture in connection with migration exist in Austria. However, there are some significant studies with a geographical focus on Germany, such as those from Susanne Keuchel (2012) or Sinus Sociovision (2007). These studies offer relevant insights:

- Cultural engagement is primarily influenced by education, social status, and place of origin rather than ethnic background, making social differences more significant.
- People with a migration history have similar cultural interests as those without, given a similar social status. Education, including parental education, is the most crucial factor for cultural interest.
- Migrants, due to their cross-cultural experiences, are especially sensitive to art and culture. According to the migrants and artists surveyed, migration enriches personality and influences a nuanced aesthetic perception.
- Despite similar interest in cultural offerings, migrants use public cultural institutions significantly less and find little relevance in them. Instead, they frequently engage in cultural activities through migrant associations, perceiving public offerings as elitist.

These studies also identify limited financial resources and insufficient time as the main barriers to cultural engagement (Sinus Sociovision 2007). Additionally, educational, social, and subjective barriers contribute to this issue (Ibid.). The study participants often described art as challenging and expressed fears of not understanding it or knowing how to engage with it. Cultural engagement was frequently seen as boring and unenjoyable, while other leisure activities were perceived as more attractive. Furthermore, a common belief among the participants was that art does not fit their lives and lifestyles, or that they have no

occasion or reason to visit cultural events. Some participants also shared negative experiences with cultural offerings, particularly during school visits (MANDEL 2011:116,117).

To address these challenges, strategies that are needed for more diverse institutions were suggested. The intercultural audience development approach, which systematically attracts and retains new audiences by combining marketing, user research, cultural education, and mediation, often under cultural policy goals, is mentioned as one of the successful strategies.

It is essential to embed diversity at the leadership level, as well as throughout the organization. Institutions with leaders from migration backgrounds attract more diverse audiences (MANDEL 2011:117). Collaborating with diverse institutions and conducting surveys of target groups to understand their interests and barriers is also essential.

Developing sustainable relationships with new users can be achieved by involving them both as artists and audiences to create new content together. In conclusion, an institutional change beyond traditional hierarchies and the distinction of cultural elites is necessary.

“The only really effective way to change the make-up of your audience is to first change yourselves” (MANDEL 2011:118).

Another important aspect is the recognition that culture is constantly changing, with migration playing a key role in this transformation. Wiebke Sievers, in her book on cultural change in post-migrant societies, argues that this change has not been acknowledged by major cultural institutions, cultural policies, or official narratives (SIEVERS 2024:1).

Despite the increasing number of artists and interventions challenging the myth of homogeneous national identities, a lasting cultural shift is not an understood consequence. These narratives will only become widely accepted if they succeed in altering existing institutions and structures. However, studies that measure whether national artistic and cultural fields are more welcoming towards immigrants and their descendants indicate that cultural transformation in these domains remains a slow process with limited effect (SIEVERS 2024:7).

In this subchapter, I will introduce two official documents published by the city of Vienna about cultural participation, providing insights into local cultural policies and studies of cultural inclusivity. The first study conducted from 2014 to 2015, aimed at understanding the factors influencing cultural participation and the specific differences in engagement among

diverse groups. The second document is the Viennese Cultural Strategy for 2030, which presents the city's approach to creating an inclusive and affordable cultural landscape for all residents.

2.3.1. Kulturelle Beteiligung in Wien - Cultural participation in Vienna

The study on cultural involvement among different social groups in Vienna, commissioned by MA 7- the Cultural Department of the city of Vienna, took place from December 2014 to March 2015 and included three research stages. It began with a literature review of relevant studies, followed by an analysis of the 2013 Social Science Basic Study II, which surveyed over 4,000 Vienna residents aged fifteen and above about their cultural involvement (SCHÖNHERR & OBERHUBER 2015:4). The final phase involved focus groups consisting of Viennese residents interested in culture but without a high school diploma, providing deeper understanding of factors that influence cultural participation. The aim of the study was to present an overview of cultural participation in Vienna and examine differences in cultural engagement among various groups. The research is connected to the broader discussion of cultural participation as an indicator of equality, accessibility, and social disparities. Specifically, it explores whether publicly funded cultural institutions are in theory open to all social groups and how this relates to the broader discussion on participation equity in a democratic society.

According to the study, first-generation migrants attend cultural events somewhat less frequently than those born in Austria to migrant parents. Generational differences were particularly evident in theater attendance, with about two-thirds of non-migrants and 60% of second-generation migrants visiting the theater at least once in the past year, compared to only 49% of first-generation migrants (SCHÖNHERR & OBERHUBER 2015:5,6). Interestingly, second-generation migrants were overall more culturally active than those without a migration background, with only 3% not visiting any cultural institution in the past year, and about two-thirds attending more than four (SCHÖNHERR & OBERHUBER 2015:6).

The focus groups highlighted that cultural participation for migrants is closely linked to other forms of participation and opportunities for informal education. Migrants often see cultural events like exhibitions and theater performances as opportunities to learn, expand their horizons, and integrate into Austrian culture. The study identifies four types of cultural participants (Ibid.). These are the "highly culturally active" ones, who make up over 10% of

Viennese population. About 30% are “partially culturally active” and they favor popular cultural events like movies and festivals. 17% of the sample, who frequently attend high-culture events, are the “traditionally culturally active” type. The largest group, 40%, is “culturally inactive”, with only occasional participation in cultural activities (Ibid.).

The study revealed that these types vary by gender, age, and migration background, but social background, especially parents’ education, strongly influences cultural engagement later in life. Those from educated families seem to be more culturally active, particularly in high-culture activities. The focus groups have emphasized the importance of early cultural exposure at home, whether from parents or relatives, as crucial for future cultural participations. Schools can also play a role in shaping cultural interests, but affordability remains a significant obstacle for many, especially in low-income groups. Free or discounted cultural offerings could on the other hand encourage greater cultural participation. Vienna’s cultural offerings have been rated positively in the study, while only a few participants were explicitly dissatisfied with the cultural activities.

2.3.2. Wiener Kulturstrategie 2030- Viennese Cultural Strategy 2030

This report highlights Vienna’s current challenges in cultural participation and the need for a comprehensive analysis to address residents’ needs. Veronika Kaup-Hasler, the City Councilor for Culture and Science, remarks that this requires the knowledge of many, *“especially those who make up the cultural field, to avoid overlooking anything”* (Stadt Wien 2023:4). An intensive dialogue involving artists, audiences, politicians, and all stakeholders in cultural policy decisions is necessary.

The goal of the cultural policy for 2030 is to ensure *“inclusive and affordable culture, fair pay and social security, crisis-resilient culture, cultural infrastructure and new spaces, contemporary commemorative culture, diversity and equal opportunities”* (Ibid.).

Affordable and inclusive culture is central to this cultural policy. The city of Vienna is dedicated to ensuring that all residents, regardless of their socio-economic background, have access to culture. Initiatives include free cultural programs in all Viennese districts, free entry to the permanent exhibition at the *Wien Museum* as well as the *Kultursommer* with diverse open-air events. The Vienna Culture Pass also benefits low-income residents. However, rising living costs challenge socioeconomically disadvantaged residents in accessing the city’s

cultural programs. The city plans to enhance communication about affordable events and expand programs for children.

Regarding diversity and equal opportunities, Vienna is proud of its diverse cultural landscape. All Viennese, regardless of their gender identity, social conditions, age, religion, sexual orientation, or disability, should be able to participate in the city's cultural life both as artists and as audiences. Some initiatives whose concepts emphasize and promote diversity include *kültür gemma!* or Go for Culture and Cash for Culture. By 2030, Vienna's cultural landscape should reflect the city's diversity, implementing a diversity advisory board and expanding accessibility in all areas.

One of the goals of this cultural policy is to ensure fair pay, good working conditions, and social security for artists. This also means that it is necessary to recognize artistic activity as work that must be compensated. Fair distribution within the field, across demographic groups, and within institutions from large theaters to the independent scene needs to be additionally guaranteed. Efforts to improve precarious working conditions will continue with initiatives like work scholarships for artists and grant application templates for all sectors. However, the political scope of the city is limited regarding social systems, as these are influenced at the federal level. This is why the city will look to strengthen cooperation with the federal government to achieve these adjustments.

In addition to these measures, from June until September 2023, around 1,000 residents of Vienna participated in a survey on cultural policy, gathering input on issues like fair pay, social security, affordable culture, and inclusive participation. Many respondents called for increased cultural programs for children and measures to better reflect diversity at all levels including *"higher representation of women, services for people from various socio-economic and educational backgrounds, and greater inclusion of people with migration backgrounds-on, in front of, and behind the stage"* (Stadt Wien 2023:57).

Additionally, a survey on cultural participation conducted by the research SORA through a selective tender process showed that cultural engagement is influenced by factors such as family interest in arts and culture, and cultural education in schools. The study found that 27% of Vienna's residents are frequent cultural users (Stadt Wien 2023:61). Higher cultural capital correlates with higher cultural usage: 40% of Viennese with high cultural capital visit museums and other cultural venues frequently, compared to 24% with medium cultural

capital and 15% with low cultural capital (Ibid.). Furthermore, 31% of those with low cultural capital have not attended any cultural events.

Cultural usage is also strongly linked to education and income. 34% of Viennese with a high school diploma frequently attend cultural events, in comparison with 21% of those without a diploma (Stadt Wien 2023:62). Furthermore, 21% of those struggling with income are frequent cultural users, compared to 30% of residents who manage well or somewhat well with their income (Ibid.). The most crucial factor when it comes to attendance decisions is the quality of the offer, at least for about 76% of Viennese residents. Conditions like price, time, and accessibility surprisingly play a secondary role. A favorable price is a decisive criterion for 38%, sufficient time for 34%, and good accessibility for 31%. Price is especially important for residents with limited income (52%), and free admission is mainly significant for younger people aged 15 to 29 (39%). Affordable culture and cultural participation are particularly important for Viennese residents in challenging financial situations, those with a migration background, and those between the ages of 50 and 64. Diversity and equality are rated more important by residents with a migration background and those aged 50 to 64. Fair pay and social security are of greater significance to residents with a high school diploma, and again those aged 50 to 64 (Stadt Wien 2023:66).

By 2030, Vienna's cultural policy will focus on affordable culture and inclusive participation, for all demographic groups. Vienna's cultural landscape in 2030 is imagined as diverse and inclusive, with fair compensation for artists as well as social security, enabling them to create sustainably and with financial stability (Stadt Wien 2023:67).

2.4. Summary

This chapter provided theories on migration and culture, as well as how these concepts are shaped by the media and dominant public discussions.

Even if the categorization "migrant art" was initially used by artists who faced discrimination to highlight their work, today the term is often used in a negative way, creating bigger gaps in the art world. Additionally, the concept of art, which was developed according to Western cultural standards, has often classified non-Western art as ethnic, reproducing the stereotypes about marginalized artists. These artists are often portrayed as outsiders in the media and dominant public discourse, rather than active contributors.

In terms of cultural participation for migrants, factors such as education and social status play a more important role than ethnicity. For institutions to enhance the cultural engagement of migrants, hiring cultural workers with migration backgrounds and promoting diversity in leadership roles are crucial steps.

Overall, the literature suggests a marginalized and underrepresented position of artists, which are often portrayed through stereotypes, rather than focusing on the real barriers to cultural participation. The aim should be to create sustainable change in how migration is understood.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I will introduce the methods I have used for gathering the data. This will include a description of the events that I attended and the interviews I conducted, as well as a depiction of the data collection methods, and the process of data collection itself.

3.1. Access to the field

My initial research plan was to focus on a theater group, *Teatar Breza*, from Vienna, whose members come from various countries of former Yugoslavia. I intended to conduct my fieldwork with this group by participating in their rehearsals, attending (and participating) in their final project, and interviewing the members. However, the group faced some unexpected challenges, including a temporary change in the artistic leadership at the beginning of 2023, as I started my research, and the cancellation of a play premiere due to the death of a close friend of one of the actors in the spring of 2023. This led to a short break in the group's activities, which meant I could no longer follow their work as I had originally planned.

In these circumstances my supervisor, Professor Çağlar suggested that I broaden my research to include other artistic groups in Vienna that focus on migration topics and examine their positionality in Vienna's creative scene. I followed this advice and shifted my primary research method from participant observation to interviews.

Through the artistic director and founder of *Teatar Breza*, Anja Lazić-Akaratović, I was able to contact several individuals involved in Vienna's art scene. I learned about one interview

partner through an article I included in the thesis, and I connected with another one through a friend. This friend also introduced me to a WhatsApp group called *BIPoC & Migra Kunst Jobs/Calls/etc.*, which has over 600 members. I posted several times in this group to explain my research, but only a few people responded, and from these interactions, I was able to secure one interview partner. I found most of my other interview partners through online research. Communication with these individuals primarily took place via email and social media platforms such as LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Instagram.

3.2. Research methods

The methods that were used for collecting the data are predominantly qualitative research methods. Most of the data was collected through interviews, 13 of them in total; however, only ten interviews will be used throughout the thesis. The three remaining interview partners and their fields of influence were less relevant to the final research question. Additionally, using participant observation, I visited three theater plays, two discussions, and one festival. Furthermore, some data was gathered from informal conversations. One of the included interviews was obtained through a survey with open-ended questions.

The interviews I conducted were semi-structured. Before each interview, I researched the interview partner online to learn about their background and the projects they had worked on, so I could discuss these with them. Each interview began with an introduction to my research topic, followed by the interviewee's introduction. During this part, interviewees talked about their profession, education, and current position. Some also shared their migration journey to Vienna and their reasons for moving there.

In the next part of the interview, I asked for a more detailed description of the interviewee's field of work. This included the topics they focus on in their artistic work, the organizations they are employed with, or specific projects they have completed. The final part of the interview concentrated on the interviewees' perceptions and experiences within Vienna's cultural scene.

In addition to these interviews, I attended various events. Some of my interview partners were involved in these events in different capacities, so I included the relevant organizations, institutions, or events in Table 1 to help connect these participants appropriately. I was

invited to one of these events by an interview partner, while the others I found through online research or recommendations from the before-mentioned WhatsApp group.

I conducted participant observation at these events and engaged in informal conversations with attendees, sometimes finding new interview partners. I took photos of the venues, flyers, and events, which are also included in the thesis. Throughout the data collection process, I kept a field diary. This diary includes my observations, descriptions, thoughts, reflections, summaries of informal conversations, and records of email communications.

Alongside fieldwork, I conducted online research and used secondary sources. This included publicly available videos of relevant events or interviews, which I analyzed as part of my data evaluation. I also incorporated publicly accessible data from the city of Vienna and used statistical data from national surveys or historical records for a more quantitative aspect of the research.

3.3. Field research: description of the attended events and an overview of the conducted interviews

All the events I attended took place in 2023. The main criteria for selecting these events, were the organizations or institutions behind them. All of these organizations are currently active in Vienna's independent cultural scene. Another important criterion was the content of the performances. The theater plays and performances I attended were based on the individual experiences of the performers or offered their personal perspectives on events in the public sphere. Table 1 listing these events is provided below in the chapter, which includes the date, venue, and type of event (e.g., performance, theater play, discussion, or comedy). I will briefly introduce the events here and provide a more detailed description in chapter 5 of the thesis.

The *Clišhé Träsh* event is a curated project that has been held in Vienna since 2022. It features comedy, concerts, performances, workshops, and discussions. The participants use humor to challenge dominant stereotypes in society and aim to provide a safe space for everyone, including those who want to live in a "*postmigrant, post-Nazi*" society, and to all queer people, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and other marginalized communities (Kulturen in Bewegung 2022). I visited the event on its opening night, October 6th, 2023, and

attended a comedy performance as well as a performance of an artist in residence. I found out about this event through the already mentioned WhatsApp group.

My interview partner Selina Shirin Stritzel invited me to the event *Justitia: Ill*egal Monsters*. *Justitia* is a four-year project funded by the city of Vienna. The project explores the connections between theater, law, and justice, with each year focusing on different topics that are always linked to the previous ones. In 2023, the project was in its second year and focused on migration politics.

Another event I attended was *Diversität in der Kultur*, a panel discussion held at *Belvedere 21*. This event focused mainly on topics such as accessibility in the cultural scene and the power structures and hierarchies within Vienna's established cultural institutions. The last three events listed in the table were all part of the Roma theater festival *E Bistarde*, held at *Dschungel Wien*. The plays *Land ohne Land* and *Rom*nja City* explored issues related to Roma identity, the neglected history of Roma and Sinti people, and themes of stereotypes and empowerment within the Roma community. The event *Images of Rom*nja artists in media and on stage* was a discussion held on the closing day of the festival. The participants discussed their desire for self-representation, the stereotypes Roma people face daily, and the importance of community.

	Name of the event	Date	Venue	Art of the event	Interview partners
1	Clišhé Träsh	06/10/2023	Kulturhaus Brotfabrik	Comedy, performance	Marissa Lobo
2	Justitia: Ill*egal Monsters	07/10/2023	Brut	Performance	Selina Shirin Stritzel
3	Diversität in der Kultur	10/10/2023	Belvedere 21	Discussion	Marissa Lobo, Ivana Pilić
4	Land ohne Land	03/11/2023	Dschungel Wien	Theater play	none
5	Rom*nja City	04/11/2023	Dschungel Wien	Theater play	none
6	Images of Rom*nja artists in media and on stage	09/11/2023	Dschungel Wien	Discussion	none

Table 1: Events

Table 2 that lists my interview partners includes details such as the format of the interview (in-person or online), the location, date, and duration of each interview.

For the conducted interviews, I have decided to include only a table in this chapter to provide an easy overview of the interviewees. Each interview will be covered in detail in chapter 5.

	Interview Partner	Occupation	Organization	Location	Date of interview	Duration
1	Danilo Jovanović	actor theater director	Physical Theater Company "Side Effect"	Dschungel Café	10.11.2023	1h 15min
2	Ivana Pilić	cultural worker researcher	D/Arts	online	19.12.2023	43min
3	Anja Lazić-Akaratović	actor creative director	Teatar Breza	Burggarten	10.07.2023	38min
4	Mirjana Mustra	artist curator cultural worker	independent artist	online	18.11.2023	1h 10min
5	Marissa Lobo	artist activist artistic director	kültür gemma!	online	20.12.2023	53min
6	Željka Aleksić	conceptual artist	independent artist	Creative Cluster	10.11.2023	1h 50min
7	Jana Dolecki	theater scholar cultural producer	independent artist	online	14.11.2023	1h 40min
8	Mbatjiua Hambira	artist project coordinator cultural producer	kültür gemma!	Creative Cluster	07.08.2023	1h
9	Selina Shirin Stritzel	theater maker researcher	Justitia: Ill*egal Monsters	Brunnenmarkt Café	03.11.2023	54min

Table 2: Interview partners

The 10th interview partner was Amalija Stojšavljević, who contributed by answering open-ended questions in the form of a survey.

Chapter 4: Contextual Background

In this chapter, I will introduce two significant events. The first one took place in 2011/2012, and the second in 2023. The first event is the project series „Pimp My Integration”, which aimed to bring post-migrant perspectives into the theater scene in Vienna. Through workshops, theater plays, and discussions, participants gathered to draw attention to their struggles and challenges as artists in Vienna. They shared their issues in order to collectively develop successful strategies that could be implemented in the cultural institutions to raise the visibility of the underrepresented groups.

The second event, or initiative, is the „Museum of Migration”. This initiative offered performances, lectures, and discussions through two events to explore the possibilities of an

inclusive future for people with migration histories in Vienna. The museum's primary goal is to provide opportunities for self-historicization, acknowledging the long history of migration in Vienna.

4.1. Cultural scene in Vienna in 2011/2012: „Pimp My Integration”



Figure 1. „Pimp My Integration” poster

„Pimp My Integration” was a project series held in fall and winter 2011/2012 at Vienna's theater *Garage X*, curated by Aslı Kışlal and Carolin Vikoler from the theater group *daskunst*, and directed by Ali M. Abdullah and Harald Posch. The final report on process support by EDUCULT has served as the main resource for the data presented in the following chapter. „Pimp My Integration” included theater productions, panel discussions, audience talks, and readings, with a particular focus on theater made by and with post-migrant artists. The program with its twenty-four acts achieved an occupancy rate of more than 90% and attracted over 2700 visitors, not only to *Garage X*, but also to the four other venues (Presse-Service Wien 2012).

The series included eleven theater performances, with guest shows from Berlin's *Ballhaus Naunynstrasse*, *Theaterhaus Stuttgart* or *Heimhafen Neuköln*. Local productions such as *Unfun*, *Wiener Blut* or *Wie Branka sich nach oben putzte*, also brought the post-migrant issues closer to the Viennese audience (Presse-Service Wien 2012). Six panel discussion with experts like Azadeh Sharifi, Shermin Langhoff, and Erol Yıldız, explored topics such as social belonging, the significance of post-migrant theater for the society, and the potential of including post-migrant artists in the Viennese theater landscape. Yıldız said that post-migrant

positions offer the possibility to reinterpret and retell history from various perspectives (Pimp My Integration 2011).

“Above all, the society living in Austria, a country of immigration, should generally be described as ‘post-migrant’, as migration does not only change the self-perception and external perception of migrants, but also that of the host society” (EDUCULT 2012:5).

The discussions revealed that, while the term post-migrant can be used to describe diversity, it can also lead to exclusion. Some participants explicitly said that they do not want to be referred to as a part of a post-migrant scene, because they wish to avoid any forced categorizations. These categorizations are often seen as a step backwards because artistic creation no longer stands in the foreground. In the numerous discussions, it became clear that drawing a clear distinction between issues faced by first-generation migrants and post-migrants (second and third generation) in performing arts is difficult, since both groups encounter similar circumstances.

For the new cultural policy, it is essential to enable people with passive migration histories to participate, as well as shape cultural life, and not to push them into cultural niches.

“It is also about the fact that we have to work on a ‘we-construction’ - not ‘we’ and ‘them’, but we have to look into the future together”. (EDUCULT 2012:7)

The main topics which marked this project series were discrimination, the role of productions in diversifying institutions, audience development, as well as cultural policies. These subjects will be presented below.

4.1.1. Discrimination

A recurrent topic in the discussions was that the Viennese cultural sphere does not fully reflect the city’s diversity. Without necessarily identifying with it themselves, artists frequently mentioned that they are confronted with ascriptions from outside in the Viennese theater landscape. The additional segregation in the group of migrants and post-migrants became evident during the discussions. Migrants from German-speaking or English-speaking backgrounds are not seen as migrants, while those with Turkish or African origins are more frequently categorized as such. Issues included stereotypical casting and limited roles for actors with accents, with a tendency to associate migrant actors solely with migration-related roles. Several times during the project series, the artist’s desire for normality

regarding the roles, which is measured solely on artistic criteria, was expressed. Especially in the field of spoken theater, where stage presence is tied to language, there are fewer actors with linguistic accents. According to some of the discussants *“a successful stage presence does not necessarily have to be influenced by one's pronunciation”* (EDUCULT 2012:11).

Artists with migration histories are perpetually expected to work around migration-related topics. A similar assumption is present when it comes to public funding.

“You should devote yourself to content, apply for roles, or apply for funding for projects that are in some way related to migration” (EDUCULT 2012:12).

The artists themselves argue for greater freedom to choose their projects and institutions and thus have the opportunity to work outside of the post-migrant cultural space.

City councilor for Culture in 2012, Andreas Mailath-Pokorny praised the positive reception of the event series, noting its role in advancing intercultural work in Vienna (Presse-Service Wien 2012). The cultural spokesperson of the Vienna Green Party, Klaus Werner-Lobo stated:

“We see cultural diversity as the greatest wealth of this city, with which we want to flood all cultural institutions in the future- including the big ones too” (Presse-Service Wien 2012).

Curator Aslı Kışlal expressed the hope that post-migrant artists will be integrated into the contemporary cultural life, where it becomes the most natural thing *“for Özlem S. to appear as Juliet in an Austrian production of Shakespeare”* (Presse-Service Wien 2012).

4.1.2. Productions

The EDUCULT report on „Pimp My Integration” highlights the precarious position of artists with migration backgrounds in Vienna. Despite their significant presence in the independent theater scene, they remain underrepresented in mainstream cultural institutions. The discussions revealed three main issues:

1. Negation of the problem- for example some executives, especially from larger cultural institutions, showed little or no interest in taking part in the discussions.
2. Discriminatory practices- some directors refuse to work with migrant artists because they wish *“not to be put in that drawer”* (EDUCULT 2012:13).
3. Need for innovation- there is an idea that specific skills and knowledge are needed to face the growing demand for innovation in the arts.

Most participants with migration experience are primarily active in the independent theater scene, and many find state-run institutions unwelcoming and exclusionary, leading to a discouragement among artists to even try to approach these institutions. The artists also face significant challenges in securing funding, struggling with bureaucracy and a lack of accessible resources. Additionally, they are often redirected between different departments or are referred to social policy departments with their applications and thus often end up in the department for district culture and interculturality. This department however provides a maximum budget of around 5.000€ per project, which makes the production of substantial theater (almost) impossible. Additional difficulty, when it comes to the funding opportunities, is the fact that there is a lack of professionals with migrant and post-migrant histories in the decision-making roles.

The discussion emphasized that a post-migrant theater should not be considered as a separate genre, but as a reflection of the new social realities. The focus should be on representing diverse experiences through casting and creative roles rather than limiting content to migration-specific topics.

“The goal is to depict the conflicts of reality on stage.” (EDUCULT 2012: 16)

4.1.3. Audience Development

The issue of diversifying theater audiences was a significant topic of discussion. Despite the focus on post-migrant theater, the audience often remains the same, with limited growth in attendance. Improving accessibility to theater productions emerged as a key solution. Proposals included reducing ticket prices, offering special subscriptions for migrants, and addressing social and linguistic barriers. Actively reaching out to targeted groups was likewise recommended to attract a broader audience.

It also became clear that going to the theater is a social and cultural problem. Theater spaces seem exclusionary when it comes to the common behavioral and etiquette norms. Additionally, there is the obstacle of artistic language, which can further discourage migrants from visiting theatre.

“A migrant academic feels addressed and goes to the theater. A migrant worker might go if their child is performing in a play. There are people who simply have no access to culture, and that is more of a social problem than a post-migrant problem” (EDUCULT 2012:18).

The lack of willingness to perceive theater as a mirror of society is evident, since the reality of most of the Viennese population is not portrayed on stage. The theatre is still prevalently welcoming to an educated population, while less educated people living in Vienna still seem to perceive theatre as something intimidating.

To address these issues, several strategies were proposed:

- The aim should be to speak to a broad part of the population through the performed contents. Plays could be performed in multiple languages, or through alternative forms like pantomime or puppet theater to overcome language barriers.
- Increasing focus on participatory cultural projects was suggested, since attending cultural events is *“primarily a matter of participation, a matter of feeling welcome and belonging”* (EDUCULT 2012:19).
- For a successful audience development, the engagement of individuals from various communities is crucial to transmit relevant information and to reduce the existing barriers.
- To increase the accessibility of cultural spaces to the migrants, the institutions should consider measures such as financial subsidies in the form of subscriptions or reduced ticket prices.
- An additional suggestion is the need to rethink public relations and marketing. Working with images and multiple languages in advertising could create a better understanding of the content and a feeling of community. One also needs to be aware of the needs and the language used among the younger generations. In order to reach these generations, the internet and social media are seen as important means.

4.1.4. Cultural policy

One of the focuses of the project was whether a specific post-migrant theater is necessary in Vienna. According to the research, the issue is more complex and requires multiple actions to ensure equal opportunities. Policymakers must remove institutional barriers and reduce the “us” and “them” division in theaters by supporting certain topics. To reflect the demographic realities, there was also a demand for more involvement from migrant and post-migrant representatives in the decision-making processes.

The project highlighted the need to open up existing stages, to provide funding for emerging productions, and to continue the discourse on these issues. Many participants felt that Vienna's existing cultural policy does not accurately reflect the city's demographic reality, leaving many theater workers feeling marginalized, especially within high culture. The discussion underscored the importance of integrating post-migrant perspectives into mainstream institutions, thus, to mirror the complexities of society. This would require not only diverse content but also leadership and administrative roles filled by individuals with migration backgrounds.

Policy measures like quotas and migrant mainstreaming were encouraged. The participants emphasized the urgent need to change the historically elite theater industry, by creating spaces for a variety of experiences.

In addition to making sure that people with a migration history have a better chance of getting a job in cultural institutions, migrant mainstreaming should also make sure that these institutions engage more actively with diversity-related issues. However, some participants also expressed concerns that quotas could limit artistic freedom, advocating instead for hiring and funding decisions to be based only on artistic ability and quality. Additionally, imposing rules might have the opposite effect. A better and more effective approach would be to actively promote equality at the institutional level and raise awareness of the problem. Furthermore, since migrant streaming forces individuals to identify as *post-migrant*, its implementation may be complicated. This connects to the issue, which was previously discussed in the chapter, regarding the classification or categorization of theater professionals as (post-) migrants.

Participants noted that increasing the visibility of successful post-migrant figures could enhance public understanding and acceptance. There was a strong desire for improved training opportunities to address origin-related inequalities, in order to prevent the exclusion of post-migrant individuals from high culture. Another way would be to involve young, semi-professional groups in theatrical productions, which would provide further education, for example through workshops with experienced professionals.

To support post-migrant theater, participants recommended new initiatives, including:

- Open calls for performances with post-migrant topics or actors

- Dedicating specific periods or stages in Viennese institutions to post-migrant productions
- A yearly festival for post-migrant positions
- Multilingual storytelling

Besides, it is necessary to improve transparency and make clear guidelines in funding allocations, as productions with (post-) migrant topics are frequently redirected between different funding bodies and are considered social rather than artistic projects. A desire for more migrants in decision-making positions, such as in juries or curatorial boards, was also expressed.

In general, there is a lack of networking and information on funding for post-migrant theater makers in Vienna. The participants thus suggest creating an office that offers assistance, networking, and multilingual applications for (post-migrant) artists. This office should serve all theater makers, promoting inclusivity rather than segregation. The participants are also certain that a continuation of discourse on these topics beyond the „Pimp My Integration” project is necessary.

4.1.5. Summary

During the project series „Pimp My Integration”, a number of panel and audience discussions, round table discussions and individual interviews took place. It became clear that Vienna lacks a cohesive post-migrant theater scene characterized by common goals or a collective identity. A theater house under “the right people” in charge may be a useful tool for spatial representation, by increasing visibility, enabling experimentation, or offering guidance and assistance. But the application of cultural policy initiatives to reflect Vienna’s demographic reality on- and off-stage is even more crucial.

For further implementing these policies, EDUCULT has following recommendations:

- For established stages it is necessary to draw attention to post-migrant positions in order to emphasize the needs, interests, and unique potential of post-migrant theater professionals. Additionally, it is crucial that the established stages talk about targeted personnel decisions, encourage public discourse, as well as advocate for migrant mainstreaming and implement quota regulations.

- The independent scene needs to address issues which are specific for individual artists. It is also important to adopt cultural policy initiatives in order to improve the variety of positions and production in Vienna's theater landscape. These include special financial resources, consideration of the topic in the financing criteria, multilingual service offerings, or provision of temporarily usable rehearsal spaces.

EDUCULT additionally suggests giving more importance to audience development by considering the following questions:

- How much demand is there right now?
- What is the best way to involve the diverse Viennese population in today's theater scene?
- Which mediation forms can be introduced to attract target groups?

In conclusion, a deeper understanding of the post-migrant audience is necessary to gain additional insights into possible cultural policy interventions, which could expand audience demand, as well as support a long-term inclusion of post-migrant perspectives in Vienna's theater scene.

4.2. Current cultural scene in Vienna: Museum of Migration

During the *WIENWOCH*e Festival in 2023, the Museum of Migration (MUSMIG) came to life with two public events. Over thirty participants, including artists, activists, and researchers, engaged on the 16th of September in performances, lectures, or discussions to touch upon the topics of a sustainable, inclusive future for people with migration histories in Vienna.



Figure 2. Museum of Migration logo

MUSMIG is undeniably necessary in Vienna, because it is *“the blind spot of traditional museums, the thorn in the flesh of nation-state institutions”* (Textfeld Suedost 2023). Most importantly, MUSMIG is an effort at self-historicization of migrant history. The collective behind the MUSMIG initiative is calling for the right to equality, both inside and outside of museums.

Ljubomir Bratić, a member of the collective, remarks that even if migration is a topic in museums, it always contributes to the strengthening of the national identity. MUSMIG aims to question such an approach (Augustin 2023). Another member, Elena Messner, highlights that migration in national museums can often be incorrectly contextualized, trivialized, or

told from a perspective of authority (Ibid.). For these reasons, it is essential that marginalized voices present their own perspectives and experiences.

The first object that was collected by the MUSMIG collective is a burned wooden elephant (Figure 3.), telling a story of racially motivated police violence. The elephant commemorates



Figure 3. A burned wooden elephant

Seibane Wague, a Mauritian student who was suffocated by paramedics and police officers in 2003. The memorial for Wague, together with the elephant, was back then set on fire. The elephant was however preserved by the “Platform for a World Without Racism” and given to MUSMIG collective almost 20 years later. MUSMIG wants to

be perceived as “a counter-thinking to traditional, hegemonic structures” (Augustin 2023).

The collective raises the question of who is allowed to collect, speak, and exhibit. Bratić believes that these questions should concern us all, because the Museum of Migration should be for everyone, and not just for the interest of one person or one group.

One of the MUSMIG events was a discussion titled *Wer hat Angst vor dem Museum der Migration?* which invited representatives from seven Viennese museums to discuss how their permanent exhibitions could better reflect the history of migration. The included participants were executives from the Jewish Museum, Wien Museum, Museum of the Military History, the Documentation Center of Austrian Resistance, The Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art (*Volkskundemuseum*), Technical Museum, and the House of Austrian History.

The participants have shown support, welcoming the MUSMIG collective, offering guidance, highlighting the importance of collaboration, and expressing initiative for the transformation of dominant perspectives in the museums. For example, the director of the Jewish Museum, Barbara Staundinger highlighted the importance of being aware of the power dynamics, even within the minority groups. A significant importance in their permanent exhibition is placed on perspectives that are left out or forgotten in the dominant discourse.

The representative of the *Volkskundemuseum*, Matthias Beitel mentioned that institutions should constantly be evolving and learning, which can be a challenge for people working in

these institutions. He also admitted that the question of bringing diversity, which they “*do not have at all*” (WIENWOCHE 2023) in the museum’s team remains open.

However, there have been some participants who took a rather defensive stance towards their institutions. Matti Bunzel, director of Wien Museum argued that migration represents the basis of every urban history and should be considered the highest collection priority in order to represent the Viennese migration history. When asked the question of why migrants are not actively represented in museums and why there is a problem of such kind, he asked who claimed that there was a problem. Other participants found the title of the discussion “Who is scared of the Museum of Migration” provocative, feeling it implied they were responsible for the lack of migration perspectives in museums.

The host also inquired about the support that existing museums might offer to MUSMIG. In response, Barbara Staundinger suggested that rather than passively seeking help, a more appropriate approach would be to ask how collaboration can be achieved. She noted that the Jewish Museum is willing to contribute whenever possible and is open to MUSMIG’s input and participation. Barbara emphasized that museum work involves constantly shifting, engaging in self-reflection, and questioning existing power dynamics.

Monika Sommer from the House of Austrian History spoke about their “Inquired” series, where personal perspectives are added to the main exhibition. The idea is to gather diverse voices, and she invites MUSMIG to participate in one of these events. The director of the Museum of Military History welcomed MUSMIG to join the creative process, to develop joint formats, and to re-examine the museum's collection. He highlighted the importance of self-reflection, acknowledging structural racism, and questioned whether current institutional practices could evolve into anti-racist, solidarity-based approaches. Collecting is a significant responsibility, and MUSMIG should consider whether it wants to undertake this task.

MUSMIG on the other hand does not primarily see itself as an object collection project. Instead, it aims to collect discourse, dance, song, art, and rituals, focusing on intangible heritage. The goal is to preserve immaterial heritage, especially that of marginalized communities.

During the discussion, two interventions were made by Ljubomir Bratić and Gabriela Urrutia Reyes. Bratić stated that MUSMIG is as a necessity, which derives its legitimacy from the

development of society. More than 50% of the children who started first grade in 2023 have a migration background. These children have a right to see their history, which is not and cannot be represented in existing museums. A cosmopolitan city like Vienna can no longer avoid claiming to be diverse. This also means that Vienna needs to recognize the history of the diversities as its own. The collective does not see a separation between the majority society and the so-called minorities. The problem with existing museums is that they cannot free themselves from this power dichotomy.

“The Museum of Migration is not a place for the enrichment of the majority society. It does not contribute to reinforcing the racist normativity but instead explicitly challenges the racist dominance relationship here and everywhere, starting from here. The Museum of Migration does not provide ethnicization, culturalization, victimization, folklorization, culinization, or decoration” (WIENWOCHE 2023).

Gabriela Urrutia Reyes presents the Museum of Migration as a permanent room for introspection which acknowledges the impact that migration plays in society. This museum would also expose human rights violations, highlight historical discrepancies in political discourse, and reveal outdated laws, marked by racial, colonial, and patriarchal biases.

“It is important to achieve this in a sustainable and officially recognized way in cooperation with art and cultural institutions, academia, partners and the government, so we can significantly shape the attitude and perspective on migration” (WIENWOCHE 2023).

Chapter 5: Empirical findings. Detailed analysis of the events and interviews

In this chapter I am going to present a detailed analysis of the interviews I conducted, as well as of the events I attended. This material will help further understand the current situation in the Viennese cultural scene, as well as the experiences of underrepresented artists and cultural workers. This chapter will begin with observations from the events I attended, and an analysis of the interviews, highlighting the main topics and issues raised by the interviewees, will follow.

5.1. Visited events

5.1.1. Clišhé Träsh Festival

The festival *Clišhé Träsh* took place on the 06th and 7th of October 2023 at the *Kulturhaus*



Figure 4. Pricing model at the event

Brotfabrik in the 10th Viennese district. This project is a collaboration between the organizations *Kulturen in Bewegung* and *Kulturhaus Brotfabrik*. The event aims to deconstruct and reframe cultural clichés and stereotypes through humor and artistic expression (Clišhé Träsh 2023). Data for this project were collected through participant observation, informal

conversations, and online resources. The entry for the festival was based on a pay-what-you-can model, with suggested donations of 10,15, and 20 euros (Figure 4.), encouraging visitors to contribute according to their financial capacity.

The festival featured comedy performances hosted by Esra Özmen, a musician from the Vienna-based rap duo EsRap. Another notable performer next to Esra, who also performed her own stand-up routine, was Toxische Pommes.

Esra Özmen's stand-up routine addressed cultural similarities and differences between Turkish and Austrian cultures in Vienna, touching upon topics like smoking, pessimism, and family interactions. One notable anecdote was when Esra joked about an Austrian TV show where a girl mentioned her grandparents would disapprove if she brought home a Turkish boyfriend. Esra, of Turkish descent, humorously added "*Our grandparents would also kill us if we were to bring an Austrian guy home*" (Field diary 07.10.2023). The humor in her performance highlighted how these cultural differences, while sometimes leading to misunderstandings, can also be a source of shared laughter and insight. It was interesting to see how such narratives can make cultural divides seem less discouraging and more relatable.

Toxische Pommes was the next act of the second segment. She addressed cultural stereotypes and taboos, focusing on the differences in how Austrians and people from former Yugoslavia swear. While Austrian curses are mild, Yugoslavian swearing is more explicit and intense, often involving graphic and familial references. Toxische Pommes also

tackled the stigma associated with homosexuality (not only) in the Balkans. She made a humorous comment about the lack of acknowledgment of homosexual relationships, pointing out that men do not feel the need to say, “no homo” after hugging and kissing, because “*there are no homosexuals in the Balkans*” (Field diary 07.10.2023). This moment stood out to me because it highlighted a significant issue: the prevalent stigma surrounding homosexuality in the Balkans. Her ability to address such a sensitive topic through humor forced the audience to confront the societal taboos in a more engaging way. It reminded of the capability that humor has, to open up conversations about difficult subjects.

The first day of the festival concluded with a performance by Uýra Sodoma, an artist in residence, who criticized capitalist, racist, homophobic, and transphobic aspects of society. The audience was diverse, with a significant presence of BIPOC individuals. The importance of minority groups reclaiming the narrative and using comedy to challenge stereotypes was highlighted during the event.

“Clišhé Träsh wants to offer a space for minority groups to reflect how they feel about their own position in society, and besides aims at creating a postmigrant perspective” (Field diary 07.10.2023).

The event demonstrated its dedication to accessibility through its flexible pricing model, indicating how humor can help to effectively break down cultural stereotypes and encourage social- and self-reflection. The festival not only entertained but also provoked thoughtful discussions, showing that art and comedy can be powerful tools for social change. This served as a reminder that spaces like these are essential for fostering dialogue and understanding among diverse groups, making cultural and social differences feel less like barriers and more like bridges.

5.1.2. Justitia: Ill*egal Monsters

The performance *Justitia: Ill*egal Monsters* took place on the 7th of October 2023, at the *brut* theater. Co-directed by my interview partner Selina Shirin Stritzel and Gin Müller, *Justitia* explores the experiences of individuals fleeing their home countries, aiming to illustrate the complexities of migration and border crossings. Similar to *Clišhé Träsh*, the event featured a flexible ticket pricing model, allowing attendees to choose between 11, 16, or 22 euros.

The performance featured three actors—Edwarda Gurrola, Johnny Mhanna, and Faris Cuchi Gezahegn—who portrayed the stories of individuals fleeing Syria, Mexico, and Ethiopia (Justitia Flyer 2023). A multimedia approach was used to enhance the narrative, with scenes from a small puppet stage broadcast onto a larger projector screen (Figure 5.).



Figure 5. Puppet stage

The performance explored various aspects of migration, with a particular focus on the individual experiences of crossing borders. It addressed the challenges migrants face with the law and bureaucracy, the concept of legality versus illegality, and the complex identities of those who live on the move. The actors posed provocative questions about how someone can be labeled as *illegal* while still being recognized by official documents like passports and IDs.

The performers portrayed the creation of boundaries and negotiation spaces, often blending fantasy with bureaucratic reality. Furthermore, they transformed into symbolic figures such as coyotes, snakeheads, and sharks, representing human smugglers and escape aides. These characters were depicted as clever, cunning, and brave, challenging traditional views of legality and morality. This approach encouraged a rethinking of the moral dimensions surrounding migration.

The puppet stage, illustrated in Figure 5., depicted three different judicial processes experienced by migrants in Austria. The first trial was about human smuggling, highlighting the harsh penalties faced by an individual who helped others cross a border for a small fee, which he needed to buy a trolley for his newborn. The individual was fined 800 euros and sentenced to 10 months in prison. The second trial focused on the discrimination faced by a Black, queer person during court proceedings, exposing the insensitivity and biases inherent in legal processes. The final trial addressed issues within MA35- Municipal Department for Immigration and Citizenship, including long wait times and mistakes, such as sending false congratulations letters in 2021 to individuals who had not applied for citizenship.

The performance was bilingual, with actors speaking both English and German, and subtitles provided in the opposite language. Personally, I felt a sense of connection and representation in hearing accented German on stage- a rare occurrence in performing arts, especially in *Sprechtheater*. This inclusion fostered a sense of relatability and made the performance feel more accessible and representative of diverse experiences.

Overall, *Justitia: Ill*egal Monsters* presented an important exploration of migration and legality, but also demonstrated how art can bridge cultural and linguistic gaps. The performance's innovative use of multimedia and bilingual presentation created an inclusive environment, making complex issues of migration both accessible and impactful.

5.1.3. THE: Sorority Panel. Diversität in der Kultur?

On the 20th of October 2023, a panel discussion took place at *Belvedere 21*, organized in collaboration with *Sorority* and *Belvedere 21*. The data for this event were gathered through participant observation, recordings of the panel discussion, field notes, and online research. The panel featured Marissa Lobo, artistic director of *kültür gemma!* and a board member of *D/Arts*, Ivana Pilić, managing director of *D/Arts*, and Christiane Erharter, curator for



Figure 6. Online flyer of the event

community outreach and public programs at *Belvedere*. The discussion addressed several topics, including privilege in accessing art and culture, power structures and hierarchies, the lack of diversity or measurability of diversity. I will summarize the key arguments and insights from the discussion.

The panelists expressed concerns about the elitism in the art and cultural sector. Issues such as rising ticket prices, unpaid internships and general financial difficulties create barriers to participation, limiting who can engage with the cultural sector. Further limitations to participation are symbolic capital and the codes of conduct. Ivana Pilić highlighted the

disparity in resources between general outreach programs and core institutional programming.

Marissa Lobo brought a decolonial perspective to the discussion, emphasizing that art for BIPOC communities frequently intertwines with life experiences, serving as a means of processing trauma and asserting identity. This perspective contrasts with Eurocentric views of art, which can overlook the personal significance of artistic expression for marginalized groups (Field diary 21.10.2023). Lobo also shared her frustrations over the slow progress in addressing diversity and inclusion in the arts, pointing out that, despite many discussions, significant challenges remain.

Ivana Pilić agrees: *„Although diversity and discrimination critique have gained popularity recently, there remains a gap between rhetoric and actual inclusive hiring practices. Cultural actors can make a difference by reflecting on their practices and breaking down homogenous bubbles within their spheres of influence “(0:15:20-0:15:34).* The main issue is thus superficial



Figure 7. Photo of the panelists. From left to the right: Christiane Erharter, Marissa Lobo, Ivana Pilić, and host Lisa Martha Janka

implementation of diversity initiatives, suggesting that true change requires marginalized individuals in decision-making roles and a willingness from those in privileged positions to give up some of their power (Field diary 21.10.2023). Erharter emphasized that self-reflection and a constant questioning of

one's own privileges, are crucial for sustainable change, even if these processes are uncomfortable.

Marissa Lobo expanded on this idea by discussing *“dorority”* (*dororidade* in Portuguese; *dor* meaning pain, and the suffix *-idade* being used to name words and feelings), a concept by Brazilian theorist and professor, Vilma Piedade. Lobo explained that while those in privileged positions experience pain when giving up some of their privileges, those without privileges

experience even more pain. Hence, the pain is crucial in these processes, because *“without dorority, there can be no true sorority”* (0:19:25-0:19:28). This concept highlights the need for empathy and understanding in diversity and inclusion efforts.

The discussion also compared Austria’s progress in diversity with that of Germany and Switzerland, noting that the latter are more advanced in developing diversity strategies and awareness teams for combating racism within institutions. The institutions, however, must be aware of the discrimination occurring within their walls, and they need to take proactive steps to address it. Furthermore, individuals need to be made aware of their own harmful and discriminating practices.

Ivana Pilić pointed out that while old concert halls exhibit a lack of diversity, the performing arts sector is more varied, even if hierarchies tend to be homogenous at the top.

Additionally, quotas and position allocations often benefit middle-class white Austrian women, indicating a need to rethink these structures to better reflect population demographics. While Christiane agrees that the old concert halls remain *“old-fashioned or conservative”*, there are still many outreach projects like youth orchestras or city music initiatives that break out of traditional spaces (0:28:49-0:28:50). One of the examples is the guided tour *Queering the Belvedere*, which focuses on the history and representation of queer, Black people in the collection. Such events show that diverse and inclusive offers can attract broad and diverse audiences and create demand, since this tour was always sold-out.

The panel highlighted that *“barriers exist for all discriminated groups in different forms, some are clearer like ramps, but others are more subtle”* (0:34:37-0:34:53). Many people are unaware of such barriers, so it is crucial to address these questions and create capacities to reduce barriers. Inclusive practices like tours for visually impaired people can be a helpful example by being educational for sighted people, through bringing the challenges experienced by visually impaired people closer to them (Field diary 21.10.2023).

“Instead of constantly inviting external experts, we should build a diverse team that can identify and solve these issues in everyday life” (0:36:34-0:36:44). This approach indicates that it is crucial to have people in-house who can recognize and highlight these barriers.

In exploring how diversity in art and culture can bridge cultures and communities, Ivana argues against a unified concept of culture, suggesting that Vienna’s diverse population

should be reflected in the cultural sector. Successful initiatives like *kültür gemma!* and *D/Arts*, which support BIPOC and migrants, were highlighted as positive examples. *kültür gemma!* focuses on the process of creating art, rather than solely on identity politics, while *D/Arts* works with a broad range of institutions to foster structural changes. Some of the institutions include larger ones such as the *Musikverein* or the Vienna State Opera, as well as mid-sized stages like *brut* and *Kosmos Theater* or smaller activist associations like *Romano Svato*. Such an approach ensures that diverse artists are integrated into regular work practices, promoting a more inclusive environment.

Finally, the discussion touched on the importance of measuring diversity through cultural policy commitments and data collection, a practice more developed in the UK and Germany compared to Austria. Marissa Lobo advocated for increased funding for groups and institutions that genuinely promote diversity (Field diary 21.10.2023). The panelists emphasized the need for long-term efforts to integrate diverse practices and avoid tokenism, ensuring that marginalized voices are included in sustainable, meaningful ways.

The panel highlighted that addressing financial challenges and understanding the needs of diverse audiences is crucial for improving diversity and dismantling existing hierarchies in the arts. It is essential for the sector to experiment with inclusivity, learn from failures, and implement existing knowledge to redistribute privilege and foster a more equitable environment.

5.1.4. E Bistarde Festival

The *E Bistarde Roma Theater Festival* held from the 1st to the 9th of November 2023, at *Dschungel Wien*, was organized by *Romano Svato*, a Roma theater association founded in 2010 by sisters Simonida and Sandra Selimović. The festival is a powerful platform for addressing anti-Romani sentiment, racism, and sexism through various forms of artistic expression, including theater, rap, and public interventions. The Selimović sisters use their work to challenge and deconstruct stereotypes about Roma people, blending their individual experiences as Romnja with feminist and anti-patriarchal perspectives.

The festival's aim to shed light on the Roma community's struggle is particularly sentimental, given that, despite being officially recognized as an ethnic group in Austria for 30 years,

significant gaps in knowledge and enduring prejudices about Roma people persist (Dschungel Wien 2023).

Romano Svato's commitment to raising awareness and visibility for the Roma community is crucial. *"The responsibility lies in looking forward without forgetting the past,"* says Simonida Selimović, the founder and artistic director of Romano Svato (Ibid.).

The official poster (Figure 8.) for the 2023 festival references the temporary memorial, an installation by multidisciplinary artist and activist Luna De Rosa (Field Diary 09.11.2023). The installation consisted of a caravan covered with textiles, red threads, and manifestos that recall the



Figure 8. Festival's promotion poster

stories of Roma ancestors and Holocaust survivors. At the same time, it metaphorically references the caravan's iconography as a collective space, narrating the cultural and psychological heritage and memories of diverse Roma identities (Dschungel Wien 2023). During the festival, the artist offered fortune-telling inside the caravan with the *crystal ball*, resembling the red chakra or cartwheel, depicted on the Romani flag. Additionally, a person can be seen holding a mobile phone, suggesting the possibility of a digital world, or *Roma verse*, as a safe space for all Roma people.

This historical context of the festival highlights the ongoing need to recognize and remember the sufferings of the Roma community, as their persecution during the Nazi era was largely overlooked. Just like in Germany, the persecution of the Roma in Austria was not recognized. The festival's role in providing a space for remembrance and reflection is an important aspect of its impact (Roma Center 2023). The events that I visited all offered a standard as well as a reduced price. Additionally, some events were free of charge, such as the discussion that will be mentioned below.

Among the festival's notable productions was *Land ohne Land*. The play illustrates the severe discrimination Roma people faced during the pandemic, including wrongful accusations of being virus carriers and experiencing police violence.

Another significant production, *Rom*nja City*, delves into the history of Rita Prigmore and her twin sister, Rolanda, who were subjected to Nazi medical experiments in the 1940s. The play underscores the continuing impact of racism and discrimination and serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring legacy of trauma and the need for spaces of safety and empowerment for the Roma community.

Reflecting on these performances, it becomes evident that the *E Bistarde* festival not only commemorates historical suffering but also actively engages with contemporary issues facing the Roma community. The festival's approach to blending historical reflection with present-day struggles provides a comprehensive understanding of the Roma experience. It challenges audiences to confront their own prejudices and consider the broader implications of systemic discrimination.

The festival's role in addressing these issues through theater is both innovative and necessary. It creates a platform for Roma voices to be heard and valued, while also encouraging dialogue and reflection among broader audiences. The powerful storytelling in *Land ohne Land* and *Rom*nja City* exemplifies how theater can be a transformative medium for exploring and addressing complex social issues. As such, the *E Bistarde* festival stands out as a significant cultural event that contributes to the ongoing fight against racism and supports the empowerment and visibility of the Roma community.

*Talk: Images of Rom*nja artists in media and on stage*

The final day of *E Bistarde*, featured a discussion about the challenges of representation and the lack of space for Roma artists. This conversation involved six individuals from various fields, including actors, musicians, journalists, and activists, as well as organizers and founders of Roma-related events and associations. The discussion highlighted the systemic barriers that Roma artists face and explored potential pathways toward more equitable representation and visibility.

Gilda-Nancy Horvath, a journalist and musician known as Nancy Black, pointed out the chronic underpayment and disadvantages that artists, particularly those from marginalized communities, experience. Horvath has actively used her platform to challenge the far-right party FPÖ in Austria, first through journalism and later through her music. While acknowledging her privileges, such as a strong network of support, she also recognized that many others lack these resources, which can lead to fear and withdrawal from activism. This

highlights a significant issue: the uneven distribution of support networks and opportunities that can either empower or limit artists' ability to advocate for change.



Figure 9. Photo of the discussants. From left to the right: Adrian Gaspar, host Carmen Gheorghe, Sandra Selimović, Stéphane Laederich, Roxanna-Lorraine Witt and Gilda-Nancy Horvath

Roxanna-Lorraine Witt, the first Sinti and Romani person in Germany to hold a position of structural power, says that if Roma people find themselves in leadership roles, they must prove that they certainly did deserve that position. Witt further mentions that as a Roma woman, she also needs to prove her loyalty towards her community, so that she is not seen as a traitor, now that she is holding a position within an oppressive system. She also criticizes the term “minority” that is used for Roma and Sinti, since the Europe-wide population of these groups is larger than the population of some countries, for example, Luxembourg or Austria. With her engagement, Witt wants to protect the most vulnerable groups from the violent gaze of Gadje (non-Roma) people.

Stéphane Laederich, the executive director of the Roma Foundation in Zürich, remarks that deeply rooted stereotypes of Roma people very often reinforce outdated, simplistic, and harmful images.

“You always get brought back to the same place- begging, stealing, poor, many children, no education. You get pushed into these stereotypes” (0:24:16-0:24:24).

Laederich’s remarks highlight the importance of challenging and dismantling these stereotypes, as they serve as significant barriers to the acceptance and integration of Roma individuals in various sectors, including the arts.

Sandra Selimović, an actor, activist, and co-founder of Romano Svato, talked about her experiences in the art scene. Her artistic ideas were often ignored or exploited, with white colleagues receiving credit for her work. This pattern indicates a broader systemic problem where Romani contributions are undervalued and made invisible. Sandra remarks that even if you do fantastic work, *“you always need a white person in the front selling or representing the idea so it can become relevant and succeed” (0:29:31-0:29:41).* Her experiences show us the persistent marginalization and tokenization of Romani artists, where their value is only acknowledged if it fits into the dominant group’s narrative.

At the beginning of her career, Sandra often distanced herself from her Romani identity, and due to financial instability, she often took on roles that reproduced harmful stereotypes. However, over time, she found pride in embracing her identity as a queer Roma woman. Sandra was throughout her career often tokenized, such as in the theater play *Die Ärztin* that was shown in the *Burgtheater* in Vienna. She remembers that the theater wanted a diverse cast for this play since the play itself was about diversity and antisemitism. However, Sandra felt invisible, especially when she was not invited to a roundtable discussion about diversity after the play.

“You are not even aware that I’m one of the first Romani actresses who is playing on your stage, and you don’t even acknowledge it” (0:45:06-0:45:15).

These narratives highlight the complex interplay between cultural and personal identities in the work of Romani artists. While drawing on personal experiences can offer unique viewpoints and have a profound impact on the audience as well as on the broader cultural narrative, it also holds a risk of artists being seen solely through the lens of their ethnicity. Because of unstable financial situations, artists are frequently forced to create art that meets consumer needs, which can restrict their creative freedom. Although there have been efforts to include Romani plays in the regular theater programs, these attempts have remained

limited to a festival setting. Even if the classification of Romani art as a separate category can promote the visibility of Romani culture, it can also contribute to the perception that Romani art does not belong to the mainstream culture. To overcome this, institutions need to include Romani art in their regular programs and acknowledge it as an essential component of culture, moving beyond tokenistic inclusion.

Establishing platforms like the *E Bistarde* festival, where Romani voices and talents are empowered, is crucial. These spaces further create a sense of community, allowing for the celebration of Romani culture and creativity, thus challenging the status quo. The impact of this festival needs to extend beyond its duration, influencing ongoing cultural practices and policies to create sustainable change.

This discussion at *E Bistarde* reflects larger societal challenges related to representation, inclusivity, and the value placed on underrepresented voices. The festival serves not only as a platform for Romani artists but also as a stimulant for broader discussions about how art can confront structural injustices and lead the way for a more inclusive cultural landscape. True progress can only be achieved through dialogue, advocacy, and the breaking down of barriers, ensuring that all artists, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to be recognized for their contributions.

5.2. Interviews

5.2.1. The stage belongs to everyone

The artistic journey of the physical theater company “Side Effect” under Danilo Jovanović

Danilo Jovanović is an actor and theater director from former Yugoslavia. Four years ago, he moved to Vienna due to limited opportunities for artists in the Balkans. In Belgrade, he



Figure 10. Logo of the theater company

visited a private academy for physical theater, which remains central to his artistic career in Vienna. Danilo founded a physical theater company named Side Effect in 2019, focusing on migrant and refugee perspectives in its artistic work. Their performances also show how individuals with migration or refugee experiences are treated inside the Austrian system.

Side Effect works with a methodology called the open soul concept, which Danilo developed. In his own words:

“My methodology is taking people's experiences, their dreams, their memories, their emotions, and then working with them as a material [...] So I am taking the actual life experience and then I am translating it into art” (0:01:02-0:01:34).

This approach involves creative cooperation, with artists participating in all stages of creation, including text, movement, and design. It emphasizes self-representation, allowing individuals to tell their own stories, rather than relying on others to interpret and represent them. The method challenges the boundaries between structured *Sprechtheater* and performance art, focusing on rhythm, energy, and atmosphere, rather than a linear storyline.

“Theater, you feel through your stomach, I am not interested in creating theater that you need to understand through your head. You feel it, it hits you in the stomach, or it does not” (0:31:30-0:31:46).

Danilo is committed to making theatre accessible to everyone, advocating for a wider range of stories and experiences portrayed on stage, welcoming people from various backgrounds to participate, both on stage and in the audience.

“The open soul [concept] came from the idea of my understanding of theatre that says that the stage belongs to everyone. Theatre is not something exclusive, that is reserved only for professional actors or big institutions” (0:17:42-0:17:57).

The collective includes people from countries such as Iran, Ethiopia, Brazil, Türkiye, Chile, and former Yugoslavia.

The first performance of the theater company “How long are you planning to stay” premiered in Odeon theater during the *WIENWOCHE* festival in 2020. Danilo explains that this piece was inspired by frequent questions that migrants are asked in Austria such as “*Wie lange bleibst du (in Österreich)?*” and “*Woher kommst du?*”. The performance aims to challenge misconceptions about migration, exile, and identity, examining the concept of home, and how language can both empower and oppress migrants during their integration. Danilo also wanted to highlight the crucial role of migrants in supporting Austrian society, especially evident during the pandemic when migrant labor was necessary for essential services.

“These experiences should not remain invisible. Our piece shows the complexity of migrant identities from a self-empowering perspective, since the public space, which should also belong to us, is appropriated” (Physical Theater Company Side Effect 2021).

In 2020, Danilo received a scholarship from *kültür gemma!* for his project *Stories about hugs*. The performance explores the connection between two men, set in a contemporary setting, and aims at highlighting the ability to see people beyond their bodies. It focuses on the experiences of gay, migrant men in Vienna, emphasizing their exclusion from the dominant queer community and the difficulties they face, especially if they are not white. The performers additionally touched upon topics of toxic masculinity, fragile masculinity, racism, ageism, or the stigma associated with HIV. The piece underscores the human behind the physical body, asking a simple question: *“Can I find comfort in your hug?”* (Physical Theater Company Side Effect 2020).

The company’s language choices are based on what allows artists to express themselves authentically, without prior decisions. So far, English and German have been used equally, with occasional use of the performer’s native language. Throughout the process, language choices are made fluidly, to support the performers' authentic expression.

Challenges in the Viennese cultural landscape

Danilo considers Vienna as a good hub for European art, especially compared to Serbia or Bosnia and Herzegovina, primarily due to available funding. His experiences as a migrant motivated him to address related issues, leading to the formation of the group Side effect. Danilo observed the complexities of navigating the Austrian bureaucracy and how challenging it can be for newcomers.

“You have opportunities, you have fundings, you have things, but also to understand the Austrian bureaucracy and the system, how it works, not everyone can easily jump into that” (0:08:16-0:08:26).

Danilo decided to share his knowledge and privileges and to create possibilities for others, drawing from his background in project management. During the interview, the Austrian bureaucracy emerged as a challenge, primarily for project applications that frequently require project management skills. Danilo believes that although artists may have great ideas, they sometimes struggle to explain how their ideas would work in practice. According

to Danilo, the system's rules are strict and rigid, which can be unwelcoming, particularly for those who are unfamiliar with how things operate in Austria. A significant aspect of community emerged in relation to this positionality and Danilo emphasized its importance in supporting and helping one another not only through the bureaucratic system. According to Danilo, applying for projects involves extensive unpaid work, raising concerns about sustainability and stability.

Danilo furthermore expressed the intention to attract audiences from diverse backgrounds while challenging the privileges enjoyed by most Austrians. Creating inclusive spaces is difficult, especially when collaborating with established theater institutions, like Odeon theater, which has its own structures and pricing policies. This is a barrier for those who wish to attend cultural events but cannot afford the tickets. While some theaters offer reduced rates through programs like *Kulturpass*, Danilo highlights the limited flexibility in negotiating prices or organizing more accessible events.

When it comes to funding opportunities, Danilo notes that Vienna has a well-defined system for funding artistic projects. He lists several successfully funded projects by MA 7 *Stadt Wien*, the *Bundesministerium*, *kültür gemma!*, *Zukunftsfund*, and *Basis Kultur Wien*, emphasizing their importance for young, lesser-known theatre companies like his own. However, Danilo is dissatisfied with the limited access to international funding options for migrants and diasporas, outside the support from MA 7 and *Bundesministerium*.

Danilo furthermore reflects on the challenges of the Viennese art scene, where performances often have limited runs and additional visibility requires additional finance or re-staging. His preference for deeper exploration and longer runs conflicts the pressure to constantly produce new work.

Danilo criticizes the bureaucratic inflexibility and accessibility issues common in larger institutions, where administrative processes are prioritized over artistic significance. He would prefer collaboration with those who genuinely value artistic contributions, rather than being treated as just another project in a bureaucratic system. Danilo also highlights the underrepresentation of people with migrant backgrounds in the art scene. Additionally, the dominance of directors and curators from Germany, Switzerland, or Austria in the decision-making roles in the art sector is evident. He calls for more inclusive power dynamics and mentions initiatives like *kültür gemma!*, *D/Arts*, and *WIENWOCHE* as steps towards better

representation, while noting that Eurocentrism remains prevalent in the power and resource distribution.

He emphasizes the need for political frameworks that prioritize diversity and understanding of different perspectives. Danilo stands for proactive measures to create inclusive spaces by engaging with diverse communities and showing commitment to equity and care beyond just making open calls. He stresses the importance of daily actions in addressing privilege and creating a respectful and safe environment within teams.

Danilo acknowledges stability and sustainability as major challenges for artists, especially those from migrant backgrounds. He highlights the difficulty of balancing the need to create cultural capital and the practical necessity of earning a living. Frequent rejections and a lack of steady projects add to the instability, forcing people to seek new opportunities all the time. Danilo stresses the significance of fair pay for artists and the need for long-term stability to support creative freedom. Danilo concludes that broader systematic changes are needed to address these challenges effectively.

5.2.2. Fostering inclusivity in cultural institutions through D/Arts

Ivana Pilić is a co-founder and co-director of the project office *D/Arts*. At the Inter-University Institution for Science and Art, she is currently pursuing a PhD, focusing on the intersection of theory and practice, science, and art. Before *D/Arts*, Ivana was the director of *Brunnenpassage* in Vienna, with 14 years of experience in the fields of diversity, discrimination critique, arts, and culture.

In 2020, Ivana was tasked with curating discussions about discrimination in arts and culture, aiming to expand the scope and establish a collaborative network.

“I agreed but suggested that it would be beneficial to involve as many institutions as possible in the discourse” (0:01:50-0:02:03).



Figure 11. Logo of the D/Arts project office

Creating shared working experiences and building a network that benefits a broader range of people were the primary goals. By summer 2021, *D/Arts* organized large events and social media campaigns, focusing on discourse and

networking. The possibility of creating an office was considered only if it proved to be politically beneficial and effective. As a result of the initiative's success, an office with 69 cultural institutions was established in February 2022.

"The idea from the beginning was that whatever we do, we do it in collaboration. Events are never curated by just one person but involve different institutions. The goal was to bring these different players together and to create a shared working experience. [...] So from the beginning, the question was, how can we establish a network that benefits more people?" (0:02:50-0:03:45).

To increase the project's benefits, they now have a board with members like Marissa Lobo from *kültür gemma!* and about thirty advisors in a flexible structure.

For the first 2 years, *D/Arts* received initial funding from a foundation, in addition to smaller amounts from the city of Vienna, and a larger amount from the federal government. Future funding remains uncertain, as this initial funding was only available for 2023. Luckily, the city of Brethen in Germany advocated strongly on their behalf, resulting in increased funding from both the federal government and the city for the upcoming year. *D/Arts* also secured more funds from the foundation for 2024. Ivana said that it was surprising to achieve this much support for what began as a series of discussions, *"but it also shows that there is a real need for something like this in Austria"* (0:16:10-0:16:15).

Rather than starting from scratch, *D/Arts* builds on the groundwork laid by many cultural activists. Notable contributors include activists like Ljubomir Bratić, who has long advocated for the Museum of Migration, and organizations such as *kültür gemma!*, *WIENWOCHE* or Aslı Kışlal with „Pimp My Integration“.

In order to promote greater collaboration, *D/Arts* seeks to unite these longstanding activists without being tied to any particular institution. Bigger organizations like *Kunsthalle*, the State Opera, and *brut* have also shown support. The dynamic nature of the project allows new partners to join in, demonstrating its reach within Vienna's cultural institutions.

By hosting events at venues like the *Belvedere* and *Musikverein*, *D/Arts* has come a long way in engaging prominent cultural spaces. However, hosting events alone is not enough to effect real change within those institutions. *D/Arts* aims to initiate learning and transformation

process rather than claim immediate success. Member institutions are committed to an ongoing learning process rather than receiving a label indicating they are discrimination-free.

The first two years of the office project focused on gathering participants, an unusual but essential step. The collaborative process of learning and unlearning started with the establishment of the office itself. The office is seen as a political strategy, not just an administrative body. Ivana is however aware, that the office can be dissolved if it stops having a political impact or promoting real learning.

"[...] it is also a lot about being honest with ourselves, about what works and what does not. And to reflect on that together. So that we do not engage in diversity-washing" (0:22:13-0:22:30).

The lack of diversity in Vienna's cultural sector

Ivana highlights the lack of diversity in cultural institutions, both in audience demographics and staff hierarchies. One of the main problems in addressing this issue is the absence of official studies or statistics on how many people with migration histories are employed in the established cultural institutions in Vienna, and what position they hold. *D/Arts* collaborated with EDUCULT, an independent, non-profit institute specializing in research and consulting in culture and education, on a small study surveying the personnel structures of cultural institutions. However, this study was never published.

"When you look at the personnel structure, it is diverse when we look at the technicians and the cleaning staff, but the higher you go in the hierarchy, the less diverse it is" (0:31:55-0:32:07).

In Ivana's opinion, cultural institutions frequently confuse international representation with local diversity, failing to reflect the diverse urban society. For instance, Vienna's largest migrant group, the ex-Yugoslavian community, is underrepresented in cultural institutions. This lack of representation reflects broader exclusions in education, housing, and employment. Despite being integral to society, second and third-generation migrants still face discrimination. Languages like Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian are undervalued compared to languages like French. Rather than acknowledging this community's contributions, the cultural sector often treats this community as inferior.

Ivana points out that Austria lacks monuments honoring guest workers or a museum dedicated to migration, showing a disregard for migrants' histories and contributions. She argues for a shift in institutional logic from trying to reach culturally distant groups to transforming institutions to become more relevant and inclusive. The cultural sector's current homogeneity in staff continues to perpetuate exclusion.

By increasing visibility and job opportunities for marginalized artists and activists, *D/Arts* has made significant progress. However, Ivana acknowledges that learning and unlearning is an ongoing process that must be continually re-evaluated. The networking platform has promoted collaboration among different institutions, with some of them now actively seeking candidates for open job positions through this network.

Ivana remains critical of *D/Arts* practices, acknowledging that no single solution always works and that anti-discrimination initiatives can be superficially adopted. The goal of *D/Arts* is to cultivate a culture of critical reflection and effective action. Strengthening debates and public visibility, as well as public awareness is crucial, as is learning from existing successful and unsuccessful institutional processes. Ivana emphasizes the significance of not just discussing diversity on a meta-level, but also implementing concrete actions and affirmative policies.

D/Arts is now a part of a larger field of similar initiatives, working to improve competencies and know-how in diversity and inclusion through practical and actionable strategies.

However, the true impact of these efforts will be seen only in a few years.

5.2.3. Artistic freedom and Yugoslav heritage in Vienna's theater

Anja Lazić-Akaratović is a singer, actor, singing teacher and founder of the theater group *Teatar Breza*. She migrated to Vienna in 2002 with the goal of pursuing higher education. This is where she got her bachelor's degree in musical theater in 2006, and her master's degree in



Figure 12. Logo of the theater group
Teatar Breza

pedagogy of jazz singing in 2009. At the music school *Region Wagram* in Lower Austria, Anja teaches jazz and pop singing.

Teatar Breza was founded in February 2019 and consists of around fifteen members. *Breza* is a theater platform that was created because of "the need for artistic freedom and freedom of artistic expression on stage" (0:02:30-0:02:38).

According to Anja, the members share the same passion for creative intervention. She says that the theater group became something bigger than what it was meant to be in the beginning. Over time, the members of *Breza* have formed a family-like bond, spending time together both professionally and privately.

“We connected a lot as strangers in a foreign city, or rather in our city, in which we were not born” (0:04:26-0:04:35).

The actors are all from the countries of former Yugoslavia, and they perform in the Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian language (BCS). Since 2021, *Teatar Breza* regularly incorporates subtitles in the German language to induce inclusivity. Anja wants *Breza* to become even more of a platform for its members, but also non-members where everyone could pursue their own projects.

“We are not only doing theater for people speaking Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, but we are a theater in Vienna, and thus we want to be a part of this city and also to present culture from former Yugoslav region to the people of Vienna” (Field Diary 14.06.2023.).

Last year, 2023, the group received its first funding from the city of Vienna, specifically from the fifth district. Also located there is the theater *Spektakl*, where the group’s latest play *Rodne igre* was performed.

Navigating the challenges of intercultural theater

For 2024, Anja has applied for annual subsidies from the city, as well as the Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service, and Sport. When talking about their plan to apply for further subventions, Anja made the experience that pieces and ensembles that work bilingually, have a female artistic director, or have more females in the ensemble, are quite popular among the funding agencies and thus tend to get subventions more easily. *Breza* will continue to seek subsidies for their future projects, although they have not done it before, due to Anja’s aversion to the amount of paperwork these applications usually require. She calls this approach a mistake in the system of the city.

“Not only do you have to know your own profession well, but you should also be able to understand and know everything about the paperwork and bureaucracy it takes to apply for a subvention” (0:17:41-0:17:50).

In Anja's opinion, the audience that comes to see them perform are migrants with a higher education, who show interest in theater and culture. For the last two performances, which had German subtitles, Anja observed more diverse audiences, who came to watch them perform *"mostly because they love intercultural theater"* (0:22:8-0:22:40).

While reflecting on her own experiences as an artist in Vienna, Anja thinks that nowadays productions which are multicultural, or bilingual are often preferred when it comes to the funding opportunities, because of modern political correctness. On one hand, she thinks that such initiatives should be funded, but on the other hand Anja acknowledges that there are projects, which are labeled as multicultural, but lack artistic quality. This is a challenge for those who decide which projects to fund, as rejecting a project from someone with a migration background can lead to accusations of discrimination, such as *"I was rejected because I am a migrant"* (Field Diary 10.07.2023.).

Anja has been involved in the cultural fields of Vienna from her early beginnings and thus she believes that regarding the institutional structures and the diversity of staff, the situation has changed, at least in the last 10 years. When she was studying, she remembers that *"it was a rarity to see a name in the theater ensembles that was not of German origin"* (0:32:40-0:32:48).

Regarding the future of *Teatar Breza*, Anja wishes for the ensemble to have their own rehearsal space and a bigger team for production, which, unfortunately due to the lack of financial support, the theater cannot afford.

5.2.4. Feminism, class, and migration in Mirjana Mustra's art

Mirjana Đotunović, known artistically as Mirjana Mustra, is an artist, curator, and cultural worker, focusing on feminism, the working class, and migration which are topics closely connected to her personal experience. Mustra is studying post-conceptual art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Originally from Belgrade, Serbia, she has lived in Austria since 2003.

Moving from Serbia to Austria Mustra became part of the working class, and she often juggled two or three jobs while studying. These experiences expanded her political awareness and connected her with many people. At this point in her life, art became her outlet, a way to express things difficult to say elsewhere.

"I could not vote, for example, at that time. So, art was a way where I could have a voice"
(0:09:22-0:09:29).

The topics of gender discrimination, the working class, and capitalism were significant for Mustra even back in Serbia, so they naturally became central to her art. Her experience with migration deeply influenced her work. Mirjana believes that migrants are the force that keeps any country running, especially capitalist Western countries. Yet they are frequently treated as second- or third-class citizens. Mirjana believes that migrants often possess more knowledge and skills than those who stay in one place due to the challenges they face, constantly adapting to new circumstances. According to Mustra, migrants are frequently treated like commodities who must be quiet, grateful, and always prove their worth. In this dynamic, language plays a crucial role. In Austria, learning German is often used as a tool to divide and control migrants. The way language proficiency is presented is problematic. Mustra recalls job ads seeking staff with accent-free German, which she understood as a coded way of saying we would not accept migrants. She has experienced more than one instance of migrants being systematically oppressed, and she believes that making these issues transparent is essential for improving the conditions and rights of migrants in Austria.

Some of the above-mentioned topics are displayed in Mustra's art. Together with Jana Dolecki and Sanja Aleksić, she worked on a project called "Manifesto of Ideal Work" for *WIENWOCHE* 2017. The project involved a series of workshops, where a group of about thirty-five people, mostly migrants, would meet almost every week to discuss and share thoughts on diverse topics. Some of the questions raised during this project were about what work is, why, how, and for whom do we work, or how our ideal work would look like (When Where Wh.at 2017). Another significant work of Mustra is "Working Class Hero", a textile work created with her grandmother, who was an activist in the 1930s Serbian textile workers movement, using a specific technique, now practiced by only one machine left in Austria.

Community and the challenge of sustainability

Another significant initiative of Mirjana Mustra is a conference under the name *Konferencija* which aimed to unite the artistic and cultural work of people who come from former Yugoslavia. Her goal was to connect, discuss common topics, and explore their identities. Despite the challenge of no funding, Mustra managed to gather a diverse group of around 20 to 30 participants, focusing on women's artistic production. The exhibition featured a variety

of media, including photographs, videos, paintings, or performances. The first day focused on the exhibition opening, while the second day featured a more academic approach with lectures and workshops. A highlight was a live Zoom with Jasmina Tumbaš, who presented her book “I am Jugoslovenka”, exploring feminist performance politics during and after



Figure 13. Promotion flyer for the event *Konferencija*

Yugoslav socialism. The conference was in English, thus attracting a diverse audience, including attendees from ex-Yugoslavia and Austria. The audience included friends of the artists, people interested in the topics, and financial contributors such as the Student Union of the Academy of Fine Arts. Other extensive financial support was not available for Mirjana during the organization of this event. The primary support came from enthusiastic individuals who found the event important and wanted to support the cause. Mustra expresses her wish to organize this event again, but this time, securing funding would be an essential

requirement. The event involved a lot of work, and as a single mother with an unstable income, it was challenging for Mirjana to manage everything alone. With proper funding, she could expand and improve the event, offering more to both the participants and the audience.

Taking this situation into consideration, Mirjana states that it is unsustainable to be an artist, as most artists are forced to take on unrelated jobs, so-called *Brot-jobs*, just to make ends meet.

“And if you are lucky, you can find a job that is in the cultural field. And so, you can stay connected, but many people just do whatever they can find. It is very hard” (0:37:20-0:37:35).

Staying connected is crucial in the art world, since art thrives on networking and being actively involved in the art sphere, and thus *“it comes down to who you know, who your parents are, and who you went to school with” (0:38:09-0:38:17)*. Despite the precarious circumstances of artists, Mirjana states that without the contributions of underrepresented

artists and cultural workers, there is a small chance of any societal change. Mustra is aware that art cannot change the world, however, she believes that it is a powerful tool for highlighting the problems in society and slowly making an impact. In this sense, communities that continuously work on exposing discrimination, racism, and injustice through art and cultural work are crucial for public discourse and pushing for a structural change, even if it's a slow process.

In 2020, Mirjana started a community-building project titled "Not a Function", aiming at increasing visibility for marginalized artists. Although Mustra sometimes includes Austrian artists, they make up only about 10% of participants. The project is supported by Vienna's 15th district and the organization *Zebra*. Mustra says that this is her way of contributing to the visibility of underrepresented groups. She provides a platform in public spaces where the artists can show their art and get paid for their work.

"When I have some money for projects, I try to employ, invite, or collaborate with people who are from marginalized groups because they need the space. [...] If I have some power, I can distribute it, and I try to make space for the people who don't have it" (0:43:09-0:43:47).

Mustra believes that the Viennese art scene is diverse, unlike the art market, which does not adequately represent the existing diversity. She says that many people who are in positions of power are unwilling to give it up, creating obstacles for marginalized artists, who often must conform to dominant cultural norms in order to be accepted. Mirjana also names language as another major barrier in the art world. There have been some improvements, she remarks, such as the possibility to submit grant applications in English, but many opportunities still require being fluent in German. Such circumstances have the potential to exclude non-native speakers and further reinforce already-existing power imbalances. Institutions could use a variety of tools to address these issues. For example, outreach programs that aim at including marginalized communities are often run by Austrians, who may not be fully aware of the challenges these communities face. Implementing quotas to ensure that marginalized groups are adequately represented in leadership positions and within other roles in the institutions, would be a more effective strategy.

Mirjana says that visibility and networking opportunities are big challenges for her. Financial limitations also restrict the scale of her artistic projects. While having a strong idea is

important, its complete realization may be prevented by a lack of funding. Despite these obstacles, Mirjana stays devoted to using her work to make an impact.

5.2.5. Intersectional and decolonial approaches in cultural practices

Marissa Lobo, an artist, and activist migrated to Austria from Brazil and has been working in the cultural fields in Austria for the past 17 years. Her journey started in Linz with *maiz*, a self-organization of migrant women, aimed at redefining the positionality of women in cultural fields and promoting their cultural and political participation. The work of *maiz* is closely connected to the mediation of knowledge and encouraging migrant women to see themselves as the protagonists of their history, rather than accepting the status quo. From the beginning their focus was on *“the intersectional field of migration [...] and the question of class”* (0:02:19-0:02:28). According to Marissa, *maiz* was not just an organization active in the cultural field, but rather in the social and educational fields, including helping young migrants prepare for high school in Austria by learning German. Through a range of activities, the participants could express experiences, including street interventions, to *“claim the spaces”* (0:03:51-0:03:52). Lobo remarks that this approach in a collective such as *maiz* has influenced her work up until now.

Currently, she is working as the artistic director of *kültür gemma!*, a project aimed at pragmatically distributing (financial) resources in the cultural sphere through fellowships and scholarships. Marissa is also involved in other projects, concerning intersectionality and decolonial approaches, as well as approaches that are questioning power structures, especially in knowledge distribution. One such project was Night School in 2017, which took place in the *Volkskunde Museum*. Free and open to all with registration, Night School met every Monday over three 3 months. It offered a curriculum with different approaches, aimed at decolonizing knowledge.

“Night school is an evening school where thinking, learning, and teaching, depart from minoritarian, marginalized, rebellious and vulnerable positions” (oca: Night School)

The different approaches in teaching in the Night School featured performances or lectures on topics such as the marginalization of Roma and Sinti in Austria and Europe or the possibility of interventions in the dominant, hegemonic cultural and social groups (Ibid.).

Marissa says that the goal was to create an environment of hospitality and “a *space that breaks these very dry and sometimes violent spaces of learning*” (0:11:02-0:11:12).

Kültür gemma!, Clišhé Träsh, and the challenge of marginalized representation

In addition to the previously mentioned organizations and projects, Marissa is a mentor at *kültür gemma!*, where her main task is to support the artists through mentorship and financial help, assisting them to present and visualize their work. Additionally, Lobo says that from the beginning “*we wanted to have a piece of [the] cake in the cultural field in Vienna*” (0:20:35-0:20:40).

As a mentor, Marissa holds monthly meetings with the applicants, and participation in these gatherings is a criterion for receiving a grant. In individual meetings, she offers advice on the process of creation, possible changes, or on general difficulties artists tend to have during this process.

Marissa believes that a discourse about diversity exists, yet the institutions remain mainly white. The institutions will have to diversify their staff and include voices from the communities they aim to represent and reach out to. This also means having decision-makers and program creators who are a part of these communities. Lobo suggests establishing more institutions like *kültür gemma!*, and investing in the self-organized spaces, rather than focusing on the established institutions. However, even though she hopes for a significant, institutional change, Lobo also thinks that it is crucial to focus on micro-evolutions that could cause some structural transformations. Since the problem of underrepresentation and invisibility of marginalized groups is nothing new, more knowledge sharing about past initiatives would be beneficial to avoid constantly starting from scratch. On the other hand, she does believe that younger generations are actively working towards transforming the institutional hierarchy and are bringing more visibility to the marginalized groups, yet the structures will still have to change in practice.

5.2.6. A personal archive of labor and migration

Željka Aleksić is an artist who graduated in contextual painting from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Due to her challenging position as an artist, she currently works as a bakery salesperson. Željka’s artistic practice is deeply connected to her lived experiences, and she views all her roles through an artistic lens. Although she graduated in contextual painting,

she identifies as a conceptual artist. Željka looks critically at the contemporary art, stating: *“Artists engage the least with actual artistic work. Very often they do research work in art history, which should be the domain of curators, not artists. Artists should create works. [...] I insist on this and present myself as an artist who creates works through lived experiences”* (0:03:22-0:03:40).

In 2017, after being accepted to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, she worked illegally at a hair salon, right across from the Vienna’s Immigration and Citizenship department (MA 35). Financial difficulties prevented her from buying expensive art supplies, so she went as far as using hair collected from her job to create paintings, exploring the topics of legality, and belonging through her art.

Although she later produced many notable works, not all were directly related to the topics discussed above. Coming from a working-class background, she addressed the undervalued and overlooked status of workers, both in Serbia and in Vienna. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the essential role of workers, like the ones in factories and other essential services, who could not simply stop working, unlike other professions.

Željka’s most significant work is her diploma piece *Das Kapital* (Figure 14.) It is a book which contains documentary photographs from her various workplaces and all documents from the day she arrived in Vienna and applied to the Academy of Fine Arts, up until the final day of preparing her diploma, which involved printing the book as a part of her thesis.

With four hundred pages, the book features original documents from the municipal office, paychecks from various jobs, and the last page is reserved for her diploma, symbolizing her study’s completion. Upon graduation, Željka even placed her original diploma certificate in the book, emphasizing the authenticity of her art and marking the end of her educational journey, the main reason of her migrating to Vienna.

The book also records jobs she did off the books, portraying her financial struggles and the effort required to complete her education. The title *Das Kapital*, Željka says is not only a reference to Karl Marx, but also represents her personal capital- her education. Despite being perceived as a guest worker, she emphasizes that her true wealth is her educational achievement.

The book is for sale at €54.312, corresponding to her total earnings in Vienna, both legal and off-the-books jobs, representing the financial cost of becoming an artist, covering her living expenses and educational fees.



Figure 14. The book *Das Kapital* with a price tag next to it, and a white glove for looking through the book.
Photo taken by the author

“Perhaps that is even the most crucial part of the work, that price. Throughout the presentation of my thesis, I asked questions such as, what is the cost of becoming, and being an artist, how much does art cost. From my own experience, it is indeed this price” (0:24:48-0:25:11).

The impact of low-paid work on Željka’s art

Željka’s employment experiences in Vienna were diverse and often involved low-paying jobs, such as cleaning, being a hotel housekeeper, and waiting tables at restaurants. Despite difficulties, she believes these experiences enriched her artistic practice.

“I believe that only lived experience can create something sincere. We cannot invent something new today, everything already exists. Every topic has been already worked on. But the way of interpretation, the way of making a piece of work, is definitely shaped by your own experience” (0:19:08-0:19:36).

One significant impact of these low-paying jobs on her life is her diagnosis with carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS), which affects her ability as a painter since she cannot paint now as much as she would want to. She remarks:

“It is sad for me, because I have just graduated, and I should now somehow present myself the most and use all possible means for my personal presentation as an artist” (0:26:59-0:27:21).

Despite challenges like losing her job when her employer sold the business, or CTS, Željka remained committed to her art. Željka recalls applying for a grant, which offered up to 10,000 euros of financial help, yet she received only 200 euros. Although disappointed, she used the money to buy cheap canvases and paints from a supermarket. She started taking photos of her workplaces, and later painted them. She portrayed her experiences of working for a cleaning company, or in a restaurant, in her paintings, which are included on the next page.

This was also around the same time when Željka applied for the Mangelos award in Serbia. In her motivational letter, she expressed her wish to *“[...] have the opportunity, the possibility, and the privilege, in the end, to truly begin expressing myself as an artist, to stop talking about cleaning, to stop talking about the things I had been talking about, because I believe I have other topics to explore” (0:44:09-45:29).* Her reality looked different. Her work schedule left her with no time or energy to attend German language course, although she felt fortunate to have a job. Željka emphasized that her story is not meant to evoke pity, but rather to highlight systemic issues in Austria. She mentioned a comment, when she worked as a cleaner, how *“Austria favors cleaners from Serbia” (0:47:03-0:47:08).* Željka wishes for a systemic change to better support students and workers, believing art can facilitate this change. She sees discrimination as a known problem, noting that Austria often prefers certain work to be done by foreign workers, making the country unaware of other potential contributions these individuals could offer.

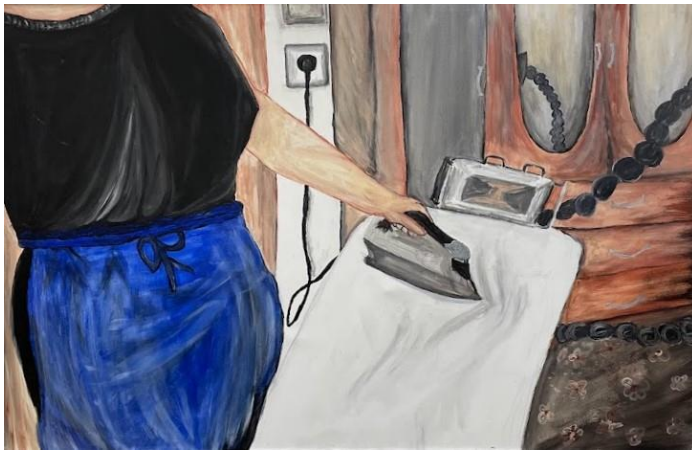


Figure 15. Paintings that were inspired by Željka's working places

Željka criticizes the superficial cultural exchanges between nations, which often focus on sports and trivial cultural presentations rather than serious artistic attempts. She argues that art should be treated with more professionalism and responsibility, rather than as a mere hobby.

In 2019, during the *WIENWOCHE* festival, Željka performed together with her mother a performance called *Gledaj majku, biraj ćerku* (Look at the mother, pick the daughter). It was inspired by her strong connection with her mother and grandmother. The performance originated while Željka and her mother were both suffering from CTS. The title refers to a Serbian reality TV show where men choose a daughter based on the mother's traits. Željka used irony to connect this concept to her own experience as a woman in her thirties, often perceived as an "old maid". The performance in Vienna, involved demonstrating exercises, prescribed by her mother's physician to improve finger mobility. The exercises, which are

usually done for a few minutes each day, were extended to 15 minutes to highlight the physical strain and discomfort. Their condition got worse by the demanding and repetitive nature of their work. In addition to examining their personal experiences, this piece also touched upon broader topics of family ties, labor, and health.

Funding challenges and future plans

Željka received most of the financial support for her artistic work from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. But regarding institutions such as *kültür gemma!* or *WIENWOCHE*, Željka expresses her criticism, despite her participation in their projects. She has learned about their funding processes and notes that these organizations often portray a misleading image. For example, despite sending numerous applications to *kültür gemma!* since her first study year in 2017, she has not received a scholarship yet.

In the broader context of receiving fundings, the institutions in Vienna continue to fund projects focused on the Balkan wars, because *“Austria loves Balkan blood”* (1:16:09-1:16:12). She has a critical stance towards artistic works, which receive funding solely because they include keywords related to war in their pieces. Željka wishes for artists from former Yugoslavia to unite and present art beyond traditional wars and cultural stereotypes, as *“we are not just rakija and war”* (01:26:01-01:26:03).

Despite claims that art is becoming more accessible, Željka feels that it still belongs to the elites. She observes that people from former Yugoslavia rarely attend exhibitions like those at *MUMOK* or *Kunsthalle*. Attendees often come for networking rather than to view art. Željka herself struggles with scheduling due to her work shifts, saying, *“I cannot remember the last time I went to an event, simply because I have a shift starting at seven in the evening”* (1:21:20-1:21:27).

Her main obstacles in Vienna include the Austrian bureaucratic system, visa issues, and financial difficulties. Due to the precarious conditions of her artistic life, Željka works multiple jobs to pay her rent, and has been unable to continue her education, due to a lack of time. This situation makes it difficult for her to renew her visa, creating uncertainty about her future in Vienna.

However, looking ahead, Željka is optimistic about 2024. She plans to present more of her works, with an upcoming exhibition at the *Kunsthalle*. Željka also plans on reapplying for the

Mangelos award in Serbia and a residency in New York. She hopes to create new, meaningful works, and has other planned projects that she will be working on in Vienna.

“If I stay here, that is. If not, I am uncertain about the future”, she concludes (01:48:49-01:48:59).

5.2.7. Curatorial practice and feminist perspectives in Vienna’s art scene

Amalija Stojšavljević is an art historian from Belgrade with a background as a curator and librarian across the former Yugoslavia. She moved to Vienna for her master’s studies, seeking a more flexible art system outside the Balkans. However, she soon discovered that Vienna’s art scene was highly stratified along the lines of class and race. From the beginning, her curatorial and research work focused on marginal social, artistic, and media positions which were not visible enough in society.

One notable project, “Doing the dirty work” critically examines female reproductive labor in Austria through artistic, feminist, and political lenses (Figure 16.). The creators of the project,



Figure 16. Cleaning Women from the “Doing the dirty work” project

Amalija and Anežka Jabůrková, both curators and mothers from (South-) Eastern Europe, examine the current artistic production related to household chores and raising the future workforce for the labor market. Some of the artists involved in this exhibition are my interview partners, such as Željka Aleksić or Mirjana Mustra. Amalija critiques how Eastern and Southeastern Europe are regarded as Europe’s non-places in the West. Ideas, concepts, and cultural elements originating from Eastern and Southeastern territories are generally not regarded as inspirational or potent, while their people, the so-called *AusländerInnen*, are seen at best as a cheap workforce. Embedded prejudices are reflected in the

image of the female workers being cleaners and manual workers. Less obvious, but equally entrenched, is their status in the academic and artistic sphere, where researchers, cultural workers, and artists are usually working on the topics related to their homelands, *“as this is often the only way to penetrate the Austrian art world”*. In this sense, Amalija remarks that

the question whether topics such as female reproductive labor serve as a relevant meeting point for various cultural and artistic tendencies in Austrian art.

The exhibition “Doing the Dirty Work” according to Amalija, wishes not only to highlight visual works by female artists from Eastern and Southeastern Europe focused on reproductive labor but also seeks to initiate debate on the hegemony of European feminism. It addresses the effect it has on everyday life outside the academic circles, the essentialization of jobs where migrant women are invisible, such as care and maintenance workers, and wishes to offer a fresh critical perspective on these issues.

Kunstentropie

Amalija founded *Kunstentropie* in 2018 in Vienna as an attempt to secure funding for her curatorial and research projects. Initially focused on promotion and research of independent artistic and cultural tendencies (Verein für zeitgenössische und nicht-akademische Kunst und Kulturveranstaltungen), the organization launched a festival and began developing her long-term project, “Uterus Effect”. Due to a growing interest in feminist discourse and marginalized social categories, *Kunstentropie* was restructured to focus on feminist and alternative art, also adopting a new name *Forschungsbasis für feministische und alternative Kunst und Kulturvermittlung*.

According to Amalija, the main goals of *Kunstentropie* are:

- creation of research links and cooperation in art, culture, and activism, in order to exchange experiences and practices.
- critically addressing of big topics and hierarchies within the world of art and culture by incorporating feminist, gender, migrant, queer, disability theories and practices.
- highlighting the artistic and cultural production of minority social groups in Austrian society and their integration in the broader social context, including migrants, guest workers, people with disabilities, etc.

Amalija mentions another project of hers, the exhibition “HAND JOB: What we know about contemporary non-traditional embroidery”. This exhibition maps, contextualizes, and critically analyzes the use of embroidery as an artistic medium in the Southern European art scene. It explores who the artists using embroidery as an artistic medium are, and what kind

of visual expression is enabled by the embroidery technique or its potential for political, emancipatory, or feminist statements.

Amalija's insights on the Vienna art scene

Amalija believes that the actual practice of being an artist and curator, achieving success, and living comfortably from practicing art is reserved for a small percentage of people *“most often for the white, highest class and anything beyond that is a precariat”*. Drawing from her own experience, Amalija says that people from Eastern and Southeastern Europe, who participate in art often imagine the European art scene as offering more opportunities. Yet, *“if your parents are not rich, doing art can only be profitable as a hobby or a side job”*.

Additionally, Amalija says that she could roughly divide the Austrian art world into three layers or classes. In the highest one are wealthy Austrians with significant influence who set trends in contemporary art. The next layer consists of Austrians who reached certain positions through their efforts. And the bottom layer is represented by the *AusländerInnen*, the people from the margins, who criticize the structural and ethical injustices in the distribution of power but have limited visibility and influence. As an example, Amalija mentions the departure of the WHW collective from the Kunsthalle, which, within the framework of institutional art, opened doors and showed different horizons of contemporary art by including artists from the world and European "provinces", but unfortunately, *“these are not the goals of the Austrian establishment”*.

Amalija criticizes the management of major cultural institutions in Vienna, noting that higher positions in these institutions are almost always occupied by “native” Austrians. She remarks that *“only as the positions go down, more diverse names appear, so that traditionally the lowest positions, such as cleaners and technicians are occupied by Yugo or Turkish people”*. On the other hand, within smaller organizations that do represent diversity, the distribution of functions is not done adequately according to the abilities of people, but rather according to some ethical and cultural fairness. The institutions should rather aim at *“changing the capitalist, neoliberal, and patriarchal structures in general”*. Although there has been some progress in the non-institutional art scene since she arrived in Vienna in 2014, Amalija believes the situation is still far from ideal.

Her biggest personal struggle in the Vienna art scene is balancing her roles as a mother, wife, migrant, and artist, while striving for individual and professional development without

inherited capital. Knowledge and commitment are, according to Amalija, only a small part of what can motivate a person to succeed, while the structural barriers within established hierarchies remain a significant obstacle.

5.2.8. Deconstructing national narratives by bringing art and activism together

Jana Dolecki is a theater scholar and cultural producer, currently working as a program coordinator on Radio Orange. She co-founded the association *Blockfrei*, which works with different artistic practices, and conducts a self-organized choir called *29. Novembar*.

Her academic work focuses on the intersection of theater and nationalism, specifically examining how Croatian national theaters during the Yugoslav Wars contributed to the construction of national identity. Jana is interested in political engagement in the arts, seeking to contextualize artistic practices within broader political and social frameworks. The association *Blockfrei* aims to present post-migrant artistic expression, moving beyond any national or ethnic categories. *Blockfrei* additionally aims to deconstruct traditional national narratives, fostering a more inclusive cultural scene in Vienna. In this sense, Jana is interested in community building and understanding how different identities are formed, expressed, and perceived in social contexts.

The choir *29. Novembar* (Figure 17.), named after former Yugoslavia's Republic Day, serves as a unique cultural and political space for individuals with or without migration experience. It symbolizes a connection to a shared, non-national identity and was founded in 2009 by a



Figure 17. Choir's logo

group of Yugoslav migrants in Vienna. At first, the choir was a response to the nationalist transformation of workers' clubs that were originally places for cultural and social exchange among Yugoslav migrant workers. Unfortunately, the clubs became politicized during the Yugoslav Wars. The choir wanted to "somehow bring back the heritage to the workers clubs" (0:13:47-

0:13:53). Jana says that the choir members refer to themselves as "radical amateurs" (0:14:52-0:14:53), meaning that the choir is open to everyone, regardless of their musical training or skills. The choir's repertoire consists mostly of partisan songs from the (Yugoslav) anti-fascist struggle, chosen for their historical and permanent messages of solidarity and

resistance. Jana highlights that the choir intentionally avoids songs that glorify specific leaders, such as those dedicated to Josip Broz Tito, focusing instead on broader topics of people's movements against oppression. As the choir evolved, its members have also become more diverse, thus consisting not only of people who are from former Yugoslavia. Their repertoire has also expanded to include songs that reflect other struggles for freedom and justice, such as feminist songs and songs from Kurdish or Iranian movements. Jana views the choir as a living embodiment of the Yugoslav ideal of brotherhood and unity existing in Vienna.

Dolecki remarks that there is no central person in the choir who chooses the repertoire, but the choir rather engages in collective decision-making while considering cultural and political implications of the songs they choose to perform. This process often includes discussions about the appropriateness of singing about struggles that may be outside the direct experience of the choir members, such as songs related to the struggles of Black people in Africa. The choir performs in public spaces rather than traditional concert venues to reach a broader and more diverse audience, including those who might disagree with their messages. Because of their diversity, the choir rarely attracts a predominantly Yugoslav diaspora audience, but rather people of various backgrounds.

In 2014, the choir established an official association to be able to apply for project-based funding, which has allowed them to secure funding for specific projects, though they still lack regular financial support. The choir has received inconsistent support from the city of Vienna. Their unique position as a collective that blends music with activism makes it difficult to fit into traditional funding categories, so they frame their projects as social initiatives, using singing as a tool for community engagement.

Dolecki has briefly worked as a project manager with the organization *Romano Svato*, which was mentioned Chapter 5. She remembers meeting Simonida Selimovic, a co-founder of *Romano Svato*, at a workshop for the choir. The choir adapted the popular Austrian song "I am from Austria" into the Roma language. This song, which remains part of the choir's repertoire, demonstrates the choir's approach to cultural and linguistic integration by having native speakers lead the process of translating and teaching songs. This adaptation of a patriotic song into Roma language plays with cultural inversion and challenges traditional notions of integration.

Broadening access to the arts beyond privilege

In 2017, Jana was a jury member for the *kültür gemma!* scholarship program, describing the selection process both as diverse and complex. One of the challenges in the evaluation of the applications was deciding whether to award the scholarship to individuals with professional experience or to those from underprivileged communities with fewer resources. Dolecki also says that it was problematic for her “to see who defines themselves as a migrant” (0:59:04-0:59:10). For example, one application came from a German-Japanese individual, and another from a Syrian refugee. While both applicants identified as migrants, Jana felt their circumstances could not be viewed as equivalent. She also said that the lack of specific guidelines from *kültür gemma!* gave the jury some freedom but also made the decision process more challenging.

Her own experiences as a migrant in Vienna have led Jana to critically engage with questions of identity and belonging. She is particularly concerned with how migrants navigate their identities in a society where they may learn the language and culture but remain politically passive. Through her work, Jana aims to give voice to these experiences and challenge existing power structures. Regarding these power structures, Jana compared established cultural institutions such as *Musikverein* with some independent cultural institutions, remarking that elite institutions often cater to a predominantly white, upper-class audience, while more inclusive spaces attract a broader range of people. Additionally, Jana criticizes the pricing and accessibility of some cultural events, arguing that cultural elitism is often more about who can afford to participate than the intellectual or artistic content. She recalls seeing a play by Milo Rau, a prominent theatre director, for just seven euros, while other less significant performances cost much more, stating “I cannot afford to go and see a bad play for 35 euros” (1:10:17-1:10:21).

In conclusion, Jana thinks that people from different backgrounds can participate in cultural activities if these are made accessible to them. Although she acknowledges the existence of elite cultural institutions, she emphasizes that exactly these institutions have the potential to change and become more inclusive. Despite some progress, Jana remains cautiously optimistic about the future of cultural participation in Vienna.

5.2.9. Addressing systemic exclusion in Vienna´s cultural landscape

Inside the structure of kùltűr gemma!

Mbatjiua Hambira, a 30-year-old artist born in Regensburg, Germany, moved to Vienna around 10 years ago to study. Over the past 15 years, Mbatjiua has been active in the music industry, as a musician, songwriter, and producer. For the last five years, Mbatjiua has worked as a project coordinator, curator, and cultural producer, often referred to as a *Kulturproduzent* or *Kulturmanager* in the German-speaking area. His work is closely connected to politics and activism.

Currently, Mbatjiua is a member of the “Question Me and Answer” (QMA) organization, which supports migrant artists by providing a platform for their work. One of the main goals of QMA is to enable interdisciplinary work, introduce new artistic perspectives, support artists in navigating the



Figure 18. kùltűr gemma! logo

Viennese cultural scene, and disrupt existing systems of exclusion in the arts (Question Me and Answer 2024). As a project coordinator, Mbatjiua is working at the organization *kùltűr gemma!* which is the main project of the *oca:* association. *Oca:* was founded 12 years ago and its main goal is to support minoritized perspectives in the cultural sector. *kùltűr gemma!* was founded to address the numerous obstacles faced by migrant and diasporic artists, such as the lack of structural funding and biases within funding agencies in Vienna.

“The way that funding agencies in Vienna are structured is a mirror of the societal imperfections, [...] the funding agencies are mainly male and white” (Interview 0:04:36-0:04:52).

kùltűr gemma! seeks to distinguish itself from traditional funding agencies by recognizing their shortcomings, such as requiring artists to have diplomas from recognized art universities. This can disadvantage artists with degrees from institutions outside Austria, which may not be recognized by the Austrian government. *kùltűr gemma!* tries to move beyond the institutionalized data, evaluating artists on a broader scope, considering artistic quality, personal identity, living conditions, and career stage, aiming for more equitable support for artists, by making sure that diverse elements of their lives and work are taken into account.

kültür gemma! is currently funded by the city of Vienna, which limits funding only to the residents of Vienna. The organization will however seek to expand its funding sources to include the state government, which will allow residents from across Austria to apply. Each year, the association awards three to five grants, depending on the city funding. The open call is broad, welcoming all artistic forms, including visual and performative arts, as well as cultural, political, and educational projects. In 2023, funded projects included a performance project, a film project, and an activist initiative to create a platform for Black journalists.

Usually there are 80 to 100 applications *kültür gemma!* receives, which makes the selection process challenging. The jury, not the organization itself, reviews and selects recipients. Due to its limited funding, the grant application process is also highly competitive. This task affects the jury members as well since they often face challenging dynamics within the diasporic and migrant community. Some applicants know the jury members personally, which can possibly influence their relationships if their projects are not selected. Artists who have applied several times without success may get frustrated with the organization, even if *kültür gemma!* is not directly responsible for the selection process. Mbatjiua explains that when selecting jury members, different criteria are considered. Firstly, the artistic expertise, which means that the jury ideally consists of artists from different genres, but also activists and cultural producers. Furthermore, the awareness of jury members of their own privileges is crucial to avoid the reproduction of systemic biases. Factors such as race, gender, and the ability to offer a variety of perspectives are considered in the selection of the jury. Although not mandatory, past recipients of *kültür gemma!* grants are sometimes included in the jury to draw on their knowledge and experience. One of such examples in my own research is Danilo Jovanović.

The key aspect of *kültür gemma!* is the mentoring it provides, especially for early or mid-career artists. Marissa Lobo plays a significant role in mentoring, helping with artistic decisions and the practical measures of “*how do I come from my idea or my dream to the actual result*” (00:20:02-00:20:10). *kültür gemma!* also provides infrastructural support, such as guidance on public performance licenses and event organization. With this support network, grantees can complete their projects and present their work to the public while navigating the involved challenges.

kültür gemma! additionally offers fellowships, which have a different focus than grants.

Fellowships support projects that are implemented by artists within cultural institutions, and three to four fellowships are selected annually. For example, in 2023, researcher and artist Tayla Myree worked at *Belvedere* on a project “Turning the Page. Representations of Blackness”. This intervention examined the portrayal of Black people in the museum’s collection. As a part of her research, Myree developed a guided tour that educates visitors about the exhibits, their historical settings, and the problematic elements of how they are portrayed.

“In European art, Black people are often illustrated as exoticized bystanders sometimes alike more decorative attributes” (Belvedere. Im Fokus).

Fellowships introduce artists to structured, often hierarchical settings in larger institutions, giving them the chance to implement their ideas in these institutions. This experience is valuable for understanding different structures in contrast to smaller organizations such as *kültür gemma!*. Participating organizations in 2023 included *Belvedere*, *D/Arts*, and *Kultursommer*.

Intersectionality and the lack of diversity in cultural institutions

Mbatjiua notes that while ideally migration history, race, or gender should not impact one’s involvement in the cultural sector, these aspects still play a role. Artists with migration backgrounds often face stereotypes and racism from art institutions, funding agencies, and audiences. However, migration history can also create new forms of community and understanding. Personal histories are increasingly explored in the arts, not only among BIPOC or diasporic individuals, but rather in general, says Mbatjiua.

“It shapes your perspective on certain things. [...]. It is in a way a lens that you have, that can provide you with insights into the world that other people do not have” (00:40:52-00:40:58).

Despite Vienna’s reputation as a multiethnic city, its demographic diversity is not reflected in the cultural institutions. Mbatjiua remarks that although most funding for the arts comes from public sources, the representation within these sectors is not diverse.

“Just look at how many Viennese people have a migration history, and then how is it that there is no data about how many people in decision-making roles at publicly funded art institutions have migration history?” (0:44:23-0:44:44).

Additionally, the majority of decision-makers in the institutions are white, “autochthonous” Austrian people. Given that the art sector is largely funded by public money, it would only be fair “*that you have a right to participate in this sector*” (0:43:20- 0:43:25) both on stage and in the decision-making roles.

The problem of representation in cultural institutions is complex, involving migration history, ethnicity, class, language, and ability. Classism, ableist structures, and language barriers further complicate access to the arts sector. To properly understand and address these overlapping issues, “*things have to be seen from an intersectional perspective*” (0:46:36- 0:46:41). Mbatjiua believes that German-speaking countries lag behind English-speaking regions like the UK and the US in adopting inclusive practices. However, initiatives such as *D/Arts* and the proactive approach of important cultural figures, such as *Kulturstadträtin* Veronika Kaup Hausler, indicate a growing awareness and effort to address these issues.

Mbatjiua believes that directors and key figures of cultural institutions must lead the charge in recognizing the value of diversity and actively work towards diversifying their teams and audiences. To achieve this, it is necessary to also be able to question existing norms and practices within (your) institutions. Mbatjiua mentions Berlin as a good example of how Vienna can move towards inclusivity. The city of Berlin has established the Diversity Arts Culture office, which advises and trains cultural institutions on inclusivity. While Vienna is moving in a similar direction, structural changes are still in early stages.

According to Mbatjiua, demographic changes are inevitable, and cultural institutions must adapt to remain relevant. Vienna’s cultural landscape needs to readjust to the city’s growing diversity, as current audiences and decision-makers in the institutions do not represent the city’s demographic reality.

5.2.10. Selina Shirin Stritzel on representation in cultural institutions

Exploring theater, law, and justice in the Justitia project

Selina Shirin Stritzel is a theater maker, arts educator, and critical theory researcher, focusing on postcolonialism and decolonial strategies. In her theater and art practice, Stritzel explores collective work methods that address the needs of minority groups, with the goal of challenging hierarchical and violent structures in German-speaking theater.

Alongside Gin Müller, Stritzel has led the *Justitia* project, a four-year theater and research initiative funded by the City of Vienna. The project explores intersections between theater, law, and justice, with each year focusing on a different topic. In 2022, the project concentrated on identity politics, while in 2023, it focused on migration politics, with a particular emphasis on the legal distinction between human trafficking and human aid. As project leaders, Stritzel and Müller emphasized collaboration with performers who have personal or activist connections to these topics.

In 2024, the *Justitia* project will address digital rights, continuing its focus on the relationship between theater and law. As previously mentioned, the project is funded by the city of Vienna, and the four-year funding structure requires annual productions. The funding program from the MA 7 Department offers different levels of funding, with the four-year grant being especially beneficial *“for the groups that are already established in Vienna”* (0:13:10-0:13:15). Although there are no official requirements for receiving this level of funding, it is generally more typical that those with significant experience and previous successes in the art scene, acquire it.

The project’s first phase named “JUSTITIA! Identity Cases” was inspired by the work of cultural researcher Mithu Sanya and her book *Identiti*. This phase examined the idea of “transracial” identity- a controversial subject brought on by real-life cases such as Rachel Dolezal in the USA, who identified as Black, despite being a white woman. The performance included elements such as courtroom dramas, musical scenes, and social media interactions, each presenting different viewpoints on the possibility of changing one’s race. It engaged with current discussions about race, identity, and the media’s role in shaping public opinion.



Figure 19. Justitia! Identity Cases Logo

Reflections on exclusion in the cultural sphere

During the interview, Selina shared some personal experiences of feeling excluded from the cultural sphere due to her background and limited exposure to the arts while growing up in a small village in Southern Germany. Her first encounter with the theater world as an intern at *Staatstheater* Stuttgart revealed the contrast between the progressive ideas shown on stage

and the exclusionary, hierarchical structures behind the scenes. This experience brought to light the structural barriers that still exist in the cultural institutions.

Stritzel discussed the significant gap between representation and actual structural change, noting that while institutions may display works by diverse artists, the fundamental structures often remain unchanged or result in tokenism. She emphasizes that institutions must diversify both their cultural content and their teams to create *“a safer and more inclusive environment for all artists”* (0:33:40-0:33:45).

In order to raise awareness about these issues in the institutions, education plays a significant role. It is also essential to highlight the contribution of initiatives and organizations that in fact create spaces for dialogue and inclusivity. However, significant changes in large institutions usually take time because of bureaucratic processes and rooted power dynamics. While progress has been made, tokenism persists. This often involves hiring a single person to represent diversity without making any significant structural changes. Stritzel refers here to Sara Ahmed’s work on diversity in institutions, particularly the challenges faced by individuals who are hired to criticize the very structures that employ them. Real change requires collective support and allyship between those in positions of power and marginalized groups. It is necessary that those in power are willing to share their control. This however involves recognizing the power they hold, understanding its implications, and making a conscious effort to support underrepresented voices. In conclusion, Selina Shirin Stritzel emphasizes the role of early education in promoting an inclusive mindset as crucial for long-term societal change.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The discourse around diversity and representation in Vienna’s cultural sector has gained significance in the last ten years. By comparing the „Pimp My Integration” event from 2011/2012 with more recent initiatives such as MUSMIG and reflecting on insights from interviews with underrepresented artists and cultural workers in Vienna’s art scene, this discussion aims to highlight both the progress made and the remaining challenges. Additionally, it will explore potential opportunities for fostering a more inclusive cultural environment.

Comparative Analysis: 2011/2012 and today

The project series „Pimp My Integration“ served as a critical response to the barriers that underrepresented artists and cultural workers faced in the Viennese art scene. Participants have criticized the cultural sector as not being representative of the demographic diversity of Vienna. Additionally, the actors who are primarily active in the independent art scene shared their experiences of stereotypical castings, often being denied non-ethnic roles. It was expected of them to only engage with topics which are connected to migration, reinforcing stereotypes and a narrow view of their identities (EDUCULT 2012).

At that time, established cultural institutions were often perceived as unwelcoming and exclusionary, which further discouraged many artists from even approaching them. In addition to the lack of institutional support, limited funding was also recognized as one of the significant barriers. The artists were often redirected between different departments, and their projects were frequently labeled as social and/or intercultural projects.

A key demand from the participants was the diversification of institutional structures, starting with audience representation, casting in ensembles, and most importantly the leadership positions. It is essential to include more underrepresented voices in the decision-making roles, as it has been shown that such institutions attract diverse audiences (MANDEL 2011). The goal is to reflect the complex realities, both in these institutions and on the stage, which could be achieved for example through performed content which speaks to a broad part of the population.

Fast forward to today, the Museum of Migration is a more recent initiative which recognizes several obstacles in the traditional museum landscape in Vienna, particularly the issue of migration being framed in ways that reinforce national identity rather than challenge it. The initiative recognizes the marginalization, trivialization, and misrepresentation of migrant histories as a significant concern, especially when these narratives are told from authoritative, often exclusionary, perspectives. MUSMIG wants to disrupt these hegemonic structures and seeks to reshape the discourse on migration, challenging the racist, colonial, and patriarchal norms in existing cultural institutions. Such norms were additionally recognized by my interview partner Marissa Lobo, who highlighted the decolonial approach in questioning power structures during her work (LOBO 2023; Diversität in der Kultur 2023).

(Lack of) Progress

It is evident that the situation for underrepresented artists and cultural workers today, in 2024, has seen only minimal change since the „Pimp My Integration” project series. Even if the outcome of this project included some concrete strategies to address the issues in the Viennese art scene, few of these strategies were in fact implemented.

Since the project series, diversity office *D/Arts* has been founded. It works on diversifying the already established cultural institutions. Another notable mention would be the organization *kültür gemma!*, which offers funding and mentorship to the underrepresented artists and cultural workers. It is important to mention that these two organizations were founded by the underrepresented communities themselves, and not by any official initiative either from the city of Vienna, or any of the large cultural institutions. In this context, the support for the marginalized artists and cultural workers is often redistributed within the said communities (JOVANOVIĆ 2023; MUSTRA 2023).

Networking as such is crucial in the art world. Artists like Mustra, Hambira, Aleksić, and Stojšavljević highlight the importance of building connections within, and in-between different communities to gain visibility and opportunities. On one hand, this could lead to a favoritism regarding decision making (ALEKSIĆ 2023), while on the other hand, it could also influence personal relationships of the individuals involved (HAMBIRA 2023). Some interview partners such as Stritzel or Jovanović have said that it is more common for established, or well-connected artists to secure funding for their projects, rather than newcomers.

Although the above-mentioned efforts of *D/Arts* and *kültür gemma!* exist, the inadequate representation in the decision-making roles and on the stage within the cultural institutions continues to be a significant challenge. The participants of „Pimp My Integration” already back then knew that the cultural institutions in Vienna do not reflect the city’s demographic diversity. This lack of diversity in the cultural sector was also a common topic in the interviews that I conducted. The cultural institutions were frequently described as being mainly white and male (LOBO 2023; HAMBIRA 2023; PILIĆ 2023).

In 2011/2012, but also during my empirical research, artists with a connection to migration openly indicated a clear lack of non-ethnic roles in the theater scene, highlighting the prevalence of stereotypical roles (EDUCULT 2012; Images of Rom*nja artists in media and on

stage). Due to financial difficulties, actors often accepted roles that reproduced harmful clichés (SELIMOVIĆ 2023). The independent art scene, however, offers some space for challenging these stereotypes. The mainstream institutions on the other hand have been slow to adopt more inclusive practices. Artists such as Željka Aleksić have expressed a desire to create art that goes beyond cultural stereotypes, displaying the diverse qualities that artists have besides their national identities.

Similar dynamics are also evident in funding agencies, which tend to “prefer” projects that are somehow connected to migration, or as mentioned in my own research regarding communities from ex-Yugoslavia to Balkan wars (EDUCULT 2012; ALEKSIĆ 2023, LAZIĆ-AKARATOVIĆ 2023). This tendency limits the creative potential of artists, who feel pressured to conform to these expectations in order to secure funding for their projects. Such occurrences additionally contribute to the reproduction of harmful stereotypes and images of underrepresented groups. This practice further serves to construct knowledge about these groups and frames the dominant public discourse (SIEVERS 2013).

Impact of migration on cultural practices

Based on the studies regarding cultural participation from Germany, it has been demonstrated that the main factors influencing cultural engagement are education and social status, with financial resources playing a crucial role (MANDEL 2011). It is important to emphasize that most study participants described cultural participation as challenging and stated that it does not fit their lives and lifestyles (Ibid.). A report, commissioned by the city of Vienna in 2015, highlighted that parent’s education and early cultural exposure at home, or the presence of cultural capital in the domestic sphere, are decisive factors for cultural participation (SCHÖNHERR and OBERHUBER 2015). Mandel also stresses that the content presented by the prominent cultural institutions often does not align with the population’s actual reality. This issue, which was present in 2011/2012, still remains up until today (EDUCULT 2012). For that reason, if these institutions indeed want to diversify their audiences, they must move beyond only catering to elitist audiences with high-culture content, such as Beethoven’s classical music or the realities depicted in plays by Shakespeare or Molière, as most people living in Vienna cannot relate to these experiences.

Many of my interview partners, such as Jana Dolecki, Mbatjiua Hambira, Željka Aleksić, Mirjana Mustra, or Amalija Stojavljević, consider the art sector still belonging to the elite.

They criticize the pricing and accessibility of some cultural events, arguing that people from diverse backgrounds would likely participate in the cultural activities if these were made accessible to them. A good example of a flexible pricing system can be seen in the events *Clišhé Träsh*, *Justitia: Ill*egal Monsters*, and *E Bistarde*. The first two events operated on a *pay-as-you-can* model with suggested donations, while *E Bistarde* offered both standard and reduced ticket prices. This approach is an effective way to make cultural events more accessible to everyone, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Ongoing challenges

Some recurrent topics in my research include resources and sustainability, as well as underrepresentation. The artists often complained about the precarious, unstable, and unsustainable conditions they face (JOVANOVIĆ 2023; MUSTRA 2023; ALEKSIĆ 2023; STOJSAVLJEVIĆ 2023). The cultural policy of the city of Vienna has highlighted their goal to achieve fair-pay and social security for artists by 2030. Even though this was one of the demands and strategies from the participants of the „Pimp My Integration” project, substantial and lasting working environments have still not been provided for the artists and others in the cultural sector in Vienna. It is far from sufficient to claim diversity if that diversity is only visible on the lowest hierarchical levels, such as among technicians or cleaning staff (PILIĆ 2023; STOJSAVLJEVIĆ 2023). What is needed is a sustainable change in the structures which allow such hierarchies to exist, or as Ljubomir Bratić from MUSMIG says, existing institutions must free themselves from these power dichotomies. During the discussion *Wer hat Angst vor dem Museum der Migration?*, it became evident that some representatives of prominent Viennese museums felt offended by the questions raised. This reaction may reflect the stance of certain established cultural institutions toward the inclusion of underrepresented groups or those who challenge existing power structures they do not hold. For a sustainable change, those in power positions first need to acknowledge the existence of their privileges and the need to be willing to share some of their power (Diversität in der Kultur 2023; LOBO 2023; MUSTRA 2023; JOVANOVIĆ 2023; STRITZEL 2023). This transformation is a painful process, however “*without dorority, there can be no true sorority*” (LOBO 2023).

To attract a more diverse audience to established cultural institutions, it is essential to first understand the barriers faced by the target groups. Conducting surveys with these groups,

focusing on audience development, and implementing quotas could be effective strategies (EDUCULT 2012; MUSTRA 2023, Diversität in der Kultur 2023). Additionally, gathering and publishing data on how many people with migration histories are employed in these institutions is crucial. The lack of such data remains a significant obstacle to changing institutional structures (PILIĆ 2023; HAMBIRA 2023). Another important step would be to increase participatory cultural projects. For example, in Berlin's Kreuzberg district, where the post-migrant theater *Ballhaus Naunynstraße* is located, the local institutions were dedicated to displaying the district's diversity by involving the local population in participatory projects (SIEVERS 2017). Participants in „Pimp My Integration“ also emphasized the importance of expanding such projects, as attending cultural events is primarily about participation, “*a matter of feeling welcome and belonging*” (EDUCULT 2012:19).

The aspect of self-representation has been portrayed as an empowering step, not only in the literature, but also throughout my empirical research. Allowing individuals to authentically portray their individual experiences is crucial for letting the public hear previously untold stories (HESS 2012; JOVANOVIĆ 2023). Additionally, as the intervention of the artist Fred Wilson “Speak of Me as I Am” has shown, the self-representation could stimulate the audiences to question their own prejudices and privileges (KARENTZOS 2012). In contrast to the dominant public discourse, which frequently portrays migration as threatening or problematic, artists like Mustra and Hambira, who have migrated themselves, see migration in a positive light, as something that broadens worldviews and enriches their lives. This is yet another reason to allow underrepresented voices to share their own experiences, instead of speaking for them. Some artists, such as Danilo Jovanović explicitly create art that attracts diverse audiences to encourage their self-reflection. Events such as “JUSTITIA: Ill*egal Monsters” or the *E Bistarde Festival* provide artists with opportunities to present their personal experiences, whether as refugees, asylum seekers, or members of the Romani community. These narratives not only highlight their life journeys, but also reflect on how they, as members of underrepresented groups, are being perceived and portrayed in Austria. For example, *Clišhé Träsh* plays exactly with the prejudices that these groups are being ascribed to. Furthermore, in theater, we need to move beyond the idea of accent-free German, as discussed during „Pimp My Integration“. Artistic success on stage does not have to depend on someone's pronunciation. The performance “JUSTITIA: Ill*egal Monsters”

showed this well and contributed to the depiction of Viennese reality, where many accents and languages come together.

The access to funding has been another major concern. The bureaucratic demands, including extensive paperwork, involve many unpaid hours of work, which on the other hand, does not contribute to the sustainable living conditions of the artists (JOVANOVIĆ 2023; LAZIĆ-AKARATOVIĆ 2023; MUSTRA 2023). The funding agencies also need to move beyond traditional categories, particularly for projects that cannot be put into one category, as underrepresented groups often integrate activist practices into their art (DOLECKI 2023; LOBO 2023). The cultural policy for 2030 aims to address this issue to some extent by offering standardized grant application templates for all sectors. If funding agencies fail to change, they will remain *“a mirror of societal imperfections”* (HAMBIRA 2023).

Despite different institutional frameworks, Berlin is mentioned as a successful example of implemented strategies regarding cultural diversification (SIEVERS 2017; HAMBIRA 2023; *Diversität in der Kultur* 2023). *Ballhaus Naunynstrasse*, a post-migrant theater offers a space for underrepresented groups to share their narratives beyond ethnic boundaries. When these groups portray migration and identity, they do it in a broader context, within the framework of German society as a whole (SIEVERS 2017). Additionally, the theater intentionally hires individuals from underrepresented groups, on and off the stage, in all hierarchical positions. Unlike Vienna's initiatives, such as the series of festivals from Volkstheater which focused on hosting guest performances by directors from Southeast Europe (DAVIDOVIĆ 2022), *Ballhaus Naunynstraße* represents a permanent transformation of a cultural institution. Participants of „Pimp My Integration” also recommended new initiatives to support underrepresented groups, such as dedicating specific periods or stages in Viennese institutions to these group's productions or establishing an annual festival for the marginalized artists. However, even if this could be a step in the right direction, similar to what was discussed in *“Images of Rom*nja artists in media and on stage”*, institutions need to integrate underrepresented artists into their regular programs, rather than limiting it to a once-a-year event. Thus, the Viennese cultural sector should aim at including marginalized groups within its structures in the long run, as these groups are not the city's temporary residents.

The actual impact of the ongoing efforts will be seen in the upcoming years, as well as the degree of implementation of the Cultural Strategy 2030. This strategy is extremely important since it is an official initiative from the city of Vienna. The cultural policy prioritizes affordable culture and inclusive participation, aiming for all population groups to have access to culture. Additionally, it highlights the importance of securing fair pay for all artists, guaranteeing their financial stability and sustainable artistic work. The success of these efforts and policies greatly depends on the collaboration of underrepresented groups, organizations such as *kültür gemma!* and *D/Arts*, established cultural institutions and most importantly the city of Vienna. As mentioned by Ivana Pilić and Marissa Lobo, knowledge sharing about past initiatives is essential. But even more importantly, individuals who were proponents of these initiatives, and who are still active in the cultural sector, must be involved in the process.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This research shows that although there has been some progress in the cultural sector in Vienna over the past decade, especially with the development of initiatives like *D/Arts* and *kültür gemma!*, many of the challenges faced by artists and cultural workers engaged with migration topics still need to be resolved. Underrepresentation in decision-making positions and the stereotypical casting continue to reflect a lack of inclusivity and diversity in the city's cultural institutions. Furthermore, the precarious financial conditions and bureaucratic obstacles these artists encounter jeopardize their ability to maintain their artistic practices, thus reinforcing already-existing inequalities. The Cultural Strategy 2030 of the city of Vienna is a step in the right direction. Still, its success will depend on substantial cooperation with underrepresented communities and the implementation of fair pay and social security measures for artists.

The findings of this research emphasize how crucial it is for representation, diversity, and inclusion, to coexist in Vienna's contemporary cultural landscape, particularly for artists and cultural workers who are engaged with migration-related topics. This research contributes to the broader discourse on inequality by highlighting the difficulties faced by these underrepresented groups and demonstrating how structural barriers can hinder artistic expression and participation. Furthermore, these perspectives provide useful suggestions for

decision-makers and cultural institutions that aim at creating an inclusive and diverse environment.

One of the limitations of the research is that it focuses on a specific group of artists, which may not accurately represent the variety of experiences within the Viennese art scene. Future studies could provide insights into the long-term impact of initiatives of organizations such as *D/Arts* and *kültür gemma!*. Additionally, it will be interesting to see if the Cultural Strategy 2030 in fact brings any changes into Vienna's cultural landscape, or simply ends up as „Pimp My Integration”, without substantial impact.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the evolving position of artists and cultural workers engaged with migration topics in Vienna's art scene, focusing on the last ten years of cultural development. By comparing the „Pimp My Integration” project (2011/2012) with contemporary initiatives like MUSMIG and incorporating insights from interviews with underrepresented artists and cultural workers, this research highlights both progress and ongoing challenges. The analysis reveals minimal change since „Pimp My Integration”, despite some progression through organizations like *D/Arts* and *kültür gemma!* that have emerged from marginalized communities themselves. It recognizes continuous issues such as insufficient representation in decision-making roles, funding challenges, and the reinforcement of stereotypes. The thesis analyzes the impact of migration on cultural practices, emphasizing the need for long-term change in institutional structures and more inclusive practices. It emphasizes the importance of the Cultural Strategy 2030 in shaping future developments and suggests that its success depends on transparent and effective collaboration between diverse stakeholders.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit analysiert die Position von Künstler*innen und Kulturschaffenden, die sich mit Migrationsthemen in der Wiener Kunstszene beschäftigen, und setzt den Fokus auf die kulturelle Veränderung der letzten zehn Jahre. Durch den Vergleich des Projekts *Pimp My Integration* (2011/2012) mit gegenwärtigen Initiativen wie *MUSMIG* sowie durch Interviews mit unterrepräsentierten Künstler*innen und Kulturschaffenden werden sowohl Fortschritte als auch andauernde Herausforderungen dargestellt. Trotz einiger Fortschritte durch Organisationen wie *D/Arts* und *kültür gemma!*, die von marginalisierten Gemeinschaften selbst gegründet wurden, hat seit *Pimp my integration* nur minimale Veränderung stattgefunden. Permanente Probleme wie unzureichende Repräsentation in Entscheidungspositionen, Herausforderungen bei der Finanzierung und die Stärkung von Stereotypen wurden festgestellt. Die Arbeit untersucht die Auswirkungen von Migration auf kulturelle Praktiken und betont die Notwendigkeit einer nachhaltigen Veränderung der institutionellen Strukturen sowie inklusiverer Praktiken. Sie unterstreicht die Bedeutung der Kulturstrategie 2030 für zukünftige Entwicklungen und betont, dass ihr Erfolg von einer transparenten Zusammenarbeit zwischen verschiedenen Interessengruppen abhängt.