5. Federal Programmes, Intercultural and Transcultural Projects

This chapter analyses some of the public subsidy programmes established by primary cultural funding institutions of the central government promoting cultural diversity. By exploring the public and independent theatre scene as well as the socio-culture field, the research seeks to outline different dimensions of manifestation of the cultural diversity dispositive[1] at the national level.

The institutions and their incentive programmes examined in this chapter are:

- The *Heimspiel* Fund of the German Federal Cultural Foundation (*Kulturstiftung des Bundes*; 2006–2012)
- *Homebase – Theatre for the Coming Society* of the Performing Arts Fund (*Fonds Darstellende Künste*; 2016)
- The Socio-Culture Fund (*Fonds Soziokultur*; 2009–2019)

These funding institutions and their supplementary programmes are financed by the *Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien* (*BKM*; Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media). The *BKM* was founded in 1998 to combine the tasks of the national government for cultural affairs under one roof (CoE & ERICarts, 2016). Given that Germany is a federal republic, according to the right to local self-government, 16 *Länder* retain their cultural sovereignty and share responsibility with local authorities. Although the federal government has no jurisdiction in the cultural sphere, the *BKM* provides additional funding through its various foundations. These foundations have a strong influence on the performing arts scene. The *BKM* realises concept-based cultural policy indirectly through the German Federal Cultural Foundation, the Performing Arts Fund, and the *Hauptstadt Kulturfonds* (Capital Cultural Fund; Schneider, 2013a, p. 42). This

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1   In this research the dispositive is understood as the sum of discursive (discourse – what it is said and how it is articulated) and non-discursive (institutions, their measures and norms, their actions, the outcomes of these actions – distribution and legitimisation of diversity discourse) elements in knowledge production and dissemination (see Chapter 1).

subsidiary interference in theatre policy is highly associated with "the lack of political will and engagement at the *Länder* and local level since structural change is not on the radar of municipal governments and the *Länder* invest in infrastructure and established institutions" (Schneider, 2017a, p. 576). Furthermore, cultural and artistic initiatives are supported by another body of the *BKM*, the Socio-Culture Fund.

The programmes mentioned above are investigated based on a dispositive approach as a methodical tool of discourse analysis. In this empirical examination, the focus is on the interplay between the objectives of "promoting diversity" and the inclusion of immigrants and refugees into the theatre realm.

This chapter provides a concise overview of various subsidy programmes as well as funding institutions and their interests and motivations to engage with theatre, cultural diversity, and immigration. The analysis explores the approaches and perspectives of these institutions supporting different segments of the vibrant German performing arts scene in their responses to immigration-related cultural diversity (see Chapter 2 for the discussion on diversity in German theatre). The research also demonstrates commonalities and disparities between the implementation strategies of mentioned primary public funding actors.

The analysed programmes are considered concrete outcomes of the cultural diversity dispositive, promoting the German performing arts scene. The objective of this inquiry is to map out (a) how key federal funding bodies address immigration-related cultural diversity, (b) which diversity-related concepts they are implementing, (c) how immigrants and refugees are incorporated in this diversity discourse, indicating the extent to which the notion of a more inclusive theatre takes immigration and immigrants into account, and lastly, (d) whether and to what extent these programmes can contribute to a diversity-oriented change in the German theatre landscape.

5.1   The German Federal Cultural Foundation and The *Heimspiel* Fund (2006–2012)

The German Federal Cultural Foundation (*KSB*) was established in 2002 to support artistic productions under the funding responsibility of the federal government. The *KSB* promotes fine arts, performing arts, literature, music, film, photography, architecture, new media, and cross-disciplinary projects. In addition to the general project funding, the institution introduces individual programmes focusing on a particular topic or artistic field. The topics of these special funding programmes change depending on the current subject matter.

The *KSB* heavily intervenes in the theatre realm through these additional funding programmes, primarily addressing municipal theatres. The foundation

incentivises municipal theatres to serve a broader population, internationalise their ensembles and repertoires, and develop international co-productions and collaborations with the independent theatre sector (Schneider, 2017a, p. 576).

To fulfil its objectives, in 2006 the *KSB* first established the *Heimspiel* Fund for municipal and state theatres, followed by *Wanderlust* between 2007 and 2012, which financed theatre partnership and exchange between German municipal and state theatres and international theatres. The third fund of the *KSB*, the *Doppelpass*, has supported joint projects between independent groups and public theatres from 2011 to 2021. Furthermore, the *KSB* promotes the German-language theatre scene through the *Berlin Theatertreffen Festival* every year.

Between 2006 and 2012, the *KSB* carried out a pioneering programme, the *Heimspiel* Fund, to encourage municipal and state theatres to deal with the problems of their respective cities and regions. Although the fund did not explicitly target immigrants, the prerequisites of the programme substantially corresponded to immigration and immigration-related themes. Among the 61 subsidised productions of 44 municipal and state theatres in 13 *Länder* in six years, immigration, unemployment, and poverty were the common subjects addressed by the endowed projects.

5.1.1   Immigrants as New Target Audiences for Public Theatres

The two main objectives of the *Heimspiel* Fund were to examine the role of (municipal) theatres and to attract new audiences to these institutions (KSB & Schauspiel Köln, 2011). The programme demanded the visibility of everyday experiences of groups that have been overlooked by public theatres (KSB & Schauspiel Köln, 2011). In order to make these underrepresented voices heard, the *Heimspiel* required municipal and state theatres to search for new narratives by incorporating residents into their projects as amateur actors. Project coordinators were expected to conduct comprehensive research on the main difficulties of their cities, cooperate with residents, and create new participatory narratives and artistic forms.

According to Hortensia Völckers, artistic director of the *KSB*, the *Heimspiel* Fund gave particular importance to productions linked to local stories. These projects were conceptualised and presented with the involvement of local people untrained in theatre practice, which conventionally, "most likely would not be in the programming of public theatres; youth cultures, immigrants, religious themes, or unemployment, all of these become material for theatrical debate" (Mundel & Mackert, 2011, p. 82). Dramaturge Björn Bicker affirms that "*Heimspiel* was a kick-off for municipal theatres to produce social and political works" (B. Bicker, personal communication, November 20, 2017).

Völckers considered that generating new audiences was vital for the survival of municipal theatres; hence, *Heimspiel* aimed to provide these theatres with the opportunity to find new artistic ways to connect with their cities and diverse cultural milieus in order to be relevant for future generations:

> I think theatres need to rethink their role in the city, what audience they want to attract, how they can appeal to new audiences and how they want to pass on our cultural heritage and expand their repertoire to current topics. I imagine theatre more like a reactor, where art and everyday culture enter to form an energetic connection. (Mundel & Mackert, 2011, p. 83)

For *Heimspiel*, "theatre should once again be understood as theatre for citizens, including marginalised social groups in the city, and take up themes from their immediate everyday life" (KuPoGe, 2007, p. 28). In this regard, the *KSB* defined two main subjects as its primary obligations: opening up the rich municipal theatre landscape to societal themes, and including non-theatregoer groups into the audience (Deuter, 2011). Hence, the *KSB* conceived of an active engagement that would bridge the gap between theatre practice and the city and its inhabitants to widen the audience composition of these institutions. This objective is firmly associated with the country's demographic structure. For Völckers, the sustainability of public theatre pertains to taking essential measures of altering its rigid and traditional framework in order to remain a stimulating artistic hub for society:

> Demographic changes are going to cause theatres much trouble; we can only hope for one thing: that these complex, intricate, highly delicate theatre structures develop a magnetism that would assure their position at the centre of urban culture. Theatres should ask themselves critically and without hesitation what impulses they can use in striving for change, appropriating new forms, and gaining new audiences. They must develop a better feeling for how to react to the current needs and situations in their cities. (Mundel & Mackert, 2011, p. 86)

Within the timeframe when *Heimspiel* was established, the public theatre scene was not familiar with dealing with social and political matters, such as immigration. Moreover, "opening the doors to the audience with a "migrant background" was almost unheard of for many municipal theatres" (B. Bicker, personal communication, November 20, 2017). In this context, this programme could be seen as the first attempt to stimulate an exchange between municipal theatres and the potential "unconventional" audiences that had been disregarded for decades. This audience is mostly perceived as immigrants lacking cultural capital to appreciate the artistic milieu of these traditional institutions:

> Many public theatres explain the striking absence of the audience with a "migrant background" as a consequence of their own deficits: they do not understand the German language, do not have the appropriate education, are not familiar with the artistic canon, or simply show no interest in theatre. (Terkessidis, 2011b, p. 44)

In this sense, *Heimspiel* provided a platform for raising the question of municipal theatres' programming and audience composition as they did not (and still do not) reflect the cultural fabric of the country. The above statements of the artistic director of the *KSB* underline the demand for a change of perspective if theatres are to survive. Within this scope, *Heimspiel* reflected on the self-image of municipal theatres and recognised that they needed to be accessible to the broader society. However, the programme regarded accessibility in a narrower sense, paying attention mainly to reception and, thus, diversifying the spectrum of cultural content to reach new audiences. Prompting these institutions to develop strategies for having a diverse artistic workforce was not taken into consideration.

5.1.2   *Bunnyhill*: First Encounter with Immigration

Bunnyhill was a concept created by Björn Bicker, Peter Kastenmüller, and Michael Graessner at *Münchner Kammerspiele* in 2004. *Bunnyhill*, created as an imaginary state, was an innovative two-month project that included theatre performances, panel discussions, and other events on the relationship between the city centre and the periphery. It aimed to bring the social and urban reality of Munich to the theatre. In an interview, Völckers stated that *Bunnyhill* significantly impacted the formulation of the objectives of the *Heimspiel* Fund (Mundel & Mackert, 2011, p. 82).

The main focus of the project was a theatre performance, *ein Junge, der nicht Mehmet heißt* (A Boy Whose Name Is Not Mehmet), which depicted the lives of marginalised people from a peripheral area called Hasenbergl. The goal of *Bunnyhill* was to intervene in the urban fabric of Munich, i.e., to create an "interference of the periphery in the city centre" (B. Bicker, personal communication, November 20, 2017), and facilitate an encounter between the outskirts and the centre of which residents had no contact with one another.

Hasenbergl is at the fringe of Munich, seen as a problematic ghetto area, where most of the inhabitants have a "migrant background". *Bunnyhill* was influenced by the true story of Mehmet, who also lived on the outskirts of Munich. In the late 1990s, he was deported to Turkey because of his many criminal offences. The life circumstances of young people in Hasenbergl were similar to those of Mehmet; "social difficulties mark their lives; they experience what it is like to be a stranger in a society that knows how to demand nothing but integration" (Bicker, 2005, p. 44).

Bicker elaborates on the process of creating *Bunnyhill*, how the interaction between the artistic team and participants was slowly built, and how fragile the process was in terms of dismantling the barriers of othering:

> We started working with Mehmet's story, reading articles, meeting people. Mehmet was not an isolated case, as we quickly noticed. We also noticed how little we knew about this world. It soon became clear that we could not just make a play about a young person; we needed to do something together with young people. (…) And so, we met some young people from Hasenbergl. We drove out to their youth club. (…) We spent a lot of time with them. And we got to know each other, step by step. We started doing our first theatre exercises with some of them. (…) We invited them to the [*Münchner*] *Kammerspiele*. Our vision was sharpened by learning about the lives of these young people, of their abilities, desires, and fears. There was often a lack of understanding. Unfamiliarity. The mutual sniffing and approaching took a long time. In the beginning, the young people looked at the whole thing with a lot of scepticism and restraint. Rightly so. They were afraid of being "presented" once again. We were afraid of not doing them justice. Without casting, without conscious selection, after a few months, a group of two girls and seven boys was formed and all of them stayed until the end. (2005, p. 44)

In 2006, the team persisted in dealing with the political and social reality of Munich, with *Bunnyhill 2*. In this six-week project, linked to the first one, they confronted the critical question: Who owns the city? With the idea of questioning the neoliberal urban policy of the city, the *Müncher Kammerspiele* was moved to various locations in the centre; a new form of theatre was constructed by intervening in public spaces "to explore what possibilities a heterogeneous city centre with diverse ways of living could offer to all inhabitants" (B. Bicker, personal communication, November 20, 2017). *Bunnyhill 2* represented a different kind of theatre because it connected with the city both through the place and the people (Dambekalna, n.d.).

In this regard, the *Bunnyhill* project, according to Völckers, "gave rise to a new form of theatre work which today – almost seven years later – can be regarded in many respects as an initial spark" (Mundel & Mackert, 2011, p. 38); in addition to being a pioneer endeavour, this project was a reminder of how theatre can gain its social relevance and function.

5.1.3   New Narratives and Artistic Formats Around Otherness

With *Heimspiel*, the *KSB* supported projects of cultural exchange. The goal of the fund was to facilitate collaboration in a creative process between artists and residents in which all parties could learn from one another (KSB, 2012).

To this end, after a lengthy research process, theatres developed projects that revolved around conflicts, communication issues, and prejudices arising from various forms of differences. Identity-based themes brought the attention to the living conditions of "the other": Sinti and Roma people, refugees, guest-workers of the 1970s, other immigrants, marginalised and criminalised youth cultures, and so on. Many of the subsidised theatres used biographical material to convey the narratives of otherness and explore new theatrical forms. This approach was to a certain extent aimed at changing the negative public perception towards various undervalued ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. From this perspective, theatre was perceived as a space for stimulating dialogue between the well-educated, middle-class audience of municipal theatres and "the other" for a peaceful co-existence. On the other end of this conversation were disregarded social and cultural groups, participating as one of the parties of interaction. By including marginalised and unknown communities into productions as untrained actors, the endowed theatres sought to provide these overlooked groups with the possibility to express themselves in front of a broad White German audience.

On another level, the introduction of social and political themes into the working process was aimed at raising awareness within public theatres and encouraging these institutions to search for new artistic methods and strategies that would help them develop a new understanding of their cities and their role within them.

One of these projects, *Illegal* (2007–2008), created by Björn Bicker, Peter Kastenmüller, and Michael Graessner at the *Münchner Kammerspiele* dealt with the issues of people living in Munich without a residence permit. The artistic team explored the lives of these people for several months, accompanied by a field research project at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich (KSB, 2012). The idea behind *Illegal* was to draw attention to people living at the fringe of society:

> Before we produced *Illegal*, we had already dealt with the subject of migration in *Bunnyhill*. Then, for the birthday of the city of Munich, the theatre [*Münchner Kammerspiele*] was asked to develop a project for the anniversary event. The title of this year's celebration was "Building Bridges". Then, after intensive research, I came to the conclusion that there was a big community of people without legal papers in Munich, which made me think about the idea of living here illegally, in such a wealthy, prosperous city. (…) It was an exciting topic for me to work on for this anniversary as this is the reality of Munich. (B. Bicker, personal communication, November 20, 2017)

The exploration for an aesthetical method of engaging with this topic reveals the conflict of representing "living illegally" and taking a dominant position when approaching the subject. Through extensive research and interdisciplinary

exchange, the team brought the stories of those marginalised immigrants into the public discourse:

> We were doing research and we asked ourselves how we could present this subject artistically. It would be too dangerous to present these people on stage. They could be arrested. The writing process was also very interesting as I thought a lot about the question of representation. Can we represent the so-called "illegal immigrants", or should they represent themselves? Do they need me, or do they need artists to represent them? All of these questions occupied my thoughts, and then I decided to write a text about their legal situation. Because this was the reality of the city, and they could not have represented themselves on stage. So, I needed to make their stories visible in the heart of the city. The text was then performed at the *Münchner Kammerspiele*. We made the production with actors and experts from different fields, and around this production, we made different lectures, encounters, and performances covering this topic. (B. Bicker, personal communication, November 20, 2017)

In another production, *Trollmanns Kampf* (2009–2010) at the *Staatstheater Hannover*, the discriminated Sinti and Roma minorities were at the centre of attention. The biography of Sinto German boxer of the 1930s, Johann Trollmann, who was sent to a concentration camp by the Nazis and murdered there, was the starting point of the theatre project. Through the life story of Trollmann, the theatre scrutinised the racist history of national socialism towards the Sinti people. By bringing the past into view, the project aimed to illustrate continuous discrimination, hostility, and prejudices these minorities still face. The Sinti community living in a district in Hildesheim was included in the project, and the working process was considered the central part that brought theatre and the stigmatised people together to create a theatre piece (B. Bicker, personal communication, November 20, 2017).

5.1.4   Who Owns the Stage?

In 2011, the *KSB* together with *Schauspiel Köln* organised a festival titled *Heimspiel 2011*, featuring workshops, theatre productions, installations, lectures, and discussions aimed towards thinking collectively about the future of the German theatre scene. In an interview, Völckers expressed that the idea of the festival was to showcase the possibilities of a future-oriented municipal theatre:

> The festival is primarily something for people with a theatre background, especially dramaturges, directors, or actors, but also for the theatre-loving audience, and there were certainly theatre scholars interested in it as well. The "*Heimspiel 2011*" festival differs quite a bit from other festivals, such as the annual *Theatertreffen* in Berlin (…). There, we show the highlights of a theatre season. The

"*Heimspiel 2011*", however, is less about presenting best-of pieces and more about showcasing the ability of theatre to renew itself from within, to broaden its range of subject areas, expand the repertoire of artistic forms of expression, and appeal to new audiences. To us, this seems crucial for the future viability of municipal theatres. (Deuter, 2011)

A symposium, which was also part of the festival, focused on the aesthetics of the *Heimspiel* theatre projects. One of the topics discussed at length was how to maintain artistic quality in socially engaged participatory projects. In these debates, the discussion on developing artistic strategies to explore new forms of documentary theatre raised the question of the autonomy of the arts and the meaning of artistic value. The contemporary notion of theatre revolves around whether art can be useful while, at the same time, remaining art (Hegemann, 2011). In this context, author and dramaturge Carl Hegemann underlined that art should inherently be connected to non-art in order to relate itself to society:

Art defines itself, (…), by making the improbable happen. Art is therefore forced to be related to extra-artistic processes in order to persist as art in this society. It is forced to both integrate into its environment and confront it. Not because society expects this confrontation, but for reasons immanent to art. (2011, p. 4)

Participants of the symposium also exchanged views on the phenomenon of participation. The lecturers articulated a demand for a change in understanding participation; a new perception of the democratisation of production and reception, representation of socially disadvantaged communities, the production structure of conventional theatre, and the development of new theatre aesthetics calls for a contemporary interpretation of the concept of participation (Diederichsen, 2011; Lehmann, 2011). This new understanding of participation, described by Diederichsen and Lehmann, however, requires altering the principles of the theatre field, which cannot be thought of separately from how aesthetics is defined by the habitus and capital of those entitled to determine the artistic quality of the arts (Bourdieu, 1989). In an intercultural society, a change in mentality in this sense would include recognising and valuing a multiplicity of aesthetics in order to liberate the theatre practice from the narrow Eurocentric viewpoint.

One of the roundtables at the symposium dedicated to "immigration, identity politics, and theatre" was an illustrative example of how the reciprocal relationship between the structure of the field and the habitus of its actors (Bourdieu, 1993a, 1993b) are decisive for the way theatre should introduce "foreign cultures". The roundtable focused on two questions: How can theatre projects give insights into

"foreign cultures"?[2] How can the hybrid culture of contemporary cities be brought to the stage? The way the discussion was formulated revealed the perception of immigration and the role of dealing with immigration-related themes assigned to theatres. This problematic formulation is a critical signifier of the division between "us" and "them". In this understanding, theatre is deemed an artistic domain in which White German theatre-makers search for ways to present these "foreign cultures" and their stories on stage. Rightly, Mark Terkessidis, one of the speakers of the roundtable, reacted to this question which displayed characteristics of colonial thinking. Terkessidis stressed that the question assumes a homogeneous "German culture" that exists alongside the cultures of immigrants, and he asked: What constitutes "foreign culture", "who is foreign", and "whose culture is foreign" in an immigrant country (KSB & Schauspiel Köln, 2011)? Terkessidis proposed to replace the expression of "different cultures" with different "reference spaces" (*Referenzräume*; Terkessidis, 2011, as cited in Heppekausen, 2011).

This formulation is particularly striking as it illustrates a mindset about immigration-generated diversity, articulated paradoxically at a festival organised to discuss the future of theatre. Understanding cultures as divided into ethnic compartments is highly controversial, especially in a country where one in four residents has a "migrant background", and the impact of the migratory processes is ubiquitous.

The roundtable discussion was also remarkable in revealing the structural internalisation of the power dynamics in the theatre field (Jenkins, 1992). Rita Thiele, chief dramaturge of the municipal theatre *Schauspiel Köln* at that time, openly expressed that their audience orientation was geared towards the educated middle-class, and that theatre is not social work concerned with reaching immigrant audiences (as cited in Heppekausen, 2011). This precise Eurocentric positioning accurately reflects who exercises and regulates power and knowledge (Foucault, 1978) by exposing who determines what (public) theatre is and for whom productions are designed.

5.1.5   The Future Image of Municipal Theatre

Considering the bourgeois audience and repertoire composition of traditional municipal theatres, as Völckers stated, with *Heimspiel*, the *KSB* succeeded in making the right offer at the right time (Deuter, 2011). However, the question of the survival of these theatres is partly interlinked with the history of the German theatre system. Municipal theatres "represent a formerly dominant population,

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2   The participants of the discussion were Monika Gintersdorfer (theatre director), Viola Hasselberg (former drama director of *Theater Freiburg*), Mark Terkessidis (migration studies researcher), and Rita Thiele (former chief dramaturge of *Schauspielhaus Köln*).

and even if they do provoke, they merely provoke the former decision-making sections of society" (Diederichsen, 2011, p. 1). In this regard, their societal relevance continues to be debatable.

To some degree, *Heimspiel* identified inertia in public theatres, their reluctance to explore the multiplicity of experiences and knowledge. However, this endeavour of supporting municipal theatres to become spaces reflecting local realities could not stimulate a structural reform in the years to come. As Völckers explained, *Heimspiel* did not aim to trigger a change in the organisational culture of municipal theatres; it was designed as an additional offer to encourage theatres to add non-conventional cultural content to their existing programming and reach out to new audiences:

> I genuinely hope that our initiative will not vanish into thin air, and that new *Heimspiel* pieces will be produced. Integrating *Heimspiel* pieces into programmes must become the standard. But these projects cannot displace or replace the classical repertoire, nor should they. *Heimspiel* is an additional offer, but it is not the final and sole conclusion as far as the future of theatre is concerned. (Mundel & Mackert, 2011, pp. 83–84)

Conversely, the future of theatre as a mirror of a democratic civil society entails participatory forms of theatre, in which citizens of various cultural affiliations have access to creation and decision-making processes. Bicker claims that the isolation of these theatres from social reality is interlinked with their mindset, which is why *Heimspiel*, in this context, could not achieve the idea of a participatory theatre:

> (…) the question of opening theatres up to this immigrant society, to other communities; *Heimspiel* did not work. Theatres do not want to change their habits. They still have not accepted that Germany is an immigrant country. They would never say it in public, but the mentality speaks for itself. If you are so open, if you want immigrants to participate in your resources, your artistic knowledge and education institutions, just open the doors. I can tell you how you can do this. But they say, "it is very difficult; we cannot become part of society so fast; we need time to change". (B. Bicker, personal communication, November 20, 2017)

To this day, as in the case of *Heimspiel*, immigrants are often the new target groups of funding programmes in the capacity of audiences. Almost 15 years after the launch of the fund, many municipal theatres have introduced socially engaged new productions. However, how can the goal of a diverse audience be achieved without addressing this rigid institutional framework that has a specific understanding of aesthetics in artistic production, created and disseminated by theatre-makers of German descent? Sharifi points out the source of one of the crucial problems: These theatres want to create diversity within their audiences, a diversity that does not exist in their own structures (2017, p. 324). In the absence of a multiplicity of voices

in artistic production, the question of how to speak of a future-oriented municipal theatre remains unanswered (Canyürek, 2019a).

Nonetheless, it is reassuring that the *KSB* continues to support cultural institutions in contributing to an inclusive cultural sphere. The *KSB* established a new programme, 360° – Fund for New City Cultures (*360° – Fonds für Kulturen der neuen Stadtgesellschaft*), active from 2018 to 2023, precisely concerned with immigration-generated diversity. The subsidy is offered not only to performing arts institutions but also covers the fields of fine arts, music, literature, art and historical museums, architecture, new media, and related forms. The 360° – Fund for New City Cultures promotes cultural diversity in programming, audience, and staff selection. With this programme the *KSB* adamantly recognises the exclusion of immigrant cultural professionals and visitors as well as immigration-related narratives in public cultural institutions:

> Germany is a country of immigration, and its cities are strongly influenced by social diversity. Although many institutions are now actively shaping this new urban society, cultural organisations have been slow to address the cultural diversity of their cities in their programmes, personnel decisions, and target audiences. Neither their managerial staff nor their visitors correspond to the proportion of the general population that has a "migrant background" [emphasis added]. (KSB, n.d.)

The *KSB* finances a staff position called "agent" in subsidised institutions, and allocates additional project funds supporting activities for a period of four years with up to 360.000 € as part of the program (360° – Fonds für Kulturen der neuen Stadtgesellschaft, n.d.). Agents with diversity skills and experience in working with actors from immigrant families are responsible for developing and guiding the diversity-oriented process of change at their respective cultural institution (KSB, n.d.).

With the fund, the *KSB* supports 13 state and municipal theatres. These are namely *Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe*, *Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus*, *Mecklenburgisches Staatstheater Schwerin*, *Staatstheater Hannover*, *Staatstheater Nürnberg*, *Thalia Theater* in Hamburg, *Theater an der Parkaue* (youth theatre in Berlin), *tjg - theater junge generation* (children's and youth theatre in Dresden), *Nationaltheater Mannheim*, *Theater Bielefeld*, *Theater Bremen*, *Theater Dortmund*, and *Theater Oberhausen* (360° – Fonds für Kulturen der neuen Stadtgesellschaft, n.d.).

As one of the most influential public funding institutions, it is encouraging that the *KSB* acknowledges structural exclusion within cultural institutions and promotes diversity-oriented perspectives through a training programme and various workshops for the employees of endowed theatres in addition to financing a diversity agent position within these institutions. However, it is not only controversial to position one person as "the voice" "'speaking for' the many who

are excluded or marginalised from access to the means of representation" (Julien & Mercer, 1996, p. 455), it is also unrealistic to expect a diversity agent to deal with long-established ideas, reflexes, institutional, structural, and aesthetical perceptions. This runs the risk of symbolic representation, which tends to conceal the core problems of the power structure within institutions (Canyürek, 2019b).

In a similar vein, systemic change entails supporting strategies for the acceptance and validation of diverse aesthetics outside the European/Western canon. Borrowing from Bourdieu (1993b), the diversification of personnel, programming, and audience is inherently conditioned by the embedded habitus of the actors in the public theatre field. In the absence of a clear vision and plans to tackle the redistribution of power, such incentive programmes remain conciliatory measures that rather focus on diversity management, masking the basis of unequal access conditions to theatre for all.

5.2   The Performing Arts Fund and the *Homebase* Programme (2016)

The Performing Arts Fund (*Fonds Darstellende Künste*) was established in 1985, and it supports the independent theatre and dance scene in Germany. The fund's main objective is to contribute to the further development of a diverse independent performing arts field. It is designated not only as a funding agency but also a service and consulting partner of independent artists and ensembles (Fonds Darstellende Künste, 2016, p. 11).

The fund operates as a mediator; it brings representatives of public cultural policy and artists together to improve the framework conditions of the independent scene. With the aim of supporting knowledge exchange and discussing the future of German performing arts regarding cultural policy, funding structures, and independent productions, it organises public symposiums and the *Bundesforum* (Federal Forum) together with the *BFDK*.

Furthermore, since 2010 the Performing Arts Fund has annually honoured experimental formats of independent artists and ensembles through the Tabori Award[3]. The award supports the visibility of innovative aesthetical approaches that contribute to the development of the independent scene.

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3   The Tabori Award is a tribute to George Tabori, a well-known theatre director, dramaturge, and writer, who challenged the borders between theatre-making in the independent and public theatre in German-speaking countries. He was forced into exile by the Third Reich and returned to West Berlin in 1971. He directed for the *Berliner Ensemble* and other German and Austrian theatres. The Tabori Award is the utmost nationwide recognition for the performing arts; with this award the Performing Arts Fund honours groups that have demonstrated excellence in continuously developing a unique format (Schneider, 2019a, p. 7).

The Performing Arts Fund offers three funding opportunities for professional ensembles in addition to special incentive programmes. The three main programmes are:

1. Projects Programme: This programme supports nationally exemplary individual projects and productions that primarily address socially relevant subjects, develop remarkable artistic/aesthetical formats, or represent a theatre of a future society through their participatory and interactive approaches to the audience.
2. Initial Projects Programme: This programme is concerned with promoting non-result-oriented projects of artists, ensembles, and collectives who have been working in the German independent performing arts scene over a long period of time. The subsidy supports various research projects, experimental artistic content, and new forms of cooperation.
3. Concept Projects Programme: This programme promotes three-year concepts (either three new productions or two new productions and a strategic/organisational project). It aims to motivate artist groups to stabilise the existing development in the aesthetical discovery of form, and to create sustainable cooperation in support, production, and guest performance networks (Fonds Darstellende Künste, 2019, pp. 4–7).

In recent years, intercultural dialogue has become a widely used concept as an alternative to integration-oriented policy measures (see Chapter 3). In contrast to integration, intercultural dialogue disavows the superiority of mainstream culture; it focuses on a mutual exchange of ideas. Around the time many cultural policies started to employ the concept of intercultural dialogue, the Performing Arts Fund established the programme *Homebase* pertaining to the lasting effect of immigration on German society.

5.2.1   Intercultural Dialogue and Exchange in the Independent Theatre Scene

Continuing to engage with relevant social and urban subjects, in 2016, the *BKM* provided an additional incentive to the Performing Arts Fund to launch *Homebase – Theatre for the Coming Society*. In context of the culturally diverse German society, *Homebase* focused on searching for new narratives and artistic forms that question the conventional understanding of (national) identity. A quote from the Performing Arts Fund's website reads:

> The aim of the programme is to support the creation of new, identity-generating narratives for the coming society with the resources of the theatre. On the one

hand, the term HOMEBASE literally stands for the starting point of a search, on the other hand as a placeholder for contemporary, changing forms and practices of home. (n.d.)

Homebase specifically supported projects that pursued a dialogue-oriented intercultural approach (Fonds Darstellende Künste, n.d.). This subsidiary fund financed not only theatre productions but also project-preparing research and conceptual phases. Through intercultural dialogue and exchange between artists with and without migration and displacement experiences, *Homebase* focused on matters related to immigration and engaged with the desideratum of the future theatre (Fonds Darstellende Künste, n.d.). In an attempt to envision the independent performing arts scene as a space of ongoing renegotiation, the programme could be a step towards thinking beyond the current perception of identity, artistic quality, and theatre-making.

Especially with the arrival of refugees in Germany from 2010 onwards, many intercultural funding schemes have been inaugurated to promote dialogue between diverse (cultural) identities. However, intercultural work was often understood as projects aiming to establish a dialogue between the majority society and "immigrant cultures". The underlying belief in introducing intercultural dialogue is that bringing people from various ethnic origins together facilitates overcoming prejudice. In this line of thought, people seeking refuge or people with a "migrant background" are perceived as representatives of some ethnic communities and not as individuals. This dialogue-based approach dismisses the individual aspects of identity and treats community identity as a fixed notion, not open to negotiation (James, 2008, p. 3).

In this context, the perception of the Performing Arts Fund on intercultural work is notably different from the majority of public policy and funding institutions. The Managing Director of the Fund, Holger Bergmann elucidates what interculturalism means for them:

> Perhaps the name of the grant tells us what "intercultural" means for the *Fonds Darstellende Künste*. It means the place where you are, where you live, where you do your artistic work. It does not mean where you come from. It does not mean homeland. It does not mean integrating into another culture. *Homebase* was concerned with the concept of identity and belonging. We do not see identity in terms of nationality, ethnicity, or race. Identity is more complex than that. (H. Bergmann, personal communication, May 28, 2019)

Through artistic interaction, the fund targeted enabling aesthetical development, cooperation, and networking between artists, with the goal of contributing to a future-oriented vision of theatre. However, this goal was not followed by continuous efforts to pin down the requirements of a liberal performing arts

scene that deals with historically rooted inequal access opportunities to artistic production.

5.2.2   Artistic Approaches to Displacement, Identity, and Homeland

In order to develop new narratives and artistic formats around diversity, *Homebase* supported 27 interdisciplinary projects, 10 productions, and 17 research projects. Endowed artists and ensembles created projects that questioned the often-debated concepts such as identity, belonging, and homeland in a society marked by immigration. Bergmann explains the diversity approach of *Homebase*:

> We focused on new stories and artistic formats that reflect demographic changes and diversity. Strengthening social cohesion and peace-making is usually what politicians and policy institutions aim to achieve. We do not. We are interested in the complexity of diversity, diverse approaches, visions, and ideas. (H. Bergmann, personal communication, May 28, 2019)

The productions and research projects reflected the issues that are part of the political discussions regarding cultural diversity. Racism, discrimination, exclusion, border-crossing experiences, asylum rights, colonialism, identity, origin and belonging, the role of cultural differences regarding inclusion and exclusion of immigrants, and asymmetric power relations were the primary areas addressed by the project owners.

Homebase was concerned with furthering artistic responses with the aim of combating existing cultural attributions and classifications and fostering the emancipation of refugee and immigrant artists. A common approach in diversity and intercultural funding programmes is to promote productions that intend to "empower" immigrants and refugees. However, in exchange and dialogue-oriented projects, the form of this empowerment is often defined by White German theatre-makers. In such projects, the unbalanced power structure reveals itself in the creation of productions. Immigrant and refugee artists are "given space" to articulate their experiences; yet they are not involved in the phases of decision-making.

In contrast, "the empowerment concept aims at creating equitable distribution and democratic participation (i.e., at strengthening the involvement of citizens in decision-making processes)" (Sharifi, 2017, p. 381). In this context, *Homebase* endeavoured to promote projects in which production and research processes included all parties involved. The objective was "to provide an atmosphere for artists to plan and create together, not only during *Homebase*, but to continue to work together afterwards" (H. Bergmann, personal communication, May 28, 2019).

The Performing Arts Fund perceives the arts in context of their societal relevance: their ability to accommodate cultural diversity. Here, the question of

who decides what should be supported is an essential aspect of addressing diversity with the means of art:

> Our understanding of art is different from the traditional way of thinking about it. It is important for us how a piece of art connects to society. Our selection of jury members also reflects what we understand from our society. The jury for *Homebase* consisted of people with various cultural backgrounds who are either linked to the science of theatre, production houses, or are artists. (H. Bergmann, personal communication, May 28, 2019)

Regarding artistic quality, many funding programmes vaguely define the criteria, often referring to "innovative" projects that meet the requirement of "artistic excellence". Often a White German jury – with unclear funding guidelines and a non-transparent process – determines which projects to promote. The *Homebase* jury comprised diverse members and critical approaches; namely Ute Kahmann, Dr Joy Kristin Kalu, Sabine Gehm, Dr Azadeh Sharifi, Dr Frauke Surmann, Tamina Theiß, and Margarita Tsomou. Their project selection demonstrated the perspective of the Performing Arts Fund on dialogue and exchange:

> The first criterion was the quality of the idea. The second was the motivation to create the project. We were interested in the vision. Another was whether the applicants worked together before or this was only one-time cooperation. Was the project meant to be planned and created together? How were the refugee and immigrant artists included in the projects? Was the collaboration at the *Augenhöhe* [eye level]? These were the aspects discussed by the jury. (H. Bergmann, personal communication, May 28, 2019)

Homebase gave particular importance to artistic cooperation between established ensembles and artists with migration and refuge experiences. *Migrantpolitan* is a remarkable example of such a platform subsidised by the fund. Curator Anas Aboura co-founded *Migrantpolitan* to enable refugee artists to realise self-managed cultural and art projects. Under this label, artists produce different projects such as *oriental karaoke*, *dabke*, *diasporic sounds*, *still alive*, the TV show *hallo Deutschland*, and organise various cultural activities at *Kampnagel* in Hamburg. *Migrantpolitan* started as a project in 2013 at *Kampnagel*, as part of a summer festival (A. Aboura, personal communication, October 11, 2018). Later, it evolved into a laboratory for experimenting with new artistic forms. Aboura describes the project as a meeting point, a community-based cultural platform:

> *Migrantpolitan* is not only a space: it is a community; it is an atmosphere and an attitude. We have *Migrantpolitan* as a physical space, in the garden of *Kampnagel*. It is a wooden house which is not that big in terms of size, around 78 square metres. There, we have lots of activities, events, workshops. Sometimes we just

chill out, sometimes there are panel discussions. We watch films, football games, or sometimes we listen to music, organise jam sessions, and our theatre group rehearses there. It is a multifunctional space, open to everyone. (A. Aboura, personal communication, October 11, 2018)

Kampnagel is not involved in the staging of productions; however, it provides funding, PR, marketing support, and so on. According to the initiator of the label, in terms of funding, "without *Kampnagel*, *Migrantpolitan* as a platform would not exist; it would not survive" (A. Aboura, personal communication, October 11, 2018). In that respect, *Homebase* brought official recognition and more visibility to *Migrantpolitan*.

In another collaboration project, theatre director Julia Wissert together with the *Akademie der Autodidakten* at *Ballhaus Naunynstraße* questioned the different dimensions of identity, such as gender, homeland, and race.[4] In this biographical and artistic research, the artists displayed their own experiences as representations of being in-between. They examined how multiple identities are shaped and experienced, and what these cosmopolitan and multi-political experiences mean for them as cultural professionals (Fonds Darstellende Künste, n.d.). By reframing various categories of difference, the research workshop dealt with reductive and essentialist markers of identity and experiences.

Another endowed project was realised by *geheimagentur* (secret agency), an artistic activist initiative, artistic experiment, and open collective in Hamburg that works anonymously. Anyone who has taken part in at least two *geheimagentur* projects earns the right to pursue their own projects under the label of *geheimagentur*. They describe themselves as "a practical exercise in the art of being many" (geheimagentur, 2016). This performance network combines theatre with civic action. *Geheimagentur*'s performances take a critical stance toward the "reality" engendered by polity and other mainstream actors. Hence, they produce fictional situations and institutions offering an alternative reality (geheimagentur, 2016). In these interventions in urban spaces, participants are not passive viewers; they

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4   *Ballhaus Naunynstraße* is an independent theatre, established by Shermin Langhoff in 2008 in Berlin's immigrant district Kreuzberg. The ensemble explicitly focuses on subjects of migration and refers to themselves as a "post-migrant" theatre. The artistic workforce of *Ballhaus Naunynstraße* was mostly born in Germany or came to Germany at a young age and thus grew up in German society, and studied directing or acting at German drama schools (Sharifi, 2011a, p. 39). Post-migrant theatre mainly deals with issues of identity, belonging, equality, participation, integration, discrimination, religion, and education. The *Akademie der Autodidakten* at *Ballhaus Naunynstraße* supports the cultural self-empowerment of people aged 16 to 27 to motivate them to participate in culture and democracy, and improve their intellectual and social skills (Kubinaut, n.d.). Racialised immigrants such as Black people, POC, and queer people offer access to self-development and professionalisation to young participants.

become part of the performances. In their *Homebase* subsidised project *Checkpoint München*, *geheimagentur* built a checkpoint symbolising a border crossing, to create an encounter between the "host" and resettled communities in the centre of Munich. By this novel approach, the performers questioned the meaning of freedom in an age where fear of terrorism is normalised, to point out how an increased need for maintaining security furthers mutual alienation, a lack of empathy, and potential hostility (geheimagentur, 2016).

In 2018, both *Migrantpolitan* and *geheimagentur* were nominated for the Tabori Award in various categories.

5.2.3   Networking with Artists Seeking Refuge

Homebase illustrated that it is equally essential to support research in order to identify the obstacles and needs for achieving a pluralistic theatre realm. The programme identified the main struggles of artists who recently fled to Germany. In this regard, one research project, in particular, indicated forming an artistic network as crucial for artists seeking refuge.

In this research project, Nina de la Chevallerie, one of the co-founders of the theatre initiative *boat people projekt*, together with Rzgar Khalil conducted interviews with freelance artists in exile living in Lower Saxony. With this project, they aimed to initiate an artistic network in the region. Rzgar Khalil is an artist seeking refuge himself, who fled from Syria to Iraq and arrived in Germany in 2014. Since 2016, he has been working as a freelance actor and dramaturge. The two of them carried out a four-month project that included interviews with 17 networkers and 33 artists in exile in the field of performing arts, 90% of which were from Iraq and Syria (de la Chevallerie & Khalil, 2017); 20% of the interviewees were women, aged 22–40, about 25% of them had an academic degree in an artistic profession, and 75% were autodidacts and cultural activists – there was often no access to such training in the country of origin (de la Chevallerie & Khalil, 2017). According to the report of the conducted research, the challenges of working as artists in Germany identified by the respondents were:

- the language barrier that reduces the possibilities of encounter since artists seeking refuge do not speak German at the desired level,
- no access to sufficient information about the local cultural landscape and funding opportunities for freelance artists in exile, nor further professionalisation opportunities in the artistic profession as they do not know where to seek information,
- not being paid at all or being paid inadequately during cooperation with German cultural and artistic initiatives, and often being subject to

stigmatisation as "refugee artists" and instrumentalisation of their tragic
experiences by their cooperation partners, and

- not having sufficient opportunities for creative exchange with each other or
  with German colleagues.

After *Homebase*, de la Chevallerie continued working on networking, bringing
theatre ensembles and artists seeking refuge together. Towards the end of 2017, *boat
people projekt* together with the *Landesverband Freier Theater Niedersachsen* (*LaFT*; State
Association of Independent Theatres of Lower Saxony) and the *Bundesakademie
für Kulturelle Bildung Wolfenbüttel* (Federal Academy for Cultural Education
Wolfenbüttel) organised a meeting titled *New Connections*. The participating
artists and theatre groups focused on establishing a platform for sharing know-
how, exchanging ideas, enabling networking, and developing joint projects
(Bundesakademie für Kulturelle Bildung Wolfenbüttel, 2018).[5]

This research demonstrated that, in a country of resettlement, accessing
information and networking is vital for artists seeking refuge. It also confirmed
what the policies promoting the inclusion of these artists into the cultural sphere
are lacking in. Cultural policies and their funding instruments mainly focus on
the development of projects for/with/by refugees but do not pay enough attention
to identifying structural requirements and introducing strategies and support
schemes coherent with these needs (Canyürek, 2020). The mentioned research
provides a basis for raising the question of whether governmental bodies only
seek to offer temporary solutions, despite forced migration being omnipresent
and one of the leading debates of German political discourse. Approaching forced
displacement solely through project-based temporary support at the very least
raises doubts about the ability of policymakers to comprehend the complexity of
migration and the ramifications of migratory processes.

5.2.4   Theatre for the Coming Society

The Performing Arts Fund's perception of diversity is promising, especially
considering many other examples that only aim at reaching immigrants as
audiences. The fund, through *Homebase*, without disregarding various dimensions
of the identities of artists or their cultural differences, aspired to mediate on
the requirements of a future-oriented theatre. The idea of intercultural dialogue
and exchange adopted by the programme provides insights into the potentiality
of artistic interaction between cultural professionals to make a change in the
established understanding of theatre and performance. In this sense, *Homebase*
did not regard culture as "ours" and "theirs". This view is distinctively dissimilar to

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5   For more information about *New Connections*, see Section 6.2.3.

the approaches that imagine cultures as separated. It corresponds to the idea that all cultures exist interculturally (McDonald, 2011), since it does not treat culture as a fixed entity. Similarly, for the managing director of the Performing Arts Fund, theatre has a responsibility to deal with the realities of this de facto intercultural society:

> We should recognise that German culture is intercultural. We should, therefore, deal with the question of how theatres should engage with this intercultural society. So, we should continue discussing the requirements of the theatre for the coming society. (H. Bergmann, personal communication, May 28, 2019)

In terms of valuing diversity and the plurality of expressions and their articulations, the approach of *Homebase* was refreshing. However, the shortcoming of this programme was limiting its focus to only one year. Bergmann agrees that such a limited period for a programme with an ambitious objective was not sufficient. However, he offers a different perspective on additional incentives:

> We intended to facilitate a project for the new generation. One year is not enough for this. Personally, I do not like the idea of a special funding programme for migration or diversity. We do not need programmes like *Homebase*. Diversity is our reality, and it should be understood as the norm of our society. I think we should develop our way of thinking in this direction. (H. Bergmann, personal communication, May 28, 2019)

Bergmann's statement illustrates the inconsistency between the diversity perspective of the Performing Arts Fund and the act of setting up a non-structural, temporary funding scheme. He elaborates on where the contradiction stems from. His explanation of how *Homebase* was established reveals the interference of policymaking into the performing arts scene and the influence of decision-making bodies setting an agenda for "promoting diversity":

> The programme was the idea of *BKM*. Around 2015, many refugees arrived in Germany. So, the *BKM* wanted to establish a particular programme for refugee artists. We do not like to approach immigration as a separate subject. If you look at our funding options, you see that everyone can apply for short-term or concept-based, long-term funding. (...) In an immigrant country, we do not need programmes that only focus on migration. In terms of budget, we need the support of *BKM*. When they came up with the idea to make a special programme for refugees, we established this programme. But it was shaped based on our vision and understanding of identity, dialogue, and exchange. (H. Bergmann, personal communication, May 28, 2019)

This strong involvement of the political dimension of policy confirms the cultural diversity dispositive claim of this research. Policymakers employ specific

instruments to implement the choices of political power, as argued in this study. The example of *Homebase* illustrates how firmly decisive the perspective of cultural politics is on the plans promoting diversity. As in this programme, a particular funding scheme was introduced to respond to the urgency of the inclusion of refugee artists into the performing arts scene as part of the cultural diversity dispositive.

Nonetheless, *Homebase* served as a learning experience for the Performing Arts Fund. According to Bergmann, initial funding supported research and planning phases, inspired by *Homebase* (H. Bergmann, personal communication, May 28, 2019). However, the programme was not followed by actions that would enhance the development of a network for further cooperation between artists seeking refuge and theatre-makers of the independent scene. That being the case, what did one more funding programme promoting a theatre concept for future generations achieve? Bergmann states that "the name of '*Homebase* – Theatre for a Coming Society' was formulated more as a question than an answer to think about together" (H. Bergmann, personal communication, May 28, 2019).

Undoubtedly, the Performing Arts Fund has been continuously investing in the development of a diverse independent performing arts scene. It engages with the demands of a heterogeneous theatre landscape searching for new artistic and aesthetical forms as well as new narratives. With the participation of diverse stakeholders, it explores the possible ways of making theatre relevant for the broader society.

In 2017, the Performing Arts Fund together with the *BFDK* initiated *Bundesforum* as a platform for exchange and dialogue to establish an "alliance for independently producing performing arts" (Bundesverband Freie Darstellende Künste & Fonds Darstellende Künste, 2018). The first forum mainly focused on the funding scheme and finding ways to join forces against acute problems. The contemporary discourse on funding, as stressed by the participants, ranged from the promotion of new aesthetics and artistic research, strengthening cross-border cooperation, and fostering a nationwide network of alliances and collaborations, to digitalisation and archiving for preserving cultural memory (Canyürek, 2017). Participants of the meeting identified structural issues in the system that needed to be addressed in order to accomplish an inclusive theatre domain. Although a demand for promoting a diverse theatre landscape was expressed, it mainly meant diversity in terms of forms and disciplines; plurality did not include immigration-generated diversity (Canyürek, 2017). Similarly, in the second meeting in 2019, policymakers, artists, and performing arts initiatives discussed ways of reinforcing funding structures and production conditions in the independently producing performing arts (Bundesverband Freie Darstellende Künste & Fonds Darstellende Künste, 2019) without reflecting on access barriers for excluded artists such as immigrants. The stimulation of exchanging ideas and further strengthening the existing initiatives,

funding instruments, and institutions nationwide towards forming an alliance (Bundesverband Freie Darstellende Künste & Fonds Darstellende Künste, 2019) did not include non-White German cultural professionals as partners in the dialogue.

Theatre policy is not only about funding; it must be designed as a question of content, not of budget (Schneider, 2017b, p. 4). On that account, developing strategies for articulating diverse artistic expressions is an indispensable part of the discussions around the future of theatre. As Bergmann expresses, a future-concerned theatre landscape should mirror a plural society:

> We need to work on how we can create diverse ensembles. Theatre for future generations should deal with this question. For young generations, it is normal to grow up in an immigrant society, to hear different languages and to have friends from different cultural backgrounds. Theatres should also understand this reality and ask themselves what they are doing to reflect it, what they are doing for this multicultural society. To be relevant for future generations, they should try and answer these questions. (H. Bergmann, personal communication, May 28, 2019)

Accordingly, commitment to diversity is an ongoing task that requires investing in the process rather than short-term incentive programmes. A key cultural policy actor that supports new artistic perspectives for a plural theatre scene for new generations should offer a clear agenda with a long-term strategy that also addresses inequalities concerning immigration-related diversity. As *Homebase* demonstrated, cultural policy actors should develop plans focusing on encounters between and networking among artists with and without migration and displacement experiences, but with the long-term goal of reconceptualising theatre as the self-image of society.

5.3   The Socio-Culture Fund (2009–2019)

For a better comprehension of how the Socio-Culture Fund promotes cultural participation, one should first probe into the founding motivation of the institution. The idea of "more culture for more people" is at the foreground of the fund's perspective on cultural diversity. Hence, a brief glance into what socio-culture (*Soziokultur*) means is essential for determining what concepts are currently implemented to reinforce its political claim of supporting the self-reflection of a diverse society.

Socio-culture emerged as a concept to prompt efforts towards the democratisation of culture as part of the "New Cultural Policy"[6] from the

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6   New Cultural Policy refers to cultural policy concepts that were formulated in West Germany in the 1970s, primarily by local liberal cultural policymakers such as Hermann Glaser, Hilmar

early 1970s onwards. Demands of *Bürgerrecht Kultur* (civil rights culture; Glaser & Stahl, 1974) and *Kultur für alle* (culture for all; Hoffmann, 1979) delineate the main features of a policy concerned with the idea of an accessible cultural life for many. Socio-culture originally referred to a cultural policy notion based on "civil rights culture" with the values of the Enlightenment and German idealism, which formed the grounds of a normative claim of a democratic society through cultural and aesthetical education and artistic appropriation for all (Wagner, 2008, p. 33). Since the turn of the 2000s, socio-culture is understood primarily as a participation-oriented cultural practice, which includes elements of youth, social, environmental, and educational work, among others (Knoblich, 2007). By and large, socio-culture can be seen as a central concept in the claim of a changed cultural policy and "reprogramming", which stands for new forms of cultural planning and cultural mediation, discourse, and the active shaping of society (Knoblich, 2018, p. 55).

The motto "culture for all" has been a vital component of socio-culture practice when dealing with the social function of the arts and culture. For Schneider, what was located at the basis of culture for all were the governance of cultural policy, organisation of participation, production of publicity, and democratisation of the arts, which are to this day – from a cultural-political perspective – the underlying principles of a relevant theoretical approach (2010, pp. 11–12).

The establishment of the Socio-Culture Fund is linked to new developments in the cultural politics and policy field. The demand for the liberalisation of the cultural sphere was followed by the process of opening the closed cosmos of the arts and culture to the broader society and enabling more people to engage in cultural activities. With this aim, in 1981, the *KuPoGe* founded the *Deutscher Kulturrat* (German Cultural Council), which operated within the *Rat für Soziokultur* (Council for Socio-Culture); then, the term "socio-culture" became a distinct field of cultural-political discourse, and the council utilised the inauguration of the Socio-Culture Fund (Blumenreich et al., 2019, p. 6).

Founded in 1987, the fund started giving grants a year later. Norbert Sievers, former managing director of the *KuPoGe* and the Socio-Culture Fund, states that socio-culture has always defined itself politically, not only in terms of its socio-political content but also concerning the assertion of its interests, articulation of its claims, and development of infrastructures (2014, p. 13).

Hoffmann, and Olaf Schwencke (Sievers, 2019a, p. 27). The "new" primarily refers to the aspiration to bring society and culture together in a political context (Schneider, 2010). Hence, the reform programme pertained to the reconceptualisation of a democratic cultural policy which strove for access to and participation in culture for all. New Cultural Policy aimed to connect art and everyday life in order to overcome the separation between actors and audiences (Sievers, 2014, p. 15). The theoretical basis of the New Cultural Policy is still an important reference point for the demands of socio-culture practice (Wingert, 2019, p. 53).

The political aspirations of the fund are palpable in its interpretation of culture and its cultural policy perspective. Cultural policy is understood as an instrument for supporting non-conventional mediums and forms of art and developing strategies to facilitate the involvement of artistic expressions of civil society enabling the creation of versions of culture. The President of the *KuPoGe*, Tobias Knoblich, summaries the distinctive features of socio-culture by this definition, provided by Norbert Sievers and Bernd Wagner:

- concept of culture: expanding the traditional understanding of culture and artistic production,
- concept of cultural policy: seeing policy not only as the promotion of the arts but rather fostering access to and participation in culture by forming a structure between the mediums of art, culture, and everyday life,
- concept of cultural practice: understanding cultural work oriented towards the objectives of "culture for all" and "culture of all"; including the fields of youth, social, leisure, and education created by civil society organisations and initiatives as areas of cultural practice (Sievers & Wagner, 1992, as cited in Knoblich, 2018, p. 54).

The Socio-Culture Fund is focused on supporting individual projects and schemes as well as structurally stabilising and developing the socio-culture scene (Sievers & Kröger, 2014, p. 38). The subsidy strategy of the institution is characterised by non-structural, short-term project funding, which encourages the participation of civil society actors in the cultural sphere and production processes. Hence, its funding policy is seen as an additional support promoting goal-oriented, concept-based, and context-related projects and plans, with the aim of providing impulses and encouraging cooperation (Sievers & Kröger, 2014, p. 38). In this regard, Sievers describes the socio-culture practice as "a think tank for new methods and formats of cultural work which are often temporary, related to current situations, location-bound and participatory; driven by the values of self-realisation, self-development and self-empowerment" (2019a, p. 49).

The conception of this strategy is manifested in the funding criteria of the institution. The ambitious funding principles seek to promote innovative, exemplary, structure-oriented, and cooperative projects:

- exceptionally innovative cultural projects that strengthen the importance of socio-culture for cultural development in Germany and Europe (promotion of innovation),
- exemplary projects that provide impulses for the development of socio-cultural concepts, e.g., in the educational and social sector and/or those that represent a response to current social and economic problems (impulse promotion),

- initiatives for the creation of long-term structures in cultural work through consultation, qualification, documentation, and networking, usually at a supraregional level (structural support), and
- measures promoting regional, national, and European cooperation in the cultural sector for pooling resources and facilitating synergy effects (promotion of cooperation; Deutscher Bundestag, 2007, p. 324; Sievers & Kröger, 2014, p. 39).

In the final report of the *Enquete-Kommission*, the Socio-Culture Fund was recognised as a crucial federal institution supporting a wide range of cultural projects and actors that "develop something new, unusual, and surprising, off the beaten track in the cultural sector" (Deutscher Bundestag, 2007, p. 323). Hence, the commission recommended that "the federal government should increase the budget of the Socio-Culture Fund by at least 25%, particularly for the support of projects in the intercultural field" (Deutscher Bundestag, 2007, p. 137).

Based on these areas of concern, the Socio-Culture Fund designates three funding grants aimed at reaching different target groups, namely: general project funding, *U25* (cultural projects by young people), and *Jonge Kunst* (which supports transnational German-Dutch cultural cooperation). Additionally, the Innovation Award (*Innovationspreis*) is granted for good practices addressing present-day social matters.

The following subsections analyse how the fund's mission responds to immigration-related diversity and, accordingly, how this conceptual approach is put into practice through funding instruments promoting subjects related to migration and displacement. In this analysis, interculturality and transculturality are distinguished as fundamental concepts related to cultural diversity.[7]

5.3.1   Interculture as a Primary Thematic Focus

From the early days of its establishment, the Socio-Culture Fund has promoted projects with features of interculturality. Between 1997 and 2013, such projects made up 18% of the total endowed projects (Blumenreich & Sievers, 2014, p. 44) and from 2009 to 2013, an average of 30% of the funded projects had an intercultural component (Blumenreich & Sievers, 2014, p. 45).

Ulrike Blumenreich and Norbert Sievers state that "interculturality has been one of the primary aspects of the funding policy of the institution long before cultural policy addressed this topic" (2014, p. 45). Lately, with the arrival of refugees in Germany, themes of displacement have become an integral part of the thematic

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7   Both the Socio-Culture Fund and the *IfK* use the terms "interculturality" and "transculturality" instead of the form containing the suffix "-ism".

focus of the fund (Sievers, 2019b, p. 6). As shown in Table 1, the increase in support for projects considered as intercultural, especially starting from 2013, confirms the claim of the fund.

Table 1: Percentage of promoted intercultural projects between 2009 and 2015

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total funded projects	96	103	94	94	134	103	107
Intercultural projects	28	25	28	17	64	35	48
Intercultural projects (%)	29.2	24.3	29.8	18.1	47.8	34.0	44.9

(Blumenreich & Sievers 2014, p. 47; Sievers 2016, p. 4)

In various evaluation reports and research papers of the Socio-Culture Fund, interculturality and transculturality are employed as interchangeable terms. Both are mentioned as concepts promoting cultural diversity, and understood as fundamental characteristics of socio-culture practice (Sievers, 2019b, p. 6).[8] This particular concentration on intercultural and transcultural projects is reflected in the subsidy scheme between 2016 and 2018.

Table 2: Percentage of promoted intercultural and refugee projects between 2016 and 2018

Year	2016	2017	2018
Total funded projects	135	106	97
Intercultural projects	85	55	39
Intercultural projects (%)	63.0	51.9	40.2
Projects on refuge and refugees	71	29	22
Projects on refuge and refugees (%)	52.6	27.4	22.7

(Sievers, 2019b, p. 5)

The statistics on the promotion of intercultural and refugee projects shown in Table 2 illustrate two significant facts. Firstly, they point out a gradual decline in financial support for these projects from 2016 to 2018, although the content relevance of immigration, refugees, and displacement remains the same. However, supporting projects for/with/by refugees is consistent with the objectives of the fund's subsidy policy. Secondly, these figures demonstrate the constructed intersectional connection between interculturality and refugee projects. In this perspective, most of the projects addressing forced migration and refugees were

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8   In the text, Sievers refers to intercultural projects submitted and funded in 2018 as projects with inter/transcultural reference (2019b, p. 6).

recognised as intercultural work. Only around 10% of the intercultural projects were related to subjects other than displacement and refugees.

Although the Socio-Culture Fund prioritises intercultural projects, it did not provide a working definition of interculturality until 2019. That being the case, it is enlightening how the actors of the fund use the term. Often the concept of interculturality and refugees are paired up (corresponding to the data in Table 2) when referring to intercultural projects:

> The additional incentives the fund received in 2016 for refugee projects were surely well "invested", and we hope that the recommendation of the *Enquete-Kommission* in "*Kultur in Deutschland*" from 2007 to increase the budget of the Socio-Culture Fund by 25% in order to support more intercultural projects will be adopted. (Sievers, 2016, p. 7)

Furthermore, the inclusive role of intercultural projects is emphasised regarding refugees. This factor attests to intercultural projects becoming one of the funding priorities of the institution. Eichler confirms that "today, in the context of refuge and integration, intercultural projects play a central role in the funding practice of the Socio-Culture Fund" (2018a, p. 2). Hence, the fund continuously supports intercultural and transcultural projects. In contrast to other national cultural policy actors, it regularly evaluates the endowed projects on their effectiveness, based on concrete criteria derived from current conceptual perspectives.

5.3.2   Conceptualisation of Interculturality and Transculturality

In order to identify exemplary methods and formats on various subjects, systematise the structure of project funding, and provide knowledge on good practices related to the areas of interest, between 2017 and 2018, the *Institut für Kulturpolitik* (*IfK*; Institute for Cultural Policy) carried out a research project for the Socio-Culture Fund (Blumenreich et al., 2019). The research of the *IfK* reflects on both the funding approach and diversity frame of the fund.

This research project is one of the rare examples of a methodological tool aiming to present various practical models for the field of socio-culture. According to Sievers, the research identified about 20 methodological approaches and 80 models that were not intended as predetermined classifications or definitions, but instead instruments to assist the actors of socio-culture practice (2019c, p. 10). This study examines the mentioned research project to illustrate the intercultural and transcultural perspective of the fund and the consistency of these conceptualisations with the fund's primary objectives.

Similarly, as in the case of *Homebase* of the Performing Arts Fund, the *BKM* was involved in decision-making regarding subject priorities for the research. According to the research team, thematic focuses were determined by their

relevance and concerns expressed by the *BKM* (Sievers & Blumenreich, 2019, p. 15). The researchers explain that for 2017, the focus was on intercultural projects, refugee work (*Flüchtlingsarbeit*), cultural education, and cultural work in rural areas, and in 2018, history and remembrance as well as other cultural projects in rural areas, which were all realised between 2000 and 2017 (Wingert et al., 2019, p. 77). Among the selected 179 projects of four thematic fields, 56 projects addressed interculture/refugees (Sievers & Blumenreich, 2019, pp. 15–16), making 31.3% of the total considered projects.[9]

The fact that projects made for/with/by refugees take up the largest share in the survey composition illustrates the obvious. Like many other cultural funding institutions, the Socio-Culture Fund promotes projects devoted to refugees and forced migration after the arrival of refugees in Germany. These projects were subsidised not only as intercultural works but under the umbrella concept of transculturality. The number of applications and funding figures in 2015 provides useful insight into the increase in interest and support for transcultural projects linked to refugees:

> In the first half of 2015, about one in four transcultural projects was dedicated to the topic of refugees, whereas in the second half, this was the case in more than a third of the project applications. (…) The corresponding subsidy rate also increased sharply. While in the first half of 2015, 9 out of a total of 42 funded projects (21.4%) dealt with refugee subjects, and in the second half, this figure rose to 13 (32.5%) of a total of 40 funded projects. (Kussauer, 2015, p. 70)

However, in the *Jahresbericht des Fonds Soziokultur* (Annual Report of the Socio-Culture Fund 2016) the *IfK* classified these as intercultural projects (as shown in Table 1). A few years later, in the mentioned research, the same projects are considered transcultural work. Throughout the report, interculturality and transculturality are used interchangeably. The researchers mention, in various chapters, terms such as "refugee work and interculture" (Kröger, 2019, p. 137), "intercultural (refugee) projects" (Sievers & Blumenreich, 2019, p. 15), "transcultural (refugee) work" (Pilić, 2019, p. 43; Sievers & Blumenreich, 2019, p. 15), and "interculture/transculture/refugees" (Kröger et al., 2019, p. 135).

Combining both terms with refugees indicates the connection the *IfK* detected between the impact of societal challenges on society and the cultural conflict of diverse identities:

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9   The distribution of other examined areas comprised: 34 projects of memory/history work (19%), 48 projects of culture in rural areas (26.8%), 41 projects of cultural education (22.9%; Sievers & Blumenreich, 2019, p. 16).

> Inter- and transculturality, inclusion, homeland, and civic engagement are the current motives or even intentions of socio-cultural project work and, obviously, these are fields of permanent negotiation of cultural identities and collective values, and they ultimately also affect social cohesion. (Wingert et al., 2019, p. 77)

Interculturality and transculturality are considered concepts for the social and artistic contribution to a participative society and a collective future. The use of these terms illustrates how the fund addresses cultural diversity and who the subject of diversity-oriented funding structures is. Both concepts are seen as measures to confront the social formation of otherness (Pilić, 2019). Hence, intercultural and transcultural projects are understood as steps towards opening a dialogue and negotiation process. The provided definitions clarify the link constructed between interculturality/transculturality and refugees. The *IfK* points out that despite their similarities in theory and practice, interculturality and transculturality are distinguishable in terms of their conceptual approach to difference (Pilić, 2019, p. 44).

The transcultural paradigm is applied by many disciplines, offering various definitions and interpretations depending on the requirements of the field (König & Rakow, 2016). Among those perspectives, the research group applied the conceptualisation by philosopher Wolfgang Welsh as a theoretical point of reference to identify the difference between interculturality and transculturality:

> Interculturality is based on dialogue and interaction between different, diverse everyday worlds, life concepts, and cultures. Interculture thus initiates a dialogue in motion, which, by reflecting on one's own position, should lead to a mutual understanding between cultures initially regarded as different (Welsch, 2009). Transculturality as a concept, on the other hand, highlights the processes of merging and reshaping different, diverse everyday worlds and (sub)cultures. (Pilić, 2019, p. 44)

The transcultural perspective of Welsch (1999) emphasises the complex system of cosmopolitan and hybrid identities of contemporary societies as a result of the processes of globalisation, migration, and mobility. Welsch offers transculturality as a critical counter-concept for multiculturality and interculturality. In his view, multiculturality and interculturality are similar terms; they derive from a traditional notion that treats cultures as separated and homogeneous spheres (1999, p. 196). For Welsch, transculturality is a response to the dissolution of rigid cultural boundaries between monolithic cultures. In modern societies, both at the societal and individual level, cultures and lifestyles merge; thus, they are intertwined and characterised by cultural hybridisation (Welsch, 1996, pp. 197–199).

Welsch's conceptualisation received broad recognition as well as criticism for its limitations. One of the foremost critiques pointed to the fact that his concept of transculturality focuses on culture but not on difference (Diehm, 2010). The stabilising function of hybridity disregards areas of conflict (Lo & Gilbert, 2002, p. 45) as it tends to underline commonalities. In a similar vein, the idea of the hybridisation of cultures and universalisation of identity carries the risk of levelling out cultural differences (Göhlich et al., 2006). A positive appropriation of hybrid cultures overshadows social inequities, experienced through differences. The claim of "we are all cultural hybrids" (Welsch, 1999, p. 198) neither addresses different living conditions of individuals and their unequal access conditions to transcultural networks (Mecheril & Seukwa, 2006), nor considers whether each individual is willing to embrace cultural hybridity. The fundamental question here is: "Who benefits from transculturality, cultural networking and hybridity and who does not" (Mecheril & Seukwa, 2006, p. 13)?

Melanie Pooch argues that at the macro level "transculturality can function as an additional model to describe cultures and their (co)existence but not every culture is transcultural" (2016, p. 52). Welsch also dismisses various intercultural approaches that regard cultures as fluid, heterogeneous, and intersectional (see Section 3.2 and 3.3 for these intercultural perspectives).

Against this backdrop, the *IfK* employs a combined theoretical approach on interculturality and transculturality for the analysis of the chosen projects. However, the adoption of the transculturality concept by Welsch contradicts various models of the intercultural paradigm and the defined focal point of project evaluation – how projects approach cultural difference. Pilić clarifies that in terms of their implementation within projects, interculturality and transculturality are not opposite, but rather reciprocal concepts (2019, p. 44). Hence, for the research project, both terms were seen as useful in exploring how the examined projects dealt with difference since "in practice, the concept of interculturality simply focuses on different constellations than those of transculturality" (Pilić, 2019, p. 44).

Paradoxically, using interculturality and transculturality together with refugees in the above-mentioned report does not align with the objectives of the research and the Socio-Culture Fund. The *IfK* seeks to analyse how the intercultural and transcultural projects treat the attribution of categories of difference and accordingly develop responses that go beyond cultural boundaries. However, categorisations such as "intercultural (refugee) projects" and "transcultural (refugee) work" unintentionally contribute to the reproduction of labels, which the Socio-Culture Fund fundamentally disavows. These groupings convey the idea of a "refugee identity" as if the legislative term "refugee" indicates a specific community identity of a territory, which is interlinked with displacement, war, and loss of homeland (Canyürek, 2020). Such categorisations do not serve the goal

of "overcoming the dichotomy between 'us' and 'them'" (Pilić, 2019, p. 44). Quite the opposite, they underline the political formation of difference. Furthermore, they entail the risk of designating refugees as the sole agencies of intercultural and transcultural negotiation and do not clarify whether refugees are considered individual entities of intercultural and transcultural encounters.

In this formulation, interculturality and transculturality reciprocally signify various forms of interaction. Hence, together, they correspond to various processes of encounter, exchange, and negotiation. However, this approach raises various questions without providing a clarification: Who are the other parties of intercultural and transcultural interaction? How is the position of the "White" Western/European defined in this exchange? To whom are the dynamics of transition ascribed? What is the aim of the dialogical encounter? Is the goal to enhance the cultural integration of refugees, deal with the prejudices of the majority society towards refugees, or create spaces for individuals of diverse cultural affiliations to stimulate artistic impulses for a mutual understanding, respect, and change? In order to search for the answers to these questions, it is vital to delve into the methodological approach and accompanying conceptualisations of the research project.

5.3.3   Assessment Framework for Intercultural and Transcultural Projects

The *IfK* developed well-formulated guidelines for examining the selected 56 projects with intercultural and transcultural features, funded by the Socio-Culture Fund between 2000 and 2018. The evaluation of the projects centred around three principles: (a) how the projects approach difference, (b) whether the projects embrace a critical perspective on discrimination, and (c) what participatory methods are applied by the projects (Pilić, 2019, pp. 44–46). These interrelated factors are indispensable in dealing with the hierarchy between dominant and subordinate stances, dismantling the construction of marginal positions, and involving "the excluded" into the processes of knowledge production and dissemination.

Concerning the three parameters, the below criteria were defined for the analysis of intercultural and transcultural projects, recognising that the two terms were often implemented together:[10]

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10   Only in the criteria are immigrants mentioned, for the first time, as one of the subjects of the socio-culture practice. Hence, it is understood that intercultural and transcultural projects address not only refugees but also immigrants.

- Who are the project owners? Who is doing the project, for whom, and with what aim? This question focuses on whether a well-intentioned "for" instead of "with" becomes conceptually sustainable (Sharifi, 2011).
- Is the project team experienced in implementing intercultural/transcultural projects (Pilić & Wiederhold, 2015)?
- How diverse is the composition of the (leading) project team? With regard to "management" versus project participants: Are the familiar privileges, structures, and hierarchies being addressed in the project (Bayer et al., 2017)?
- How and from what point in the process are "immigrants" involved? Are marginalised positions discussed and is self-articulation facilitated? Are immigrants conceptually involved (Cañas, 2015)?
- What is the conceptual approach to difference?
- What forms of artistic expression are included in the project?
- Does the project tend to remain on the level of folkloric performances, or does it target transformation effects and identify new cultural forms of action (Witte, 2013)?
- Does it focus on the process or the final product? How is this emphasis reflected in the selected methods?
- Does the project participation enable multiple voices, and does it overcome traditional patterns of representation?
- How is multilingualism handled (Pilić & Wiederhold, 2015)? Are non-verbal methods being experimented with (Czech & Bacher-Göttfried, 2013)?
- Are participants "both of German and non-German origin unintentionally focused on a certain ethnicity? Are these prejudices or stereotypes made aware of and, if necessary, will they be pointed out by differentiating perspectives" (Witte, 2013, p. 169)? If so, which methods are chosen for decoding prejudices?
- Is public visibility included in the project design? If so, with regard to which target group?
- Is cooperation with established institutions being considered in order to prevent "ethnicisation" as a minority programme (Pilić & Wiederhold, 2015)? (Pilić, 2019, p. 47)

This set of questions firmly outlines a critical diversity perspective, which focuses on removing barriers of social formations in artistic production. Although some are abstract formulations and hard to trace in a project, they still define valid diversity-oriented indicators for the funding programmes of public cultural policy bodies. That being said, it is questionable whether project funding is instrumental and sufficient for achieving the "culture for all" rhetoric, especially concerning the precarious state of the actors of the socio-culture field. The project funding structure inherently supports production processes for a limited time rather than endowing ongoing processes of experimenting, risk-taking, and even failing and

learning from past mistakes. If intercultural and transcultural perspectives are considered new measures of accomplishing a participatory culture, investing in instruments that generate the conditions for it is fundamental.

5.3.4   The Socio-Culture Innovation Award

Since 2003, every two years, the Socio-Culture Fund presents good practices of cultural/artistic initiatives and centres with an Innovation Award. It is an additional incentive for the development of exemplary projects on a particular subject. The primary objectives of the award are to promote active participation, social inclusion, cultural integration, and cultural education (Fonds Soziokultur, n.d.-b). The areas of interest promoted by the Innovation Award provide a clear insight into the cultural-political engagement of the Socio-Culture Fund. The chosen subjects reflect the funding priorities of the institution, including: dialogue between cultures (2003), new media and socio-culture (2005), *Heimat Europa* (2007), searching for traces – making a mark (concerning culture in rural areas; 2009), cultural strategies and social exclusion (2011), inclusion (2013), cultural work beyond metropolises (2015), refuge and refugees (2017), *Heimat* (2019).

Eichler stresses that the Innovation Award was designed to meet the fund's intention of providing impulses, promoting creativity, and encouraging cooperation (2018a, p. 2). Hence, the award is conferred to projects recognised as good practices on a given subject. Both cultural and artistic initiatives, provided they have submitted an application for project funding, can apply for the award; alternatively, the board of trustees can nominate projects that have received funding from the Socio-Culture Fund on the respective subject (Fonds Soziokultur, n.d.-a). Before evaluating the projects, an independent jury reviews the nominated organisations during the production process.

In 2017, the Socio-Culture Fund nominated 14 initiatives on the topic of "refuge and refugees" promoting the active participation of refugees in cultural and social life (Eichler, 2018b). The winner of the main prize was a dance project titled *KorresponDanSe 2.0*. A multimedia theatre project, *Stadt unter dem Meer* (City Under the Sea), won the second prize, and the winner of the third prize was a collage project with elements of music, dance, drama, and poetry, *der weiße Fleck* (The White Spot). All winning projects, using various formats, covered a wide range of concepts, from intercultural dialogue and exchange to dealing with otherness.

The award for projects related to refugees and forced migration is particularly worth mentioning as it demonstrates how the approach of the fund has changed over time regarding simple binary oppositions of "us" and "foreigners". In 2018, the jury evaluated the artistic collaboration of young people from diverse cultural

affiliations as a good practice of cultural integration through intercultural dialogue and exchange:[11]

> The jury believes that the winning projects are good examples of how the integration of refugees into our society can be promoted by combining and artistically implementing both social and cultural dimensions. Artistic and cultural work facilitates encounters and exchange with "foreigners" [emphasis added]. (Fonds Soziokultur, n.d.-b)

This statement makes a precise distinction between local and foreign cultures. Although it is unclear what local culture comprises, the assumption of foreign cultures refers to community cultures attributed to refugees. This view disregards the heterogeneity of diverse community cultures and fails to recognise that there is no fixed notion of culture and certainly no such thing as a "refugee culture". In this context, intercultural dialogue is understood as communication between diverse cultures; through artistic dialogue and exchange, "we" build competencies and skills for acknowledging the cultures of others.

Nevertheless, towards the end of 2018, the jury described the first award winner, *KorresponDanSe* 2.0, as a project that "recognises refugees and locals as individuals in a joint creative performance that more unites than divides" (Eichler & Schorn, 2018, p. 1). Similarly, the third prize winner *der weiße Fleck* was shown as a good example for not neutralising cultural differences which enrich migrant societies (Eichler & Schorn, 2018, p. 3).

This constructive change in perspective is reassuring as it exhibits recognising the individual dimension of identity formation, and not perceiving cultural differences as deficits in the processes of encounter, exchange, and negotiation. However, in these acknowledgements, it is unclear to what extent the "White" European/Western individual is considered as the subject of transformation. It is not explicit whether they retain their dominant position, gazing at "the refugee" in this artistic exchange and negotiation process.

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11   This statement was on the website of the Socio-Culture Fund when the author accessed the mentioned page on May 12, 2018. Later on, it was replaced with a three-page document, explaining the reasoning of the jury for awarding these three projects, dated December 10, 2018.