Contemporary dance festivals in the former Yugoslav space, 2007-2017: the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis

A thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Alexandra Elizabeth O'Brien Baybutt

M00551059

Faculty of Arts and Cultural Industries

June 2020

Abstract

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Alexandra Baybutt

Analysis of three festival examples, *Kondenz*, Belgrade Serbia; *PLESkavica*, Ljubljana, Slovenia; and *LocoMotion*, Skopje, North Macedonia, makes a contribution to scholarship on the former Yugoslavia. This research contributes to literature on festival studies, curatorial practices and contemporary dance. The concept of imperceptible politics proposed by sociologists Dimitris Papadopoulos, Niamh Stephenson and Vassilis Tsianos (2008: 71-82), characterised by forms of escape and subversion, is used to analyse the selected festivals, and the effects of the organisational principles underpinning their curation. Curation produces ethical and democratic dilemmas which leads to the conclusion that festival-making is a political practice through the creation of dissensus, following philosopher Jacques Rancière (1991: 71). Emancipatory qualities of festival-making are analysed as the curators repurpose the terms of international development and escape hierarchies in the field of dance to develop conditions for contemporary dance as an expanded practice and sustain professional working lives. Contemporary dance acts as an agent for transformation, but also a carrier of older forms of social organisation, reflecting methods and values of Yugoslav Worker Self-management that are deployed by the groups creating the festivals. Arts festival-making through self-organisation and processes of discovery mitigates the effects of hierarchies in contemporary dance, as well as the ways its support structures pre-curate choices. This gives rise to a new typology, the heuristic artist-led festival. This research builds upon observations made by dance theorist Bojana Kunst about the differences in contemporary dance between east and west Europe (2013[2004]) that by 2007 are characterised less by aesthetics and more by differences and limitations of available infrastructure and policies in the former Yugoslav space, as well as organisational principles deployed by festival-makers. Mixed-methods including discourse analysis and ethnography have been used to gather empirical material related to the three festivals between 2007-2017. These findings are synthesised to develop a framework using imperceptible politics as both analytic tool and a phenomenon arising from curatorial praxis.

Producing *LocoMotion* on decreasing resources, and the decision to end it in 2015, had consequences of reconfiguring the frontiers of solidarity in the independent dance scenes in

North Macedonia. The rise of hyper-production ushered in by Europeanisation in Slovenia created doubt about the relevance of festivals. Risking misrecognition, curatorial praxis of *PLESkavica* involved methods of redistributing agency as compensation for festivalisation (Luc Sala, 2015; Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor and Ian Woodward, 2014; 2016). *Kondenz* acted as a public sphere, asserting the right for differences to be visible and communicating challenges facing the independent scene, including the migration of artists away from Serbia. International development support for contemporary dance as an expanded, social and critical practice had been present since the 1990s, and the effects of its decrease over the 2000s are analysed through the prism of festival-making. Curatorial praxis subverted and reworked the demands of international development, without reproducing its constraints or rhetoric, leading to the claim that festivals can be significant practices and sites of recognition and redistribution of agency.

List of abbreviations

BDF	Belgrade Dance Festival
BiH	Bosnia-Herzegovina
CID-UNESCO	International Dance Council - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
EC	European Commission
EEC	European Economic Community
EEPAP	East European Performing Arts Platform
EU	European Union
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1992-2003, Confederation 2003-2006)
IETM	Founded as Informal European Theatre Meeting (1981), it became 'IETM' with the strapline 'International network for contemporary performing arts' (2005)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDA	Nomad Dance Academy
NDI	Nomad Dance Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1948-1990)
SFR	Socialist Federal Republic
SCP	Swiss Cultural Programme
UBUS	Udruženja Baletskih Umetnika Srbije / The Association of Ballet Artists of Serbia
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
URL	Universal Resource Locator
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1922-1991)
VMRO-DPMNE	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity

Acknowledgements

Contents

Introduction

April 2017, Vračar, Belgrade, Serbia

I'm in a greasy Chinese takeaway, just gone midnight.
The usual questions:
'Where are you from?' Sheffield. 'You support Wednesday or United?'
Then:
'Why are you in Belgrade?'
I'm here to research the art scene, I say.
'I didn't know we had one. Most people think we are savages. It's nice that you came here and say this'.

This thesis investigates the politics of making contemporary dance festivals. It focuses on three examples, *LocoMotion, Kondenz* and *PLESkavica*. These festivals are all connected to the Nomad Dance Academy project, initiated in 2007 to support contemporary dance development in the Balkan region. *LocoMotion* festival was made by Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Lokomotiva - Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture in Skopje, North Macedonia annually from 2008 to 2015. At the time of writing *Kondenz* festival is made by NGO Stanica – Servis za savremeni ples (Station - Service for Contemporary Dance) in Belgrade, Serbia, annually since 2008. In Ljubljana, Slovenia, the *PLESkavica* festival was made by Fičo Balet/NDA Slovenia in 2011. I argue that these three festival examples mediate changes specific to the former Yugoslav space whilst maintaining aspects of social life, and constitute making festivals as a political practice. However, the quotation above illuminates two dimensions of these topics. Firstly, it is a reminder of the reality of working in the field of contemporary dance in which marginal status prevails, in spite of its centrality in the working lives of the people in this research. Secondly, the sense of surprise evoked in my interlocutor about my answer is a reminder of the profound geopolitical and social shifts over the 1990s, as if the erosion of the republic you were born in that no longer exists might conjure up hostility or at least amnesia. This research is partially a rejoinder to that encounter.

The festivals are one of the formats that makes contemporary dance possible in the former Yugoslav space. Perceiving contemporary dance to be an expanded field, the festival makers are interested in the potential of dance as a dynamic socio-political practice. The curatorial practices deployed in making festivals and analysed in this research make this distinction. Curation appeared as part of arts festival-making across Europe in the early 2000s to further

problematise contemporary dance and with an increased motivation to contribute to its discourse given its relatively marginal status institutionally and academically. *LocoMotion, PLESkavica* and *Kondenz* demonstrate approaches to curation that mediate changes specific to each context. These changes include working conditions, cultural policies and material infrastructure affecting the independent artistic scenes of which these festivals are part. The festivals demonstrate the agency of curation to shape and contest conditions for contemporary dance artists and cultural workers. Festival curation is significant because of the ways it can defend the space of a festival for contemporary dance as a poetics of multiplicity, and has a powerful function in contemporary dance worlds[1] for opinion formation. But the festival makers in this research engaged not only with opinions on contemporary dance, but the ethics of decision-making in curation.

Salient features in the principles of organisation of *PLESkavica, Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* include collective approaches to curation, the use of statements and themes to announce topics of concern, and redistributed decision-making. Festival curation can challenge the format and functions of the festival, and remake their makers. I argue that 'imperceptible politics', as defined and expanded upon immediately below, are generated through curation when processes and relations escape forms of control brought to bear upon artists and cultural workers in the former Yugoslav space.

Imperceptible politics

'Imperceptible politics' is one of several concepts developed by sociologists Dimitris Papadopoulos, Niamh Stephenson and Vassilis Tsianos (2008: 71-82) to identify and articulate forms of escape from prevailing social conditions. Imperceptible politics are brief, unpredictable moments. They are embodied forms of subversion and defiance produced when people refuse to maintain what is already known to them in a given situation, in a particular time and space. Imperceptible, but not invisible, these politics appear in everyday interactions as festival makers navigate a meaningful life in art and cultural work. Or, as the opening quotation conveys, they might appear in encounters with others who are curious about your presence. This research does not look to the politics of each single performance work in the

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[1] Dance worlds refers to art worlds, comprised of production, dissemination, circulation and reception, and is not synonymous with the art market (after Arthur Danto, 1964; Howard Becker, 1982). There is also reference in dance worlds to the epistemological constructivist theory of life-worlds, used in analyses of social and material conditions of life along with a person's perceptions of them (after Jürgen Habermas, 1984).

festivals. Rather, it addresses the imperceptible politics of making and curating festivals that disturbs and contests working conditions and social life, and challenges existing perceptions of what dance can be in Skopje, Belgrade and Ljubljana. The perspective taken through imperceptible politics of contemporary dance festival-making contributes to an already existing discourse on dance and politics developed by Gerald Siegmund and Stefan Hölscher (2013), Alexandra Kolb (2011), and Randy Martin (1998).

Contestations of material conditions for and perceptions of contemporary dance art means that the festivals create disturbances, argued in this research as examples and expressions of 'dissensus'. Philosopher Jacques Rancière argues that dissensus, rather than consensus, is essential for democratic political practice. Politics as dissensus contrasts with policy, which Rancière argues is a form of policing (2001: 8). 'Policy' is the administration and exercise of power or forms of control. It can be the acceptance of an established order, seen through efforts to uphold unquestioningly already known facets of a given social reality and cultural production. The festivals create imperceptible politics and constitute democratic practices through their dissensus, disturbing and affecting consensus in each context, calling into question the power implicated in curation.

Thinking politics as the absent political within policy is an invitation to consider festival-making as a disruptive practice that can redistribute agency and shift perception. Politics interrupts policy, meaning a festival and its methods of organisation can interrupt and disagree with a given order or hegemonic power relations already operating in institutional structures. The imperceptible politics in the practices of festival curation questions the space of policy by asserting something that had no place before. This includes the agency to co-create a meaningful working life with peers that goes beyond individual gain or interests, and a sensibility that treats contemporary dance art as potentiality. Rancière (2004: 12) refers to the *partage du sensible*, translated as separating, distribution or sharing of the sensible (that is, available to sense perception). This concept becomes useful for tracing these assertions and dissensus. A 'distribution of the sensible' reveals the established contours of a particular collectivity, that is, those who can have a share in what is common to that community or collectivity, and who can be available, recognised or able to participate. At the same time, a distribution of the sensible is the source of disruption, or dissensus, to that same order. The imperceptible politics of *Kondenz*, *LocoMotion* and *PLESkavica* appear through their makers' struggles with the distribution of the sensible and new propositions.

Imperceptible politics addresses fields of power and social struggles or conflicts specific to each context through local, situated action (Papadopoulos et al., 2008: 76). *PLESkavica, Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* together are examples of festivals in the former Yugoslav space that struggle to be recognised by state cultural policies and instruments. If they were, such recognition might result in more robust infrastructure, and that the perspectives of contemporary dance could be understood not only as market commodity, but a as practice of critical intervention. A key struggle by the festival makers is for a place in the hierarchy, or at least, for the access to institutions in order to be able to collectively shape conditions for cultural production and working lives in contemporary dance. Cultural policies in Serbia, North Macedonia and Slovenia determine what art and dance are considered worthy, with consequences for what art is produced and circulated, and what kinds of infrastructure and conditions appear. For cultural workers and artists whose projects are not central to the concerns of national cultural policy, their work is alongside the presence of arts festivals in each city as commercial entertainment and tourist attractions. It means *PLESkavica, Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* assert and situate the appearance of contemporary dance as a critical, expanded and social practice, as part of the local, independent artistic scenes explored in Chapter 1, to make another context. The dissensus of the festivals affirms their makers as political subjects, constituted in relation to their objects of disagreement. The local scenes' concerns with contemporary dance do not remain hermetic struggles, but rather relate to fundamental questions of political agency and citizenship in each country.

Papadopoulos et al. maintain that people escape only after the controls to recapture escape routes appear (2008: xv). This recognises the emancipatory quality in struggle and escape, following political philosopher Sandro Mezzadra (2004: 267). This matters for tracing how systems of control reorganise themselves, for example any changes or increasing rigidity of policies. Consensus is a problem for democracy as it can operate as a disciplining constraint where agreement discounts those who disagree. Consensus can mean only certain sense-making counts and matters. Dissensus therefore is a way to introduce new subjects and heterogeneous forms into the field of perception (Rancière, 2010), and is a way to escape the given configurations of power and its representations. Refusal is a form of dissensus, creating an absence that also disrupts consensus. For the makers of *PLESkavica, Kondenz* and *LocoMotion*, this includes refusing to make festivals only for the circulation of performances as commodities for art markets, and to participate in forms of representation that might narrow

identities and subjectivities (for example, claiming 'Slovene contemporary dance' that would ignore the transnational flow of information in dance and assume there were some national characteristics). It means working with specific organisational principles related to the production of contemporary dance and festivals that attempt to share the agency that makes something visible or sensible, remaking notions of belonging that policy otherwise determines. The potential for dissensual subjectification to reveal differences of a context to itself is activated through imperceptible politics that cut through cultural policies and the struggles in the field of contemporary dance art. Imperceptible politics is a conceptual tool to identify the new systems of action when people escape, argued in this research as being substantiated through curatorial praxis.

Curatorial praxis

Throughout the following chapters 'curatorial praxis' is used to describe the work of the festival makers and to discuss the methods of mobilising organisational principles and values. Curation includes many different actions to deliver and mediate artistic works, and it overlaps with production and programming. Curation in particular contributes to how contemporary dance is conceptualised, shaping discourses, as well as being a discourse of its own in which the term has extended from museum studies to visual arts to time-based arts, and to applications beyond art fields more broadly[2]. Following curator Irit Rogoff (2006), differentiating between curating and the curatorial offers a possibility to frame the activities of curating through specific principles. This research also follows the proposition of curator and art historian Paul O'Neill (2017) and his argument that the curatorial is most productive when it refers to a particular way of working with others, making it a succinct way to address the collective practices, dissensus, and political subjectivities arising in the work of the festival makers.

Contrary to approaching festivals as a state of exception, or 'time out of time' following anthropologist of rituals Alessandro Falassi (1987: 4-5), the festival-making by Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia[3] is approached as praxis, that is, everyday political action underpinned by specific values[4]. In a mutually reinforcing exchange, practices embody theories

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[2] For wider reference see Simon Sheikh (2017); Beatrice von Bismarck, Jörn Schafaff and Thomas Weski, (2012); Hans Ulrich Obrist (2008).

[3] Stanica instead of Station, and Lokomotiva instead of Locomotive are used throughout, following the names used in Serbia and North Macedonia.

[4] The use of praxis in this thesis does not directly reference the Praxis School in Belgrade and Zagreb from the 1960s coordinated by philosophers Mihailo Marković, Gajo Petrović and others, but nevertheless

and theories reflect upon practice. Referring to curatorial praxis, rather than curating, refines the analysis of what was being subverted through the festivals and their processes of creation that equally values practice and theory. New distributions of the sensible were not limited to the curatorial statements and themes of each edition. Developed across several editions of the festivals from 2007 to 2017, curatorial praxis deepens particular values and methods, learned and embodied through their effects. A summary of the curatorial praxis observed across *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* includes methods of self-organisation and values of radical equality, co-ownership of the means of production, non-alienation between artists and managers, the right to work and the right to non-work. It is also characterised by autonomy and individual initiative, taking an anti-capitalist position, with a commitment to agitation, and willingness to be in disagreement with each other without taking offence. The work of the festival makers begins from a radical presupposition of equality, and Chapters 3, 4 and 5 elaborate further upon processes of construction and subversion through curatorial praxis.

For Rancière, democracy is not a regime (2001: 31-32) but the practice of politics, rather than the maintenance of policy. Rancière's theory of politics as dissensus emerging from artistic work is fruitful for considering the principles and ethics underpinning the curatorial praxis of *Kondenz, PLESkavica* and *LocoMotion* (1991: 71; 2004: 42-43; 2010: 184). The festival makers do not consider their curatorial work as an artistic practice necessarily. Rather, curatorial praxis is about shaping the festivals on behalf of artists and discourses of contemporary dance art. Yet, artists are also part of the curatorial groups, and similar principles and concerns of making art, dance and choreography interweave and inspire curation. But the point is not to argue to which category curatorial praxis best belongs, but rather to trace the characteristics of the three festival examples and the effects of the equality they practice and stage via dissensus, and what elements of a context become reflected back to itself (Rancière, 2001: 42).

The analytic framework used here to analyse curatorial praxis in the former Yugoslav space draws also from feminist philosopher Nancy Fraser. Fraser argues that strategies of recognition and redistribution need to be thought and practised together for a radical politics of equality, or what she refers to as radical democracy, to occur (1997: 15). Festival-making might be

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acknowledges the connection between the value of praxis and the vigilant work of critique of any regime (1979).

understood as a practice of radical democracy when practices of recognition and redistribution appear as closely interwoven and balanced. For contemporary dance this can include the recognition of differences between people and conditions of production, as well as the possibility of ambiguous meanings and multiple forms of sense. Redistribution might be understood through sharing of knowledge, skills, funds, access, and agency to select and co-create, though not limited to these alone. The examples of festival-making in this research highlight the qualitative dimensions and effects of redistribution. When the processes and conditions of production of contemporary dance are obscured or are not recognised as significant by those in positions of power to disseminate art works (performances), like festival makers or producers who unquestioningly circulate existing performances, the conditions of their emergence become undermined. The consequences of this cam limit how contemporary dance might be conceptualised and practised. Curatorial praxis can be a practical politics that integrates processes of recognition and redistribution to foster democratic engagement across the divides festival makers perceive in their contexts (following Fraser in Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 27).

When recognition and redistribution across a range of issues and topics as sketched above are not considered and practised together, contemporary dance festivals risk not fulfilling or activating their political potential for dissensus. For example, holding onto consensus with given forms of representation risks policing already constructed categories of dance style and practice, as much as of categories of people. When recognition of differences stands in for reallocation and redistribution of resources and positions, the impetus to develop an alternative sensibility is muted (Rancière, 1999; see also sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 2001). Splitting a politics of recognition and redistribution impacts upon processes of social justice. Whilst festival-making rarely appears as a question of justice in the way Fraser develops it, this research is interested in moments of injustice when art and artists experience indifference or fear, or when questions of taking care of something, like administration of public subsidy, forms of sharing of agency, and what it might mean to be an equally seen and heard citizen, create hostility and fragmentation. The following chapters elaborate upon on the concept of imperceptible politics to understand curation as a practice that can escape from given circumstances, making festivals contestations of not only definitions and values of contemporary dance, but how conditions for it might be shaped through recognition and redistribution.

PLESkavica, Kondenz and *LocoMotion* are analysed through two interconnected lines of enquiry about the imperceptible politics generated through curatorial praxis. The first relates to long-term effects of the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) on cultural production in the former Yugoslav space. The concept of 'transition' is often used to account for the political transformation of a Socialist republic into individual nation states organised through so-called market capitalist liberal democracy. But it does not adequately capture the experiences of everyday life and the profound changes within the lifetimes of the festival makers. Nevertheless, theories of 'transition' provide the opening onto a discourse of contested themes such as Europeanisation and professionalism, and how independent artistic scenes navigate and understand these themes are briefly described below and expanded upon in Chapter 1.

The second line of enquiry concerns the crises of cultural politics across Europe with regards to the availability of public funding, national and international cultural policies and discourses of how art and arts festivals are expected to participate in economies and democracies. These questions are not limited to working life after the European financial crash of 2008, as arts festivals have long been sites of overlapping, often contrasting, interests about social relations and economic transactions. The particular focus here is made through addressing the unprecedented increase of arts and contemporary dance festivals since the 1990s, the proliferation of which is encapsulated in the term 'festivalisation', as defined below and further discussed Chapter 4. The tension as a result of funding cuts and ideological debates on the functions of festivals are found precisely amidst the new opportunities for cultural production in the former Yugoslav space. The critical responses by artists and practitioners through curatorial praxis addresses many struggles related to 'transition' and to these cultural politics, specific to the local contexts but related to broader concerns for contemporary dance in Europe.

Nomad Dance Academy, contemporary dance, festivals

Lokomotiva, Stanica and NDA Slovenia (founded in 2011 out of a group connected with Fičo Balet) are partners of the regional project Nomad Dance Academy (NDA) that began in conversation in 2005 and more formally in 2007. NDA is structured through self-organisation and principles of sociality, further explored in Chapter 2. The methods through which the NDA partners navigate changing contexts through curatorial praxis are based on an ethical stance of openness and principles that include balance, invitation and empty space. The festival makers

were profoundly aware of the agency they had to determine what art is made and made visible (Alfirević, 2018: 89), and curation appears as a meaningful way to reflect upon and challenge this role.

There are many people connected to the NDA project as co-founders, members of partner organisations, project participants and audiences. They include co-founder of NDA Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, who co-founded Lokomotiva in 2003, and works with different colleagues over the years including project manager Violeta Kachakova and project coordinator Elena Risteska. Co-founder of NDA Marijana Cvetković co-founded Stanica in 2005, and works with different colleagues including producer Ksenija Djurović and project coordinator Mirjana Dragosavljević. Stanica co-founder and NDA co-founder Dragana Alfirević works with NDA Slovenia with members Nina Božič, Jana Jevtović, Céline Larrère, Gregor Kamnikar, Dejan Srhoj, Rok Vevar and Jasmina Založnik. These people work as artists, researchers, historians, cultural managers, writers and producers. At its outset, NDA was comprised of six partners organisations in five of the former Yugoslav republics, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, North Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), plus Bulgaria, each with art scenes sufficiently interested in and motivated by contemporary dance to pursue collaboration. Whilst Bulgaria also experienced 'transition' following the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and manifold consequences in everyday life, it was not part of SFRY. For this reason and the broader aims of NDA of being open to collaboration and partnerships, the project itself would not advocate for articulating its work as necessarily characterised by sharing aspects of the former Yugoslav space that are explored in this research.

This research highlights affinities between the three festivals and the fluid yet fairly constant groups of artists and cultural workers creating them. Born in the 1970s and 1980s, many were witnesses of SFRY, and also witnesses to its dissolution and destruction over the 1990s, and the concomitant profound changes and ethical questions. The contemporary dance scenes in the former Yugoslav space highlighted in this research share some similar challenges, concerns and questions as a result of 'transition' worthy of analytic attention. Curatorial praxis in *PLESkavica*, *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* include some traces of some Yugoslav socialist practices and principles, reworked and transformed, and are elaborated in Chapter 1. These traces are not at the forefront of political representation or practice by central governments, and were across the 1990s encouraged to be considered regressive, nostalgic, idealistic and

obsolete. They can therefore be considered subversive. Papadopoulos et al. argue that subversion is that which is 'banished and eradicated through political representation, yet never completely' (2008: 80). Subversion, as a process of reclaiming a form of forgotten or suppressed praxis, is a crucial dimension in the analysis of festival-making through the connections made with aspects of SFRY. In spite of these subversive traces, this research does not forward a proposition for a particularly 'Socialist curating', or 'Balkan curatorial', or 'Balkan contemporary dance', nor describe NDA as part of a new movement or pioneer of an artistic epoch. Overemphasising these traces as modes of escape without due consideration might threaten to reproduce an east/west[5] Europe split in such a way as to erase the transnational flows of contemporary dance worlds. The argument that traces of SFRY appear in festival-making and that this is a subversive dimension of curatorial praxis and traits of Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia might lead to the assumption that such traces appear in all NGOs and contemporary dance organisations in Serbia, North Macedonia and Slovenia, and in other parts of the former Yugoslav space, which is not necessarily the case.

The cultural workers and artists in Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia perceive contemporary dance as an expanded, critical and social practice (Alfirević et al., 2011: 4). These perspectives informed and were informed by a dynamic of dancing, choreography, performing, performance, improvisation, embodiment, sensation, perception, touch, somatic practices, writing, reading, and related discourses from theorists and practitioners in and beyond contemporary dance. In short, contemporary dance is perceived by NDA as a practice of potentiality, with the possibility for multiple poetics and interpretations, as well as capable of acting as an instrument of critical intervention. This research uses NDA's perspective of contemporary dance, elaborated and discussed in Chapter 2, to draw comparisons between other interpretations of contemporary dance in the former Yugoslav space. Festival curatorial praxis extends the discourse on contemporary dance as expanded practice, not by claiming that festival curation is choreography, but by drawing attention to the synergy between contemporary dance as potentiating choices and processes of curation, interwoven with the

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[5] In this research, west is used to denote direction, and West to broadly refer to north Atlantic, European and Australasian geo-political histories characterised by colonialism and imperialism, with Hellenic, Judaic and Christian philosophy and religions informing many aspects of life. The concept 'West' and especially Western power internationally are contestable, echoed in contemporary art research projects such as *Former West* (2008-2016) that explores grand, and often essentialising, narratives of modernity with the collapse of the USSR. The conceptualisation and problematisation of the 'West' in this sense is two-fold as the post-WWII tripartite Cold War arrangement, and synonymous with hierarchical ultramodernity (Formerwest, 2019).

dynamic sketched above.

Imperceptible politics is concerned with changing the very conditions of perception and action more than with changing what we see (Papadopoulos et al., 2008, 73-74). Staying alert to moments where a new distribution of the sensible occurs is what gives rise to imperceptible politics in the politicisation of contemporary dance and festival-making. This research finds an affinity between Rancière (1991) via Papadopoulis et al. (2008) with an emphasis on contemporary dance practice and education as a training in shifting perception, in which starting from a place of ignorance is considered an advantage to creative potentiality. Papadopoulos et al. argue that imperceptible politics changes sensibilities. They change the immediate social realities of existence in ways that, after a certain point, become impossible to ignore (2008: 75). This is what makes the NDA project significant and transformative because its partner organisations construct new material realities where they operate, tracing the future in the present, and by insisting upon space for contemporary dance as an expanded, critical and social practice. There is no one ultimate strategy: neither imperceptible politics nor NDA can be reduced to one successful and necessary form of politics. Subverting that which operates to maintain the integrity of a given field of power happens through many unpredictable encounters, implicating contemporary dance as a vector for change. Analysing imperceptible politics is not in order to argue that there is a more plausible or reliable 'truth' underneath phenomena. Rather it is a methodological imperative to articulate when and how something is made to matter as dissensus. As such, the familiar proposition of festivals as safety valves of social relations, following anthropologist Max Gluckman (1963), can be rethought through imperceptible politics. The pressures entailed in working in contemporary dance over time make *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* safety valves that highlight broader dynamics of local and transnational artistic scenes, as well as the experiences and learning of their makers.

In neither festival scholarship nor dance, theatre and performance scholarship is there an agreed upon genealogy of arts festivals. Nor is there a genealogy that narrates the appearance of contemporary dance festivals that acknowledges how the definition of performance forms might be co-created by the framing provided by festivals themselves. Whilst characteristics and functions of festival-making and research have been mapped, most thoroughly by sociologist Donald Getz (2010), arts festival genealogies that trace contemporary dance and the former Yugoslav space are not to be found. However, one genealogy presented by researchers of cultural policy and management Chris Newbold, Jennie Jordan, Franco

Bianchini and Christopher Maughan marks transformations in European contemporary performing arts festivals across three phases: 1940s-1950s, 1960s-1970s and 1980s-1990s (2015: xviii). The phases illustrate tensions in organisational methods, conceptualisations of art, and curatorial authority pertinent for tracing the politics of festival-making in *LocoMotion*, *PLESkavica* and *Kondenz*, and Chapter 1 explores this further.

Arts festivals across all the phases demonstrate economic and humanitarian concerns, and are often quite radical at their point of initiation[6], by providing what is missing from a context or already available to see in the programming of theatres, following theatre researcher Dragan Klaić (2011:136). In the years following the end of World War II, festivals were characterised by a sense of reconstruction to support and prefigure urban infrastructure as well as moral and civic values, coinciding with the development of new provisions for welfare. *Edinburgh International Festival* (1947) and the *Avignon Festival* (1947) are paradigmatic for stimulating economic growth, as well as highly influential on other festivals elsewhere. The international dimension so appreciated in the *Edinburgh* and *Avignon* festivals interweaves with a cosmopolitan outlook that shows an openness and willingness to engage with divergent cultural experiences in, as anthropologist Ulf Hannerz puts it, 'a search for contrasts rather than uniformity' (1990: 239). Debates on the influences, controversies and transformations of these two festivals are outlined elsewhere, for example by theatre scholar Jen Harvie (2003); sociologist Jean-Louis Fabiani (in Giorgi, Sassatelli and Delanty, 2011); and researcher of French, theatre and literature Philippa Wehle (2003)[7]. Lastly, arts festival histories largely deploy of the concept of 'culture' in a way that follows cultural theorist Raymond Williams definition that argues culture is 'the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity' (1983: 87), following on from poet and cultural critic Matthew Arnold (1993[1869]) and literary critic Frank Raymond Leavis (1963[1948]). This contrasts with the definition

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[6] By the 2000s, differences between the once fringe and 'off' festivals and 'official' festivals have blurred in several cases as the so-called fringe festivals also contend with questions of financing and participation in art markets (Knowles, 2000; Bradby and Delgado, 2003). This shows how the so-called fringes have to work hard to remain a critical in their commentary, or to provide audiences a new alternative. Festivals that began in the 1970s, 80s or 90s and by the 2000s have developed away from their fringe, marginal, alternative initiation into a particular standard, if not hegemony, of the festival circuits.

[7] Precedents from the nineteenth century in the histories of secular arts festivals that emphasise the intermingling of profit and creative practices include *Bayreuth Festival* (1876), which is an example of encouraging elite tourism for theatre. Another line of research includes The Great Exhibition in the UK (1851), leading to the World Fairs and International Biennales, which are critiqued as significant points of global trade as well as nation branding (Sloterdijk, 2013: 12) *Edinburgh International Festival* and *Avignon Festival* are credited with influencing the rise of the 'fringe' or 'off' festival that was replicated in North America (Huffman, 2003: 58).

forwarded by anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1958[1871]), 'culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'. The debates in anthropology about the definition of culture appear in artistic practice and festival-kaing. In this research, 'culture' is used in the way Williams describes it when discussing festival histories, national and international cultural policies, but is also used in the broader sense by Tylor to analyse the politics of festival-making[8].

The changes to political and territorial borders in the continent of Europe after 1989 and 1992 meant the further increase of festivals in contemporary dance and experimental performance already in motion since the late 1970s[9]. The concept of 'festivalisation' followed the increase of arts festivals from the 1950s. It can also refer to the re-naming, re-branding or co-opting of existing events and celebrations as festivals (also referred to as eventification, following sociologist Doreen Jakob, 2012). Writer and entrepreneur Luc Sala (2015) debates festivalisation as not only an economic trend but as a compensatory form, a point also made by Klaić (2014), and elaborates upon the utopian space festival-making can afford. Underpinned by humanist values, Sala (2015) proposes that festivals contribute something beneficial and can have more positive compensatory dimensions. Similarly, festival researchers Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor and Ian Woodward (2014; 2016) explore forms of responsibility and sociality found through festivals in Europe, Australia and north America, though acknowledge that 'festivalisation' provokes some disadvantages. The proliferation of festivals since the 1990s cannot only be located in the cynicism of art market success, but rather in a dispersal of belief in the agency of artistic practice, performance, and the celebratory dimensions of festivals. The processes of making festivals can generate critical reflection, as well as propose them as a form of intervention in existing public spheres[10], and shape new ones. This follows

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[8] Two debates within anthropology explore narrowing the definitions of culture outlined by Tylor, Arnold, Leavis and Williams further, finding two extremes. One in which culture is considered more a tool, both material and cognitive, used by a society to maintain its adaptation to nature, offered by Roy Rappaport (1968 [1980]: 233). The other is more purely cognitive, limited to the communicative and meaningful aspects of social life, for example, found in the Clifford Geertz (1973: 89), though not strictly upheld by him. These debates continue to circulate on the interactive and material aspects of social life, that is, everything people *do* - with themselves, with objects and with each other.

[9] In the 1980s, at least thirty new festivals for contemporary dance specifically or arts festivals that included it were initiated in Europe. In the 1990s, more than sixty more festivals were started. In the 2000s, more than eighty new ones appear, and in the 2010s up to 2016, another seventy can be counted (unpublished database by the author).

[10] Jürgen Habermas (1974: 49) outlines a realm of social life that mediates between private individuals and the state, to which 'access is guaranteed by all citizens' where free discussion is conducted. It is a space,

geographer Stanley Waterman (1998: 63) who argues (after sociologist Jean Duvignaud, 1976, and anthropologist Alessandro Falassi, 1987: 3) that festivals at the end of the twentieth century are characterised by the opportunity for reflection and creation, for makers, participants and audiences, as well as researchers. These observations are helpful to distinguish festivals in the 2000s-2010s like *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* whose makers are deeply concerned with the context in which they occur. As a result of analysis of these festivals, the concept of the heuristic artist-led festival is proposed, contributing to festival scholarship from the field of contemporary dance more broadly, whilst offering a tool that helps to explicate how festival-making is undertaken.

Methods

In order to delimit the scope of an analysis of curatorial praxis and imperceptible politics, three festivals connected to NDA were selected for several reasons. NDA is worthy of greater analytic attention especially for the lessons to be learnt for contemporary dance communities in the UK. In addition, much of the discourse on NDA has been created by its members or artists and theorists from the former Yugoslavia. My outsider status as a researcher, though insider position as a practitioner in the field of contemporary dance, was an opportunity for another perspective and analytic interpretation. The effects of NDA exceed a single PhD project, but three of the festivals connected to NDA produce a greater understanding of its principles and protocols in action. These three are not indicative of all contemporary dance festivals in the former Yugoslav space between 2007 and 2017, but they serve to open up questions of festival curation more broadly and help to problematise the role of international development support on contemporary dance.

A mixed-methods approach is used to explore the two lines of enquiry of imperceptible politics and curatorial praxis and the long-term effects of the dissolution of the SFRY on cultural production of contemporary dance festivals in the former Yugoslav space. This interdisciplinary research uses diachronic and synchronic perspectives to explore curatorial

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ideally, to be able to hold political actors to account. The public sphere is shaped and transformed through a given situation in a historical constellation. This research follows Nancy Fraser's elaboration from Habermas to consider festivals as both creating diverse public spheres, and intervening them (1997: 76-93'. Fraser argues that 'any conception of the public sphere that requires a sharp separation between (associational) civil society and the state will be unable to imagine the forms of self-management, interpublic coordination, and political accountability that are essential to a democratic and egalitarian society' (Fraser, 1997: 92).

praxis in single editions of festivals as well as changes across several editions over a span of years. It uses discourse analysis from several sets of literature on festivals, cultural policy, international development, Yugoslav histories and politics, as well as materials from dance, theatre and performance studies. Thirdly, it uses ethnographic methods to engage in a close relationship with what is considered meaningful to the festival makers and what is at stake in each context. Ethnographic work has informed the analytic framework, constructed over time in relationship to different discourses and the examples of curatorial praxis in the festivals. These methods are explained below.

Synchronic and diachronic analysis developed from the field of linguistics through Ferdinand de Saussure (1959: 101, 140). Synchronic analysis means to engage in a process that identifies fundamental principles of a particular system, which for Saussure would mean the relative stability of a language at a particular moment in time. This invites close consideration of its structures whilst also supporting comparison with adjacent languages. A synchronic approach is used to discuss single editions of festivals, understood as the result of many relationships, and as fleeting moments of imperceptible politics upsetting and disrupting the present. This enables close consideration of the concerns of Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia at a specific time to elaborate upon curatorial praxis. Its deployment in this research also means to interpret a festival as a kind of language communicating multiple concerns, allowing for comparison with adjacent festivals or events, including other editions of the same festival. It also makes the festival an occasion in which an artistic scene reorganises and sees itself, as an example of dissensus but also what sociologist Alan Blum would refer to as the 'grammar of a scene' (2001: 17).

Diachronic analysis looks to the relationships between successive terms that are substituted for each other in time. It is a way to consider the development and evolution of a language through history (Saussure, 1959: 140). This helps to interpret different editions (as successive terms) of festivals as connected, rather than discrete. In this research, 'festival' is considered an enduring concept and feature of societies. Analysing the curatorial praxis of festivals diachronically means looking to the principles, methods, effects, relations and concerns that, following anthropologist David Picard, make festivals mediate change and maintain social life (2015: 1). A diachronic approach draws from materials related to festival editions to understand the appearance and reasons for particular concerns, and how these relate to previous events and questions. These materials reveal shifting configurations of who was involved in the NGOs,

and in co-curating each edition, as well as which artists, venues, funders and partners were in relationship. A diachronic approach also supports analysis of the historical precedents to the NDA project to consider how festivals, networks, meetings and policies coincide and interact. These interactions are understood through similarities and contrasts, such as disjunctions or new translations of a policy. This comparative approach helps to illuminate how independent arts scene understand themselves, and what is made meaningful in methods of production and artistic practice. Additionally, unanticipated effects and consequences of funding regimes on curatorial praxis are able to be analysed through a diachronic approach that would otherwise be missed by the current project evaluation structures that are more concerned with immediate, empirical results.

Two core principles of discourse analysis are that firstly it is an interpretivist epistemology, in which there is no 'social reality' to be uncovered. Rather, the social is produced through action and interpretation. The second is that meanings arise from the interrelation of bodies of texts that bring new ideas and concepts into the world, following philosopher Michel Foucault (1972: 48-49), and founder of critical discourse analysis, Norman Fairclough (1995: 74). In this regard, discourse analysis supports a two-fold inquiry of curation as response and curation as creative context-building by surveying a range of different written sources and resources. These include theoretical texts, monographs, edited collections and journal articles, web archives, interviews taken by myself and by others, publications from policy bodies, and publications and programmes by the festivals, other reviews and commentary, observation/field notes from spending time with and in the various contexts. As with the opening text in this Introduction, this research presents several different registers of writing, and when italicised, these texts are field notes taken from during the research period. Each text is approached as a valuable episteme. Over the course of the research, certain terms that repeatedly appeared in the discourses were collected with the intention to 'denaturalise' them through analysis, these include terms addressed in the following chapters like 'independent', 'local scene', and 'self-organised'.

One of the first principles of dialectical thought is the law of non-contradiction (associated most famously with Aristotle) that argues that an entity is either 'a' or 'not a' (Singh, in Das et al., 2014: 168). Non-dialectical thought refuses this binary thinking, and helps to account for contradictions without needing to ascribe direct causality. This is important for the method of discourse analysis used in this research that presents contradictions side by side, rather than

trying to make one perspective more true or appealing than another. For example, I experienced someone expressing doubt to me about a particular topic, then later the same person expressed their congratulations about it in a public forum, contradicting the perspective shared with me. Neither is more valid empirical information, but rather an insight into the unfolding multiple perspectives in which an individual and their opinions are not fixed. The non-dialectical approach taken in this research allows for a study of navigating changes and acknowledges social agents are never transparent to the observer, which is the epistemological and ethical foundation of ethnography (Fassin, in Das et al., 2016: 69).

Text-based analysis alone is insufficient to grasp the concerns of festival curators, so the methods of semi-structured interview and participant-observation were deployed in a range of settings. Some of the materials gathered through interview and observation are original to this study and collected between fieldwork between 20016-18 in the UK, Serbia, North Macedonia, Slovenia, as well as in Poland and the Netherlands. I conducted twenty-four semi-structured interviews, and twenty-seven semi-formal conversations of varying duration, maximum an hour and a half. I was not able to attend some of the festivals but not all, and for this research it was necessary to speak with festival makers to discuss their experiences, thoughts and feelings about their work, and how they sense their reality and changes in material conditions. A limitation of this research is that I did not learn the local languages of my interviewees, instead relying upon English. This meant that I was not able to pick up additional information in the conversations between people, adding to the limitations of the already partial nature of participant-observation. As with many organisations in the Balkans, the names of the projects change and the people remain. But methodologically the problem arises in tracing archives, as across the 2000s, many web pages that had been created for projects are no longer accessible. Therefore, several links in the bibliography are about projects that have ended, and with expired URLs, but written about on websites from other ongoing platforms.

The rationale for the selection of the festivals included a motivation to understand differences across festival curatorial praxis from shared concerns with contemporary dance as an expanded practice, and the long-term effects of so-called 'transition' from SFRY. Supported by a diachronic and synchronic approach, this research argues that more insights into the effects of festivals might be found when they are analysed as continuations rather than only discrete events, partly following an extended case method articulated by Michael Burawoy (1998), building from the Manchester School of social anthropology through a decolonial perspective

to advocate for reflexivity in research with attention to context as a point of departure. An extended case-study approach is also used by anthropologist Abner Cohen in his analysis of the Notting Hill Carnival, London, UK over several decades (1993), offering opportunity for the analysis of patterns of change in production and social relations. The comparative dimensions include a festival ending (*LocoMotion* in Skopje), a festival transforming (*PLESkavica* into *CoFestival* in Ljubljana), and a festival enduring (*Kondenz* in Belgrade). The selection also illuminates the differences between partners of the NDA project. Whilst sharing some similar needs and conditions, specific interests appear through curatorial praxis, and how conditions in the former Yugoslav space varies. The three festivals and contexts offer insight into transformations of the former Yugoslav space through other comparative terms, such as the relationship to the European Union (EU), and the effects of artistic mobility and migration on artistic scenes. This research attempts to not reproduce the expectation that these contexts are to be viewed first as 'peripheries', and second, with the assumption that they that need to catch up with the modern institutions of the West, such as individual freedoms, a market economy, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law, following political historians Marian Burchardt and Gal Kirn (2017: 5). The festival makers address these topics and questions themselves, and so are framed and analysed in their terms.

The other three partners of NDA at its initiation also produced festivals. NDA Bulgaria/Brain Store Project continues to produce the *Antistatic* festivals and serve the contemporary performance communities in Sofia. However, as Bulgaria was not in SFRY, a wider exploration would open more questions of comparison that were beyond the scope of this research. In BiH, Tanzelarija is no longer an NDA partner since 2011, and the *ZRVK* festival it produced has operated independently from NDA and Tanzelarija after its first edition in 2008. NDA Croatia/The Tala Dance Centre still continues, with different festivals and projects, elaborated by cultural workers Jelena Mihelčić, Iva Nerina Sibila and Ivana Slunjski (2014). Croatia prior to 2005 had considerably more infrastructure for dance education, contemporary dance, theatre and performance out of all the former Yugoslav republics (see *Frakcija* journal since 1996; Una Bauer, 2015; Dea Vidović, 2018). For example, the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb, the second largest city in SFRY after the capital Belgrade, was founded in 1950, and Ana Maletić founded a school of Rhythmics and Dance in 1954. Both of these are part of longer histories of modern dance in both Croatia and in SFRY and generations of educators and artists. This meant that the volume of materials and discourse would require more space than this thesis could allow to trace transformations of contemporary dance festivals in relation

to the NDA project and the specific conditions of Croatia. In all three cases, the political changes and challenges for cultural production will have points of similarity with Serbia, Slovenia and North Macedonia, and this research lays a foundation for possible future research.

I understood myself to be an insider-outsider throughout this research for several reasons. I have first-hand experience participating in international arts festivals as an artist-performer (UK, Italy), artist-participant (Austria), as well as a volunteer (Netherlands, Poland, UK). I have familiarity with some of the concerns of artists' working lives, including the frameworks of support, training and production. I am cogent of some of the debates between artists concerning how individual projects are conceptualised and contextualised. I am well aware of the tensions between heuristic processes of discovery that lead to artistic works, and the frequent necessity of articulating ideas for an application form before the opportunity for such processes have occurred. I have had substantial experience of working through the body and movement to recognise the intimacy and trust it can produce between peers and colleagues, and the trust in dance and performance practices as being meaningful. Lastly, I am familiar with some of the differences between how contemporary dance is conceptualised, taught and shared in different cities and countries across Europe, enough to be able to grasp that there are multiple interpretations, expressions and debates, but not knowing how these are produced.

My understanding of myself as an outsider firstly recognises that all which was previously stated as familiar in the previous paragraph is nevertheless provisional and partial, that is, my learning will be ongoing. Whilst the performance of expertise is understood as normal and acceptable, I find it sometimes can inhibit appreciating and attending to multiple perspectives and ways of moving through life. Secondly, my sense of being an outsider relates more obviously to being unfamiliar with working and living in Serbia and North Macedonia. Along with Slovenia, I was an outsider to the details of local artistic communities and the kinds of relationships between arts organisations and state funding structures, as well as the histories of artistic works in those spaces related to dance and contemporary performance. I was especially unfamiliar with the experiences of growing up in Socialist Yugoslavia, the experiences of war, and the major transformations to individual lives and societies. I became familiar with how my colleagues and friends from the former Yugoslav space experienced being 'othered' in different ways, and the affective intensity of West/East European comparison that would slyly creep into self-perception and be occasionally disclosed in conversation.

This informed the analysis by producing ongoing processes to make the familiar strange, and the strange familiar (William James, 1921[1911]: 7). These included reflective writing and questioning my own biases and perceptions throughout. Asking questions from the perspective a self-proclaimed ignorant outsider was useful for placing my interlocutors in a position of authority, though sharing some knowledge from the field of contemporary dance in my own country helped to produce a sense of exchange. My empathy for struggles was joined by curiosity and motivation to understand the processes and forces beyond more immediately apparent activities and occurrences. Tracing patterns and concerns from the perspectives of those involved in generating the field of contemporary dance was alongside acute awareness of how their positions and perspectives are multiple. I saw gaps in literature that did not account for the communities of cultural workers moving across and between spaces for contemporary dance, who were simultaneously sharing common interests and ground, and coming with different experiences and tools. Analytically, I was compelled not to overstate or understate the differences, but find ways to contribute to understanding how and when dissensus was formed through these multiple, changing positions.

Before fieldwork, all necessary ethical procedures in line with Middlesex University were adhered to. The central aspects of the ethics procedure set up and followed in this research were making participants aware of myself as a researcher at a doctoral level of study, and that they were free to take part and withdraw at any time. Interviewees granted me permission to cite them by their name, and where permission was not given for named contribution I sought their permission to anonymise their words. In the case of overheard information during participant-observation, I strove to ensure that no part of the information used could identify the speaker. Where refusals for interviews were made, either by non-reply or explicit refusal, this is acknowledged in the text for the attempt made, and the necessity of recourse to other interview materials already conducted by others.

Chapter summaries

Chapter 1 lays a foundation for the later analysis of contemporary dance festival curation. It presents how and why a conceptualisation of the former Yugoslav space is taken up in this research in order to argue that continuities, traces and transformations of SFRY inform the curatorial praxis of the *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* festivals. Drawing from several discourses on 'transition' and following especially the insights from political historian Gal Kirn

on 'postsocialism', this chapter elaborates upon the changing conditions for contemporary dance. One of the traces of SFRY pertinent for understanding the self-organised practices of the NDA projects is Yugoslav Worker Self-Management. The history, ideals and problematics of this are presented to argue that, following curator and theorist Jelena Vesić (2015: 122), its legacies continue in the unofficial, unexpected 'elsewheres' of artists' collectives. The marginal cases of cultural workers in dance both in SFRY and in the 2000s highlights that despite the many differences between east and western Europe in the field of contemporary dance as argued by Slovene dance theorist Bojana Kunst (2013[2004]), shedding light on the similarities and continuities helps to understand the functions festivals take as enduring dissensual political practices that disrupt prevailing conditions and perceptions of dance. These tensions are explored in the new opportunities for independent cultural scenes, festivals, and education. The struggles for artists and cultural workers during SFRY and in the 2000s highlighted in this chapter help to argue what curatorial praxis was addressing in the creation of imperceptible politics.

Chapter 2 presents the NDA project through its initiation and connection to networks and festivals. These dynamics matter for how art worlds operate and how conditions for contemporary dance develop through individual relationships. I argue that tracing the continuity of organisational principles informing curatorial praxis across networks and projects helps to see festivals less as one-off expressions or events, but connected to broader projects of emancipation. The organisational structure of NDA, its goals and its working principles that include balance, empty space and invitation, illustrate how the festivals appear as part of the intentions to transform conditions for contemporary dance in the Balkans. The goal of artistic developments places emphasis on ongoing learning and artistic research. In this regard, the NDA projects and associated festival-making are modes of socialisation into the values of life-long artistic practice and research to re-make contemporary dance as an expanded practice. The goal of artistic development also refers to the importance of education in order to combat power monopolies and mechanisms that decide the conditions, contours, and permeability of dance scenes. The NDA project's ambitions to address production, dissemination, circulation and reception of contemporary dance were grounded in a trust it has an expansive, critical and social potential. In each context of the partner organisations, these perceptions of contemporary dance are not necessarily shared by others. The imperceptible politics of festival curation navigates and addresses the tensions of recognition and acceptance of contemporary dance in the former Yugoslav space in which a marginal position is useful and exhausting. The salient

qualities of the principles of balance are found in how it operates as a pragmatic organisational tool, as well as a conceptual strategy to stay alert to changing conditions and needs. The principle of empty space is characterised by supporting conditions for latent capacities and potential to emerge, evocative of the paradigms of dance improvisation, training in perception and sensation, and emancipatory education predicated on shared ignorance. The principle of invitation is a mode of socialisation into relations of trust and reciprocity. This principle opens questions about the advantages and disadvantages of the open call structure for arts opportunities, as well as in the organisational structure of NDA. These principles are all resources of festival curatorial praxis through which the imperceptible politics addresses time, work, friendship, efficiency, and notions of belonging and responsibility, explored in the subsequent chapters.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 expand upon *LocoMotion*, *PLESkavica* and *Kondenz* festivals in turn. The structure of these chapters first gives an overview of the festival and organisation, and what the curatorial praxis entailed. Then it addresses the imperceptible politics is in relation to what struggles and social conflicts the festival edition or editions addressed at the levels of 'transition', national cultural policy, infrastructural changes, and interpersonal relations. Each chapter ends with a discussion of specific key themes arising from imperceptible politics in relation to the context. Chapter 3 presents the *LocoMotion* festival and describes the arc of its editions from 2008-2015. The 2011 edition particularly shifts the perception of its makers as to what festivals can be within cultural production and artistic development. The sociality of the festival space is illustrated through the principle of invitation to redistribute curatorial authority. Imperceptible politics of *LocoMotion* address struggles for Lokomotiva arising from several concerns. Unsupportive and unchanging cultural policies are subverted through carving out a space for contemporary dance as an expanded practice in the context of Skopje. Whilst the presence of international development community and foundations during the 1990s and following the end of the Yugoslav wars in 2001(here taken as the armed conflict in north west Macedonia between the Albanian National Liberation Army and security forces) had been supportive of the independent scenes of contemporary art and dance, the departure of the majority of that support left Lokomotiva in an unsustainable position requiring, if not provoking, a reconfiguration of the NGO. In addition, disagreements in the organisation about how to develop audiences and what the festival should be ultimately meant the decision to end the festival. Other challenges include the decrease of common space in Skopje in the face of privatisation, and that state cultural institutions would not cooperate with the independent

scenes. The crisis in access to space for the festival in 2014 shifted perception of how solidarity can operate in Skopje between different arts organisations. Imperceptible politics of trust shows that maintaining one's immediate relationships is as important as tending to international partnerships further away. The end of the festival adds to the narrative presented by Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski of the 'slow death' of the independent scene in Skopje (2017), as younger artists are not self-organising to develop contemporary dance further. Rebalancing Lokomotiva's work and projects, and being based in a new building means curatorial praxis simply transforms. This example raises the point that festivals and curatorial praxis can operate as forms of escape in difficult circumstances, creating diverse public spheres and meeting points. But when it becomes disempowering and unsustainable financially to keep producing an annual edition, festivals no longer hold such emancipatory potential for their makers.

Chapter 4 analyses the curatorial praxis of *PLESkavica* in 2011 as a form of escape from both the long-term decay of cultural worker's rights in Slovenia, alongside the increased demands for efficient cultural production. In 2011 there was a particularly large amount of festivals of contemporary dance happening, leading the makers of *PLESkavica* to question the sustainability of such a move, and then to refuse to perpetuate hyper-productivity. The curatorial concept 'Defestivalisation for Refestivalisation' shaped the festival as a mode of critique wherein the spaces of contemporary dance could retain some capacity for agitation and dissensus in a new distribution of the sensible. *PLESkavica* festival marks resistance to 'Europeanisation' when it was experienced as narrowing rather than expanding artistic potentiality, and reasonable workers' rights. This resistance was not through an ethno-nationalist backlash that eschewed liberal ideals of cosmopolitanism. Rather, it was how the format of the festival and the curatorial problematise the attempts of Slovene national cultural policy, along with EC co-production cultural projects, to regulate production within contemporary dance worlds, and their festivals. The festival staged a reorganisation of the subtle control mechanisms dominating festival-making through a curatorial praxis that, like *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* in 2011, redistributed curatorial authority and invited artists, curators and guests to enter into processes of unbecoming underscored by radical equality that framed uncertainty as potentiality.

The festival was an opportunity for artists and audiences to develop their own interests, as well as confront questions of how time, and time together, might be experienced. Defestivalisation was approached not only as a deconstruction of festivals, but also through the principles of

empty space and balance, leading on from invitation as methods to remake the concept and format of the festival. This approach also shares principles from improvisation and spontaneous composition in devising and performance. This demonstrates the choreographic at play in the curatorial, concerning the processual, time-based appreciation of construction and reception that cultivates dissensus in festival-making. In the 1990s, Slovenia, and the rest of the former Yugoslavia, attempted to erase the rationale for co-ownership and co-creation of the state, even making it a taboo. *PLESkavica* quietly recalled these notions in the attempt to extend the co-creation of a festival and instil a sense of shared responsibility for the artistic scene.

Chapter 5 addresses the curatorial praxis of the *Kondenz* festivals from 2008-2016, focussing predominantly on the imperceptible politics of the 2016 edition. Co-curation is generated by a return of artists to Serbia, showing long-term effects of the NDA project, as well as how artist mobility can refresh and challenge local scenes. Ongoing migration away from Serbia is nevertheless an issue for the independent scene, and is addressed in different ways, including humour as an imperceptible politics of escape from prevailing challenges. For Stanica escaping without travelling means forming partnerships with artists and organisations elsewhere, and this remains crucial in sustaining practice and resourcing itself. Trust in contemporary dance as an expanded practice is communicated through the *Kondenz* festivals. Contestation over definitions of dance in the public sphere, through festivals and in the media, could be interpreted as an expression of democracy through dissensus. Though these debates can nevertheless be hostile, leading to some polarisation in the arts communities. The *Kondenz* festivals address the struggles of the independent scene, which like the struggles in North Macedonia and Slovenia, also include unpredictable administration by the Ministry of Culture that inhibits long-term planning. The festivals, as regular points of solidarity, are part of a shared responsibility taken by people and organisations in the scene to ameliorate the dysfunction.

Chapter 6 picks up from topics mentioned Chapter 1 and the subsequent chapters to explore the role of international development in the former Yugoslav space in relation to festival-making to argue how the increase and decrease of funding is navigated through curatorial praxis. The changing conditions for contemporary dance have affected artistic scenes, but also the opportunities to develop how it is understood and valued, meaning festivals continue to be significant mediators of meanings. The economic and political project of EU sought to develop European culture, implementing top-down measures for integration and regional cooperation

more rigorously through the Creative Europe programmes launched in 2000 by the European Commission. The increased visibility and discourses on contemporary dance across the 1990s and 2000s relates to the expansion of EU member states, and the increase to art project funding connected to the EC. This chapter forwards two conceptual ramifications following the discussion of *LocoMotion*, *PLESkavica* and *Kondenz*. The first extends the question of redistributing curatorial authority and agency, and looks to international development funding bodies' terms and conditions as a mode of pre-curation. These may or may not be then reproduced by recipients, and as the example of NDA partners shows, subverting pre-curation is possible. The second is a proposition for a new typology called the heuristic artist-led festival. This takes into account the methods and principles of making, and especially the role of learning and discovery that values the unknown. Whilst this proposition risks claiming a specialisation of a festival that might threaten to curtail or ignore what its effects could exceed, the attempt here is to recognise processes of curatorial praxis when it shows enabling, emancipatory potential, and where contemporary dance as an expanded practice remains fluid and contestable.

The Conclusion summarises the findings of this research concerning the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis and festival-making in the former Yugoslav space and offers reflection upon the methodological implications. An extended discussion of self-organisation synthesises the nuances of its capacity in sustaining conditions of contemporary dance, but also the struggles of independence and interdependence. Festivalisation is discussed as contributing to the diversity of cultural scenes and the public sphere, notwithstanding its problems highlighted through *PLESkavica*. The effects of international development and its changing configurations impacting upon independent cultural scenes are illuminated through examples from *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion*. However, the presence of the EC in particular as a supporter, and pre-curator, of contemporary dance in Slovenia, Serbia and North Macedonia continues into the 2010s. This produces a debate on the shared quality of ambiguity in contemporary dance as an expanded practice and the EU as an unfinishable, paradoxical project. Not quite proxies of one another, this nevertheless means the contribution of NDA is significant for reconfiguring organisational principles and ethics in the field of contemporary dance, through arts festival-making as a distinctly European, and conflicted, domain.

Chapter 1

The former Yugoslav space and contemporary dance in context

Choosing to refer to the former Yugoslav space is understood to be somewhat controversial. NDA describes its project as a Balkan one by co-founder Bojana Mladenović (in Alfirević 2011: 18). Not all project partners are based in former Yugoslav republics (NDA Bulgaria), artists are invited from other countries, partnerships are made with organisations across Europe and north America. It might risk appearing parochial or nostalgic to refer to SFRY, perhaps even insulting, traumatising, and against cosmopolitan values. But 'former Yugoslav space' acknowledges the complexity of shifts from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918-1929) that became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929-1941), Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–1963), Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963–1992), as well as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY, 1992-2003/2006). FRY ushered in changes that were almost unrecognisable to qualities of SFRY, but retained 'Yugoslavia' in the naming, further shifting associations and claims to meaningfulness. Former Yugoslav space also references a time when Serbia had experienced what artist and art historian Miško Šuvaković refers to as de-internationalisation during Milošević's regime (2012). Economic sanctions began in 1991 by the European Economic Community, followed by a ban by the United Nations Security Council in 1992 on all international trade, scientific cooperation, air travel, cultural and sport exchange that ended in 1996. This reduction of the flow of people, goods and ideas, along with the cultivation of alternative means of taking advantage of the situation in order to survive, matters for understanding the emancipatory drive of the independent scene and contemporary dance interpreted in this research.

The 'former Yugoslav space' is used in throughout for several reasons. Firstly, to indicate elements of SFRY as an enduring, diverse cultural imaginary, as much as a geopolitical project of SFRY as a place[11]. Whilst the experiences of people born there nevertheless share some similarities to communist regimes of the USSR, particular differences, such as how Yugoslav Self-Management operated, and relationships towards contemporary art are fruitful to consider for their relations to contemporary dance. Deliberate differentiation between the USSR and

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[11] The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963-1992) consisted of six socialist republics, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia, and two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina.

SFRY is made because Yugoslav Socialism cannot be adequately conflated with Soviet Communism in the notion of Eastern Europe. Omitting the Yugoslav experiences and democratic practices in such conflation further reinforces the assumption that democracy was latterly bestowed by the West. It is also a deliberate choice to resist reproducing the stipulated term Western Balkans to refer to Serbia and North Macedonia that casts a divide between the EU and the non-EU countries of Europe, for example in the Stabilisation and Association Process of the countries of the former Yugoslav space established by the EU in 1999 (De Munter, 2019)[12]. Although this process is significant, the EU is not the only transnational institution to structure conceptions of people and practices, artists and contemporary dance. Such terms do little to articulate nuanced experiences. SFRY was not only about land, but questions of what sustains a meaningful life.

Second, and related to the first point, is the analytic imperative to be able to discuss the concerns of the somewhat marginal position for dance artists and cultural workers in SFRY that continues into the 2000s, elaborated later in this chapter. This shows particular challenges that art and artists face in order to be recognised and to be able to develop supportive infrastructure. 'Former Yugoslav space' becomes helpful for thinking culture and identity in a way that denaturalises the nation-state as the hegemonic form of organising space, following anthropologist Akhil Gupta (1992: 74), as well as the practice, historicisation and conceptualisation of contemporary dance festivals. Critical geographers such as Edward Soja (1989), Doreen Massey (1994; 2005); and Nigel Thrift (2008), and philosophers Henri Lefebvre (1974; 2004) and Michel de Certeau (1984) demonstrate the necessity of inserting critical theories of space in theorising societies and practices. Differentiating place and space, de Certeau (1984: 117) argues that place implies a sense of stability, whereas space is composed of the intersection of more mobile elements than simply a distribution of coexisting relationships. Space is therefore more polyvalent, with conflicting terms and crucially characterised by practice. It is this sense that 'space' is used in this research.

Worker Self-Management

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[12] 'Western Balkans' was also visible to read on the corner of the screen through the US television channel CNN during the Yugoslav Wars, and the term has profound meaning in Serbia for some people. As told to me during fieldwork, watching CNN was the way to know when/where the NATO bombing would occur, and so 'Western Balkans' is connected to this history and personal experience. Like all processes of naming, it is not neutral.

Anthropologist Chris Hann observed that 'the *everyday moral communities* of socialism have been undermined but not replaced' (2002: 10, emphasis in the original). Said another way, the atomising effects of 'a dominant regime of neoliberal capital accumulation and exploitation' undermines what could be understood as a moral community of a shared socialist outlook, but one that had not been and could not be mechanistically replaced after the official dissolution of SFRY in 1992[13] (ibid). The moral communities, especially artistic and intellectual communities of SFRY have traces in the collectively developed principles and work of NDA. The practices in the NDA project of self-organisation have similarities to Yugoslav Worker Self-Management. In order to understand how this offers a perspective on the ways artists collectively manage their practices and understand themselves more broadly, and how NDA transformed Self-Management into self-organisation more specifically, a brief description of its intentions and problems is required. Before opening onto discourses on 'transition', 'Balkans' and 'postsocialisms', an explication of Yugoslav Worker Self-Management and its transformation to self-organisation is presented also to mark a specific difference between SFRY and the USSR, and SFRY and the West.

SFRY was a critique not only of Stalinist bureaucratic hegemony and the totalitarian state apparatus, but also of the so-called representative democracy in the West. The principles of Self-Management appeared as part of the process of ideological and practical differentiation of SFRY from both Soviet communist and Western models of the state. Yugoslav Worker Self-Management was the dominant ideology in both theory and in practice that 'encompassed all the social spheres: economy, politics and culture' according to Vesić (2015: 120). Yugoslav Worker Self-Management attempted a largely participatory democratic economy that was intended to function within the broader authoritarian system of the one-party state and political monopoly. Hence, this economic democratisation was envisaged and directed in a top-down, patriarchal way. The Marxist question of Self-organisation and liberation appears. Self-Management was presented as a social process through which the state would wither away, given that Socialism represents just a step towards Communism, with the Socialist state as a transient stage in abandoning the concept of the state altogether. The following statement is

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[13] This research does not pursue neoliberalism as an analytic tool, explanatory framework or empirical object, following John Clarke (2008) and Gavin A. Smith (2010), as well as others, who argue its ubiquity has diffused utility. This is not to argue against the discourses produced, nor the pertinence of the attempt to deploy and develop concepts that in the context of Yugoslav 'transition' might help to account for the major restructuring of economics as a tool of organisational governance. (For further reference see Eagleton-Pierce, 2016; Carrier, 2016; Springer et al., 2016; Kalb, 2012; Harvey 2005).

from Edvard Kardelj, one of President Josip Broz Tito's closest aides and the main conceptual creator of socialist Yugoslav Self-Management. Kardelj was inspired by politician and philosopher of anarchy Pierre-Joseph Proudhon who first theorised Self-Management under the term of 'auto-gestion' that became a primary component of some trade unions, and was a theme 'within revolutionary syndicalism, introduced in late 19th century France' (Vesić, 2015: 121).

> The basis of all freedoms and rights of working people and citizens in our socialist society is the right to self-manage. This is a new and directly democratic socialist right, which is possible solely in the conditions of the social ownership of the means of production and the working class at the ruling position in the society. This right is unquestionable and inalienable and as such belongs to all working people and citizens (Kardelj, 1978, in Štiks and Horvat, 2015: 373).

Kardelj's perspective of the Self-Managed system 'was expressed in the pluralism of self-managed interests' (Vesić, 2015: 120). Rather than the choice of political organisation being between single- or multi-party preferences, Self-Management was the promise of the choices and associations of socialism itself, allowing instead for plural, diverse interests. Kardelj argued that these could be 'incomparably closer to the individual and immeasurably more democratic than any form of political party pluralism which alienates society as a whole from the real man and citizen, even though it decides ostensibly on behalf of the citizen' (Kardelj, 1980[1977]: 176-7). Work was considered to be not merely a measurable process of effectiveness and productivity in the service of state prestige or a given factory. According to Kardelj, it implied 'knowledge of the circumstances of production and the (formal) possibility of continually influencing the development of the apparatus of production' (Vesić, 2015: 122), making empowerment through knowledge a priority and part of the self-education dimension of SFRY that might be understood as a shared enterprise between citizens. Feminist philosopher Ankica Čakardić argues that Kardelj's statement could be interpreted as an idealised potential for the emancipation of women, but this could not be realised for several reasons. Čakardić argues that Self-Management could never be emancipatory, as the oppression of women, and all peoples, is an integral component of capitalism (2015: 391). Political historian Vladimir Unkovski-Korica (2015: 46) similarly argues that Self-Management could never be emancipatory for anyone for its connections to markets and industrial capitalism. Other arguments against Self-Management include that it failed to decentralise and redistribute

power (Kanzleiter, 2011). As critic and dissident Milovan Djilas, expelled in 1954 from the central committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party, argued that 'so-called social ownership is a disguise for real ownership by the political bureaucracy, by the new class' (1957: 2), making a mockery of the hopes of SFRY.

During SFRY, Self-Management could be seen in art practices and rhetoric, and according to Vesić, and can be read as a rather politically correct response to Kardelj's proposition of applying the term 'worker' to all the people, 'no matter if they conduct physical or intellectual work, no matter if they are involved in material production of goods or other social activities' (Vesić, 2015: 122). Vesić goes onto point out that in the broader context of managing SFRY, the strategic and pragmatic application of these principles dissolved into bureaucratic standardisation and apologetic rhetoric, echoing Djilas, 'while the true practice of workers' control, its critical re-thinking and self-reflection, happened in less officiated 'elsewheres'' (Vesić, 2015: 122). These 'elsewheres' were not just found in artist's communities and networks in SFRY, terminating at its dissolution. They are continued through the self-organised structures of NDA and the groups co-curating *LocoMotion*, *PLESkavica* and *Kondenz*, as moral communities, following Hann. As Alfirević points out,

> We ourselves are the owners of the processes, products and the results of our work, and whoever comes in touch and works within this frame is also the owner of their own processes and results, just as much as we are. In these terms we do inherit, question and actualise the idea of self-management (2018: 91-92)

Theatre scholar Branislav Jakovljević (2016) traces connections between Yugoslav Self-Management and conceptual art. He observes that the discourse on Self-Management moved from international policy-making forums to alternative art exhibitions and publications since the1990s. Whilst this shows the transformation of the sites of the discourses of Self-Management, it pays less attention to where its practices continue, rather than being displayed. The NDA project refers to its work as self-organised, not as Self-Managed. What is carried on in practice and philosophy is the belief in the right to work, the necessity of self-education in order to have an equal say, and a sense of co-ownership of the means of production. These are considered fundamental principles in order to retain creative autonomy and agency, not lose it. This transformation of Self-Management to self-organisation with these dimensions is one of the traces of SFRY in NDA and curatorial praxis referred to throughout the research.

Dominant narratives in the 1990s deployed over-determined categories of liberal democracy and market capitalism, and these were presented as inevitable and desirable for the seven succession states of the former Yugoslavia (Burchardt and Kirn, 2017: 11). Political historians Marian Burchardt and Gal Kirn present theories of transition from the USSR, SFRY and FRY after 1989 and 1992 to note that in mainstream social theory and research, the immediate aftermath of 1989 was characterised by the 'triumphant return of positivist modernisation theories. Modernisation had clearly become, again, a grand narrative' (Burchardt and Kirn, 2017: 4). The notion that communism was 'defeated' corresponded with a particularly emotive 'aftermath'. This teleological inevitability was seen as 'the last goal and horizon of historical development, while all other deviations or alternatives were relegated to the "dustbin of history" or viewed as regressive reactions fuelling the 'clash of civilizations' (Samuel P. Huntington, 1996)' (Burchardt and Kirn, 2017: 4-5). Burchardt and Kirn argue that this was highly problematic for narrowing analytic potential. Philosopher Boris Buden (2010) also heavily criticised the narratives and rhetoric of 'transition', not only of the former Yugoslavia but also of the USSR, arguing that notions of childhood and anaesthesia were used to depoliticise and infantilise those actually responsible for the overthrow of a regime. 'Transition' connects to the expectations, and myth, of a supposedly self-regulating market, according to philosopher Srećko Horvat and political theorist Igor Štiks (2015), with the assessment of the 'neoliberal shock tactics' on governments and markets in Eastern Europe further elaborated by economic geographer Martin Sokol (2001). 'Transition' included rapid dismantling the publicly-owned structures of SFRY, with a major rearranging and privatisation of previously state-owned assets by governments, opening to neoliberal modes of governance and implementation of austerity tactics. The outcomes of economic 'wild West' liberalisation in the absence of genuine political or institutional liberalisation has resulted in forms of struggle for equality seen across all areas of life, according political theorists Valery Perry and Soeren Keil (2018).

Writing on the topic of 'state capture', Perry and Keil (2018) note that in spite of 'progress' as the wars ended and the countries of the former Yugoslavia have joined the Council of Europe and other bodies as states in their own right, and as they embarked on their individual European Union integration paths at various speeds, 'the region still seems to suffer from a shortage of both good governance and effective economic policy and development' (2018: 6). They argue that the former Yugoslav space is in many ways increasingly less democratic, and more authoritarian, in political and economic outlook. State capture in the Western Balkans, the term

used to refer to both a region and to those countries on the waiting list to join the EU (Petrović, 2014: 4), is a complex process entailing government workers grip on power, using 'political, social and economic means to extend their own influence and ensure their dominant position in these transitional political systems' (Perry and Keil, 2018: 6). Perry and Keil argue that overall there has been ineffective political and economic reform on liberal democratic consolidation in the former Yugoslav space. Rather, there are many different forms of transitional political and economic models (Perry and Keil, 2018: 6), all affecting everyday life. The effects of state capture effecting conditions for cultural production, contemporary dance and festivals will be explored in the next chapters along the topics of cultural policies, and budget handling, transparency and communication.

Sociologists Florian Bieber and Dario Brentin (2018) traced activist protests over 2010s that show ongoing dissatisfaction in the former republics. This work builds from Horvat and Štiks (2015) who address the presence of radical politics in the Balkans that rehabilitate notions of radical equality. Following Nancy Fraser (1997), in each type of relationship equality can be assumed or inequality can be reproduced. Starting from radical equality based on potentiality is part of building a communist world, rather than reproducing the logic of inequality and over-determining individual capacity or incapacity. It starts from a sense of mutual obligation and responsibility, rather than demanding human rights as the first and last action. Radical equality is understood fundamentally a practice rather than a given set of circumstances in which human rights are expected to endure without participation in their preservation. Without addressing the discourses on the concept of human rights substantially, the point is that the activism and protests (by the political Right and Left) in the former Yugoslavia over the 2000s and 2010s highlights the dissatisfaction arising from experiences of disenfranchisement and lack of equality. Changes to the organisation of society over the 1990s and 2000s might have enshrined some legal frameworks such as human rights in the former Yugoslav space, but these are not necessarily practiced and integrated in everyday encounters.

'Balkans' is analytically understood as both place and space. Discourse on 'Balkans' includes studies in postcolonialism, territory and constructions of Europe, for example by philosopher Slavoj Žižek (1999), and with different approaches taken by philosophers and historians, as traced by ethnomusicologist Dunja Njaradi (2013). In debates over nationalism and statehood, 'Balkans' is explicitly associated with failure, for example by political historian Thanos Veremis (2014). Sociologists Andreja Živković and Matija Medenica (2013) raise a case for a

Balkan federation that acknowledges the complex relations with the concept of Europe. It also appears in studies of metaphor and affective histories (Bjelić and Savić, 2002; Koch, 2009; Petrović, 2009, 2016), and Sarah Green's anthropological work on ambiguous identities and place (2005). Horvat and Štiks (2015) deconstructed discourses of 'Balkans' that had fixed the concept as wholly negative.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Balkans was pejorative, associated with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and later SFRY. Creating 'small, weak, economically backward and dependent nation-states, striving to modernise' according to historian Maria Todorova (2015: 172). Todorova (1997) proposed two neologisms to trace the politicisation of the term. *Balkanism* (stereotyping) and *balkanization* (fragmentation) drew from postcolonial theorist Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and built from theorist of religion Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995). Todorova contrasts these discourses to claim that 'unlike Orientalism, which is a discourse about an imputed opposition, Balkanism is a discourse about an imputed ambiguity' (Todorova, 1997: 17). Todorova proposes that Balkanism constitutes the Balkans as an ambiguous 'pre-modern version of the self' (1997: 14), the ambiguity of which relates to the way the Balkans were and are regarded, interpreted and stereotyped. Diana Mishkova (2019) contributes a substantial debate on Balkan self-understanding that explores practices of Balkanism in academic scholarship from within and without the region. Mishkova aims to reinstate the subjectivity and agency of 'the Balkans', and to establish the responsibility of what she refers to as the Balkan elites for the concept and images conveyed (2019: 5).

Todorova (2015: 172) writes, 'at its simplest, 'Balkan' is a name: initially, the name of a mountain, used increasingly since the fifteenth century when it first appeared, until the nineteenth century, when it was applied to the peninsula and region as a whole'. Geographically, Balkan countries are those of the former Yugoslavia – Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, Slovenia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo[14], and includes Greece, Turkey, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria and north-eastern Italy. Some anthropologists prefer to use the geographic term Balkans and southeastern Europe synonymously, like Čarna Brković (2017: 7). The work of anthropologist Stef Jansen refers to the experiences of people

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[14] The Republic of Kosovo declared independence from the Republic of Serbia in 2008 and is recognised as a sovereign nation by 98 UN member states, but not all, including Serbia. Serbia continues to claim it as the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija. At the time of writing, this remains unresolved.

in BiH as being on the 'immediate outside' of the EU (2015: 55), showing the nomenclature of place and space to produce profound reflection on a sense of position and power.

The concept of 'postsocialism' introduces a possible way to engage in critical relationships and debates with former regimes and subsequent experiences of life. It marks temporal changes and geopolitical shifts along with other 'posts' ('postsocialist', 'postsocialism' and 'post-communism'). It is an unclear epochal marker, part of the discourse on 'transition'. For example, 'postsocialism' is deployed in debates of political regime changes across Eurasia (Hann, 2002); discourses on feminisms, (Zaharijević, 2013), and in discourses on civil society (Gagyi and Ivancheva, 2018). One argument is that 'postsocialism' perpetuates a problematic sense of a break in continuity, as it overdetermines a shared, coherent existence for all, and as a consequence undermines minority positions and experiences (Müller, 2019: 533)[15]. Though Kirn eventually calls for moving away from using the 'post' prefix of the 'postsocialist condition' to create a different historicity altogether, his perspective is particularly useful for this research. The definition proposed by Kirn (2017: 61) is 'when the initial defeat of socialism within market socialism—what I call postsocialism—occurred'. Against a majority position that articulates it as after 1991, Kirn places postsocialism in a historical period in Yugoslavia between 1965 - 1972 when marketisation began, creating a split between workers and technocratic organisation steered by politicians (2017: 61). In this time frame, Kirn observes how the internal institutional changes gave a new possibility of bank loans, with credit given by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, that increased the divides of power and impacted further upon the already uneven wealth around the regions of SFRY. The IMF-imposed austerity that came later and the workers' strikes provoked more struggle between ideological positions of the state technocrats and the workers.

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[15] This thesis does not pursue the discourse of civil society in relationship to festival-making, however as the term is used in the independent scene, a brief comment is made. Political philosopher Antonio Gramsci's construction of the capitalist state involves two overlapping spheres, one of a political society that rules through force, and the other of a civil society that rules through consent. 'Civil society' is the 'associational' sector comprising of voluntary organisations and NGOs, understood differently in each context of its appearance and discourse. Nevertheless, in development policies, the goals of 'strengthening' civil society can be pursued in two different ways. One, considered to be the more neoliberal version, is by building civic institutions to complement, or hold to account, markets and states (Gagyi and Ivancheva, 2018: 56). The other is a Gramscian way of building civic capacities to be able to challenge assumptions of the prevailing hegemony, think differently, and articulate new visions, requiring both consensus and dissensus (Jones, 2006: 27; Gramsci in Forgacs, 2000: 194-195; 224). NDA cannot be absorbed into a conception of a 'civic institution' as the neoliberal version would require, as the independent scenes contrast with state cultural institutions through ongoing rejection of monopoly positions and hierarchical working methods. The NDA project is more aligned with the Gramscian way of strengthening civil society through challenging the notion of institution through its decentralised modes of self-organisation.

A significant aspect of Yugoslav Self-Management was to create processes for decentralisation that were intended to tackle 'the problems of political monopoly', and so transfer the control of 'social capital toward the workers' control over the means of production' (Kirn, 2017: 59). This suffered irrevocably with the postsocialism Kirn highlights. His work illustrates 'postsocialist' tendencies in processes and policies that already in Yugoslavia in the 1960s supported a form of protocapitalism (or 'soft socialism', Vaseva, Veljanovska and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, in Cvejić and Pristaš, 2013: 359). This protocapitalism 'found solid agents in the emerging technocracy' (Kirn, 2017: 61). The major contribution Kirn makes complicates and contests notions of 'transition' by locating and identifying the contradictory movements of postsocialism in socialism that thwart conceptual binaries of 'communism' to 'democracy'.

Cultural workers and artists in SFRY and after 1992

Kirn (2016: 63) highlights the precarious conditions of cultural workers in Socialist Yugoslavia through the histories of cinema groups. The Self-Management model, he argues, created a difficult division of labour that pushed some workers into more flexible and precarious positions with fewer or no benefits afforded to other workers, but also pushed them to improve their political organisation where possible. Kirn notes that cultural workers in SFRY embody the borderline cases that were not majority positions in the more general systems of socialist employment, and indicate specific navigations of independence and interdependence. The status of cultural workers on flexible and precarious positions, with greater freedom from the state, bore similarities to western European cultural workers in the 1960s onwards, and with cultural workers in the region from the 2000s onward.

The borderline, marginal cases include dancers and choreographers. For example, the cooperative working practices and shared decision-making features of Yugoslav Self-Management during SFRY did not exclude explorations of solo performance practices and proto-entrepreneurialism, according to art theorist Milica Ivić and choreographer Igor Koruga (2017). For dance artists working professionally, there was little protection of their rights as workers, according to curator and historian Rok Vevar (2016), and theorist and dancer Iva Nerina Sibila (2017: 121). However, in Slovenia the government recognised self-employed dancers and choreographers as freelance artists since 1981, according to cultural manager and curator, Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski (2012: 25). These dance artists were present in theatres as choreographers, on television as performers, and in public festivals and events.

Unless contracted in the ballet or theatre companies, Sibila (2017: 121) notes that the responsibility for production and negotiating contracts was increasingly in the hands of dance artists themselves. This contrasts with the theatre, ballet, and visual arts that were greatly supported by the budgets at the municipal, republic, and federal levels. Workers who held positions within state run cultural institutions were provided with life-long contracts, paid holidays, pensions, and other benefits. The system of for-life contracts in state cultural institutions however was mostly inherited and continued in the newly independent republics in the 1990s and 2000s. A consequences of this system is that state cultural institution workers would not change frequently, and only partially motivated or permitted to collaborate with independent artists and NGOs.

The point is that those working in modern and contemporary dance, performance, and experimental art practices have long had a status of being barely or semi-institutionalised, recognised or tolerated to different degrees. This research argues that the continuities between Socialist Yugoslavia and the 2000s through the position and status of contemporary dance cultural workers illustrates long-term effects of the postsocialism Kirn describes have not been resolved. Even referring to 'cultural worker' is a deliberate connection to SFRY, following artist and theorist Ana Vujanović who remarks that it is 'an old-fashioned term (taken from the socialist vocabulary)' and 'covers a wide range of dirty, material, as well as more sophisticated and spiritual activities in which I engage' (Vujanović in Alfirević et al., 2011: 121). This matters for understanding cultural workers and contemporary dance artists in the independent scenes, and their work as specific intellectuals.

Foucault's notion of the 'specific intellectual' (1980: 126) is a useful way of identifying those who cannot and will not speak in universal terms, but will problematise the modes of production in their specific knowledge practices. In SFRY and in the former Yugoslav space, many artists and specific intellectuals were and are vehement critiques of conditions and challenges, using subversive ways with and through available instruments and media. As co-owners and co-creators of SFRY this approach was possible in a way that the later privatisation of cultural institutions does not enable. Philosopher and political theorist Herbert Marcuse argued for subversion by working within systems and established institutions. Marcuse believed that you can change society by learning how to do the jobs involved, and at the same time preserve one's own consciousness in working with others' (1972: 55-56), which is

reflected in some of the examples of artists and cultural managers during SFRY. Directors of cultural centres, especially the student cultural centres were able to present many different kinds of art and raise questions about SFRY (Spaskovska, 2017: 55). There were also unofficial networks that enabled knowledge circulation, with events and exhibitions held privately in people's homes (Spaskovska, 2017: 26). During SFRY, marginal artistic practices that posed critical relationships with the state were at times welcomed 'in a society which is as a rule open to changes and permanent investigations', if following the claims of Susovski (1978: 3). But despite there being comparative freedom and possibility for subversion in making and working in the arts in Yugoslavia (especially when compared with the regime in the Soviet Union), the conditions for artistic work and production need to be understood as unstable and unpredictable, as repercussions for artists whose work was not approved of by the Communist Party officials differed across the republics (Šuvaković, 2015),[16] undermining the impression of openness.

Whilst considering the precarious nature of artists' working lives is by no means a new phenomenon, by the 1990s and 2000s individuals have become even more atomised and responsible for negotiating work and contracts. Speaking at a conference on precarity, dramaturge and philosopher Bojana Cvejić and artist Ana Vujanović, typifying the role of the specific intellectual, propose it is more than this, as

> We should understand the types of work that artists developed in the last 25 years or so — a variety of flexible and temporary workshops, festivals, and residencies — as an outsourced training ground for flexible neoliberal politics and its "crisis management," which constantly seeks new, "creative" solutions resulting from improvisations in unknown surroundings (Cvejić and Vujanović in Puar et al., 2016: 176)

Cvejić and Vujanović's point resonates with the disadvantages of alienated labour of artists and cultural workers that has been flourishing since the 1990s in the field of contemporary dance in the former Yugoslav space, as well as across Europe. But the comment does not account for some of the important differences in operation and conceptualisation between

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[16] Art historian and artist Miško Šuvaković (2015), at a panel discussion dedicated to the poet Tomaž Šalamun, stressed that artists and dissident figures in various republics met different degrees of acceptance and forms of discipline. In Slovenia, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, in most cases 'problematic' people received fellowships and were sent abroad, whilst in Croatia for the same 'offence', a passport could be taken away. In Belgrade, police would invite such a person to an 'informative' discussion at the station. In Novi Sad, the person could be imprisoned for up to eight months, whilst in Sarajevo they could simply disappear.

festivals (and workshops and residencies) that attempt to not only critique this situation but practice alternative methods. The improvisation in praxis underpinning curatorial conceptualisation and the making of festivals in this research might not need to only be seen as an outsourced training ground for flexible neoliberal politics. Instead these festivals could be perceived as training grounds of imperceptible politics that subvert from within. The perspective of Cvejić and Vujanović approaches festivals as platforms or mediums, rather than mediators that can transform conditions of perception. The festivals in this thesis give curatorial praxis more significance than only rehearsing new creative solutions to serve market capital or problem-solving, making them agents rather than symptoms. Cvejić and Vujanović's argument offers no point of escape, except for an evacuation from working in the field of contemporary performance altogether. Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia retain a love for the field that Cvejić and Vujanović's comment cannot accommodate, despite them both being close collaborators of NDA at different points, and members of the scene. It would be a mistake to dismiss *Kondenz*, *Locomotion* and *PLESkavica* as capitulation rather than adaptation to circumstances as their curatorial praxis is characterised by subversion and forms of escape. Imperceptible politics is a way to reclaim the artistic and cultural work as practices of radical equality. The NDA project took the premise of circulating power and agency to sustain and function in open-ended ways:

> Would Nomad be feasible within anarchic structures of loose networks, without a general manager? What is a position, what is a function? Power and authority should be allocated through functions not by positions. Power should circulate, not stagnate (Alfirević et al., 2012: 65)

These questions expose that it was important for the NDA project to consider and hope for the very solidarity almost rendered unthinkable from the first quote from Cvejić and Vujanović. In this regard, the notion of the independent scene sheds light on the role of specific intellectuals and subversion, elaborated further in Chapter 2.

Independent scenes

The festivals in this research are considered part of independent scenes of contemporary dance, a historically-orientated mode of social organisation, specific to an eastern European and former Yugoslav context, that does not have quite the same equivalent in western European countries, in spite of some similarities. Independent artistic scenes are characterised by little or

no affiliation with state cultural institutions, exist on project-based funding, and tend to be made up of NGOs and independent artists. The independent scenes support and safeguard the development of experimental work by independent artists, irrespective of commercial success. Klaić (2014) offers a division between types of festivals following the developments in the field of theatre and performance and independent scenes over the 1990s and 2000s. Klaić differentiates between those festivals and organisations that operate on a more commercial basis, and those that attempt to remain not for profit and therefore independent of the constrains associated with making commercially successful events (though they still experience constraints). Commercial arts festivals, he argues, tend to make more conservative choices in terms of artistic experimentation, or support already consecrated artists whose work might well be considered more experimental but is less of a risk to present due to their extant popularity. By independent, Klaić means the presence and survival of non-commercial, non-ideologically dominated theatre, performance and dance spaces, which refers to those spaces that contrasted with the ways in which SFRY commanded mass public spectacles as a form of propaganda. Klaić argues that commercial theatre and festivals that makes their appeal as entertainment are closely aligned with financial security. This means they can demonstrate conservative tendencies that uphold some of the hegemonic representations in a particular culture, such as particular body types or heteronormative coupling. The attempt to preserve commercial viability and wider popularity can diminish the potential for expansion of imagination when a politics of representation is narrow. This can be used to think with contemporary dance and its festivals. When entertainment prevails as the dominant index in appraising contemporary dance, its encouragement can be (but is certainly not always) at the expense of experimentation, impoverishing the public sphere and risking the depoliticisation of dance.

Both for-profit as well as some not-for-profit festivals wishing to guarantee audiences and gain symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1977: 183-184), and financial capital and stability can demonstrate preferences for more established, known artists with particular stylistic traits that have already been invested in and gained more visibility and credibility, as previously stressed. This tendency ignores the conditions of production or emergence of a particular artist, stylistic, or choreographic approach. As such, festivals can take advantage of the investment made elsewhere and the labour of others in creating the works that are available for circulation without contributing to artistic development more broadly. This is part of the power festival-making can have in dance worlds. The independent scenes working adjacently to state cultural institutions when partnership is unavailable, which is particularly the case in Serbia and North

Macedonia, are often the contexts that invest in experimentation. In a sense, the independent scenes feed the very problems Cvejić and Vujanović lament, and this is a significant tension in contemporary dance. The motivation for artistic autonomy, as far as is possible, is for the NDA partners, running alongside the interest in professionalisation and increasing educational infrastructure, that has developed in relationship with arts festivals. The next section turns to some histories of arts festivals to underscore these tensions.

Arts festival genealogies

Cultural policies influencing festivals of the 1940s and 50s followed an 'art for art's sake' perspective, shaped by the 'modernist belief in the inestimable value of cultural activity' (Bradby and Delgado, 2003: 2). An intrinsic value of art was nevertheless accompanied by expectations of the festivals to achieve specific goals, aiding reconstruction and economic regeneration (Harvie, 2003; Waterman, 1998), and re-establishing contact with other regions of Europe to stimulate the flow of people and business (Newbold et al., 2015: xviii). Through a complex method of leveraging heterogeneous artistic practices, arts festivals were utilised as instruments to produce and reproduce differences between Europe and the rest of the world to create and maintain social and spatial divisions that would be advantageous to the empowerment of Europe. Choreography and dance were in this phase afforded more visibility and circulation as a consequence.

In the 1960s and 70s, festivals become more explicitly community orientated and political (Newbold et al., 2015: xviii), as they were effective formats to critique prevailing hegemonies, politicise issues, and form meeting spaces. The second phase continued a professionalisation of arts festivals as job creation expanded with new markets and technologies, as well as the focus on intercultural dialogue and exchange. Contemporary and modern dance had been appearing in theatre festivals, but festivals of 'contemporary dance' started to emerge. This asserted a new differentiation of art genre adjacent to 'theatre', rather than subsumed under it. One example of a specialised festival for modern and contemporary dance practices is *Dance Umbrella* festival in London, UK, founded in 1978[17]. Festivals also offered the opportunity for different programming and presentation to theatre venues that helped circulate guest artists,

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[17] Renaming a festival reflects changes in the field of dance. For example, The International Festival of Modern Dance in Lithuania was organised for the first time in 1989, and was renamed AURA International Dance Festival in 2011.

new forms and discourses in SFRY[18]. The prevailing traditions and practices in the formal, state or municipality-founded theatres in SFRY were less experimental, and it was easier to establish more radical artistic positions in student theatres and festivals. Through the 1970s some of these transformed into permanent theatre groups, and the festivals became important contexts of meeting between professional or semi-professional avant-garde theatre groups[19]. They increased the opportunity for seeing and presenting new explorations in performance forms[20]. The changes in perceptions of art-making and access to spaces of art in the 1960s and 1970s coincided and interconnected with the wave of bottom-up socially engaged art practices such as Fluxus and Happenings on questions of art as life (Harrison and Wood, 2003: 690, 727, 903, 929; Kaprow, 2003: 127; Sansi, 2015: 38-39). Experimental art practices, and post-modern dance and choreographic developments (Banes, 1979; Burt, 2006) interconnected with the major political activism that emanated from France in 1968 against many facets of life including market capitalism and the dominance of north-American consumerism. Discontent with the organisation of societies, and demands for the reconfiguration of the spaces where discourse can happen, were catalysts for festivals as an alternative model of cultural organisation.

Newbold et al. characterise festivals by the 1980s and 1990s through the increased involvement of the private sector, orientated by commercial and economic development interests, as well as an increase in the size of an individual festival in terms of quantity of artists, number of days and venues (2015: xix). Urban regeneration plans and tourism connected increasingly with

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[18] Three waves of festivals were distinct to the mainstream professional theatre in SFRY. The first includes Small and Experimental Stages (1960) and BRAMS (1966). The second includes Small Theatre Days (1974-1994), and that took various names over the years: OFF theatre, Sterijada, Mala sterijada, and Young and Open Theatre (1976). Grabovac states these in the second wave can be considered more 'Yugoslav' festivals, as 'there were few performances from abroad' (2017), showing the ways in which historicizing festivals through typologies corresponds swiftly with geographical, geopolitical identifiers in order to account for what was considered familiar or foreign in a particular context. The last wave was in the middle of 1980s when another three festivals were established presenting artists from abroad: The Week of Modern Dance (Tjedan suvremenog plesa) (Zagreb, 1984), FIAT (Fijat) (Podgorica, 1985) and Eurokaz (Zagreb, 1987).

[19] Festival of Student Theatre and Multimedia (Internacionalni festival studentskog kazališta – IFSK, in Zadar then Zagreb, was active from 1961 to 1975, and was a forerunner of The International Festival of New Theatre Eurokaz (1987 – 2013). Its first edition in 1987 was part of the Zagreb Universiade (World University Games) cultural programme and then became an annual event.

[20] Other scholars have elaborated upon the connections between experimental, conceptual art practices made visible through cultural institutions and festivals in SFRY. For the positioning of international theatre festivals such as BITEF in SFRY cultural policy, see Vagapova (2010); Vujanović (in Blažević and Čale, 2014: 81).

festivals, which in some cases produced a standardisation of arts festival design[21]. The effects of networks and memberships like the European Festivals Association (EFA) support cost-sharing between festival organisations that create conditions to build longer-term relations between artists and festivals internationally. This has led to criticisms of homogeneity as festivals reinforce the circulation of the same groups and names, even accused of participating in market chains as a form of industrial production (Maurin, 2003: 6; Klaić, 2012; Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017). Newbold et al. observe that the consequences of networks and exclusivity clauses means the demand and therefore the scope for programming less established artists can become more difficult (2015: xxi), though this affects the music industry more so than theatre and dance. The question for NDA partners became who would take part in artistic development, rather than only circulation of existing artworks.

Characteristics of arts festivals in the 2000s and 10s continue many of the same concerns as previous decades. Existing networks and relations built between arts organisations continue co-production arrangements. In spite of the competition of resources, festivalisation continues, not only the appropriation of other kinds of events into the notion of festival, but the sheer quantity of festivals being produced. An indicative, but not exhaustive, observation made during this research found that between 2000-2017 one hundred and fifty-five new festivals of contemporary dance and performance started in Europe. The morphology of festivals as frames for artworks and artists on an international market, as well as festival brands becoming known internationally, could be illuminated by the transformations of global finance. The proliferation of festivals could be interpreted as a sign of commodity diversification. But this ignores how many festivals of contemporary dance are not for profit, working with low budgets, created from a self-organised motivation to determine the conditions of artistic practice and its framing, as part of the independent scene that fills gaps in education and exchange.

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[21] In SFRY, festivals occupied different cities and towns, with more commercial and tourist-orientated music festivals in the summer on the coast (Pula Film Festival, Dubrovnik Summer Festival that started in 1950, Split Summer Festival, Adriatic Melodies, Split Festival of Light Notes, etc.) and by a popular lake (Bled Jazz festival). There were other festivals that a more national character with (Sterijino pozorje, 1956; Pula Film Festival, 1954, October Salon, Belgrade, 1969). There were also specialised international festivals (Biennial of Graphic Arts Ljubljana,1955; BITEF – Belgrade International Theatre Festival, 1967; FEST – Belgrade Film Festival, 1971), MESS International Theatre and Film Festival in Sarajevo, 1960, originally called Festival of Small and Experimental Scenes of Yugoslavia/ Festival malih eksperimentalnih scena Jugoslavije), Belef (Belgrade, 1985).

Contemporary dance education

As well as festivals, conditions and infrastructure for contemporary dance include dedicated dance centres, project grants, suitable studios and stages, experts from the field of contemporary dance amongst panels of adjudicators, outlets for discourse, and education. With regards to the status of dance and the consequences on educational provision, the first private school in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was opened by Meta Vidmar in the 1930s in Slovenia. But there had been no successful attempt to bring contemporary dance into the governmental school system, as a school for artistic, creative and innovative dance did not fit into the existing political and cultural climate in SFRY, according to choreographer and researcher Maja Delak (in Hochmuth et al., 2006: 189). In the 1960s and 1970s, the Yugoslav government tried to reduce any dance art existing at that time to the level of amateur activity. Dance was given a formal status by carrying out the activities of the state, through the framework of cultural associations, established for amateur culture[22]. So, dance was specifically an amateur practice and recreation, or with a more institutionalised position within the state ballet theatres and companies, or, rarely, in privately-led initiatives such as schools, or existing through the examples of precarious artists negotiating their own terms. Any debate on educational provision in contemporary dance more specifically is fraught with what is considered necessary for training artists and for training dancers, and how dance is defined.

Dance for performances in theatre spaces in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and then in SFRY, is a complex narrative that can only be sketched very briefly here. There was for a limited period in the 20s, 30s and 40s, a far more fluid definition of ballet that included more modern and experimental dance influences, according to Rok Vevar's anthology of dance criticism 1918 – 1960 (2018). Later in SFRY, experimental performance developments concerning the body did not appear not through theatre and dance, as institutional theatre spaces in SFRY were more rigorously controlled and grounded by principles of moral education, glorification of national history and elevating patriotic consciousness (Milohnić and Švob-Đokić, 2011). Instead, they appeared more in alternative spaces of visual art, performance, poetry and music (such as Glej

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[22] Theatre and performance festivals in SFRY, open to the West and to internal critique, can be viewed alongside the state-crafted, often youth-orientated ones, like 25 May –Youth Day, and competitive events such as the Festival of labour of the youth of Yugoslavia (Festival rada omladine Jugoslavije), designed to foster a 'competitive spirit and endorse the doctrine of self-management' (Spaskovska, 2017: 97). A large portion of youth took part in a range of cultural and art festivals in cinematography, theatre, literature, music and science 'that were – at least in an institutional sense – devoid of politics' (Spaskovska, 2017: 97), emphasising the sense of art as recreation in service of commemoration and representation).

and Mladinsko theatres in Ljubljana, and Atelije 212 in Belgrade).

It was only by the 1980s when the decline of SFRY was happening that dance, and especially contemporary dance, could find more institutional status (Kunst, 2015: 18), though it was appearing through festivals. Institutional status arises from a combination of mechanisms and instruments, including and not limited to educational centres and programmes, policies, archives, public foundations like a dance centre. Arts festivals can have a more fluid relationship with institutionalisation, discussed in Chapter 6. A significant precedent of dance centres includes the twelve centres for choreography opened in France in 1988. Though as this thesis will illustrate, institutional status through different instruments for contemporary dance in the former Yugoslav space has not been straightforward to attain or maintain, nor always desirable. The founders of NDA appeared to be well aware how contemporary dance was instituted and made available through educational structures, influencing how it might be defined, performed and further disseminated. It was and still is common, when possible, for younger artists from eastern Europe to migrate to study at dance and arts conservatoires in western or central European countries. Establishing educational frames and contexts in the Balkans was a motivation of several NGOs and projects like NDA, as a form cultural stewardship by instilling conditions for creation and perceptions of contemporary dance.

In all the former Yugoslav countries, there is no opportunity for formal contemporary dance education at non-privatised university level. Others have written accounts of institutionalised and semi-institutionalised dance, theatre and performance training in the former Yugoslav space and eastern Europe (Ivić and Koruga, 2017; Vujanović, 2015; Szymajda, 2014). These accounts reflect the different ways contemporary dance is perceived and shaped through educational frames in the Balkans, or described and ranked comparatively to other performance forms (Šuvaković, 2010: 11), and with ambivalence about the institutionalisation of contemporary dance itself (Ivić and Koruga, 2017: 65). Regarding the former Yugoslav space and projects like NDA since the 2000s, Ivić and Koruga observe how 'education is still a part of individual initiatives, smuggling, collective sharing in micro-environments, direct and non-institutional knowledge transfer' (2017: 65). In spite of many efforts, the use of 'still' in this sentence conveys a sense that the authors perceive conditions and infrastructure for contemporary dance in former Yugoslav space to be not much improved since the initiation of NDA in 2007, or in light of the other educational formats and frames for contemporary dance in the region.

Curator, dramaturge and NDA Slovenia member Jasmina Založnik remarks that without institutional status you, as an independent artist or NGO, simply have less power, and it is easier for your work to be erased (Založnik, 2019). This might happen when there is competition for funding within dance more broadly where ballet might take more resources, or be considered more prestigious by a ministry of culture board. Writing on and from the Druga Scena (a Belgrade-based network Stanica is a member of and explored in Chapter 2) artists Marko Miletić and Vida Knezević argued that it is important to identify processes that lead to a 'pacification and professionalisation (demanding efficiency, productivity etc.) of cultural production, and neutralisation of its antagonistic political potential' (2010: 9). The project of NDA aimed towards the professionalisation of the field (Alfirević et al., 2011: 4), and the festivals were part of this. But in this regard, 'professional' for NDA did not mean to become the industrial capitalist or entrepreneur that would seek to commodify contemporary dance at the expense of experimentation, or to privilege experimentation at the risk of artists becoming alienated from the means of production. Rather, the project offered an interpretation of professional integrity and ethical consideration in service of contemporary dance as a field of contrasts. The aim was to position contemporary dance distinct to other art forms and dance styles, as well as to dance perceived only as recreation, which had been attempted during SFRY.

east/west

The measures taken to erase Yugoslav socialism and forward liberal democratic market economies by newly independent nation states themselves and implemented by international development agencies meant contemporary dance benefitted from the increased interest taken in the former Yugoslav space. Anthropologist of the EU, Claske Vos, argues that Europeanisation is synonymous with modernisation (2018: 36). Fitting into themes of modernity and democracy, contemporary dance easily folded into mechanisms of Europeanisation, that is, a strategy of self-representation through processes of reorganising territory and peoplehood, driven by the administrative power of the EU but not synonymous with it, according to anthropologists Borneman and Fowler (1997). Following Hannah Arendt (1973[1958]: 269-270), Borneman and Fowler argue that two conditions of west European nation-states, 'homogeneity of population and rootedness in the soil', were introduced into eastern and southern Europe. They argue that former Yugoslav republics sought to 'join Europe' by building nation-states through what they understood of the western European

model, which included the experience of time as equated with increasing financial capital. The concept of 'Europeanisation' tends to relate to the administrative and economic dimensions of a country's state-building, including democracy, human rights and the development of markets (Schimmelfennig, 2012; Džankić, Keil and Kmezić, 2018), though this appears with a vast number of interpretations and contestations (Velikonja, 2005). 'Europeanisation' could be used to deflect attention from the negative associations with 'Balkans', but this is not the case with NDA.

The complexity and ambiguity of the name 'Balkan' appears between NDA partners (Alfirević et al., 2011: 16 – 25; 61). Vujanović (in Alfirević et al., 2011: 124) states her preference to use 'the former Yugoslavia' rather than using the 'Balkans'. NDA co-founder artist and educator Bojana Mladenović, who studied dance in Belgrade before migrating to Amsterdam, refers in an email conversation in 2007 in the first NDA publication to shifting experiences of space and place (Mladenović in Alfirević et al., 2011: 18). Mladenović expresses how the Balkan region was understood to be in dialogue with activity elsewhere, at that point in 2007 meaning largely the West, making the Balkans distinct geographically and politically. As already highlighted though the discourse on 'Balkans', this division is not a conceptual conceit, but based upon a material reality. Serbian citizens more specifically had experienced international sanctions and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) intervention through bombing in the 1990s, and when starting to recover from largely international isolation, then experienced the assassination of the first democratically elected prime minister after Milošević in 2003, Zoran Djindjić, who advocated for joining the Europe Union. Writing on the destruction of alternatives Serbia under the Milošević regime, sociologist Eric Gordy maintained that in the 1990s 'many if not most people experienced isolation from global institutions and global currents as a shock, compared the demolished international reputation of the country to the welcome it had experienced under Tito' (2005: 17). It is in this sense that transnational dance scenes provide an escape both in terms of mobility as well as in an approach to movement, body, creativity and collaboration unlike other forms of work. As Belgrade-based curator Jelena Piljić put it 'there was some hope around the time of Djindjić, but it's hard to feel it now' (2018). Serbia's integration with the EU is often conflated in everyday conversation as simply 'Europe', and during fieldwork in 2017 'Europe' was referred to as elsewhere. The contestation of space and place is most obvious in Mladenović's reference to Europe not including the Balkans:

> …in our pro(su)posed balkans the element of no structural support for development of

contemporary dance is the fact that creates this area being more clearly distinguished from european (non balkan) area where it is structurally, institutionally, financially organized already in last few decades [*sic*] (Mladenović in Alfirević et al., 2011: 18)

To speak of NDA as a Balkan project can by no means neutralise 'Balkans', but a project for contemporary dance in 2007 does not have the same political centrality and negativity that the name carried in the 1990s and early 2000s according to Todorova (in Horvat and Štiks, 2015: 159). An aim of the NDA project was to develop a 'common market' that should provide sustainability for new productions 'and improve the social status of contemporary dancers and choreographers' (Alfirević, 2011: 5). Reference to the market acknowledges the many different markets that contemporary dance might participate in and create for. Balkans is conceptualised by Alfirević as predominantly a space within but also separate to a European common market, in keeping with NDA's projects for self-determination and mobility, supported by the EC and other international funding bodies. A 'Balkan' network and project for contemporary dance troubles existing ways of speaking about where contemporary dance practices are happening and where artists are based. This is usually found in a simple gesture often made by international festivals and academic discourses, like this thesis, that states where artists are 'from' in this way: (UK). Though this is challenged by artistic mobility and migration that means this formation appears: (UK/SER), to show where someone is from and where they are based, it nevertheless is a common formation to denote belonging. Using 'Balkans' refuses to accept identity organised at the level of the nation state and alludes to another kind of shared context and culture.

In 2003, some years before she left Ljubljana for Giessen, Germany, Bojana Kunst wrote *The Politics of Affection and Uneasiness*. Through the lens of performance and performing arts, she captures a particular moment of an east/west Europe debate characterised through the notions of the body and temporality. After philosopher Slavoj Žižek, Kunst notes the underwhelming realisation that the 'other' was not what was hoped for; both east and west were disappointed with each other's political futures after the changes to the geopolitical map of 1989 and 1991 (Kunst, in Cvejić and Pristaš, 2013[2003]: 344-345). Kunst argues that the political and financial strength of the West dominates characteristics in contemporary dance, disguising the differentiation through aesthetics, rather than addressing the political circumstances that contribute to the shaping of conditions and interpretations between the 'east' and 'west'. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Kunst states that not only could 'we' see each other, but we saw the

seeing, and it was a disappointment. Kunst observes that dance and theatre makers in the 'east' seen from the 'west' were considered out of time, somehow old fashioned, proximate yet not quite as 'useful' as they could be for programming festivals and theatres. Crucially, dance and theatre makers from the 'west' were allowed a perpetual 'now', the incarnation of modernity, in a way that the easterners could not inhabit, as the physicalities and aesthetics were different (Kunst, in Cvejić and Pristaš, 2013: 348).

In this affordance of a perpetual presence, 'western contemporary dance somehow institutionalised an exclusive right to modernity, urbanity, autonomy, and - what is even more important - the right to universality' (Kunst, in Cvejić and Pristaš, 2013: 348). The modernity of Yugoslavia, a somehow 'failed experiment' of socialism, marks its artists and forms of production 'old fashioned' or 'not quite right' in an unanticipated temporality from the perspective of the 'western gaze' that belittles and denies (after Andre Lepecki, 2000). Kunst situates these observations not as aesthetic differences. Instead she opens up the awkward realisation that western capitalist motivations and resources had enabled the development of infrastructure for contemporary performance and dance, shaping a particular hierarchy, if not hegemony, of comparison. Burying differences between bodies dancing and choreographic forms using aesthetic or stylistic standards from existing (western) cannons in dance, theatre and performance studies and histories was easier than having to face the intricacies of 'transition' and a new politics of institutionalisation and Europeanisation that Slovenia, North Macedonia and Serbia would undertake (Kunst, in Cvejić and Pristaš, 2013: 348).

Kunst proposes another approach that instead of framing and interpreting everyone within a certain context (east, west, Yugoslav, Balkan) there is a possibility of disinterring context and parallel modernities to make different articulations and resistances (Kunst, in Cvejić and Pristaš, 2013: 350). Yet this thesis maintains reference to SFRY and the former Yugoslav space to acknowledge and analyse curatorial praxis that was not happening in similar way elsewhere over the 2000s and 2010s. Kunst argues that the opacity of transitional societies can be viewed as a tactical advantage (Kunst, in Cvejić and Pristaš, 2013: 350). In this regard, the reconfiguration of many systems in the former republics meant initiative could be taken through a sense of inviting yourself to observe what might be possible, rather than there being stable institutions for the arts and for contemporary dance that already shape the hierarchies in cultural production. As explored earlier in this Chapter, 'transition' was highly obscure, and so meant a new opportunity of creation could be possible for the field of art. The consequences of

this empowered moment are further discussed in Chapter 6. Kunst proposes that the opportunities for cooperation and using different production models to both the former state systems in SFRY, and to art market approaches, might find or generate what she referred to as 'a parallel strategic subversion', predicated on action, and including 'different politics, paths, emotions and personal interventions' (Kunst, in Cvejić and Pristaš, 2013: 350). This is echoed in a comment by the co-founders of NDA who urge re-contextualisation, as it is not acceptable that the new context of the reconfiguration of the former Yugoslav space should define its citizens. Rather, 'it is the act that defines the one who performs it, not the other way around, which means that suddenly it is authorship that defines identity' (Alfirević et al., 2011: 56). With regards to new politics, Kunst indicates the change for those who were previously unrepresented (Kunst, in Cvejić and Pristaš, 2013: 350), and whose capacities were not perceptible to emerge from within the organisation of the social realm (Papadopoulos et al., 2008: xv). Dancers, choreographers and cultural workers were able to assert their presence and become represented in the transnational circulations of contemporary dance practices and discourses.

Cvejić and Vujanović (2010: 2) note a meeting between artists and theorists from Western Europe and the former Yugoslavia in Vienna convened by Tanzquatier Wien called 'Taking Stock' that 2005 (not long after Kunst wrote her text) was the indicative moment to argue that the east-west Europe division in contemporary dance was no longer plausible or justifiable because of flow of practices, discourses and people. They argue it became important to explore the politics that made the dance scenes across Europe become closer and engage in greater structural and political organising. Kunst's arguments that to ignore conditions of creation in favour of analysing aesthetics alone risks forming overly reductive ontologies of performance, and flattening differences between dance communities and scenes. Whilst a divide at level of artistic questions and practices might no longer be an imminent concern as it had been for Kunst's observations, comparisons between conditions and infrastructure over 2007 to 2017 might expose aspects of cultural production indicative of the ways artistic scenes and communities in contemporary dance function differently in the former Yugoslav space. Differences are characterised by unchanging or barely changing conditions for contemporary dance will be elaborated in the forthcoming Chapters. One divide might be understood less through an east/west separation than through an EU/non-EU classification, characterised partly by how well connected you might become to the machinery of the EC, and how much it trusts your organisation. Recognising those differences, and the ways in which festivals are

conceptualised, produced and received raise questions about some of the longer-term consequences of 'transition' that citizens and cultural workers of the former Yugoslav republics continue to experience.

Chapter summary

This Chapter has drawn from discourses on 'transition' and the former Yugoslav space to provide a foundation from which to analyse the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis in the *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* festivals. Traces and transformations of SFRY, especially Yugoslav Worker Self-Management, the marginal position of cultural workers, and the notion of postsocialism occurring within socialism following Kirn, were presented in order to highlight continuities of struggles for the cultural workers of NDA Slovenia, Stanica and Lokomotiva and the conditions for contemporary dance in the 2000s. These continuities help to understand that the struggles addressed by the curatorial praxis of the *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* festivals are not new phenomena. The imperceptible politics created from curatorial praxis reference the lived reality of navigating challenges for visibility and agency in the former Yugoslav space. Differences between east and west Europe in contemporary dance practices and production became debated through festivals and education in the circulation of knowledge practices. Kunst warns that to ignore the processes of construction of conditions for contemporary dance practices risks reinforcing what she argues as a western European self-granted right to contemporaneity that demeans practices elsewhere through comparisons that make central western European artistic standards. Differences in practices and methods may be more shared by 2017 but conditions have some particular differences. The changes in the former Yugoslav space related to working conditions and political agency traced in this Chapter grounds the analysis of the festivals in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 as political practices that disturb and intervene in prevailing conditions and perceptions. These interventions are argued as happening in and on behalf of the independent scenes, conceptualised as both space and place. The next Chapter will address the NDA project appearing in the former Yugoslav space, addressing conditions and infrastructure for contemporary dance through its organisational principles and philosophies of practice.

Chapter 2

Introducing Nomad Dance Academy: a foundation for imperceptible politics

The goals and principles of Nomad Dance Academy (NDA) are crucial for understanding the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis of *LocoMotion*, *PLESkavica* and *Kondenz*. This Chapter first traces the initiation of NDA then analyses its principles. NDA is described as a project, a regional platform, and a meta-structure. Its appearance coincides with the transitional politics of the Balkans and former Yugoslav space that intersect with the industry of international theatre and performance festivals that had been gaining strength and influence over previous decades. The festivals by NDA partner organisations appear as motors of artistic scenes and international collaborations, significant for meetings that beget more meetings and more festivals as part of cultural stewardship. The regularity of meetings and festivals help sustain the social relationships that constitute artistic scenes, and of the NDA project. Understanding festivals and networks as related can demystify the emergence of a single edition, as looking to the social relations illuminate the circulation and recognition of specific artists and art forms when traced as part of networks in which reciprocity matters for the redistribution of opportunities.

> Nomad Dance Academy is an independent, open, and sustainable platform for the contemporary performing arts with the aim to initiate and support education, research, artistic production, and transfer of knowledge in the Balkan region and beyond (Alfirević, 2011: 4)

This description comes from the first publication co-authored by founders and partners in 2011. The goals of NDA capture the authors' awareness of changes to cultural production and the opportunities that could bring recognition of the Balkan region (as a geographical notion), a new redistribution of resources, and professional development to artists and cultural workers. These goals are:

> To contribute to the professionalisation of the field and to introduce the NDA model to other cultural fields
>
> To provide both young as well as experienced dancers and choreographers with more

opportunities for education and research

To rethink and improve conditions of production in the field of dance

To promote dance as a socially relevant and inclusive art field and expand its audiences

(Alfirević et al., 2011: 4)

These goals indicate the manifold rationales why the NDA project wanted to comment on and intervene in dance worlds. They also illustrate the diverse criteria of cooperative, multi-partner art projects of the 2000s and 2010s, shaped to an extent by the European Commission project policies[23]. The NDA project was an exceptional act of reconnecting that rehabilitated the freedom of movement and exchange of SFRY geographically, through a new rhetoric of artistic mobility. The new opportunities in the former Yugoslav space in the 1990s and 2000s for co-production and artistic mobility from international foundations, NGOs and national arts council's foreign policies are further discussed in Chapter 6. This support was invaluable for the co-founders who wished to collaborate regionally at a time when this was not an interest or policy by the governments of the six NDA partner countries in BiH, Bulgaria, Croatia, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia[24]. The NDA project also connects to the shifts in discourses in contemporary dance and performing arts occurring in the 1990s regarding expanded notions of choreography, explored later in this Chapter.

The momentum of NDA was partly facilitated by previously existing festivals and networks that illustrate the interconnected, fluid nature of arts scenes and communities across Europe, and the initiative of individuals to advocate on behalf of others. For example, the Balkan Dance Network was established in 2005, in a meeting called 'Balkan Express' in the frame of professional network IETM[25] held in Belgrade[26]. Nevenka Koprivšek, artistic director of Slovene arts organisation Bunker, describes the Balkan Express as 'a frame with no concrete artistic projects', meaning the Balkan Dance Network was meant more to create conditions so that projects like NDA could happen (in Alfirević, 2011: 46). 'There was a special moment at

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[23] The NDA project connects to Tanzfabrik in Berlin, Germany through NDA co-founder and member Gisela Müller. The project is connected with Vienna, Austria, the home of the *ImPulsTanz* Festival (annual since 1984), and in 2007 NDA became a partner of Jardin D'Europe (2008-2013) and Life Long Burning (2013-2018, 2018-2022), supported through Creative Europe.

[24] In 2009 visa-free travel in the Schengen zone became possible for citizens of North Macedonia and Serbia, and for citizens of BiH in 2010 (De Munter, 2019), making travel easier.

[25] IETM was founded in 1981 as the 'Informal European Theatre Meeting' and in 2005 became 'IETM' with the strapline 'International network for contemporary performing arts'.

[26] There had been an earlier Balkan Express meeting in Trieste, Italy in 2002 organised by Koprivšek.

the Belgrade meeting when a critical mass of mostly dance people in the Balkan Express got big enough to become their own group, their own collective' (Koprivšek in Alfirević, 2011: 43). A line can be drawn via Koprivšek from IETM to the Balkan Express meetings to the Balkan Dance Network to another network called Theorem that provided €6,000 for the first few meetings of the NDA (Koprivšek in Alfirević et al., 2011: 44).

The Theorem network, based out of France between 1998-2005 was supporting artistic collaboration between the east and west of Europe. Its twenty-six members from twelve European countries were theatre producers with the resources to support artists, and with large stages to programme for. When Theorem began in 1998 it was not long after the new geo-political borders of the former Yugoslav space were drawn up (for example after the Dayton Agreement in 1995), and war was still taking place between Serbia and Kosovo (1998-1999). At this time, resources to help the movement of artists and production of their works was generally unavailable in all the former republics, and so Theorem was vital. Koprivšek (in Alfirević et al., 2011: 44) noted that producers from eastern Europe grew strong enough to support artists in their own right, but nevertheless artists were still unable to produce the large works wanted by the Theorem network partners. By 2005, when NDA was emerging, the east/west European divide was less acute, but money for travel to meeting in person, especially for Serbian artists, was lacking. Before Theorem ended, Koprivšek 'managed to convince my colleagues there to use that funding to support the early stages of the NDA' (in Alfirević et al., 2011: 44).[27] This example shows the intimacy of social relations in sustaining conditions for contemporary dance and the imperceptible politics of trust in contemporary performing practices.

Druga Scena

Belgrade-based NDA partner organisation Stanica is a member of the Druga Scena, which translates as the Second or Other scene (TkH, 2006: 16-18, 75-79). This is another significant influence on the organisational practices and working ethos of NDA. With an emphasis on autonomy and solidarity, the Druga Scena was founded in 2005 as a self-organised initiative, and as an informal network of eight independent cultural organisations and groups in Belgrade

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[27] The *Balkan Dance Platform*, held in Skopje in 2005, received a grant of CHF 10,000 (about €8700) towards its production costs from the Swiss Cultural Programme (SCP) This was considered an 'exceptional' award by the SCP (Matarasso, 2013: 18), and it contributed to the momentum to develop NDA, providing funds for the first three years 2007-2010, and into 2013.

(Vujanović and Šuvaković, 2006: 16)[28]. The Druga Scena understood itself as an informal network or platform. Members saw their activities and their value as the process of linking theory, art and culture with various forms of Left-wing activism, and was specifically a politically Leftist organisation (Cvetković, 2018). 'Independent' in this context, elaborating further from how it was articulated in Chapter 1, means existing independently of the agendas, expectations and requirements made by Belgrade City Council for Culture, the Ministry of Culture and Information, or international foundations. The autonomous organisations and informal groups comprising the Druga Scena were concerned with contemporary art, dance, theory, culture, media and activism, none of which had been established by republican or local government institutions, by political parties, banks, corporations, by foundations[29] or universities, or through the individual status of independent actors. Each operated without regular funding from the budget of the City of Belgrade. This is in keeping with its insistence on keeping political parties and artistic organisations separate, as well as the mixing of political parties in designing educational curricula. According to its web statement, members of the

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[28] Serbia's political revolution in the early 2000s that mobilised revolt through art is part of the background of the Druga Scena (Vujanović in Szymajda, 2014 [2007]: 59). The Druga Scena was critical of and pro-active opposed 'institutionalised fascism, racism, sexism, misogyny, homophobia, neo-conservatism, nationalism, neoliberal capitalism, market postmodernist cynicism in culture, and all other forms of violence against the human community' (Druga Scena, 2006). The discourse on the narratives on the 'First Serbia' and 'Other Serbia' found in Serbian media and in scholarship of the 1990s/2000s will not be pursued here. The Druga Scena operates within some of the terms of 'Other Serbia' somewhat characterised by an anti-nationalist position, pro-Kosovo independence, pro-European integration, but also show criticism of the liberal position of Other Serbia, the binary arguments created and splits that formed (Dulić, Listhaug and Ramet, 2011). Ana Russell-Omaljev (2016) specifically focuses on elite figures entailed in First and Second Serbia debates to analyses the ways in which First Serbia constructs Other Serbia and vice versa, arguing that both essentialise identities to constitute their arguments.

[29] Across eastern European countries and the former Yugoslavian republics, artists were encouraged by the Open Society-funded Soros Centers for Contemporary Art (SCCA) to take an approach to art as socially engaged and critical. The SCCA in Belgrade opened in 1994, and was the main commissioner and the only infrastructure for the production and distribution of contemporary art and performance in support of the alternative cultural scene. Art at this time was critically charged in the fight against Milošević and the nationalist regime, drawing attention to civic freedoms, human rights, and positive democratic values (Vujanović in Szymajda, 2014[2007]: 59; Bogavac et al., in Cvejić and Pristaš, 2013[2010]: 207). Though acknowledged to be valuable, this support from the SCCA was not without problems as it steered the agendas and programming. These were freed up after the support from the SCCA withdrew in the early 2000s (Svebor Midzić, of the centre for contemporary art in Belgrade, interviewed by Stieger, 2003). The relationship with the SCCA was characterised by a sense of ambivalence in the artistic scenes (of which Midzić is part), given the way the centres sought to institutionalise and professionalise practices through managerial structures considered alienating, and typical of business entrepreneurialism. The contrast for the local artists and arts organisations was between the more progressive discourse propounded by SCCA, underpinned by themes of liberal democracy in Karl Popper's book *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1962), and the business agenda of art, further debated elsewhere (Hennig, 2011; Djordjev, 2010b; Stone, 2010).

Druga Scena had a willingness to deal with cultural policy in Serbia in the shift from SFRY to FRY (2006). The initiative insisted on transforming cultural policies through creating dialogue and pressurising relevant state cultural institutions to cooperate with independent scenes, so whilst existing separately, or autonomously, members maintained the motivation to transform policies that might then transform working conditions and the social position for independent artists and cultural workers.

Members strove for free access to art, and for open communication between institutions, artists and audiences. The Druga Scena members insist upon their work as being a public good, not the opportunity for profit or individual private interests. Insisting on the vitality of the public sphere, members also uphold the idea and ideal of public space as crucial for gathering and debate in ways unmanaged by the state, a market, or a particular political party. The motivation for critical intervention and subversion through critical thinking and the repolitisation of art against market criteria applied to culture and education, and the refusal of state market policy underpinned by nationalistic tropes, follows the role of the specific intellectual. Members acknowledged the necessity of struggle in order to advance the visibility and position of independent self-organised scenes at local, regional and international levels. Ultimately, the Druga Scena committed to fight against all forms of structural and individual discrimination. The Druga Scena aims and principles converge with those of NDA, and help to articulate the imperceptible politics of the festivals discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, and what is made to matters through curatorial praxis.

An important joint project of the Druga Scena was establishing a space for the independent scene to work, meet and discuss various urgent events. That was fulfilled in 2007 with the opening of Magacin, a multi-use space at 4-8 Kraljevića Marka, Savamala, Belgrade, where Stanica and other NGOs are based. By the 2010s the Druga Scena still exists as a mailing list between members who continue to exchange information (Cvetković, 2018). Its members are in Serbia and elsewhere, and appear through publishing, in academic texts, as curators of international exhibitions, and as part of conferences and symposia internationally. Like the emergence, growth and wane of projects and networks like Theorem, over time it stopped existing as it had been, but its values persist through the way Stanica operates (Cvetković, 2018).

The festivals associated with the NDA project mean that spaces for the discourses on

contemporary dance and other issues are constructed in response to heterogeneous needs and interests of artists and the scenes, and are characterised by anti-capitalist and anti-fascist qualities. The NDA project also insists upon art as a necessary part of public culture and that national cultural policy and funding structures should support contemporary dance in its expanded sense. NDA members do not advocate that art should be supported only by private funds or international partners, or that they should seek public-private partnerships they consider to be a threat to artistic risk-taking. The insistence on art as a public good is not with the intention of art replacing state instruments or welfare systems (Cvetković, 2016), but in the sense argued by the Druga Scena in which art might preserve a space or context of debate and dissensus. Relying upon international funding, Cvetoković argues from her context of Serbia, would make it easy for the state to further justify dismantling welfare systems as this third sector of arts NGOs could be argued as a suitable substitute. So, whilst NDA does have support from international partners, attempting to shape local and national conditions remains important. As with the Druga Scene, the NDA project wanted to create transverse relationships between different organisations and institutions that would support artistic autonomy, as well as local, national and international partnerships.

The cultural policy in SFRY meant art was seen as having intrinsic value (Fojut, 2009: 17), although art was also understood to be instrumentalised as party propaganda (for example, 'Socialist Realism', Vesić, 2015, and in mass movement displays, Cvejić and Vujanović, 2012: 67-70). But the perspective of an intrinsic value, or ontology of art is retained by NDA in the insistence that contemporary dance should receive public subsidy as a socially relevant public good. For NDA, insisting upon partnering with the state comes from the shared socialist experience that 'the state and the social are the same' (Alfirević, 2018: 92). Some independent scenes of theatre, dance and performing arts find ways to exist overlapping and in parallel with state-supported theatres and cultural institutions, taking advantage of international partnerships and networks for sustaining working life in contemporary dance, refusing more corporate financing. This attitude is not shared by everyone involved in contemporary dance and art in the former Yugoslav space (Dregić, 2017), as other methods of financing and co-financing art are becoming increasingly more common, such as corporate and private sponsorship, and for some, acceptable if this enables artistic practice and a livelihood.

Conceptualisations of contemporary dance

Whilst anthropologists and historians Andrée Grau and Stephanie Jordan comment, that dance was the 'least articulated art form of the twentieth century' (2000: 9), the development of discourse on contemporary performance from the 1990s has increased significantly. Following sociologist Rudi Laermans (2015: 26) and his observations that largely each artist and artwork calls forth a particular theoretical framework, rather than offer a generalised statement on the main characteristics or condition of 'dance' in the 2000s-2010s that would not adequately take into account heterogeneous practices, this section follows the NDA members' perspectives of contemporary dance and their implications. The NDA project goals appear to arise from a trust in dance and embodied practices, and in which contemporary dance is conceptualised as a social, critical and expanded practice. NDA specifically aimed to promote contemporary dance as a socially relevant and inclusive art field (Alfirević et al., 2011: 4). An assumption in this goal implies that contemporary dance might have a democratic utility based on non-exclusivity. But without elaborating upon how relevance is defined, the statement keeps open how the goal might be achieved, retaining a conception of contemporary dance as potentiality. Another assumption in the statement pre-empts an accusation of irrelevance that makes the assertion of relevance answerable to a broad appeal of 'social' utility. Attempting to measure or evaluate contemporary dance through its 'acting on' society ignores the observation that it already is a social practice, with sociality itself having enabled its appearance and endurance. The notion of the social as continually assembled follows philosopher and anthropologist Bruno Latour (2012: 159). With philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, the social is continually constructed through relationships in which being itself is constituted by becoming (1978: 23). The goal claiming dance's social relevance stems from an assumed need to anchor a concept of society as stable, similar to a 'place' (after de Certeau, 1984) to make society separate from art and thus show how art demonstrates its agency as 'acting on', rather than 'acting with' processually, considering conceptions of contemporary dance art and society both as movements of co-construction and contestation.

NDA members conceptualise contemporary dance as a critical practice, where the definitions of what it could be and do remain open. By emphasising the potential of the type of space and time that contemporary dance might institute, and the manner in which it 'frames this time and peoples this space' (Rancière, 2009: 23), the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis addresses how dance appears and might be received. For NDA members, and in keeping with the Druga Scena perspective, the potency or agency of contemporary dance can be understood through how it affords critical, reflexive spaces and practices that are not necessarily welcomed

in other dance forms or spaces. The discourses on contemporary dance as a critical practice creating dissensus are elaborated in different ways, for example, through how it mediates, reflects upon and questions dance's material elements (Laermans, 2015: 46–50, 208–12). Or, in the work of Cvejić (2015a: 46), building from philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1994: 187), relations are traced between dance and philosophy, with the proposition of choreographic problems pursued non-dialectically as the actualisations of potentialities. Calls to revitalise discourses on choreography from dance theorists Ric Allsopp and André Lepecki (2008) animated classificatory debates not only within Performance Studies or Dance Studies, but also within and between artists and artistic practices. Contemporary dance is acknowledged as interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary (Alfirević et al. 2011: 3; 58), notable not only by non-adherence to any one style or methodology, but also by the increasing presence and discourse of the 'practitioner-researcher' or artist-philosopher' in which theorisation emerges from practice and practitioners (Colin and Sachsenmaier, 2016: 22; Blades and Meehan, 2018: 8). Debates on the notion of 'postdance' (Andersson, Edvarsdsen, and Spångberg, 2017) appear in the wake of debates since the 1990s on 'conceptual dance' that marked shifts in dance practices in the 1990s (Birringer, 2005; Lepecki, 2004: 171; 2006: 135; Fabius, 2012). As part of this discourse and the heterogeneous practices of the 1990s onwards, contemporary dance, in the 'expanded' sense, relates to non-representational concerns (following Deleuze, 1994: 64, 134, 139), in which, for example, dance and choreography are not always entwined. But more fundamentally the emphasis in a non-representational approach is that presuppositions in thinking, or 'an image of thought', are considered impediments to the conditions of critique and creation. Contemporary dance might be practised, pursued and understood as a mode of encounter rather one of recognition, following Deleuze (1994: 139), hence the preoccupation in contemporary dance and choreographic practices with framing spaces of encounter and in the processes of creation that attempt to limit presupposition. In a similar mode, Lepecki identifies several examples of what he refers to as 'experimental dance' that present 'dissensual practices of corporeality and subjectivity' (2016: 14). Lepecki argues that dance is a movement of estrangement and derivation with a critical capacity 'to escape from forms, times, and procedures it is supposed to be confined to and identified with as an aesthetic discipline' (2016: 14-15). Consequences of these perspectives and discourses on an expanded sense of choreography, and of contemporary dance, have been that different artists' works and approaches evoke and provoke heterogeneous theoretical frameworks, and so a theoretical

multiplicity follows the poetic multiplicity[30], for some artists and some theorists, and becomes elevated by some festivals.

These perspectives on contemporary dance as a critical and expanded practice help to understand why NDA members and festival curatorial praxis, strives to cultivate the space for the potential of dance as a dissensual practice and as a poetics of multiplicity. But the heterogeneity within contemporary dance theorisation, as much as its practice, underpins a major problematic for developing institutional frameworks and what the conditions for artistic development might involve in the former Yugoslav space. It was Lepecki in 2004 who made the assertion that the developments in dance taking place in the West over the 1990s were robust enough to be termed 'an art movement', though one that 'does not as yet have a name' (Lepecki, 2004: 171), and in 2017, he insists contemporary dance has a capacity to escape from recognisable disciplinary forms as an important escape from forms of representation. Lepecki's arguments for the potentiality of contemporary dance is to an extent predicated on contemporary dance being already framed, circulated and disseminated by structures that trust this premise, and do not object to its elusive characteristics. The dependency upon trust in contemporary dance (and contemporary art more broadly) rests upon this conjunction of its protagonists retaining an open potentiality for art that includes ambiguity and multiple poetics, whilst nevertheless recognising it as legitimate art and a differentiated space, and persuading others to do so also, if it is to be in receipt of public subsidy, and therefore be considered a public good and profession.

The struggles in the former Yugoslav space for Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia to develop infrastructure for contemporary dance as an expanded practice interweave with these discourses and complexities. It appears to be difficult to simultaneously defend a definition of contemporary dance as including a commitment to heterogeneous creation and theorisation whilst also arguing against narrowing artistic disciplinarity. Developing educational frameworks and cultural policies requires articulating a distinction of contemporary dance to

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[30] Written articulations of contemporary dance practices, by the artist themselves or other theorists, firstly, can be considered part of curatorial practice, but also secondly, that such processes canonise both parties by further legitimising an entwined contingent belonging between contemporary dance and a particular artist. Whilst heterogeneous discourses do arise, they do not arise for all artists, and so this footnote is to acknowledge the unwritten, unarticulated possible expressions in contemporary dance that are not part of the, often academic, writing contingencies that the naming of discourses such as 'conceptual dance' or 'postdance' reproduces, but whose work is nevertheless part of a scene.

other artistic fields and forms (with longer histories and infrastructure[31]), and to other conceptions of dance, showing the tensions in institutionalisation for art and art education in which artistic practices may emerge from educational frames, or inform them, or appear quite apart. Appeals to naming artistic disciplinarity or genre through a notion of style or methodology cannot fully account for those performance practices insistent upon rupture and reconfiguration. Striving for wider recognition of contemporary dance as a critical, social and expanded practice thus remains a significant challenge for NDA members in the former Yugoslav space. The NDA project principles help to meet these challenges and are used to create projects and curate festivals that contest some existing notions of dance.

Principles of balance, invitation and empty space

Writing from Serbia in 2006 where the open call competition for funds by the Ministry of Culture and Information began around 2001, Vladimir Jerić Vlidi notes that 'our particular social context is demanding a wider approach, nurturing bottom-up processes and the building of protocols – in this 'phase' protocols are incomparably more important than the production of masterpieces' (Jerić Vlidi, 2006: 51). Alfirević et al. argue that 'being the painter, the frame, the painting, and the model all at once, the NDA acts as a tool of intervention right from the very place where it is being realised' (Alfirević et al., 2011: 58). In addition, the NDA principles are also an imbrication of practices for processing conflicts and disagreement, emphasising process and relationships in order to remain generative in the way argued by Alfirević et al. I argue the principles and protocols provide a foundation for the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis.

> The Principle of Balance: the balance between regional and local levels, between different parts of the programme, between artistic and managerial aspects of the NDA, in financial matters, etc. (Alfirević et al., 2011: 9)

The notion of professionalisation for NDA in the goal of life-long artistic development and learning the means of production is an important facet in which direct experience of making, performing and watching contemporary dance affects understanding of what might be needed

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[31] This is in reference firstly to how film, music and theatre were canonised during SFRY more so than dance, and second to how histories of art and performing practices in the twentieth century rigorously contest the subject of artistic disciplinarity (see Colin and Sachsenmaier, 2016: 3-6).

for its production. In this sense, the trust in contemporary dance as holding potential for transformational, embodied encounters means the principle of balance is a way to stay alert to changes emerging from contemporary dance, as well as to changes in one's working context. The principle of balance is a malleable concept that conditions reciprocity, and implies shared responsibility being taken along with individual initiative in self-organisation. Pragmatically, balance is found simply in the NDA protocol to hold meetings ideally of no fewer than three people. More conceptually, and expanding upon the 'etc' in the quotation above, balance is an ongoing process through the very seeking of it that might create new systems of perceiving one another and a particular situation. Constant movement and micro-adjustment is needed for balance, through interconnected processes of sensing, observation and reflection. The NDA projects aimed to make a new context in an existing context, offering something that was missing, which goes beyond only pointing out a problem by attempting to redress some sort of perceived imbalance. Creating new contexts through the festivals is an attempt to balance out some of the more alienating aspects of working life[32].

The new opportunities of applying to project grants from both national ministries of culture and foreign projects in the 1990s in Slovenia and North Macedonia, in the 2000s in Serbia were particular transformations to modes of cultural production and organisation of groups of artists and peers. The attempt to redistribute access and availability of opportunities to more artists and audiences through increased festivals, residencies and platforms in the wider field of contemporary dance in Europe can be argued as a democratic reformulation of dance worlds. But the contention for working life was that there became little alternatives to these mechanisms or time to reflect upon the consequences of them, as will be traced in Chapter 3 by the festival makers of *LocoMotion* struggling to maintain the annual festival, and in Chapter 4 in which *PLESkavica* is an objection to the reduction of time for artistic development and production, showing a curatorial practice characterised by refusal of constant mobility and quick answers. Consequences of these new working conditions included problems such as exhaustion, and lack of being able to co-create these terms of these so-called opportunities.

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[32] This follows economist and philosopher Amartya Sen's notion of cultivating lives that people have reason to value (1992: 64, 150), and recalls cultural analyst Jim McGuigan's comments that cultural work is a special kind of creative labour (2010: 326), involving communicating meaning, with dimensions of identification and pleasure. McGuigan's arguments concerning the motivation to engage in cultural work are apparent in the festival makers in this research, as they actively shaped the opportunity for developing contemporary dance as an expanded, social practice, and accomplish non-alienated work, finding meaningfulness through togetherness and emancipatory struggle.

This is what is meant by aspects of disempowered alienation in working life, and what provoked questions of balance for NDA members.

Balance is the principle through which to stay alert and reflexive amidst changing conditions. For Cvetković and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, intervention in working conditions should not stay within a closed circle of the members of an art collective (in Alfirević, 2011: 32-33), but should be made visible and present in public discourse. This is how the principle of balance underpins decisions on the format of the *PLESkavica*, *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* festivals as modes of critique, and the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis that remake the present, or the terms of working conditions. Balance appears in the role of the festival makers, comprised of artists and cultural workers as specific intellectuals, who provide a new distribution of the sensible. Perceiving the problems of a particular context, and commenting upon them through curatorial praxis, is intended to have consequences that challenge an existing order, such as the unbalanced relationships between the state, stakeholders, and artists, seen for example in the curatorial praxis of *Kondenz* 2016 in Chapter 5. Working collectively through the principle of balance is not simply a strategic necessity for sharing resources, but a processual phenomenon that can cultivate and sustain solidarity to overcome scarcity.

> The Principle of Invitation: we have chosen to invite rather than select people, because we believe that inviting is much better suited to the formats of our work. Each member of Decision Making Body (DMB) may invite one new member every three years. (Alfirević et al., 2011: 9)

Invitation operates as a principle of organisation for NDA and for working with other artists. The function of invitation shifts configurations of people and redistributes agency to avoid hierarchical power monopolies to attempt to keep relations, roles and responsibilities in dynamic balance. Invitation is a crucial mechanism to refresh knowledge and power, characterised by a self-reflexive 'suspension of comfort and taking things for granted' (Alfirević, 2018: 91). The principle helps to decentralise organisation and shifts its centres, keeping the NDA project in motion and existing between the people and projects. For NDA, invitation is a preferred tool that does not attempt to disguise individual subjectivity, as Alfirević writes, 'others do not have the right to question this invitation, so the power is

undivided' (2018: 91). NDA co-founders and project mentors[33] foresaw the necessity of self-refreshing processes for the network, as empowered positions needed to be retained so as not to become limiting and narrow, but shared. The aims to avoid holding onto power for long, and for not separating roles of artist and manager were prescient in this regard.

Jerić Vlidi anticipates the problems associated with the redistribution strategies of the open call, the consequences of which can take a longer period of time to appear. He argues that 'policy makers should not introduce competition among artists and content-providers to 'take a bigger piece of the pie' – they should 'make the pie bigger'' (2006: 51). However, the size of the 'pie', and access to it, continues to fluctuate. The dynamics of open calls helps to understand why principles feature so strongly in the work of NDA to navigate its eligibility, but not reproduce the logic of competition over cooperation. The principle of invitation appears to comment upon and attempt to prevent against the ways in which the competition produced by the open call can fragment artists and scenes.

Advantages of the open call include the ostensible opening up of an opportunity to more possible applicants and interested parties. This is considered to be a democratic gesture of widening access to an advantage. Using an open call method to populate a festival can bring unknown artists to a context and develop new relationships. A festival programmer can write a call based on a particular theme or question to get a sense of what artworks have been made, and develop the curatorial theme around what appears, with a greater sense of communication with current practices and concerns (Husemann, 2012: 273). It also can save the expenditure of a festival programmer or curator travelling to see artistic works and meet artists. Disadvantages of the open call are that they cannot overcome all bias, including the predominance of English in international art worlds, little accommodation for different needs such as dyslexia or visual impairment, and the expectations of production skills or capital to pay for web design and video editing. The open call bypasses modes of relations based on sociality and face to face encounter, where instead trust is placed in the tools of writing. This is a way of attempting to equalise applicants. But judging and ranking applicants on their recognisable symbolic capital of art world markers (like specific names of institutions, theatres,

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[33] Former *ImPulsTanz* festival co-director and film-maker, Guido Reimitz was a mentor of NDA between 2007-2010. As well as bringing specific skills and knowledge, Reimitz facilitated mediation and moderation, and 'at crucial times helped us open the horizons of all the things the NDA could be(come). Thanks to him, we give more consideration to emotions and energies, we are constantly challenged to look beyond set limits, and we see different perspectives and possibilities for the work we are doing' (Alfirević et al. 2011: 9).

educational frames, festivals, choreographers) excludes those artists without such capital from accessing funding bodies and arts organisations. The rather powerless position of waiting to be chosen created by the open call creates a subordinate position of artists to the decisions of others. These are the mechanisms that render festival makers powerful. The open call system often generates more proposals than small arts organisations can sometimes meaningfully address, perpetuating a sense of the artist as an alienated entity, if or when a generic rejection letter appears. An open call system for festivals might take some responsibility for investing in a performances' creation, if selected. However, in many festivals, the circulation of performances and choreographies relies on investment made by others elsewhere.

Advantages of invitation include that you as the curator or programmer directly select people you already know, trust and want to work with, or work with again. This acknowledges the time already spent getting to know them by putting yourself in contexts to meet other artists, investing the activities of the field, and its sociality. Your subjective opinion and experience is not mediated by another kind of criteria. It can be more efficient as there is less paperwork and administration. Rather than waiting for approval, an artist-led festival can make the context, shifting the terms of who is involved, observed specifically in the curatorial praxis of *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* festivals in 2011. The imperceptible politics created address the points raised about what a festival invests in, and how artistic development might be supported. The role of invitation addresses the artist as an equal to be hosted, not an object to be contracted in an almost arbitrary transaction. In the former Yugoslav space, the question of efficiency arising in the principle of invitation is also related to the short-term funding cycles and dysfunctional Ministries of Culture where the announcement of the opening date of a funding call is often delayed, leaving less time to plan (Cveković, 2017), elaborated further in Chapter 5. Inviting who you already know and know to be making work is efficient when there is little time for extra fundraising, let alone arranging visas and travel for foreign artists. If you as a festival cannot pay artists what they might command in other countries, invitation means the artist and the festival can negotiate on a case by case basis (Založnik, 2018). These negotiations are an important part of the principle invitation, especially when the esteem a festival organisation holds for an artist and their work might not be commensurable with the available fee. Participating in the festival might be considered valuable to the artist for other criteria, who nevertheless accepts the opportunity.

A politics of recognition and redistribution might be practised together through the principle

of invitation but would require other principles and protocols to facilitate what that might include. Disadvantages of invitation are that it limits the range of who could ever become part of a project, festival or organisation. Unconscious biases may be reproduced and unquestioned. Invitation could easily be accused as nepotistic as opportunities might be shared with friends first rather than strangers. Nevertheless, the principle of invitation deployed in some of the curatorial praxis in *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* exposes the differences in how sociality is treated in the former Yugoslav space as necessary and to be cultivated. Building face to face trust with another person is considered valuable, if not imperative, in contexts where systems of welfare and workers' rights have diminished dramatically in the lifetime of cultural workers. Chapter 4 will explore the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis connected to the principle of invitation that addresses how time for sociality has compressed in the faster, industrial capitalist market economy of Slovenia over the 1990s and 2000s, alongside the decreasing stability for independent cultural workers.

> The Principle of Empty Space: every decision or segment of the project must leave some empty space, for new initiatives and ideas – an unknown territory for us to investigate (Alfirević et al., 2011: 9)

The empty space principle[34] appears as a pragmatic choice, for example, through always leaving some time in a meeting for something that was not on the agenda to have space to arise and be discussed. Conceptually, it is characterised by trust in the unknown. The principle of empty space facilitates potentiality, building from trust in the unknown and unknowable, committed to indeterminacy as a necessary precondition for imagination, improvisation and creativity (Hallam and Ingold, 2007: 2; Nelson, 1996), where latent capabilities might appear or be nurtured. To work with the principle of empty space to enable escape is more generative than trying to cause imperceptible politics to happen by prescribing what that escape would look like or constitute. Papadopoulos et al. caution against attempting to harness and work with imperceptible politics as they will be misrecognised and translated into the given terms of a field of representation (2008: 68). Rather than perpetuate a limited sensibility (the given terms of a field of representation) that proliferates through policing, after Rancière they argue that

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[34] This principle bears no reference to theatre director Peter Brook's seminal text outlining approaches to theatre practice (see Brook, 1968).

imperceptible politics are better recognised as triumphant potential of subjectivity and escape that are unrepresentable (2008: 68).

If the principle of invitation operates on the hope of what another person might bring to a situation or project, empty space accounts for how even this cannot be predicted. Like balance and invitation, working with the principle of empty space anticipates that things appear during a process that you could not plan for or presuppose, therefore the empty space principle recognises how to take into account that which occurs along the way. In this sense, empty space offers another dimension to curatorial praxis that recognises control is impossible, and festival-making can have, or even should have unpredictable qualities. In this regard, the empty space principle highlights an agonistic ethics of curatorial praxis, with agonistic referring to struggle in the ethics of cultural production. Following Deleuze (1983: 55; 1990: 41) and Nietzsche (2003: 192), ethics examines the conduct of life, and its active, rather than reactive energies. This is further discussed in Chapter 3 in which Lokomotiva created the *LocoMotion* festivals to argue not only for contemporary dance as an expanded practice, but the right to exist and assert the festival as a diverse public sphere at a time in north Macedonia dominated by revisionist cultural policies that were indifferent to contemporary art and the work of the independent scenes.

The empty space principle acknowledges that process and collaboration between different entities (humans and non-human agents) involves deliberately withdrawing agency (Vevar, 2019). This is in order to co-create, share, lead and follow, and not know, which is evocative of dance improvisation. For example, following Melinda Buckwalter (2010: 41-42), 'as an improviser, I'm building something, but I don't know exactly what. I'm only knowing it as I build it'. Or with Jonathon Burrows (2010: 24-27), that there will be freedom and loss. Or with Lisa Nelson (1996)[35], that sensation is the image: 'I am concerned with how an image gets built through the actions of a group of people and with how long it takes for an image to become visible'. Papadopoulis et al. refer to imperceptible politics remaking the present by 'remaking our bodies: the ways we perceive, feel, act' (2008: 73), and the praxis of improvisation helps to illuminate how imperceptible politics appears through embodied action. This is deepened by

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[35] Many articles by Nelson and other choreographers that are otherwise inaccessible are available on the dance archive website Sarma, active since 2002, publishing in English and Dutch.

considerations from somatic movement practices and embodiment education[36] where the potentiality for movement as a training of sensation relates, for example, to the action, perception and response of the nervous system (Hartley, 1995: 248-249).

The empty space principle in relation to the NDA project's motivation for radical equality that influences curatorial praxis is redolent of the not knowing and shared ignorance in Rancière's perspective on emancipatory learning (1991: 71), and of educational theorist Paolo Freire's methods to fight oppression in which freedom is a result of praxis, balancing theory and practice through heuristic processes. The emancipatory dimensions of learning and leaving space for discovery relates to taking and relinquishing agency in different moments. In this sense, the empty space principle supports the autonomy and emancipatory dimensions of work found in self-organisation. It is a way of recognising and working with unanticipated consequences that produce imperceptible politics. Empty space as a precursor of trust is the imperceptible politics in curatorial praxis of *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* in different aspects, such as inviting artists and audiences to co-create each day of the *PLESkavica* festival in 2011, described in Chapter 4, and in the reconfiguration of the co-curating group of *Kondenz* in 2016, described in Chapter 5.

Organisation of NDA

This section returns to the organisation of NDA more broadly to show the principles in action, and makes a contrast between NDA and its partners. In 2011, NDA Bulgaria, NDA Croatia, NDA Slovenia and NDA Macedonia were formed as independent bodies, with different degrees of legal and organisational frameworks in each country. This was in order to divide the NDA programmes and balance the work to undertake it, and make that divide more visible (Založnik, 2019). Stanica decided not to form NDA Serbia because all the people involved in Stanica were involved in NDA and it was thought that a new organisation would unnecessarily create double the amount of work (Cvetković, 2018). Around 2015, many people left NDA Macedonia, leaving Iskra Šukarova and Kire Miladinoski (nomad dance academy participant, 2008), and Lokomotiva collaborates with NDA regionally on projects (Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2018). In terms of staff and budgets, NDA partner organisations are relatively

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[36] Notable authors and practitioners in the field of somatic movement education important for the field of dance include Irmgard Bartenieff (1980), Bonnie Bainbridge-Cohen (2012), Thomas Hanna (2004), Moshe Feldenkrais (1987[1972]), Lulu Sweigard (1988), and Mable Todd (2008[1937]).

small entities. Activity depends upon who is running the organisation, and what kind of other regional or international projects and partnerships they can secure. The configuration of the people working in the partner organisations has changed, for example when Stanica co-founder Dragana Alfirević moved from Belgrade in Ljubljana (2007), and when Dalija Aćin moved from Serbia to Sweden.

The organisational structure of NDA includes a 'Decision Making Body'. The DMB is a practical tool to coordinate support, map ideas for subsequent years, and to decide how funds might be redistributed and matched through the different partner countries' funding systems. Each member has the right to invite a new member to join NDA, and this is renewed every three years. For the first two years you can be only an observer, after which you get all the rights of the network to vote, to actively participate, and to invite (Založnik, 2019). The first three years of NDA were highly productive and mobile, largely because of the nomadic education it carried out between each partner organisation over 2007-2010 with three cohorts of students. By 2011, that came to an end, and NDA engaged in a reflective process to establish the next projects and consider conditions of production. Rapid productivity was being questioned. This was amplified through the discursive festival formats that year that include *PLEScavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* and their curatorial praxis, as well as the Nomad Dance Institute (NDI) programme. NDI was intended to be a self-education process for NDA, rather than about teaching others[37].

NDA is understood as a meta-structure, according to Cvetković (2018), that supports collective practice and reflection. What is particularly important about NDA is that its principles and protocols are shared in its publications, rather than held as private property. This relationship to freedom of access is professional in a way that is concerned with protecting a field of potentiality in art and social relations through sharing access to the means of creation, and not in the manner found in preferences for intellectual property laws or corporations' patents. Alfirević acknowledges how NDA has elements of an institution in this regard (2018: 88), as it has generated and maintains an ethos of practices. However,

NDA operates with no substantial or continuous support by the state, private funds or

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[37] There were around seven supported projects that were understood as a foundation and trial of Nomad Dance Institute (NDI) and its mission. Some projects were short-term, some of a longer duration, and include 'Archive', 'CoTeaching', and 'Advocacy'.

by the art market since what we do for the most part is not marketable in classical sense. It is an institution without walls, centralised headquarters, a single registered address, email address or webpage, or for that matter a bank account and without one director or one person to represent it. (Alfirević, 2018: 88)

This diffuse insistence of existing to the barest minimum of bureaucracy refuses over-institutionalisation. To sustain and politicise contemporary dance by piercing through management-speak of art markets and dance sectors, conditions could easily collapse without regular meetings and assessing the needs of the partners and individuals involved. This discussion cannot leave NDA as a singular figuration alone, for it risks overly-stabilising the project. As the brief sketch of Theorem and Druga Scena helped to illustrate, the interconnections between festivals, networks, projects and individuals are processual and unpredictable in the life of NDA. Each partner organisation of NDA operates according to their interests and needs, as well as particular histories. Založnik states that NDA is 'very much personalised' (2018) and exists differently for each individual, as well as each partner organisation. For Založnik, and echoed by Gisela Müller (2019), the spirit of NDA is held by different people, and those willing to carry it, not only administratively, but for its relationships.

The principle of invitation exposes how relationships matter for the longevity of networks, and for how trust and friendship facilitate future cooperation and self-organisation. The process of observing for two years before becoming a full member of the DMB offers greater chance to acclimatise to the ways of working and develop trust. This point concerning the cultivation of trust makes the principles of invitation and empty space crucial for understanding the generative way NDA functions over time and how curatorial praxis develops over different festival editions. The principle of balance helps understand how invitation of new members becomes necessary to prevent a closed circle of mutual patronage, so new members might reflect something new back to the group about itself. Alfirević observes that 'we are the public we want to work with, and we often have to ensure there are a sufficient number of people involved, so that our practice does not implode or become hermetic' (2018: 91). This comment points out the responsibility of individual and collective agency entailed in self-organised working structures. Invitation can include inviting yourself and taking your own initiative, but without being proprietary. Increasing professionalism does not mean discrediting the role of friendship in sustaining networks. Friendship and togetherness are important in the projects of NDA, as they enable partners to pursue their interests. Artist Céline Condorelli argues that

'friendship might be about shared loneliness rather than overly explicit togetherness' (2013: 71-72). The loneliness in the context of the former Yugoslav space appears to an extent in the relatively small amount of people interested in contemporary dance as an expanded practice, making the independent scenes find friendships and partners in other contexts. Condorelli goes on to argue that 'solidarity and thus, a certain dimension of friendship, might have something to do with mutual support in situations of lack and need' (Condorelli, 2013: 71-72). Responding to an invitation considered through the notion of friendship helps to argue that processes of curatorial praxis cultivate mutual support for the future of a festival. Whilst lack of infrastructure is a frequent comment in the independent contemporary dance scenes in the former Yugoslav space, festivals create and respond to a need to connect with peers and artists by having the frame and opportunity of something to share.

NDA and festivals

NDA partners made strategic use of festivals to experiment, to reproduce the values of an expanded view of contemporary dance, and to promote local artists and host guests (Cvetković and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski in Alfirević et al., 2011a: 32-33). Založnik states that the festivals were not only intended to be spaces of display of experimental and critical performances, but also the occasion for reflection between audiences and artists (2012: 122). Nevertheless, it became appealing to explore what festivals could be and what parts of dance worlds they might support, for example artistic development more than circulation of existing artworks (as seen in *PLESkavica* in 2011 as well as *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* in the same year). The festivals in the following Chapters demonstrate an enduring interest in critique, self-reflection, and especially non-scheduled ways of collective work in which group dynamics need not adhere to strict timeframes (Cvetković and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2011a: 32-33). Cvetković and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski observe the momentum of discourse in contemporary dance and performance on the subject of curation, and in 2011, when Stanica and Lokomotiva collaborated to create the *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* festivals, they note:

> This year, an underlying interest of both festivals concerns the issue of selecting and organising in the performing arts; in other words, curating (which used to be called programming). Curating in contemporary performing arts has been increasingly discussed over the last five to ten years, lately also in publications (e.g. *Frakcija*, No. 55: Curating Performing Arts, summer 2010), conferences (e.g. Beyond Curating:

Strategies of Knowledge Transfer in Dance, Performance and Visual Arts, Essen, Germany, January 2011), workshops (e.g. Towards Curating as a Critical Practice, Novi Sad, Serbia, April 2011), and festivals (e.g. *PLESkavica*, Ljubljana, Slovenia, June 2011). (Cvetković and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2011)

The comment that curating used to be called programming gently mocks the lexical shift in naming activity, querying whether this was a trend that could be better substantiated. Despite Cvetković and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski's suspicions, the distinction between programming and curation made through increased attention to critical or theoretical contextualisation and mediation became necessary for identifying the increased attention also given to questions of ethics, format and purpose that arguably shifted the stakes of making festivals for the makers. The festivals explored in the following three Chapters argue the concept curation as useful (not merely fashionable), and generative when considered through the praxis supported by the NDA principles.

Chapter summary

This Chapter has explained the NDA project through its initiation and connection to networks and festivals. Tracing the continuity of principles across networks and projects illuminates the ways in which festival-making connects to broader projects of emancipation and transformation of conditions for artists and contemporary dance. The goal of artistic development also relates to the emancipatory dimensions of education and reflection. The NDA project's commitment to the professionalisation of contemporary dance in the Balkans through an expanded notion faces challenges in attempting to retain space for heterogeneous practices and a poetics of multiplicity whilst differentiating contemporary dance to other art forms and practices. Friendship and solidarity become even more implicated in the collective struggle, making the notion of professionalism in contemporary dance one that attempts to avoid alienated working relations and conditions. The principles of balance, empty space and invitation are both practices and values informing curatorial praxis. The next Chapter focuses on *LocoMotion* festival to present and argue its imperceptible politics.

Chapter 3

LocoMotion Festival: curatorial praxis and balance

LocoMotion festival for contemporary dance was created by Lokomotiva - Centre for New Initiatives in Arts and Culture in Skopje, North Macedonia between 2008-2015, initiated by Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski with Iskra Šukarova. This Chapter traces the changes in curatorial praxis and the imperceptible politics of *LocoMotion* through the effects of dissensus. *LocoMotion* took place annually, presenting contemporary dance choreographies and performances (solo, duet and group) by a range of regional and international artists. It supported the dissemination of Nomad Dance Academy artists' works, and was a frame of meeting for those connected with NDA. Audiences included local artists, cultural workers, and those interested in experimental practices, as well as guests from elsewhere with a connection to the NDA programmes, and supporters of dance.

NGO Lokomotiva began in 2003 two years after the last of the Yugoslav wars in the north of Macedonia in 2001. It was co-founded by Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, Iskra Šukarova, Natasha Dimitrievska, Ljupcho Tanurovski and Ilcho Cvetkoski (Lokomotiva, 2016). It acts as a platform for the 'development of contemporary arts and culture in order to achieve progressive socio-cultural change in the community' (Lokomotiva, 2019). It is part of a wave of self-organised initiatives in the field of arts and culture in North Macedonia that is referred to as the independent scene or civil society sector, explicitly delineated from the state-run cultural institutions (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2016: 241). In the 1990s and 2000s, the formation of non-governmental organisations like Lokomotiva had agendas that demanded innovation and new ways of working to inform a different production environment, adjacent to or in place of, the older systems of cultural institutions inherited from SFRY explored in Chapter 1.

Dance historian Slavčo Dimitriov and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski argue a general function of contemporary dance and experimental body-based performance practices is to usher in forms of diversity hitherto less supported or visible. Lokomotiva, like the NDA project more broadly, follows an expanded definition of contemporary dance, understanding it as an 'embodied social practice, exploring what makes a body do what it does, what a body can do, and how bodies' doing does the world' (Dimitriov and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017: 27-28). Tracing

histories of contemporary dance in SFR Macedonia, Dimitriov and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski (2017: 41) present an argument that dance 'pierces through' other spaces and art practices, following Cvejić and Pristaš (2013: 12-13). The image of piercing through means the use of one material context for another, where contemporary dance appears in other contexts that would not necessarily be considered typical spaces of it, like a choreographic performance in a theatre, or within theatre or music performances that did not claim to be dance. But it is more than simply a matter of identifying frames and formats, but rather of elevating the practices and discourses of dance as a critical practice. Artists and theorists Janez Janša[38], Bojana Kunst, Aldo Milohnić, and Goran Sergej Pristaš argue that dance's 'piercing through' in different times and spaces connects to a motivation 'to isolate dance as a cultural category that still produces a sort of discomfort within the aesthetical disciplinary debate' (in Cvejić and Pristaš, 2013[2006]: 24).

Dimitriov and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski highlight how Modern dance had some presence in SFRY and SFR Macedonia. They collate a variety of art practices of the 1970s onwards that privileged the body in opposition to two predominant expressions: the normative body performed *en masse* in Yugoslav public presentations, and ballet. Their mapping of dance revealed a significant rebellion against the institutional framework of ballet, against its hierarchical verticality and institutional hegemony that produced 'the canonised, codified, purified, shaped, standardised body of ballet' (2017: 41). Risima Risimkin is amongst the rebellious. Risimkin held a for-life contract at the state ballet theatre in North Macedonia, but chose to leave in order to develop both her work as a choreographer independently and create a new model of organisation through her NGO Interart. Both NGOS Lokomotiva and Interart demonstrate an ongoing trust in contemporary performance practices argued as discreet as well as interconnected categories. They both attempt to build and maintain opportunities for artists and audiences in Skopje, though in slightly different ways.

The curatorial praxis of *LocoMotion*

The *LocoMotion* festivals were significant sites for the presentation and contestation of dance not only in the context of Skopje but for contemporary dance more broadly conceived as a

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[38] The art collective comprised of Davide Grassi, Emil Hrvatin and Žiga Kariž who in 2007 each changed their names to Janez Janša, leader of the Slovenian Democratic Party since 1993 and Prime Minister between 2004-2008 and 2012-2013.

transnational and critical practice. During intensive education formats in 2008-2010 across the region, the *LocoMotion* festivals were opportunities to present the NDA artists' new choreographies, engendering a sense of belonging between artists from different parts of the Balkans (Matarasso, 2013: 24). Šukarova and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski co-programmed the festival with different contemporary dance performances, informed by their combined knowledge and interests. The festivals constituted a space to see and contest expressive capacities of embodiment and communication, forming the conditions for dissensus, redistribution of the sensible and imperceptible politics through shifts in perception as to what contemporary dance could be.

As well as being a platform for NDA artists, Šukarova and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski were interested in communicating to audiences and artists of the local scene different articulations of contemporary dance and performance distinct to Modern dance and ballet, and to the programming of Risimkin's festival *Dance Fest Skopje* (founded in 2005)[39]. Another factor informing the programming of *LocoMotion* was Lokomotiva's awareness of the performances were already appearing in other frames of theatre, dance and visual arts in Skopje to ensure variation and to orientate Lokomotiva as distinct. Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski describes the festivals in these years as being ones that represented local choreographers and contemporary dance to the local scene (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017). In a sense, the festivals were an imperceptible politics of insisting upon a space for contemporary dance as a comparatively marginal practice by positioning it through a festival frame. Whilst the purpose of many arts festivals is to pose some differentiation, addressing how and why Lokomotiva created *LocoMotion* exposes contours of the political potential of festivals. Dissensus occurred not only through what was presented, which for Lokomotion was insufficient as justification for the festival, but how it was curated. Drawing from Rancière's methodological imperative means tracing the configurations of sense, or put another way, the affective forms of linkages between perceptions, discourses and decisions.

The *LocoMotion* festival in 2011 demonstrates a particular interest in curatorial experimentation, connected to the self-reflective processes the NDA partners were engaged in

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[39] *Dance Fest Skopje* is produced by NGO Interart Cultural Centre that has been developing conditions for contemporary dance since 1996, led by choreographer Risima Risimkin. Interart works towards the 'affirmation and popularisation of the Contemporary Dance scene in Macedonia' (Interart Cultural Centre, 2018), and also has created a Contemporary Dance Academy in 2010, in cooperation with The Rotterdam Dance Academy, Netherlands.

after the three-year nomadic education cycle ended. Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski argued that curation became the way through which to experiment with festivals. She understood the festivals as situated in a particular context and therefore they needed to nurture some aspect of it. She was concerned with how wider global changes affect the field of art, the conditions for creation, and especially how artists are treated (2017). In partnership with *Kondenz* festival, *LocoMotion* festival opened the question of how to curate a festival in the specific political context of North Macedonia. A festival that represented choreographers and contemporary dance as expanded practice was no longer considered sufficient for artistic development, nor for the function a festival takes of being a context through which audiences might compare and contrast, useful though that is for contributing to debate in the public sphere and insisting upon the right for difference to exist and coexist. Cvetković and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski argue that festivals in dance and performing arts 'promote homogenisation and commercialisation in the distribution of art' (2011), constraining cultural production. Arguably *LocoMotion* was not contributing to this phenomenon prior to 2011, but their observation was nevertheless an important catalyst to explore the festival differently. The festival format of the 2011 edition questioned these observations through a different approach characterised by intensified collaboration and a form of invitation, underpinned by a concern for artistic development and sociality, and to avoid the reproduction of the festival as marketplace.

The format of the 2011 festival involved co-curating both the *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* festivals in collaboration with Swedish partners. *LocoMotion* was already co-programmed, so this extension to include more voices was hardly a departure from a single artistic director's position, but rather continued the processes of how co-curation might be achieved. The core co-curating team for the festivals that took place in Belgrade and in Skopje were Dalija Aćin (Serbia/Sweden), Dragana Alfirević (Serbia/Slovenia), Marijana Cvetković, Anders Jacobson (Sweden), Šukarova, Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, and Johan Thelander (Sweden). Through discussion and negotiations, the festivals were made by extending invitations to several other artists with whom the co-curators worked or collaborated. These artists would present what they wished in whatever way they found to be suitable, emphasising the festival as a meeting place of people, rather than the presentation of specific artistic works or choreographies. They were invited based on their involvement with dance, but also on their questions and reflections upon enduring matters of concern shared by Lokomotiva and Stanica, such as the position of contemporary dance as a critical, expanded and social practice, and working conditions in the Balkans. The festival was intended 'as a space of being and living together, or togetherness,

creating a collective platform in which we could communicate different issues we were concerned with' (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017), with that communication taking place between participants and audiences.

Invitation still involves selection, but rather than selecting finished artworks, greater focus was given to the artists, their processes and interests. Whilst recognising that invitation still creates a hierarchy, the festival makers wanted to erase it as much as possible (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017) through the experiment of redistributing artistic agency and curatorial authority. Typifying the empty space principle in action, he imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis demonstrates the trust in the invited artists, and that something will appear for all involved through creating conditions for sharing. The co-curating group discussed their perceptions and questions of what constitutes curating, and how to experiment with and through it. They were curious about what kinds of protocols were already being invested in and considered how and why they programmed and selected something upon constructed criteria in their previous work. According to Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski (2017), this helped to acknowledge that criteria are often based upon very individual, personal understanding and artistic preferences. In this regard, 2011 marked a shift in how Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski wished to mobilise the festival not only as a medium to transmit possible alternatives, but as a creative format itself that might mediate changes to cultural production and artistic practice. Curatorial praxis, more so than programming, was therefore developed.

Audiences may or may not have approached the 2011 *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* festivals as consumers of art works. The artists involved may or may not have experienced them more as a kind of workshop or residency. Yet the curators developed an alternative vision for festivals, not only for themselves but intended for the artists they invited and for the audiences who attended. Whilst the *LocoMotion* festivals from 2008 already contested the observations that dance festivals were promoting homogenous commercialisation of the distribution of art, the 2011 edition paid greater attention to sociality between artists and curators that highlighted the more alienated experiences of artists who appear and leave festivals swiftly, present only for their performance. An emancipatory potential of cultural production appears in a new distribution of the sensible. The redistribution of curatorial agency to enable artistic difference and development recognised different ethical questions of festival-making, and needs of artistic scenes, including Lokomotiva's own. Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski reflected that the 2011 festival was a turning point in how she saw the concept of the festival and wanted to continue working

in that way (2017). She considered it unsatisfying to the broader goals of the organisation to revert to the previous format of making a festival that represented artists only (2017), as this experimentation had provoked questions and new practices concerning relationships with artists, and redistribution of curatorial authority and agency. The festivals constituted a space for discussion and communication, as well as communicating more broadly the potential of festivals to be an experimental format through heuristic processes. Rather than treat the festival as a 'museum of different art pieces' (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017), Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski was motivated to continue reconsidering the potential of the space of a festival for sociality and communication.

Within the frame of the 2012 *LocoMotion* festival, Lokomotiva created an NDA regional advocacy project for contemporary dance, the first of several NDA advocacy events that were intended to welcome and address those in positions of responsibility for arts policy and provision in the Balkans. This approach to advocacy, led by NDA member Gisela Müller, involved leading a processual experience of choreography through discussions and workshops held over two days at the Youth Cultural Centre[40] in Skopje. Firstly, welcoming politicians and policy workers gradually into the spirit of NDA, would lead to a second phase of asking very specific questions about what is possible, and what the needs of the scene and policy makers are, and to discuss what they need from each other.

It was hoped that this advocacy event would lead to better understanding of contemporary dance and appreciation of the efforts of NDA. It was disappointing for Lokomotiva that no one from North Macedonia's political community attended. There was a representative from the EU connected to cultural heritage who attended for the first half hour only, but it was 'at least someone from a position of authority' (Müller, 2019). In spite of communicating the needs of the independent scene, and staging an event that heightened awareness of what contemporary dance entails and embodies, it was not possible through these efforts to intervene in the cultural

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[40] That the advocacy event took place at the Youth Cultural Centre is a continuity of their function during SFRY. For example, festivals organised through and by the student cultural centres across SFRY went beyond their seeming association with amateurism that 'student' might infer, and instead demonstrated a significant capacity for innovative and sensitive production and curation, seen through their programming and support of new art practices (Janevski in Cvejić and Prištas, 2013: 149), and also in their experiments in ways of working, their political opposition and critique of the state, articulated across different publications and catalogues. It is an imperceptible politics in the curation to also evoke the idea of contemporary dance as a public good, held in one of the many concrete structures from SFRY.

politics of North Macedonia at that time. The presence of Lokomotiva was tolerated, and no obvious measures were taken to stop the organisation existing and carrying on its activities. Yet freedom to exist was insufficient for Lokomotiva, who interpreted the indifference and disregard to the work of the independent scenes and NGOs as a form of censorship by omission (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017). Lokomotiva was not able to enter into the systems of support and institutional frameworks that might secure more predictable and sustainable conditions for contemporary dance and widened access to it for audiences. The situation casts the festival even more as an act of defiance and insistence, but sustaining this dissensual position and agonistic ethics proved hugely challenging.

The *LocoMotion* festival programmes in 2013, 2014, and 2015 were comprised of performances and some talks. From the way Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski explains it, curatorial praxis was less free to develop, and the festivals were less experimental in their format than in previous years (2017). Making the festivals was difficult as there was less money, and they did not receive any funds or support from the state. Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski assumes that this was because Lokomotiva was very active in its dissent toward the state, as she explains,

> We criticise, we sign petitions towards policy matters, we advocate for changes, we're voicing for everything that happened, we're against the regime, we're against the solutions to what has been done, we write, we do things, and actually we position ourselves as a critical opponent to this established right-wing government. They don't explicitly say that you don't exist, but they don't support you, which is why I saw that it was an implicit cultural policy measure, or censorship. (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017)

The decision to end the festival opens questions more broadly about artistic fields and practices, and about who can participate in their discourses, as well as have the agency and funds to shape them. Sustainability requires transformation and creative reframing of circumstances to face what is possible. These concerns were communicated by a performative game. In the 2014 *LocoMotion* festival, Vaseva and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski presented a game they made called *How to make a festival with 100 and 1 million Euros*. The idea for the game emerged from the text *The Festival as a "Microphysics of Power" (Foucault) in the Region of the former Yugoslavia* by Vaseva, Veljanovska and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski in 2012 (Cvejić and Prištas,

2014)[41]. The intention was to provoke discussion with audiences from the questions and concerns they faced as festival makers, which were also pertinent for others in a similar role, some of whom were in the audience. The questions include:

> Under which economic situation we can produce new frames of festivals? How are content and aesthetics affected through economics and politics? Can we sustain the ideas of reformulation of festivals in a socio-cultural and political context in constant *under construction*? (Vaseva and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2014)

'Under construction' alludes to North Macedonia and evokes the nation-building project of the political party, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). The historical revisionist project 'Skopje 2014' began in 2010 and produced one hundred and thirty-six buildings and structures, and cost between €80 – 500 million. It was considered highly controversial for its use of public funds, as well as for its aesthetics (Jordanovska, 2015). The game references the challenges of unpredictable and fluctuating financing for contemporary dance festivals. It also queries who supports artistic development and risk. Recognising the shifting, multiple functions of festivals sometimes as becoming, for example like *LocoMotion*, more about the short-term preservation of the festival itself, the game urged questions and self-reflection specifically about how choices of curation are made with and without funding. It asked that curatorial criteria were brought to awareness for further scrutiny. By questioning what is important to you as curator, it invited consideration about what is invested in for any current, as well as future, concerns. The game shared the critical, self-reflection Lokomotiva was preoccupied by and that the curatorial praxis of *Locomotion* had helped to develop.

The festival ended in 2015 because of several interconnected reasons alongside the unchanging national cultural policies that marginalised contemporary art and dance and those who champion it, described later in this Chapter. Ending the festival in 2015 did not mean the end of Lokomotiva. Provoked by the problem of finding suitable space for the festival, Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski faced a precondition of performing arts: without a space, it does not and cannot exist, and a decision was taken to move Lokomotiva into a building. Since 2016 Lokomotiva

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[41] 'Microphysics of power' is a concept Foucault extends in *Discipline and Punish* (1977: 26; 29; 149). It assumes that the power exercised by institutions and other apparatus on a body is a strategy, in a network of relations in perpetual struggle. In this sense, the concept of power is orientated as mobile, predicated on strategies and tactics, rather than something preserved or possessed.

shares the use of Kino Kultura, an old cinema building in Skopje where it has an office and access to the large cinema hall. By 2017, Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski reflected that the new working conditions were much better for everyone, 'people are more relaxed…we don't frustrate ourselves to be the producer of this machine that should bring up and forward whatever is imagined, and is a fiction of existence, of the field and contemporary dance here' (2017). By ending the festival, a different kind of programme could emerge in which Lokomotiva continues to support contemporary performance practices.

The imperceptible politics of *LocoMotion* and 'state capture'

> It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that we are witnessing the slow death of the independent cultural scene, and contemporary culture and art in Macedonia. Without support on national level or from international funds, which are currently withdrawing from the country, the scene is collapsing. Some groups are changing their direction towards profitable programs, others are reducing their activities, and some are being forced to close. This is a product of many years of non-dialogue between the establishment and civil society, which still does not recognise the independent sector as a valuable part of society or the necessary boiling point where critical thought and new work is produced. (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2016: 247)

The imperceptible politics of the *LocoMotion* festivals as a means of escape and subversion address struggles that can be grouped under three different kinds of concern in relation to the comments above on the slow death of the independent scene. The first concerns the national cultural policies and the quality of relations between state cultural institutions, NGOs and independent cultural workers. The second relates to the long-term consequences as a result of 'transition' about the professionalisation of artistic and cultural scenes, through the presence, support and departure, of the international development foundations. The third relates to disagreements, friendships and relations within and between Lokomotiva, and the dynamics of artistic scenes. The imperceptible politics of the *LocoMotion* festivals relate to these three areas of discussion as a constellation of contextual concerns, rather than seeing any one in particular as directly responsible for or correlating with curatorial praxis.

The international community, present across the former Yugoslav space in the 1990s and 2000s, was significant for supporting conditions for contemporary dance. These sources of

support sought to leverage the spaces of contemporary art and performance practices with a hope that through art and cultural activity, civil society might be strengthened through building the capacity of NGOs to encourage diverse public spheres, and intervene in policy-making[42]. Recalling the point that the work of the NDA partners exists and insists between the presence of the international community and the local conservative, nationalist politics, a significant factor affecting contemporary dance festival-making in North Macedonia was the cultural policies introduced by the VMRO-DPMNE in 2006. These policies intended to reclaim a connection of North Macedonia to ancient Macedonian figures. Contemporary art of any kind had little support from state cultural institutions, and contemporary dance was therefore reliant upon its protagonists' initiatives and capabilities in building partnerships elsewhere and with international development bodies, whose investment would help contribute to the scene, the field and to professional practice.

The VMRO-DPMNE was the ruling party between 2006-2016, over which time this cultural policy did not change. With the departure of the majority of the international development support, the festivals appeared in defiance to the prevailing conditions up until 2015, and Lokomotiva continues to find ways to thrive by carving out other kinds of opportunities and international partnerships. Nevertheless, the presence of the VMRO-DPMNE, even when it was no longer the ruling party by 2017, makes interventions into working life that trouble the image of Lokomotiva existing simply adjacent to indifferent cultural policies. The following sketch illustrates that attempting to carve out space and conditions for contemporary performance and art practices faces unexpected challenges particular to North Macedonia. The experience of hostility and the effects on everyday working lives help to underscore challenges that are less perceptible if analysis only looks to the achievements of Lokomotiva. Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski mentioned a 'regime', referring to the experience of North Macedonia as less a

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[42] Lokomotiva's activities in 2003 and 2004 included hosting dance performances, workshops, film screenings and projects (EU-projects between France, Greece, Belgium and Macedonia), in cooperation with the British Council (2003-2007), French Embassy, German Embassy, Greek partners, an Albanian dance theatre company from Tirana, a Swiss dance and theatre company, and others. Other foreign foundations, embassies and funds that have contributed to the work of Lokomotiva include the US Embassy, The Trust for Mutual Understanding/Movement Research (USA), Swedish Institute, Goethe-institut (Germany), French Cultural Centre, European Programme for Culture 2007-2013, and the European Commission. North Macedonia-based support for Lokomotiva has come from the City of Skopje, Macedonian National Theatre, Macedonian Opera and Ballet, and Youth Cultural Centre.

liberal market capitalist independent nation state than a monopolisation of power, described as 'state capture' in Chapter 1.

Thursday 27 April 2017, Hotel Park, Njegoševa 2, Belgrade, Serbia
I attended a workshop between a group of researchers, sharing a mid-way point of their project Dissonant (Co)spaces (2018). Two partner organisations, Lokomotiva from Skopje and Loose Associations (Slobodne veze) contemporary art practices from Zagreb, Croatia, were joining a third, the Jelena Šantić Foundation from Serbia. The working lives of those in Lokomotiva are similar to their peers across Europe in the arts and cultural NGO scenes as they navigate research grants, partnerships, and meet with colleagues in the pursuit of meaningful contributions to artistic and historical discourse.

At one edge of Hotel Park's dining room, I approached a quartet of sofas around a small table. The elegant people poised around it are frozen, listening and watching a mobile phone in the centre, the coffee cups semi-sipped and all cigarettes quietly burning. I had meant to say my goodbyes to Biljana, oblivious to the content of what was causing this atmosphere. But I noticed it immediately, and could not help but ask what was going on. Tears are in some people's eyes. The Parliament building in Skopje had been invaded by supporters of the conservative nationalist party VMRO-DPMNE, opposing the election of the new Assembly Speaker, Talat Xhaferi (Pajaziti, 2017). Along with several others, the leader of the once opposition Zoran Zaev (Social Democrat Party, SDSM) who had recently become Prime Minister, had been beaten up, and someone shot a gun in the air. Later I read it was riot police, using a stun to break up the protests (Hopkins, 2017). Those around the mobile phone were straining to find out what this meant for the country that day. Whether the Macedonians could cross the Serbian-Macedonian border to return home was, for a moment, an urgent question.

Whilst this event took place after the *LocoMotion* festivals had ended, it gives some sense of the hostility of the VMRO-DPMNE towards democratic debate that made intervening in state cultural policy by Lokomotiva so challenging, and why the imperceptible politics of the festivals during the leadership of the VMRO-DPMNE were a significant redistribution of the sensible that addressed these struggles through shaping space for contemporary dance to exist and insist. The independent cultural scenes were excluded from collaborative processes with the government to better develop structures (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017: 221). Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski argues that decisions taken without consultative processes with the

most active portions of artistic fields, largely those in the independent cultural sector or scenes, is an abuse of power (2017: 222).

In addition to ten years of the VMRO-DPMNE, the problems for contemporary dance in North Macedonia appear in policies from the 1990s. After the dissolution of SFRY and North Macedonian independence, the state cultural institutions showed 'difficulties recognising other ways of dealing with ideas from outside the institutional frameworks' (Dimitriov and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017: 40), meaning cooperation between them and the independent scenes was not straightforward. New updated cultural policies for dance were not considered robust frameworks for supporting new dance languages and expanded practice for several key reasons. The Ministry of Culture created a policy that conflated all dance that was not ballet or folk as 'contemporary dance' (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2016: 242). This meant that contemporary dance, understood as an experimental art practice, was grouped together with jazz, jazz-ballet, Modern dance, and other neoclassical forms in cultural policy. In this move 'contemporary dance' becomes categorised and orientated through style and technique only, rather than understood as different to these other dance forms through its processes of creation, conceptualisation and spaces of encounter.

Classifying contemporary dance only as genre did not prevent contemporary dance as expanded practice from taking place and being explored as seen in the work of Lokomotiva, but it posed a challenge for where and how such practices might be resourced, shared and developed through education. A transverse relationship between top-down policies and the ground-up approach of Lokomotiva could function, according to Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski (2017), if at its core it supported artistic development. Lokomotiva was not opposed to cooperation with state cultural institutions. Some state cultural institutions were more open to supporting NGOs and independent organisations until 2015, and Lokomotiva was able to work in relationships with some on various projects (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017). When these relationships became impossible to broker, Lokomotiva continued to support artistic development and find ways to support its own development, like the example of the project between partners in Croatia and Serbia above illustrates. Some cultural workers in those institutions regretted the change in possibility of cooperation. The traces of these relationships appear in chance meetings with former colleagues and collaborators, catching each other up on the developments in their contexts, as instances of the social relations entailed in artistic scenes that cultural policy cannot further police.

Another effect or consequence of the new cultural policies was that those managing and directing state-led cultural institutions were political figures not in possession of any professional, artistic expertise, or understanding of contemporary performing practices, nor the management of them, that would better equip them for the role (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2016: 245). This calls into question why such a discrepancy in knowledge was considered suitable for overseeing artistic practice and public culture. The premise of a Ministry for Culture is rather undermined when its workers are alienated from the contexts they are responsible for administering and supporting. This situation was expected to change in the period 2013 – 2017 (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2016: 245), though following the instalment of Zaev's government in 2016, reformation of state cultural institutions or policy is yet to take place (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2018). Pinning down the exact reasons for the cultural policies not the purpose here. The effects of these policies maintained a conservative hold over official definitions of art and dance, though not the capacity to challenge them through curatorial praxis. Though the end of *LocoMotion* shows the limits of what can be sustained and achieved in such conditions, the role of the festival to appear as a form of escape from conditions of control over artistic practice, and assert presence in the public sphere is nevertheless significant for arts festival histories and the ways of fighting against the experience of state capture.

Along with the other NDA partners, Lokomotiva insists upon a particular world view that believes in art as a public good, and the government's responsibility to create reasonable infrastructure for spaces of art without commercial interest as part of democratic practices and the creation of diverse societies. Alfirević explains that 'we have to insist that the state becomes our partner' for several reasons including that 'we all share the socialist experience that the state and the social are the same', and because 'it is the duty of the state to secure equal rights to everyone, as well as to take care of the preservation and fostering of the public space [*sic*]' (2018: 92). The independence of North Macedonia meant the loss of public assets once held in common, including this paradigm. For Lokomotiva, consequences of this loss in 'transition' included access to public buildings to cooperate with and host the festival. The loss of common space in the city of Skopje for debate and non-commercial activity is an imperceptible politics the *LocoMotion* festivals addressed through curatorial praxis by creating a new distribution of the sensible.

Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski considers curating as an approach towards curating itself: 'that you open up a space for diversity, not only thinking about dance, but seeing dance through the lenses of the other' (2017), in an expanded view of choreography permeating curatorial praxis. *LocoMotion* represented a certain autonomy for contemporary dance by maintaining a space that held potential for the multiple interpretations of time-based art. The festivals generated dialogues and expressions fulfilling the purpose of the independent scene by championing something different to prevailing aesthetics of dance, understood as commercial entertainment, and to the conservative nationalist political ideologies in Skopje 2007-2015, ratified by national cultural policy. After ten years of VMRO-DPMNE (2006-2016) the Ministry of Culture project calls for funding still have no obvious category for dance. Instead contemporary dance might squeeze itself into 'drama activities', 'interdisciplinary projects', 'international activity', or perhaps 'general activity' (Ministry of Culture of Macedonia, 2019). This demonstrates little advance in the project of the turn of the twentieth century to elevate dance as an autonomous art form, and of the independent cultural scene in Skopje to differentiate contemporary dance more decisively.

One the one hand, perhaps this situation illuminates something about the adaptive, fluid and cooperative potential contemporary dance as an expanded practice that pierces through other artistic frames and forms, making the empty space principle work as an advantage. On the other hand, it shows the fragility of the concept of contemporary dance that can be too easily reduced into a stylistic category, and the challenge to articulate its differences. The example of *LocoMotion* illustrates that contestations as to what counts and matters in the discourses of dance can mistranslate across different contexts, or never reach those with the power to determine conditions that would develop more productive points of solidarity between independent artistic practices and scenes and state cultural policy and institutions.

Ending the festival can be considered a survival strategy because subverting the experience of diminishing conditions opened up new possibilities for the sustainability of Lokomotiva. But before that point of escape, the challenges for Lokomotiva increased. The annual cycle of making festivals was impacting upon Lokomotiva's opportunities to reflect, according to Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski (2017). In addition, there were disagreements within Lokomotiva about how best to develop audiences, artists, the scene and the organisation. The 2011 festival for Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski was a significant meeting place, producing a context of sociality, but attempting to mobilise the format of the festival to communicate something expansive

about choreography and the perception towards what festivals can be had its risks. Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski (2017) reflected that, in retrospect, this began to create friction between her and Šukarova as co-programmers/curators because they understood the festival differently to one another. Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski stated that Šukarova observed some audience stopped attending the festivals, reflecting that they may have become too self-referential (2017). Audience attendance is scarcely dependent upon only curatorial conceptualisation, and the festivals did have audiences. But Šukarova's concerns highlight how co-curation involves negotiation between different perspectives on contemporary dance, and on how a context and audiences are perceived, and which methods might keep these in balance. Dissensus is valuable for expressing democratic practices of co-existing differences, redistributing attention and perception, but these discussions in Lokomotiva show how consensus can enable cooperation. In the circumstances of North Macedonia between 2007-2015, the slow death of the independent scene was also affected by younger people and artists largely not continuing the work of Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski's generation in the independent scene.

> …despite a critical mass of people who worked on creating conditions for the development and promotion of contemporary dance as a recognisable and independent art since the early 2000s, it seems that no serious impact was made on the development and establishment of an independent contemporary dance scene in Macedonia. There was a lack of initiative by the younger generation of dancers, choreographers and cultural workers to develop an independent contemporary dance scene, perhaps due to apathy stemming from unsystematic and ad hoc policies of the Ministry of Culture (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2016: 243)

It is beyond the scope of this research to develop Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski's suppositions about the next generations' general unwillingness to continue to develop the independent scenes. But what this comment helps to articulate is that whilst festivals might provide an important context for independent scenes to connect, strengthen relationships, and support artistic development, they cannot be considered sufficient for addressing or responding to all aspects of conditions of artistic production and dance worlds. Building audiences and nurturing future artists relies on other structures like regular programming in a venue and educational formats[43]. The comment about the slow death of the scene draws attention to the

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[43] Cultural manager Aida Cengić writes from the context of BiH (2012: 20) points out that the municipalities and cantons support international cooperation in the form of festivals more so than other types of programme.

disempowering position of no longer having resources or opportunities to share, and perhaps the limits of self-organisation in cultural production for contemporary performance in adverse circumstances. Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski observed that her friends were investing in the development of the independent dance and performance field by presenting their performances and by giving lectures in kind or for a small fee, and the festival could provide that frame. Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski describes this as 'a kind of sharing economy', when having something to share means you retain a relationship that she describes as being outside the realm of financial market (2017). The emphasis is on having something to share rather than making a profit from it, or from each other, and where the nature of the relationship is considered to matter more for the longevity of artistic practices and development. Nevertheless, Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski concedes that once the position from which being able to share something is lost, it becomes very difficult to sustain the relations in the longer term, because:

> You cannot neglect the logics of market, you cannot neglect that each of us needs money to survive…we were all working there and no one was paid, and we got really frustrated and crazy, so I said this precarious work has to have its limits, and its limits can be overworking, or being burnt-out, and what do you produce out of this?...And then I said to Iskra [Šukarova] that I cannot work in these conditions any more, I would like to stop because I don't see this as something positive, and I believe in the beginnings and the ends, and I don't believe in eternity without reformation, I believe in visions that can be transformed through different things. (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017)

The idea of sharing and creating a common space had advantages, but Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski traced the problems that started to really bother her including the reproduction of the precarious working conditions in which 'your labour is not seen, there is no price for your labour, not only the market price, but the price of living' (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017). In the long term this economy of sharing reproduced precarious conditions of work in which the quality of some of the relationships also suffered. Lokomotiva's work, encouraged

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Though festivals contribute to BiH, they also can redirect funding away from other areas and Cengić notes that there are no mechanisms that might systematically support long-term projects or international co-productions, with what little support there is going instead to the funding of festivals. Her observations help to argue that building audiences might be better served through more regular programming of a venue, a strategy Lokomotiva can develop from its base of Kino Kultura.

and supported by international community organisations and guided by the independent cultural scene's reflexive, cooperative strategies, reached a limit that was exacerbated from within the cultural policies of North Macedonia. Professional practice then becomes a question of how to work with existing conditions.

Balance and rebalance

The NDA principle of balance helps to articulate the struggles that imperceptible politics addressed. Imperceptible politics remakes perception and escapes forms of control in a given order. In Skopje, forms of control include the various instances of indifference produced through state cultural policy. Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski points out that you cannot plan strategically in the environment of North Macedonia to engage in longer-term project devising and negotiations. Sustaining ideas is impossible without the support from other kinds of instruments. In such circumstances, recognition and support comes from peers in the independent cultural scenes, and the effects of redistribution through networks like NDA, and other international partners. Ending the festival arguably is another imperceptible politics of refusal, disrupting the consensus in dance worlds that an arts organisation must host a festival as clearly not all can or necessarily need to do so. Moving into a venue produced different challenges to the previous years, but having another kind of resource to share helps to sustain some continuity of scenes in contemporary dance and performance in Skopje through the renewed capacity to build audiences and support artists on different terms. Several shifts of perception rebalanced friendships and the frontiers of solidarity of the independent scene and field of contemporary performance. Through the game in 2014 Vaseva and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski raised the question of how to sustain a festival when 'the only economy can be an economy of sharing and exchange' (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017). These questions emerged from experiences accumulated through the *LocoMotion* festival, 'where you cannot talk about aesthetics, or you cannot programme everything you would like to programme within the field, but more or less you genuinely nurture the relations with whom you collaborate' (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017). In this statement, friendship becomes the circulating necessity, admitting how forms of solidarity were sought perhaps more as a result of not being able to afford other kinds of decisions or choices.

Imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis remakes perceptions, including those of festival makers. For example, before Kino Kultura, Lokomotiva did not have a venue of its own to host

the *LocoMotion* festival and relied upon different spaces in Skopje. Many possible suitable spaces for contemporary dance performance were inaccessible to the independent scene as explained earlier owing to the reluctance of state cultural institutions to collaborate with independent organisations and the privatisation of public spaces. In 2014 Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski announced her need of space for the festival to everyone in her community over email. Only one person reacted, an older theatre director who telephoned other people to try to help Lokomotiva, 'and none of the others reacted' (2017). Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski remembered that Risima Risimkin had a space suitable for dance and performances at the top of a shopping centre used for Risimkin's own work and classes, as well as rented to others. At this point *Skopje DanceFest* and *LocoMotion* festival were taking different approaches to programming, and were not collaborating, though were not on unfriendly terms. Texts written about these festivals tend to make distinct their differences, rather than their commonalities (Jordanovska, 2015; Vaseva, Veljanovska and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2014).

> I was panicking. Then I realised the alliances exist until the moment that…I mean alliance in this sense of the independent cultural scene here, can exist maybe more verbally than practically. And then I called Risima and she said no problem. So, we rented that space and did a couple of performances there, and a couple in the Youth Cultural Centre. So even those who you believe are not your allies reacted better. It was a funny experiment. (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017)

From this comment, it is apparent that Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski up until 'that moment' did not include Interart and Risimkin in her notion of the independent scene. This was a moment of rebalancing relations between artistic directors in organisations for dance that laid new foundations for further cooperation in later years. If practitioners working in a similar field in the same city can find functioning cooperation this can be crucial to overcome some of the shared challenges of cultural production. The project-based ways of working and ways in which small organisations often compete for the same funds tacitly reinforces competition between peers. This example shows this to be surmountable. To emphasise success as being the number of international artists passing through your city or festival is perhaps easier to quantify and perform to your funders than sustaining social relations with nearby peers to enable activity at the local level. This example of the curatorial praxis of *LocoMotion* as not only the conceptualisation of a festival but working with decisions as to where and how to stage works exposes the interdependencies and contingencies in contemporary dance. Reflecting

upon this dynamic of friendship and solidarity with peers, Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski remarks that

> …it is a transaction, but a completely different kind of transaction - on the level of human, an emotional, affective transaction, in which you as a person are subjectively more important, and *a priori* to financial transaction, in labour or work. This is important: if you work on something you love, or not. Those kinds of inputs are embodied, becoming an immanent part of you as a human, this is how you transform or not, no matter what the transformation can mean, it can be positive or negative. (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017)

This reflexive account gives further depth of understanding the work that goes into shaping conditions for contemporary dance, work that is full of feeling in the attempt to prevent against alienated relations, regardless of whether suitable partnerships and alliances are in another country or in the same city. The art world Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski speaks of in this conception is understood to be meaningfully sustained through friendships, mutual regard and trust. The encounter Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski describes recognises that two different, adjacent perspectives on contemporary dance and performance (expressed through each arts organisation's festival programming) in the same city, might find productive points of cooperation. The shared commitment to a field of contemporary dance as poetics of mulitplicity is not simply through having the financial power to buy space. This moment of cooperation has a different quality to the ways in which festivals are expected to market themselves to audiences and funders as different to one another as follows the logic of a comparative and speculative art market. Cooperation between peers in the same city are the less visible, imperceptible politics of artistic scenes that help to sustain conditions for contemporary dance. The shifting terms of production in contemporary dance in North Macedonia over the 2000s and 2010s affected the curatorial praxis of the *LocoMotion* festival and relationships of solidarity. Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski pointed out that some of the choreographies in *DanceFest Skopje* would have been quite at home in *LocoMotion* had it continued (2017), meaning that a shift of its programming was taking place, in a new distribution of the sensible. The role of *LocoMotion* perhaps helped pave the way for the programming elsewhere.

Chapter summary

This Chapter has traced the arc of *LocoMotion* from 2008-2015 through curatorial praxis that became most experimental in the 2011 edition that shifted the stakes of what festivals can be and what an ethics of curation entails. The festival as a social space was enabled through the principle of invitation that redistributed decision-making to more artists. The imperceptible politics of the *LocoMotion* festivals addresses struggles for Lokomotion arising from several different areas. Firstly, the unsupportive and unchanging cultural policies of North Macedonia between 2007-2017 were escaped from and subverted through carving out a space for contemporary dance as an expanded practice, through the festivals, and later through a venue. Secondly, the presence of international development community support for independent scenes of contemporary art and dance was crucial given the absence of other kinds of infrastructure or policy that would recognise contemporary dance as an expanded practice. But its departure left Lokomotiva and other NGOS in unsustainable positions, dealt with in different ways. Thirdly, disagreements about how to develop audiences and what the festival should be meant that in 2015 the decision to end the festival happened, along with Šukarova leaving the Lokomotiva, and the move of the NGO to Kino Kultura.

These changes in North Macedonia affecting the conditions for NGOs like Lokomotiva can be articulated through tracing movements of dissensus across the phases of the festivals. In 2008, presenting the festival as a form of disagreement with prevailing definitions of dance and expressions of the body created a new distribution of the sensible. However, this form of dissensus was not considered satisfying to the aims of Lokomotiva, wishing to operate as an agent of transformational politics and practices and so was motivated to keep examining its modes of production and circulation. Dissensus appears then through the new focus on the methods of curating that refused to distribute specific art works, as well as refuse to hold onto existing collaborative structures within Lokomotiva about who makes those decisions and how. This approach to festival-making faced being misunderstood or ignored by figures in North Macedonia in positions to recognise and redistribute support structures for contemporary dance art. This approach also faced being considered ineffective for developing audiences by focussing on processes more than more clearly definable 'artworks'. The disagreements within Lokomotiva showed different relationships to how contemporary dance as a critical practice might be understood and shaped through festival-making.

Another effect of the *LocoMotion* festival as a form of dissensus was in reconfiguring Lokomotion's perception of the local scene through the relationship with Interart that was more

distanced prior to Lokomotiva's desperate need for performance space for the festival. Through observing cooperation between NGOs, rather than emphasising their differentiation, and their competition for funding and recognition, the complexities of dissensus is exposed as a fluid, processual phenomenon with unanticipated consequences that can reconfigure relations. Maintaining an outlier position that produces dissensual subjectification without sufficient financial support, energy, or what Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski might refer to as a critical mass of people, risks internal collapse if no other form of solidarity with independent art scenes, or other agencies, appears. The reconfiguration of the frontiers of solidarity of the local independent artistic scene was observed through Interart and Lokomotiva finding common ground helped to develop future conditions to lobby together on behalf of contemporary dance and performance practices, and by the move into Kino Kultura. The concept of the scene is further reinforced as being fluid and requiring fluidity for continuity.

The festival-making by Lokomotiva exposes the ground of political power in Skopje to make accessible, or inaccessible, opportunities to NGOs such as resources of buildings and co-production with institutions. This festival-making simultaneously disrupts this political power that would appear preventative, but could be surmounted through new distributions of the sensible. Without intending to overstate their cooperation, what was common between the two NGOs was the more general wish to support contemporary dance art, and the shared disdain for the cultural policies that the exclude it. The distributions of the sensible traced in the curatorial praxis of *LocoMotion* show what inclusive practices in cultural production and organisation can mean and look like, and how the role of international development support can bolster these efforts.

The story of *LocoMotion* attempting to balance out the challenges of working in North Macedonia in the independent scene illuminates the long-term effects of the proliferation of festivals across Europe and in contemporary dance since the 1990s that makes normative their regular occurrence, but questionable sustainability. Lokomotiva could escape from what was perceived to be increasingly a constraint, rather than an emancipatory practice. The example of *LocoMotion* makes clear the distinction between not holding onto power, and no longer having power. The festival as an expression of common space for debate and dissensus in a new distribution of the sensible became disempowering to sustain. By 2015, refusal to create the festival any longer is a movement away from festivalisation that acknowledges sustaining conditions for contemporary dance practices need not necessarily require annual editions.

Contemporary dance festival-making is contextually specific as a moving phenomenon amidst moving social relations, the politicality of which appears through navigation of dissensus that is self-generated as well as imposed. The next Chapter explores festivalisation from the perspective of Ljubljana and Slovenia's experiences joining the EU, in which indifference from the Ministry of Culture continues but with different qualities and effects of dissensus.

Chapter 4

PLESkavica festival: the Balkan beef-burger, Defestivalisation and Refestivalisation

This Chapter explores the *PLESkavica* festival made in 2011, and responds to its curatorial question 'Defestivalisation for Refestivalisation'. The analysis of the imperceptible politics of the curatorial praxis of *PLESkavica* will address struggles in Slovenia particular to 2011, as well as to longer term effects of the country's disassociation from SFRY through the notion of Europeanisation. Themes of time, radical equality, the limits of the principle of invitation, festivalisation, the relationship to the Ministry of Culture, and the changing conditions for cultural workers in Slovenia all interconnect with the notion of Europeanisation, discussed at the end of the Chapter.

PLESkavica festival followed three years of the *Short Cuts* festivals (2008-2010) by Fičo Balet, an organisation for contemporary dance in Slovenia founded by Goran Bogdanovski and Dejan Srhoj. This festival was the platform for the final presentations, in solo, duet and group form, of the NDA educational programme participants and share them with audiences in Ljubljana or coming from elsewhere in Slovenia where there are also communities of dance artists and educators, like in Maribor and Celje. Audiences included those within an interest in contemporary performance practices, other artists and cultural workers. In 2010, Fičo Balet became the NDA partner in the formation of NDA Slovenia, and in 2011 it received funds from the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia to create the *PLESkavica* festival. That year as there was no intense preparation and finalisation of production and presentations of the NDA educational programme as there had been in previous years, it was an opportunity to create something new within the context of the NDA project (Založnik, 2019).

A brief sketch is needed to mark the difference between Slovenia and the other former Yugoslav republics in its experiences of 'transition'. First, it had a ten-day war in the break-up of Yugoslavia, and though there was much violence during that time and after in terms of who the state recognised and validated, Slovenia's situation was considerably different to North Macedonia and to FRY/Serbia. The artistic scene's intellectual practices were a similar level to west and central Europe, and unlike Serbia, many people did not migrate, and there were

better conditions for work at least for the first two decades on from 1992 (Založnik, 2019). 2011 was a decade after Slovenia officially left SFRY, and the top-down efforts by government to disavow and erase Yugoslav Socialism include more processes than can be addressed here. But *PLESKavica* is interwoven with these processes of Slovenia's Europeanisation, appearing as a comment upon and criticism of the systems of cultural production that had changed in this decade, whilst nevertheless taking advantage of the choices opened up by being part of the EU and the partnerships of EC projects.

The title of the *PLESkavica* festival in 2011 puts itself in dialogue with the local context of Ljubljana. *Pleskavica* is the name of a kind of 'Balkan beef burger' (Baskar, 2003: 204). Naming the festival in this way was a Slovenian language joke response to another dance festival in Ljubljana called *Gibanica*, a local dessert that translates as 'moving cake'. *Gibanica* is a type of layered strudel, with a combination of Turkish (Ottoman) and Austrian (Austro-Hungarian) influences often found in the cuisines of the former Yugoslav space and Balkans. As well as the reference to a beef burger, *PLESkavica* holds several other meanings, hinting at the multi-layered concerns of the festival. *Ples* means dance and *kavica* is the diminutive form of coffee (*kava*). The festival name could become in English beef-burger-dance-small-coffee. It variously references: festival similarity and differentiation in the city, a familiar meat dish to those who would recognise it, taking a small coffee together, dancing, a short duration, or perhaps a brief burst of caffeinated energy.

PLESkavica festival placed emphasis on processes of dialogue. Rather than choosing to programme and invite individual performances, another format was taken up similar to the *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* festivals in 2011 described in the previous Chapter. The festival makers decided to invite thirty-six 'domestic and foreign artists and creators in the field of contemporary dance to share knowledge, reflections and thoughts with each other and with the audience', and if they wished, to share any of their finished works in these conditions (CoFestival, 2016). 'Instead of productivity, we chose creativity, creative accumulation in slow time' (CoFestival, 2016). Each day for ten days, artists and audiences could come together, eat, and decide what they wanted to do that day, creating daily plans together. The festival centre where that meeting would take place was Tabor (an old sports hall in Ljubljana used for arts and sports), with evening improvisation jams held at Stara Elektrana, (an old factory converted into a theatre and performance space run by Bunker, founded in 1998).

The group organising *PLESkavica* was comprised of Goran Bogdanovski, Dragana Alfirević, Dejan Srhoj, Rok Vevar and Gregor Kamnikar representing NDA, Jasmina Založnik at that time from the NGO Maska, and Sandra Djorem from the Network for Contemporary Dance in Slovenia. Developing the festival began around January 2011 with the consideration of how to spend €10,000, which was according to Založnik, quite insufficient for a festival (2017). There had been many creative processes, tasks and artistic scores proposed in these discussions. The curatorial team initially shared some example 'modules'[44] during the festival, though these were not strictly adhered to, followed through, nor necessarily intended to be. In *PLESkavica*, the potential to create different connections was given priority, emphasising the interests of the people present, enlarging the empty space principle. The festival was intended to be for artistic experiments and experiences, with reflection upon individual needs and desires, and on the circumstances in which everyone present lives and works. It was an opportunity to share practices, but also to just be and do nothing (Založnik, 2017). Overall the festival was shaped as an unpredictable programme to emerge from the collective imaginary and individual interests. The aim of *PLESkavica* was that through a process of defestivalisation 'we could come to the foundation for refestivalisation, to intervene in the existing mode of festivals in order to establish a new potential festival and mode of working doing-being' (Založnik, 2017).

Time and radical equality

PLESkavica did not demonstrate a form of curatorial activism in a manner of demanding change on a singular issue. Instead, the imperceptible politics in curatorial praxis addressed the struggles of 'transition' more broadly. By mobilising the concept of a festival as a social space, curatorial praxis commented upon the prevailing conditions of cultural production and provided an alternative.

> What we didn't want to do with the money that we had was to make the equation that time is money. We wanted to expand the time we didn't have any more. (Vevar, 2018)

PLESkavica approached the time spent together between the participants of the festival as meaningful, rather than incidental. With the 'time we didn't have any more', Vevar refers to

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[44] In the lexicon of both educational formats and circuit boards in a computer, 'modules' references the modular format of the nomadic educational format (2007-2010) where different intensive workshops took place in different cities. The modules suggested for *PLESkavica* included movement scores and workshops.

the ethos of production in SFRY that organised social life around work, and celebrated work not only in terms of productivity and efficiency, but in the name of emancipation (Cvek in Jelača, Kolanović and Lugarić, 2017: 103). Importantly in this paradigm, leisure and sociality were also considered important. In efforts to 'Europeanise', the perception of time in Slovenia has, in Vevar's experience, fundamentally changed, and any emancipatory dimensions of work were being eroded. *PLESkavica* attempted to create conditions to spend time together as a precondition for future trust and possible cooperation, echoing the sense of face to face togetherness considered important in *LocoMotion*. Curatorial praxis created an ambiguous context in which sharing artistic interests, impulses to do and not do, might unfold with less direction and control than in other frames of cultural production and consumption.

The emphasis on emergence aligns with contemporary dance's time-based qualities and the accumulation of questions arising from a particular gathering. Embodied practices, durational movement scores, and improvisation seek to accommodate change and unpredictable outcomes, and are cultivated in contemporary dance training and creation. The festival could have been more smoothly orientated as a workshop or rehearsal, but insisting on the frame of a festival similarly insisted upon remaining ostensibly an accessible, public event, whilst attempting to make certain tropes that are more familiar to dance artists available to more people. Activities during *PLESkavica* included choreographic tasks, viewings, debates, workshops, coffee drinking, and dancing. *PLESkavica* attempted to shape conditions to linger that could provoke the quality of attention audiences might have for watching staged performance and choreographic works, or similar to the heightened level of self-reflection and sensorial enquiry in somatic-based movement techniques. The imperceptible politics here address the festival maker's perception and rejection of the commodification of time as an accomplishment or for immediate gain. Curatorial praxis insisted that the festival must resist this alienation of experience and relationship. and included choreographic manipulation of the experience of duration, meaning that *PLESkavica* emphasised indeterminacy and ambiguity as preconditions for creativity.

The attempt of *PLESkavica* to promote lingering in time and condition spaces of potentiality risked making the contours of the festival unrecognisable as the challenge to the experience of time ruptured existing perceptions of what a festival should include. During the experience of *PLESkavica*, the perception of time was highly diverse for participants. For example, feedback included needing more time, that things were too quick, or too slow. that nothing was

happening, that too much was happening (PLESkavica, 2011: 7). This illustrates the individual differences in how invitation into the concept of the festival, and time, are interpreted. But it also shows how anticipation of an event structures the ways in which it is encountered and that perhaps 'festival' cannot be so easily co-created differently. Capitalist models of work in Slovenia, and especially for freelance cultural workers, have encroached upon the notion of leisure time, once understood as normal in SFRY following Vevar. In 2011, the festival makers observed that unquestioning hyper-productivity and flexible employment had become well-installed, making the curatorial praxis leveraging the principle of empty space and expansive duration a radical move. The confusion and discomfort about *PLESkavica* from its audience members attests to a significant shift in Slovenia from SFRY. Another transformation of Worker Self-Management takes it towards a different polemic. Rather than self-organisation as an emancipatory practice for individual as well as collective benefit, Self-Management can be conceived instead as an individual practice for self-regulation, self-control, and self-production that undermines solidarity and interdependence. It is part of the self-exploitation and blurring of work and life critiqued by researchers like sociologist Pascal Gielen, commenting upon artistic scenes (2009). *PLESkavica* was a critique of this notion of Self-Management in Slovenia that permeates the logic of the individual artist-entrepreneur in which time is reconceptualised as something not to be 'wasted'.

PLESkavica was insistent upon the empty space principle, meaning answers would certainly not be quick or simple, and conclusions would be resisted so as to attempt not to establish a hierarchy of authority. Trust in the unknown and in the necessity of struggle for emancipation shows a relationship to self-education as experiential and ongoing. The festival was attempting to implement these values of radical equality through the curatorial. In response to a comment that *PLESkavica* might be just a commune and not a community, one of the festival makers responded with that they were more interested in active participation, irrespective of how an event was labelled. The preoccupation of this festival maker was with questioning and redefining every element of the festival in a particular moment, and as a consequence realising they also change it (PLESkavica, 2011: 15)[45]. This comment illustrates an assumed equality

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[45] The festival is archived in its own publication in English and Slovene, the *PLESkavica* newspaper, which Vevar referred to as a catalogue in the manner of a fine art exhibition. It is a polyphonic document, a scrapbook of texts, references and quotes from several philosophers, photos, reflections, plus a recipe for *pleskavica*, and was created and published a month after the festival ended. The organisers invited everyone who had been there for their contributions, and some, not all responded, writing in English and Slovene.

between the hosts of *PLESkavica* and audiences. The answer shows that transformation in perception and self-perception is held in high regard, and potentiality and agency are considered vital aspects of participation. However, the attempt to resuscitate discussions amongst equals and reconfigure the expectations of the roles of host and guest was challenging for the audience as participants. It was also a challenge for the festival makers, some of whom only gradually could relinquish their sense of obligation to host, rather than experience, the festival (Založnik, 2017). This is the imperceptible politics of the curatorial in remaking perception. *PLESkavica* provoked self-reflection on individual habits and patterns, including those of its makers. For Srhoj, the festival as a context to try out things with a group without needing months to prepare to get a space and coordinate with people was very welcome (2018). He observed the subtle ways that whoever in the organisational team had the keys to the building was assumed to be fixed in a position of responsibility and therefore authority by some of the invited guest artists. They discussed the sharing of responsibility, and in Srhoj's opinion, 'we should all have access to the keys' whilst acknowledging it to be impossible on an institutional level (2018). Vevar recalled that the cultural workers from Bunker claimed that the *PLESkavica* team were not being sufficiently responsible for the audience or wider public, in spite of making invitations and publishing the programme for each day. The curatorial praxis disrupted the expected ways of doing things in festival-making that although confronting and challenging, interrogated the concept of defestivalisation through practices.

Questioning the principle of invitation in curatorial praxis

The figuration of an artistic scene as local, though also Slovene, European, and international creates a fluid terrain for belonging. Philosopher Isabel Stengers (2005: 188) proposes that a sense of belonging begets responsibility because of an attachment to someone or something. Following this idea, the dimension of invitation in the *PLESkavica* festival exposes dynamics of artistic scenes that raise questions about how belonging, and therefore responsibility might be cultivated and experienced. The facilitation of experiences in *PLESkavica* of co-curation as an experiment with radical equality can be argued as a democratic practice. It was done with the hope it might affect the future sense of solidarity of the artistic scene in Ljubljana. The following account of an experience shows how interactions at the level of the local scene expose the subjectivity inherent in invitation that affects belonging. Though less affected by migration than North Macedonia and Serbia overall, many contemporary dance artists from Slovenia leave the country for education and professional work elsewhere. In 2010, a Slovene

choreographer returned to Ljubljana after five years of study in the Netherlands. They were making work and attempting to find structures to support it. They were not one of the artists specifically invited to *PLESkavica*, though was welcome to attend as any other audience or artist. A peer of theirs from the same dance and choreography programme in the Netherlands was specifically invited as an artist, and he attempted to include them in the festival, which they felt ambivalent about.

They recall their response to this situation: 'the knowledge is considered to be elsewhere, and only foreigners can bring it in'. The NDA principle of invitation attempts to avoid setting up the relation of applicant to selector, though selection is also part of invitation. Besides showing how the NDA principles do not function as promises or guarantees and nor can they be totalising in a way that would police the formation of relations, this experience exposes the complexity of artistic scenes. The international festival system, where diversity is often created based on a politics of representation of country of origin or national identity, regularly models the guest as something to be cherished. The distance travelled, and the otherness anticipated, is often celebrated as special. In the efforts to include artists from other contexts to offer the possibility of new learning and enrichment, the relationship towards a local, semi-familiar face can become of peripheral importance, though not necessarily a deliberate violence in favouring novelty. This issue for festival curation entails working with recognition and redistribution in complex ways, always entailing some loss or omission. For NDA members, local knowledge and connections are considered important, in spite of the experience of this interlocutor. The situated dimensions of curatorial praxis explored in these Chapters demonstrates the always subjective interpretations of contexts, and what responsibility and attachment are experienced to be.

This artist explained to me how the NDA project appears to them from 'outside' of it: 'there is the impression that they think they're not doing well, but they do not see the differences between artists in the same scene. You never see the long tail behind you if you consider yourself at the end of the tail, whilst you are at the beginning' (2018). Their comment urges attention to recognise relative perceptions of success. The imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis show the principle of invitation to remain partial, but have the capacity to remake artistic scenes and the sense of belonging, responsibility and perceptions of each other.

Festivalisation

Resistance to quick answers and solutions was considered necessary to retain potential for thought and reflection as dimensions of praxis and dissensus. Založnik and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski (in Alfirević et al., 2012: 6) state this is also to resist being recognisable on the art market.

> We want to step back and shed light on that which is unspeakable or untradeable, even if the price we have to pay is a temporary lack of clarity or permanent lack of consent Založnik and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski (in Alfirević et al., 2012: 6)

The unspeakable or untradeable is this space of experimentation and perhaps can be considered the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis. The festival was proposed as a reflection and response to the changes in dance worlds and festivals in Slovenia resulting from 'the increased mobility and higher economic standards of European citizens, and increased quantity of international networks, of political changes and the changes of cultural politics in the last three decades' (PLESkavica, 2011: 1). These were changes to the material reality of living and working in Slovenia. One particular facet of these conditions was the changes to the landscape of arts festivals.

Festivalisation, understood as the increase of festivals as well as turning existing events into festivals, is often argued as an economic trend. Luc Sala debates festivalisation as a compensatory form, relating it to how they can make up for something that is missing, for example like 'lack of physical contact in modern life and cyberspace' (2015: 3). Sala elaborates upon the utopian potential of festival spaces, imbuing festivalisation with a more positive connotation in which festivals can contribute something beneficial and joyful. Nevertheless, *PLESkavica* was created in response to the occurrence in Ljubljana in 2011 in which five festivals of contemporary dance took place earlier that year: *Gibanica* (founded 2003), *Pajek/Spider* (2010), *Plesna Vesna* (connected to the Europe-wide project *Aerowaves*), *Exodus* (1995), and the *Balkan dance platform*. Also, *Mesto žensk* (City of Women, 1996) and *Mladi levi* (1998) festivals were happening, both presenting contemporary theatre, performance and dance. Plus, other festivals of contemporary dance that year were taking place in Slovenia's second largest city Maribor, *Platform* (since 2007) and *Performa* festival (1993), and in the

town Murska Sobota, the *Fronta* festival (2006). Those involved in making *PLESkavica* considered it rare to find so many local and foreign dance performances in Slovenia. In other cities this quantity has become more common (for example in Berlin or London), but for the population in Ljubljana and Slovenia this increase highlighted 'a vicious circle of hyperproduction', which the *PLESkavica* makers found to be 'damaging to dance creativity' (CoFestival, 2016). 'Exhausted and tired of a crazy production pace' (CoFestival, 2016), defestivalisation/refestivalisation attempted to address issues arising in the field of contemporary dance and performance in Slovenia such as requiring more premières to be made in less time. Festivals began to mirror or reproduce industrial production in other areas of Slovenia's marketplaces, typified by efficiency and streamlining, and associated with the western European approach of market principles applied to cultural production and management (Založnik, 2017). This is not to argue that market principles were not part of some cultural production during SFRY, but the emphasis on increasingly efficient production was producing a new sense of alienation for artists and cultural workers over the 1990s and 2000s. Festivalisation was not interpreted as compensatory at all.

NDA Slovenia argued that over the 2000s 'the majority of festivals of contemporary performative arts changed into fairs, where producers just trade with art products. While for artists, festivals are more a place of cultural transition rather than a place of meeting (PLESkavica, 2011: 11), meaning artists passed through, rather than lingering to experience a context and audiences more closely or for a longer duration. This criticism of festivals meant the impetus to develop *PLESkavica* was with the hope that it might for be a space for a 'rehabilitation of potentiality of being' (PLESkavica, 2011: 1), emphasising personal and artistic growth and development in the compensatory sense of festivals posed by Sala. *PLESkavica* can be understood as a critique of the expectation of permanent growth in the international arts festival industry observed not only in Slovenia but across Europe. Rather than swell out of proportion 'in relation to their financial and organisational capacities, and the needs of audiences' (Keil, 2015: 11), the makers of *PLESkavica* attempted to balance the financial situation, deploy a strategy of co-curating, and conceive of audiences as being the broader arts community of Slovenia rather than art consumers, in order to address a common context threatening to further exhaust artists and cultural workers. It is in this sense that the festival was communicating the untradeable qualities of (working) life by taking ten days' time and slowing down to explore together through shared praxis.

Consequences of curatorial praxis

After the festival, the organisers wrote the required report and sent video footage to the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia. There were also photographs of people doing things that were not immediately recognised as dance or choreography. The Ministry required the report to be re-written, and invited them to a meeting (Založnik, 2017). Bogdanovski went to explain that the festival team and artists were working, and to defend their festival-making and its concept from misrecognition. This illustrates the challenges of evaluation when set on the terms of the funder, rather than the terms of the project, and begs the question why no one from the Ministry attends the projects it ostensibly supports. This absence is also found in EC projects more broadly. Anthropologist and cultural policy analyst Claske Vos argues that the lack of any representative from the EC at the projects it funds is also found to be a problem (2018: 39). The problem for *PLESkavica* was the misrecognition about what contemporary artistic practices entail and what conditions are considered supportive, like conducive labour laws, discussed later in this Chapter. The dimension of Europeanisation characterised by economic rationalisation has led to increased alienation between funding bodies, like the Ministry of Culture and the municipalities, and artists. Whilst this might be argued and justified though the funders taking distance so as not encroach upon artistic autonomy, in as far as that is possible rather than idealised, this distance does not actually serve artists and festival makers. It increased the gap in understanding about contemporary dance as an expanded practice. Rather, it is up more often to the independent artists and cultural workers to adapt to the terms of funding to be eligible to enter into the relation. Moreover, consultation with the independent scenes is not frequent, exacerbating the gap.

From the perspective of contemporary art, this misrecognition shows the success of curatorial praxis by testing the margins of the form of the festival and what qualities of attention to one another can be in practices of radical equality. Nevertheless, the consequences of misrecognition can be significant for building mutual, trusting relationships.

> Srhoj: It's what the Ministry of Culture said…One of the reasons was that "we saw in the PR materials you're just enjoying yourself". I was so shocked, yes this was part of it but… and if this was really all that we did, it still serves the purpose of festivity and artists sharing knowledge, and if they do it over coffee, this should also be recognised.

But no.

Vevar: What the Ministry says between the lines is that when the cultural workers are not detached enough from the means of production then it isn't work, if there is a joy then it's not work. We are not capitalistic enough, because of a not a big enough level of defamiliarisation, in the Marxist sense (Baybutt, Srhoj, Vevar and Založnik, 2018)

In 2012, refestivalisation is apparent in the consequences of the 2011 festival:

It was very clear we were very happy and transformed by it [*PLESkavica* 2011], but that we were not interested to repeat it. It was clear it was something we needed to do, something that the scene needed, but not something that needed to be repeated…and then I realised that they [the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia] became the curators of our next festival, because we couldn't have done it, even if we wanted, the same way (Srhoj, 2018)

The following year, *PLESkavica* did not receive any funding from the Ministry. This is not perhaps a direct consequence of the 2011 edition, though it was assumed by the NDA Slovenia members. This raises the point that financial power is an enduring, significant mechanism to enable and to an extent pre-curate festival formats, and provoke or temper the opportunity to contest artistic practices, including contemporary dance as an expanded practice. The experiences of *PLESkavica* 2011 contributed to how NDA developed its work on the topic of advocacy in 2012, recognising that the legitimation of art requires ongoing education and communication across a range of instruments and spaces. Due to the lack of finances for *PLESkavica*, members of different festivals decided to join resources.[46] *PLESkavica* in 2011 became *CoFestival* in 2012 as a merger for the continuity of festivals. Vevar notes that *CoFestival* has to an extent managed to vitalise and revive the contemporary dance community in Ljubljana, which is an aim of NDA. But 'we know we are missing something that is

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[46] *CoFestival* joined together *PLESkavica* with *Ukrep* festival (translated as Taking Measures), produced by Plesni teater Ljubljana (Dance Theatre Ljubljana), and that edition was programmed by Alfirević, Vevar, Založnik, Srhoj and Slovenian choreographer Sinja Ožbolt. Bogdanovski, the founder of Fičo Balet and NDA member was a programme director-advisor for Kino Šiška on the project *Modul-dance*, the four-year Creative Europe project (2010-2014) and proposed the festival mode as a platform for the presentation of *Modul-dance* artists, so it became involved with *CoFestival*. Kino Šiška was a partner of *Modul-dance* with Bogdanovski and Mitja Bravhar, who works at Kino Šiška.

connected to *PLESkavica*, a certain kind of festival infrastructure, a certain of fundament that would function differently than festivals usually function' (Vevar, 2018). From the increased swell of festivals of contemporary dance, theatre and performance observed in 2011, already in 2012, their number visibly dropped (Založnik, 2018), hence any appraisal of festivalisation always requires revision, and refestivalisation remains an open question.

Unless privately financed, contemporary dance and performance cannot avoid the criteria of public funding bodies like national arts councils and the EC grants if it is to operate on the terms of being considered a public good, held apart from the logics of financial markets. Yet transforming these instruments, the criteria, their timing and management, and increasingly their market logic, is difficult to implement when these bodies change or are closed to dialogue. For NDA Slovenia, building a relationship with Kino Šiška, a cinema and concert venue, has helped sustain the legacy of *PLESkavica* through *CoFestival*. The Ministry of Culture's relationship to the independent cultural scene and to freelance workers relates to which ever government is installed, the changes of which over the 2000s and 2010s have been largely been characterised by decreasing funds and dialogue. The European financial crash in 2007, to an extent, served as a pretext to justify the reduction in state subsidy for arts across the continent rather than a legitimate reason, according to former secretary-general of the advocacy platform 'Culture, Action, Europe', Ilona Kish (2012: 94). There had been a reduction in the budget for culture before 2007 through a reduction of state support for the arts, in line with free-market conservative policies that tend to commodify art and 'stress the choice of the individual as much as possible and seek to minimise state intervention and spending' (Kish, 2012: 94). Nevertheless, the Slovene Ministry of Culture in 2007 was still in support of contemporary dance. The second National Programme for Culture in Slovenia (2008—2011) envisioned the founding of a Centre of Contemporary Dance Arts. It was, according to Založnik, 'the very last act of the previous centre-left government' (2012: 115). The Centre was established on 13 July 2011. 'One could say that this was a major cultural policy achievement for the scene, as it had fought for institutionalisation for more than two decades. Unfortunately, it became clear, very soon, that the Centre was just an excuse and empty gesture that was not really meant to help the scene. In August 2012, barely a year later, the Centre was officially abolished. One may reasonably ask, then, if strategic documents have any function at all and for whom they are intended' (Založnik, 2012: 115). This helps to illuminate the problems facing contemporary dance artists and cultural workers when national cultural policy changes with each government for continuity and infrastructure, though the struggle to institutionalise dance in Slovenia has a

much longer history (elaborated further by Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2012: 8). Whilst the NDA project more broadly shows ambivalence towards institutionalisation, for its partners it could mean greater stability for cultural workers and artists in the field of contemporary dance, and more possibility to contribute to the terms of creation. The example of the short-lived Centre of Contemporary Dance Arts helps to illustrate the struggles in Slovenia to argue successfully for contemporary dance and performance as a valuable contribution to and expression of a pluralist society, rather than something the Ministry should support simply because other EU countries do, and because festivals are considered effective for tourism. Tokenistic support can render contemporary dance simply a cipher for democracy without deepening understanding and respect for an artistic field and its possible needs. The imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis in *PLESkavica* addressed these problems.

Cultural workers

Slovene art theorist and historian Beti Žerovc (2015[2006]) writes on the cultures of biennales and the star-curator structures in visual art context. *PLESkavica* demonstrates an example of the Leftist political position of curators, observed as the norm by Žerovc (2015[2006]: 125), but unlike institutionalised, international contemporary visual arts, the curators of NDA partners' festivals do not necessarily instrumentalise such attitudes in favour of self-promotion and to perpetuate the hierarchical structures they claim to want to change (Žerovc, 2015[2006]: 137). The professionalism of NDA, explored in Chapter 2, is observed in *PLESkavica* throughits curatorial praxis that recognised the risks to artistic development and addressed it by remaking the festival space as potentiality. As Založnik explains, two months was the standardised production period and the expectation was that productions and festivals would be made of a similar quality on decreasing amounts of funding. This provoked an urge to react (2017). Založnik and the others observed perpetual adaptation to the system by artists and independent cultural workers, plus the increasing exhaustion, dispersion and fragmentation due to the number of jobs and roles one fulfils as a freelancer in art. 'The festival as a detoxification was supposed to enact a politics of awareness' (Založnik, 2017).

The system of production in contemporary dance expressed by Založnik can be further understood by looking to the consequences of Slovene independence from SFRY in 1991, and joining the EU in 2004. Social theorist Mitja Velikonja, following Gramsci's articulation of

hegemony (see footnote 11 on page 35-36), observed the infinitely reproduced 'mantras of the new Eurocentric meta discourse that became normalised in all spheres of social life' (2006: 8) to indicate a sense of progress and modernity. Slovenia, 'detaching ourselves' from the 'West of the European East', had become the 'East of the European West' (Velikonja, 2006: 7; Patterson, 2003: 110). By this, Velikonja notes that catching up and keeping up with the ideals of the EU project proceeded with little question for what was being put aside, replaced or erased, such as what working life and time means for social relations and a shared sense of responsibility.

As in North Macedonia and Serbia, Slovene independence meant widening the possibilities for freelance artists and workers in contemporary dance and performance in a redistribution of resources, eligibility, access and recognition. But only up until a certain point. Simon Kardum is artistic director of Kino Šiška, the only cultural institution in Slovenia where all are employed for the term of the director, meaning there is a self-refreshing model in which the next director will be able to choose the team to best implement the programme. Other public cultural institutions do not operate on these terms. Until 2005, Kardum worked in the Ministry of Culture and was a key architect of Slovenian cultural policy since independence in the transition from the Yugoslav system. During SFRY, cultural activities were supervised and funded by the state, so it was not possible to speak of a cultural market or entrepreneurship. Kardum's proposition was different to the suggestions being made since the 1990s that arts and artists should be left to the nebulous idea of 'market forces' (in Kučić, 2018). Instead, whilst working at the Ministry of Culture, Kardum implemented social security systems that differentiated the status of cultural workers and freelance artists to other freelance workers in order to recognise, incentivise and reward the different nature of the work and the range of skills involved, as well as the kinds of contribution artistic work offers. Kardum argued that creative and artistic work cannot be valued by bureaucratic principles, measuring work through the hours spent or similar methods to assess industrial production (in Kučić, 2018). Because of the rigidity in public cultural institutions, the self-employed status for cultural workers in Slovenia created an attractive alternative to public sector jobs that would allow the creator some social security and thus freedom, with the 'independent cultural artist' status implemented since 1994. This required a shift in the understanding of 'artist', as before it had referred more to visual arts artists, and now expanded to include performing artists and other kinds of cultural worker, which was an important move for those involved in contemporary dance and for giving some stability to the idea of the independent scene. This recognised status

produced several advantages, such as it became easier to create, to implement public interest in the field of culture, to reduce the pressure of employment in public institutions, and to promote cultural entrepreneurship if so desired[47].

Maintaining a special space for artists, alongside the changes in the 1990s, meant navigating processes of Europeanisation before and after independence, and joining the EU, that involved dismantling some structures that were well-functioning during Yugoslav socialism. Slovenia, like other republics, inherited significant networks of libraries, museums, galleries and so forth that Kardum and others attempted to safeguard from being sold or privatised (this is one of the points of difference between Slovenia and the other former republics). Europeanisation involved new systems of redistribution, and in the 1990s, private cultural organisations such as institutions, societies and cooperatives joined the cultural space. By 2002 they gained the right to equal access to public funds and infrastructure. These non-governmental organisations were professional, no longer considered amateur or voluntary if they had previously been in SFRY, and involved many different kinds of freelance artist and cultural workers, coinciding with changes not only with art forms but also new technologies and web-based creative work.

Public sector employment rules determine that the wage system for the public-sector workers increases for those staying in those positions for long periods (so those roles rarely open up to other, often younger workers). The criteria by which those people work there in the first place is based only upon their education and not their prior involvement and expertise with the field of art. It legitimates a certain alienation between public sector institutions and freelance cultural workers, and this increases the likelihood of miscomprehension of the nuances and specificities of particular artistic practices between these workers and other artists, especially freelancers. In order to manage smaller budgets directors of public institutions reduce the number of outsiders the freelance artists cooperating with institutions, as well as reduce the cost of their work. Kardum argues that the long-term effects of these types of measures means that salaries workers in public institutions will grow relative to the cultural budget, and as the system rewards seniority with higher wages for the number of years worked, this will gradually take the majority of the money from any budget. He comments because of this disparity of where the funds are directed (towards management rather than artists), the public institutions will not

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[47] However, the state introduced restrictions to monetise freelancers who paid social security contributions, in that that these must not exceed the average wage of employees in public cultural institution. Though this was a form of social transfer, or form of welfare, Kardum argued that this measure did not reward artistic quality (in Kučić, 2018).

have any artistic works to share with the public, because there will be little budget available to create the programme. With the reduction of the budget for culture before and after 2007, these changes, and lack of changes, further challenge the working lives of freelance artists and cultural workers, and those in contemporary dance. This is part one of the 'politics of awareness' Založnik mentions.

The second issue affecting independent cultural workers was the introduction of a 'census' for artists, in which the highest annual income of the self-employed in the field of culture cannot exceed €20,000 if they want to retain the right to the paid contributions of social security. This, from Kardum's perspective was a misguided policy. It has meant creators making more works, gaining more recognition in the form of awards and media coverage, whilst severely limiting their income. The state has eliminated the original idea that the status of self-employed artists and cultural workers should recognise and serve those creators whose work is well-received, not only through market indexes but amongst the wider field of art, and not only in Slovenia. Independent cultural workers are instead dependent on this system that does not promote their autonomy nor reward their performance. It is a system that appears to be indifferent to them, and to art. Marginal status is exacerbated by the squeezing or destruction of welfare systems for artists that reconfigure the terms on which working lives and participation in a field are made possible, or impossible.

The imperceptible politics of the curatorial praxis of *PLESkavica* addressed the changes to systems of production that have been impacting freelance or independent artists and cultural workers in the field of contemporary dance throughout the 2000s. The expectations of the festival to fulfil a function of visibility and circulation made adapting to changes year by year simply normal. But the imperative to comment upon and critique this situation through the format of the festival itself was particularly unusual. *PLESkavica* demonstrated the need to debate these changes, through and for the expanded notion of contemporary dance that values processes of inquiry as artistic practice, where 'quality' might be understood through heuristic discovery, rather than the testing of a hypothesis of already known, and recognised value systems. Založnik reflected that during *PLESkavica* she and her peers (artists and cultural workers in the Slovene contemporary art and performance scenes) had long discussions concerning how to argue about what the NGO scene were doing, and about the needs of independent cultural workers and artists more broadly. Some expressed how it had left an impact on them, how it made them think about their festivals and how to establish their

educational models differently and were in touch over email to communicate this (Založnik, 2018). For Založnik, only after receiving feedback months later, did she realise the uniqueness and the value of *PLESkaviac* and the experiences 'that I couldn't immediately grasp at the time' (Založnik, 2018). *PLESkavica* addressed different fields of power influencing the spaces and practices of contemporary dance. Vevar explained that *PLESkavica* also influenced subsequent and other NDA activities and events, and they were all informed by the initiation of a different mode of 'creativity vs productivity' (Vevar, 2018). The task in the curatorial concept of refestivalisation during *PLESkavica* was far less obvious than the deconstructive elements of defestivalisation in the daily dramaturgy that hijacked expectations and questioned what a festival could be. The festival left them to understand it later on, and in this way, Vevar states that refestivalisation 'is the task that is still waiting for us' (2018).

The imperceptible politics of *PLESkavica* and Europeanisation

The EC projects can only be fulfilled by those artists and cultural workers who are eligible, which is less of a tautological statement than a recognition that the artists and organisations that are supported as the ones deemed professional in the eyes of the EC, in such a way as to make marginal, or call into question the professionality of those artists and cultural workers who cannot or do not want to participate in such projects on those terms. Affiliation and association matter in dance worlds (such as how symbolic capital operate through a CV or awards). This is important for accounting for dance worlds that are formed through the connections between people. Like the examples from Lokomotiva, this sociality is often a taken for granted background, whereas the curatorial praxis of *PLESkavica* highlights how it is crucial to sustainability and endurance. It is in this sense that the principle of invitation exercised in *PLESkavica* matters for extending an opportunity to more artists. But the space of the festival opened up through curatorial praxis itself offered opportunity for arts communities and NGO scenes of Ljubljana to reflect upon itself. The co-curation deployed is not intrinsically against individual authorial autonomy. Rather, following Cvejić and Vujanović (2010: 2), individual autonomy is understood not as private property but a capacity for structural thinking. Working against the alienation of artists and managers, and between organisations and NGOs shows a broader commitment to artistic development. *PLESkavica* is local not at the expense of the international, but being responsive to the local context, rather than trying to impress the guests only is what renders this festival meaningful as a mediator of change, attempting to maintain dimensions of social life all but lost in the dissolution of SFRY.

The analytic adequacy of the concept of 'Balkans' in application to NDA Slovenia appears through considering the NDA project broadly and *PLESkavica* more specifically as being against 'Balkanization', that is, violent fragmentation (following Todorova, 1997). 'Balkan' here comes to mean not an unwillingness to work, but certainly an unwillingness to work too much and to enter into relations of exploitation. *PLESkavica* thus opposes some of the aims of the EU when perceived in its autocratic, extractive sense. Refestivalisation can be interpreted as interdependent with Europeanisation in ways that attempt to overcome the struggles of production, distribution, circulation and reception of contemporary dance. *PLESkavica*, in its attempts to redistribute agency through curatorial praxis, undermines policy systems that encroach upon a consideration of life and time as shared rather than managed. The attempt to rehabilitate seemingly lost values of Self-Management through self-organisation, belonging, and co-responsibility, and not as individual entrepreneurialism, eschews aspects of western European hegemony whilst reinventing it in the context of Slovenia-in/of-Europe, bringing something of SFRY into the expanded imaginary as well as politically defined EU space.

To approach refestivalisation as a never-to-be accomplished phenomenon, and as a generative principle that propels praxis, opens it to illuminate new beginnings, re-initiations and to float the possibility of a critical capacity of a festival to resist pacification and depoliticisation. This could mean refestivalisation, as a working principle for designing and curating arts festivals, might stand as a corrective to Europeanisation if Europeanisation is pursued in ways in uncritical ways, or seek consensus with less space for dissensual practices. If both the projects of the EU and of contemporary dance as expanded practice are impossible to complete, justifying continual collective interpretation, the challenges posed by Europeanisation to the field of contemporary dance are nevertheless traceable through what the quality of relationships are like between independent scenes and state cultural institutions and policy. *PLESkavica* shows on the other hand shows the robustness of the notion of the festival as a public sphere of debate, where disagreement over the contours of art and festivals could appear. On the other it appears as a warning for the sustainability not only of festivals, but of the independent cultural scenes of Slovenia, discernible through tracing the imperceptible politics that addresses the challenges cultural workers face regarding time and radical equality.

Chapter summary

This Chapter has analysed the curatorial praxis of *PLESkavica* in 2011 through the theme of Europeanisation in Slovenia, characterised by changing approaches to time and cultural work. 'Defestivalisation for Refestivalisation' helped to shape the space of the festival as one for lingering, trying out ideas, and being together in a new distribution of the sensible. It was considered unusual by audiences and peers in the NDA scene, as well as unrecognisable by the Ministry of Culture that questioned the value of such a festival. It also provided a useful analytic framework through which to illuminate the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis. The principle of invitation in curatorial praxis appeared to redistribute curatorial agency, in a radical move to work with empty space and potentiality. The principle of invitation was also further illuminated through how it could not easily reach into all the nuances of a local scene and its artists. *PLESkavica* recalled the notion of co-responsibility through radical equality with the attempt to extend the co-creation of a festival and instil a sense of shared responsibility for the artistic scene.

The curatorial in *PLESkavica* demonstrated a mobile, complex distribution of the sensible. The distribution of that which was made available to sense perception, and held in common as contemporary dance was explored through the propositions made within the frame of the festival by the various participants and artists. These different activities made new divisions in what was included in that distribution, and excluded out of sense perception and took place through discussion during the festival as well as debated after through the creation of the publication, and in the relationship with the Ministry of Culture and its evaluation. The tension in the curatorial praxis was generated through a refusal to maintain a model of production of finished art works by NDA Slovenia, expressing a form of dissensus with firstly, the dominant European contemporary dance production systems and expectations of frequency, and secondly, and interconnected, Slovene cultural funding policy. A major rupture and reformation in the distribution of the sensible was notable through the relationship to time and duration highlighted by the festival, and the ways in which it was articulated by its makers. Meeting and being together, and leaving (and filling) empty space, attest to a processual notion of festival where the limits of process had not been predetermined in advance of the event. Often unseen experimental processes were instead the celebrated content, making the festival a conduit for discovery and non-representational processes, rather than safely displaying products. This is further emphasised by the forms of documentation that were less recognisable by the Ministry of Culture and its conception of what constitutes a contemporary dance festival. The politics of cultural production in the example of *PLESkavica* is precisely in this uncertain

birth of curatorial praxis as power without power (Rancière, 2009b: 119), through the individual and collective processes undertaken before and during the festival.

The decision to stay with a processual unfolding of events and activities (and inactivity) in the festival, and refuse immediate communicability and succinct answers, means that NDA Slovenia cultural workers can be understood as political agents through the vivification of their subjectivities that catalysed a new distribution of the sensible. The imperceptible politics in the curatorial praxis of *PLESkavica* asserts the festival-makers as embodying a political subjectivity. Their identities include the agency to assert curiosity for process, and uphold a trust in an expanded notion of contemporary dance and choreography, and are made more important than performing something more recognisable and predictable to both funders and audiences. The curatorial praxis of this festival edition as form of dissensus touches the concerns of cultural production and status of workers in Slovenia by 2011, exposing their political subjectivity. This distribution of the sensible to assert the political agency entailed in exploring a democratic potential of curation was a risk and a triumph of the festival.

The *PLESkavica* festival showed the makers' resistance to the experience of Europeanisation, enacted by Slovene cultural policy that demanded efficiency from a distance. Though perhaps the festival also illustrates an example of radical democracy as a practice that is also entailed in the concept of Europeanisation. NDA Slovenia recognised and responded to changes in Slovene politics that are connected to EU politics through the festival at every level of organisation. Self-organisation underpinning curatorial praxis is shown to be necessary in creating a space for the reflection on topics that affect more than only the festival-makers. These include the erosion of legislature designed to recognise artistic labour as distinct to other kinds of work in Slovenia that affected the independent cultural scene. Deconstructing many characteristics of contemporary dance festivals, defestivalisation drew from an expanded notion of choreography and improvisation to embody questions and processes of mutually co-constructive togetherness. Building upon the example of *PLESkavica* and how curatorial praxis might critique and agitate more hegemonic formations of festivals, notions of co-ownership and collective responsibility, Chapter 5 will pick up the function of the festival to create diverse public spheres and explore more consequences of misrecognition and dissensus.

Chapter 5

Kondenz festival: controversies and the scene

Kondenz ('condensation' in English) festival is an annual festival for contemporary dance since 2008[48]. The editions have had different constellations of programmers/curators, with different partners and artists. Several people regularly reappear, and co-founder Marijana Cvetković works full time at Stanica and on *Kondenz*. *Kondenz* was initiated to present current practices in experimental and critical performances, again in solo, duet and group form, and to share the work of artists from the NDA network and elsewhere with local and guest audiences. As with the other festivals connected to NDA, the festival was created to raise awareness of contemporary dance as an expanded practice, stimulate discussion and reflection, and form a meeting point for peers, artists and audiences.

Kondenz was conceived and produced by Stanica – Servis za savremeni ples (Station - Service for Contemporary Dance in English), founded in 2005 by about forty different artists (Cvetković, 2018) in a process it describes as being a 'bottom-up initiative' (Stanica, 2016), characterised by the appearance of the new opportunities in the early 2000s of project making, fundraising, developing partners and relationships. Stanica is based at the shared work space Magacin ('warehouse' in English), co-founded through the work of the Druga Scena[49]. This Chapter is the third account of festivals connected to NDA tracing the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis to analyse the different editions of Kondenz, though with an emphasis on the 2016 edition, a year with some significant controversies and dissensus for the independent scene.

Dance artists, and those variously related to dance such as producers, theoreticians, and designers drew together to collaborate, fund-raise and found Stanica. Some of them developed their own organisations, some of them had their own theatre and physical theatre companies, some left Serbia, some stayed, some stayed in dance (Cvetoković, 2018). This detail helps to illustrate that it was contemporary dance that drew people together in the early 2000s, but that it is also a field in which people pass through for many different reasons. *Kondenz* is part of

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[48] At the time of writing in 2019 the festival continues.

[49] *Kondenz* festivals have taken place in Magacin, and other venues that have long-standing relationships with Stanica (such as Cinema REX, Bitef Theatre, CKZD/centre for cultural decontamination, and in earlier years, Dom Omladine Youth Cultural Centre and outdoor spaces on the banks of the river Sava).

the work of Stanica to provide conditions for all active parties in the art scenes of Serbia and the Balkans (Stanica, 2016), which includes developing and hosting educational workshops, professional development, production, promotion, advocacy and cultural policy, similar to Lokomotiva. The goals and determination of Stanica to secure and provide 'reasonable and professional working conditions' (Stanica, 2016) appear modest. Stanica's goal that focusses on improving working conditions gestures to the austerity in Serbia that poses fundamental challenges to the practices for artists and independent arts organisations and NGOs, and to which understatement is operationally more effective for sustaining the patience and endurance required. Because this aim has not changed in some years, it signals ongoing dissatisfaction with conditions that are still considered unreasonable.

Stanica's work, as part of the independent cultural scene and connected to the project goals of NDA, attempts to generate and transform artistic practice and production, and to reconfigure the frontiers of solidarity amongst the contemporary art and performance communities in Serbia, the former Yugoslav space, and internationally. Nevertheless, Marijana Cvetković and Ksenija Djurović of Stanica refer to *Kondenz* as a small, local festival, partially because of its budget and duration (2016). This figuration means for them that the festival can remain adaptive and responsive to changes in the immediate context. Djurović (2016) remarked that 'we don't want to become big or institutionalised', and Cvetković stated that '*Kondenz* has never been ambitious, with ambitions to become the best, or the most relevant' (2016). Nevertheless, the festival has emancipatory dimensions, understood through imperceptible politics that address struggles of working conditions and the right of contemporary dance as an expanded practice to simply exist.

Curatorial praxis of *Kondenz* festivals

Kondenz is part of the art histories of the independent cultural scenes in Serbia expanded upon elsewhere, in which festivals are one of the points of reference for the presence of contemporary dance (for example, Vujanović 2010, 2015; Ivić and Koruga 2017). Some festivals were one-offs, like the *ProTools* festival in 2004, initiated by TkH (Walking Theory) (2002-2018), that brought artists Xavier Le Roy, Mårten Spångberg, Mette Ingvarsten, and Tino Sehgal to Serbia for the first time. Per.ART organisation led by Saša Asentić in Novi Sad ran an annual festival of contemporary dance *NOV.ples* in cooperation with the Serbian National Theatre from 2010 to 2013. Others have longer regularity, like the *Festival of*

Choreographic Miniatures (annual since 1997, with a competition format of performances no longer than ten minutes) presented by The Association of Ballet Artists of Serbia (UBUS). The festival *Pokretnica* (Movement) in Novi Sad was amongst the few independent arts organisations in Serbia in the field of contemporary dance that did receive funding from the Ministry of Culture and Information of Serbia for its first edition in 2016.

February 2017, Magacin, Savamala, Belgrade
I flip through the Kondenz festival brochure from 2016, and ask Ksenija to explain to me who gave the funds. She opens up the back page, and we peer at their emblems and icons. She refers to this list as the graveyard, and laughs.

The curatorial praxis of previous editions sheds light on the dynamics of the artistic scene and the fluctuating support for the festivals that is considered with humour in the above image. The first three editions of *Kondenz* were curated by Dalija Aćin, Dragana Alfirević, Ana Vujanović and Marijana Cvetković. In 2008, the format of the selected pieces focused on solo performance. In 2009, the festival addressed dance and multimedia. In 2010, the third edition of the festival presented a younger generation of artists from five countries in the Balkans, corresponding with the three-year programme of nomadic education of NDA. The festivals of 2008-2010 occurred contemporaneously with wider funding changes that took time to more obviously affect artistic and production practice. For example, in *Raster*, a yearbook of the independent performing arts scene in Serbia, artist Bojan Djordjev comments that the number of featured projects and productions in 2010 was the same compared to the 2009 edition, but the funds available were lower, due to the rebalancing of the state budget (2009; 2010).

Production in 2009 and 2010 years was also affected by delays of the Ministry of Culture and Belgrade City Assembly opening the call for proposals for funding. Djordjev notes that the independent scene was simply prepared to operate without the appropriate financial support, but posed the question 'how long and whether at all it should sustain' (2010: 10). To carry on without the subsidy sends the message that the withdrawal of funds is justified, and with a potential effect of the same attitude being taken towards other public subsidy for welfare (Cvetković, 2016). This poses a significant ethical challenge for artists and arts organisations regarding how to continue. As explained in Chapter 3, the 2011 *Kondenz* festival was co-curated between Stanica and Lokomotiva artists in Skopje for the *LocoMotion* festival, and in

collaboration with HybrisKonstproduktion from Stockholm, Sweden[50]. This edition marks a shift in praxis in how the frame of the festival was perceived and interrogated through distributed decision-making and curatorial authority. These editions staged a fruitful meeting place to revitalise the sociality of festivals.

Kondenz in 2012 commented explicitly on artistic migration in the face of diminishing support. The issue of migration affecting contemporary dance scenes in Serbia connects to a longer pattern of migration affecting all aspects of social life. Michal Šrubař and Miloš Fňukal (2010: 21) argue that internal and external migration in the former Yugoslav space 'after 1990 was primarily forced and was in connection with military conflicts and human rights violations on a mass scale'. In addition, external migration was propelled by strong economic motivation. For Serbia specifically, in the 1990s approximately as many as 900,000 people left, in particular younger and more educated ones (Pelikán et al. 2004: 53 in Šrubař and Fňukal, 2010: 23; Sotirović, 2013; Koinova in Abazović and Velikonja, 2014). Šrubař and Fňukal (2010: 34) observe that the migrations deepened the decline of the region, including economic losses, organised crime and authoritarian regimes. They argue that these consequences 'represent a long-term competitive disadvantage for the affected regions' (ibid).

The title was '*Kondenz Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts: Self-organized, Self-financed, Self-supported Edition 2012: Edition Dedicated to Choreographers, Dancers and Cultural Workers from Serbia and the Balkans who are Leaving to Places Where They are More Appreciated: Festival for Gathering, Discussions, Critique, and Exchange*' (Kondenz, 2012). It appears like an epitaph and communicates the issues and struggles facing not only by *Kondenz* but many cultural workers in the Balkan region. The festival invested in gathering together artists who were still in Belgrade and those who were no longer there, to celebrate the scene and affirm the festival as a meeting place[51]. In 2012 there was a reduction of funding for the festival, and it was created with a budget of RSD 300,000 (about €2600 or £2240 in 2012) from the Ministry of Culture and Information. In an interview in the online arts magazine Seecult (2012), choreographer Dušan Murić and Cvetković state that 'solidarity and mutual support, as the basic principles of work and assembly at Stanica, are shown in the work:

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[50] There is at the time of writing no live website archive for this project. See instead Thelander, J (2009).

[51] The discourse on artistic migration away from Serbia includes initiatives by Per.Art, an organisation in Novi Sad, that created an international symposium 'Drain of the Scene' in 2012, and the project "Extended Scene" from 2012-2016, to which Cvetković and Stanica were invited to participate. Per.Art also created a conference in Skopje with Lokomotiva as a partner (Asentić, 2020)

everyone is doing organisational, promotional and creative work at this festival. We want the new works of our authors, produced in Europe or in Serbia (with minimum grants of RSD 100,000 to 300,000) to be promoted, presented to a broader audience and noticed by the local cultural scene which is prone to deleting and amnesia' (Seecult, 2012). Murić and Cvetković argue that the scene itself is unpredictable, and it stands accused of a short-term memory. This inconsistency or tendency is perhaps characteristic of artistic scenes, especially when sustaining working life in contemporary dance more specifically, and art more broadly, can fragment people into individual residencies, education programmes and temporary projects, as well as close friendships and collectives like NDA, Stanica, and TkH, in spite of their efforts to refresh their members. Seecult notes that *Kondenz* contributed to a critical dialogue on numerous topics that it argues are more often remain unsaid or taboo in Serbia, such as violence in public, marginalisation of art, culture and education, a dramatic increase of nationalism, immigration and emigration, patriarchy and corruption (2012), illustrating the ways in which the festivals for contemporary dance as dissensus can also be critical interventions in the public sphere. Nevertheless, Stanica also proposed playful ways to face its situation. In 2012, the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis favoured joy as a way of dispersing fear and frustration:

> What we decided to do was to make a huge loud opening at Magacin with a lot of people, guests who were already there, and with this small performative action of printing the programme on scarves or t-shirts. We prepared some nice textiles for the opening to make the programme, a bit bigger than A4 size. Katarina Popović, our artist designer, and another artist were printing on the spot. And because of the whole collapse of the independent scene's funding that year, we decided to invite a professional mourner, to mourn over culture, its death (Cvetković, 2018)

Professional mourners mostly come from eastern Serbia, where it is more common for funerals to include their performance presence. After some searching Stanica found Vesna Stanković Milekić, an actress at the Yugoslav Drama Theatre in Belgrade, and member of the then Social Democratic Party in the Serbian Parliament, who is also a professional mourner (Trebješanin, 2012). Stanković Milekić negotiated a price and agreed to be there for the opening of the festival.

It was another layer of an MP coming to mourn. It was a Friday and we announced it. And there was such a huge crowd you cannot imagine, all the artists who deal with performance, all the young ones, the old ones, you know these famous ones, came to Magacin. It was nice weather and people could be outside. And one hour before the opening she called to say she was so busy at the Parliament that day, that they have an important thing they have to vote for, so she cannot come…so we announced it, we put up these big papers, 'Parliamentarian Vesna… mourner…cancelled her participation'…there was this fantastic animating activity of making the programmes, the prints, it was very nice, it was another gesture that contributed to the whole thing in a very direct sharp way (Cvetković, 2018)

Cvetković was sceptical of the reason for cancelling, and considered that perhaps Stanković Milekić had experienced a conflict of interests (2018). Though the independent scene was not dead, nor planning on perishing, the cancellation further accentuated the departures and sense of exodus that Stanica in turn used to fuel the festivities and indicate the life of the scene instead. In 2013 *Kondenz* questioned the 'principle of counting' itself: 'how many of us have stayed, how many of us have gone, how many of us are interested in re-questioning, how many dinars are needed...' (Kondenz, 2013). The politics of redistribution engaged by other funding bodies did not go unnoticed. The organisers specifically thanked the cultural policies of other countries and organisations who supported artists and their work, in order to be able to bring several performances to the festival (Kondenz, 2013). Performances in this edition were selected for how they treat the issues and problems of social constitution and communicate conditions of art and culture production, that 'are well known in this environment' (Kondenz, 2013). A sense of struggle is alluded to in the festival description, but not elaborated.

In keeping with the curatorial praxis and dissensus generated by *Kondenz* that critiques observations of cultural production in Belgrade, the 2014 edition came with the title 'Belgrade Dancefront'. This was a perceptible play on words of project Belgrade Waterfront construction, launched in 2014[52]. This put the future of Magacin into question as the construction (and deconstruction) is nearby, however Magacin has had a somewhat unstable status for some years

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[52] This project, between United Arab Emirates and the Government of the Republic of Serbia, is wrought with controversies, not least over the lack of transparency about those plans, unauthorised demolition, and deaths of undocumented workers. The gentrification it typifies increases conditions of scarcity, lack of affordability and uncertain tenancy (Balkanist, 2015; Surk, 2018; Mašina, 2018; Ne da(vi)mo Beograd, 2018).

prior (Dragičević-Šešić in Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski et al., 2018: 56). The festival included temporarily installing a geodesic dome on the banks of the river Sava to be used as a space for workshops and discussions (by Dušan Murić with artist Martin Schick). This edition continued to raise questions about living and working in Belgrade, where the imperceptible politics appears through defiance of the present moment, and the insistence to create spaces for debate in a new distribution of the sensible. The eighth edition of *Kondenz* in 2015 was entitled 'Dance at work'. *Kondenz* posed questions concerning working conditions for artists, and the consequences of their work. The festival invited artists who Stanica recognised as engaging with the politics, discourses, agents, strategies and communication of contemporary dance. The festival budget was €43,000 (£38,000) (Cvetković, 2016).

Working with fluidity of artistic scenes, understood through the effects of artistic mobility and migration away from Serbia, is seen most clearly in the curatorial praxis of the 2016 edition. Much like the previous examples of *LocoMotion* and *PLESkavica*, the figuration of the festival needs to be understood as a collective pursuit, and not the vision of one artistic director. The ninth edition of *Kondenz* festival in 2016 was conceived of by Marijana Cvetković, Dalija Aćin Thelander, Marko Milić, Igor Koruga, Ana Dubljević, Dragana Bulut, Jovana Rakić, Dušan Murić and Mirjana Dragosavljević. Executive production was by Ksenija Djurović and Mirjana Dragosavljević. Part-time public relations work was carried out by Tatjana Nikolić, and graphic design by Katarina Popović. This was the team creating and producing *Kondenz*. Earlier in 2016, Ana Dubljević wrote a text 'without thinking about it much' (Koruga, 2018). The group liked it and discussion followed as to how best it could be used. It became the statement of the festival in the printed and online programme. It was suggested that this text be read aloud in advance of the performances in Serbian and in English. I volunteered to do this, and was the English speaker for several rounds of this reading. This action happened for the majority of the performances in the festival. At times, it could not be coordinated in the flow of overseeing an evening, and during the latter part of the festival, by which point it had already happened several times, it was deemed sufficiently voiced to be repeated again to largely the same audience members (Koruga, 2018).

> For any kind, variety or a side-track of dance which reflects. For any choreography of physical or mental bodies which re-questions. For theory which feels. For research, experiments, risk. For an audience which takes part in art. For political art. For art which is not only a product. For collective practices and organisational principles. For the

artist-citizen. For transparent procedures. For continuity of work. For a united and visible dance scene. For new generations. For the next *Kondenz*. (Kondenz, 2016)

The shorter tag-line of the festival was

Give me a pickle, I'll make you a cookie. (Kondenz, 2016)

These texts allude to many issues, problems and hopes of the local independent artistic scene. For example, why stress transparency? Because lack of transparency must be a concern. Audiences are addressed as taking part in art, not consuming it, and art is understood not only as a product, which implies that the commodification of contemporary dance must be being perceived as problematic. The longer statement affirms values and beliefs that indicate to an audience member what needs to be taken care of and what the festival affirms. The shorter statement is a humorous assertion of the ways in which Stanica might remake its circumstances into something sweeter. During the process of creating the festival, Koruga stated that in the first months it was difficult to balance previous plans and agreements already made for *Kondenz* prior to the new work configuration (2018), that will be explained in the next section. Before the structural change to Stanica, some plans and projects had already been invited, and arrangements had been made with other organisations in Europe to bring certain artists, illustrating how festival curation interconnects with networks. Working in this configuration brought new ideas which took time to narrow down, partially because of the concepts of the performance works themselves, which works had already been arranged, and which were being planned. Using the NDA principle of balance, the rule of least three people for meetings, and plenty of discussion of which principles to use to set criteria, the programme could only be finalised after the announcement of the budget and results of the Ministry of Culture and Information, and the City of Belgrade funding calls.

Co-curation and trust

The collaborative method of making *Kondenz* shows the long-term effects of the earlier NDA nomadic education project, as well as the NDA principles in action. Five years earlier, in 2011, several artists had left Belgrade to pursue education and work elsewhere, including Ana Dubljević (NDA participant 2008), Igor Koruga (NDA participant 2009), Jovana Rakić (NDA participant 2010), and Marko Milić. Koruga noted that since then, as there were fewer people around, Cvetković had been in charge of Stanica, artistically as well as administratively, and

was coordinating *Kondenz* 'more or less on her own' (Koruga, 2018). Several people connected to Stanica had returned to Serbia in 2015 and 2016, including Koruga. He approached Stanica co-founder Dalija Aćin Thelander (who contributes to Stanica from Sweden) and Cvetković to propose changing the structure of working, which was by that point was perceived as more hierarchical (with an office of three employees and some temporary ones) by Koruga (2018). The intention was to decide the programming, not only of *Kondenz* but of all of Stanica's activities, on a collective basis that would include more voices and artists. This led to regular meetings, and Stanica's transition period began in January 2016 of the new work structure with a different model of planning and working than in previous years.

From March 2016 to March 2017, Cvetković, Koruga, and Djurović became a core body responsible for making decisions together within Stanica, as they were constantly living in Belgrade and could be present for each meeting. They worked with a structure that two additional artists would be brought in for larger artistic direction/decisions. With the three as a base, the other two artists could be in different configurations: e.g. Marko and Ana, Dalija and Marko. This flexible working structure enabled different topics to be addressed in different configurations. It shows how the relationships comprising Stanica were shaped through an artist-led framework. This detail is an example of how the bottom-up, self-organised mode of working in Stanica carries out the NDA principles of balance and invitation. It illustrates the long-term effects of result of the Nomad education programmes where participants like Koruga were encultured into being co-creators of the means of support for their work and the work of others. The imperceptible politics in curatorial praxis is in the willingness to remake systems of action. As the curatorial statements of earlier editions of *Kondenz* announce, migration is a major concern for Stanica. A form of escape from this situation without abandoning all that is trusted and invested in is sometimes through humour, seen in the curatorial praxis of inviting a professional mourner in 2012, and the embodied experience of further accommodating her non-appearance. It is also through willingness to adapt but not lose the commitment to contemporary dance as an expanded practice that can politicise the present moment.

What was at stake for Stanica and its artists was maintaining a space to reaffirm contemporary dance as a social, critical practice, with some recognition from state cultural instruments. This refers to the point made in Chapter 2 about art as a public good discussed in relation to NDA's perspectives on how contemporary dance artists and cultural workers take the position of the specific intellectual. Professional practice for Stanica includes attempting to transform

conditions for more than only a few artists, but also addresses the longevity of independent scenes. Stanica has been invested in elaborating and contesting what contemporary dance and performance can be for audiences. Translation matters in this sense, as 'dance' in Serbian is both *igra* and *ples*. *Igra* has another definition of 'game'. The *Belgrade Dance Festival* (BDF) uses *igra* (*Beogradski Festival Igra*) and *Kondenz* uses *ples* (*Kondenz festival of contemporary dance and performance / festival savremenog plesa*). Cvetković notes that there is confusion amongst audiences as to what is attributable to 'contemporary dance', partly because of which word is used, and what is associated with the artists' works presented in festivals (Cvetković, 2016). BDF includes different dance styles, ranging from ballet and neoclassical to some contemporary choreographers, with an emphasis on presenting large, virtuosic companies whose status has already been conferred elsewhere. It also claims that its audiences have grown because they discovered contemporary dance 'of the highest level' (Belgrade Dance Festival, 2017). Confusion about contemporary dance partially relates to the how and where discourses in dance are generated and accepted. The differences between *Kondenz* and BDF help define what each festival affirms and supports. Stanica's frustration with the BDF is not with the programming of different choreographic works, but with the way in which BDF articulates contemporary dance that does not acknowledge a wide multiplicity. This gives keener purpose to the programming of different artists in *Kondenz*. For many years BDF did not present any local or Serbian artists' works, and quite vaguely, considers itself as addressing the world (Lijeskić, 2016). Stanica's commitment to local artists with whom it has a long relationship is seen in their regular appearance in *Kondenz* festival. *Kondenz* festival tickets are free or relatively low in price, whilst BDF charges high ticket prices. The differences between the festivals illustrate a dynamic of artistic contestation, but also of methods of support for contemporary dance and artistic and audience development.

Kondenz can be seen as a protective space that affirms a right for varied conceptualisations of dance to be present, and the right of local artists' works to be visible alongside guests in a way that makes the festival a showcase in a similar way to BDF. But the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis of *Kondenz* trusts in art as something that can be unrepresentable, rather than mirror existing conditions in which communication about something is conflated with a premise of selling it as a product or experience (McLuhan, 1964: 231). Tatjana Nikolić explained that long-term planning can mean that a festival might be marketed more steadily over a longer period of time to potentially increase audiences (2016). The short-term notice of the public funding system in Serbia frustrated Nikolić, as she was not able to do her job in the

way that she wanted, which is connected a version of professionalism that values strategic marketing of something representable in the busy art market of Belgrade. Nikolić's frustration was also exacerbated by not knowing many details of some of the performances in the *Kondenz* festival 2016, like a première by choreographer Dušan Murić (2016), in order to be able to communicate more clearly to prospective audiences. This was not a majority case for all the performances in the festival, nevertheless, it raises an important point about possible representations and the communicability of contemporary dance, or what Vujanović might refer to as 'the ethics before aesthetics' in art (2015: 13).

Members of Stanica trust the artists it works with and invites, sometimes not seeing their choreographies in advance, but from Nikolić's perspective this is risky for attracting audiences who want to know more about a performance (2016). But from another perspective, some ambiguity and unpredictability is desirable (Cvetković, 2016; 2018). This an example of the empty space principle in application, and the imperceptible politics of trusting that which is absent, nor seeking any form of evidence beyond the action of the trust itself. Stanica does not want *Kondenz* to enter into a festival industry context that it understands as ultimately squashing or limiting creativity by prioritising market success (Cvetković, 2016)[53], and this example of differences of opinion between peers concerning the communicability and representation of contemporary dance as an expanded practice refers to a broader debate on the experience and consumption of art that is beyond the scope of this Chapter to pursue. From the perspective of NDA, the Druga Scena and Stanica, dissensus in and through art is constitutive of democratic practice, meaning co-existing artistic differences are not a threat, but a necessary facet of artistic practice and social life. However, the curatorial praxis of *Kondenz* refers also to the sense of struggle against pressures that police what art might be and who gains support to make it. Those pressures include the unclear reasons why the Ministry of Culture does not keep to a schedule to announce open calls, and more urgent for the independent scene, why funds are diverted away from local choreographers.[54]

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[53] There is a counter argument to this in the example Robert Lepage and his theatre company Ex Machina using international festivals for creative development (Fricker, 2003). However, artistic touring produces increased pressure on the budgets of the company, as well as the festival host, limiting the time available to participate further in a festival. An example of a dance festival that attempts to not participate in the circulation of sameness and cultivate time for exchange between participants and artists is the festival *Aerowaves* (founded in London, 1996, and by the 2010s takes place in different European cities annually).

[54] In Serbia, 'cultural policy was for a long time an activity of narrow circles of public sector cultural administrators, under the patronage of the Minister of Culture who promoted the ideology of the political party s/he represented' according to Dragićević Šešić and Drezgić (in Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski et al., 2018:

The Ministry, the panel, the outcomes

Many arts organisations experience periods of not knowing what their budget and options might be, but in Serbia, not-knowing is a regular condition, leading instead to plenty of improvisation and last-minute quick movement when there is an answer[55]. The necessity in these moments is maintaining relationships with others who will understand the familiar conditions in which to be able to manoeuvre. Making a tentative argument that these modes of working appear to be more normal, or at least familiar in Serbia does not mean to characterise this quick movement and cooperative action as a shared skill of all 'Balkan peoples and artists'. Rather, it is a facet of independent scenes in and beyond Serbia where cooperation is an accepted precondition of artistic practice and survival in time-based arts, and speculative planning a condition of freelance work. But uncertainty is exacerbated by dysfunctional institutional practices specific to Serbia, experienced over several years. Unlike an ongoing open system of application (seen for example in organisations such as the Arts Council of England) the open call for art project funding, also referred to as 'the competition' by the Ministry of Culture opens and closes on specific dates each year. It should have opened in October 2015, but did not open until February 2016. The three-month waiting-period until the results of the call in May 2016 left only five months for Stanica to be able to consolidate plans for *Kondenz* festival in October, based upon knowing what budget would be available to confirm artists, book travel, secure venues, promote the festival, conceptualise, design and write the programme, and other elements. It is possible the Ministry was also delayed in knowing or deciding about the allocation and quantity of funds, though no concrete reason or apology for the delay was supplied, nor was there any indication of when to expect the call to open after the October deadline had passed. This situation for artists and NGOs is considered very familiar (Ječmenica, 2016; Kalafatić, 2017), and one that reinforces why invitation of artists is more tenable as a time-saving method than an open call.

Notwithstanding the disrespectful approach to artists' and NGOs' planning, there are other

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44). This arrangement shows a much too close a relation between party politics and cultural policy, narrowing the possibilities of which publics might be eligible for support to make art with public subsidy.

[55] This echoes findings by Čarna Brković on how individuals deploy informal strategies to access health care in BiH (2017a), with arguments of how ambiguity is managed.

problems with the open call set by the Ministry of Culture. It is structured in such a way as to pitch individual artists against NGOs and other kinds of organisations for the same fund, rather differentiating systematically along criteria that takes into account scale of operation and budgets. The delay in calls for projects also compromises application for EC projects that operate over longer durations with larger budgets, which makes it difficult for Stanica to access extra funding for the festival that require guaranteed matched amounts (Cvetković, 2017)[56]. The open call structure and coordination under these circumstances produce compromised or unworkable conditions for long-term planning, international cooperation and co-financing. This is partly why the NDA project aim to professionalise the field remains a process, and what Stanica means with seeking reasonable working conditions. It would involve creating predictable mechanisms for the distribution of funds, plus recognition of and respect for the work of NGOs and independent artists.

The announcement of the budget on the tenth of May 2016 revealed a significant drop in funds available for *Kondenz* from the Ministry of Culture and Information. The festival budget for 2016 was €11,000 (£9460). This included €8445 from the Ministry of Culture, €3378 from the City of Belgrade, plus €1000 from the Embassy of Sweden for the participation of the artists coming from there, and some other smaller grants, for example like some funds from the *Life Long Burning* programme (LifeLongBurning, 2013) used to contribute to the *Critical Practice* research group that took place in the frame of the festival. Overall, the festival budget was less than half than it was in 2015 (Cvetković, 2016). There were many problems with the procedures made by the panel in 2016. For example, there should be five panel members not three, and it was not appropriate for the assessment of the applications that none had any particular expertise in the area of contemporary dance (Cvetković, 2016; Koruga, 2016a). But most contentious was that each panel member, Ivanka Lukateli, Vlada Dekić and Ana Martinoli, had some affiliation to Aja Jung, the artistic director of BDF and the educational institution she founded (National Foundation for Artistic Dance), presenting a high level of conflict of interests. Whilst

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[56] Cvetković (2012: 17) stated that the European Cultural Programme projects are important instruments that support Serbia's EU integration process, as well as for international cooperation and production of contemporary art, but she observes that the Ministry does not promote them as its own scheme, and they are considered a burden for the budget and administration required. Regional politicians are incapable or willing to undertake serious reforms towards building economic and especially social models compatible with others elsewhere that ensure sustainable economic development, and progress in human rights. With few exceptions, they still generate nationalism, which gives them ideological control over their idealised, homogenised ethnic communities. Cvetković argues that they have no systematic ideas about the development of societies with efficient mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of internal conflicts without violence (see also Bešlin and Milošević, in Biserko, 2017: 552-553).

panels often face knowing the artists who apply (Založnik, 2017), the ways in which this is approached and made transparent and accountable matters for the decisions taken. The panel that year gave 63% of the total budget for dance to the BDF (RSD 12,000,000, £90,225, €101,990). Jung is also a member of the Board of Folk Dance and Song Contest of Serbia (or known as 'Kolo') led by Dekić that was given RSD 500,000 (£3758, €4252) for a contemporary dance performance. This performance was to be co-produced by the National Foundation for Artistic Dance (run by Jung, in which Lukateli works as a ballet teacher), and by the Hartefakt Foundation, of which is Martinoli is a member. Koruga (2016a) notes that the Commission's report states that Dekić was excluded from considering the projects of the National Foundation for Dance, which though legal on paper, left space for the other two members and close associates of the Foundation and the BDF to redistribute resources in the interest of these organisations. No other actions were taken to make explicit or share the criteria used to make these decisions.

None of the local choreographers who applied received funds for their productions that year. 'Local choreographers' refers to Igor Koruga, Marko Milić (both based in Belgrade), Dušan Murić (based in Zemun), Jovana Rakić (Novi Sad), Ana Dubljević (based in Berlin) and Dragana Bulut (also in Germany). Local could mean associated with Serbia, rather than necessarily a resident or passport holder. Certainly, applying to the Ministry of Culture requires fluent use of Serbian and writing in Cyrillic. But the decision to refer to 'local' or *domaći* in the original translation of texts by Stanica recalls a different sense of belonging. *Domaći* is not a label of nationality, but translates variously to mean domestic, of the home, of the city, of the place you are in at that time, of the country, of the Balkans, of the former Yugoslav space. The use of local eschews a politics of identity as something singular or only connected to a nation state, without denying a sense of belonging to a place and a space. *Domaći*, considered alongside the fluid identities of artists and their working lives in contemporary dance, captures how belonging happens in multiple locations and temporalities.

The terms on which *Kondenz* 2016 was curated in solidarity with guest and local artists, and audiences, affirmed the space of a festival for contemporary dance as an expanded practice, further illuminated through a debate in the public sphere. On the 15 June 2016, ballet teacher and panel member Ivanka Lukateli wrote an opinion piece in the *Politika* newspaper. It was a response to the 20th edition of the *Festival of Choreographic Miniatures*, founded during SFRY. Amongst other arguments, Lukateli disliked the aesthetics of some of the

choreographies including those presented by Koruga (2016a) and Murić (2016). Differing opinions show dynamic contestation of artistic communication and creation in the public sphere. In this instance, it also showed a strategic use of a public sphere to justify a position that would be less inflammatory had Lukateli not been one of the three people on the panel of the Ministry of Culture responsible for disseminating public funds for dance that year. Using a mainstream media instrument to denigrate contemporary dance as an expanded practice, and the artists who stand for it, could be interpreted as an attempt to justify the panel's decision to not support art it did not appreciate. This is an example of the struggles of the right for difference to be visible, reminding cultural workers that the financing of art is a form of pre-curation of festivals and the public sphere. The imperceptible politics of the curatorial praxis of *Kondenz* addressed these issues.

The article in *Politika*, alongside the results of the call for applications to the Ministry of Culture, sent a deeply troubling message to local artists, and to Serbian artists connected to the independent scene living elsewhere. That the majority of public funds could be given to the BDF that is already in receipt of funds from corporate partners, plus the support of the EU Delegation and other embassies (Belgrade Dance Festival, 2017) indicated that the Ministry was in favour of those arts organisations and festivals already in public-private partnerships. This infers that contemporary dance is only worthy of support and celebration if it participates more explicitly in financial capital, and trades in meritocratic notions of 'excellence', rather than considering artistic practice and development as more nuanced. The struggles addressed in the curatorial statement for a 'united and visible scene' relate to this debate in which there is more at stake for the infrastructure for contemporary dance and the future of independent dance artists in Serbia than one edition of a festival. However, *Kondenz* nevertheless was an important point of communication and contestation of these controversies.

Responses to Lukateli by UBUS and the independent dance scene involved actions of publication to intervene in the public sphere. Firstly, there were coordinated efforts to respond and contest the decision through an open letter sent to Ministry of Culture, made visible through different social media and online publications. It had signatures from the independent arts scenes of Serbia requesting the decision be annulled and the process of adjudication to be repeated (Kondenz, 2016). A response from UBUS was published in *Politika* on the 23 June 2016. UBUS also published another open letter through the 2016 *Kondenz* festival blog. Koruga submitted a response to *Politika* that was not published, owing to reasons of its length

and because Lukateli's text was not an article but an opinion piece, so would not face redactions (Koruga, 2016b). Koruga's response, and a response by Murić, were made available to read on the 2016 *Kondenz* festival blog (in Serbian)[57]. By contrast, Aja Jung states that she understands her critics, though considers the local scene to be spiteful (Lijeskić, 2016).

In addition to publishing responses, and the festival as a point of solidarity and agonistic ethics with shared struggles of the scene, a third action was prosecution. In an effort to create reasonable working conditions for contemporary dance artist, in June 2016, Stanica and Marijana Cvetoković, together with the Belgrade Section of the International Council for dance CID-UNESCO (International Dance Council - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) (represented by Ivana Milovanović Ex Kacunković), the Perpetuum Movement Art Centre (Svetlana Djurović), ERGstatus (Boris Čakširan), and the Association of Professional Ballet artists, Choreographers and Ballet Pedagogues of Serbia (UBUS) (Aleksandar Saša Ilić) self-organised to file a law suit against the Ministry of Culture and Information. The lawsuit was supported also by Novi Sad Section of CID–UNESCO (Aleksandra Ketig) and personally by all the contemporary dance artists of the independent dance scene, self-declared as part of civil society in Serbia (Stanica, 2019; Seecult, 2019). The results of the lawsuit appeared after the time-frame of this research and it is beyond the scope to be able to address more fully its meaningfulness to independent artistic scenes regionally and the risks to Stanica locally[58]. Nevertheless, the direct intervention (or 'policing') of state

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[57] Koruga's address to Lukateli presents an update of dance history that includes contemporary dance multiplicities, demonstrating the incompatibility of the appraisal she made between different dance forms (Kondenz, 2016a). It is futile, Koruga argues, to approach contemporary dance through the same tools that underpin the values of ballet. Koruga laments that three generations of contemporary dance artists in Serbia are rendered invisible in an assessment strategy of dance that identifies only the firmly instituted forms as having the right to exist, such as ballet and modern dance. Koruga raises the point that contemporary dance activities are not understood as being part of, or representative of, contemporary Serbian culture, though are well-respected outside of Serbia. In his response, Murić identifies his artistic practice as clearly distinct to modern dance and ballet. Murić acknowledges the work of all of Stanica's artists, and is deeply unhappy about their negation (2016). He closes by inviting Lukateli to *Kondenz* festival that autumn. I asked Cvetković if she invited Jung that year. She did not, and neither Lukateli nor Jung attended (2016a). Jung did not respond to my requests sent by email to meet for interview.

[58] In 2018, Stanica received no funds from the Ministry of Culture for any other project other than Kondenz. It received again the minimum possible amount from the Ministry (the same as in 2017, RSD 500,000/€4500). This gesture duly notes Stanica's ongoing commitment to contemporary dance and that there are very few contemporary dance festivals in Serbia, but refuses to grant Stanica and its artists any additional possibility that a larger budget might facilitate. Stanica also received the minimum amount for co-financing projects together with other partners. With the EC requiring arts organisations to pre-finance projects (that is, only receive funds after the project is successfully completed), Stanica faced an immense challenge to be able to complete two 4 and 5-year EU projects. The court case was received by the

instruments to change policy and to hold the state that represents them accountable for its actions is a significant example of what collective responsibility for and solidarity in the field of contemporary dance can look like. It is perceptible politics that demanded fair processes in accesses to public funds, and maintains the belief in the right of artists labour to be recognised, and that the Ministry should support public culture, rather than, for example, expecting international funding to fulfil that role. It fights for the notion of festival to not have to operate primarily as a business in order to be valuable (Lijeskić, 2016). Dissensual subjectivity of the people involved reflected disparities in the context of Serbia to itself, and helps to make sense of the hope in the 2016 festival statement 'For the next *Kondenz'*.

The imperceptible politics of *Kondenz* and 'the scene'

The curatorial praxis of *Kondenz* opened questions that include how artistic development is nurtured in increasing mobility and migration in Serbia, and amidst cultural policies that marginalise or ignore contemporary dance artists. Imperceptible politics is found through humour in curatorial praxis that the scene could recognise, revealing the life of the scene and its concerns. The scene, as distinct to other modes of social organisation (like 'sector' or 'community' for example) is frequently referred to by Stanica. The figuration of 'scene' means association, in which belonging and responsibility can be built and discarded as needed, following sociologist Michaela Pfadenhauer (2005), affined with the fluidity and temporary nature of self-organisation. In this sense festivals exemplify the vitality of a scene and its visibility, a regular occurrence where the scene is seen, and in some way reflected back to itself. *Kondenz* contributes though a curatorial praxis characterised by resistance to the

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Administrative court in 2016, then nothing was heard until February 2019 when Stanica received the news that the Administrative Court of Serbia accepted the accusation against the Ministry of Culture and Information. The judgment stated that the explanation of the competition results for the funding did not contain any content about any of the applications that were received, nor the criteria on which decisions had been established, nor any evidence of the reasons for the rejection of the applications. The Administrative Court stated that there was no clear legal basis and reasons for the decisions that were made, which constituted a violation of the procedure. As a consequence, the decision for the outcome of applications for funding for dance in 2016 was officially annulled (Seecult, 2019). Such a procedural victory was valuable to those in the independent dance scene for the hope they have that similar irregularities and lack of transparency by the Ministry of Culture and Information would be prevented in the future. It cautiously shows some potential for Serbia's rule of law to be able to be successfully regulated and contested by its citizens. At the time of writing in 2019, change in favour of the scene remains slow or even impossible. Cvetković notes that the results for funding calls are still dominated by Aja Jung's Belgrade Dance Festival, and there is still no professional representative for contemporary dance installed at the Ministry of Culture and Information (2019).

narrowing of discourse on contemporary performance, and responsibility for the scene's shared histories and any future continuity. Writing on the grammar of scenes sociologist Alan Blum poses a question pertinent for the independent cultural scene of which Stanica is a part:

> Perhaps the strength of the scene is directly related to the danger of exposure which is commensurate with it in a way that makes any scene an occasion when the right to be there might be called into question. Does the challenge of the scene not make reference to the risk released by this prospect of exposure, a prospect that animates the scene and intensifies its liveliness as the occasion it is? (Blum, 2001: 17)

The scene as an analytic for illuminating curatorial praxis helps to show how *Kondenz* participates in animated discourse on the right of the local artists, and an expanded view of contemporary dance, to be legitimate expressions, not simply marginal practices only defined through their opposition to what kind of dance and festivals are supported by state cultural policy. Blum's thoughts illuminate a tension in the goals of NDA members to professionalise contemporary dance and be accessible, whilst at the same time, use festivals (and other projects) to intervene in the existing systems that determine the conditions for the independent scene, and thus for an expanded notion of contemporary dance. The strength of the independent scene in Serbia is palpable in the action of the lawsuit and response to Lukateli. The festival functions for, on behalf of, and because of the commitment to a scene, characterised by impermanence and mobility, and held together by relationships between people. However, perceptions about the scene from its insiders and observers raise questions about its ambiguity and transience.

Stanica assembles and reassembles the scene. It understands its work as being part of and on behalf of the local independent scene in Belgrade, though it does have many partners and friends across Europe, the USA and Brazil, demonstrating the ongoing ways of balancing working life when artistic scenes are considered transnationally, not simply as European or Balkan. In 2016 when Cvetković addressed the *Critical Practice* group of artists, writers and curators, some of whom were familiar with the conditions and concerns of the former Yugoslav space, her mentions of 'the scene' produced a sense of continuity and affirmation by referring to it frequently, without qualification or extra description. How festivals related to the scene through curatorial praxis is partly clarified through the constellation of people involved in co-creating *Kondenz.* But in spite of the dimensions of belonging and responsibility through shared

values (and not necessarily aesthetics), the following comments illustrate some of paradoxes of the 'independent scene' in Belgrade, taken from conversations with artists and cultural workers who preferred to be anonymous. 'There isn't really a scene here in Belgrade. There was in around 2006 when more people were around, but now?' (2017). In this sense, the migration of people away from Belgrade is a crucial dimension to the figuration of a diminishing scene for this speaker. Similar to stressing the past tense, Murić commented that 'we [Stanica] missed the moment to really do something' (2018). Murić reflected that some decisions were not made, and too many aspects were left open, that consolidating institutionally could have happened or should have happened, and now others in the dance communities and scenes in Belgrade take the lead in education, or have more visibility (2018). An anonymous artist no longer based in Belgrade indicates their position: 'Why stay and fight a losing battle?' (2018). Another points out their reasons for leaving: 'It's too exhausting always fighting against something' (2016). Another states that 'the scene is too intellectual' (2017). These reflections on 'the scene' communicate how some artists and cultural workers might choose to no longer feel like exiles in their own context by simply leaving the place, but not necessarily break all ties with the scene as a space or shared imaginary in spite of their issues with 'it'.

The tension for curatorial praxis and festival-making is working with these changing configurations of artists, collaborators and audiences. Making the festivals through self-organised collective practices shows co-curation to be a significant redistribution of agency, as with *PLESkavica* and *LocoMotion*. Three ramifications can be observed. Firstly, artistic migration and mobility was announced and problematised through curatorial praxis in earlier festivals, then in 2016 affected a new working configuration for Stanica, in a distribution of the sensible, proposed by Koruga. The different configuration of artists could advance and refresh knowledge and skills for the organisation. As much as migration shifts configurations and any regularity of artistic scenes, it is also an advantage to curatorial praxis if it includes some circulation of artists, returning to Serbia. The example of *Kondenz* 2016 identifies the long-term effects of the NDA project (between 2008-2010), and the potential to re-make each other as agents of belonging, sharing responsibility for contemporary dance as an expanded, critical practice.

Second, the attempt to redistribute decision-making in curatorial praxis comments upon and critiques differences in power in the field of contemporary dance festivals more broadly, shifting agency within the scene. Whilst co-curating partly reflects the lack of funds to

substantially pay one person to curate (Založnik, 2018), it is more than simply a pragmatic choice. In the examples of *Kondenz* over different editions, making festivals appears to be a process of discovery, characterised by a sense of heurism, and shows artist-led festivals to be a nourishing practice of and for the NDA project. The comments about the diminishing sense of the scene however help to attest that frameworks to institute contemporary dance might provide more stable conditions, not only for contemporary dance but for working life. But this and the previous Chapters have highlighted the NDA partners' capacity to shape conditions face challenges often beyond their control, which makes Stanica and the others' pursuit of a court case against the Ministry of Culture and Information of Serbia exceptional.

A third point about the relations of the festival to the scene is that whilst inviting guests, the approach to making *Kondenz* shows solidarity particularly with local artists. Both Stanica and local artists are vulnerable to the Ministry of Culture's protocols and mismanagement that threaten the spaces for contemporary performing practices. In a sense, NDA members pose a kind of existential threat to the nationalist, conservative perspective that considers contemporary dance as an expanded practice to be not representative of the its values and forms of representation, whilst also competing for material resources to reproduce itself. But in Serbia, this is further complicated by both the Ministry of Culture and the EU Delegation's support for the BDF, meaning contemporary dance is in some way recognised as valuable, but only produced in a certain way. The indifference towards local choreographers and NGOs illustrated through the dysfunctional administration of the Ministry of Culture explained in this Chapter and experienced by Stanica means curatorial praxis is one of the modes of escape to find other ways of operating. The endurance and strength of the scene forces this dysfunctional form of control to transform itself. The long-form activism of Stanica, as connected to the aims of the Druga Scena and to NDA, becomes apparent though this court case to show the vigilance and patience required to reconfigure state structures, not just for those making the claim but for future artists applying to the Ministry. It is in this sense the diffraction of imperceptible politics, concerning what Donna Haraway refers to as the 'effects of connection, of embodiment, and of responsibility for an imagined elsewhere that we may yet learn to see and build here' (1992: 295). This recalls the midnight conversation at the start of this thesis and the surprise as a result of connection.

Chapter summary

This Chapter has explored the curatorial praxis of the *Kondenz* festivals by looking to the

imperceptible politics arising from artistic mobility and migration, the grammar of the 'scene', and the collective practices of self-organisation. Remaking systems of organisation and co-curation show the effects of Stanica's flexibility in adapting to artists' interests and needs. The *Kondenz* festival served artistic development of local and guest artists, and is a meeting point for the continuity of the scene to see itself. The regularity and insistence of the festival for the independent scene contrasts with others' perception of it, indicating that scenes risk vanishing if too fluid, and require rebuilding relations to endure and continually create conditions for contemporary dance as an expanded practice. Differences of opinion about how it should be instituted, circulated and promoted expose the dynamics of different artists and cultural workers in the same city. The festival announced problems concerning Stanica and the scene, and found humour in facing the changes and lack of changes since 2008. Stanica and others believed in reforming national cultural policy and the procedures of the Ministry of Culture, and contested these directly through the court case created in 2016. This collective responsibility is a rare example of policing rather than simply politicising prevailing issues. It shows the motivation to act on behalf of more than only individual interests to strengthen the systems that might recognise differences and redistribute public funds more transparently and equitably for the benefit of more artists and NGOs in the future and consequently, audiences. Djurović proclaimed 'nothing about us without us' (2019), meaning some values of SFRY, or the moral community mentioned in Chapter 2 in which citizens were ostensible equal co-owners of the state and of the means of production, have not been extinguished.

As with the previous two Chapters, dissensus operates across several areas of cultural production, exposed through curatorial praxis as a form of escape. Stanica's willingness to reconfigure its structure of organisation affected the scope for co-curation, continuing the responsivity and responsibility underpinning its founding values. The insistence on supporting the local artistic scene and choreographers who did not receive funding in 2016 was a way to communicate solidarity with those artists dis-included by the funding distribution system operating with opaque decision-making processes. The distribution of sensible that conceptualises contemporary dance as international, typified in the programming of the Belgrade Dance Festival, is found in the curation of *Kondenz* to be more nuanced. Invitation of local and international artists situates the festivals as simultaneously connected near and far, rather than favouring only ever foreign guests, like the BDF.

Divisions in what could be considered to be held in common between different artists, cultural

workers and festival-makers, that is, an appreciation and respect for dance art, is exposed through the festivals and examples of curatorial praxis to be interwoven with state capture that profoundly affects cultural production in Serbia. Politics, as argued by Rancière is formulated as what it might be, rather than what it is. This figuration is mirrored in the discourses on the expanded notion of contemporary dance. Policing its boundaries through making access to support and funding difficult if not impossible provokes further questions beyond the scope of this research about the relationships between beliefs in specific ontologies of dance and the exertions made to preserve, or police them, and how the power to do so is perpetuated. The example of the artistic scene opposing the Ministry of Culture shows that powerful positions, such as the privileged and exclusive committee of 2016, can be challenged.

Stanica strives for an expanded notion of contemporary dance through practices of radical equality. Though as the debates of the definitions of dance and its modes of production and curation indicate, caution is paramount before assuming all explorations of contemporary dance are necessarily pursing radical democratic politics. The politicality of the *Kondenz* festivals is exposed by the method of exploring the distribution of the sensible in its two-fold formation of that which is available to be perceived and held in common, and its disruption. Stanica explores and subverts other ways of producing and doing contemporary dance by sharing curatorial authority, agency and responsibility. These agonistic ethics produce dynamics tensions in the appearance and reconfigurations of the scene. The festivals forward the arguments for public culture as held in common amongst citizens, with the creation of spaces for representation, recognition, redistribution, non-representational practices, and imagination about what contemporary dance can be. The encounter with and through contemporary dance facilitated by festivals serves not simply as a metaphor for enlivening political imagination, but as a democratic practice of debate through dissensus and for dissensus.

These three Chapters have drawn upon Lokomotiva, NDA Slovenia and Stanica to trace the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis in the *Kondenz*, *LocoMotion* and *PLESkavica* festivals, and the NDA principles in action. The next Chapter reflects upon the shifting presence and influence of the international community in the context of the former Yugoslav space as a major supporter of contemporary dance as expanded practice and therefore part of cultural stewardship. The previous Chapters expressed the ways curatorial praxis both responds and critiques changes in conditions, meaning the imperceptible politics of festival curation, as

a form of escape, can be understood in relationship to some of the tensions between increasing demands of EC funding policy as a kind of pre-curation alongside unchanging national cultural policies. The categorisation of arts festivals, implicated in a nexus of motivations and interests, could reflect questions of their construction and principles, rather than their size or age. The following Chapter will also forward a typology of festival, the heuristic artist-led festival, in light of *LocoMotion*, *PLESkavica* and *Kondenz* that reflects upon the artistic and civic dimensions of curatorial praxis, and the function of discovery, typical of the empty space principle.

Chapter 6

International development and contemporary dance festivals

The NDA project described itself as being formed through bottom-up processes (Alfirević et al., 2011: 27) traced in Chapter 2. But the project was not alone in its intentions and aims. NDA gained the support from international community bodies that further shaped conditions for contemporary dance as an expanded practice. This Chapter returns to relationships between cultural production in the former Yugoslav space and international development affecting curatorial praxis. The focus and motivations of the international community more broadly changed as the Yugoslav wars gradually receded into the distance and newer conflicts, wars, environmental and political challenges emerged and drew attention (Gordy, 2005: 17-18). The previous Chapters have argued that reconfigurations of international development support alongside the lack of accommodation for contemporary dance in the former Yugoslav space by national cultural policies meant the functions of the *LocoMotion*, *PLESkavica* and *Kondenz* festival can be understood as critical commentator upon these circumstances as well as alternative models of cultural production, mediating these changes.

The festivals are perceived and analysed in this thesis as mediating between forms of support, and between the changes to the respective support structures over the 2000s and 2010s. International development includes not only project funding but also particular value systems in which expectations and attitudes towards contemporary dance and festivals become entailed in the goals of the international community that in turn to an extent shape the independent, or interdependent, artistic scenes. I argue that navigating and learning from the terms of the new support for contemporary dance in the early 2000s affected curatorial praxis in the subsequent years of producing festivals. Forms of escape, understood through the emergence and effects of imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis, from different aspects of working life in Serbia, Slovenia and North Macedonia between 2007-2017 demonstrate some ambivalence concerning the presence of international development itself. This Chapter first traces the contours of support for contemporary dance in particular coming from the Swiss Cultural Programme with a thirteen-year programme in the former Yugoslav space, and the European Commission, whose presence continues. This then opens a debate about how arts festivals mediate contradictions in this support to illuminate their shifting and multiple roles. The EC supports

contemporary dance in Serbia and North Macedonia in spite of these countries not being in the EU because of the process of EU expansion to include these countries. This has been in motion since in the former Yugoslav space since 1999 when the Stabilisation and Association Process was formally established[59], though North Macedonia began its process of rapprochement in 2000, and Serbia applied for membership in 2009 and negotiations began in 2014. This then opens a debate about how arts festivals mediate contradictions in this support to illuminate their shifting and multiple roles.

The international community in the former Yugoslav space

The 'international community' refers to a broad group of national, international and transnational organisations and public bodies. It is commonly used in international relations to refer to those groups that might stand for or intervene in issues concerning human rights. The term legitimises and enhances the credibility of certain positions through vote-based consensus-building procedures in and between the different groups. The so-called international community aims are organised under humanitarian ethics, and are not without major controversies, not least in the dominance of the views of the West, taken to be north America and western Europe, or North Atlantic, which is not global at all, but comprises a fifth of the world population (Blaut, 1994; Ishay, 2004). During the Yugoslav wars (1991-2001) and after, several North Atlantic governments and organisations such as the United States of America, EU, NATO, the NATO-led Kosovo Force, 1999-2009 (KFOR), Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) sponsored projects to monitor and assist with the ongoing efforts of nation-building, stabilisation and democratic reform in the former Yugoslav space (Graan, 2016: 278)[60]. Other international community bodies appeared at the same time, several already mentioned in previous Chapters, to support arts and cultural projects, and were often concerned with regional and international collaboration. International organisations impacting specifically upon the field of contemporary dance in Serbia, North Macedonia and Slovenia include the EU; Open

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[59] 'In 1999, the EU launched the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), a framework for relations between the EU and countries in the region, and the Stability Pact, a broader initiative involving all key international players. The Stability Pact was replaced by the Regional Cooperation Council in 2008. The 2003 European Council in Thessaloniki reaffirmed that all SAP countries were potential candidates for EU membership' (De Munter, 2019)

[60] The constellation of international community support varies for each of the former republics because of the different experience of international cooperation (Dragičević-Šešić and Suteu in Švob-Djokić, 2005: 98).

Society Foundation/Soros Centres for Contemporary Art; Pro Helvetia (Switzerland); ERSTE Stiftung (Austria); Institut Français (France); and the British Council (UK)[61].

In the 1980s and 1990s UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) produced a number of papers and events that generated discourse concerning the possible functions of culture in development and post-conflict contexts, eventually to be implemented and deployed by national governments and international bodies[62]. Art was not in the foreground of these discussions, but it nevertheless became situated in debates on culture, as the broad and contested concept to denote human practices (see footnote five in the Introduction). Following development researcher Polly Stupples (2011: 39) these events, meetings and papers provide the frame of reference for the integration of cultural policies into international development, and the legal instruments through which to lobby for greater support for culture within it, all affecting conditions for contemporary dance. Connections between the public sphere, democracy and artistic practices considered significant by UNESCO are an ongoing debate concerning attitudes towards the agency and volatility of art (developed elsewhere, see for example Belfiore and Bennett, 2007; 2008). These connections continue to be understood somewhat differently by each organisation and are navigated and mediated through practices such as making festivals. They are underscored by a sense of hope that the effects of investing in art would be advantageous to processes of post-conflict reparation through the development of material resources and human relations. Incorporating culture into international development, contemporary dance appears amongst the motivations to instrumentalise art and cultural activity for broadly defined issues such as strengthening 'civil society', the vitality of the public sphere and democratic practices. In international relations, dance is simply one incidental art form amongst many as part of a wider strategy. Yet contemporary dance appears as a specific field of activity and specialisation in the working lives for the people connected to NDA pursuing a professional livelihood, elaborated in this thesis. As outlined in Chapter 2, the motivations by NDA members to explore contemporary

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[61] International support is often administered via embassies, delegations or temporary offices (Lučić, 2017). For example, organisations like Interart in Skopje benefitted from relationships with the Dutch embassy (Interart, 2018). The advantages are the increased proximity, introduction to decision makers and access to forms of support. These kinds of relationships do not always continue when diplomats change to another office and there is no obligation to retain the relationship.

[62] Publications and events include UNESCO's World Conference on Cultural Policies in 1982 (also referred to as Mondiacult); the UN's World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997); the World Commission on Culture and Development, with its report 'Our Creative Diversity' (1996); the publication of the first UN World Culture Reports, and the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Politics for Development (1998) and its following Action Plan.

dance as an expanded, critical and social practice converges with the interests of international development meaning instrumentalisation, as well as development, of contemporary dance occurred by each in mutually constructive ways, implicating festivals as important mechanisms within this nexus of relations.

Following Naila Kabeer (1999) a specific definition of empowerment is useful to understand the rise of NGOs for contemporary dance and festivals in the former Yugoslav space that elaborates upon Kunst's argument that the opacity of transitional societies has some tactical advantages (2013: 350). Kabeer defines empowerment as being about the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability[63]. The formation of the NGOs of Lokomotiva and Stanica, and Fičo Balet (before NDA Slovenia was formed) opened up the possibility of professional work on a not-for-profit basis that would enable different kinds of risks and experimentation for artists and cultural workers, as well as the framework through which to enter open calls for projects, gain funds and co-production opportunities. These empowering life choices that opened up in the 1990s and 2000s are a contrast with the context of SFRY where it was less possible, if not impossible, under the regimes of public cultural institutions and the largely amateur or recreational status of dance. The new redistribution of opportunity and resources to form NGOs needs also to be seen in the context of the privatisation of public institutions during and after the dissolution of SFRY, and during the sanctions in FRY. More opportunities for mobility and exchange projects meant more education and cooperation was possible, and the increase of festivals of contemporary dance, in particular from the 1990s onward, was partly a response to the new project calls that required individual artists grouping together. The festivals of this research follow on from a logic of international gatherings and circulation of art, briefly sketched in the Introduction with the use of arts festivals after WWII as a form of reparation and nation-building. Festival-making and the strategic use of cultural production had a significant precedent in the activities of SFRY[64], steered from the top down. The shift remarked upon here in which contemporary

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[63] The creation of NGOs in the former Yugoslav space supported by the international community falls into a worldwide increase of NGOs. The complexity of the histories of NGO scenes is beyond the scope of this research as they take on many different roles and are not without controversies and power monopolies (see Vetta, 2018). Another consequence of the empowered moment of new opportunities for NGOs is the movement from being the new-comer to the one with greater agency in the field of cultural production who cannot or will not share further, creating alienation between different generations of artists and cultural workers, which is considered to be a problem in Slovenia (Mijačević, 2018).

[64] SFRY had a significant festivalisation of its own, so the new wave of arts festivals in the 1990s and 2000s is not without precedent in the former Yugoslav space. Sociologist Stevan Majstorović argues the increase of festivals and tours by many art forms in SFRY and to countries elsewhere (including the Non-Aligned

dance is implicated relates to the new opportunities for cultural workers from the 1990s entailed in the new recognition and redistribution strategies of the international community attempting to work with bottom-up projects like NDA.

It is festivals that continue to be considered significant and contestable instruments that announce changes in society. By 2007 the professionalisation of contemporary dance shared through and by festivals was starting to become more apparent in the former Yugoslav space and the previous Chapters show the increasing skill and capacity of the NGOs alongside the more unchanging and at times adversarial national cultural policies. What is significant about *LocoMotion*, *PLESkavica* and *Kondenz* is how they demonstrated increasing concern for the multiple functions of festival, and questioned which stake holders' needs take priority[65]. The festival makers also were keen not to reproduce the tropes of this support when it encouraged rehearsal of the culture industry rhetoric. But before addressing the changes and contradictions in international development support, two international community bodies, the Swiss Cultural Programme (SCP) and the European Commission (EC), will be presented. These were particularly significant for the NDA project partners because of the duration of support, and as mentioned in Chapter 2, the early financial support provided by the SCP[66]. For Lokomotiva and Stanica particularly, the presence of the EC and the departure of the SCP reconfigured the scenes and working conditions.

Swiss Cultural Programme in the Western Balkans (1999-2013)

The SCP worked in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia with broad goals to contribute to the promotion of democracy, freedom of expression, conflict resolution

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Movement countries) was a gesture of cultural democracy (1980: 60). Art and a broader notion of culture was seen as having intrinsic value in SFRY (Fojut, 2009: 17), though festivals were paradigmatic of a well-planned political strategy: to communicate Yugoslavia's new look to the West, distinct to the communist, totalitarian regimes of the Communism of the Eastern Bloc, whilst hiding other kinds of repression and weaknesses in the country (Vaseva et al., in Cvejić and Prištas, 2013: 360; Vujanović, 2010: 377).

[65] The phenomenon of arts festivals navigating different needs is not new to the 1990s and 2000s. Brady and Delgado observe that *Edinburgh* and *Avignon* 'had to manage the tension between being exceptional and yet regular. With success came the demand to 'serve', 'nurture' and 'answer to' their local communities and so festivals discovered another contradiction: they had to be both local and international: one of their justifications might have been that they fostered local talent, but another, equally important for their success, involved the cultural kudos that accompanied the 'international' work that they imported, however decontextualised that product might be from its original place of production and reception' (2003: 2).

[66] Slovenia was largely in receipt of and eligible for EC projects and joined the EU in 2004. It did not receive the same degree of post-conflict intervention seen in North Macedonia and Serbia, and is not grouped in with the 'Western Balkans'.

and the respect of minorities (Matarasso, 2013: 84-85)[67]. Similar to the European Commission cultural projects described in the next section, the SCP aimed to foster regional cooperation through developing arts management and production skills, and the promotion of cultural initiatives and organisations. To do so, it would use instruments such as NGOs and cultural centres to facilitate the formation and preservation of 'independent and diversified cultural landscapes' that it regarded as crucial to serve these goals (Matarasso, 2013: 15). The perspective of art by the SCP was seen as supplementary to its broader aims, but art was not made peripheral because of this separation. The SCP's perspective of art and culture meant a crucial distinction for preserving artistic autonomy as much as possible, whilst recognising the potential of art, and its processes of emergence, to produce many kinds of effects. Society and art are held as separate categories with an understanding of their interconnection and co-constitutive potential or idealisation, rather than being conceptualised as static categories, or too-easily conflated, or placed in a hierarchy (where society is first).

'The intention was never to instrumentalise cultural programmes for social ends. The freedom of creative artists and cultural event organisers was respected at all times' (project directors Martin Dahinden and Andrew Holland, in Matarasso, 2013: 9). Nevertheless, 'while art was valued in its own right, it was also seen as an effective, flexible and creative means of achieving human development goals' (Dahinden and Holland, 2013: 11-12). Dahinden and Holland maintain that culture could be 'a driver of dialogue and exchange' (in Matarasso, 2013: 10). These statements, in which contemporary dance is included in the notion of art and culture, infer that art cannot be predictable, that its outcomes cannot be known in advance, and any attempt to instrumentalise it beyond supporting its conditions of emergence would be impossible or counterproductive. This appears to value the potentiality of art production, circulation and reception, emphasising the processes and sociality that enable art to appear. There is hope and trust, rather than a concrete guarantee, that art can contribute to achieving 'human development goals'. This shows a nuanced approach to the SCP's investment in art as multilateral, and not as an added luxury product (Matarasso, 2013: 30). Dahinden and Holland

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[67] From 1999 the SCP was run in the Western Balkans by Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council, upon a mandate of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. In line with the Programme mandate, the SCP closed down on June 30 2013, after which its successor body, 'art∡ngle– Balkans | Culture | Development', operated from 2012-2016, and would partner with the European Cultural Foundation funds (and others).

go on to say that 'cultural actors cannot possibly solve the complex economic, social, demographic and environmental challenges faced by communities across Europe' (in Matarasso, 2013: 31), reinforcing in this worldview that the specificities of different fields of practice that may overlap but cannot be substituted for each other. Instead, they argue that artists' and cultural workers' contribution to solving them can lie in how they help people develop awareness, confidence, skills, shared vision, mutual respect and imagination that help to overcome challenges. Art in this sense is celebrated and supported when its processes of creation produce dissensual subjectification. This last point from the SCP seems to argue that artistic work can be an indication of democratic society, though it is important to note that art and its conditions of production are not always replete with respect and confidence, nor inherently democratic.

As much as the NDA project partners benefitted from international development, it is also necessary to consider that the international development partners learnt from NDA. Anthropologist and post-development theorist Arturo Escobar urges attention to processes through which international community development players increase their professionalisation also, and further institutionalise their practices (1995: 37). These can show the power differential in the relationship. In this instance, professionalisation for the SCP and the NDA project appears to be based around practices and experiences, rather than measuring outcomes on financial terms. SCP pointed out the benefits to its own competency, as NDA 'was the pilot regional cooperation project, providing a rich learning experience for the SCP's work in its last phase' (Matarasso, 2013: 20-21). The SCP was able to refine its modes of cooperation and collaboration for the implementation of future projects or develop intervention models in post-conflict contexts elsewhere that are beyond the scope of this research to consider, but important to acknowledge.

Lokomotiva recognised that the aim of foundations and arts funding structures like the SCP was to invest in individuals, groups and organisations to bring a scene up to a certain level before departing (Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2017). The NDA project was there constituted through transverse partnerships (rather than being receivers of funds without some reciprocity) understood the relationships between artists, arts organisations and the international community bodies to be framed in terms of mutual learning and growth. Recalling Lokomotiva's transformation by ending the festival and moving into a building, the principle of balance more broadly helps to articulate why the NDA members were keen to create and

develop infrastructure at the local and national levels because of the withdrawal of much international development support from former the Yugoslav space over the 2000s[68]. Developing infrastructure could mean a greater redistribution of the decision-making processes between the independent scene and shared responsibility for production. But the difficulty to establish such frames in Slovenia with the short-lived National Centre for Dance in 2012, or the closure of the SCP-supported Točka Cultural Centre (2006-2010) in Skopje shows the challenges for the independent scene. In the cross-fade of development support structures, Kooperativa, a 'non-governmental, non-party and non-profit association of legal entities' (2019) was founded in 2012 in Zagreb to support arts organisations in southeast Europe. Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia are all members, finding mutual solidarity with independent cultural scenes regionally through Kooperativa[69]. The association is free to join, and raises funds separately, rather than gaining contributions from members. Kooperativa helps sustain the capacity of NGOs to develop contemporary dance as an expanded practice and build partnerships.

The European Commission and Creative Europe

Questioning the role of the EU on contemporary dance and festivals helps to address the ways NDA members' curatorial practices have developed over the past decade and what values circulate, or might be carefully curated out of much discourse. NGOs like Stanica and Lokomotiva can access EC cultural project funding without Serbia and North Macedonia being members of the EU[70]. But it is not simply access that is at stake, but rather how processes of Europeanisation, institutionalisation and management of contemporary dance shape artistic scenes and festivals.

The EU became a more active participant in promoting culture and development in Europe and globally gradually. In 2007 its first significant policy appeared, *A European Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World*, inspired by UNESCO's work on cultural diversity. 'Creative Europe'

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[68] 'As many important supporters withdrew from cultural work during the first decade of the 21st century, SCP found itself an increasingly rare (and valued) supporter, in a fragile domestic funding landscape for cultural actors in the region' (Matarasso, 2013: 28).

[69] Lokomotiva is member and co-founder of *JADRO Association* of the Independent Cultural Scene, North *Macedonia*. Stanica is a member of NKSS/ Association Independent Culture Scene of Serbia. NDA Slovenia is a member of Asociacija, Association of Arts and Culture NGOs and Freelancers.

[70] Only arts organisations based in EU member states can be leaders in EC Cooperation projects, and several non-EU countries can be invited partners (EACEA, 2019)

is the specific tool for EU diplomacy and the EU integration project. Launched in 2000, under the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency within the EC, Creative Europe supports European cinema, arts and creative industries to create jobs and growth, as well as to open up new international opportunities, markets and audiences. Across its different phases coinciding with the seven-year cycles of the commission that trickle down into festival and project-planning (2000-2006; 2007-2013; 2014-2020), Creative Europe has implemented evaluation to develop its aims and needs according to changes across Europe and globally, which has repositioned how contemporary dance might be included in its goals. The examples from the previous Chapters show NDA members as unwilling to adapt to changes uncritically if they appear to compromise the values and ethos of the independent scene, described in Chapters 1 and 2.

In the first phase (2000-2006) there were annual, multiannual and special events and projects across performing arts, visual arts, literature, heritage and cultural history. The budget of €236.4 million was dedicated to promoting a common cultural area, characterised by its cultural diversity and shared cultural heritage, plus the EC has been creating project calls specifically for the Balkan region since the 2000s. Creative Europe does include artists and practitioners in its panels and for consultation. For example, in 2002, two years before Slovenia would join the EU, Bojana Kunst appears on the 'list of experts' that evaluated the pre-selected projects in the field of performing arts. Contemporary dance featured regularly in the first phase[71].

NDA appears in the second phase of Creative Europe (2007-2013), which had almost double the budget (€400 million) to support projects and activities designed to protect and promote cultural diversity and heritage. The programme also included funding cultural organisations as well as the contribution to policy analysis and some strategies for dissemination. Creative Europe projects take place as partnerships between arts organisations from different countries, demonstrating the EU cultural policy that requires the ability to cooperate beyond locally rooted places crucial (Vos, 2018: 35)[72]. The expansion of the EU contributed to festivalisation through new redistributions of funding and opportunities developed by Creative Europe. For

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[71] For example, specialist conservatoires PARTS (Belgium), and Laban (United Kingdom, UK), as well as companies such as Rosas (Belgium), Damaged Goods (Belgium), Siobhan Davies (UK), and cultural centres Tanzquatier Wien (Austria) and Southbank Centre (UK).

[72] The examples of the festivals in the previous chapters nevertheless demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages to being able to cooperate with peers in one city.

example, contemporary dance festivals could find support through specific budget lines between 2014-2017 for 'European Platforms'. Newbold et al. indicate that since the global financial crash over 2007-2008 affected the sustainability for many older and newer festivals across Europe (2015: xx-xxi). As the choices in policy and budget in each country affect festival production, in this sense the EC supplemented the continuity of arts festivals and contemporary dance, as ongoing investment in rebuilding and reparation.

The third phase (2014-2020) had another increase in budget to €1.46 billion with the Culture and Media programme joined together. A new pre-financing measure has been implemented, requiring the successful completion of a project before funds are released, which is a challenge for smaller organisations. Vos observes that the EC project grants funding criteria insists upon feasibility, immediate results, and a direct output of the investments made (2018: 38). The aims have required more professional management, which translates as the financial viability of projects. The emphasis on immediate results risks missing the longer-term effects of investment made, such as sharing learning over time. For example, NDA co-founder Dragana Alfirević was, amongst other artists and practitioners, invited to support *Pokretnica* festival in Novi Sad, Serbia. The rhetoric and practice of cultural industry, understood and implemented differently across Europe (Lučić, 2017; McGuigan, 2005: 75-76), includes the encouragement of public-private partnerships to increase financial resources (seen for example in the corporate sponsors of the Belgrade Dance Festival), which also shapes the terms of what professionalism in contemporary dance, as well as survival, looks like. The start-up style of seed-funding imported from the corporate sector for business entrepreneurs does not largely function for small NGOs like Stanica or Lokomotiva unable or unwilling to grow in size, and working with the ethos of the independent scene.

Size becomes a pernicious way of discounting some festivals rather than appreciating how they correspond with each other. The festivals in this thesis described themselves as 'small' in terms of budget and scale. This comparative notion appears pejoratively in some festival scholarship alongside a problematic binary of elite large festivals and amateur small festivals (Waterman, 1998). This is misleading and not appropriate for contemporary dance festival analysis. Klaić also creates a hierarchy of festivals through size by naming several 'well-known initiatives', then mentioning several hundreds of 'smaller' theatre festivals that have more 'limited international programming', and 'fewer reverberations and prominence' (2011: 139). Klaić does not elaborate upon what constitutes a successful reverberation, nor conceptualise all the

festivals regardless of scale as contributing to a broader notion of a transnational contemporary performance scene, working together comparatively in the creation of artistic scenes and networks as a field of contrasts. Nor does making hierarchy by size help to account for the work comparatively smaller festivals might do in politicising performance in the context of the festivals' emergence by addressing material conditions, and creating spaces of debate and contestation, as shown by *Kondenz*, *PLESkavica* and *LocoMotion*. Processes of institutionalisation and management in contemporary dance festival-making and discourse mirror the core issues and paradoxes of the EU itself in its humanitarian and economic interests. The *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* festivals somewhat reflect these tensions of the EU back to itself.

Contradictions in EC funding

Anthropologist Don Kalb refers to the economic historian Alan Millward's arguments that the European Economic Community (EEC) enhanced the sovereignty of national states, 'but the current setup makes a joke of sovereign democracy' (Kalb, 2017). The Treaty of Rome in 1957 that formed the constitutional basis of the EU was an example of an international institution to help secure peace, prosperity, and shared social citizenship, and the European Economic Community (EEC) had a close trading relationship with SFRY. But the 'really existing EU' of the present, according to Kalb, is anchored in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, the Monetary Union of 1999, and the accession of the Eastern 'postsocialist' countries from 2004 to 2006, after the collapse of world socialism from 1989 to 1992 (2017: 1). The EU of Maastricht in 1992 was born under conditions that were opposite to those under which the EEC of Rome in 1957 had formed. Kalb argues that the EU 'has become a semi-imperial, technocratic, debt collection agency for Northern capital and for dictating the liberal rules that suit the core states to their Southern and Eastern vassals-not unlike the relationship of the IMF and the World Bank to the Global South in the 1980s' (2017). Kirn observes that the statement by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s 'There is no alternative' and the free market has since been replaced by another alternative: 'the technocratic-led neoliberal apparatus of the EU, with its strong tendency toward authoritarian forms of governance' (2017: 64). Echoing the economic differences between the republics of SFRY (Repe in Biserko, 2017: 207), the EU members have extremely unequal wealth, making a liberal fiction out of the presumed equal status

amongst them[73].

Joining the EU was held up as the prize for 'transition' in the former Yugoslav space, following the expectation that the development of market economies constitutes the development and rationalisation of the modern state (Polanyi, 1944). Amongst the criticisms against joining the EU are the problems observed in former Yugoslav republics like perpetuating debt in Slovenia, rapid financialisation of the education system in Croatia, and pro-EU discourse concealing changes to employment legislation, also in Croatia (Horvat and Štiks, 2015). The European Commission cultural programmes seek to diffuse the criticisms found within the EU and its onlookers. Sharing in a 'European' approach to culture advocated for through the Creative Europe programme is hoped to facilitate a smoothing over of cultural differences, as well as the different financial and political realities (Vos, 2018: 35).

Article 128 of the Treaty of Maastricht means that the EU avoids any transnational policy harmonisation, which ideally allows different approaches to art and culture to coexist. Cultural policies developed in the former Yugoslav republics have interpreted contemporary art and dance differently, creating some of the disadvantages elaborated in the previous Chapters, and therefore some policy harmonisation might be useful for contemporary dance. In the meantime, until national cultural policy change, projects like the European Dance House Network creates alternative frameworks (2019). Vos observes that the EC 'shared management provides frameworks of policy making but no guarantees regarding its eventual implementation' (2018: 37). The EC's methods to control or semi-standardise artistic production, financing and evaluation have been replicated by Slovenia's Ministry of Culture, and mismanaged by Serbia and North Macedonia, with the consequences of preventing or diminishing the intentions of this support as explored in the previous Chapters, especially in relation to being able to plan for the future. The EC Culture Programme obliquely supports NGOs to achieve what the EU's central premise cannot do: to lobby as citizens to contribute to changes in national cultural policy. As illustrated by the work of NDA members, this is a slow and incremental process. By the third phase of the EC projects, the relationships with national Ministries for Culture and the independent cultural scenes in which Lokomotion, Stanica and NDA Slovenia work, remain in a similar state to the mid-2000s. The flow of funds from bodies like the EC to arts

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[73] The relationship of the EU to Greece for example displays the limitations of the EU project that attempts to balance national sovereignty and financial integration. In the 2010s, the EU project of defending its borders in both visible and invisible ways of strict policing and incarceration, making certain lives liveable and others unliveable has become more apparent (Kouvelakis, 2018).

organisations like NDA increased the scope for developing and recognising forms of practice and conceptualisation of contemporary dance. Sometimes these are managed by Ministries of Culture, sometimes entirely brokered by the arts organisations and NGOs themselves. In either configuration, contemporary dance discourses do not necessarily flow back to all administrative and decision-making bodies in Serbia, Slovenia and North Macedonia that might otherwise affect how policies and conditions are shaped.

Kondenz, *LocoMotion* and *PLESkavica* festivals mediated changing experiences of time, friendships and sociality, and demonstrated trust in contemporary dance as a critical, expanded and social practice, where ambiguity and the unknown is valued. Through curatorial praxis, the artists and cultural workers of NDA practised transparency in their work and redistribution of agency that were, between 2007-2017, underdeveloped in the respective Ministries of Culture. The support of the international community helped the festivals to become a form of exile from their national cultural policies without leaving so-called state capture in North Macedonia and Serbia, or intensified state bureaucracy in Slovenia. The international community's relationship to the former Yugoslav space for the independent scenes' relative autonomy and self-organisation has been crucial, and could in this regard be conceptualised as cultivating a sense of friendship, through offering succour in times of lack and distress and in an agonistic way that prioritises mutual learning (Verkerk, 2019: 25-26). The appearance of NGO-led arts festivals in the former Yugoslav space needs to be seen adjacent to, rather than in coordination or complement with, state cultural institutions. Unlike in many western European contexts, state cultural institutions had not yet started imitating international theatre and performance festivals in their programming and structures. Arts festival from the independent scenes appear markedly different not only in the kinds of performance works they share, but the terms on which their workers are engaged and employed, which was expanded upon in Chapter 4 in the section concerning freelance cultural workers in Slovenia.

Nevertheless, the observations from Kalb and others above about the problems and methods of the EU provoke questions as to how contemporary dance and cultural production interweave. Professionalisation appears to be defined in the EC projects through economic rationalisation measures and evaluation processes that show support for contemporary dance only when it can be managed on specific terms. Terms that have not abandoned the hope that art might support democratic processes, but with the new pressure of pre-financing and administrative efficiency. As the continuing support offered by the EU Delegation in Serbia for the BDF demonstrates,

attention is given by the EU to arts festivals that manage large budgets, rather than necessarily differentiating between the organisational practices and methods of NGOs. Or said another way, making festivals through a politics of recognition by creating visibility of diverse expression but without considering redistribution of resources that make a festival possible can narrow the opportunity for artistic development, recognition of differences, and therefore risks the vitality of the public sphere.

The contradictions of the EC's humanitarian and economic interests become apparent in the ways in which artists and NGOs navigate different articulations and expressions of contemporary dance and festivals. As a method of justification for the culture programmes, the EC wants to be able to claim efficiency and be accountable to member states, whilst championing art and heterogeneous practices. Except art is not predictable or efficient, and cannot be treated in the same way as road construction or waste management. The EC requires projects to be efficiently managed, which can in turn enable spaces and conditions for ambiguity, as the *PLESkavica* festival typifies. But it is important to recognise that the EC set the terms and agendas of project calls that pursue political agendas of the EU more broadly. *PLESkavica* questioned those terms, rather than treating them as merely an inevitable dimension of Europeanisation, and with the corollary of misrecognition by the Ministry of Culture.

Through the support and subsidy of international development projects like NDA meant contemporary dance could be held slightly apart from art market pressures. When framed and elevated by arts festivals, argued as revitalisations of the public sphere, contemporary dance becomes interwoven with expectations that it contributes to democratic practice, as recognisable social utility and value. NDA made this argument about the potential of contemporary dance. The examples this thesis demonstrate some of the effects of the encouragement to make festivals in the former Yugoslav space in which contemporary dance is conceptualised as a critical, creative potential, and as a conduit for developing new markets through the diversification of art forms and festivals locally and internationally. The EC criteria does not necessarily conflate an idea of art as social instrument, but it is shaping the conditions as to which outcomes of art production and reception are given more priority[74]. This affects

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[74] 'EU policies are moving towards a comprehensive understanding of culture as a tool contributing to urban regeneration, attractiveness, entrepreneurship, innovation, jobs and sustainability' (Iglesias, Kern,

what artistic work is made and shared, and frames 'failure' under specific terms. In spite of festivals being an important way to connect artists with audiences and peers, festivalisation in the sense of the increase of festivals was remarked upon by the curatorial praxis of *PLESkavica* as becoming problematic for the increase of speed of production and the lack of freedom this was producing. For Lokomotiva, making festivals was becoming disempowering. The intentions for art need to be understood through the practices of production and what it seeks to take responsibility for.

As the previous Chapters illustrated, imperceptible politics of the festivals demonstrate a trust in artists and contemporary dance as an expanded practice. What is significant is that the NDA partner organisations experienced the changes in criteria and demands from the EC funding projects, but attempted to not reproduce them in the festivals or with the artists with whom they worked. The ways in which the NDA partners redistribute the advantages of such partnerships and funding without redistributing the rhetoric and control demonstrates a form of critique without negating the significance of that support. The partners show how relative autonomy is earnt, rather than bought or bestowed, in navigating the empowering and disempowering dimensions of international development funding as it changes its terms. The sense of responsibility of NDA was to partner stake-holders, but not at the expense of artists and audiences.

It is unlikely that the NDA project would have received funding from the European Commission (EC) or other international development bodies if claims to be rehabilitating dimensions of SFRY were made, in spite these facets being reworked and mediated through the field of contemporary dance (that itself better converges with narratives of modernity) (Burchardt and Kirn, 2017: 4). The NDA project would not make such a claim itself. Yet there is a subtle irony that the NDA project principles retain some of the traces of Socialist Yugoslavia that contribute to the sustainability of contemporary dance festival-making and artistic development, traces that the new governments in the peninsula were quick to dismiss, along with the support of the West in the 1990s, as traced in Chapter 1. This shows some ambiguity of the West and international development agents in both contributing to the erasure of SFRY conceptually or ideologically, whilst simultaneously supporting art fields and

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Montalto, 2012: 1).

independent scenes that preserve and transform some aspects of its culture. It illustrates the subtle transverse relations afforded through the field of contemporary dance. The festival makers of *Kondenz*, *LocoMotion* and *PLESkavica* use the terms of international development intervention, but repurpose them to suit their interests and ends. Through self-organisation they secured the reproduction of existing structures in the contemporary dance field internationally (festivals, co-production, partnerships) to be able to participate through them. Through curatorial praxis, they expose and interrogate the ethical implications of these methods. In this regard, contemporary dance acts as an agent of change and transformation, as well as a carrier of older forms of social organisation.

Mediating between international development and artistic autonomy

The work of NDA could be interpreted as an attempt to reconcile the tensions of international development support, and especially the changing demands and qualities of the EC projects. The festivals as safety valves of social relations are mechanisms not only for audiences, but for makers navigating interests in contemporary dance as an expanded practice. In one of the largest literature reviews of festival research, Donald Getz (2010) points out that 'whether privately owned, not-for-profit, or in the public sector, the ownership of festivals makes a potentially huge difference to the nature of its management and the experiences offered to attendees' (Getz, 2010: 17). This helps to illuminate the responsibility taken by *PLESkavica*, *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* to engender co-ownership of the field of contemporary dance through curatorial praxis, using organisational principles of balance, invitation and empty space as methods to recognise and redistribute agency for the makers, and provide reflection upon the independent scenes.

With a view towards festival policy studies, Getz (2010: 5) notes that some festivals are being researched as permanent institutions. Klaić, in spite of his perspectives on scales of festivals, does argue that festivals 'have a developmental function' (2011: 137-138). This is extended by Keil (2015) who observes that many international festivals of dance, theatre and performance, operating in networks such as the ones explained in Chapter 2, hold considerable power to not only share artistic practices, but to shape conditions of production, and as such deserve institutional status. Mediating between artists, audiences and stake-holders, the responsibilities of festivals have expanded from presentation to promotion as arbiters of new artistic and production developments. Claiming a festival as an institution recognises the contribution

made adjacent to other cultural institutions, as in the case of the former Yugoslav space. Keil connects transformations of international theatre festivals into institutional features or mechanisms of cultural production to the changes since 1989 characterised by the increased mobility of individuals and knowledge. This observation also follows the ways in which artists and arts organisations learnt to navigate project calls and funding networks and the professionalisation encouraged across the 1990s and 2000s. Another observation can be added to Keil's argument. The European marketplace of arts festivals is characterised less by making financial profit than by increasing participation in cultural production in more diverse ways that simultaneously help to justify the investment made, often on the grounds of social utility or professional development. Festival organisations in receipt of public subsidy from national and international funds appear to over time cultivate 'added value' in their applications to differentiate their projects from others, actively increasing responsibility for more facets of art and dance worlds. As sketched with the influence of *Avignon* and *Edinburgh* on other festivals, an unofficial policy is the participation of festivals in different aspects of art world production, distribution, circulation and reception, noted by Keil. This increased responsibility comes with advantages of taking increased control over the means of production, but also increased expectations of arts festivals more broadly. Various procedures and events within festival-making[75] become normal and expected, and are sometimes emulated and modified by other festivals, which reproduces a need to continue differentiation within a similar typology of arts festival. Keil is hopeful that festivals can be emancipatory, but it is unclear for whom. The examples in this thesis help to illustrate the dynamics of autonomy, differentiation and responsibility. Firstly, they each demonstrate some aspect of differentiation in their immediate contexts, in a distribution of the sensible. Secondly, they show making festivals to be emancipatory when the balance of different demands and needs can be undertaken in such a way that stays open to artistic risk, whilst mitigating the challenges of producing festivals on uncertain budgets. Differentiation of arts festivals might be understood through their methods of organisation that draws attention the ethics of cultural production, as exposed by the imperceptible politics of *Kondenz, LocoMotion* and *PLESkavica*.

As the comment in Chapter 4 from Srhoj pointed out, the Slovene Ministry of Culture acted as a curator of the 2012 festival owing to its decisions to reduce the budget, helping to emphasise

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[75] Such as those Keil describes, but also workshops, residencies within festivals, prize giving, extra platforms and so forth.

how festival-making is undertaken through curation and pre-curation. Navigating the multiple partnerships entailed in festival-making is further illuminated by the question of curatorial themes and how particular topics appear in the public sphere through festival curation. Themes set by public funding grants (even ones as general as a 'European Platform' budget line) to an extent pre-curate festivals, contributing to their meaningfulness and meaning-making capacities. In this way, the EC needs to be considered a kind of curator or pre-curator of festivals and of contemporary dance practices through its gatekeeping at a distance. Project grants require the applicant to work within already pre-decided terms and conditions. A successful applicant has already agreed to them, already self-censoring or modifying interests and values to fit. The EC will only grant projects to those willing to meet the criteria, showing the intricacies of consensus building in curation, the effects of which mean the requirement to perform dissensus and a poetics of multiplicity, but only latterly once approved in theory, then evaluated in practice. Terms or fuzzy concepts, such as migration, climate change, or identity (Cornwall, 2007; Markusen, 2010) wait to be filled and reinterpreted by artists and arts organisations. The effects of pre-curation are not wholly determinate, as the openness of the themes and concepts in EC projects can be generative, and indeed subverted. The *PLESkavica*, *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* festivals show how curation mediates between the needs of the funding body and their ways of pre-curating cultural production, and the interests sustaining artistic autonomy.

The independent scenes in the context of the former Yugoslav space have historical as well as contemporary significance, connected with the dissemination and development of practices and ethical questions, and *LocoMotion*, *PLESkavica*, and *Kondenz* continue these concerns. Following Klaić (2014), independent scenes preserve ethical communities and supposed freedom of art from conservative tendencies. In Serbia, North Macedonia and Slovenia, the independent cultural scenes take up initiatives to fight for communal use and access to state property and public assets, and work against political parties' indifference to the independent scenes and contemporary art, as well as against the profit-driven corporate sector that also informs conditions for arts festivals and contemporary dance. Sometimes it is as blunt as when following a book launch Stanica held, all those present go out to join a protest in Belgrade (in 2016). Sometimes it is more through the curatorial itself that can be seen reproach policy changes, like increasing demands for efficiency in cultural production seen through *PLESkavica*, or the problems of migration affecting artistic communities seen through *Kondenz*. As the previous Chapters have argued, independent scenes are not necessarily stable

forms or groups but enduring constellations that reveal patterns of change relative to factors such as policy, migration, and friendships. What is particular about the NDA project is how it produced the context for the festivals as part of the independent scenes in which the consequences of being hyper productive (*PLESkavica*), hypermobile (*Kondenz*), and unbalanced between the networks abroad and at home (*LocoMotion*) were addressed through the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis as a form of escape, that is, following Papadopoulis et al., non-linear, witty and hopeful (2008: 70). In this regard, self-organisation, characteristic of the independent scenes, is a way to deal with the late capitalist conditions for working in art, and to mitigate the hierarchies in the field of contemporary dance.

Artist-led festivals

Analysing festivals amidst the notions of the public sphere, democracy and artistic work helps to understand the multiplicities and contradictions as part of art worlds, as well as their relationship to society. Whilst against essentialising festivals as fundamentally common to all civilisations, Duvignaud does argue that they might be understood as connected to each other through the shared characteristic of being in some way antagonistic (1976: 18-19). The artist-led festival is to an extent antagonistic, as Maurin puts it (2003: 11), when it eschews management and therefore the risk of alienated labour. Newbold et al. (2015: xvi) make a problematic classification between artist-led or civic events that somewhat blunts the argument of festivals as antagonistic or acting as safety-valve of social relations[76]. As the examples in this thesis help to argue, artist-led festivals can demonstrate clear commitments to civic, artistic and political questions that appear as interwoven and discreet (as examples of non-dialectic practices), so to classify festivals in this way forecloses upon an understanding of their multiple functions and effects. *LocoMotion*, *PLESkavica* and *Kondenz* as artist-led festivals might imply a negligible civic commitment because they stand for contemporary dance art. The imperceptible politics as movements of escape show that whilst advocating for an ontology of dance art, they also insisted that spaces of art, the festivals, do not need to succumb to art market logic at the expense of the potential for dissensual subjectification, nor uphold conservative, nationalist interests of incumbent governments that might diminish the diversity of the public sphere.

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[76] Simplistic and dualist classifications of festivals into sacred and secular, rural and urban, popular and establishment do not offer sufficient insight into distinctions amongst festivals (after Duvignaud, 1976; Falassi, 1987: 3; Waterman, 1998: 58).

Notwithstanding Newbold et al's. classification, artist-led festivals with a range of responsibilities in cultural production might be understood to be crucial for dissensus through their capacity to destabilise perceptions, raise questions, and act-with society in the assemblage of the social constituting diverse public spheres. The notion of artist-led is however open to interpretation, for example, festivals might have associate artists working on their programming and curation, like *Avignon* festival's structure in which an artistic director and two administrators are joined by an 'associate artist' that changes periodically (Wehle, 2003), circulating artistic knowledge and reflection upon needs. It might mean a concern with the reception of an artistic work alone, without considering modes, ethics and economies of production. Alternatively, artist-led might refer to a focus on relations and processes of creation, and be less interested in disseminating completed performance works, like in the 2011 editions of *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion*. These festivals were developed from a sense of responsibility for cultivating an expanded notion of contemporary dance, and sharing what professional practice could be. This echoes the Yugoslav socialist premise of the workers being co-owners of the means of production in the creation of the state, as well as self-organising to take responsibility for and contribute to developments in dance happening in their contexts, as well as elsewhere, being part of discourses, even driving them. The organisational culture of NDA suggests the need to articulate a festival typology in which artist-led might be further refined through consideration of the values in the NDA partner members' methods, principles and tactics observed in curatorial praxis. Before outlining the heuristic artist-led festival, a brief word on public sphere diversity and accessibility is required.

Following Fraser, an emancipatory potential of a public sphere resides between the two functions of retreat inwards and redirection outwards (1997: 82). Thinking this model of the public sphere in relation to arts festivals helps to trace artists, cultural workers and audiences' experiences of learning, friendship and solidarity found in the dynamic navigations between the investment made by international development and the independent scenes. Making and participating in *Kondenz*, *PLESkavica* and *LocoMotion* were contexts of withdrawal and regroupment that helped to cultivate makers' curatorial praxis and self-determination, and the dispersal of agency make the festivals a kind of training ground for understanding contemporary dance as expanded practice and self-organisation. These festivals sometimes led to relationships that supported further collaborations and collective activism, redirecting action outwards, beyond the duration of the festival. To assume artist-led festivals are exclusive hermetic bubbles, or a retreat inwards only, forgets that these spaces have embodied

consequences of endurance, preservation and transformation of practices[77]. It is in this way that artist-led festivals can be expressions and examples of democratic society, in a redistribution of the sensible. Fraser's argument about the plurality of the public sphere (1997: 82) help to articulate the advantages of the heuristic artist-led festival in NDA's goal to develop the field of contemporary dance in the former Yugoslav space. Fraser does not imagine there to only be one public sphere. Rather, there are many, and not in a hierarchy, which she argues is important for diversity and democracy. Irrespective of how many there are and can be, their ease of access is not equal.

Cvetković and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski (2011) observed the need for artistic, process-based experimentation was to contrast with the more market-oriented formats of displaying and networking. They argue these generated a proliferation of open-framed formats, most of which were quite exclusive to artistic communities. This indicates that the artist-led experiments of the festivals were not being initiated, absorbed or appropriated by state cultural institutions, or commercial art fields. Cvetković and Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski's comment hints that these open formats did not necessarily reach those not already interested in contemporary dance, performance or art, and that this exclusivity was a concern. Vaseva, Veljanovska, Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski (in Cvejić and Prištas, 2013: 643-644) observed that the funding from the EU had been significant for creating structures that benefit contemporary dance practices across education, production and presentation in North Macedonia, but it radically affected the artistic scenes. Both the European Commission and SCP emphasised capacity building of NGOS and professional networks, and if not growth of scale of operation, growth of knowledge and exchange through frequent meetings, publications and trainings. Vaseva et al. argue that this has been at the expense of other kinds of audience development. Arts festivals became a paradigmatic meeting place for communities and scenes in processes of professionalising. In this regard, arts festivals were training grounds for their makers and peers, learning methods of networks and partnerships, as well as the rhetoric found in international development. The festivals in this thesis demonstrate both the perpetuation of these tendencies, as well as their subversion

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[77] Fraser argues that public spheres are not 'spaces of zero-degree culture, equally hospitable to any possible form of cultural expression' (Fraser, 1997: 83). Rather, 'they consist in culturally specific institutions', for example, textual exchange, journals, internet/social media, urban spaces, public parks, cafes and shopping malls, which operate as culturally specific rhetorical lenses that 'filter and alter the utterances they frame', and therefore can accommodate some expressive modes and not others.

The presence of international development bodies supporting the creation and participation in arts festivals as training spaces for the professional, international arts communities, produced the risk of alienating audiences as festivals threatened to become only networking spaces for cultural workers and artists. But on the other hand, the support also meant that artist-led spaces like *LocoMotion*, *PLESkavica* and *Kondenz* could appear and develop. Festival curation in *LocoMotion, PLESkavica* and *Kondenz* was transformative for the festival makers' perceptions of what festivals can be and do. As part of the enquiry into how the festival makers make sense of their realities, the principle of balance shows how festival makers' discoveries and learning informed their work and ethical debates in curatorial praxis. These debates concern the obligations to one another as makers, to the independent scene, and to contemporary dance, and what vulnerabilities appear as theirs to respond to, and what joys to celebrate.

Heuristic artist-led festivals

The properties of escape in the imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis place trust in the unknown and the remaking of the present. Whilst institutional support can be advantageous for contemporary dance as an expanded practice to enable escape, *PLESkavica*, *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* demonstrate contentions with its contingencies. Characteristic of the independent scene is the alertness to forms of oppression. But describing the festivals as 'independent' does not quite grasp the contours of the processual dimension of learning and discovery underpinned by particular principles that escapes control and fights against oppression. In light of the characteristics of *PLESkavica* and *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* understood through curatorial praxis, artist-led festivals can gain further specificity by attending to their heuristic dimensions. This helps to account for the role of discovery and learning in curatorial praxis across the three festivals and places emphasis on the festival as a context of unanticipated, collective learning, and ground for imperceptible politics that remake the present.

A heuristic method allows the discovery of something, and is a system of education in which learners are trained to find out things for themselves. A heuristic approach to making festivals embodies the function of subversion in learning. The curatorial praxis of *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* demonstrate malleable systems for discovery and self-discovery, about how contemporary dance might be made, staged, received and debated. Heuristic processes are often found in making choreography and the body-based somatic inquiries informing dance,

where the empty space principle is amplified as sense of the unknown holds significant attraction. Training and performing in contemporary dance, choreography and improvisation have some similarities to the processual cooperative, collaborative models of organisation of Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia that inform making festivals. Heuristic artist-led festivals include ongoing learning, in a mutual pedagogy underpinned by a sense of radical equality, meaning any terms of pre-curation or the obligations of funding and project evaluation criteria, in the manner of the specific intellectual, can be worked with and critiqued rather than replicated. There is considerable risk in pursuing a heuristic artist-led festival when there are expectations of what a festival might need to achieve in the terms set by funders or stake-holders, as well as audience relations.

Several of the festival-makers are artists, and in the 2011 editions, the distributed processes of curation involved inviting more artists, as well as other people, into the process of curation. The changes in the configurations of the groups making *PLESkavica*/*CoFestival*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* attest to the necessities and interests of individuals to pursue experiences and work elsewhere. Responsibility for making festivals and supporting the scene is shared on pragmatic terms as well as supported by the NDA principle of not holding on to power for too long. Much can be learnt from art and artists directly in view of festivals, rather than taking the perspective of managing or presuming their needs. This connects to the principle of empty space that cultivates trust in processes, and being comfortable with the discomfort of not knowing how something will unfold in advance. From the perspective of NDA, extending a gap between managers of arts funding and artists threatens to diminish the meaningfulness of dance art in its unknowable, unpredictable dimensions. For NDA, emancipation through its projects and curatorial praxis was not simply about bringing benefits to its members alone. The independent scene NDA grew from and contributes to attempts to work beyond individual gain, preferring mutuality and interdependency for raising the standards and conditions for artistic work. The imperceptible politics of festival curation in the artist-led heuristic approach champions dissemination of learning, rather than the arguably hermetic culture of intellectual property, but is not precise or strict about how and when that learning will be redirected and reappear.

Chapter summary

Long-term effects of the dissolution of SFRY include the reconfiguration of support for contemporary dance and arts festivals. The support for arts festivals more broadly as part of

post-conflict intervention by international development includes instrumentalising art for economic benefits whilst attempting to leverage processes of making art to enhance and announce democratic practices. NDA typifies the latter, whilst railing against the former, considered an impediment to artistic autonomy. This Chapter has presented some of the changing presence and aims of international development support in the former Yugoslav space that affected conditions for contemporary dance and festival-making. The EU as the longest-standing pre-curator of contemporary dance in Europe is illuminated by the EC's role in developing conditions for it in the former Yugoslav space, not imposed but to an extent done magnanimously, though co-created and achieved by projects like NDA and the respective partners and festivals. Contemporary dance, valued as an expanded, social and critical practice by the SCP and EC, enabled artists and cultural workers to develop frames like the festivals. But this support was not without contingent dimensions, such as the expectation that the independent scenes would become more self-sustaining through increased participation in art markets or gain public-private partnerships, both of which are considered objectionable by the NDA project members. Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia navigated the contours of these changing relations and expectations, giving rise to the proposition of the heuristic artist-led festival in which risk and learning are foregrounded, like self-organisation, these qualities mitigate the influence of pre-curation and the terms on which public subsidy are set. The festival makers were willing to take artistic and curatorial risks, clarified through occasions of dissensus, where civic concerns of how to more equitably shape conditions of cultural production and a meaningful working life coexist with and through curatorial questions. In a general sense *Kondenz*, *PLESkavica* and *LocoMotion* were artist-led in that artistic development was the initial intention of the festivals, through supporting the visibility of local and guest artists. The more specific heuristic dimension appears in the interest of the festival-makers to show and enact the classification of contemporary dance to be fluid and contestable, especially in the context of the cities in which they were taking place to further interrogate the functions of festivals, their agency and their performativity. The sense of discovery is sustained by the festival makers who curated contexts to share with audiences the possibility to also discover what contemporary dance can be. The heuristic element in the artist-led festivals in Chapter 3, 4 and 5 show the learning of Lokomotiva, NDA Slovenia and Stanica to create new distributions of the sensible to repurpose available structures for their own interests and needs in order to be able to reproduce the values and perceptions of the independent scene, contemporary dance as an expanded, critical and social practise, and the traces of SFRY through self-organisation.

Conclusion

The previous Chapters have argued that making festivals can constitute a dissensual political practice. The three festivals illuminate some of the transformations to cultural work, time, and professionalism experienced in the former Yugoslav space in the context of the dissolution of SFRY and Europeanisation. Analysis of curatorial praxis exposes facets of working in contemporary dance as a transnational, multi-sited phenomenon in which migration and artistic mobility refresh knowledge and skills of artistic scenes, but questions of financing and policy become specific, localised challenges. This Conclusion will return to the two lines of enquiry questions posed in the Introduction. It addresses the long-term effects of the dissolution of SFRY on contemporary dance festival curation through the examples of the three festivals, connected through the NDA project. And second, it discusses how value systems underpinned by radical equality, the organisational principles of NDA, and forms of cooperation in cultural production affect festival-making and curatorial conceptualisation. The imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis shows making festivals to be a political practice through their capacity, as both events and as collective processes of creation, to form new distributions of the sensible.

Methodological implications

This research has traced the imperceptible politics of festival curation as forms of escape from already known ways of doing and thinking that generates imperceptible politics. Rancière's propositions of dissensual subjectification illuminates the different concerns informing curatorial praxis, seen also in the differences between NDA partners and festival makers that reveal processes of self-determination within self-organisation. Escape as a political category has connotations of journeying, yet the festival does not travel but coexists with its context, interconnected with it and prosing a new one. Implications in the concept of escape alluding to exploration and hunger for life can be observed in curatorial praxis that connect to movement and restlessness, as active rather than reactive energies. As Mezzadra puts it, 'escape has been almost a privileged way to subjectivity', a road to freedom and independence (2004: 267), helping to confer the agency potentiated through curation. The imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis of *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* demonstrate an ethics of escape in which the festivals demonstrate emancipatory dimensions for their makers and peers, but with

an attempt to redistribute agency beyond their activites. The potency of imperceptible politics revitalizes the present moment, and whilst escape is always situated and ambiguous (Papadopoulos et al., 2008: 59), the search for a better future might be understood to be part of making festivals. The merit of imperceptible politics as an analytic tool to explore forms of escape, and therefore forms of oppression or constraint and emancipatory practices, was a deliberate method to sense gradual and subtle change in phenomena.

Analysis of the festivals required shifting attention between modes of production, circulation and reception of contemporary dance worlds. The use of diachronic and synchronic perspectives on different editions has helped to reinforce their multi-layered effects and specific concerns. A diachronic perspective has helped to illuminate the effects of policy changes and friendships, whilst synchronic analysis enabled deeper insight into the use of NDA principles in addressing the experiences of particular struggles faced by Lokomotiva, NDA Slovenia and Stanica between 2007-2017. The use of different discourses generated an ongoing process of comparison and synthesis. Kirn's articulation of capitalism within socialism that occurred in SFRY (2017: 61) helped to highlight the tensions in cultural work of artistic autonomy and professionalism that carries on into the 1990s and 2000s, and especially how the tendency of artists to cooperate internationally occurs irrespective of regime or 'state capture'. The marginal positions Kirn observed of cultural workers in SFRYcontinuing in the 2000s and 2010s in the three festivals offers more empirical evidence of the nuances of dance worlds and the non-dialectic experience of cultural workers as connected to context but capable of making new ones.

Discourses from festival studies helped to sustain the enquiry of what changes were being mediated through collective curation. The processual understanding of festivals helps to argue that they arise from sociality, as well as what is more commonly argued, result in sociality. The use of discourses from contemporary dance as an expanded practice in the analysis of imperceptible politics in curatorial praxis was in order to differentiate between forms of dance and forms of art. Whilst it is not the aim of this research to argue that festival-making reflects the arts forms that a festival presents (if for example, film festivals were analysed cinematographically, or music festivals analysed compositionally), but in the case of the three festivals analysed here, contemporary dance as an expanded practice informed some methods of curatorial praxis and the relationships sought with artists followed the interest in somatic

process, encounter and improvisation. Ethnographic methods of direct and sustained contact with people involved in making the festivals and the artistic scenes was undertaken through participant observation, interviews and document analysis. These methods have meant that the materials gathered about the NDA goals and principles of balance, invitation and empty space could be used to further analyse the festivals themselves. Contrasting concerns and questions posed by the people involved in making festivals, or in the scenes and communities, was aided by a recursive exploration of the tensions and struggles of cultural production. This allowed different perspectives to co-exist, gathered from different sites and encounters in which the juxtaposition of materials could give rise to several conclusions addressed in the following sections.

This research explores some similarities between the former republics, as well as specific differences in cultural production and contemporary dance festival-making. Related to the selection of festivals, a significant methodological dimension to the analysis of festival curation was the shared context in which the makers had lived and observed the problems and advantages of Yugoslav socialism, and their erasure through different means. The decision to differentiate between the former Yugoslav space and the Balkans in a way that NDA itself would not advocate for, not least because of its emphasis on Balkan regional cooperation and the presence of Bulgaria within the network, nevertheless helped to distinguish specific aspects of SFRY that I argue affects festival-making decades after its official dissolution. This includes understanding the processes and philosophy of self-organisation as a transformation of Worker Self-Management and its potentially emancipatory qualities. The decision to limit reference to 'Western Balkans' was in order to support a comparative approach between North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia, as well as deflect the tendency of this term to reproduce a 'Europe/not-quite-Europe' imaginary. In Chapter 1, the argument made by Vujanović and Cvejić that around 2005 using an east/west division of Europe to categorise contemporary dance became redundant helps to make an important distinction found in this thesis. This research strove to acknowledge and compare differences in terms of production, policy and infrastructure for contemporary dance and culture more broadly affecting making festivals that persists in North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia, but not to overstate the differences in such a way as to assume Slovenia, as a member of the EU, necessarily represents a more conducive context in which to develop contemporary dance[78].

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[78] According to Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski 'We can say that since 2004, Slovenia's cultural policy, which

Limitations of this research include not having sufficient knowledge of local languages to be able to connect in a different way with artists and cultural workers that may have offered other insights into curatorial praxis. It was a problem that I could not reach Aja Jung of the Belgrade Dance Festival, who did not respond to requests to meet, and so I used other sources and interviews to further understand her position more closely. Additions to the design of this research for the future could include other festivals in BiH, Bulgaria and Croatia to pursue consideration of the legacies of the NDA project through festival curation.

International development, festivalisation, and contemporary dance

This thesis contributes to a greater understanding of how international development support for contemporary dance affects working conditions and artistic scenes. Serbia and North Macedonia are significant contexts for understanding the role and effects of the international community on contemporary dance and festivals especially because the decrease of this support and interest over the 2000s and 2010s. Festivalisation interweaves with processes of Europeanisation through which NDA gained different forms of institutional recognition, sometimes internationally before locally.

The landscape of international development funding for art projects in the former Yugoslav space changed considerably between 2007 to 2017. The EC, as an institution and international development player, remains a major supporter of contemporary dance that will arguably continue to affect the production of festivals and contemporary dance in both the gathering spaces and places of festivals, as well as in digital space. The multi-partner cooperation projects shaped by the EC configure the terms of that support, proposed through the concept of pre-curation. Pre-curation includes the dynamics of application processes, eligibility and evaluation. NGOs' and artists' work depends not only on access to financing, but often on the terms and timings international development partnerships that, as the previous chapters explored, do not always smoothly cohere with national cultural policies, nor the functionality of scheduling in national Ministries of Culture.

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had made it stand out in the former Federation, has increasingly come to resemble the reactionary or non-existent cultural policies of the other five constituent republics of the former Yugoslavia.' (2012: 6)

Curatorial praxis and new distributions of the sensible in *LocoMotion*, *Kondenz* and *PLESkavica* expose the practical outcomes of the intentions of international development that navigates what is possible at a local level, if not actively encouraged, recognised or supported. Balance, empty space and invitation appear as both consequences of the interdependency with international development as well as the methods through which to cope and thrive amidst their changes and contingencies. In order to develop projects and opportunities, the NDA partners learned methods of co-production typical of international arts festivals and organisations. But they did so without becoming uncritically subsumed in project funding rhetoric. They neither reproduced its logic of efficiency and bureaucratic alienation, nor regurgitated worn-out application vocabulary that the field of contemporary dance relies upon, such as notions of 'mobility', 'visibility', sustainability', 'networking', and 'exchange', according to Alfirević (2011: 62). Reflecting upon these terms in the contexts of their use meant that NDA were increasingly able to give critical feedback on their own projects. This is an example of how the agency to self-invite entailed in self-organisation operates to create fluency with working-life. Reflective, practical and theoretical dimensions that appear in curatorial praxis are not so much forms of control over working-life, but processual necessities.

Material and attitudinal support from international development organisations that contributed to collective responsibility for contemporary dance and its infrastructure across the decade is important when considering how national cultural policy had not been equally present. On the other hand, international development that has focussed on developing markets in the former Yugoslav space easily casts art as being leveraged for that agenda, especially with tourism and festivals being part of building economies. The independent scenes of contemporary dance in the former Yugoslav space, that the NDA members are part of, demonstrate enduring criticality towards all mechanisms of cultural production appearing from international development as well as local infrastructure. This critical relationship also included questioning their own agency and decision-making power. Through the examples of festivals and curatorial praxis, NDA members repurposed the terms of the interventions made by international development that enabled conditions for contemporary dance. This firstly secured the reproduction of the structures of creation and production in contemporary dance elsewhere in Europe like festivals and artistic development platforms, so NDA could participate within those power structures, and redistribute some of its advantages through tactics such as co-curation and invitation. Secondly, contemporary dance as an expanded practice as advocated for by NDA, found convergence with some of the international development organisations' expectations and

definitions of art. The SCP's insistence to look to the ways in which art is created and received, respects an ontological category of art that includes contemporary dance, and the agency of art and artists as immanent phenomena. This distinction does not assume art can be forced or expected to achieve specific goals, and is similar to the insistence of the NDA projects in which contemporary dance situates socially and politically, but nevertheless remains at the same time, distinct and not to be policed.

Contemporary dance as an expanded practice remains connected to, and to an extent reliant upon, the EC programmes. The examples of festivals in this thesis help to communicate the connections between artistic practice and production, to the systems of support for them and raise questions about how implicit articulations of 'Europe' interweave in these dynamics. The EC continues to advocate for contemporary dance, and to shape the distributed systems of cultural stewardship that make it, and its festivals, possible through its funding provision. In Chapter 1, it was argued that Europeanisation is not synonymous with adopting EU policy entirely but that the administrative power of the EU is pervasive in reorganising peoplehood and territory, and promoting the economic development of nation-states, alongside human rights and democracy. Europeanisation, understood through a range of interpretations and contestations, can be observed in points of convergence and divergence from NDA's understanding of contemporary dance. For example, contemporary dance as an expanded practice is understood as a radical social practice that holds potential for democratic practices. NDA opposes the marketisation of art, emphasising public funding for public culture and here is a divergence from the treatment of artistic work and working life from how other commodities are financed and produced. But the professionalisation of contemporary dance as a field of practice in which a meaningful working life might be crafted also is rooted in economic viability. Several of the complex and conflicting dimensions of the EU, in processes of Europeanisation, become clarified through how contemporary dance is produced, circulated and received.

If Europeanisation is an unfinished and unfinishable process, following Delanty, Giorgi and Sassatelli (2011: 3), and Bauman (2004), then diverse conceptions help to deliberately retain Europe as an ambiguous concept. The NDA project situated itself as a Balkan, European, regional and local project, in parallel with the non-dialectic approach to contemporary dance. NDA recognise that there is considerable power entailed in a conceptualisation of Europe, and of art, as mutable and processual that is creatively generative, and violent, depending on how

physical and conceptual borders are policed. Retaining 'Europe' as impossible to complete justifies and propels ongoing efforts to continually rearticulate its existence, growth and adaptation as a collaborative, collective, democratic endeavour that has regard for both plurality and individual choice. The ways in which this plural Europe is alluded to as a shared concept helps to understand how 'its' festivals appear as instruments through which to make and remake, but never finish, Europe.

Contemporary dance as a poetics of multiplicity might then be understood to reinforce this process, with the festivals as temporary definitions of artistic forms. The tropes associated with European modernity concerning speed, efficiency, rationalisation of production, and managerial control over professions, make little sense to the messier, unpredictable elements of making art. Festivalisation of Europe appears in this tension of accepting unpredictability and framing it to produce an impression, if not performance, of control. The ambiguity of contemporary dance as a poetics of multiplicity is paralleled by ambiguous concepts deployed by EU policies to member states. Interpretation is up to each receiving government of a member state to develop, as well as each artist and NGO. Awareness of the malleability of concepts and non-dialectic thought, rather than a yearning for a definitive, is an important characteristic of contemporary dance as expanded practice that the NDA partners sought to work with and cultivate.

Like contemporary dance, this long-standing generative ambiguity at the core of the EU defends creative interpretation, and like contemporary dance, such ambiguity can produce irresolvable disagreement, when recognition, legitimation, and consensus cannot be found over certain terms or processes. Yet dissensus, at more obvious and imperceptible degrees is the very activity that keeps a field, a discourse, or a continent in motion and potentiality. Whilst the far-reaching consequences of disagreements within the EU are beyond the scope of this thesis to address, the paradoxes of the EU are embodied and reproduced in European, or rather, the EC-supported arts festivals as spaces of philosophical questions, debates, and disagreements. Contemporary dance production and festivals in the former Yugoslav space illuminate processes Europeanisation not simply through parallel concerns and questions, nor necessarily through representational strategies of Europe, but by being part of the conduits of social change in Europe that reflect itself to itself to open further questions. Recalling Gupta's aim, contemporary dance is another way of understanding the formation of communities that can denaturalise the nation-state when its festivals offer ways of organising space and spaces

through dissensual practices, and build bridges between scenes that are mobile in their forming and re-forming.

The economic and existential project of the EU is mediated through contemporary dance festivals, as much as contemporary dance festival makers navigate and mediate the support from the EC in pursuing their futures. Contemporary dance contributes to the EU project in ways that perhaps the EC could not anticipate, and as the project of NDA shows, the unexpected outcomes of its budget lines for culture have meant support for the revitalisation and transformation of some Yugoslav socialist principles piercing through festival-making. Imperceptible politics of curatorial praxis, though, are the unpredictable, unexpected moments of escape even from the enabling dimensions of EU policy on EC funding that supports contemporary dance, that appear agreeable and conducive until the reciprocity of the arrangements are questioned, as NDA as benefactors, illustrate. Democracy as practised by the NDA partners, though, wrests the aggrandising democratising narratives of the EU into a praxis of subversion. Forms of escape, when noticed by regimes of control, often force those regimes to reconfigure their borders and bodies. This remains an open question for future research into the structures and functions of arts festivals in Europe, and cultivation of empowered, meaningful working lives, as well as for the methods of censorship by omission that appears in the national cultural policies in the former Yugoslav space.

Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia recognised the problems of uncritically adapting to the latest national policy changes. This is seen most clearly in the curatorial theme of 'Defestivalisation/Refestivalisation' in *PLESkavica* shaped against increasing productivity expectations by the Slovene Ministry of Culture, in line with industrial production targets for other commodities. But the curatorial praxis here recognised that whilst festivalisation was a particular challenge in Slovenia, festivals in contemporary dance across Europe were also helping to perpetuate models of production that NDA considered unsustainable, or in danger of creating homogenous frameworks.

Festivalisation, with of its definitions being simply an increase of festivals, can be understood as generative in the case of Skopje and Belgrade where *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* contributed to diversifying examples of dance seen locally. For *PLESkavica*, its dissensus can be understood in relationship to the particular experience of Ljubljana hosting many dance and theatre festivals in 2011, and the negative conception of festivalisation appears here as the

quantity was deemed excessive (the number of festivals of contemporary dance and performance did fall the following year). What connects the three festivals is how each cast doubt upon festival industries also associated with festivalisation, and this doubt indicates something about how their makers perceive audiences and artists. Whilst this thesis has not focused upon the audiences explicitly, the festival-makers do not position them as consumers nor artists as service providers. A lesson from NDA's interpretation of being professional, which connects to the sociality of contemporary dance more broadly, is that what is produced is always co-owned and temporary. Ongoing practice and commitment to radical equality inflects the conceptualisation of democracy as always requiring reinitiation and it never being taken for granted. These conclusions might support a possible new direction for festival-making, or refestivalisation, that is less interested in hyper differentiation at the expense of co-existence and co-existing differences.

In the former Yugoslav space between 2007 and 2017, it can be argued that cultural policies have not developed that more adequately recognise perceptions of contemporary dance as an expanded practice. Where policies do exist for dance, as in the example of North Macedonia, contemporary dance is understood and narrowed by classification as a style only. Where policies exist for the redistribution of funds through a Ministry of Culture, in Serbia the absence of more detailed protocols to recognise different organisations risks a less equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Whilst such circumstances do not necessarily inhibit artistic work as the self-organisation of the independent scenes illuminate, the consequences of confusion or indifference towards choreographers and contemporary dance artists mean those interested in pursuing professional practice must continually develop their own connections, as well as be willing and able to travel to other contexts.

The complexity of defining contemporary dance as an expanded practice is significant for this research. The gulf of understanding between artists and the national cultural policy makers who largely determine the local conditions meant that the NDA project's aim to professionalise the field of dance mattered for building a sense of continuity and solidarity amongst diverse artistic communities and scenes. Professionalisation of the field of dance was supported by international development bodies, though as traced in Chapters 2 and 6, but the NDA project would not take on professionalism as a model of increasing hierarchies, or thickening the institutional mask that might form stronger borders between art, artists, and managers. NDA members were suspicious of institutional inflexibility as well as industrial models of production

and subsequent alienation, exploitation and exhaustion. The professionalism of Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia have significant implications for festival-making as a potentially radical democratic practice. Professionalism was conceptualised in ways that did not embrace perpetual competition amongst peers that is encouraged by instruments such as the open call for projects. Collective curatorial practices and the principle of invitation attempt to meaningfully redistribute agency and share responsibility on behalf of a broader field of contemporary dance as expanded practice.

Self-organisation has carried contemporary dance and performance practices in such a way that shows a willingness of the independent scenes unmotivated by making profit or government approval. Initiatives, educational frameworks, festivals, projects appear, transform or end, as noted in the unpredictable web archives and by Cvetković and Murić's accusation that the scene in Belgrade has amnesia. Continuity is traced instead through people and activities, and the initiation of the NDA project helps to make the claim that festivals beget more festivals as an unofficial cultural policy. The investment made by NGOS and artists in their own professionalisation contrasts with local-level policies and practices of the different Ministries of Culture. It would appear that contemporary dance is scarcely instrumentalised by Serbian, Slovene and North Macedonian governments to serve more cosmopolitan, outward-looking agendas or urbanisation, leaving it alone to exist otherwise. Yet the indifference towards contemporary dance by national cultural policy makes it easy to dismiss, to be infantilised even, and depoliticsed through marginalisation operating as a mechanism of censorship by omission, especially when independent artists and NGOS cannot access spaces of decision-making. That is why the actions to raise visibility, lobbying for greater, or to echo Stanica, 'reasonable', working rights and transparency in decision-making, in short, to professionalise remains significant to reposition and champion contemporary dance as an expanded practice. *PLESkavica*, *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* expose intricate dynamics of festival-making on shifting financial ground, and the bi-lateral agreements between countries and transnational organisations like the EU on which NGOs rely.

Contemporary dance as a social, critical and expanded practice was an organising principle of working life for NDA. In *PLESkavica*, *LocoMotion* and *Kondenz* it organised an uncompromising method of self-education for its makers, as well as its audience. The artist-led heuristic festival, and the properties of curatorial praxis, remake their makers. *LocoMotion*, *Kondenz* and *PLESkavica* questioned what is, or could be, held in common. This includes the

agency to co-create a meaningful life, and what civic life can entail for citizens with the power to shape spaces for public gathering and debate. They each show challenges in cultural scenes that make festival-making a catalyst that can reconfigure friendships, alliances and frontiers of solidarity over a decade. In Skopje, a context where cultural policy is indifferent to contemporary art, reconstructing transparent, discursive, public spaces through the festival as a public sphere reflects the lack of these in North Macedonia back to itself. Tracing the ending of *LocoMotion* reveals significant insights for festival sustainability more broadly. It helps to argue that despite the capacity of festivals to produce imperceptible politics and dissensus, festivals cannot be the only tactic for transformations in cultural production or holding a fluid scene together. Defestivalisation as an ending can be a new beginning, like for Lokomotiva moving into Kino Kultura, remaking the terms of the NGO and opening potential for something other than the disempowering exhaustion of maintaining a festival. In Slovenia, the increase of festivals that partly prompted the curatorial question of *PLESkavica* 2011 was not a sustained feature of the landscape, as the number of festivals for contemporary dance and performance promptly reduced in 2012.

Refestivalisation continues through *CoFestival*, as an important part of the changing festival landscape for dance and contemporary performance in Slovenia. *PLESkavica* succeeded in politicising contemporary dance. It achieved the vanguard position that often secures success in contemporary art of being almost unrecognisable. But, much like *LocoMotion* existing as a symbol of otherness by 2014, it is not always possible or necessary to sustain radical alterity in festival-making. That the NDA Slovenia group chose not to replicate the format of the 2011 edition argues that more familiar festival formats can still make critical commentary through framing and contextualising the artistic works of others. Whilst the festivals in this research might operate as another kind of institution, following the observations of Keil, heuristic artist-led festivals as a typology might more effectively illuminate the transformations of independent scenes in the former Yugoslav space over the 2000s that show an ambivalent relationship towards the kinds of institutionalisation associated with Europeanisation, as well as further institutionalisation being unlikely to happen soon, given disinterested national cultural policies for an expanded conception of contemporary dance.

Contemporary dance appears to act as a versatile cultural form for change and transformation whilst carrying older forms of social organisation. The festivals of this research demonstrate a form of cultural stewardship of both contemporary dance as an expanded practice and methods

and values of self-organisation associated with Self-Management in SFRY, partially, and somewhat ironically, enabled by the intervention of international development and its interest in supporting contemporary art. Their makers were aware of disempowering features of festivals for artists and for themselves that connect to constraints of profit-driven market capitalism. The intention to limit the alienating, disenfranchising dimensions of late capitalism is seen throughout the festivals, but also to take advantage of funding and co-production when possible to reinforce artistic autonomy, having something to share, and shaping a livelihood. Whilst operating in uncertain ways, strategies to find meaningful work and learning is seen in the development of curatorial praxis underpinned by NDA principles and aims. Collective responsibility for artistic scenes is observed through friendships, partnerships with peers to lobby together, and NDA partners working on behalf of others to achieve actions such as challenging the practices of the Ministry of Culture in Serbia.

NDA, traces of SFRY, and self-organisation

The determination of the members of Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia to operate transversally between scenes, funding bodies, international community agencies, institutions and peers in a cooperative way, and on as equal terms as possible is a deliberate strategy of survival. However, Stanica, NDA Slovenia and Lokomotiva seek institutional support or status selectively. Each insists upon the need for openness and flexibility, found in the empty space principle in their relations and partnerships. Whilst inured to their dysfunctionality, NDA partners acknowledge their interdependence with different state cultural policies, institutions and structures. Making relationships with these might ensure better conditions for the future and the possibility to affect future policy changes. However ambivalent this position appears, it is more generative than operating in opposition only, as the state institutions would then continually shape and pre-curate the choices of the independent scenes.

NDA project partners expected the festivals to support the development of the field of contemporary dance in the region. But the analysis of curatorial praxis in the previous Chapters helps to argue that the festival makers were interested not only in opinion-formation about contemporary dance as an expanded practice or the conditions for the local scene, but concerned with decision-making about the creation of their festivals themselves. The festival makers' concern for legitimacy meant not shying away from engaging with regimes of power

and the mechanisms that determine working conditions, but their concern was also for autonomy and for the independent scene to remain distinct. The ethical imperative underpinning Lokomotiva, Stanica and the *PLEScavica* 2011 group refuses to treat festival-making as apart from their context in a way that would attempt to appear almost apolitical, but rather, to understand the festival as highly situated. The makers insisted upon deliberative practices for shared decision-making and collective self-determination (Fraser, 1997: 86). These festivals illuminate broader questions of how to live and work in contemporary dance in meaningful ways. The festival makers acted from the presupposition of their own equality which means the festivals can be understood as practices of dissensus, that is, as challenges to hierarchical orders in contemporary dance, in cultural policy, in funding, in access, in representation, in distribution and so on. *Kondenz*, *LocoMotion* and *PLEScavica* forward the idea that people should be able to debate together, make decisions and take action as members of groups, communities or scenes, about the things that affect their lives.

In a context where state cultural institutions and policies for contemporary dance and art were hostile, indifferent or simply not existing, NDA was attempting to build a more robust field of contemporary dance in the former Yugoslav space and Balkan region with the already-existing scenes of activity. The project aimed to decompose the representational strategies of extant practices, such as ballet and Modern dance that carried expectations of which bodies and persons could work as dancers and choreographers, by forwarding conditions, discourse and examples of contemporary dance as a critical practice. What was at stake for Stanica, Lokomotiva, and NDA Slovenia included emancipation through knowledge and self-education. This thesis is not intended to be a guide to ethical curating or curating dissensus, but it does indicate how to take risks together to challenge known ways of doing and understanding in making festivals. The implications of the empty space principle in discussions about taking and relinquishing agency are significant contributions that question the power concentrated in the hands of a few that would monopolise the direction contemporary dance might take, and therefore how festivals are created and used.

Kondenz, *LocoMotion* and *PLEScavica* commented upon aspects of working life through curatorial themes. But they also attempted to intervene in making working life in contemporary dance meaningful through the methods of producing and experiencing the festivals, engaging with dilemmas and tensions through action and reflection. Self-organisation for praxis was at the heart of these contributions. It offered the opportunity to remake the present, through acts

that would shift perception and provoke questions, or humour. Self-organisation brought socialist practices and values to use. It supported troubling the questions of who gets to make and define contemporary dance, and its festivals, and contributed to a politicisation of contemporary dance, overcoming some of the vulnerabilities in a shared context.

How the festivals were made and conceptualised through self-organisation is a continuation and transformation of Yugoslav Self-Management. Co-ownership of the means of production reflects the co-ownership and co-creation of the state through a position of radical equality. To argue that the self-organised practices of Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia are connected to Yugoslav socialist legacies is not to assume that all contemporary dance operates in the former Yugoslav space operate on the same terms. Rather, the traces of socialist Yugoslavia in *Kondenz*, *LocoMotion* and *PLESkavica*/*CoFestival* pierces through as much as contemporary dance itself had pierced through other frames in SFRY. Although the previous Chapter made a case for the typology of heuristic artist-led festivals, self-organisation nevertheless is a crucial dimension to the way Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia make festivals and how the NDA project structure its activities. A vision of Yugoslav Self-Management was the possibility for 'opening of spaces for the autonomous development of different spheres of work and life under the umbrella of collective politics' (Vesić, 2015: 120).

This thesis grounds an understanding of the self-organisation observed in the festival makers as an extension and transformation of Yugoslav Worker Self-Management. Whilst Yugoslav Worker Self-Management is undoubtedly heavily contested, it nevertheless offers a radical model for cooperation that appeared in the unexpected elsewhere of artistic groups both during SFRY and after its dissolution, in the work of NDA and festival curation, carrying on this vision. Individual initiative has possibility in self-organisation, echoing the position of SFRY historically, founded as an anti-fascist and anti-capitalist project that did not seek total conformism but a search for co-existing contrasts, though within limits. The values carried on through self-organisation by NDA include the belief in the right to work and the sense of co-ownership of the means of production, as far as possible. These are fundamental principles that attempt to retain a sense of autonomy of artistic work, develop resources to share, and the agency to operate collectively. Self-organisation is not only a symbolic position of the potential for changing the modes of operation, but a practised technique, situated in the specific material conditions of what could be made possible in Skopje, Belgrade and Ljubljana between 2007 – 2017. It did not need to be imported. NDA used tactics of fluidity so that the configuration of

people involved could refresh itself, and so members might take time away, or leave, meaning new projects could appear, plans could adapt, and ideas could circulate. Examples include how the DMB reconfigures itself on a three-year cycle. Other examples of self-organising self-organisation is seen in how *CoFestival* merged three festivals together in 2012; and that when the *LocoMotion* festival ended, Lokomotiva restructured itself for its sustainability and individual needs.

Though invitation was used in *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* in 2011 in particular to question the hierarchies of selection, invitation nevertheless creates an interior and sense of belonging to NDA more generally. The qualities of NDA become clearer when considered alongside other cultural workers in dance. An example of this is found in the following story, centred around the concern for being transparent. In a meeting in 2011 of the Association of Contemporary Dance in Slovenia, those people present were to decide on board members for the fated Institute of Contemporary Dance. Two people in the meeting preferred to take a blind vote, whilst NDA members Alfirević and Vevar opposed this. Vevar notes that 'the NDA spirit is total transparency, not really feeling bad about confronting each other, it's not about personal things but how we are together' (2018). This expression of trust in difference is a crucial facet of self-organisation that exemplifies how NDA understood dissensus as crucial for democratic practice.

As illustrated through the empty space principle, autonomous and emancipatory dimensions of work could be better served through collective action in the taking and relinquishing agency to derive benefits for all involved, and those beyond. The festivals demonstrate this not only through creating spaces for public performances and workshops, but with co-curation experiments made by extending invitation to more artists and audiences that distributed decision-making in the 2011 editions. A quality of responsiveness to change underpins self-organisation, like the example of sharing decisions about the curatorial statement written by Ana Dubljević for *Kondenz* 2016. *PLESkavica* exposed the principle of invitation through the agency cultivated and deployed in distributed decision-making across different stages of festival-making (preparation, design and participation) that are often more distinctly held apart. The empty space principle worked to both take and give up agency, and co-create over time, shows self-organisation to be a dynamic, unpredictable process, one that works against any 'kind of solidifying of the power' (Alfirević in Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski, 2018: 91).

The imperceptible politics of self-organisation shows a mode of escape from the everyday challenges of sustaining working life in contemporary dance. Self-organisation is valuable for the ways in which it also temporary, committed but not instituted, and so interconnected with the fluidity of the scene. In this regard, the self-organisation of NDA partners in festival-making troubles the notion of a dance 'sector' that can undermine artistic autonomy or critical capacity in favour of industry reliability and efficiency, or of art for profit, in which the art may show criticality but only in terms approved of by the art market. A sector implies institutional rigidity that glosses over vulnerabilities and marginality, and the monopolies of power that can depoliticise contemporary dance through consensus. The imperceptible politics in self-organisation of the festivals included the possibility to re-make the terms under which they worked, and to remake each other's perception, thus destabilising the various regimes of power in cultural production by rendering their influence questionable, and doing differently.

PLESkavica, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* each rehabilitated the idea of self-organisation as enabling co-creating and co-curating the festivals, instilling a sense of shared responsibility for the artistic scenes in which they were taking place. This is why the festivals were significant practices that promoted socialist values, and why imperceptible politics matters for rupturing the anxieties of twenty-first century versions and visions of self-sufficiency. Notions of co-ownership, temporary ownership, and producing forms that are not individual property are less an attack on individuation than on the barriers to finding common ground for what might be shared.

Independent cultural scenes

The imperceptible politics of making the *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* festivals exposes artists and cultural workers as political subjects with freedom to disagree and remake the terms of their work. Trust in something that is missing uncompromisingly appears. What is missing in each context at times is a commitment to sociality and co-creation in state cultural policy and infrastructure that would recognise the differences and contributions of artistic forms, and redistribute differently the power to shape their conditions. In the independent cultural scenes of which Lokomotiva, Stanica and NDA Slovenia are part, working with a politics of recognition of differences in dance and methods of making, and redistribution of agency and resources strives towards an emancipatory, meaningful working life.

The people in the NDA project wanted to ensure reflection upon their processes in order not to perpetuate and reproduce any monopolisation of power and resources, and remain flexible to the changing needs and interests of its members and other artists, audiences and peers. In a fundamental way, the festival makers respected the life choices of artists they invited. They were committed to artistic inquiry for audiences. The festivals would include volunteers only on the basis that they would be enabled to get to see work, meet artists and not be given only the most menial tasks. Seen most keenly in *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* of 2011, but carried through other editions of *Kondenz*, *LocoMotion* and *CoFestival*, the social space of the festival was emphasised and used to nurture various relations in an attempt to work against isolation between artists, cultural workers and audiences. Analysing the contexts in which these festivals appeared helps to argue that though contemporary dance might exist transnationally, the ways in which it is conceptualised and produced, seen through festivals, remains intimately interwoven with the politics of the places and spaces in which they are realised, affecting how contemporary dance comes to be politicised, its discourses and its possible futures. On the other hand, contemporary dance might serve as a useful proxy to understand how differences more broadly conceived are or are not tolerated.

Though the concept of 'the independent scene' is contested from within the scene itself through questions of its actual material reality and the very possibility of independence (Ivić and Koruga, 2017), the festival makers strove to form a meeting point for the scene that simultaneously disclosed it to other audiences and scenes. The cyclical dimensions of the three festivals, for and by artistic scenes, affects the dynamics of contemporary dance production and dissemination and draws attention to other discontinuities and unpredictable elements. The reoccurrence of the festival as mediators of change forms a point of solidarity, to discuss, face, laugh at, lament, celebrate and escape by presenting new works, inviting guests and sometimes using different spaces and venues in the cities. The festivals were a point of reoccurrence and withdrawal to refresh the scene. By inviting new artists, and audiences, the scene is maintained through a quality of porousness and transience, as something to be joined and left. *PLESkavica*, *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* each communicated and mediated issues of concern in the local scene of contemporary artists and cultural workers. One of these affected by a number of factors was working conditions. Factors include first, that relationships of exchange between the independent (interdependent) scenes and state cultural institutions diminished over the 2000s and 2010s. Second, that the departure of much of the funding support from the international community, especially after 2008, meant a decrease in funded collaborative

opportunities between different groups and organisations. Third, projects that did continue with EC grants were managed in problematic ways by national ministries for art and culture. For example, in *Kondenz* 2016, the curatorial statements hint that the right to work is jeopardised, and though it does not make it explicit, the reference is to the dysfunctional systems of the Ministry of Culture and Information. The local scenes therefore experienced different kinds of alienation, for example between the artists and NGOs, and the policies (or their absence) by the ministries. These entrenched some adversarial feelings, but the festivals attempted to avoid reproducing the same alienation between curators and artists, or artists and audiences. Between 2007 and 2017 there have been several missed opportunities for meaningful, mutually enriching relationships between national and municipal funding bodies (part of the state power) and local artists and NGOS that would support artistic and audience development. These frustrations partly characterise the experiences of the local independent scenes of contemporary dance artists and cultural workers.

Humour was also an imperceptible politics of defiance and subversion, for example playing with the roles of curator and the curated in *PLESkavica* when the festival makers wanted to experience their festival as participants, shifting the balance from host to co-creator. Or, in the of example of *Kondenz* in 2012, where the assembled crowd followed the lead of the organisers in celebrating the non-appearance of the professional mourner. These moments address whole fields of power through locally situated action of the scenes, where the immanence of the laughing body takes improvisation as life, and escapes capture. The precarious, itinerant and unpredictable working conditions in contemporary dance and other cultural work is understood to be normal in the 2000s and 2010s, and to argue that festivals do not contribute to this would be disingenuous. However, Stanica, Lokomotiva and NDA Slovenia were aware of these problems, and sought to find ways of doing differently. The self-organised models of work in each organisation, between them, and with their peers beyond each city that were explored in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 demonstrate modes of not merely coping with the environment but finding ways to thrive and find meaningful, playful experiences.

In joining the EU, Slovenia installed many autocratic models of managing the state and exacerbating methods of positivist measurement to describe success and efficiency. As much as possible, NDA Slovenia refused to tolerate such policing of modes of production, with dissensual subjectification arising through curatorial praxis. Changes to the status and taxation of independent cultural workers and artists that would undermine the differences between this

work and other fields, closely traced Chapter 4, illustrates the necessity of an infrastructure that recognises artistic work. *PLESkavica* in 2011 demonstrates major refusal to uphold a system in decline, or be placated by the existing infrastructure. The makers of the festival were not willing to simply carry on adapting, but used the festival to critique the contributing factors affecting meaningful working life and the continuity of the local scene itself. This is the imperceptible politics of addressing a whole field of power in the localised action of festival-making. *PLESkavica* challenged the expectations of the local scenes. Not all of its makers' peers recognised that the 2011 festival experiment was not simply idealising direct democracy and horizontality, but communicating and critiquing the demands of production to which most cultural workers and artists had been flexibly augmenting their work and timings around for some years. The festival was a refusal of certain demands, without disappearing from the context altogether. Embodying indifference to productivity, taking time, prioritising the quality of attention given to each other, and yet still managing to make a busy programme, was a risk the festival considered crucial to take. *PLESkavica* shaped the space of the festival precisely for the very creative exploration Slovene cultural policies claim to support, but failed to recognise.

Another factor affecting the local scenes that was commented upon by the festivals through the curatorial concerned artists' migration, especially in Serbia and North Macedonia. In Slovenia, the migration of artists is less (in quantity and frequency) than from North Macedonia and Serbia, and artists often return after study elsewhere, questions of sustainability nevertheless remain important. Artistic migration and mobility refreshes and helps to circulate knowledge, advance skills and can be considered an advantage to curatorial praxis, although the examples of *Kondenz* and *LocoMotion* indicate the struggles of being the place that is left behind. The scattering and reconfiguring of people and practices characterise artistic scenes, and the analysis of curatorial praxis opened questions about the effects of return and regrouping. In 2015 the return of choreographers Igor Koruga, Ana Dubljević, and Jovana Rakić to Serbia made a difference to the ways in which Stanica was organised and *Kondenz* was created in 2016, and reflects the long-term effects of the NDA project. Tracing all the artists and participants in NDA projects, and the contributions they have made on other scenes, artistic practice and education, would constitute another study to understand better the long-term effects of networks in contemporary dance. Festivals provide a point of entry to such an enquiry. Festivals are so often theorised for being a space of exception, though in this research they contribute to understanding how belonging (to a scene, an art form, a field, and so on)

might be constituted over time. This would be a direction for future research, building also from Vevar's article and lecture-performance *How my life turned into a festival* (2010) about his everyday life as a cultural worker in which festivals became normal rather than exceptional. The festivals in this thesis illustrate how artists co-exist across many scenes and have sufficiently accessible entry points to them that are also enabled by curatorial praxis.

It would be a mistake to take for granted the regularity of festivals, as the example of *LocoMotion* shows. As its ending due to a combination of factors out of balance illustrates, festivals of the independent scenes need to be understood as interdependent, if not contingent. The return of some artists to Serbia in 2015 and not to North Macedonia is one example of the flux of the conditions for contemporary dance and contemporary art in these two countries especially over the 2000s and 2010s, and is related to forms of support and broader issues affecting artistic working life in art and dance. By comparing the lists of supporters over festival editions, the skill in maintaining relations and friendship to enable them to continue, or be made anew becomes apparent, though changes to infrastructure are beyond the control of NGOs. The sense of endurance of local scenes is traceable to individuals and to the politics of friendship in everyday encounters. Založnik points out about *CoFestival* that 'we are this collective body, we are not superstars who come and then leave, we are creating the context, that cannot be created by someone else' (2018). Založnik here illuminates the specificity of the configuration of people who wish to take care over many aspects of the festival and the scene, and those relationships are considered meaningful. Though some of the discourse on the topic of the scene explores its exploitative and self-exploitative potentials (Gielen, 2009), this research contributes another perspective that argues festival-making can operate as a safety valve of social relations for the scene when curatorial agency can be redistributed and pre-curation questioned.

Witnessing curatorial praxis

No longer the post-conflict hotspots that attracted international attention and headlines, the context of the former Yugoslav space remains analytically important for the field of contemporary dance and for festival scholarship, as well as the long-term effects of regime changes in so-called 'transitional' states. This thesis was initially inspired by what principles underpin festival curation, and the concerns that might inform them. It has analysed the imperceptible politics of cultural production from the perspectives of festival makers in North

Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia alongside questions of recognition and redistribution of agency relevant not only to those living and working in the former Yugoslav space. Tracing imperceptible politics and changes in festival curatorial praxis highlights the clarity of cultural workers' political agency, their motivations to co-create the means of production and what radical practices of democracy can look like in the field of contemporary dance. The NDA project goals and organisational principles of invitation, balance and empty space helped to create conditions to politicise contemporary dance and resist its depoliticisation, without predicting or policing what that might look like. These goals and principles contributed to an analytic framework that wove together concerns of SFRY with festival-making in the former Yugoslav space. Through new distributions of the sensible, creating imperceptible politics, the festivals by NDA partners demonstrate the effects of working with structure and improvisation, and navigating multiple forms of support and escaping obstacles. Recalling Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski and Dimitriov's comment in Chapter 2 on 'delayed audiences', Lepecki argues for the affective-political dimensions of being an audience, where audiences only become constituted when the stories of what was witnessed are retransmitted, after the time of viewing and embodying (2016: 177). This reinforces the proposition that festivals continue to affect discussion and debate about how they are constituted and how contemporary dance is presented and contested beyond the duration of their event, rendering this thesis another kind of witnessing of festival curation, and the traces of SFRY.

This thesis does not provide much detail about the experience of a festival as an audience member, or my experiences of the festivals I attended, nor individual performances. The category of audience is stretched in certain moments to include other festivals and scenes, and media spaces of the public sphere. This dimension of the research could be extended in the future to approach audiences' experiences, but not only in the reductive manner of the current demographic profiling and statistics. Making festivals of contemporary dance with public subsidies currently entails a double performativity: for the funder as an audience, and for audiences who want to attend a festival of contemporary dance. The ways in which these performances are unfolding threatens to depoliticise the field, and therefore there is scope for further research to which this thesis stands as perhaps a hopeful countermeasure to the challenges of the next decades. This research was less concerned with justifying audience quantity, experiences, or perceptions than with the festival-makers processes and concerns. In this regard, the festivals are perceived as the results of sociality and common interests in contemporary dance as an expanded practice. The agency of festivals continues to extend,

communicating across different sensory modes, affecting perception, addressing fields of power, being locally recognisable along topics and thematic lines, and meeting delayed audiences. This is the imperceptible policies of curatorial praxis.

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