

London School of Economics and Political Science

Performing interculture

*Inequality, diversity and difference in
contemporary music production in Berlin*

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Declaration of originality

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it). The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Quotation from it is permitted, provided that full acknowledgement is made. This thesis may not be reproduced without my prior written consent. I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

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Abstract

This thesis explores contemporary forms of music production and performance in Berlin, Germany, and analyses to what extent these are associated with transformative forms of urban multiculture, or the reproduction of elite formations and racialised notions of difference. Based on an ethnographic study, including qualitative interviewing, participant observations and musicological reflections, I examine a self-described ‘intercultural’ music project which has been developed by an established opera institution in Berlin. The project seeks to interrogate its position as part of Germany’s highbrow music realm by promoting a ‘Turkish German’ intervention in Berlin’s cultural sector. Set against the project’s specific institutional setting and its urban context, where the legacies of German imperialism and racialised guestworker policies continue to crystallise, I probe how the project’s organisational and aesthetic practices construct particular notions of difference and shape concepts of cultural value and legitimacy – in short, I examine how interculture is *performed* in the context of *Project X*. In so doing, I consider the creative practices of music-making but also link such aesthetic discussions to an analysis of wider discourses around citizenship, identity and belonging that operate in Germany. My study traces to what extent *Project X* unsettles hegemonic constructions of difference but also shows when and under which conditions the project reproduces marginalising discourses around ‘race’, migration, class and gender by ultimately relegating transgressive musical representations back into the standardised logics of a Western art music institution. This study contributes to critical scholarship on cultural production and to current debates in sociology concerned with the remaking of social inequalities and cultural distinctions in the context of urban multiculture. On a more practical level, my thesis offers a critical review of intercultural efforts made in Berlin’s highbrow music sector and suggests a reflexive way forward for cultural projects that seek to engage with the multicultural city.

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¹ For copyright and anonymity reasons, I have not included any pictures or graphs in the online version of the thesis.

Chapter 1: Introduction – setting the scene

'There has been something about classical music and opera that tends to hire its own, whether its class, whether its gender, or ethnicity. [...] There is something about opera any way that feels quite a bit behind other media. Generally there has just been a few gatekeepers who decide the taste of opera and they are pretty similar people with pretty similar tastes' (Stuart Murphy, ENO's chief executive, cited in The Guardian, 28 January 2019).

'I'm not sure that there can be such a thing as intercultural music-making in a Western art music institution' (Rifat, freelance oud-player, interview in November 2017, Berlin).

My first encounter with Project X

I first met Murat² in a little Turkish restaurant in Bergmannstraße in Kreuzberg, Berlin. I immediately noticed how well Murat was known by the restaurant's cook and waiters, how he casually greeted some of the other guests and recommended his favourite dish to me. 'This is my *Kiez* [Berlin slang for urban neighbourhood], you know. This is where I was born and grew up. My family, my friends... most of us are still here.' Murat, in his early 40s, seems somehow younger. A loose, casual shirt and blue jeans styled up with a pair of colourful, slightly worn out sneakers – cool without caring too much his appearance reminded me of a 'real' Berliner, not the stereotypical hipster yuppie with designer glasses, but a neighbourly guy who seems somewhat unimpressed by the new 'edgy' hype his city has experienced during the last years. With his keen eyes and tousled hair Murat seemed brim-full of energy, a bit hectic, almost agitated. He immediately addressed me with the informal 'you' and after only a little while of friendly small talk, he started to casually call me by my last name – 'as football players do' he joked with a very noticeable Berlin accent.

² The real names of all individual research participants and participating cultural institutions have been changed.

The friendly and relaxed atmosphere made me feel instantly comfortable. He seemed genuinely interested in what I had to say and ask and felt even more passionately about his own responses. ‘Berlin has such a long-standing Turkish community, but there is still a reluctance in this country to let us have a seat at the table... A project like this is therefore long overdue. I have never worked in a musical institution before you know. I am a plumber by training, and I was as an entertainer on a cruise ship for a while, but I mostly worked in neighbourhood management in Neukölln. When I saw the job alert by the opera house, I didn’t think I would stand a chance against all the musicologists and pedagogics who showed up for the interview. But I got the job and have been working there since 2011.’ He was chosen, as the opera house’s³ directorship explained to me later, because he had a concrete plan.

The job was meant to design and implement a programme that the opera house described as ‘intercultural’. When applying for the job, Murat had an imminent idea of what such an intercultural programme could look like and coined it *Project X*⁴. Interculture is thus a key concept for Project X, and for this thesis. While not intended as a direct answer to a specific piece of cultural policy but rather as a term of creative practice, Project X’s conception of interculture draws inspiration from the Berlin-based migration scholar Mark Terkessidis (2010: 10) whose definition states that ‘neither the differences between cultures nor mutual respect should be paramount – it is not intercultures but interculture, thus “culture in the in-between”’. For the purposes of this study, I build on the above and understand interculture as a dynamic term of cultural and creative practice which seeks to counter paradigms of multiculturalism, integration or assimilation and instead champions the emergence of new syncretic

³ For the purposes of publication, I do not disclose the name of the opera institution in concern.

⁴ For the purposes of publication, I have changed the original title of the project to ‘Project X’.

relationships.⁵ Against this backdrop, this thesis is interested in how and to what extent the notion of interculture becomes both mobilised and mobilising in contemporary cultural production – that is, I examine *how interculture is performed* in the context of Project X.

For the opera institution, the Project X programme was planned as a follow-up to its predecessor programme ‘Turkish – Opera can do it’⁶ which introduced Turkish subtitles and accompanying materials (flyers, booklets, etc.) for all main in-house performances. ‘I think they [the opera institution directorship] knew pretty much right away that this wasn’t enough by far...’, Murat said with a mischievous smile, so the opera institution decided to promote a more comprehensive programme to rethink its relationships with its multicultural urban surroundings. Murat remembers: ‘I didn’t know music at all, really. I however know the city, I know the Turkish communities and I know how to bring people together to create something and I knew what I wanted to create.’ Working closely together with his colleague Nicolai, he hence put forward different projects in the name of Project X to promote what he claims should be a ‘process of diversification’ on distinct yet interrelated levels – programming, staff and audiences. The cultural, historic and demographic specificities of Berlin seem to stand at the core of Project X’s approach:

‘It’s a Berlin project. I don’t think this could work anywhere else or at least not in this specific form. You need to work locally. We really try to work with the particular features of Berlin and its people and that only works when you know the city. Project X is not a generic programme because it is so closely linked to Berlin and its Turkish communities. This was our starting point but, although the Turkish focus somewhat prevails, we have a broader perspective on diversity of course. We aim to move with the times of this city’ (conversation with Murat in April 2016, Berlin).

⁵ I will present a more in-depth, critical discussion of the concept of interculture in Chapter 2.

⁶ See the flyer of ‘Turkish – Opera can do it’ in Appendix 1 [Please note: The opera institution owns the copyrights to most of the photos, posters and flyers added in the Appendix].

As a first step, Project X sought to make the in-house children's choir of the opera institution more diverse by specifically promoting participation of children of different (mostly Turkish) backgrounds and from various urban localities. Correspondingly, in 2012, the opera institution commissioned its first Turkish German children's opera, the second one following in 2017. Through hiring local composers, musicians and librettists of either Turkish or Arabic heritage or from Turkey, the objective of both operas was inasmuch the attraction of new audiences as it was the widening of the aesthetic programming of opera itself with a particular focus on intercultural music-making. Moreover, with the launch of the minibus-programme⁷, the Project X team has sought to engage in an intimate and reflexive way with the wider multicultural spaces of Berlin, conceptualising a short and interactive musical theatre story that is concerned with themes around migration and belonging and which aims to specifically stage Berlin's Turkish migration histories through the means of music. Consisting of a small team of three musicians and two singers, the minibus has since travelled through various neighbourhoods in Berlin, performing at different local organisations such as neighbourhood centres and family hubs⁸, and has even embarked on a concert tour along the so-called guestworker route all the way from Berlin to Istanbul.⁹

In addition to the above-mentioned programmes, Project X organised the Turkish music festival¹⁰ at the opera institution in 2016, including performances by the famous Istanbul group Kardeş Türküler, Turkish pop Icon Candan Erçetin and Berlin's popular DJane Ipek, conducted an intercultural staff training and hosted a symposium on inequalities and interculture in the highbrow art sector. After 2017 –

⁷ I have changed the names of all the programme parts of Project X. See Appendix 2 for the official Minibus-poster.

⁸ See Appendix 3 for a list of the Berlin partner organisations.

⁹ See Appendix 4 for an overview of the music pieces used in the Minibus-programme.

¹⁰ See Appendix 5 for the festival programme.

that is, after I completed my fieldwork – the Project X team launched yet another Minibus-concert tour this time via the *Ruhrgebiet* [Ruhr area] to Brussels, developed a Minibus-performance specifically designed for children and initiated the so-called pop-up operas, small spontaneous and interactive performances of opera pieces in Berlin's public spaces, such as airport waiting halls, bars, parks or sports clubs.

As Nicolai reflects, 'we are learning too. It is indeed through our work that we get an increasingly deeper understanding of what could be done in terms of interculture within the music sector. So far, we have not stopped thinking about new ideas' (interview in Berlin, September 2016). At the centre of all of Project X's work, however, stands the notion of 'a mutual intercultural learning strategy' that strongly seeks to avoid any form of a unilateral outreach – 'it's not just about access for diverse people, it is first and foremost about us as an institution', Murat holds (conversation in March 2016, Berlin). Thus, as the opera institution website (2017) sums it up, with the launch of Project X, '[the institution] aspires to be an interculturally open institution' and to be 'open[] towards the city'. As such, Murat adds, Project X would offer a realm within which the perception and self-understanding of the highbrow or Western art music sector itself could be challenged: 'Project X provides an opportunity to rethink what actually constitutes the classical music world and musical theatre, where it is out of touch and unequal and where it would need to change if it wants to stay relevant.'

My first meeting with Murat left me both enthusiastic and sceptical. It was hard not to be swept away by the passion with which he was discussing his work and his relationships to Berlin. Clearly, he was someone who cared deeply about the city

and about Berlin's Turkish German¹¹ communities, someone who seemed unapologetically aware of inequalities in the city's cultural sector and Germany more broadly and who was ready to jump in at the deep end and take action. Set against the stereotypical images of Germany's so-called *Hochkultursektor* [high culture sector]¹² as somewhat dusty, detached and elitist, Murat's biography seemed promisingly unorthodox. Yet, a feeling of scepticism remained. It was, however, not at all directed at Murat or Nicolai whose dedication and wealth of ideas seemed inexhaustible to me but was rather grounded in my own experiences of Germany's highbrow musical field. Although I had been interested in Western art or classical music¹³ almost all my life and attended performances at Berlin's opera and concert houses on a regular basis, I felt a growing uneasiness about precisely those institutions in concern. While the opera and classical music scene in Berlin never occurred to me as fancy or dissociated as similar institutions in Munich, London or Paris, their entanglement with Western elitism and hierarchical forms of cultural distinction seemed undeniable still.

Indeed, the opera performances I have seen in Berlin, and especially at the opera institution in concern, arguably the most dynamic opera house in the city, were most often novel, shrill and provocative, full of frivolity, politics and critique à la *Regietheater*¹⁴. But no matter how innovative the performance, opera as an institution

¹¹ Throughout the thesis, I will use the term 'Turkish German' to describe Germans of Turkish descent. I do so for two reasons: First, it corresponds with the self-description of many of my research participants and, secondly, it counters the framing of 'German Turks' predominantly used in German public discourse which has been criticised by activists and scholars for its inherent othering logics that mark communities of Turkish descent as 'secondary' Germans only.

¹² Throughout the thesis, I will use the terms 'highbrow sector', 'high culture sector' and 'state-subsidised cultural sector' to the largest extent synonymously. While I find conceptual faults with either of such terms (which I develop further in Chapter 4), I have decided to stick to such description to precisely grasp and emphasise the hierarchical relationships still playing out in the cultural production and consumption sphere.

¹³ Throughout the thesis, I will use the terms 'Western art music (sector)' and 'classical music (sector)' interchangeably, while being conscious of the conceptual limitations both terms carry (see Chapter 4 for more details).

¹⁴ *Regietheater* [director's theatre] is a modern post Second World War practice that allows the director augmented artistic freedom in staging a particular theatre or opera piece and, in doing so, to divert from the original script or staging directions. These divergences can include central elements such as the

and a genre nevertheless appears somewhat anachronistic and out of touch. The glamorous atriums, the star singers, the orchestra in dress coats, the mostly elderly, middle-class and almost exclusively white audiences – for me, almost nothing seemed to connect Berlin’s opera houses with the fast-pacing, complex, multicultural and unconventionally creative spaces of the city. And while the field of opera and (Western) classical music more generally is certainly internationalised; socially diverse, multicultural and multi-ethnic it seems not. On the contrary, not only did I myself only rarely see a person of colour¹⁵ on Berlin’s opera stages or even in the audience, but reductive constructions of racialised difference also appear to be part and parcel of many canonised opera repertoires. One need only think of the role of the ‘moorish general’ in Verdi’s *Othello* or of the barbaric, oversexualised Turks in Mozart’s *The Abduction from the Seraglio* – long-standing Orientalist and racialised character depictions that have too often been uncritically adopted by contemporary directors and artists.

How, then, does a project like Project X, which seemingly seeks to unsettle the social, organisational and aesthetic boundaries that have shaped the genre of opera in favour of the multicultural city, sit within an institutional setting that has been itself

chronology of scenes, the geographical location of a plot, casting choices and, of course, the plot itself. Most notably, the *Regietheater* approach designates a renunciation of traditional theatrical conventions and interpretations and as such runs in parallel to a broader (post)modernist aesthetics that centralises politics and political critique in staged performances (see e.g. Dombois and Klein, 2007).

¹⁵ Throughout the thesis, I deploy terms like ‘people/artists/cultural producers of colour’, ‘minority cultural producers’, ‘people/artists with migration background/biographies’ synonymously, while being aware of the nuanced conceptual differences each of these terms bears. I decided to use these terms to stress the ways in which people who are not considered white become racialised and minoritised in mainly white societies such as Germany. The term ‘person of colour’ has been put forward by communities of colour, anti-racist academics and activists in the United States to highlight the need for solidarity and form alliances among racialised groups of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds who face similar experiences of racism, discrimination and marginalisation in societies where ‘white’ has been centred as the norm and standard. The term was originally developed by the black feminist Audre Lorde while she resided in Berlin during the 1980s but has gained more and more traction in Germany through the works of contemporary critical ‘race’ and postcolonial scholars (see e.g. El-Tayeb, 2016; Nobrega 2016, Nghi Ha, Al Samarai and Mysorekar, 2007).

so deeply entangled with Western elitism and long-standing discourses of Otherness? To what extent can such hierarchical relationships, especially around class, ‘race’ and ethnicity, be challenged given the historical legacies of and current inequalities in opera as an aesthetic and institutional format? And, put in the larger context of contemporary Berlin, how does a project like Project X speak to broader urban inequalities and discourses of migration and citizenship that operate in Germany’s public sphere more broadly? In short, to what extent can a project like Project X critically reconstruct notions of cultural value and legitimacy and disrupt racialised and classed discourses of difference that show in Berlin’s cultural production sector and in the country’s wider society?

It is these research questions which guide my thesis. More specifically, in conducting an ethnographic study (including qualitative interviewing, participant observation and musicological reflections) of Project X as a self-identified ‘intercultural’ project, I examine how its organisational and aesthetic practices construct particular notions of difference and shape concepts of cultural value and legitimacy. In so doing, I work with Project X’s cultural producers, the wider opera institution staff involved in the project as well as with musicians, composers and other local participants who have not been fully employed by the opera institution but have been affiliated with Project X. Moreover, I consider in detail the practices of cultural production and music-making itself but also aim to critically situate such aesthetic discussions in a wider analysis of the Western art music sector, which has been itself heavily implicated in reductive depictions of Otherness, and in the urban context of Berlin, where the legacies of German imperialism and racialised guestworker policies continue to crystallise.

My interest in Project X has therefore been at the same time political, academic and personal. As already insinuated above, my personal interest in Project X partly stems from my biographical relationship with music, in particular Western art music or classical music. Having been an amateur piano player and singer almost all my life and holding a BA in musicology, I have come to know music and music-making from various perspectives. I was lucky to have found music-making – of whatever genre – as a space of deep enjoyment, personal retreat and shared social experience which taught me the extraordinary human value of aesthetic practice and creative self-expression. However, I have also been confronted with the ways in which unequal social conditions have led to different forms, genres and traditions of music being either valorised or dismissed as valuable and legitimate means of aesthetic and social experience and with how such aesthetic judgements contribute to concealing and supporting the dominant social powers in society.

It is in this regard that my academic transition from musicology to sociology has helped me profoundly to dismantle the ways in which social inequalities and hegemonic power relations of class, ‘race’ and gender, for instance, have been disguised as aesthetic value judgements and have worked through hierarchising discourses of highbrow versus popular, of Western versus othered and of sophisticated and legitimate versus banal and primitive. The critical examination of the social implications of contemporary cultural production, and of music production in particular, has become a central scholarly and political objective of mine. An analysis of Project X set against broader inequalities in Berlin’s cultural sector and in contemporary Germany more generally corresponds precisely to this endeavour and, as such, has given me a unique opportunity to further grapple with the complex relationships between the musical and the social.

My personal interest in the field of cultural production is therefore crucially intertwined with my wider scholarly and political concerns which are illustrated in significant ways by Project X. Most notably, Project X has developed amidst a set of larger debates that have considerably shaped Berlin's cultural politics in recent years. On the one hand, Project X speaks to the latent crisis of Germany's high culture sector in which Western art music, and specifically the genre of opera, holds a particularly central position. It thus exemplifies broader questions of cultural programming, policy and funding and the ways in which their specific orientation and distributions (de)legitimise certain segments of cultural production and, in turn, how cultural institutions react to such issues.

On the other hand, and partly interconnected with the former, Project X is situated within a larger 'diversity in the arts' debate that has not only been at the centre of discussion in Berlin's state-subsidised cultural sector but which is moreover profoundly entangled with a wider discourse about Germany as a postmigratory¹⁶ country shaped by long-standing histories of migration, racism, imperial pasts and racialised guestworker policies with a particular focus on migration from Turkey and the Middle East. In this vein, turning the ethnographic eye towards contemporary dynamics in the Western art music sector not only gives insight into Germany's current political moment but also bears political and scholarly significance for the wider postcolonial project of 'provincializing Europe' and its cultural institutions (Chakrabarty, 2000)¹⁷.

¹⁶ The term postmigratory has first been coined by the Turkish German theatre producer Shermin Langhoff who has championed postmigratory narratives in her work at the theatre *Ballhaus Naunynstraße* and at the *GORKI Theatre* in Berlin. Since then, the term has been picked up and further discussed by scholars and activists, calling attention to the various ways in which migration, historic and current, is an integral part of German society (see e.g. Foroutan, 2014; Yıldız, 2014; El-Tayeb, 2016). I will turn towards such debates in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

¹⁷ I will come back to this argument in Chapter 4.

On a more abstract level, then, Project X illuminates debates around and potential shifts in contemporary cultural production in Germany, its relationships to social power and its entanglement with classed and racialised hierarchies. As such, the project might illustrate the changing configurations of contemporary cultural distinctions and elitism inasmuch as it sits within a broader politics of cultural representation, discourses of difference and issues of inequality in the multicultural city. Project X thus raises pivotal questions about the ways in which issues around migration, urban diversity and inequality can be negotiated and addressed in contemporary cultural production and specifically problematises the complex relationship between Western highbrow culture and urban multiculture. Subsequently, the project throws up a variety of issues which, from a theoretical perspective, require me to address a variety of academic discussions, too. More specifically, my analysis of Project X sits across a multitude of academic debates stemming from cultural sociology, musicology, cultural studies and critical ‘race’ and migration literature that have significantly helped me make sense of the empirical intricacies uncovered by my fieldwork. As such, this study is inasmuch a voyage through Project X and Berlin as it is a voyage through contemporary scholarship.

Thesis Outline

As stated above, this thesis seeks to interrogate how interculture is performed in the context of Project X by zooming into the project’s organisational and aesthetic practices. In so doing, I aim to examine how these construct particular notions of difference and shape discourses of cultural value and legitimacy. I herein take seriously the practices of music-making itself, but also aim to critically situate such affective and process-oriented discussions in a wider analysis of the aesthetic and

institutional legacies of Berlin's highbrow music sector, of the city's migration and cultural histories and of the current political moment playing out in Germany more broadly. Overall, my thesis shows where and how, in the context of Project X, interculture succeeds in unsettling dominant notions of Otherness and constructs progressive discourses of cultural value and legitimacy. However, it also demonstrates how, despite genuine efforts to critically review the workings of Berlin's highbrow sector and to produce transgressive representations of difference, Project X reproduces marginalising discourses around 'race', migration and class by ultimately relegating such musical disruptions back into the standardised logics of a Western art music institution. My thesis will proceed in two parts. Part One – comprising Chapters 2, 3 and 4 – lays out the theoretical, contextual and methodological debates within which my thesis is embedded, while Part Two – encompassing Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 – focuses more specifically on my study of Project X. Chapter 9 will conclude the thesis.

In Chapter 2, I will provide an in-depth discussion of the theoretical debates and concepts across which my thesis is situated and to which I hope to contribute in a meaningful way. Critically reflecting on current discussions in cultural sociology, cultural studies, critical 'race' and migration scholarship and (ethno)musicology, I will put forward an interdisciplinary approach that I hope can appropriately address the nuances and complexities of contemporary music production as revealed by my ethnographic study. I will first discuss (post)-Bourdieuian theorisations of cultural legitimacy, distinctions and capital, before outlining the literature in the field of cultural studies and critical 'race' and migration scholarship that is concerned with the ways in which racialised and urban inequalities are being (re)made through cultural representations and production processes. In addition, I will present important discussions drawn from musicology that problematise the notion of intercultural

music-making against the backdrop of the historic and current relationships between Western art music and its (Turkish) Others. Throughout the chapter, I will identify theoretical, methodological or empirical limitations these different strands of scholarship bear. Overall, I argue for a critical recognition of racialised and classed hierarchies in theorisations of emerging forms of cultural capital, urban multiculture and intercultural music-making to which my thesis might hopefully add important insights.

Building on this, in Chapter 3, I will lay out the broader historical and political frameworks within which Project X as a Berliner music project proceeds. I will first consider how contemporary Berlin has evolved as a capital of both migration and cultural production and will specifically recount the role of the opera institution and its predecessor institutions within this context. I will firstly illustrate the important position the highbrow cultural sector has claimed within the city of Berlin and Germany more widely, while also finding itself under ever-dawning pressure to legitimise its social and cultural value. Secondly, I show that Berlin's cultural sector has held ambiguous relationships with the local migrant populations who have experienced structural marginalisation and racist exclusion while simultaneously being used for broader city-branding purposes. Furthermore, I will critically review current debates around diversity in the arts (or lack thereof) which aim to place a more critical approach to urban multiculture at the centre of arts and cultural production. Elaborating on historic and current citizenship debates in Germany and on the ways in which these have shaped constructions of 'race' and ethnicity in relation to the country's Turkish German population in particular, I will argue that Germany currently finds itself at an important but volatile discursive opening where its imperial legacies and postmigratory realities are being negotiated in the cultural sector and

beyond. Throughout this chapter, I will draw from contextualising interview data with cultural producers and musicians affiliated with Project X to outline how Project X's particular institutional and urban embeddedness positions the project at the ambivalent intersection of debates around cultural elitism, institutional racism and broader discourses around urban multiculture, migration and citizenship.

In Chapter 4, I then move onto elucidating the epistemological and methodological approaches that constitute this study. Highlighting the importance of a sociology of cultural production, I argue for a closer analytical relationship between music's aesthetical and affective dimensions and its social implications and discuss the ways in which ethnographic methods can play an important role in this context. In this connection, I also outline how an ethnographic study of current dynamics in the Western art music sector can contribute to the wider project of provincializing Europe. Here, I especially draw from critical epistemologies as conceptualised by postcolonial and Feminist scholarship that put forward the urgency of reflexivity and underline the partiality of knowledges to critically engage with my own positionality in and beyond my PhD research. I will also provide a detailed overview of my fieldwork process and discuss the limitations as well as the ethical and political risks that my study entails.

In the subsequent Part Two, I then turn more concretely towards my field site and research findings. In Chapter 5, I will start by considering the concrete processes of intercultural music-making itself and analyse how practices of commissioning, composing, rehearsing and performing reflect and shape the intercultural framing of the two children's operas that the opera institution commissioned as part of Project X. Exploring the kinds of creative conventions and institutional constraints that inform such musical processes, I will identify how specific power relations, quite literally, play out in music-making itself and construct particular musical representations.

Thinking through questions of musical subjectivity, authorship and appropriation, I will analyse these creative practices in the context of broader public discourses of Otherness that operate in Germany's public sphere. While I indeed recognise the emergence of what I describe as *a postmigratory aesthetic imaginary* that challenges Western hegemonic concepts of musical value, I overall contend that the opera institution's production logics inherently carry and reproduce hegemonic notions of musical genre that determine the ways in which intercultural music is being done. I therefore contend that, in order to unfold their critical creative impetus, projects like Project X need to be fundamentally decoupled from the standardised production logics of Western institutions that otherwise risk imposing restrictive and reproductive boundaries on intercultural interventions.

Chapter 6 is concerned with the ways in which Orientalism as a system of cultural knowledge production is negotiated and reproduced in Project X's visual curation practices. I hold that despite Project X's eagerness to evade Orientalist depictions of Otherness, the project has to continuously grapple with its institutional and aesthetic context, which is crucially entangled with long-standing Orientalist imaginations as well as with reductive discourses of gender, 'race', migration and religion that are mobilised in Germany's public debate. I suggest that the project runs the risk of legitimising and reproducing Orientalism as a system of knowledge production by not being able to fully break out of these overarching discursive and epistemological frames. Drawing from ethnographic and interview data that I generated during my fieldwork at the opera institution as well as from archival data that have been published by the Project X producers, I demonstrate that the debates around visual representations in Project X are particularly centred around the Othered female body, which seems to mirror its hypervisibility in broader German migration

and citizenship debates. Nonetheless, I will also illustrate how the Project X team treats their rehearsals and performances as continuous, unfinished and reflexive processes which allow for external critique and self-correcting practices to take place. As such, the project tentatively unlocks a liminal space – a space for what I denote as *public reflexivity* – in which such dominant structures of knowledge production might at least be called into question.

Chapter 7 is specifically concerned with Project X’s children’s choir initiative. I will examine how the underlying concept and daily workings of the intercultural choir reflect both practices of inclusion and mobility as well as of exclusion and reproduction. I suggest that the choir initiative proceeds in an ambiguous and partly paradoxical setting in which different accounts of and objectives connected to interculture are being realised. Based on both ethnographic data and interviews with Project X’s organisers as well as with choir children and their parents, I show how the different considerations of interculture differ between grounded approaches to everyday multiculture and strategic ideas of mobility and emerging forms of cultural capital which *socially commodify* Project X’s intercultural efforts to reproduce privileged positions of middle-class whiteness. Despite aiming to fundamentally change the institutional conditions of cultural participation in favour of a critical commitment to urban multiculture, Project X therefore also risks becoming yet another site of liberal multiculturalism which not only leaves overarching inequalities of ‘race’ and class untouched but actually contributes to their remaking.

Chapter 8 interrogates Project X’s objective to create convivial urban encounters between the opera institution and Berlin’s wider city publics. I analyse the ways in which Project X addresses, articulates and performs Berlin’s postmigratory character in creating moments of urban encounter and examine how these relate to

broader discourses of difference and inequality. Mainly based on ethnographic data of the Minibus-performances taking place as part of Project X in Berlin and Istanbul, my analysis suggests that Project X's performances can become both platforms of expressions of conviviality as well as of enduring social and spatial hierarchies. Grasping these ambivalent and contingent dynamics, I argue for a more critical engagement with concepts of urban encounters themselves and with the forms of conviviality these might unlock. By putting forward the notion of *critical encounters*, the chapter thus seeks to further develop theories of urban multiculture in the setting of today's postmigratory Berlin with a specific interest in the role music production and performance might play in this context. I furthermore hold that the degree to which Project X actually succeeds in interrogating hegemonic power relations in favour of more convivial relationships depends on its producers' ability to accept and take onboard moments of conflict, contest and critique that might arise in the context of Project X's performances, instead of ignoring or deflecting from such issues.

In Chapter 9, I will revisit the main findings of my study and summarise its key theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions. Drawing back to the larger scholarly and political context within which Project X as well as my thesis are situated, I will develop critical research implications that might further tackle the relationship between cultural and in particular music production, urban multiculture and discourses of difference, migration and citizenship. With regards to intercultural projects like Project X, I will not only reflect on interculture as both a term of creative practice and theoretical engagement but will also outline practical ways forward for cultural producers and artists who are concerned with issues of inequality, representation and multiculture in contemporary cultural production.

PART ONE

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework – diversity, difference and inequality in contemporary music production under conditions of urban multiculture

Given this research outlook on Project X and my wider scholarly interest in the reworking of highbrow culture in multicultural Berlin, I situate my thesis across a number of academic literatures. In the following chapter, I seek to sketch out the social and cultural parameters a project like Project X goes up against and outline the relevant theoretical concepts and questions that my thesis will address as I move forward. I start by discussing (post)-Bourdiesian approaches to theorising cultural legitimacy, capital and distinction as they explicitly foreground issues of social hierarchy that play out in the cultural field of cultural production and consumption. I then review the core contributions of cultural studies as well as current critical ‘race’ and migration scholarship that inquires how notions of difference and inequalities of ‘race’ and ethnicity are being produced and reproduced in cultural production processes. In this context, I will moreover draw from critical theorisations of urban multiculture and present (ethno)musicological literature that speaks to the concept of intercultural music-making and to the historical legacies of musical Orientalism in Western art music production.

Overall, I argue for a critical account of power hierarchies in theorisations of both emerging forms of cultural capital and notions of intercultural music-making in order to grasp, expose and address the epistemic and long-standing inequalities that operate in the sphere of cultural production today. A critical recognition of the assertion of classed, racialised and gendered (among others) hierarchies becomes especially urgent in the context of Project X which aims to mobilise and reflect critical notions of urban multicultural diversity while being deeply implicated in longer

standing relationships of power precisely with regards to class, ‘race’, ethnicity and nationality. In this vein, I moreover propose a closer analytical focus on the aesthetic and organisational practices that structure contemporary cultural production in order to, first, counter the dominant angle on cultural consumption adopted by many of the above-mentioned strands of literature and, second, to contribute to recent scholarship that examines how cultural representations not only circulate but come into being. I will organise the literature according to themes. In so doing, I also seek to carve out where the distinctive theoretical approaches differ, where they might be complementary and where I detect theoretical limitations that I hope to address in a meaningful way as this thesis progresses.

Hierarchising culture and the (il)legitimacy of art

There has been a vast amount of literature in cultural sociology and cultural studies concerned with the hierarchisation of so-called highbrow and lowbrow art and its entanglement with hierarchies and inequalities of social class (Bennet et al., 2009; Hebdige, 1979; Williams, 1985; Willis, 1990). However, there has been a general dearth of qualitative investigations into the sphere of highbrow cultural production itself and into the ways in which hegemonic notions of cultural value and legitimacy are being produced and reproduced through its social, institutional and aesthetic dynamics. The works of Pierre Bourdieu present a major exception in this context¹⁸, although as I will show in the following, I am critical of aspects of his legacy.

Of particular importance is Bourdieu’s multi-dimensional concept of ‘capital’ in which he differentiates economic, social and cultural forms of capital that, following

¹⁸ For further exceptions see, *inter alia*, Williams (1983) and more recently Atkinson (2006), Bennet et al. (2009), Born (1998), Bull (2014), Hennion (1993), Nobrega (2016), Saha (2013), Scharff (2019).

the logics of accumulation and convertibility, are the driving forces of social inequality and its reproduction. However, while he detects a general interconnectedness between the accumulation of these three forms of capital, in his theory of cultural production he also recognises a certain complementary antagonism between economic and cultural capital accumulation: In his analysis of the literary field (1981)¹⁹, Bourdieu draws a distinction between two types of institutional and aesthetic modes of production, the market-driven commercial ‘bourgeois art’ whose main currency is economic capital, i.e. money, and the field of ‘avant-garde art’, in which market dynamics are to a great extent levered out and in which cultural capital is dominant. While he also discusses how, ironically, avant-garde art can ultimately be turned into economic capital²⁰, thereby turning its specifically non-economical character on its head, Bourdieu generally posits that avant-garde art is not primarily validated by commercial success as its production is largely subsidised through public means. Instead, the subsidised art sector would foreground a ‘competition for cultural legitimacy’ as its ‘specific logic’ (Bourdieu, 1971: 163).

Bourdieu’s notion of cultural legitimacy is important for my thesis as it critically recognises a constructed hierarchy between a specific set of highbrow institutions,

¹⁹ Following Bourdieu’s field theory, society is divided up into different arenas of social practice called ‘fields’ (translated from the French word *champ*). Bourdieu describes a number of fields, for instance, the field of education, the field of religion, of law, of art or indeed of cultural production. A field thus describes a specific social space which is constituted by its own set of rules and forms of capital and in which a set of agents and their respective social positions are located. The field position of an agent is the outcome of the interaction between the particular logics of the field in concern and the agent’s capitals (economic, social and cultural) and habitus. According to Bourdieu’s conceptualisation, the different fields in society can interact with one another and are themselves organised in a hierarchical manner. For example, most fields are subordinated to the overarching fields of power and class relations.

²⁰ Here, Bourdieu presents a sophisticated analysis of the regulatory modes that structure the field of subsidised art and the different ideological and aesthetic position-takings within it. Bourdieu highlights the ‘risks’ of avant-garde cultural production of ultimately obtaining ‘substantial economic profit from cultural capital [...] originally accumulated through strategies based on denial of the “economy”’ (Bourdieu, 1981: 286; cited in Born, 1995: 17). While his theory has great analytical bearings for contemporary research that is concerned with the processes of competition and change in the avant-garde cultural field, these elaborations are less significant for the purpose of my study.

which are dedicated to a specific canon of artworks and receive considerable public subsidies, and more popular spheres of cultural production. Moreover, it accentuates how state-subsidised art institutions have to constantly legitimise themselves in order to compete for and receive public funding.²¹

The hierarchy between legitimate and non-legitimate art works and their production closely relates to Bourdieu's analysis of cultural consumption: Whereas the former is associated with Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, the latter does not serve as a marker of distinction. As Bourdieu (1985: 40) elaborates,

'[n]othing more rigorously distinguishes the different classes than the disposition objectively demanded by the legitimate consumption of legitimate works [...] and the even rarer capacity to constitute, aesthetically, objects that are ordinary or even 'common' [...] or to apply the principles of a pure aesthetic in the most everyday choices of everyday life.'

This quotation, probably one of the most cited paragraphs from the book *Distinction* (1985), concisely summarises the Bourdieusian view of the systemic manifestations of cultural taste and their underpinning aesthetical ideal in correspondence to people's social class. According to Bourdieu, differences in taste – with upper- and middle-classes merely consuming expressions of high culture and working-classes consuming popular cultural forms – would represent a structuring mechanism through which a hierarchical system of class and culture would be generated and reproduced.

More specifically, at its core would stand a dichotomous classification between popular forms of expression in contrast to art forms that 'have been part of a long-term historical tradition associated with "high" culture' (Savage, 2006: 159). On the one hand, Bourdieu (1985: 19) argues that art situated within the high culture realm reflects

²¹ As I will show in Chapter 3, Project X has been developed by an established Berliner highbrow institution during a time where the cultural and social legitimacy of Western high culture has been increasingly questioned, which seems to validate Bourdieu's understanding of the dynamics in the state-subsidised art sector.

the ‘most absolute form of the negation of the world’, thereby becoming the ‘defining feature of cultural capital itself’ (Savage, 2006: 160). By putting forward the paradigm of a Kantian aesthetics, which postulates the notion of formalism as a qualitative measurement of art, this ‘internal “hyperinstitutionalization” of “art”’ is therefore based on ‘the complete dissociation of art from living contexts’, because of which ‘the merely formal features of art can become the guarantee of its “aesthetics”, rather than its relevance and relation to real-life processes’ (Willis, 1990: 2, 3). On the other hand, lowbrow forms of culture are mostly favoured by ‘people with a low level of education, who prioritise the practical over the aesthetic’ (Claessens and Dhoest, 2010: 50).

To Bourdieu, ‘the core tension’ between the distinct forms of culture is thus not ‘to be found so much in the opposition between highbrow and lowbrow culture per se but between the possession or otherwise of highbrow aesthetics, which constitute a very particular disposition towards the appreciation of different cultural forms’ (Friedman et al., 2015: 2).²² Following Bourdieu, this organisational pattern in the realm of art goes therefore hand in hand with a form of cultural hegemony, representing not only specific hierarchies of cultural taste, value and legitimacy, but of social agency and power. Thus, different forms of culture, their consumption and production are integrated and classified within a ““socially recognized hierarchy of the arts”” which corresponds to ‘a social hierarchy of the consumers. This predisposes tastes to function as markers of “class”’ (Bourdieu, 1985: 1). Hence, taste in art and the differentiation between valuable, legitimate, ‘consecrated’ artworks and those

²² It is noteworthy that Bourdieu’s account of a Kantian aesthetic paradigm is narrower than the definition of ‘highbrow’ per se, which in some renderings could include the kinds of mainstream classical music that Bourdieu would not see as conveying cultural capital in its fullest versions.

which are not deemed as such are at same the time a reflection and a reproduction mechanism of the given social order.

While Bourdieu's analysis focuses on the mid-and late 20th century in France, I suggest that a similar hierarchisation of art production and consumption can be seen in Germany where state subsidies for arts and culture are primarily going to institutions associated with the 'highbrow' sector which seem to uphold a kind of 'legitimate cultural capital' and thus endorse Bourdieu's arguments even today.²³ The opera institution is certainly part of Berlin's highbrow cultural landscape that, in both its institutionalised as well as the aesthetic form, corresponds to a Bourdieusian notion of cultural capital. Moreover, as its artistic director reflects in a recent interview (Karlin 2018), there seems to be something even more peculiar about the social role of opera in Germany which assigns the genre with a culturally specific value and legitimacy. As the director notes, in Germany

'there's an ownership of the art form. So for German audiences, it's not just a night out: it's our DNA on the stage, reflecting back at us, in all sorts of different ways. I mean the Germans think they invented opera, you have to always remind them that it was actually the Italians. I think there are only two cultures in Europe, Germany and Russia, where opera is so deeply embedded in the culture, in the exploration of national identity, good and bad.'

In view of the important position opera bears for what the director describes as Germany's 'national identity', they further argue that '[n]o-one should be excluded from opera'. As the director of the opera institution, they hence want

'as many people as possible to come and experience it, through ticket prices, through open policy, through dialogue with an audience. But not everyone's going to get it: there are people who just don't like Japanese food, who don't want to eat raw fish. It doesn't mean they're vulgar: people shouldn't be forced to like opera' (ibid.).

²³ I will provide more details on Berlin's cultural funding structures in Chapter 3.

While the director's statement seeks to counter or prevent a reproach of cultural snobbism by highlighting that no one should be 'forced to like opera' and that one would not be 'vulgar' by not doing so, he still reiterates the important position the genre holds in Germany. I hence suggest that his objective to make opera accessible precisely because of its significant role in the country's cultural life appears to further approve a Bourdieusian notion of cultural capital as something which is at the same time scarce and sought after. That is, while being partly recognised as something elitist, opera is simultaneously to be made accessible both economically through subsidised ticketing (the cheapest regular tickets at the opera institution are between €10 and €15) as well as through cultural policies, revised programming and outreach initiatives. As I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter of this thesis, the latter, often conducted in the name of social mobility or cultural participation, appears to further reproduce a class-based hierarchy between highbrow and popular artworks and institutions and, as such, seems to be in line with Bourdieu's analysis of social reproduction and the role of cultural capital within it.

From 'snob' to 'omnivore'?

However, although Germany's traditional commitment to funding its highbrow music sector remains strong, its legitimacy has also frequently been called into question by either highlighting its high public cost, which would stand in no relation to the small segment of society that makes up its audience, or increasingly by documenting the lack of social openness and diversity in highbrow institutions' staff, audience and programming.²⁴ Going hand in hand with a broader trend towards critiquing the overt

²⁴ Such criticisms seem to increasingly question the social legitimacy of traditional Western high culture which problematises a Bourdieusian understanding of cultural capital. See the Chapter 3 for more details.

elitism in highbrow culture, there hence seems to be a latent crisis of legitimation in Germany's state-funded arts, in particular with regard to the highbrow music sector, which might call the application of Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital into question.

Sam Friedman et al. (2015: 2) posit, for instance, that the aesthetical shift from modernist approaches to postmodernism has brought about a redefinition of formerly conserved canons of art, 'away from traditional forms of cultural excellence venerated from earlier periods, towards an insistence on the value of the new', thereby attributing a greater value to cultural variety, openness and innovation. Indeed, as a large body of literature shows, the cultural tastes of today's middle- and upper-classes are not anymore strictly defined by the Kantian formalist aesthetics, which promotes a detachment of art from its social context, but increasingly appreciate a closer rapprochement to the popular. There has thus been much debate in contemporary cultural sociology literature if a Bourdieusian notion of cultural capital still adequately represents contemporary social life. Most notably captured by the notion of the 'omnivore' put forward by Richard A. Peterson and Roger M. Kern (1996) and, more recently, by the 'emerging cultural capital' thesis developed by Annick Prieur and Mike Savage (2011, 2013), such approaches have argued that we can witness a shift in the configurations of cultural distinction which would interrogate the boundaries between highbrow and popular forms of culture and lead to a decline of traditional highbrow legitimacy.

A wide range of quantitative studies have set out to probe this argument, showing that persons of a higher socioeconomic and educational background do not, as described by Bourdieu, exclusively consume cultural products associated with the highbrow context, but are more and more interested in a broad variety of musical forms such as jazz, hip hop, pop music, electronic music and others (Peterson and

Simkus, 1992; DiMaggio and Mukhtar, 2004; Van Eijck and Knulst, 2005; Bennett et al., 2009). Especially in Europe and North America, highbrow institutions like classic music, theatre, ballet or indeed opera seem to be no longer perceived as reflecting some sort of cultural hegemony, but appear to have lost their aesthetical and, therefore, social authority. To put it with Philippe Coulangeon's words (2005: 125), the diversified 'eclecticism in upper-class [...] tastes is part of wider-ranging thinking on the declining power of highbrow arts in symbolic identification of the lifestyles of social groups'. Subsequently he contends that

'cultural capital manifests itself not so much in a penchant for learned or highbrow culture as a capacity to interpret and assimilate novelty and difference – precisely the interpretation of the effect of cultural capital in terms of [a]esthetic tolerance that is at the core of the omnivore/univore model' (ibid.: 144).

It therefore seems valid to contend that cultural omnivorousness does indeed lead to a blurring of boundaries between high and lowbrow and, in doing so, might moreover indicate 'a wider democratising shift toward [...] a more general ethos of cultural "openness" and "tolerance" that is seen to invalidate, or at least threaten, Bourdieusian processes of cultural distinction and snobbery' (Friedman et al., 2015: 2). As I will document in more detail in the following chapter, the presumed boundary-dissolving between highbrow and popular culture also shows in the director's artistic agenda for the opera institution in which he combines classical opera repertoire with operettas, musicals and cabarets, aiming to provide the audiences with much-sought after musical variety. A Bourdieusian classification between class and particular forms of cultural consumption might thus indeed be under review, even in Germany's traditional opera sector.

However, I want to cautiously emphasise that these changes in the field of cultural consumption do 'not imply an indifference to distinctions' in the creative

realm but rather indicate a (re)formulation ‘of new rules governing symbolic boundaries’ (Peterson and Kern, 1996: 904). Although the findings of Tak Wing Chan’s and John H. Goldthorp’s (2007: 1) study of forms of social stratification and cultural consumption exemplified by the music sector in England state that musical consumption turns out to be less linked to class, it is not freed from any social context but instead ‘proves to be more closely associated with status, and also with education’. In this regard, Coulangeon (2005: 144) argues that ‘the link between cultural capital and [a]esthetic tolerance’ is thus essentially ‘brought out by the tight correlation between educational attainment and diversity of musical interests’, thereby marking the less educated and the lower social classes as cultural snobs, who seem to exclusively develop a preference for popular culture. It therefore appears that the omnivore-concept primarily concerns ‘those circles most likely to enjoy a cultivated relationship to culture, that is, the new highly qualified and educated socio-professional elites’ (Bellavance, 2008: 190). Based on an in-depth ethnography of an elite boarding school in the USA, Shamus Khan (2011: 152) similarly holds that ‘[e]lites have incorporated some of the cultural attributes and tastes of those that they had previously excluded. Yet this new practice – omnivorous consumption – is itself a symbolic marker [...] this omnivorousness, become their own mark of distinction.’²⁵

Hence, ‘on closer inspection’, Friedman et al. (2015: 2) disclose precisely ‘that beneath the surface-level championing of “connection” and “the everyday”, new cultural movements are a long way from a true spirit of openness. Indeed, aesthetically, this is arguably form masquerading as function’ (see also Savage et al., 2015; Jarness, 2013; Gerhard, Hans and Mutz, 2012). Building on the above, I hold

²⁵ More generally, this mirrors Boltanski and Chiapello’s (2005) argument put forward in *New spirits of capitalism* in which the authors highlight the ways in which the contemporary capitalist system valorises supposedly critical, creative and non-hierarchical forms of labour, cultural and social relations as they become more and more enshrined in its systematic reproduction.

that the concept of the omnivore only identifies a more flexible individualist pattern of cultural taste and consumption for the higher social classes, especially for the well-educated, but cannot be seen as proof for upwardly sociocultural mobility from more diverse backgrounds. Moreover, Alan Warde, David Wright and Modesto Gayo-Cal (2007) suggest that despite the contention of a wider cultural consumption, participation and competence within the sphere of highbrow culture continue to be limited to specific middle-class segments. As such, the social status of contemporary middle-classes seems to be perpetuated by a convergence of different cultural positionings – the ability to consume and appreciate a variety of cultural forms is expanded while a unique access to traditional forms of high culture and capital is maintained.

Reviewing ‘cultural capital’ under contemporary conditions

Here, I believe that the notion of an ‘emerging cultural capital’, while in some ways similar to the idea of the omnivore, has more analytical bearing for rethinking the configurations of cultural distinctions today. It argues

‘for a sensibility for new tendencies and emerging forms of cultural capital. It is not given that the forms of cultural capital that Bourdieu pointed to will have the same value today. The very content of the concept needs to be revised in light of the very different conditions of the early 21st century’ (Prieur: 2013: 1).²⁶

Based on a number of cultural consumption studies in Denmark and the UK, Prieur and Savage equally emphasise the decline of high culture as ‘the most accentuated

²⁶ Within this context, the authors characterise a number of major tendencies which would bear increasingly distinguishing significance within today’s cultural spaces: the decline of high culture, the mode of cultural appropriation, the influence of cosmopolitanism and the impact of technology on practices of cultural consumption.

form of cultural capital’ (*ibid.*:1). Despite the fact that practices associated with traditional high culture continue to be ‘situated exactly where one would expect them to be in the social space: among the highly educated’, it is noteworthy that ‘[y]et very few also within this group have these preferences and practices exclusively’ (Prieur, 2013: 2; see also Prieur et al., 2008; Pasquier, 2005; Lahire, 2004). Although this conclusion corresponds with the omnivore thesis, Prieur and Savage argue against the underpinning idea of omnivorosity, deeming the concept ‘unhelpful for advancing our understanding of contemporary cultural boundaries’ (Prieur, 2013: 2).

Hence, in contrast to the omnivore claim, Prieur’s studies in Denmark (2008, 2013) actually show that it is specifically the group of the better educated, which ‘explicitly marked distaste for some other groups’ tastes’. There is a link here to Bennett et al.’s (2009) British study, which argues that eclectic modes of taste might nevertheless be captured as a form of cultural capital, stressing that an increasing open-mindedness towards diverse cultural forms ‘is itself a modality of cultural capital, since it is especially highly valued among those in the higher positions’ (Prieur, 2013: 2). Here, especially younger people decreasingly attach artistic passion or reputation to traditional forms of art, thereby breaking with the Bourdieusian view on highbrow culture as the intrinsic marker of cultural legitimacy and as a profitable asset supporting someone’s socioeconomic positioning (see e.g. Van Eijk and Van Oosterhout, 2005).

In view of this debate, Prieur admits that the development toward omnivorosity is indeed a sign of a legitimization crisis of classical high culture as cultural capital; however, she argues that the corresponding changes in cultural taste and practices could be better conceptualised as a ‘knowing appropriation of culture’ (Prieur, 2013: 3) or ‘reflexive appropriation’ (Bennett et al., 2009: 194), indicating a

more strategic deployment of diverse cultural forms which presupposes the capacity to abstract and distance oneself from the otherwise direct influence of the cultural material in concern. In line with the aforesaid review of the omnivore thesis, Prieur also postulates that it is therefore the way of cultural participation which calls for a further investigation and could give insights into both forms of cultural democratisation as well as continuing elite distinctions. Therefore, the second tendency pointed out by Prieur and Savage highlights the ‘displacement of how distinction is achieved, with less emphasis on the choices of particular objects and more on the way to relate to these objects’ (Prieur, 2013: 3).

Here, Prieur argues that the “‘knowing’ appropriation of culture’ can be furthermore linked to an increasingly cosmopolitan approach to cultural taste. Taking into account the studies by Fligstein (2008) and Holt (1997), it is particularly the well-educated European middle-class residing in urban spaces, which perceives the cultural world as less localised and hence becomes more and more expansive in its cultural orientation. Opposing the more locally contained cultural context of lower social classes, ‘the capacity to stand outside one’s own national frame of reference’ (Prieur, 2013: 6) could thus also be evaluated as a new facet of cultural capital. It would therefore be especially the European middle-class which acts as pivotal agents in the restructuring ‘of a distinctively European cultural field’ (*ibid.*: 6). Through embodying an internationalised life-style, European elites incorporate another display of cultural capital, standing in sharp contrast to a rather local orientation of cultural taste and consumption. Here, Khan (2011: 197) further elaborates on the social consequences of specific forms of privilege-remaking that make use of the seeming idea of openness: ‘The distinction between the elites and the rest of us appears to be a choice. It is cosmopolitanism that explains elite status to elites and closed-mindedness that

explains those who choose not to participate. What matters are individual attributes and capacities, not durable inequalities.²⁷

Limitations of the post-Bourdiesian debates and approaching a sociology of cultural production

In contrast to the theoretical propositions by Kern and Peterson, the observations elucidated by Prieur and Savage present a more nuanced and useful analytical framework of emerging forms of cultural distinction. Despite establishing a fruitful and expandable research basis, however, I believe that a few crucial conceptual issues remain and deserve further reflection. First, and particularly important to my study, the proposition of the decline of the highbrow sector is ambivalent. As most of the referenced studies have shown, highbrow culture has indeed forfeited its former social importance in favour of a more eclectic consumption behaviour of high-status persons. Yet, it is important to bear in mind Warde, Wright and Gayo-Cal's (2007: 160) argument who postulate that in addition to the increasing social value of cultural openness, 'consecrated culture remains a token of distinction which probably still operates effectively as a form of cultural capital' which is partly supported by the fact that highbrow culture is still almost exclusively consumed by people of higher educational backgrounds and, at least in Germany, continues to receive considerable

²⁷ Another contemporary development pointed out by Prieur and Savage (2011, 2013) is the growing scientification of sociocultural life. Owed to a rapid technological advancement, the increasing relevance and legitimacy of scientific approaches to culture can be identified as yet another change of cultural capital. Whereas the notion of culture elaborated by Bourdieu in *Distinction* comprises mainly the field of humanities, contemporary types of cultural production, its proliferation and consumption are significantly fashioned by modern technology, most decisively by digital communication media. This technologisation of the cultural realm brings about a notion of cultural capital, which is intrinsically associated with 'scientific expertise, technology, information systems, and more generally the capacities to handle methods of various kinds' (Prieur, 2013: 3). Whereas the technologisation of cultural consumption is indeed an important contemporary feature that demands further sociological reflections, it is not the concern of this PhD research. Nevertheless, I would like to note that it is especially the global music sector which would present a prime example for critically addressing the role digital media claim in cultural consumption, but also in circulation and production alike.

public subsidies (even if their amount and distribution is often disputed in public debate). Moreover, given the highbrow sector's continuous need to support its own legitimacy, it yet remains to be seen how concrete organisational and aesthetical changes within the sector itself might transpose or reaffirm its distinctive position. In this context, Project X presents a rich case study to examine if institutionalised formats of high culture truly lose their distinctive nature or if formerly excluded forms of culture might ultimately be co-opted and fed back into its institutional frame.

Second, I agree that the analysis of the mode of cultural appropriation is essential when analysing people's cultural practices. However, it should not only be applied to social elites consuming more popular forms of culture, but it can also produce useful insights when analysing different approaches to high culture participation. For instance, recalling Bourdieu's (1985: 64) explications of the 'air of ease which comes with fortunate birth', Anna Bull (2014: 152) elaborates in her study of youth orchestras in the UK that children of working-class backgrounds would need to perform 'the labour of practising or showing they deserved their place in this world' through their forms of high culture engagement much more profoundly than children of more privileged backgrounds. When seeking to examine the role and position of the highbrow in contemporary Germany, I therefore suggest that it is crucial to account for the distinctive modalities and objectives differently positioned people might associate with high culture. An analysis of Project X could provide such a lens into the different ways and meanings of highbrow participation and would furthermore lend itself for questioning whether different approaches might change the very site of cultural participation and the ways in which ideas of value and legitimacy might be changed or reproduced within its context.

Thirdly, and most prominent for my study, the ways in which Prieur and Savage's focus on the formative impact for urbanisation and cosmopolitanism on the development of emerging forms of cultural capital relate to notions of 'race' and ethnicity and to discourses around multiculture and urban diversity deserve further unpacking. While it has been a familiar critique of Bourdieu-inflected work that it does not account for issues around ethnicity, 'race' and racism, I believe that the situation calls for a more nuanced discussion (for in-depth discussions on Bourdieu's relation to postcolonial thought and critical 'race' scholarship see e.g. Go, 2013; Puwar, 2009; Rollock, 2007; Wallace, 2017). Certainly, I agree with the criticism that most scholarship around an emerging cultural capital exhibits a blindness towards the multicultural and postcolonial configurations of Western metropolises in that it neither takes the systematic and historic nature of racism into consideration, nor the complexity of diasporic cultural practices as sites of meaning-making, power struggles and resistance.²⁸

However, I believe that the emerging cultural capital scholarship more widely does indeed critically recognise how, in European and North American societies, 'whiteness' operates as a form of cultural capital in itself and how it continues to persist as such even in more cosmopolitan cultural frameworks. Emphasising the notion of a 'cosmopolitan nationalism', for instance, Savage, Wright and Gayo-Cal (2010: 599-600) complicate 'the view that contemporary forms of cultural production and circulation, and consumption, shatter national boundaries and permit new fluidities in the movement of people, signs, artefacts and identities'²⁹ and instead argue that 'the "hybridisation" or "fragmentation" of national identities are phenomena that

²⁸ See Bennet et al. (2009) as an important exception.

²⁹ As put forward by Albrow (1996), Castells (1996) or Robertson (1995), for example.

run in parallel with the maintenance of the privileged political or symbolical positions by ethnicities that were dominant in the first place'. As such, although not providing an in-depth analysis of the ways in which stratifying factors such as 'race', ethnicity or citizenship status manifest in contemporary patterns of cultural inequality, the authors do certainly take note of how whiteness as a system of privilege continues to play into contemporary and emerging cultural hierarchies.

Ghassan Hage (1998: 26) elaborates this point particularly clearly, arguing that even under conditions of multiculture a form of 'white power' prevails 'in all societies dominated by a European cultural tradition and imbued with the tradition of "tolerance" and "cultural pluralism", unless it opens up to the decentralising effect migration and globalisation have had on the status of Whiteness' itself. Putting forward the notion of a 'national cultural capital', he finds fault with a superficial form of liberal multiculturalism which he denounces as 'a strategy aimed at reproducing and disguising relationships of power in society, or being reproduced through that disguise. It is a form of symbolic violence in which a mode of domination is presented as a form of egalitarianism' (ibid.: 87). Hage draws a connection to Bourdieu's 'strategies of condescension' (1991) and argues that in a system of white multiculturalism, white agents who occupy 'a higher position in one of the hierarchies of objective space symbolically deny the social distance which does not thereby cease to exist, thus ensuring they gain the profits of recognition accorded to a purely symbolic negation of distance' (2000: 87). His argument can thus be read in line with scholarship that shows how emerging forms of cultural capital champion the façade of transnational and transcultural openness and fluidity while actually embodying, and thus stabilising, cosmopolitan-oriented forms of whiteness.

Turning again to my case study of Project X, it would hence be particularly important to investigate the ways in which the Western highbrow sphere has been implicated in constructing and reproducing not only reductive representations of racialised Otherness, but also – and connected therewith – discourses around whiteness. However, as I have already insinuated above, the focus on whiteness in this context also has important limitations. Most notably, it can bear the tendency to merely centre around the cultural agency of white European middle-classes while ignoring the agency of people of colour and overlook their critical cultural interventions born out of a postcolonial, multicultural and diasporic urban life. This reflects a classic problem with Bourdieu's work in general: whilst being critical of a (white-centred) Eurocentric cultural capital as he conceptualises it, he nonetheless seems to valorise it which, in turn, at least implicitly risks neglecting and de-valourising art and culture exercised by non-Western people and/or people of colour.³⁰ However, particularly when we think through the remaking of the highbrow as a site of Western social power now turning increasingly towards cultural diversity and urban multiculture, it is crucial to consider how today's European cultural and artistic life has been crucially shaped by the long-standing and multifaceted participation of people of colour and minority

³⁰ Similar to this argument, Bennet (2011) suggests that the particular qualities of Kantianism as understood by Bourdieu and the consequences these have had for his survey design and interpretation of working-class cultural life would ultimately subscribe to an elite notion of cultural value. As Bennet (2011: 532) puts it, 'Bourdieu's account of the relations between culture, choice and necessity traps the working class in a double-bind similar to that in which late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century anthropological surveys trapped "the primitive" by interpreting their so called limited capacities for aesthetic discrimination as an effect of necessity'. In another article by Bennet and Silva (2011: 434, 435; emphasis in the original), the authors take issue with Bourdieu's ignorance toward questions of ethnicity (at least in his earlier work), arguing that 'Distinction is more or less entirely an ethnic-free zone' and that, especially in the chapter on the working-class choice of necessity, readers would find 'not a sign of anything other than a purely French and monochromatically white working class'. Bennet and Silva hence hold that '[i]n terms of work that needs to be done, a more thorough exploration of the relations between ethnicity, trans-national cultural flows, and the processes through which varied ethnically marked forms of cultural capital are acquired and transmitted across generations is perhaps the most urgent priority in view of the increasing ethnic diversity of (most) Western societies' (ibid.: 435).

cultural producers, without minimising the violent regimes of exclusion and marginalisation artists of colour faced and are facing in the sphere of cultural production.

Especially when examining a project like Project X, which seeks to unsettle Eurocentric notions of cultural value and legitimacy while itself being embedded in a Western highbrow frame, a theoretical perspective needs to be adopted that allows us to critically examine whether or not contemporary changes in cultural distinctions might actually open up social spaces of upward mobility and critical cultural representation put forward by minority cultural producers. It is precisely about developing a keener understanding of the ways in which systems of class and ‘race’ inequality intersect, how they permeate contemporary cultural production and how they shape, challenge or remake patterns of cultural legitimacy, capital and power. Thus, I seek to situate my study of Project X at the juxtaposition between the dynamics of ‘whiteness’ as cultural capital (drawn from the Bourdieu tradition) and critical ‘race’ and migration scholarship which has foregrounded the experiences of people of colour in the European cultural production sector and beyond. This will allow me to show how both systems of whiteness and other discourses around ethnicity and ‘race’ are in play and in tension in Project X, and I hope to bring these dynamics to light by studying their interactions ‘on the ground’.

To that end, I suggest that it is crucial to consider the organisational approaches, institutional parameters as well as the aesthetic negotiations of contemporary (highbrow) production in order to draw out how notions of cultural value, legitimacy and difference are being constructed in practice. In this light, I argue that many of the post-Bourdieuian approaches discussed above not only fall short theoretically but also from a methodological point of view. First, they merely aim at

measuring patterns of cultural consumption rather than analysing processes of cultural production. Second, most of the recent studies follow a quantitative approach, such as latent class analysis based on large survey data, and therefore had to a priori cluster different forms of cultural expressions into clear-cut and fixed categories. It is hence an inherent limit of the applied methodology that cultural forms as well as their consumers seem rather static and confined and that more substantial changes of the cultural production process and the material itself could not be identified.

Aiming to mitigate such methodological restrictions, other scholars have strengthened the application of multiple correspondence analyses in order to better map out and connect people's various cultural activities in more elaborated 'cultural profiles' (Hanquinet, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, et al.; Savage et al., 2018; Savage et al., 2015). Others have adopted mixed-method approaches to measure cultural consumption and structures of taste as they are better equipped for 'capturing both the structural and experiential elements of tastes' (Purhonen and Wright, 2013: 262; see also Bennet et al., 2009). However, even though these approaches seek to include reflections on modalities of cultural participation, they still focus on practices of consumption leaving the practices of production and the qualities of the aesthetic material itself out of the examination. Although I understand and acknowledge that these studies aim to counter the reduction of the cultural matter in concern from becoming 'hallowed objects' (Friedman et al., 2015: 6), I nevertheless argue that a further methodological expansion is necessary to advance a critical engagement with Bourdieu's cultural theory and its contemporary predecessors.

In particular, I draw inspiration from production-focused methodologies as *inter alia* exemplified by David Hesmondalgh's (2002) theory of 'cultural industries' or Georgina Born's (2010) approach to 'a sociology of cultural production' which I

deem particularly useful for my thesis and which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 4.

While Born (ibid.: 176-177) emphasises Bourdieu's work as having 'most thoroughly operationalized a sociological theory of cultural production' and underlines his achievement 'to have created an analytical scheme which gives due weight to the relational nature of the field and the competitive position-taking characteristic of actors engaged in cultural production, dynamics captured elegantly in the spatial metaphor of the field', she nevertheless holds that if we were to 'look to Bourdieu to fill out a sociological aesthetics and to address the specificity of the art object, we look in vain'. Subsequently, she offers a way forward by developing 'an explanatory theory of cultural production' (ibid.: 171) that brings together an analysis of the institutional parameters of cultural production with a non-reductive account of the aesthetic which takes into consideration issues of creative agency, subjectivity, aesthetic judgement as well as of history, temporality and change.

Such an approach would furthermore invite researchers to overcome 'the boundaries that demarcate the sociology of art from adjacent fields, augmenting the sociological repertoire with reference to anthropology, cultural and media studies, art and cultural history, and the music disciplines' (ibid.: 171). From both a theoretical as well as methodological angle, I suggest that such an approach becomes particularly fruitful for investigations such as my own that are specifically concerned with intercultural interventions into Western musical highbrow frames and aimed at critically engaging with notions of cultural value, legitimacy and genre (see e.g. Myers, 2002, 2005; Thomas, 1991). To that end, in the rest of this chapter, I will discuss the strands of literatures that play a key role in my work and that have significantly featured in and shaped the ways in which I came to think and write about Project X.

Rethinking concepts of ethnicity, difference and urban multiculture through a politics of representation

Of great centrality to my study of Project X is a strand of social thought which has come to be known as the British cultural studies tradition and which has decisively advanced contemporary scholarship on cultural production. Under the directorship of the cultural theorist Stuart Hall, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham developed into a key research institution for the growing field of cultural studies during the 1970s and 80s. Approaching issues around ideology and inequality of class, 'race' and gender from an interdisciplinary perspective, cultural studies sought to bring into dialogue debates drawn from different scholarly fields, such as sociology, literary and media studies, history and philosophy. Among scholarship on youth and working-class (sub)cultures in the UK, a main focus of the Centre's work has been on the politics of 'race' and representation and on the black diasporic experience in and beyond the UK more specifically. By turning decisively towards diasporic cultural production, cultural studies scholarship addresses precisely the theoretical and methodological limitations that I pointed out with regards to the post-Bourdiesuan debates.

As such, they have contributed significantly to the wider conceptual framework of my study and helped shape my theoretical thinking about cultural production and a representational politics of difference in the context of social justice and anti-racist struggles in postcolonial and multicultural societies, such as Germany. In this connection, it is especially Stuart Hall's and Paul Gilroy's work which, mainly from the 1980s onwards, has been particularly concerned with transnational diasporic life, urban multiculture and the formation of new ethnicities as well as with issues of cultural politics and representation of Asian and Black British artists. Particularly looking at everyday cultural life and the popular culture realm, the role both scholars

assigned to cultural production has often been seen as an ambivalent one, oscillating between racialised exclusion, marginalisation and practices of ‘race’-making on the one hand, and emancipatory critique that aims to challenge, resist and renegotiate racialised hierarchies and bounded notions of ethnic, cultural and national identity on the other.

For instance, since his pioneering book on ‘The Black Atlantic’ (1993)³¹ through to his more recent work on urban conviviality (2000, 2004), Gilroy has been concerned with the syncretic, hybrid and transnational nature of diasporic and postcolonial cultural life and, connected herewith, with the fundamental interrogation of the analytical category of ‘race’ and of Eurocentric accounts of culture and identity. As he highlights (2000: 249), ‘[t]he frontier of cultural difference can no longer be made congruent with national borders’ but ‘today’s inescapable encounters with difference’ would have become an ordinary, quotidian feature of contemporary postcolonial societies and, as such, would pose important challenges to bounded notions of ethnicity and identity. In this context, he emphasises everyday encounters of urban multiculture as prime sites for negotiating ideas of diversity and difference on the one hand as well as for experiencing processes of translation and exchange on the other.

He puts forward the notion of ‘conviviality’³² which would open up an alternative interpretation to a state-centred multiculturalism – one which would not be

³¹ In his ground-breaking work on the ‘Black Atlantic’ first published 1993, Gilroy elucidates the notion of the Atlantic as a social and political space for black diasporic intellectual and cultural production. The ‘black Atlantic’ signifies a modern political and cultural formation which was brought about by the experiences and legacies of the global slave trade and which therefore exceeds bounded notions of both ethnicity and the nation-state. Thus, Gilroy not only highlights the syncretic, hybrid and transnational cultural life of the black diaspora but therein also develops a fundamental interrogation of the analytical category of ‘race’ itself and, connected herewith, of Eurocentric nationalist accounts of culture and identity.

³² Gilroy’s theory of conviviality stands in the context of a broader scholarship on urban multiculture and everyday diversity (see e.g. Amin, 2012; Hall, 2000; Jackson, 2018; Jones and Jackson, 2014; Merrifield, 2012; Neal et al., 2013; Watson and Saha, 2012; Wise and Velayutham, 2014; Young, 1990)

based on bounded and static notions of different cultural groups needing to be ‘managed’, but one that is ‘uncoupled from its associations with unbridgeable, absolute difference and reconfigured with a wider sense of the unevenly developed power of subnational (local) and supranational relations’ (ibid.: 244). Such an understanding of urban multiculture would simultaneously account for the systemic character of racism and socioeconomic inequalities while also recognising the lived experiences of cultural and ethnic fluidity and, as such, would be able to ‘force nationalisms and biosocial explanations of race and ethnicity into more defensive postures’ (ibid.: 244). Looking specifically at the site of urban cultural life in this regard, Gilroy holds that

‘the expressive cultures that have grown up in these polyglot urban spaces – transnational and translational vernacular cultures – supply and celebrate a variety of interconnection that not only acknowledges interdependency, but, at its insubordinate and carnivalesque best, has been known to project an immediacy, a rebel solidarity, and a fragile, universal humanity powerful enough to make race and ethnicity suddenly meaningless’ (ibid.: 249).

Given Project X’s focus on Berlin’s urban multiculture and on the promotion of Turkish German artists and cultural workers within its context, both Gilroy’s concept of conviviality and his focus on diasporic urban cultural production more widely are of great conceptual importance to my study. However, as Project X is located somewhat outside of the multicultural everyday sphere and is instead institutionally bundled up with the European high culture sector, it is yet to be seen to what extent Project X can actually create moments of convivial and creative encounter which may

which would offer an important counter-discourse to what Sivamohan Valluvan (2016: 205) denotes as ‘the dystopian political rhetoric surrounding Europe’s ability to live with diversity’. However, Sivamohan Valluvan (2016: 205; emphasis in the original) also detects ‘a risk that the sociology of multiculture tends towards a certain descriptive naivety’ and thus urges scholars to put a critical analytical emphasis on ‘how everyday multicultural practices rest on a radical and complex ability to be at ease in the presence of diversity but *without* restaging communitarian conceptions of the selfsame ethnic and racial difference.’

indeed challenge hegemonic discourses around Otherness and belonging³³ in contemporary Germany. My study therefore also speaks to broader questions about the relationship between institutionalised creative practice and practices of conviviality.

Here, Stuart Hall's work on a politics of representation in cultural production presents another conceptual lens which has been exceptionally helpful for my theoretical approach to Project X. Preceding much of Gilroy's work, Hall (1996a: 442) also turned towards the sphere of cultural production to analyse the changes in black cultural politics in 1970s/1980s Britain which he described as 'designed to challenges, resist and, where possible, to transform the dominant regimes of representation – first in music and style, later in literary, visual and cinematic forms.'³⁴ Following Hall, such political shifts cannot only be grasped as a change in the structure of cultural representation but would be 'best thought of in terms of a change from a struggle over the relations of representation to a politics of representation itself' (ibid.: 442). In this context, he elaborates on the 'slippery concept' (ibid.: 443) of representation which I

³³ When I speak of belonging, I do not primarily refer to the personal feeling of belonging as 'feeling at home' but rather to a 'politics of belonging' as conceptualised by Yuval-Davis (2011). Yuval-Davis urges us to investigate who is able or allowed to 'feel at home' in both a material and an affective sense. As such, a politics of belonging is understood as referring to particular political projects that seek to construct specific notions of collective or collectivity by structuring processes of in- and exclusion. In this context, Yuval-Davis draws attention to processes of everyday bordering, which can play out along spatial, ethnic, cultural and gendered lines (amongst others) and through which certain people can be excluded from or relegated to the margins of belonging (see also Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy, 2018).

³⁴ Similar to Gilroy, Hall also turns towards the sphere of cultural production and analyses the changes in black cultural politics in 1970s/1980s Britain and its consequences for representational politics and for concepts of ethnicity and difference. Hall (1996a: 442) detects a 'struggle to come into representation [...] predicated on a critique of the degree of fetishization, objectification and negative figuration which are so much a feature of the representation of the black subject' which, according to him, would usher in 'the conditions of existence of a cultural politics designed to challenges, resist and, where possible, to transform the dominant regimes of representation – first in music and style, later in literary, visual and cinematic forms'. Such politics have been primarily concerned with establishing of access for black cultural workers to represent themselves and to contest and counter the stereotypical, fetishized black imagery produced by the dominant discourse.

deem essential for my own research into the cultural politics of Project X. As Hall puts it,

‘[m]y own view is that events, relations, structures do have conditions of existence and real effects, outside the sphere of the discursive; but that it is only within the discursive, and the subject to its specific conditions, limits and modalities, do they have or can they be constructed within meaning. Thus, while not wanting to expand the territorial claims of the discursive infinitely, how things are represented and the “machineries” and regimes of representation in a culture to play a *constitutive*, and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event, role. This gives questions of culture and ideology, and the scenarios of representation – subjectivity, identity, politics – a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the constitution of social and political life’ (ibid.: 443; emphasis in the original).

Following Hall, the shifts in the politics of representation would have furthermore brought about ‘a renewed contestation over the meaning of the term “ethnicity” itself’ which would challenge ethnicity as a concept ‘permanently colonized’ by racist thinking and instead open up ‘a more diverse conception of ethnicity [...] predicated on difference and diversity’ (ibid.: 446, 447). Against a system of racism that operates ‘by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories’, Hall thus argues that ‘we are beginning to see constructions of just such a new conception of ethnicity: a new cultural politics which engages rather than suppresses difference and which depends, in part, on the cultural construction of new ethnic identities’ (ibid.: 445, 446; see also Hall, 1996b).

However, Hall also identifies ambivalences and tensions between such progressive representations of ethnicity and difference and the broader structural conditions of a postmodern popular culture. In contrast to the European high culture sector, which he claimed would evidence ‘blindness and hostility’ towards any form of ethnic difference and would not even be able ‘to speak ethnicity when it was so manifestly registering its effects’, postmodernism, on the other hand, ‘loves [nothing] better than a certain kind of difference: a touch of ethnicity, a taste of the exotic [...]’

“a bit of the other”” (1992: 23)³⁵. According to Hall, ‘the global postmodern represents an ambiguous opening to difference and to the margins and makes a certain kind of decentering of the Western narrative a likely possibility’. However, he also notes that such disruptive narratives of difference would often take rather essentialist forms and would moreover be matched by heavy backlashes showing in ‘the aggressive resistance to difference; the attempt to restore the canon of Western civilization; the assault, direct or indirect, on multiculturalism’ (ibid.: 24, 25). He contends, therefore, that

‘the spaces “won” for difference are few and far between, that they are very carefully policed and regulated. [...] they are grossly underfunded, that there is always a price of incorporation to be paid when the cutting edge of difference and transgression is blunted into spectacularization. I know that what replaces invisibility is a kind of carefully regulated, segregated visibility’ (ibid.: 24).

Nonetheless, Hall holds that ‘marginality, though it remains peripheral to the broader mainstream, has never been such a productive space as it is now’ going hand in hand with and being supported by broader ‘struggles around difference, of the production of new identities, of the appearances of new subjects on the political and cultural stage’ (ibid.: 23). Thus, he builds on Antonio Gramsci (1971) and rejects any dualist narratives of ‘either total victory or total incorporation’ but argues that what we observe in the realm of contemporary cultural production would be a struggle of cultural hegemony which ‘is never about pure victory or pure domination [...] it is always about changing the dispositions and the configurations of cultural power, not getting out of it’ (ibid.: 24).

³⁵ Here, we can actually see a parallel to the emerging cultural capital literature which, as I have shown above, similarly recognises the use of notions of difference and Otherness in the remaking of contemporary cultural distinction without, however, critically addressing the racialised inequalities actually at play.

I am aware that both Gilroy's and Hall's works are intricately entangled with the historic and contemporary specificities of Britain's (post)colonial society and of the black diasporic experience in this context. Nevertheless, I am convinced that both thinkers offer a ground-breaking analytical framework that enables us to look at cultural production, at media, art, literature and music, from a broader perspective of overarching systems of representation and power that stretch far beyond the field of aesthetic production and into broader debates around difference, identity and belonging. I believe that their examinations of black cultural politics in the UK in the context of broader debates around diaspora, urban multiculture and postcoloniality provide an extraordinary understanding of the ambivalences and contingencies of a representational politics that makes a critical investigation into current cultural production and its broader political implications possible, in the UK and elsewhere.

As such, their analyses also bear important parallels to the contemporary cultural politics in Germany where notions of interculture, urban multiculture and postmigratory narratives are gaining increasing recognition and are crucially shifting the position of minority cultural producers towards a politics of representation that aims to challenge the hegemonic understanding of Germany as an ethnically and culturally homogenous society (I will elaborate on the theoretical and historical characteristics of Germany's citizenship and migration debates and the specific racialisation of Turkish Germans in Chapter 3). My study of Project X as an example of the contemporary cultural conditions in Berlin is therefore deeply inspired by the works of both theorists. This is especially the case as a transdisciplinary approach to researching processes of cultural production as developed by the Cultural Studies tradition has been thus far barely adopted with regards to Germany's cultural

landscape (see e.g. Terkessidis, 2006).³⁶ Throughout my study of Project X, I hence aim at further advancing such an approach in conversation with the political and cultural specificities of contemporary Berlin to arrive at a keener understanding of how the project's intercultural frame might impact on broader discourses of representation, citizenship and belonging in Germany.

It is crucial to note, however, that both Hall and Gilroy are mainly concerned with the cultural dynamics of the everyday and the popular culture sphere, leaving the state-funded sector of highbrow music and theatre largely out of sight. While I think that their theoretical lens would certainly also lend itself for an investigation of representational politics in the highbrow sector – as I partly seek to do in my thesis – I also argue that such an analytical transition would bring with it its own particular tensions as a project like Project X illustrates. For one, the project is situated in the high culture frame of opera, which has itself been implicated in processes of imperialism and in the (re)production of classed and racialised hierarchies. Second, while indeed largely freed from potentially marginalising market dynamics, Project X is almost entirely funded by the German government and thus can be at least implicitly associated with broader state-making projects. The question therefore is how Project X can unlock a politics of representation that sets out to challenge the ethnic and cultural hegemonies traditionally showing in German highbrow music production and, by extension, in narrations of the German nation, while still being associated with such unequal cultural and political spaces. To examine how Project X can reconstruct

³⁶ Some important exceptions are offered by Onur Suzan Nobrega's (2016) study of labour conditions of Turkish German theatre artists, by Azadeh Sharifi's (2011) thesis on postmigratory theatre work in Cologne and by Elisa Liepsch, Matthias Pees and Julian Warner (2018) whose edited volume *Allianzen: Kritische Praxis an weißen Institutionen* encompasses diverse writings on critical practices and anti-racist coalition-building in white-centred cultural and educational institutions in Germany.

notions of inequality, diversity and difference against the backdrop of such long-standing institutional inequalities will hence be a crucial endeavour of this study.

Here, I would like to raise another issue where I believe the works of Hall and Gilroy could still be further expanded: Although both scholars highlight the deep-seated ambivalences between critical artistic work, creative subjectivity and the constraining effects of the broader cultural, political and economic structures³⁷, neither Hall nor Gilroy fully consider the concrete institutional, organisational or aesthetic practices that shape and produce processes of representation in the cultural sphere in the first place. Bearing my own research focus on Project X in mind, by turning towards the processes and socialities of music-making in more detail, I hope that my thesis will give insight into the very practices of cultural production and performance that lie at the basis of and play into broader issues of representation. My turn towards the organisational and aesthetic dynamics of cultural production can contribute to further our understanding of how discourses around diversity and difference are established and performed through (musical) practice.

(Un)making ‘race’ and Otherness in urban cultural production

To that end, I will consider the work of contemporary critical ‘race’ and postcolonial scholars to further tune into the sphere of cultural production and into the processes of ‘race’-(un)making that are practiced within it. Such an analysis is particularly urgent in the context of Project X which claims to be ‘intercultural’ and seeks to ‘diversify’ the highbrow realm of music production, recognising the multicultural configurations

³⁷ Gilroy (1993: 111), for example, critically analyses the ways in which black culture becomes commodified in the popular culture industries and lays bare how the arts funding in the UK would systematically coerce reductive representations in the context of black British arts, ‘rely[ing] absolutely on an absolute sense of ethnic difference’. Hall unfolds a similar discussion in ‘What is “black” in black popular culture?’ (1992), *inter alia*.

of Berlin. I therefore specifically build on current scholarship which has critically observed an increasing focus on policies in media and cultural institutions as well as in cultural legislation aimed to diversify their programming, audience and workforce alike.

While recognising the progressive potential of a greater representation of cultural diversity, particularly in Western mainstream cultural and media industries, Gavan Titley (2014a: 139) also cautions us that mainstreaming diversity can ‘be as depoliticising as it can be normalising’. He recognises the risk of ‘a post-racial valorisation of diversity’ as the basis for a turn away from the ‘contested ideological terrain of cultural representation’ (2014b: 253) by proposing a reductionist understanding of diversity as freed from and proceeding outside of broader political and power struggles. Thus, concepts of diversity which only promote a greater number of cultural minority producers and artists of colour, who or whose work is assumed to be ethnically or culturally outside the Western-European norm, would fall short in accounting for the systemic inequalities and personal experiences of racialised and marginalised groups.

Anamik Saha further specifies that ‘[i]n the neoliberal conjuncture diversity neutralizes race, and is now more likely to act as a marker of consumer brands, lifestyle choices, and postracial cultural appreciation [...] rather than the lived experience of multiculture’ (2018: 106; emphasis in the original). As Saha (2018: 106, 107) puts it, such approaches to representing diversity would therefore often only be about ‘add[ing] colour to a production’ instead of ‘exploring black or brown experience or even just social issues’. As such, the focus on diversity would not engender a critical interrogation into bounded concepts of ethnic difference but instead would rely and re-inscribe reductive constructions of Otherness. Consequently, diversity initiatives

would not only be counterproductive because they can lead to racial profiling in hiring and funding processes (see e.g. Pritchard and Stonbely, 2007) or might result in accusations of tokenism against minority producers (see e.g. Johnston and Flamiano, 2007; see Puwar, 2004 for an in-depth analysis of labour experiences of racialised professional workers), but as Saha contends, ‘diversity initiatives tend to eradicate more contentious issues such as equality, equal opportunities, and social justice’ (2018: 25, see also Ahmed, 2007, 2012; Gray, 2016; Hall, 2000; Malik, 2013; Mellinger, 2003; Nwonka, 2015; Saha, 2013, 2017). Here, he even goes a step further and argues that diversity strategies would therefore not only miss to review racial inequalities in the cultural industries but that it is indeed the very notion of diversity itself that would *make* ‘race’.

According to Saha (2018: 22), ‘diversity initiatives rather than failing, actually serve an ideological function that sustains the institutional whiteness of the cultural industries even while they claim (often genuinely so!) to do something more inclusive’³⁸. In this connection, he detects an integrationist pull in cultural policies which, going hand in hand with neoliberal market demands of commercialisation that increasingly pressure cultural industries into revenue-oriented approaches, would not actually address the socioeconomic and political inequalities that have led to the marginalisation of particular social groups, but instead would seek to manage ethnic and cultural plurality from the hegemonic white Eurocentric centre with ‘damaging effects upon the practices of cultural producers wanting to tell stories from the margins’ (ibid.: 108, see also Ahmed, 2012; Hammou, 2016; Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma, 1996). In this vein, Nancy Leong (2012: 2190) further clarifies that diversity

³⁸ His argument thus mirrors Hage’s (1998) analysis of a ‘white multiculturalism’ as well as the critical examination of whiteness as a system of cultural capital that is emphasised by some of the emerging cultural capital debates.

initiatives would contribute to the commodification of ‘race’ instead of overcoming racial injustice and thus would just be another feature of racial capitalism which she describes as ‘the process of driving social and economic value from the racial identity of another’. As such, they would present ways of managing the demand of minorities while keeping white-centred power relations in its place, producing what Hall (1992: 24) calls ‘a kind of carefully regulated, segregated visibility’.

Here, one could object that projects like Project X, which are situated in the state-funded art sector, might be largely freed from such marginalising market logics. However, as Saha (2018: 85) reminds us, the ideological rhetoric around diversity strategies would not only link to its assumed economic value, but also paint the latter as ‘a key tenet in a liberal pluralist model of communications that emphasises how an open, independent and free media system is central to the sustenance of a well-functioning democracy’. In fact, according to Philip Napoli (2008), the justification of diversity projects in terms of democratic values would be especially pertinent in the case of the non-commercial art sector in order to secure their social appreciation and public funding sources (see e.g. Nobrega, 2016). There might hence be an ideological function at work in Project X, making the project merely a way to manage Berlin’s multicultural diversity in order to maintain the opera institution’s legitimacy and publicly funded position but without reviewing the institutional logics that sustain racial inequalities in highbrow institutions in the first place.

Critically turning towards current research and scholarship on cultural industries, Augie Fleras (2016) and Herman Gray (2016) therefore argue that studies of cultural production would often fall short in really unravelling the systemic inequalities of ‘race’ and ethnicity that shape sites of cultural and media production and fail to recognise that ‘a misrepresentation of diversity and difference that is

institutional, systemic and institutionalized' (Fleras, 2016: 34). Drawing on Hesmondalgh and Saha (2013), Gray (2016) details that production studies would often suffer from two analytical confinements. First, they would only establish 'discursive linkages of race to people of colour (and not the operation of whiteness)' which prohibits an appropriate analysis of systemic racial bias of cultural organisations and second, they would fail to appreciate 'the logic of creative practices [...] as a site of making race and practices of inequality' (ibid.: 248). According to him, it therefore 'follows too that inattention to race-making rather than racial representation [...] assumes that the source of inequality and racism rests with individual preferences and dispositions of showrunners and directors' rather than understanding 'race as a practice of knowledge/power' that is endemic to cultural organisations (ibid.: 248).

A critical awareness of the systematic and epistemic nature of 'race'-making in cultural production demands even further attention in the context of a project like Project X, which not only aims to 'diversify' Berlin's highbrow music sector but, in doing so, also seeks to accentuate and reflect the city's postmigratory and multicultural character more widely. Here, similar to Fleras and Gray, Michael Keith (2005) identifies a misleading tendency in the literature on urban cultural production which, in aiming to avoid an analysis which ultimately fixates and re-inscribes bounded notions of culture and community, would often focus on and romanticise the idea of a transcultural urban diversity that innately supersedes the legitimacy of the nation-state and of fixed concepts of identity and culture that are tangled up in its construction. Keith objects that even transnational movements, diasporic alliances and expressions of cultural hybridity 'are locked into patterns of urban residence and city labour markets, creating the classic patterning of jobs, homes, and power marked by the

mosaic of multiculturalism. The city variously accommodates, assimilates, or stigmatizes these racialized patterns through its form' (ibid.: 253). He therefore argues that although a

'study of cultural production that privileges creativity that emerges from dialogue between traditions in the arts or in everyday life implicitly argues against the taxonomies of either ethnicized or racialized pigeonholes [...] such arguments may undermine the case for institutional recognition of forms of cultural racism in the institutions that govern precisely these activities' (ibid.: 259).

It follows thereon that studies of urban cultural production, in particular of such projects that deem themselves innately intercultural, have to critically engage with the 'regimes of governmental power' (ibid.: 252) which structure and regulate the field of cultural production. That is, instead of solely focusing on processes of creative exchange, such studies need to critically address the projects' organisational set-up, such as the funding systems they rely on, the cultural policies they seek to speak to or implement, their institutional frameworks and histories as well as the dominant aesthetical parameters of production, performance and judgement that crucially shape and determine the context of these creative encounters. Hence, it is not just crucial to understand the linkages between cultural production and processes of representation on a broader social level, but to zoom into the concrete practices of cultural work. When examining projects like Project X, it is thus imperative to trace and analyse how the organisational and aesthetic practices in cultural production construct and represent notions of diversity, difference and identity and the ways in which these link to broader patterns of urban inequality permeating Berlin.

In order to analyse the effects of specific diversity strategies or intercultural projects like Project X, we would hence need to better understand the link between conditions of cultural production and the politics of representation. Here, Sara

Ahmed's work on diversity policies in Higher Education presents another helpful angle. While she, like Saha and others (see e.g. Deem and Ozga, 1997; Kandola and Fullerton, 1994; Kierton and Green, 2000), equally stresses that diversity strategies merely reproduce institutional whiteness and inequality rather than facilitating social change, she also argues that it is ultimately about the ways in which diversity as a term and a political commitment circulates within an institution:

'[T]he success of diversity and equity policies is dependent on the capacity to determine how such terms circulate within organisations. For diversity practitioners, this means repeating the word 'diversity' and other words that are marked through the struggle against the reproduction of social and material inequalities, such as "equality" and "justice". Words such as "diversity" do then enable action, and even social change, but the actions they enable depend of how they are taken up, as well as who takes them up. In other words, the "take up" of such words is dependent on institutional histories that maybe forgotten or concealed in the present' (Ahmed, 2004: 11).

Drawing back to Hall's notion of cultural hegemony, Saha (2018: 31) equally recognises a small yet disruptive potential in diversity strategies and policy:

'As much as I argue that the reason minority access to the cultural industries is impeded not in spite of diversity initiatives but because of them, I would also go as far as saying that when successful cultural transcriptions occur it is because of these policies despite how they feel like they are in spite of them.'

Building on both Ahmed and Saha, I hence wish to trace how Project X performs interculture in practice and how notions of diversity and difference are actually constructed in the aesthetical and organisational processes of the project. Going forward, I thus follow the above-discussed debates and intend to 'switch the question from how cultural industries *represent* race, to how cultural industries *make* race' (Saha, 2018: 11; emphasis in the original). I hope that such an analysis will ultimately contribute to an evaluation of Project X's position in broader struggles of

representation centred around hierarchising discourses of ‘race’, ethnicity and class that shape inequalities in contemporary cultural production.

Power, Otherness and affect in intercultural music production

To lay the theoretical groundwork for an investigation into Project X subsequently also involves a closer analysis of its specific institutional site, the Western art music sector, and of the creative practices standing at its core, in particular forms of intercultural music-making. While genre constructions like ‘world music’ have been thoroughly criticised for the ways in which they perpetuate neo-colonial and racial capitalist systems by mobilising reductive notions of ethnicity as sheer marketing strategies for an international music market (see e.g. Born and Hesmondhalgh, 2000; Bayley and Dutiro, 2016; Huq, 2003; Stokes, 2004; Sharma, 1996), the notion of intercultural music-making has often been used to counter world music’s creative and political implications. Rather than describing a form of genre, the term instead connotes a particular *process* of music-making or, as Kevin Fellezs (2004: 199) denotes it, ‘intercultural musicking’. As such, it designates musical interchanges ‘between two or more distinct musical cultures that resulted in musical mixes’ (Born and Hesmondhalgh, 2000: 25) which can take shape in particular compositional, improvisatory or performance arrangements. Intercultural music-making thus seeks to accentuate ‘the blurring of musical borders and histories’ (Frith, 2000: 315) by dissolving ‘distinctions between tradition, authenticity, and modernity’ (Born and Hesmondhalgh, 2000: 28; see also Bailey and Dutiro, 2016).

Such conceptions of intercultural music-making mirror theorisations of interculture more widely. Having emerged as a counterpoint to state-led formulations

of interculturalism³⁹, interculture describes the multifaceted processes of dialogue and exchange between different social groups which are in turn not seen as static or bounded entities but as dynamic and fluid configurations of social life (see e.g. James, 2008, 2009). The notion of interculture therefore involves the recognition of cultural differences and similarities inasmuch as it implies the realisation of syncretic, hybrid cultural formations freed from groupist understandings of ethnic or cultural identity. With regard to intercultural programmes in the art sector, Terkessidis (2010: 10) hence postulates that the focus of intercultural projects like Project X should lie on ‘the development of new relationships’ that overcome discursive boundaries of integration, assimilation or multiculturalism. Interculture would thus accentuate the formation of a new mode of sociality which emerges out of the multifaceted and reciprocal connections between people of different biographies and backgrounds. In this sense, the concept of interculture goes beyond notions of urban multiculture which ‘merely’ seek to render essentialist constructions of difference meaningless by focusing on people’s routine cross-cultural and cross-ethnic interactions. While interculture in its critical core therefore rather runs in parallel to theorisations of new ethnicities, its explicitly liberal interpretation as often deployed in cultural and social policy has also been the object of much scholarly concern. Mainly finding fault with its de-historicised approach to intercultural relations and its tendency to disregard structural

³⁹ Originally understood as a Quebecois counterpoint to an Anglophone model of multiculturalism seeking to ‘preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians’ (the 1988 Multiculturalism Act Preamble) of all ethnic and cultural communities, the state-led model of interculturalism was developed to ensure the cultural survival of Quebec as a unique political institution. While still granting representation to immigrant communities on both a macro-level of politics and a micro-level of everyday public debate, ‘interculturalism seeks to care for the future of the majority culture as much as that of minority cultures. From this perspective, it is essentially a search for conciliation’ (Bouchard, 2011: 445). In Europe, interculturalism was first reflected as a kind of communication strategy, aiming to promote an intercultural dialogue to foster a European community-building: ‘Unlike multiculturalism, where the focus is on the preservation of separate cultures, intercultural dialogue seeks to establish linkages and common ground between different cultures, communities, and people, promoting understanding and interaction’ (The European Commission, 2017).

racism, critics have argued that the concept of interculture is not only ill-equipped to tackle today's deeply entrenched racialised and classed hierarchies but might furthermore contribute to their re-inscription (see e.g. Alexander, 2005; Connolly, 2000; Laflèche, 2007).

Such criticisms also extend into debates around intercultural music-making. For instance, as Born and Hesmondhalgh (ibid.: 15) state in their pioneering edition *Western Music and its Others*, musical producers who include 'other' musical elements in their compositions or performances are always also 'transforming that music through incorporation into their own aesthetic: appropriating and re-presenting it'. Such tensions pose themselves with particular urgency in a production context like Project X's; that is, whenever intercultural music-making is taking place within a highly institutionalised, canonised and ritualised musical space like Western art music and opera (see e.g. Atkinson, 2006; El-Ghadban, 2009). In such production contexts, Fellesz (2004: 147) emphasises that 'the presence of a past so deeply imbricated with colonialist desire, the exploitation of indigenous traditions for mere voyeuristic pleasure' would lead to 'inevitable differences in "starting positions" for each side of an intercultural partnership'. In view of my case study, it hence remains essential to critically reflect on the overarching power structures that first determine who the intercultural producers are, where they have been historically positioned in the musical field and how the current process of production might play into and replicate 'neo-colonial practices of appropriation and domination [...] through western mechanisms' (Huq, 2006: 67).

Despite such complex negotiations and looming perils of intercultural musical encounters, Veit Erlmann (1996: 474, 457) interjects that these would nonetheless

allow for an opportunity to precisely reflect upon such hegemonic power structures and that

‘[r]ather than casting these moves in binary terms such as choices between the West and the Rest, between participation and refusal, the politics of global musical production creates numerous highly changeable “border zone relations” that allow performers to constantly evaluate their position within the system [...] Value, in the viral stage, develops from pure contiguity, from the cancerous proliferation of values without any reference point at all.’

These musical negotiations are inherently marked by the affective and emotive qualities of music-making which Tia DeNora and Gary Ansdel (2017: 239), for instance, denote as ‘the glimmers of music’s “inside” (sensibility, emotional stance, affect)’. According to the two scholars, ‘[t]hese glimmers come at times of conflict over music where people hold and hold on to musical materials, stands and stances so as to render music “this” way not “that” way’ (ibid.: 239). At the same time, these affective attributes would also make up music’s ‘capacity to effect change, and thus to be an instrument of social ordering’ (ibid.: 231). On the one hand, such changes might pertain to the negotiation of musical subjectivities only. On the other hand, shifts in musical identities might also initiate a review of broader social relations (see also DeNora, 2000).

A concrete example of music’s abilities to influence social relations is put forward by Jonna Vuoskoski, Eric Clarke and Tia DeNora (2017: 584) who highlight the ways in which music-making and listening can promote interpersonal feelings of empathy. As they explain, ‘by enabling the synchronization of actions and the collective expression and experience of emotions for groups of people, music may have offered an evolutionary advantage through promoting social bonding and group cohesion’. While the authors deduce that music’s specific motoric and affective characteristics would therefore promote the emotional affiliations of people involved

in either the making of or the collective listening to music, they also set out to test ‘whether simply listening to music from a specific culture could evoke empathy and affiliation towards members of that culture’ (*ibid.*: 587) and find that it can indeed foster cross-cultural empathy and even reduce racial bias. Put more generally, it seems to be ‘precisely music’s extraordinary power of imaginary evocation of identity and of cross-cultural and intersubjective empathy that render it a primary means of both marking and transforming individual and collective identities’ (Born and Hesmondalgh, 2000: 32).

However, by concentrating on the affective capacities of music itself, one might run the risk of concealing or ignoring the broader social relations (and inequalities) within which cultural production necessarily proceeds. Against this backdrop, Born et al. (2017) put forward the notion of a ‘social aesthetics’ to provide a clearer lens for bringing into dialogue the micro-practices and socialities of music-making with overarching discursive and institutional paradigms. More specifically, Born draws out four planes of music’s social mediation: First, she introduces the ‘immediate microsocialities of musical performance and practice and [...] the social relations embodied in musical ensembles and associations’ (*ibid.*: 43). Besides the microsocial, she secondly draws out music’s power ‘to animate imagined communities’ between the performers and their audiences. Thirdly, she highlights music’s ability to ‘refract[] wider social relations, from the most concrete to the most abstract of collectivities’, such as social hierarchies of class, ‘race’ and gender or concepts of ‘the nation’. The fourth plane designates the ways in which music ‘is bound up in the broader institutional forces that provide the basis for its production’ (*ibid.*: 43) and thus considers both the particular workings of the cultural industries as well as the broader economic, political and historical contexts. Being sensitive to the

intricate ways in which music's affective qualities can engender social transformations while not losing sight of the wider material and discursive structures that shape and constraint music production, my study of Project X focuses precisely on the contentious moments of creative and affective negotiation against the backdrop of broader institutional, political and historical parameters.

A note on Western art music and its (Turkish) Others

My analysis of Project X therefore needs to be set against the historical relationship between the Western art music sector and Turkish musical traditions, and against the cultural exchanges between Turkey and Germany more broadly. The relationship between the Western art music sector and musical developments in Turkey has been a profoundly troubled and ambivalent one. It is a relationship deeply ingrained in Orientalist and Westernisation discourses which have taken both aesthetic and institutional forms and which stand at the core of historical constructions of Otherness that have played out both in the realm of music production, but that have also extended into broader discourses of legitimacy, identity and belonging. According to the ethnomusicologist Laudan Nooshin (2003: 245), Western art music's relationship to other musical systems has historically 'draw[n] from a deep-rooted discourse of binary opposition – a language of difference – in order to mark the boundaries between Europe and its "ethnic others"'. Such boundary-drawings have played out not only in the aesthetic material and its institutionalisation itself but have also underwritten the very study of and discourses around music (see also Bayley and Nooshin, 2017; Bohlman, 1993; El-Ghadban, 2009; Radano and Bohlman, 2000; Stokes, 2004).

As Erlmann (1999) explains, while the Western gaze towards the East would have taken different forms over time, these are connected through long-term

continuities of marginalisation and exploitation dating back to the peak of Europe's imperialist expansion. Following Erlmann, during the 18th and 19th century, representations of Otherness would have been crucially shaped by narratives of modernity which fetishised the Orient as an oppositional spectacle against which Western civilisation sought to define itself. In this connection, Ela Eylem Gezen (2012: 197; emphasis in the original) highlights Western art music's representation of Turkish music as one of the first expressions of musical Orientalism: 'Contact with the Ottoman Empire influenced German and, to a broader extent, European music. For instance, *alla turca* style, which employed Turkish instruments and themes, marked compositions by Haydn, Beethoven, and Mozart.'

As Bellman (1998: 13-14, 31-32) describes, *alla turca* had 'evolved from a sort of battle music played by Turkish military bands outside the walls of Vienna during the siege of that city in 1683'. However, he adds that only very few actually had heard the music, so that 'what became understood as Turkish Style was thus almost entirely the product of the European imagination'. In this connection, Stokes (2000) further elaborates that this 'Turkophilia which gripped Vienna in the late eighteenth century' was 'driven by a process of what one might describe as domestication', showing in blind borrowings from 'largely imagined musics from the East' which were incorporated into the rationalising logics of Western classical music and as such, organised according to a clear East-West power binary. While such musical references certainly meant to bring sonic pleasure and innovation, *alla turca* also implied a superiority of the West towards its imagined Turkish counterparts in constructing them either as alluring and desirable or as threatening and backward (see also Scott, 2009; for a general discussion of Orientalism and its constructions of the East-West binary see Said, 1978).

In contrast, the representational frames that developed during the 20th century were increasingly set around discourses of mimesis and authenticity. Stokes specifies (2004: 48-49) that it is during this period that Western music started to seek after ‘the “real presence” of the Other rather than a represented abstraction’. As Nooshin (2011), Stokes (2004, 2008) and Scherzinger (2004) highlight, it is especially during the postmodern era that the Oriental Other started to be absorbed in the search for and claims to authenticity. Whilst this discourse certainly illustrated a change from earlier representational regimes, it nonetheless continued to firmly reside within an us/them binary, now based on romanticising ideas of the pure, uncorrupted Other – or, to put it with Nooshin’s (2003: 250) words, of ‘contemporary noble savages’. Such reductive notions of authenticity persisted even in later discourses on musical hybridity and even on intercultural music-making (see e.g. Stokes, 2004). While those practices were actually supposed to champion the fluidity and open-endedness of musical styles, the rhetoric of hybridity risks building around assumed elements of authentic Otherness. Here, Stokes (2004: 50) points out how ‘[t]he identification of authentic [musical] elements ideologically justifies, naturalizes, and cements the hierarchical and exploitative relationships that (continue to) pertain between centres and peripheries, dominant and subaltern groups’.

Yet, the relationship between Western music and its (Turkish) Others has not only been shaped by various forms of cultural appropriation, but equally by various forms of internationalisation. As such, it has by no means been a one-directional process but involved multi-layered forms of transnational musical exchanges between Turkey and Western Europe (see e.g. Aksoy, 2014; Gezen, 2012; Greve, 2015; O’Toole, 2010). Moreover, both European imperialism as well as processes of Westernisation across the globe have led to a transnational expansion of Western

musical language (such as staff notation and equal-tempered tuning, for instance) but also of its educational and mediating institutions such as music conservatories and concert halls (see Stock, 2004; El-Gahdban, 2009). Such influences, however, did not remain static but were adapted to and altered by their local contexts (see e.g. Stokes, 2008). As a result, Western art music has taken various institutional and aesthetic forms across the globe which call into question its very framing and Eurocentric terminology (see e.g. Nooshin, 2011).

In this context, the relationship between Turkey and Western Europe is again particularly insightful. On the one hand, Western art music looks back on a long history of musical Orientalism; on the other, both the Ottoman Empire and later the Turkish Republic invested in a Westernisation process that decisively shaped the country's musical environment.⁴⁰ While scholars continue to debate to what extent this process was meant to develop an alternative way to modernisation that would assure greater independence from European imperialism, or rather reflected the attempt to assimilate (see e.g. Gülpalp, 1997; Keyder, 1997; Göle, 1997; Tekelioglu, 2001; Yarar, 2008), Ayhan Erol (2012: 40) underlines the field of music reform as 'an example of the most important symbolic violence aimed at imposing a particular vision of the [Turkish] state'. Erol (2012: 40) here specifically focuses on music reforms in the context of the founding days of the Turkish Republic under Murat Kemal Atatürk in 1923 in which 'western music was embraced in the name of "universalism": in other words, by accepting the historical superiority of the West as the producer of modernity, the political elite eagerly embraced European classical music' often at the

⁴⁰ Of course, Westernisation has only been one side of the musical coin; that is, there have been many other musical influences, especially from Anatolia and the Middle East, that have decisively shaped musical developments in Turkey (see e.g. Türünz, 2016; Stokes, 1992, 2008). While, for the purposes of my thesis, I focus on the musical relationships between Turkey and Europe, it is by no means my intention to 'mute' non-Western influences on music in past and present Turkey.

expense of traditional folk musics and musical styles more closely affiliated with the Ottoman past.⁴¹ This championing of a contemporary Turkish art music has also led to the establishment of a dual educational system. To that day, most conservatories in Turkey offer distinct educational strands for Turkish folk music, art music and Western art music (see e.g. Karahasanoğlu, 2012). It is with these historical complexities in mind that I approach the analysis of Project X.

Conclusion

In summary, as I have already argued with regards to both the post-Bourdiesuan literature and the debates around urban multiculture and diversity programmes in the arts, it is crucial to remain alert to the ways in which long-standing hierarchies of class and ‘race’, among others, re-inscribe and reproduce themselves even in intercultural projects that seemingly champion openness, dialogue and social change. Looking at intercultural productions and music-making in particular, it is therefore imperative to not only account for the social and affective qualities of music as aesthetic experience but to take into consideration the historical, institutional, and creative parameters that make up its production. While this chapter has detailed in what ways the particular strands of literature are important to my study and where they may also be limited or expandable, my overarching theoretical concern is indeed how to critically analyse and theorise a project like Project X which sits across so many different (yet related)

⁴¹ Elucidating the overall objective of such reforms, the establishment of contemporary Turkish art music, Erol postulates (*ibid.*: 43) that ‘[a]s a matter of ideological principle, the aim of the music reforms was the creation of a national cultural identity. Turkish pupils went to Europe in order to learn western music. Upon returning to Turkey they began to construct “Contemporary Turkish art Music” as a kind of “musical syncretism”, combining folk music and western musical techniques. So, rural melodies “invented” by the state as Turkish folk music were used by western music-educated musicians in order to create a completely new national musical culture’ [yet he concludes that] ‘most of their works were based on “modern” composition techniques: that is, their compositional styles were based on the music of the particular European style that they had learned’.

problems and literatures. Moreover, by turning my analytical focus towards the site of cultural production, I might also be able to tentatively bring into dialogue the emerging cultural capital scholarship with the cultural studies scholarship on urban multiculture, cultural representation and ‘race’-(un)making, using the example of intercultural settings like Project X. While I am aware that such an interdisciplinary endeavour cannot and should in no way be seamless⁴², I also recognise that the above outlined literatures have to a certain extent complemented each other in my study and, in so doing, have each been indispensable to my thinking and my writing about Project X.

⁴² Certainly, an interdisciplinary approach like I aimed to develop in this chapter bears challenges and risks – on a conceptual level but also from a wider epistemological and political standpoint – but I believe that it also offers a unique and nuanced framework in which to address the theoretical and political complexities that Project X incorporates.

Chapter 3: Situating Project X – an overview of Berlin’s cultural sector and citizenship debates in Germany

In what follows, I explain the wider cultural and political context within which my study of Project X is situated, before proceeding with my empirical analysis. I first present a concise overview of the key social and political developments that have shaped the cultural sector in Berlin from the beginning of the 20th century until today. This section maps out the zones of tension and conflict that have emerged between the historically rich city of Berlin as both a locale of Germany’s imperial histories and as a migratory and creative capital. I will use the history of the opera institution and its predecessor institutions as a general guideline for these broader elaborations in the hope that this section familiarises the reader with the artistic and political currents that led to Project X’s emergence and against which this study should be read. I will secondly look more closely at citizenship debates in Germany and consider the ways in which ‘race’ and ethnicity are constructed in the German context. I suggest that we can identify an ambivalent opening in citizenship discourses that might potentially direct us away from understandings of Germany as an ethnically and culturally homogenous ‘non-immigration country’ (see e.g. El-Tayeb, 2016; Rommelspacher, 2002) and towards a more profound recognition of Germany as a ‘postmigratory society’ (see e.g. Carvalho, 2014; Foroutan, 2015; Langhoff 2011).

It is against this broader cultural and political backdrop that I analyse how the historical legacies of the German nation are being negotiated in contemporary cultural productions in Berlin and in the politics of Project X more specifically. Throughout this chapter, I will draw from interview data with Berlin-based minority cultural workers and musicians affiliated with Project X to show how the project’s institutional

association as part of the Western art music sector and its specific urban location position Project X at particularly ambiguous intersections between Western cultural imperialism, elitism and a critical recognition of urban multiculture. This, I posit, makes a closer analysis of the concrete production processes underpinning Project X's intercultural work evermore necessary.

Opera in the context of Berlin's cultural history

Project X is organised by the smallest and youngest of the three state-funded opera houses in the city. Since its foundation in 1947, the opera institution has played a key role in Berlin's cultural life. But even before the opera institution opened its doors between *Unter den Linden* and *Behrenstraße* in East Berlin, its geographical locality and institutional predecessor, upon whose grounds the house was founded, have claimed a prominent position in Berlin's cultural past and, as such, give crucial insights into the wider political and cultural history of the city.

The story of the opera institution thus begins with the opening of its predecessor, a well-known theatre house⁴³. Founded in 1898, the theatre served as a place of musical entertainment for the well-established Berliner bourgeoisie. Its programme mainly comprised (jazz) operetta performances and satirical theatre revues and showcased popular artists of the time. Its cultural profile of 'light entertainment/light muse' made the theatre one of the most celebrated revue institutions in the world and a prime example for the golden 1920s in Berlin. As such, the theatre was part of a larger vibrant international cultural scene that developed in Berlin in the early period of the *Weimarer Republik* in interconnection with increasing immigration to the city (see e.g. Vertovec, 2006). In particular, Berlin became the

⁴³ I do not refer to this theatre by name to not give away the name of the current opera institution.

home of many Jewish Eastern Europeans, numerous of them intellectuals and artists, who fled the pogroms in the early 1880s that followed the coup against the Emperor Alexander 2nd of Russia. However, while the city developed as a cosmopolitan centre for arts and culture throughout the early 20th century, Jewish migrants in Berlin were already exposed to the growing antisemitism that only a few years later led to their persecution and murder and forced those who escaped in time into exile yet again (see e.g. Massing, 1949; Nobrega, 2016).

The theatre did not remain unaffected by the rise of National Socialism. In the beginning of the 1930s, its many Jewish artists and producers were forced to stop working on and behind the stage, being the victims of Hitler's 'degenerate art' doctrine⁴⁴. The music programme itself ran uninterruptedly until 1934 when the Nazis made the theatre an institutional representative of their state-operated leisure organisation *Kraft durch Freude* [strength through joy], which set the theatre's ideological directory until its closure in 1944. Then, shortly before the end of the Second World War, the theatre's main building, foyer and ceiling paintings were fully destroyed during an allied attack on Berlin; only the main auditorium remained intact. In the aftermaths of the war, the allied powers that brought the NS regime to an end separated Berlin into four sectors, with the Soviet Union occupying the Eastern parts of the city while France, the UK and the US held control in the West. Berlin, the divided city, lost its status as Germany's political and cultural capital and instead became the focal point of the Cold War and of the ideological confrontation that the

⁴⁴ Degenerate art, or *entartete Kunst* in German, was an ideological doctrine adopted by Hitler's NSDAP [*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*/ National Socialist German Workers' Party] as a move against modern art. During the Nazi dictatorship, many art works by both national and international artists, which were judged as Communist, Jewish or un-German, were removed and banned from state-subsidised museums and galleries. Cultural producers whose work was denounced as degenerate had to endure sanctions, such as occupational bans, and were prohibited from exhibiting and selling art or from holding teaching positions.

Deutsch-Deutsche Teilung [German-German division] brought with it. In this context, the cultural scene in the East quickly became a politicised platform for the Soviet leadership that aimed to create a prestigious arts sector in the German Democratic Republic [GDR].

One of its focal points was evidently the Berliner Ensemble, founded in 1949 by Bertold Brecht and his wife Helene Weigel. Here, Brecht's *Episches Theater* [Epic Theatre] concept came to its full artistic bloom with the theatre company not only being one of the most celebrated institutions in Berlin but internationally as the numerous international guest performances indicate (see e.g. Funke and Jansen, 1992). Two years earlier, the opera institution was founded on the theatre's building remnants, with its first director⁴⁵ seeking to revive its original commitment to modern music theatre and its linkages to the tradition of the French *opéra comique*⁴⁶. By seeking to re-establish 'elementary laws for the musical stage', the director (Felsenstein 1997: 229) specifically highlighted four examples of European theatre as role models for the opera's aesthetic development: The *Théâtre-Libre*, one of Europe's first off-theatres founded in Paris in 1887 by André Antoine, the *Freie Bühne* [free stage] established by Otto Brahm in Berlin in 1888, the *Deutsche Theater* [German theatre] directed by Max Reinhardt since 1904 as well as the *Moscow Art Theater* founded in 1898 by the theatre theorist and practitioner Konstantin Stanislavski (Roselt, 2008). As Roselt (2008) points out, all four institutions that inspired the founder were not opera houses or musical stages but spoken theatres, thus reflecting his conviction that the musical parts of an opera would not claim a higher importance than the theatrical scenes of the performance. Working furthermore in close proximity

⁴⁵ To not give away the name of the institution, I decided against naming its founder as well.

⁴⁶ Put briefly, the term *opéra comique* denotes a genre of opera which originated in France and which traditionally contains both sung arias and spoken dialogue.

to his contemporary Brecht, he grounded the genre of a *Realistisches Musiktheater* [realistic music theatre] which aimed at creating a performance as believable and realistic as possible by assigning all artistic parts of an opera – scores, libretto, enactment and scenery – a similarly important function for its dramatic unfolding (Herz, 2008). To put it with the founder's (Felsenstein, 1976: 69) own words,

'[t]he real musical theatre experience [...] can only arise, if the dramatic function of music and singing is correctly recognized and coherently deployed. This function can only be: to bring a story musically and vocally to one theatrical reality and to unconditional credibility. To turn the music making and singing on stage into a convincing, truthful and indispensably human expression is the cardinal question.'

To make the opera performances not only more believable but also more accessible to the Berlin audiences, he moreover determined that all operas should be translated entirely into the German language. Despite seeming like a rather banal decision from today's point of view, this move to German translations reflected a unique exception in the opera world, which at the time was merely shaped by Italian or French librettos and singing techniques (see e.g. Blubacher, 2005).

While the director's political convictions remain disputed until today (see e.g. Rienäcker, 2008), the notion of a realistic music theatre bears aesthetic and political parallels to Brecht's Epic Theatre and to modern *Regietheater* as it developed in post-war Germany. As such, the opera institution's aesthetic and political foundations set it apart from its much more established and traditional partner organisations. While Project X, which was launched more than 50 years after the opera institution's first opening, does not explicitly refer back to its institutional founding days, I nevertheless suggest that the house's particular aesthetic and political tradition created the broader environment within which critical approaches to contemporary music theatre should be thought of. Thinking back to the postwar period in Berlin, it is safe to say that the

Opera institution developed as a central player in the GDR's growing cultural scene. However, West-Berlin's cultural sector equally rehabilitated itself during that time, benefitting from Germany's *Wirtschaftswunder* [economic miracle] which supported the city's postwar reconstruction. After the years of ideological strangulation by the NS regime, cultural institutions were now equipped with considerable public funding and sought to provide a space for modern bourgeois culture (Kosnick, 2008). In contrast to the cultural sector in the GDR, however, the 1950s in West Berlin were shaped by a 'protective mantle of cold war antitotalitarianism' with intellectuals and artists still maintaining a clear 'separation of culture from politics, shunning any ideology, fascist or communist' (Huysen, 2006: 2; cited in Nobrega, 2016: 21).

It was only in the 1960s that a new cultural era of political critique was ushered in, in particular pushed for by the 1968 student protests which, inspired by the *Frankfurter Schule* [Frankfurt School] and decolonisation and civil rights movements abroad, critically grappled with the aftermath of the Holocaust and German imperialism and moved the country's *Schuldfrage* [guilt question] into the political and cultural focus. In this context, traditional high culture was to a certain extent deconstructed as Germany's *Nationalkultur* [national culture] after it had been coopted and appropriated by Nazi fascism (see e.g. Marcuse, 1965; Nobrega, 2016).⁴⁷ Increasingly, the city's highbrow cultural institutions were now presented less in terms of cultural elitism, capital and distinction but were portrayed as sites for participation, cultural learning and history (see e.g. Glaser and Stahl, 1983). Yet, while the Berlin Senate implemented different cultural policies to promote this social vision for the arts throughout the 1980s and 1990s, contemporary visitor evaluations across the

⁴⁷ As Huysen puts it (2006: 2; cited in Nobrega, 2016: 21), 'Goethe's Weimar right next to Buchenwald, Adolf Hitler's Wagner cult and Albert Speer's megalomaniacal architectural fantasies'.

highbrow sector have nevertheless documented that it still only attracts around 6% of the German population and predominantly of middle-class background (see e.g. Mandel, 2017; Reuband, 2018).

The renewed significance of Berlin as the cultural capital of (West) Germany was further strengthened after the country's reunification and the self-declaration of the Federal Republic as a *Kulturstaat* [culture state]⁴⁸. The term was first noted in the reunification contract between East and West Germany which announced that the diverse artistic and cultural developments in both parts would constitute the cultural foundations of the newly founded Federal Republic, arguing that 'Germany's significance in the world would stem from its significance as a culture state' (Knoblich, 2016; my translation). Thus, following this constitutive self-image as a state in which 'art and science, research and learning are free' (German constitution article 5 paragraph 3; my translation), Germany further expanded its public spending for established art organisations and educational institutions. As the main funding obligation for the arts rests with the respective *Bundesländer* [federal states], Knoblich (2016) explains that some states even passed special laws that aimed to make cultural funding obligatory rather than a voluntary budgetary expenditure. For the Opera institution and other established highbrow institutions in Berlin, the city's public arts spending has translated into indispensable amounts of financial support. The latter remained in place even after the increasing deindustrialisation of Berlin in the 1990s that had detrimental consequences for its economy. As Kira Kosnick (2008: 29-30) explains,

⁴⁸ The country's 'ideological concept of *Kulturnation*' (Orgad, 2009: 726; see also Rindisbacher, 2013; Ohlert, 2014; Schildt and Siegfried, 2009) has not only placed a particular focus on Germany's cultural sector but has been furthermore extended to a broader conception of cultural citizenship and identity and, as such, has been mobilised in both cultural policy frameworks and, more controversially, in the context of integration and migration debates closely linked to the notion of *Leitkultur* [leading/guiding culture]. I will elaborate on this further in the following section of this chapter.

‘the cultural-industries sector is recognized as one of the few areas of economic growth that the city has seen since unification, and this is complemented by high levels of public funding for its cultural establishments such as theatres, opera houses, and museums. Despite the city’s virtual bankruptcy, public spending for culture has continued and been justified by different city government coalitions, which have pointed to the pivotal role of culture and the arts for any future economic revival.’

Yet, from a purely juridical standpoint, the legal requirements with respect to public support for the cultural sector are ill-defined which means that, in practice, the amount and structure of public arts funding can vary extensively and, as many critics argue, is always at risk of being cut first when times are harder and budgets tight (see e.g. Mandel, 2017; Mager, 2014). The continuous negotiation between political and financial responsibilities carried by the federal state governments and the constant risk of public spending cuts put considerable pressure on state-subsidised art institutions which continuously need to proof their cultural value and social legitimacy.

In this context, Berlin, with its chronically empty public coffers, presents a clear example of such ever-present pressures which have particularly manifested in discussions around the maintenance of the city’s three opera houses. In the last years, only 1,8%⁴⁹ of Berlin’s regular budget has been spent on public art of which the overwhelming majority (95%) goes to the city’s highbrow music, theatre and art institutions and only around 5% to the free scene (see Grünwald-Schukalla et al., 2018; Anheier, 2017; Blech, 2018; Kreienbring, 2018). For Berlin’s three opera houses, the city’s cultural budget translates into quite considerable financial support: State public expenditure have subsidised each opera ticket across the three institutions with an average of €100. For the opera institution of concern in this thesis, subsidies

⁴⁹ 1,8% of Berlin’s regular state budget is designated to support arts and culture which make up around 400 million Euros per annum. In 2017, the cultural budget even amounted to 508 million Euros. Amongst the established arts institutions is the *Stiftung Oper* the main recipient of such subsidies, receiving 35,3% of subsidies in 2014/15 (see Grünwald-Schukalla et al., 2018). For further information see: <https://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/foerderung/>

even amount to €181.10 per ticket (see *Der Tagesspiegel*, 2010). Due to the relatively high costs of the three institutions in comparison to other cultural organisations, the Berlin government decided to launch the *Stiftung Oper* [Foundation Opera] in 2004 as an umbrella organisation in charge of the managerial and programme coordination for all three opera houses. Its aim was not only to streamline and thereby to minimise the logistical costs across the three institutions but also to make sure that their respective programmes would offer a wide variety of performances and therefore would complement rather than compete with one another (see *Abgeordneten Haus Berlin*, 2003). However, such efforts initially seemed to backfire when in 2006, only two years after the founding of *Stiftung Oper*, its first director Michael Schindhelm threatened to quit his job, claiming that the envisioned cost cutting of €17 million until 2009 was unattainable and irresponsible (see e.g. Hanselmann, 2006).

The opera crisis thus intensified further in 2007 when the political pressure to close one of the three institutions grew. At this point in time, none of the three operas fulfilled their capacities with the opera institution being at the very bottom with an average ticket sale of only 60% of the house's capacity. Eagerly trying to relieve pressure on the city budget, Klaus Wowereit, Berlin's mayor at the time, argued that 'the state of Berlin will, for the foreseeable time, not be in a position, and it doesn't matter which government in which colour composition will be here, to equip three opera houses financially to that extent that they are able to compete with houses in Paris, Munich or elsewhere' (cited in Limberg, 2007; my translation; see also Lewinski-Reuter and Lüddemann, 2008). While up to today, none of the three houses has actually closed, such political and financial pressures led the three institutions to compete more and more fiercely for the public recognition and resources on which they so highly depend. For the Opera institution, the consequences were unapologetic

changes in the artistic and managerial directorship with the house's previous artistic director leaving the institution in 2012. He was replaced by the a new director, who describes his artistic vision as deeply influenced by his upbringing as an Australian with 'Hungarian-Polish-Russian roots' and of Jewish heritage which has not only made him come to appreciate the genre of operetta in particular but to widen his approach to music theatre in general (interview in *Die Zeit*, 2014; my translation).⁵⁰

Since his appointment in 2012, the director successfully breathed new life into the opera institution and revived its artistic heritage in a novel light. Arguing for more artistic diversity and against a clear distinction – a 'pigeonhole thinking' (*ibid.*) to put it with his words – between Germany's high culture and more popular art forms, he started to offer a wide and eclectic mix of classical opera repertoire, musicals and operettas. Ticket sales increased again and even skyrocketed with the opera being almost at full capacity (88,7%) in 2018 (see *Der Tagesspiegel*, 2018). Aiming at keeping the house's aesthetic tradition and societal vision of opera alive, the opera institution under its current directorship has sought to redefine itself as a 'contemporary and vibrant music theatre' that aims to be an 'opera for all' (Project X website, 2017). As the director explains, '[t]oday's audience wants *variety*, diversity, all genres, seriousness, depths and vaudeville [...] This is not possible for larger [opera] houses, they are far too cumbersome. It works for us' (interview in *Die Zeit*, 2014; my translation, emphasis in the original).

The artistic agenda to widen the Opera institution's programme and offer more variety of music theatre ranging from classical opera repertoire to musicals and

⁵⁰ In the interview, the director describes the operetta as a quasi-Jewish genre which he furthermore identifies as a crucial part of Germany's cultural history. He argues that his diverse cultural background would make him appreciate a rather broad variety of musical programming. To him, performing 'in one week Zimmermann's *Soldiers*, Rameau's *Castor and Pollux* and Dostal's *Clivia*' would 'not represent a new dramaturgy or a new understanding of music theatre, no new style of the house or something like that, but something completely natural, organic and authentic' (cited in *Die Zeit*, 2014; my translation).

cabarets seems to back precisely this boundary-blurring between high and popular. That the opera institution under him has been almost at full capacity year in and year out further supports that point. A pre-supposed connection between class and cultural consumption as conceptualised by Bourdieu might hence indeed not hold true anymore. It is furthermore no surprise that Project X, while having been launched already in 2011, grew considerably under the current leadership. No other programme at the opera institution grants such a clear and intricate insight into the ways in which the crisis of opera in Berlin and beyond and the institution's self-expectation as an open and inclusive opera house have sparked a critical investigation into the legitimacy and very foundations of state-funded music theatre. Following Project X's co-manager Nicolai,

'to a certain extent, Project X needs to be seen in line with the broader work of the opera institution – people here are exploring various ways to think about modern music theatre. The directorship is very open with regards to putting on different kinds of performances. Project X therefore fits into the generally open spirit of this house, while taking efforts a step further, of course' (conversation in Juni 2016, Berlin).

In this vein, Project X presents a rich case study that grants insight into the current changes of cultural production taking place in Berlin's Western art music sector to explore how an elitist setting is being forced to open up further, reach out and modify itself, both institutionally and with regard to the aesthetic material it represents. As Nicolai further specifies,

'Project X has certainly meant new territory for us – both institutionally and aesthetically. When I say us, I mean the opera as such. Because Murat and I have totally different experiences with Berlin. He knows the different *Kieze* [urban neighbourhoods], the social organisations, like neighbourhood managements or family centres. I know the free theatre scene, the more alternative crowd so to say – we already had such networks, but the opera of course didn't. So, overall, Project X has really led the institution to leave its safe haven and go into the multicultural city and engage with very different partners' (ibid.).

In this connection, Murat adds that ‘a programme like Project X can be very useful because it shows how positions of culture and music can change, how you can reposition yourself, even as a rather traditional institution. But you need to start and work locally, this project is ultimately a Berliner project’ (conversation in March 2016, Berlin).

Berlin as a multicultural metropolis and the challenge of diversity in the arts

While Berlin has been shaped by long-standing histories of migration, especially from Turkey, the city’s cultural politics long ignored and excluded the city’s local migrant population, many of them of working-class background, from cultural production and policy. As such, for a long time, rather than fostering a creative engagement with Berlin’s local multicultural population, the city’s cultural vision has been merely formulated around discourses of urban cosmopolitanism and business innovation. However, since the early 2000s, there has been an increasing debate around a lack of cultural and ethnic diversity in the arts. More and more cultural initiatives have been founded to accentuate the migratory and postcolonial histories of Berlin and to center cultural production more explicitly around postmigratory narratives and experiences. These developments have also forced the city’s highbrow institutions to reflect on their institutional structures. Project X is thus situated within these wider debates in Berlin’s cultural sector and presents an illuminating case study for a critical analysis of diversity in the arts agendas in the context of epistemic institutional and urban inequality.

The development of Berlin as a transnational cultural hub already started during the 1980s and 1990s, when (West)-Berlin’s free art scene became a growing platform for alternative lifestyles and politics with more and more youth subcultures

forming around left-wing political groups, squatting cultures and different music genres such as punk, rock and later electro (see e.g. Bader and Scharenberg, 2010). Offering a wide array of novel possibilities for artists and intellectuals from around the world, Berlin started to re-instate itself as a hub for the international subculture scene. Furthermore, West Germany's fast-growing economy during the 1960s and 70s led to the recruitment of many migrant workers from the Mediterranean and Turkey in particular, who mostly settled in the country's urban areas like Berlin and who actively contributed to its newly emerging city culture (see e.g. Mandel, 2008; Nobrega, 2016). However, while Berlin indeed opened up a scene for prominent artists and writers from around the globe, the cultural work of this first generation of so-called guestworkers was largely ignored. As Onur Suzan Nobrega (2016: 109) puts it, this 'cultural amnesia' and a general lack of solidarity with and disinterest in the social situation of the city's migrant communities persisted even after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989.

Drawing on the sociologist Nevim Çil (2009), Nobrega (2016: 22) even suggests that Germany's reunification resulted in 'a new wave of nationalism based on new ethnicised group categorisations labelled as "West German", "East German", and "migrants"' that 'pushed migrants further to the margins of the nation and led to changes in the social fabric of German society, which culminated in outbursts of violence against migrants and asylum seekers', gruesomely exemplified by the racist attacks in Solingen, Mölln and Lichtenhagen during the early 1990s⁵¹. As Nobrega (ibid.: 24) continues, while Berlin's Turkish migrants had benefitted from West Germany's economic upturn in the 1960s and 70s, they were not only simultaneously

⁵¹ During the 1990s, there were several severe instances of racist violence in Germany with Neo-Nazi riots in Rostock-Lichtenhagen (1992) and arson attacks against a migrant home in Mölln (1992) and a Turkish family in Solingen (1993). Together, these attacks have claimed eight lives.

exposed to everyday racism and harsh working conditions but ‘were particularly affected by unemployment and precarisation following the outsourcing of large parts of German industrial production to low-wage labour countries abroad after the reunification of the city’.

The risk of economic precarity for Berlin and its migrant populations in particular rose drastically with the increasing deindustrialisation of the city during the 1990s. Aiming to change the structure of Berlin’s economy, Gerhard Schröder, Germany’s chancellor at the time, (SPD), whose *Agenda 2010*⁵² policy was largely responsible for deep cuts into the country’s social welfare system, focused instead on the economic value of innovation and freelance creative labour.⁵³ As such, during the early 2000s, Berlin intended to strengthen its reputation as a cosmopolitan and innovative metropolis while still maintaining the image of an edgy and unpolished center for alternative lifestyles and club cultures, contrasting with other urban centers in Germany which still bore closer connections to the country’s viable industrial sectors. Klaus Wowereit’s (Berlin’s mayor from 2001 to 2014) famous depiction of Berlin as ‘poor but sexy’ (see *Der Tagesspiegel*, 2003) thus served simultaneously as a status description and as the city’s promotional slogan.

Mirroring Florida’s (2002) ‘creative class’ argument, Marion von Osten (2007) therefore argues that the discourse around the city’s creative industries has to

⁵² The *Agenda 2010* entailed a series of social and economic reforms implemented by the German government at the time, a Social-Democrats/Greens coalition, that was aimed at reforming the country’s labour market and welfare system. The declared intention of these programmes was to reduce unemployment by fostering economic growth. However, due to its partly harsh austerity measurements, the *Agenda 2010* also received considerable criticism.

⁵³ Gerhard Schröder’s [Social Democratic Party] policy of the *Neue Mitte* [new centre], named after the Berliner district ‘Mitte’ where both the government as well as many cultural institutions (such as the Opera institution) are located, as well as the so-called *Schröder Blair Paper* (1999) resulted in the passing of new policies which called for a greater focus on innovation, creativity and modernisation to bolster the economy against recession. However, as Nobrega (2016) and Kosnick (2008) object, such calls were ultimately euphemistic justifications for the increasing dismantling of Germany’s social benefits and welfare system that had drastic effects on the country’s migrant population.

be read as a form of neoliberal labour market reform that connected investment in the arts with a strong focus on individualised entrepreneurship, which promoted creative freelancers and other self-employed people as ‘the professionals of the nation’ (2007: 107; cited in Nobrega, 2016). However, building again on Çil (2009), Nobrega (2016: 25) argues that ‘these highly promoted “professionals of the nation” that appeared in policy discourse did not include migrants, who were increasingly pushed to the margins of the nation and its capital city Berlin’. Instead, ‘the promotion of [...] Berlin as a creative and cosmopolitan world city operated in a framework in which the cultural productions of ethnic minority artists were considered foreign and outside the framework of German national culture’ (ibid.: 25).

Nobrega illustrates her reasoning with a number of cultural policies which cast Berlin’s multicultural and multi-ethnic demography in terms of international diversity rather than promoting the artistic work of local minority cultural producers. *Inter alia*, she mentions the governmental report *Kulturwirtschaft in Berlin* [Cultural Economy in Berlin] published in 2005, which acknowledges Berlin’s ‘diversity’ merely with respect to the *Karneval der Kulturen* festival [Carnival of Cultures] which is depicted as ‘a “best practice” example of cultural productions by foreign artists in the city’ (2005: 13, cited in Nobrega, 2016: 25; see also Dubey, 2011). Such policies would perform a kind of ‘stranger fetishism’ (see Ahmed, 2000) and would illuminate

‘how racialised discourses in the context of the new significance of Berlin as the nation’s cosmopolitan and creative capital continued to exist until recently without taking into account that over fifty years of immigration have caused substantial changes in Berlin’s demographic structure as well as its cultural landscape’ (Nobrega, 2016: 25).

Kosnick (2008; see also Häussermann and Colomb, 2003) hence suggests that the discourse of Berlin’s cultural diversity would have drawn a sharp distinction between a grounded notion of urban multiculture rooted in the acknowledgment of the city’s

local migrant and often working-class population and a rather cosmopolitan approach that centered around the international, middle-class art scene emerging in the city. Nobrega (2016) especially recognises a structural lack of minority artistic voices in Berlin's state-subsidised theatre and music sector. While Turkish German literature and cinema would have gained more and more acclaim in Germany's cultural mainstream from the 1990s onwards (see e.g. Mandel, 2008), Berlin's high culture institutions seemed to largely exclude local minority producers from working-class backgrounds.

This argument is mirrored by Murat who describes his astonishment when he started to work at the opera institution and was faced with its lack of diversity:

'The German highbrow sector is indeed exclusionary. I can't even believe that when we first started with Project X, there was not one Turkish musician or manager working at the opera – and that in a city like Berlin, which has so massively been shaped by its Turkish diaspora' (interview May 2016, Berlin).

Rifat, a freelance oud-player who has been affiliated with Project X, confirms Murat's impression. Having fled his home country Syria in 2015, he found his new (musical) home in Berlin. While he expresses a deep love for Berlin that he describes as a city 'where, musically, you find a mix of everything that you won't find anywhere else in Germany or possibly elsewhere in Europe' and which would therefore present an extraordinary place for him 'to work on my variability as a musician', he still recognises a clear chasm with regards to the city's musical organisation. As Rifat notes,

'even in a city so rich in musical styles, the high culture sector still sees itself or is still seen as elite music. Western classical institutions often think of themselves as these open, free-spirited places but actually they very much have cultural hierarchies in place' (interview November 2017, Berlin).

In light of my fieldwork participants' reflections, a number of more recent policy initiatives were launched, trying to critically review the structural exclusions in the city's highbrow sector. For instance, the Berlin Senate started to make increasing funds available for cultural projects specifically designed to foster intercultural exchange and dialogue, programmes like *be Berlin, be diverse*⁵⁴ (2009-2013) aimed at sensitising cultural institutions for the city's diverse multicultural and migratory narratives and, more recently, the city government opened the office *Diversity Arts Culture*⁵⁵ designated to monitor and advise on issues of diversity in the cultural sector. The opera institution itself is part of the overarching initiative *Charta der Vielfalt*⁵⁶ [charta of diversity] which was launched in 2006 to promote cultural and ethnic diversity in institutions and companies. However, critics argue that such policy-driven diversity strategies would, first of all, not be legally binding and, secondly, would most often bear integrationist tendencies by aiming to include minority cultural producers into the established institutions without interrogating the epistemic racial, gender and class-based inequalities that have shaped their aesthetic and institutional set-ups.

On the cultural production side, however, there have been a number of initiatives and organisations founded and led by local minority cultural producers that have precisely centered their work around a critical revision of Berlin's cultural histories and foregrounded the long-standing contributions and current work of (local) artists of colour. Institutions like *Werkstatt der Kulturen*, *SAVVY Berlin*, *Berlin Postcolonial*, and most notably, the postmigratory theatre approaches at the *Ballhaus Naunynstraße* and the *GORKI Theatre* have long worked towards a critical recognition

⁵⁴ For further information see: <https://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/kulturpolitik/kulturelle-teilhabe/kulturelle-vielfalt/artikel.626848.php>

⁵⁵ For further information see: <https://www.diversity-arts-culture.berlin/en>

⁵⁶ For further information see: <https://www.charta-der-vielfalt.de/en/>

of Germany's imperial legacies and the postcolonial, postmigratory configurations of the city of Berlin. As the theatre scholar Azadeh Sharifi (2011: 43; cited in Foroutan, 2016; translated by the author) explains, such work

'is about the creation of an own identity in German society and in the theatrical cosmos in which postmigrant artists and cultural producers find themselves. Topics and traditions of the German culture and the culture of their families need to be created and narrated in a new fashion, because the previous instruments so far were insufficient.'

Especially highlighting postmigratory interventions in highbrow theatre institutions like the GORKI, Erol Yıldız (2013: 144; my translation) further maintains that such approaches in this context would operate as a sort of 'reconstruction work [...] a form of memory-archaeology' which would bring 'stories that so far have not been told into the public consciousness'. By making the postmigratory and postcolonial visible within German (highbrow) culture, the realms of cultural production and society more broadly would be recognised as plural discursive spheres in which postmigrant experiences and protagonists have long played an active part (see also Foroutan, 2016).

However, despite such crucial advances in Berlin's cultural landscape, there is still a distinction between the more established high culture institutions in the city and such smaller cultural organisations listed above, which despite receiving state subsidies are much less supported than the former. Thus, it seems that the ways in which the Berlin Senate distributes public spending continues to uphold a Western-centric form of a 'legitimate cultural capital' as theorised by Bourdieu which is institutionalised by the city's high culture sector, while 'diversity work' is somewhat outsourced to smaller, less supported (but thus also more flexible) institutions that are specifically designated to challenge such Eurocentric cultural epistemologies. While I

am convinced that it is absolutely crucial to support autonomous initiatives that are led by and stage the work of minority cultural producers and artists of colour, I also believe that established high culture institutions should by no means be held less accountable to interrogate the ways in which their historical legacies and current structures have involved racialised, gendered and class-based exclusions. Especially with regard to Berlin's highbrow music sector, such efforts have been largely absent or have taken solely the form of education and outreach programmes that aim to integrate new audiences into their standardised workings rather than reviewing and recreating what kinds of standards have been built into its institutional core in the first place.⁵⁷

In this connection, Ayaz, a Berliner bağlama-player who has also been affiliated with Project X, even goes a step further and contends that

'although Western classical institutions might think of themselves as the mainstream they are not anymore, they are out of touch with the city, no matter how they think of themselves. I believe though that Germany still thinks of classical music as more valuable than other musical cultures. It's almost like a classic music fascism for the lack of a better word. Especially classical music organisations have a hard time to go beyond the canon, but yes, I believe things are definitely changing.'

He deduces that this shift in musical distinctions could be indicative of a wider change in society:

'Musical centres are of course very local, but yes the imperial history has made Europe and North America very influential around the globe, but their power is declining. Maybe the changing patterns in music is a sign of that. We are in Berlin, look around you. The city is so diverse, this must have some impact on the cultural institutions here, they will have to adapt' (conversation in September 2017, Berlin).

⁵⁷ For an overview of a number of Berlin-based outreach programmes (including Project X) see: <https://www.museum-outreach.de/>

In this context, Project X is a unique attempt of doing just that and, as such, provides an exceptional case study to critically trace ‘diversity efforts’ in a highbrow music institution. As the opera dramaturge Peter recounts,

‘as a highbrow institution, I believe the opera institution needed to take action. To reach new audiences, but also to fulfil what we believe culture and music should do – be a place for everyone, regardless of their background, financial, cultural or otherwise. Of course, we were inspired by the general debates around diversity and interculture that are led in politics and cultural production, but we wanted to find our own, Berlin-specific answer to these questions’ (interview April 2016, Berlin).

However, while Project X thus seems to want to distance itself from yet another simplistic diversity-strategy by focusing on a constructive in-between that supersedes essentialist notions of culture, ethnicity and identity, concepts like interculture or hybridity have themselves been highly criticised for following a rather romanticised understanding of dialogue and exchange that does not acknowledge the deep-seated and often violent inequalities that structure such encounters (e.g. Attali, 1985; Huq, 2000; Sharma, 1996; Stokes, 2008; see Chapter 2 for more details).

Reflecting on her collaboration with Project X, the freelance ney-player Lila precisely mentions the ambivalences of such intercultural framings:

‘Personally, I think that Project X is very useful because they show that hierarchies can be broken up, also musically. You need to have a progressive cultural policy and politics for that, but even more so you need managers in the institutions who think forward – I think the Project X people do that’ (conversation in October 2017, Berlin).

In a similar vein, Rifat believes that ‘Project X is not just an outreach programme, but they really try to carry a big question mark into the opera as well’. Yet, he also reflects sceptically on labels like interculture in general:

‘Whether it’s “intercultural” or “multicultural”, I think these terms are mostly used for publication and marketing purposes. It’s for people to know what to expect and I like it

that way and I use it for my own music, too. It only becomes a problem if this terminology enters a broader scientific or cultural sphere, once it enters the books it is a problem. Then it can become Orientalism. It starts to matter when power relations come into play, when it becomes a hierarchy, when it becomes a sub-term for racism' (conversation in October 2017, Berlin).

Lila equally holds that 'it still has to be about the concrete implementation. On paper, these intercultural things often look great, but you have to see how it all works out in actual rehearsal and performance moments. These are the sites when you can really see who is in charge or who dictates what kind of "interculture" we are doing here, if you know what I mean.'

Following Lila's and Rifat's words of caution, a critical study of Project X needs to foreground a micro-analysis of the project's aesthetic and institutional dynamics in order to trace how the modifications in the cultural sector might interlink with processes of cultural inclusion and exclusion, of mobility and elitism. Understanding who is taking part in the process of reforming the musical site in Berlin's urban sphere and analysing its social, aesthetic and organisational conditions will provide a keener understanding of the ways in which hegemonic discourses of cultural representation, legitimacy and value might be challenged in favour of a more grounded and critical approach to today's urban strata. Simultaneously, an examination of the aesthetic and organisational processes that make up Project X might lend itself to critically document where and how intercultural efforts in opera can fall short, in what ways cultural institutions need to reckon with their own genre histories in order to promote institutional change and to what extent such critical efforts are at all possible within a broader context of racialised, classed and gendered inequalities that shape Berlin's urban sphere as well as citizenship debates in Germany more broadly. The project therefore lends itself for a critical investigation into recent campaigns that champion the democratisation and diversification of cultural

production but that have been deeply criticised by scholars and practitioners for their ultimately reproductive consequences and their lack of commitment to social justice, equality and anti-racist politics in the cultural industries and beyond.

Citizenship debates and constructions of ‘race’ and ethnicity in Germany

While such diversity debates have been going on in cultural industries around the globe, they carry a particular political weight in contemporary Germany. Grappling with the imperial and racist legacies of the *Drittes Reich* [Third Reich], the consequences of its post-war racialised guestworker policies and recent immigration in the context of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’, the country finds itself in a contingent political moment that pends between a fundamental recognition of its multicultural and multi-ethnic configuration and the re-emergence of a right-wing nationalism that works its way back into the political mainstream. An analysis of Project X is hence inasmuch about inequalities in Berlin’s musical field as it is about broader discourses around citizenship and belonging. To understand this further, we will need to look more closely into the ways in which debates around migration and citizenship have been framed and consider the ways in which ‘race’ and ethnicity have been constructed in the German context.

Although Germany has always experienced migration and has been shaped by a diversity of cultural, ethnic and religious communities since its origins as a nation-state and especially after the end of the Second World War, a politics of multiculturalism has never been officially adopted. As Yasemin Karakaşoğlu (2011: 104; my translation) critically notes, in contemporary Germany, the notions of

‘multiculturality and multicultural society seem to have been banned into the political poison cabinet, despite the fact that both terms do not describe ideologies but are

appropriate status descriptions for a society which is as strongly influenced by cultural diversity as ours'.

Karakaoğlu identifies a continuing ‘process of repression’ in German public debate which would help conceal ‘the fact of immigration’ itself and would ‘leave the hierarchised conditions in society intact’ (ibid.: 103, 104; my translation). This process has found its legal reflection in the construction of German citizenship that has long been tied to the idea of a bloodline continuance, extending citizenship status *qua jus sanguinis*. Going back to 1913, when the *Rechts- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz* [Nationality Act] of the German Empire had first been legally implemented, this notion of the German population as a racially defined polity was taken to the extreme during the German colonial empire and, most clearly, during the *Drittes Reich* which passed and was regulated by the Nuremberg Laws. After the end of Second World War, which led to the abolishment of these laws, the German Federal Republic was founded in 1949 and the previous *jus sanguinis* directives were reinstalled. The racialised narrative of Germany as a community of blood did therefore not vanish but was merely reworked (see e.g. El-Tayeb, 1999). Thus, Germany’s vigorous self-depiction as a ‘non-immigration country’ persisted and citizenship continued to be an ethnic and racial classification through which white German ‘natives’ remained legally and socially distinguished from all racialised minorities who were generally framed as *Ausländer* [foreigners].

Such policies also manifested in the guestworker initiatives of the 60s and 70s which anticipated guestworkers as temporary migrants, expected to ultimately return to their home-countries (Mandel, 2008; Kaya, 2013; Toktaş, 2012). As Fatima El-Tayeb (2016: 146; my translation) explains, the non-European guestworker was seen ‘as the ever-foreigner, who arrives with an incompatible, static “foreign” identity that

she maintains unchanged before she returns back to this “foreign” country’. According to El-Tayeb (ibid.: 146), when many of the people who came to work in Germany stayed on and reunited with their families, the racialised exclusion of their descendants endured, leading to a whole generation of German-born who have continuously been ‘migratised’ and denied their citizenship as they did not have ‘German blood’ – the ‘legitimate German’, as El-Tayeb (ibid.: 146; my translation) puts it, had to be ‘ethnically German’ as well. This moral panic about the ethnic homogeneity of Germany also extended into the legal discussion around dual citizenship arrangements. As Seyda Ozil, Michael Hofmann and Yasemin Dayioglu-Yücel (2011, see also Howard, 2008) point out, dual citizenship was for a long time seen as a sign of division in national loyalty and thus legally inhibited. Only by the end of the 1990s did the naturalisation and citizenship regulations in Germany alter slightly: Since the beginning of January 2000, children born in Germany to non-German parents can finally claim formal citizenship.

However, notwithstanding such legal principles, even the second and third generations descending from migrant families are frequently ascribed ‘a migratory background’⁵⁸ in mainstream political and media jargon and are hence still being kept apart from the majority German society. This discursive ascription is especially persistent in the case of Muslim families who migrated from Turkey or the Middle East which illustrates ‘the refusal of the majority to part with a white/Christian image of Germany’ (El-Tayeb 2016: 9; my translation). Subsequently, despite the legal

⁵⁸ Persons with a migration background are defined as those who ‘immigrated after 1949 into the present area of the Federal Republic of Germany as well as all foreigners born in Germany and all who are born in Germany as Germans with at least one parent who has either immigrated to Germany after 1949 or is a foreigner in Germany’ (see Statistisches Bundeamt Deutschland Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit. Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund – Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2005, published on 04.05.2007),
see:
<http://www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/DE/Navigation/Publikationen/Publikationen.psm?cmopath=struktur,vollanzeige.csp&ID=1020313>.

changes, the narrative of the German people as an ethnically homogenous population continued. Whilst foregrounding a ‘colourblind’ ideology which rests on ‘the firm conviction that Europe would be free from structural racism’ (*ibid.*: 7) having learned from the horrors of Nazism, racialised notions of citizenship persisted in Germany and were simply reframed under the cloak of ‘cultural difference’. This, for instance, can be observed in the recent moral anxieties around the ‘Islamification’ of Europe which grounds itself and mobilises long-standing Orientalist constructions of Otherness (see e.g. Attia, 2007, 2009; Rommelspacher, 2002; Shooman, 2011).

Following Edward Said’s pioneering analysis of Orientalism, the Christian European fantasies about Islam found their origins in the Middle Ages when Muslim Empires stretched into the European continent. According to Said (1978: 59),

‘[n]ot for nothing did Islam come to symbolize terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians. For Europe, Islam was a lasting trauma. Until the end of the seventeenth century the “Ottoman peril” lurked alongside Europe to represent for the whole of Christian civilization a constant danger.’

Hence, Nobrega (2016: 41) explicates that ‘[t]he Oriental was invented by Orientalists as the inferior other – locked in the past, irrational, despotic, barbaric – through which European Orientalists defined their own culture as superior, rational, democratic, sophisticated and progressive’. Building on this, Iman Attia (2007, 2009) as well as Yasemin Shooman (2011) detect many elements in German contemporary debates around Islam which would mirror precisely such Orientalist tropes as identified by Said. As Shooman (cited in Nobrega, 2016: 42) argues, following the changes in citizenship law, people previously framed as ‘guestworkers’ and ‘Turks’ started to be predominantly framed as ‘Muslims’, which led to ‘new racist demarcations of difference’ in German public discourse. This ‘culturalization of citizenship’ (Duyvendak, Geschiere and Tonkens, 2016; see also Castro Varela and Mecheril,

2016) has hence followed a dichotomous structure between the citizen and the non-citizen based on the attribution of a constitutive value to cultural similarity or difference. ‘This process mirrors and extends colonial [and Orientalist] tropes of Western superiority vis-a-vis not-yet enlightened Others that need to give up difference and assimilate or be kept out of the national frame’ (Holzberg, Kolbe and Zaborowski, 2018: 537).⁵⁹

As the above insinuates, the Turkish German population in particular has been framed as the ultimate ethnocultural counterpart for the construction of a ‘truly’ German identity (see e.g. Amir-Moazami, 2010; Mandel, 2008). As Ferruh Yilmaz (2015: 40) elaborates, Turkish migrants and their descendants would not only be positioned along a class-based hierarchy as the ‘guest/immigrant worker’ but would be more and more framed along a ‘cultural/civilizational’ axis which would recast and relabel them as Germany’s largest Muslim minority (see also Aydin and Pusch, 2011; Sökefeld, 2004; Spielhaus, 2006; Yalcin-Heckmann, 2002; Yurdakul and Yükleyen, 2009). ‘As the debate on immigration has taken central stage in political discourse’, Yilmaz (ibid.: 38) summarises, ‘immigrants-turned-Muslims have increasingly become the Other against which national identities are narrated’. As such, Germans of Turkish descent would become a prime example of ‘intersecting racialised and classed politics’ (Tudor, 2018: 4). Following Anna Korteweg and Gözde Yurdakul (2014), such discourses around citizenship furthermore intersect with discourses around gender⁶⁰ which show, for instance, in the heated debates around the headscarf.

⁵⁹ This process is also reflected in law; showing, for instance, in the legal requirements for naturalisation which demand language and citizenship tests but also in the reinforced restrictions on asylum and non-European migration (e.g. Hess et al., 2017; Pichl, 2017).

⁶⁰ For a general discussion on this point see e.g. Yuval-Davis (1998).

Yet, more recently, leading German politicians have seemingly aimed to review the country's mainstream position on migration and multiculture by affirming, for instance, that Germany was 'basically a country of immigration' (Angela Merkel, 2015)⁶¹ or that 'Islam is part of Germany' (Christian Wulff, 2010)⁶². And when, at the height of the 'refugee crisis' in 2015, Merkel opened the Balkan route for thousands of people feeling war and deprivation under the motto of *Wir schaffen das* [we can do it], her actions were often heralded as a sign of a new German *Willkommenskultur* [welcome culture] and as a demonstration of transnational solidarity. Such statements also gained wide public support for a long-overdue acknowledgment of Germany's cultural, ethnic and religious diversity and possibly marked a tentative opening of German discourses of national belonging and identity. According to El-Tayeb (2016), however, this hesitant discursive opening has been met with an even stronger re-emergence of racist discourses that not only gave the ideological justification to the NSU⁶³ murders from 2000-2007, the frequent arson attacks on refugee homes and the Islamophobic propaganda of PEGIDA⁶⁴ (see also Decker et al., 2012) but have also paved the way for a socially acceptable right-wing extremism that, as reified by the results of the German parliament elections 2017 from which the far-right AFD⁶⁵

⁶¹ Merkel stated the above in May 2015 when she appeared in a broadcasted talk show titled '*Gut leben in Deutschland – was uns wichtig ist*' [living well in Germany – what is important to us].

⁶² Christian Wulff served as Germany's president between 2010 and 2012. The statement above has been part of his 2010 speech on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of German unification. The English version of the speech can be accessed here: http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Christian-Wulff/UebersetzteReden/2010/101003-Deutsche-Einheit-englisch.html;jsessionid=C84792C6746E9AFF14C4A4BE5D939DB1.2_cid362?nn=2748000

⁶³ As it was later uncovered, the racist terror group *National Sozialistischer Untergrund* (NSU) [National Socialist Underground] perpetrated the attacks on men of Turkish and Greek heritage between 2000 and 2007 throughout Germany, leaving ten people dead and one wounded.

⁶⁴ PEGIDA stands for *Patriotische Europäer Gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* [Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident] and is a nationalist, far-right and anti-Islam political movement which was founded in October 2014 in the city of Dresden.

⁶⁵ In the *Bundestagswahlen* [German general elections] of 2017, the *Alternative für Deutschland* [Alternative for Germany] reached 12.6% of the votes and entered the *Bundestag* as the third largest party after CDU and SPD.

emerged as the third largest party, gains more and more traction in mainstream politics and debates.

In light of the above, we can hence diagnose a critical juncture in German politics. While this moment is clearly an ambivalent one – with regresses into a mainstream right-wing nationalism already lurking – it might also open up a productive discursive realm in which hegemonic notions of Germanness can be unsettled. Whereas the country’s political landscape still seems to find itself between a slow acknowledgment of Germany’s long-standing and growing ethnic, cultural and religious diversity and violent discourses around the country’s ethnic and cultural exclusivity, activists, academics and artists of colour have long recognised Germany as a multicultural society and have addressed the inequalities and marginalisation migrants and minoritised communities have been subjected to. In more recent discussions, it has been particularly the notion of the *Postmigrantische Gesellschaft* [postmigratory society] that took the centre-stage in the work of many critical ‘race’ and migration scholars in Germany and has even begun to spill over into broader political rhetoric (see e.g. Mecheril, 2014; Spielhaus, 2014; Yıldız, 2014).

As Vassilis Tsianos and Serhat Karakayali (2014) highlight, the notion of a postmigratory society would not look at migration as an accomplished fact or finished process but would stress the socio-political and cultural transformation processes that have shaped societies with postcolonial/post-imperial pasts and guestworker histories. They argue that, in the case of Germany, many of these transformations have centred around the fights for political recognition and citizenship for former guestworkers and their families but would also comprise contemporary experiences of and struggles around migration. For Naika Foroutan (2016: 234), the postmigrant discourse would therefore make it possible to critically address and challenge othering processes that

result from labels such as ‘migrant’ or ‘migratory background’. She criticises that the phenomenon of migration would have become ‘a meta-narrative’ in German public discourse by having been made responsible for all different kinds of socio-political and economic problems (ibid.: 234).

Critically reviewing the simultaneity between the critical advancement of a postmigrant discourse and the increase of racist, *völkisch* [nationalist] backlashes in Germany’s political sphere, Foroutan (ibid.: 229) holds that these antagonisms would shape the country’s ‘society in its transformation from a country of immigration towards a postmigrant society that is formed through processes of immigration and emigration and that increasingly understands its migration-reality as given and now negotiates its self-depiction beyond the migratory’. As such, the omnipresence of debates around migration would result in various ambiguities and conflicts between proponents of migration, who recognise migration as both an inevitable global phenomenon and a vital part of German society, and a public lack of affective acceptance based on the perception of migration as *Überfremdung* [threatening infiltration] of national culture and identity. As a consequence of such paradoxes, ‘rights and positions – which have been already politically granted – are again and again called into question from a narrative and emotional point of view’ (ibid.: 241). Despite such antagonisms, Foroutan nevertheless highlights the emergence of new alliances between different activist groups, researchers and cultural producers which push for a critical engagement with systemic forms of inequalities and patterns of discrimination, striving for an equal representation in all kinds of political realms.

Germany’s complex discourses around migration and citizenship as well as the current discussions around the country’s postmigratory state will be a crucial context to bear in mind when I approach the way in which Project X relates to questions of

cultural diversity, multiculture and difference. As the project sets a particular focus on working with minority cultural producers and artists of Turkish descent, questions of racialised and classed inequality intersect, which is furthermore pronounced by Project X's institutional frame as part of the Western highbrow sector. While Project X's focus is certainly a musical one, I suggest that the ways in which notions of cultural value, legitimacy and difference may be (re)constructed through its aesthetic and organisational practices might also give insights into larger citizenship debates currently negotiated in Germany's public sphere. In turn, it is moreover crucial to recognise the inherent tensions, challenges and ambivalences of intercultural productions like Project X when they take place in a context of long-standing urban inequality and are framed by a larger public discourse that has been deeply intertwined with reductive notions of Otherness. Questioning in what ways and to what extent Project X might be able to address and unsettle such overarching patterns of inequality, while still being embedded within their context, will ultimately guide this study.

Chapter 4: Methods – reflections on researching inequalities in contemporary music production

In this chapter, I lay out the epistemological and methodological approaches that underpin this study. Epistemologically, I pay special attention to the ways in which my study relates to the wider project of ‘provincializing Europe’ (Chakrabarty, 2000), and will critically examine my own positionality within this context. To grasp the complex relationships between music production and broader systems of inequality, I then argue for a closer methodological consideration of cultural production practices and of the aesthetic material of music itself while nevertheless taking into critical account the broader institutional arrangements, political and economic structures, citizenship regulations and their wider discursive formations that frame the aesthetic-social nexus. I will subsequently provide a detailed discussion about the scope, the time frame and the limitations of my fieldwork and outline my analytical strategy. In so doing, I will reflect on the ways in which my own positionality in and beyond the field has shaped every stage of the research process. Moreover, I draw out the ethical risks that my study entails considering both the practices of researching and writing as well as possible implications my study might bear for broader political and cultural policy debates in contemporary Germany. Lastly, I discuss the main methodological limitations and ethical issues raised by my research as well as the key contributions my research methodology bears for the study of cultural production and the sociology of the arts more broadly.

Epistemological approach

My epistemological and analytical strategies draw inspiration from postcolonial thought and Feminist epistemologies which have underlined the partiality and situatedness of knowledges to contest models of research that presuppose a Eurocentric and unproblematic conception of scientific objectivity, neutrality and rationality. Within these frameworks, it is especially the postcolonial project of ‘provincializing Europe’ which has influenced my epistemological thinking and to which I hope my thesis might contribute in its specific terms. As Dipesh Chakrabarty⁶⁶ (2000: 24) puts it, ‘[p]ostcolonial scholarship is committed, almost by definition, to engaging the universals – such as the abstract figure of the human or that of Reason – that were forged in eighteenth-century Europe and that underlie the human sciences’. He continues that ‘[co]ncepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, [...] the idea of the subject, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, scientific rationality and so on all bear the burden of European thought and history’ (ibid.: 4). Against this backdrop, Chakrabarty puts forward the concept of ‘provincializing Europe’ precisely with the aim to work through and dismantle the ways in which European colonial legacies are still playing out through notions of historicism, modernity and rationality.

⁶⁶ Chakrabarty starts his book *Provincializing Europe* by critically considering the ways in which particular theoretical models, which have become conventionalised in global academic practices, are primarily rooted in and reflective of Eurocentric accounts of history. He therein draws out a set of core themes, such as notions of modernity and capitalism, that would underwrite such dominant narratives. In consequence, Europe would have become more than just a specific region in geographical terms but would have come to constitute the dominant scholarly perspective on the world. Putting forward the need to provincialize Europe, Chakrabarty therefore seeks to unmake such Eurocentric approaches, to challenge the underlying concept of historicism and to deconstruct Europe as the hegemonic paradigm for modernity, rendering it back to be only one of the world’s regions among many. Chakrabarty’s argument thus predicates postcolonial thought and scholarship that calls attention to the ways in which imperial relationships and colonial legacies persist even long after the formal collapse of colonial powers.

In this vein, Ruth HaCohen (2013: 361) draws a particular connection to Western classical music and argues that

‘Western music boasted autonomy, elaborated in a long historical process, precisely at the time in which exploration of exotic musical cultures beyond Europe became attractive to Westerners. Like other Enlightenment projects, that autonomous music became their measure; its notational system, which enabled for centuries the rendition—and preservation—of works and styles, was sought to transcribe and explore the sonic unfamiliar’ (see for more details Beckles Willson, 2013).

Building on the above, my research seeks to contribute to the provincialisation of Western classical music by turning a dismantling eye to the ways in which Eurocentric notions of musical value, legitimacy and difference have shaped and are still being upheld in institutional and aesthetical practices. In this context, an analysis of Project X as an intercultural intervention into precisely such practices carries particular political weight as it allows me to not only disentangle the ways in which Orientalist binaries and reductive notions of Otherness might impact and reproduce in intercultural music-making, but also to lay bare how non-Western musical practices might subvert such creative hegemonies. By turning my ethnographic eye towards Project X and the opera institution, I thereby hope to contribute to the study of Western art music in ways that ‘disrupt[] some of the uncomfortable binaries and unequal power relations that have been part of the field since its inception, and for the ways in which it requires us to engage with the familiar “as if it were not”’ (Nooshin, 2011: 297; see also Nettl, 1995; Stokes, 2008; Shelemay, 1996).

In a related vein, a wide range of Feminist scholarship challenges the very idea of objectivity in knowledge production and instead states that knowledge is always situated, contested and inherently partial (see e.g. Hill Collins, 1990; Campbell, 2004; Haraway, 1988; Harding, 2004). As Suki Ali (2006: 472) points out, ‘the central proposition of these debates is that all knowledge and its production are political and

emerge under conditions that are enmeshed in relations of power between knowers and knowledge itself'. Part of this broader political project foregrounded by Feminist epistemologies is the critical recognition of every researcher's particular standpoint in and beyond the field of academic knowledge production. Building on bell hooks (1992) and Patricia Hill Collins (1990), Nobrega (2016: 76) writes that

'our perspectives and our value judgements – that is how we construct and see the world and interpret it – depends on the standpoint that we occupy within power relations. As power relations shape our standpoints, they also reveal how certain claims of objective analysis can be distorted by the reproduction of dominant ideologies and paradigms that are conducted under so-called standards of social neutrality in research.'

While my thesis cannot be deemed an explicitly Feminist research project, such critical epistemes to knowledge production, and standpoint theory in particular, have helped me significantly to come to terms with my own positionality in and beyond the research process, to make sense of the kinds of knowledges I encountered in my fieldwork as well as of the sort of knowledges that would remain *foreclosed* or only partially accessible to me. Even more so, these epistemological reflections helped me make sense of the ways in which my own research can challenge or might reproduce hegemonic paradigms of knowledge production. On the one hand, I am highly supportive of Harding's (2004: 128) reflections of standpoint theory as "“starting off thought” from the lives of marginalized peoples; beginning in those determinate, objective locations in any social order will generate illuminating critical questions that do not arise in thought that begins from dominant group lives". However, on the other hand, I have to critically reflect on my own positionality within this wider *social order* that Harding describes and consider the extent to which my own standpoint might make me complicit in upholding rather than subverting hegemonic productions of knowledge and meaning as put forward by the *dominant group*.

A note on positionality

Most notably, as a white German woman of middle-class background, I am undoubtedly part of the dominant and dominating mainstream society. While I vehemently distance myself from any racialised and essentialist framings of German citizenship, identity and belonging, my body nevertheless represents precisely such classifications that have been normalised as the invisible standard, especially in contrast to bodies of colour that are continuously othered and often pushed to the fringes of German citizenship debates. My positionality plays an especially pronounced role in the context of this study as it is precisely concerned with the socioeconomic inequalities and racialisation processes in Berlin's Western art music sector which, as I have argued throughout this thesis, is significantly complicit in upholding institutional whiteness and reproducing reductive notions of difference. As Ahmed (2007: 157; see also Frankenberg, 1993; Puwar, 2004) describes it,

‘[w]hen we describe institutions as “being” white (institutional whiteness), we are pointing to how institutional spaces are shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others: white bodies gather, and cohere to form the edges of such spaces. [...] As many have argued, whiteness is invisible and unmarked, as the absent centre against which others appear only as deviants, or points of deviation [...] Spaces are orientated “around” whiteness, insofar as whiteness is not seen.’

How, then, can I conduct research that is concerned with the struggles and positions of artists and cultural producers of colour (and often of working-class background) in Berlin's Western art music sector? How can I critically investigate institutional whiteness and inequalities of 'race' and class in the arts when I myself embody, and have biographically benefitted from, precisely such institutionalised power relations? While I do not believe that my positionality makes it impossible for me to build critical alliances with marginalised social groups in my academic work and my wider politics, I am however particularly aware that my positionality – my standpoint – crucially

shapes all stages of the research process and bears ambivalent implications for systems of academic and cultural knowledge production. Throughout my fieldwork, I therefore tried to be especially sensitive and attuned to questions of class, ethnicity and gender, following Anne-Marie Fortier's (1998: 49) proposition that 'rather than identifying how gender and ethnicity affect the research process, we need to examine how they are negotiated'. As a consequence, in what follows, I try to be as reflexive and careful as possible when discussing my methodological approaches, my fieldwork process as well as the limitations and ethical risks of my research.

My ambivalent position in this research project is furthermore heightened by my biographical relationships with music which, in many ways, have sparked my investigative interest in the Western art music sector. On the one hand, having grown up in Germany in what I would consider a musical household and having been surrounded by Western art music as an amateur practitioner and listener almost all my life has provided me with a particular access to the field of classical music production in Germany. Knowing how the game is played, so to say, it was fairly easy to adapt myself to the language, behaviour and overall atmosphere of the opera institution as my contextualising fieldwork site. On the other hand, while being somewhat an insider to the Western art music world, I am still an outsider to the professional and often precarious art and music sector which allows me only a limited understanding of the pressures, objectives and lived realties of the cultural producers I worked with, in particular of the cultural producers of colour who are subjected to such pressures in particularly prominent ways (see e.g. Norbrega, 2016; Saha, 2018; Scharff, 2019).

Moreover, due to my educational background, I have developed a primarily academic interest in the Western art music sector which leads me to have an often-different set of questions and research interests regarding the particular institutional,

social and aesthetic configurations of Berlin's music sector than many of my practising research participants hold. In many ways, my sociological approach to the field of music production actually even contrasts with the role music played in my own upbringing. With a number of my close relatives being professional musicians and with my parents being very keen for me to learn an instrument from an early age, music has been ever-present throughout my childhood and youth. While I did not only listen to but also actively engaged in a broad variety of musical strands – for years, I sang in a pop choir and a jazz band – my musical upbringing was primarily rooted in Western art music practices. Playing classical piano and the flute for many years and having sung in various classical ensembles, I am intimately accustomed to the protocols, practices and norms but also experienced the aesthetic joys and intricacies of Western art music.

During my youth, however, I started to see music not just as a distinctive field of aesthetic practice but also as a social domain where hierarchies of taste and evaluation manifest and which is co-constitutive of broader systems of power that, for instance, show in processes of racialisation and the remaking of class inequalities.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ In this regard, I recall two instances in particular. When I was about nine years old and had played piano for about four years already, I had a phase during which I hated everything about the piano. The bodily restrain of sitting still, the discipline, the daily practice – I had enough of it all, so I boycotted my piano lesson and instead secretly met up with my friends. When my mother, who had never been pushy in any aspect of my life, found out, she got really angry and asked me if I had any idea how much I would take for granted and how much money I would waste by not attending the lesson. My mother grew up in a poor household of seven, with my grandfather dying early and my grandmother, who had to leave school at nine years old, having to bring home the money by doing sowing and cleaning jobs for the neighbours. There was barely any money and certainly none to waste for my mother who loved singing and always wanted to take lessons. For her, being able to afford piano lessons for her child was a clear sign of social mobility and spending money on my musical education was seen as a direct investment in my cultural capital and class position. The second memory dates back to when I was about 14 years old. I told my grandmother (from my father's side) about a concert I was putting on with the school's pop choir. As usual, she was excited to hear me talk about the upcoming concert and about all the fun I was having singing and playing with my friends. Then she asked if I would still have enough time to practise piano. I must have looked confused for a moment as I was playing piano in the concert as well. When I told her again that I was not just singing, she only replied 'sure, but I mean *real* piano'. Real, for her, meant classical piano, the music she knew and loved, the music she found most valuable. My grandmother restated her music taste many times more during my childhood. While she considered Western art music 'most sophisticated', 'eternal', 'withstanding the test of time', everything

Becoming aware of the ways in which the field of music is a deeply hierarchised one and how these hierarchies are inherently racialised, classed and gendered and, as such, embedded in and constitutive of much wider histories and systems of inequality has since shaped my approach to both thinking about and making music. Although music-making (in various styles) still plays an important role in my personal life, I have therefore also tried to distance myself from the aesthetic practice *per se* and sought to adopt a more critical, reflexive perspective. After I graduated from high school, with music being one of my main subjects, I therefore moved to Berlin to study a double degree between musicology and social sciences at the *Humboldt Universität zu Berlin*.

Grasping the aesthetic/social nexus

While musicology in Germany, at least back at the time when I was a BA student (in the late 2000s/early 2010s), was very much the study of ‘great texts by great men’ (see e.g. DeNora, 1995; Taylor, 2007) most of whom were white and European or North American, the social science part of my studies significantly supported me in making sense of the ways in which production and consumption patterns in arts and culture interlink with systems of power. Yet, there was something missing in as well. Cultural sociology seemed to treat artworks almost as empty entities, somewhat hollowed out of any creativity, emotional or intellectual substance, and solely evaluated in terms of a larger social and economic system. I agree with Born (2010: 174) who, drawing on Zolberg (1990), writes that ‘much scholarship in the sociology of art is vulnerable to

else was seen as a fun side activity, but not in any way as serious or legitimate. These two memory snippets still resonate with me as they were among the first moments in my life that showed me another side of music-making: Western art music as a marker of status, distinction and power at the expense of *Other musics* seen as not quite as sophisticated, as trivial or banal.

accusations of reductionism for failing to address the specificity of the aesthetic and of the art object'.

Therefore, when I came to the LSE for my Master's, I was taken by the cultural studies literature precisely because it persuasively bridges a discussion of the politics of representation in cultural and media productions with a broader critique of a neoliberal political economy, colonial legacies and systemic racism. Yet, classical music seemed to be widely left out of cultural studies, too, although I would argue that many of its arguments could be applied to classical music in a relatively straight forward way. Instead, I turned towards music sociology scholarship as put forward by Georgina Born, Tia DeNora or Antione Hennion and more recently by Anna Bull or Christina Scharff. While the respective authors deploy a variety of different qualitative methodologies, all their approaches stand at odds with a classical, merely text-based musicology, ethnographic approaches in particular. As Bull (2014: 46) clarifies in her own PhD work on Youth orchestras in the UK,

‘my use of ethnography to examine classical music practice is, in part, a retort to this [musicology's] predominance of textual analyses. In order to bring the body and the social into dialogue with musicology's reading of texts, there need to be bodies in the research process itself — mine, at the very least.’

Agreeing with Bull's reasoning and reiterating the idea of provincializing classical music, with this study I therefore seek to de-familiarise the familiar, to look behind the curtain and to investigate music as an aesthetic medium which, at the same time, is never detached, never innocent but always social. In that sense, the method of ethnography has given me the space, the time and the resources to explore how musical hierarchies are expressive of broader power formations in society and how racialised and classed notions of value and legitimacy work through its production without, however, treating the musical material solely as a passive reflection of social

relations or as a means for their regulation. In so doing, I also hope to contribute to unravelling what DeNora and Ansdell (2017: 232, 233) call the ‘black box of socio-musical study’ which requires a close focus on the ‘collaborative, real-time, micro practices of musical engagement in situ as performed by specific, singular, individuals and groups. This focus is bullishly ethnographic.’

Thus, aiming to foreground the intricate processes of music production – both organisationally and aesthetically – and the ways in which these proceed within broader institutional powers and discourses of difference, my study is heavily guided by Born’s (2010) approach to a sociology of cultural production. She holds that ‘central to theorizing cultural production should be a positive account of aesthetic formations, attentive to their productivity and genealogical longevity as well as to artists’ role in reproducing or transforming them’ which, crucially, would then need to be ‘reconnected to an analysis of the interrelations between such formative systems and other social, political and economic dynamics’ (ibid.: 188). Drawing on her own work on the ICRAM (1995) in France and the BBC (2004) in the UK, she specifies that

‘[e]thnographies of cultural institutions offer an analytical meso-level, a meeting point of history and contemporary practice [...] the ethnography enables an analysis not only of organizational conditions, but of the social relations of production, the nature of creative practice, and the authorial subjectivities of those involved. By analysing such institutions in the terms of hierarchy and stratification, social and cultural difference and division, much can be gleaned about the particular art worlds and the conditions for creativity that inhere within them’ (ibid.: 190).

Besides zooming into the institutional cultures, systems and hierarchies of aesthetic production, she furthermore highlights ethnography’s opportunities to analyse ‘the social relations immanent in our experience of art, music and media’ highlighting that particularly ‘in the performance arts, both the social relations and the manifest

socialities of performance mediate and form part of aesthetic experience, with both positive and negative valences' (ibid.: 190; see also Born et al., 2017). It is this emphasis on the meso-level analysis of the practices and socialities of artistic production and performance that I found most helpful throughout my study of Project X.

From the moment of entering the field in 2016 to the data analysis and writing up process, I hence paid particular attention to the ways in which Project X's intercultural approach is performed in both organisational and aesthetical terms, setting it against the institutional workings of the opera institution and the historic evolvement of the Western art music sector more broadly. In situating such discussions amidst the wider urban politics of Berlin and broader discussions around German citizenship and belonging, I traced how Project X as an intercultural music project might challenge inequalities in the cultural production sector but might also end up reproducing precisely such hegemonic relationships of power. Moreover, in line with my epistemological reflections, I took seriously the socialities of Project X's music performances themselves while, however, being highly conscious that my aesthetic experiences and judgements are innately shaped by my specific musical background and my wider positionality I hold in the field and beyond.

Negotiating access

I first heard about Project X, or rather its predecessor programme in 2012, when I was a musicology student in Berlin. As part of my studies, I completed a module on opera dramaturgy in whose framework our teacher organised a workshop with the opera institution's chief dramaturge at the time. I remember sitting in the opera's cafeteria, enjoying a coffee with my fellow students and being captured by the uplifting feeling

you get when you think you are entering sacred halls. To that day, I find the hustle and bustle of an opera house, a dance or theatre company exceptionally thrilling. Breaking the finished product of the performance down into its many pieces and discovering all the labour that goes into putting on a show still fascinates me. While performance leaflets merely mention the performing and curating artists and their sponsors, a glimpse behind the scene reveals just how many people contribute to the finished product presented on stage. From the voice trainer to the light technician, from the make-up artists to the concierge, from the press service to the cleaners – every step and every person play an essential role in the production process. The same feeling captured me when I was shown around the opera institution premises for the first time.

Ironically, until then, I had never had a keen interest in dramaturgy, let alone opera dramaturgy. This wasn't my dream or professional goal but yet, for some reason, I still remember the feeling of 'having made it'. Having been to the opera institution many times before as an audience member, I think the feeling was rooted in the knowledge that this was one of the most prestigious and innovative opera houses in Germany, certainly in Berlin. I remember how the dramaturge talked us through the various productions he was involved in and provided an overview about the various projects the opera institution developed over the years from children's operas and outreach programmes to experimental shows and international concert tours. It was in this context, that I first heard of the programme 'Turkish – Opera can do it!', the predecessor programme to Project X. And, despite the admiration I had for the opera institution, I clearly remember how I found the very title of the programme unsettling. This scepticism deepened when I found out that the programme only meant to introduce Turkish subtitles to the opera performances. Not only seemed such an approach extraordinarily superficial, but the very framing and positioning of the

project as a sign for the opera institution's open-mindedness and its innovative character threw up many troubling questions for me.

What was the intention behind this project and, maybe even more importantly, what were the underlying assumptions about opera as an institution and Berlin's Turkish German population? For me, the way that the word 'Turkish' seemed to describe a sociocultural challenge for the opera just fitted too neatly into an already heavily othered and patronising integration-discourse to which Turkish Germans have been subjected for so long. Put frankly, Turkish German Berliners seemed to be portrayed as a challenge to the genre and the institution of opera – a challenge that the opera institution would courageously face head-on... with subtitles. The value-dichotomy at play in all of this was the most troubling to me. On the one hand, 'opera' was implied as something enriching, cultured, and valuable; on the other hand, Turkishness seemed to be implicitly associated with everything but. Yet, thanks to the opera institution and its project, Turkish Germans could still be taught how to find access to the world of opera and become part of its cultured circle. I remember leaving the dramaturgy workshop that day and thinking to myself that opera was just not for me after all.

It therefore took me quite by surprise when, in 2014, I stumbled over a flyer at the tube station *Kottbusser Tor* in Kreuzberg which advertised a project called 'Project X' developed by the opera institution Berlin. By then, I was already a master's student at the LSE with my transition from musicology to sociology well under way. In London, I came into deeper contact with cultural studies and postcolonial theory, with critical urban studies as well as with music anthropology and sociology – all of which have had an enormous influence on me and certainly sparked my scholarly interest in Project X. After reading up on the project online, I contacted Murat and Nicolai and

asked them for an interview, sending along my CV and a short abstract of what should be my master thesis. Both agreed to meet up for individual interviews. As I noted elsewhere in this thesis, Murat and Nicolai were not only immediately open to engage with my questions but actually showed genuine interest in my research project. Instead of an advertising pitch about their project, which I was honestly expecting, they gave me a detailed account of why they believed the Western art sector was out of touch and unequal and how it would need to change to fulfil any public or creative purpose. And while they did talk about their project in optimistic terms, neither of them glanced over the fact that Project X did also lead to institutional and inter-personal tensions which, to them, would disclose just how deeply seated class hierarchies and institutional racism would be in Germany's cultural production sector.

While the interview material was extremely rich, the scope of my master's thesis only allowed me to superficially tap into issues around interculture and inequality in the arts as exemplified by Project X. Yet, such issues stayed and resonated with me, even throughout my endeavours into the non-academic professional world. In hindsight, I think that the very decision to return to university to do a PhD might have been sparked by the ambivalence I felt towards Project X and similar initiatives which I needed to explore further. While I was initially thinking of comparing three different musical projects in different urban contexts – Project X in Berlin, the Demos orchestra in Paris and the Animate project in London – I quickly came to realise that an ethnography across multiple field sites was neither feasible within the time scope of a PhD, nor would it allow for an in-depth investigation of the questions I was most interested in.

I thus contacted Murat and Nicolai again in 2015, at the end of Michaelmas term of my first PhD year, this time asking for a much more extensive research

partnership that, to the extent possible, would grant me access to the Project X's producers and affiliated musicians and composers, to important project meetings in-and outside of the opera institution, to conceptual documents, info materials and press reviews as well as to the rehearsals and performances that took place in the frameworks of the project. After checking in with the chief dramaturge of the opera institution and running my project outline and research terms by the managerial directorship of the house, Murat and Nicolai agreed and invited me to follow Project X for as long as I wanted. However, they asked me to come to Berlin already in March 2016 when they started the rehearsal and planning process for the Minibus concert tour. Although I had originally planned to start my fieldwork at the beginning of my second year, this seemed too good an opportunity to pass on, so I decided to go.

Once in the field, I quickly found out that Murat and Nicolai had 'vetted' me from different perspectives. Nicolai seemed to connect to me due to our similar backgrounds: He also had a background in sociology and during his studies was supported by the same academic foundation of which I was member, which he valued as a sign of my professionalism, academic rigour and, ultimately, trust – this was cultural and social capital in action. Murat, on the other hand, seemed to test our connection on different grounds. When we first met, we went out for lunch and just chatted – not so much about his work or my work, but about Berlin, food, football, politics. I recall him telling me after that lunch that he was positively surprised that I wasn't like other academics he had met and whom he had found to be elusive, distant and stiff. Throughout my fieldwork, Murat admitted to me that he also wanted to see if we would 'click' and if I was 'cool' and 'to be trusted' (my fieldnotes, 2016). Initially, I felt rather stressed that my analysis or findings might somewhat betray his trust in me; after all, I approached Project X from a critical angle.

However, I quickly learned that trust for Murat had less to do with his professional affiliation to the opera institution and my academic interference in it. Quite the opposite: ‘You can write whatever you want! We want the honest and critical opinion!’, he kept on reassuring me (fieldnotes, 2016-2017). Instead, before agreeing to a research partnership, he wanted to see if we saw things alike. ‘Too often, people in the music pedagogy and mediation scene applaud every new hype and every project that is being done but miss the one really important thing – that it is them who don’t understand and who are out of touch’ (conversation May 2016, Berlin). I think the fact that I was quite frank about my academic background and political views from the very first moment I met Murat and Nicolai seemed to assure him that I was ‘on their side’. This moment of establishing trust also revealed in complex ways how my positionality as a white German woman was first and foremost a signifier of distrust for Murat while it did not seem to play a particular role for Nicolai. Thus, negotiating access also meant to negotiate the boundaries and responsibilities of my positionality in that I had to be particularly outspoken about my critical views on Berlin’s cultural industries. While I did not have to change or adjust my political opinions about mainstream ‘diversity talk’ or any kinds of integrationist cultural policies and projects, I still had to communicate them clearly to prove my academic and political alliances.

To me, Murat’s initial scepticism was a clear indication of the profound barriers, the ignorance and the privileges institutionalised in Western art music organisations and working cultures and of the vulnerable position that Murat and other cultural producers of colour are subjected to in their creative work. That the two main Project X-organisers, and especially Murat, frequently told me that their work sometimes felt like ‘tilting at windmills’ (my fieldnotes, 2016-2017) seemed to prove this impression. Thus, from the very beginning of my fieldwork, I was not only

reminded of the lack of institutionalised support so often experienced by minority cultural producers but also of the ways in which my own positionality might have made it difficult or even impossible for me to fully comprehend some of my research participants' experiences with institutionalised inequalities. And, most importantly, it showed me the importance of diversity agendas that, despite institutional obstacles and pressures, truly strive for an anti-racist, equitable and socially just arts world to which I hope this thesis can contribute in its own modest terms.

Being in the field, being out of the field

In accordance with my ethnographic methodology, once in field, I set out to generate what Clifford Geertz (1973: 10) has famously described as a 'thick description [...] of the multiplicity of complex conceptual structures' that coexist, interact and counteract simultaneously in a particular social context. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 1) summarise, the ethnographer's job in that sense is to participate

'overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of research'.

Thus, for a period of 18 months (from March 2016 to November 2017), during which I lived partly in Berlin and partly travelled over from London for particular events, I followed Project X and its producers along.

When I initially joined the Project X team, I was introduced as the PhD student from London who would accompany the project from an academic perspective, i.e. *wissenschaftliche Begleitung*. In the beginning, I was very much dependent on Nicolai and Murat who, as my key gatekeepers, got me in touch with other producers and musicians connected to Project X. While those who were directly implicated in the

project – artistically or organisationally (that is, the associated musicians, costume designers, directors and dramaturges) – were instantly welcoming, open to being interviewed and letting me join them for rehearsals and meetings, some of the broader opera institution staff, like the children’s choir conductor or the managerial staff, were initially more reserved in their responses. When facing such difficulties, I would usually call Murat or Nicolai who would help me establish contact with the wider opera institution staff.

I think that these unequal responses between the Project X team and the wider staff can be explained by two reasons. First, as I spent most of my time in the field with people closely associated with Project X, I was able to establish a trusting relationship with many of them which made them more comfortable to share information, views and experiences with me and ultimately made them treat me almost as a full member of the team. After the first few months in the field, I had thus established numerous connections and had the email address or mobile number of every Project X member, so that I was able to arrange interviews or meetings completely independently. For the broader opera staff, however, I was seen as just a PhD student, an outsider, who wanted to get access to internal materials or talk to people about their work. As such, I meant more work and effort for them and was primarily seen as a potential source of criticism. In those situations, when it was particularly hard to explain what an ethnographic study is, what it entails and what its objectives are, I had to rely on my gatekeepers who again contacted their colleagues on my behalf and followed up on my interview or attendance requests.

Second, I believe that these different contact experiences go to show that projects like Project X, even if they are a fixed part of a larger institution, often rely on the commitment and dedication of a few. That is, at least the fully employed

dramaturges and musicians were paid by the opera institution no matter what and often decided voluntarily to support and get involved in Project X which often meant to work beyond everyday routines and working hours. Hence, there was already a certain level of genuine interest in intercultural projects that I could build on when interviewing and following the Project X team. However, many of the wider opera institution staff had no direct or personal affiliation with the project and might not have been so caring or aware of the questions and problems it tries to tackle. With those research participants, I had to rely heavily on my musical background and my wider cultural capital to make them interested in cooperating with me and interrupting their daily routines to give me interviews or letting me attend rehearsals.

As an ethnographer, I particularly sought to observe Project X's rehearsals and performance practices. Hence, I sat in rehearsals for the Minibus-performance for about six weeks (2016) and saw around 30 performances in Berlin and on the concert tour to Istanbul (2016-2017). I also took part in the Turkish Music Festival in September 2016, joined the rehearsals of *the Bremer Stadtmusikanten* children's opera for about six weeks (2017) and saw three performances at the opera institution (2017). I moreover went along to meetings of the Project X team, to appointments with media organisations, radio stations or neighbourhood centres from across Berlin which wanted to cooperate with Project X and read through all of the project's conceptual documents, press reports and publications and videos which I could get my hands on (2016-2017). As a participant observer, I accompanied the Minibus concert tour to Istanbul as a stage assistant (2016), helped out at the Turkish Music Festival and assisted in outreach workshops with young people at the opera institution (2016). To put it with Chris Barker's (2002: 186) words, I thereby hoped to arrive at a 'detailed holistic description and analysis of cultures based on intensive fieldwork, [...]

including the unspoken and taken-for-granted assumptions that are made about cultural life'. Throughout the entire fieldwork period, I took handwritten notes about everything meaningful I saw, heard and observed, which I then translated and digitalised afterwards.

My ethnographic study also involved musicological reflections, particularly with regards to the two children's operas commissioned in the frameworks of Project X. I was very lucky that both composers as well the orchestra conductor and the musicians involved granted me access to the scores, either talking me through their processes of composing or through particularly exciting or challenging passages to play or conduct. Given my special interest in intercultural music-making, my main questions of concern surrounded the intricacies and difficulties of bringing different musical systems, instruments and playing techniques together. In understanding 'musical organization [as] a simulacrum for social organization' (DeNora, 2000: 2), I therefore investigated who participates, who gets a voice and who is left out of practices of intercultural music-making. Moreover, drawing back to Born (2010), I also aimed to consider the aesthetical qualities of the compositions themselves, not only making aesthetic judgements about them but also trying to embed them in broader systems of musical production histories and genre-making processes. In addition, I also sat down and recorded 30 interviews with Murat, Nicolai, and previously or currently associated musicians, singers, composers, directors, dramaturges, orchestra and children's choir conductors as well as with choir members and their parents (2016-2017). In these 30 cases, I had the permission to produce audio recordings of the interviews on my phone which was a great help when it came to transcription, translation and data organisation.

As an interviewer, I prepared non-directive questions ‘which allow people to account for themselves in their own terms’ (Seale, 2004: 202, 215) and made it possible for me to approach each interview as a ‘guided conversation’ (Lofland, 1971). While I tried to keep the interviews with the children short (about 30 minutes), most of the interviews with my adult research participants lasted between an hour and two and a half hours. The majority of interviews was conducted on the premises of the opera institution or on the road to Istanbul. Others I held at cafes, bars and restaurants in the Berlin neighbourhoods of Kreuzberg and Neukölln or met my interviewees in their homes. As far as possible, I tried to keep a balanced gender representation with 12 of my interviewees identifying as female, 17 interviewees as male and one interviewee as gender-fluid. Across my interview sample, 14 participants identified as ‘having a migration background’, most of whom described themselves as ‘Turkish’ or ‘Turkish German’ and five respectively as Kurdish, Arabic, Russian, Italian, or Japanese Arabic, while 16 participants identified as white Germans. While all interviewees with a migration heritage were either directly involved in Project X or at least affiliated with the project (like the children’s choir members), only half of my white German interviewees had a direct affiliation with Project X, while the other half only peripherally came into contact with the project through their regular work at the opera institution (such as the orchestra conductor, the choir conductor, or the managerial staff).

After leaving the field, I settled back in London to analyse my data and write up my findings. First, I coded my field notes and interview transcripts partly with the help of the software NVIVO and partly by manual organisation. My data coding was a way to organise such information generated along specific lines of inquiry that I was following from the planning stage of this research process and that also came up during

my fieldwork. Such prominent themes included: ‘diversity’, ‘difference/Otherness’, ‘race’, ‘class’, ‘gender’, ‘religion’, ‘the urban’, ‘high culture’, ‘cultural capital’, ‘identity and belonging’, ‘cultural value-making’, ‘institutional logics’ and ‘musical/creative process’. I first tried to map the coded data around the different Project X programmes but quickly came to realise that this structure led to analytical repetition and vagueness. I then re-organised my data following my guiding question of how interculture is performed in the context of Project X, inductively drawing out four analytical avenues: first, the ways in which practices of music-making take shape in Project X; second, the ways in which the project constructs notions of difference in its visual curation practices; third, the ways in which Project X relates to processes of social reproduction and mobility and fourth and finally, the ways in which Project X engages with Berlin’s multicultural urban spaces. These key thematic sites guided my data analysis and underpinned my decision to divide the empirical part of my thesis into four substantive chapters. While I thus followed an inductive analytical approach allowing my data to speak for itself, I have also been keen to let my own writing converse with the existing literature that I outlined earlier on in this thesis. I believe that such an intricate dialogue between data and theory helps clarify the specific insights and contributions my study offers, while also doing justice to my interdisciplinary framework by closely engaging with scholars from different academic fields.

Research limitations

Although almost all research participants ultimately granted me access to the information and sites I needed, I also encountered a few closed doors. For one, I was not allowed insight into any funding-related paperwork or correspondence. It was of

course explained to me that Project X was partly funded through the opera institution's regular funding and partly through external funding provided by the Robert Bosch Foundation, the Mercedes Foundation and the Deutsche Bank Foundation: While the opera institution covered all the staff and overhead costs for rehearsals and performances on-site and in Berlin more widely, the additional funding covered the expenses and logistical requirements of programmes like the Minibus programme or the Turkish Music Festival. However, I was neither able to get a detailed account of all the expenses covered by the different funding sources, nor did I get access to the funding applications, decisions and general correspondence between the Opera institution and Project X's external funding partners.

However, Saha (2013: 823) reminds us that we need to take critical note of the 'political economy of arts funding' when researching the production of representational politics in the subsidised arts and theatre sector. With regard to diversity-strategies in arts programming, he argues that 'through arts funding governmentalities, practitioners are steered towards creating productions that reproduce the usual racialized archetypes, stifling the ability to move beyond certain narratives, reducing them to the usual fetishized ethnic signifiers' (ibid.: 832). I had numerous discussions with Murat and Nicolai as well as with other managerial staff at the opera institution about precisely these precarious linkages between cultural policy, funding decisions and issues of creative decision-making, during which the Project X duo generally reported that their funding affiliations would not be conditional on the implementation of particular aesthetic formats.

While I do believe that the fact that Project X has been 'planned in' as part of the opera institution's regular budget has had mitigating effects on the 'arts funding governmentalities' that Saha points to, I am nonetheless convinced that I could have

learned a lot more about the ways in which intercultural projects have to present themselves to funding bodies (public or private) and about the consequences such decision bear for a politics of representation. An analysis of the Project X's funding-related correspondence against the backdrop of wider cultural policy debates in Berlin and Germany more broadly would have therefore been particularly insightful. Thus, my lack of access to funding decisions certainly presents a limitation of this research project. While my study nevertheless tried to critically reflect on the broader financial structures that underwrite publicly supported music institutions and on the ways in which these are tied in with wider citizenship and integration debates, it would have been a great resource to investigate the impact of funding structures on aesthetic and organisational practices and representational politics of intercultural projects like Project X.

As I already discussed earlier on in this chapter, my positionality certainly allowed me to quickly become acquainted with the professional Western art music world and with the social conventions, norms and protocols permeating an institution like the opera institution. Moreover, due to our shared political vision for a social equitable, anti-racist arts sector, Murat took me under his wings, so to say, which helped establish trust with the wider Project X team. My specific focus on inequalities and the ways in which these show in and are reproduced by the aesthetical and organisational dynamics of intercultural music-making was especially welcomed by my research participants of colour – a shared political connection was fundamental to my research collaborations and conversations with the freelance composers and musicians 'with migration background' who have been affiliated with Project X. Some of my participants even told me that they had not expected such critical questions, that they had never been asked about their experiences in Berlin' music sector and that

they appreciated getting their voices heard in this way. Yet, despite providing me with comprehensive and detailed accounts of their experiences with marginalisation in the music world and despite my best efforts to recognise and do justice to their stories in my analysis, I had never had such experiences myself. Thus, while I am committed to share and highlight their accounts, their stories are not mine. This study cannot be – nor does it aim to be – a study about the everyday experiences of artists of colour in Berlin’s music sector. I do however hope to be a committed ally to such research participants who strive for a truly diverse, equitable and socially just cultural industries. Furthermore, ethnographic methods are well-tailored to arrive at a

‘detailed holistic description and analysis of cultures based on intensive fieldwork, the objective being the production of what Geertz (1973) famously described as “thick descriptions” of “the multiplicity of complex conceptual structures”, including the unspoken and taken-for-granted assumptions that are made about cultural life’ (Barker, 2002: 186).

Building on this, my thesis sought to engage with a multitude of perspectives that shed light on how interculture is performed in the Project X context and that illuminate the multifaceted complexities that intercultural endeavours in the Western art sector bring with them. While I believe that the analytical breadth of my thesis is crucial for the research purposes of this study, I nonetheless think that each of my analytical foci could have offered a deep-reaching investigation in their own right. Questioning the ways in which intercultural music projects engage with their wider local context and the wider city development, how minority cultural producers navigate a system historically stacked against them, to what extent the funding structure of the European highbrow sector intersects with broader integrationist policy agendas or the ways in which particular representations are being constructed throughout the various stages of the musical production process could all have been thesis topics in and of

themselves. While I therefore critically take note of this project's limitations, I am eager to further engage with such questions in the future.

Risks in and beyond research

Ethnography, as a method and as a wider research commitment, carries its considerable ethical risks. From negotiating access and the writing up process to its publication, ethnography innately bears unequal power relations between the ethnographer and her research participants. Such issues are not limited to hidden ethnographies but also show in open research projects like my own, which forced me to ask myself to what extent I should unveil and share my research intentions with my participants. As Fine (1993: 274) cautions us, for example, '[i]f subjects know the research goals, their responses are likely to be skewed' (see also McDowell, 1998; Johnson, 1975; Van Maanen, 1988). In my study, I was especially conscious about the fact that I was researching institutional inequalities and power relations with participants that worked at different levels and along different hierarchies precisely as part of the institution in concern and held a different set of interest and privileges.

While I did produce a concise overview of my research project that was circulated around the opera institution, I did not always open up completely about my political and theoretical background once in the field. I believe that had I disclosed my research interests to the fullest extent – especially to people in important positions at the opera institution – some of my research participants might have consciously or unconsciously adapted their answers to what they expected to be my political stance. This goes to show that, as a researcher, one has to be crucially aware that ethnography always already entails and invokes power-laden encounters (e.g. see Fortier, 1996). Against this backdrop, Janet Finch (1984: 83) criticises that, while acting more

sympathetic than we are might indeed aid our ethnographic research, it is a deceptive practice and as such bears ‘a real exploitative potential’. Defending such practices, however, Judith Rollins (1985: 276) argues that they ‘can be important in studying elites’ and might even be a prerequisite for generating valuable data. Being myself interested in the remaking of cultural elites and hegemonies, I therefore occasionally decided to leave my broader research objectives partly undisclosed to those in powerful institutional positions. As my thesis furthermore aims to foreground those narratives that have often been marginalised in Berlin’s music sector and to examine the reproduction of social hierarchies, I ultimately had to come to terms with such ethical dilemmas in favour of my larger research objective.

However, another ethical issue has been of greater concern to me; that is, the question of how the inescapable power relations that come with any research project might end up reproducing classed, racialised and gendered hierarchies of knowledge production. As Ali (2006: 471) notes, ‘we cannot ever hope to escape (non)hierarchical power relations in research, that all research is inevitably, to an extent, racializing’. While my research is committed to trace how notions of racialised difference are being (re)produced in the context of contemporary cultural production and to work against notions of ‘race’ as an ontological category, I nevertheless acknowledge that ‘race’ as a concept

‘is both slippery and sticky. We are always aware that this phrase is contested in theory, discourse, policy and the everyday, and yet we know that [...] it has real meaning and effect not only through claims to raced identities, but also through continued widespread racism’ (ibid.: 473).

Thus, it is a crucial ethical and intellectual task for the researcher to be sensitive and attuned to the ways in which people experience racism and to call it out for what it is, while at the same time avoid reifying the very category of ‘race’ in and through

research. Here, David Goldberg (2009) stresses the need for researchers to not only offer ‘descriptive’ accounts of racialisation which risk end up reproducing the very racialising governmentalities at work, but to provide theorisations that disrupt and challenge such regulatory systems. Personally, I am sceptical as to whether these two steps can ever be fully separated. However, as I hope to do in my own work, I believe that the reason for descriptively carving out processes of racialisation has to be that, once identified, their norms and outcomes might hopefully be unsettled and dismantled.

This acknowledgment not only led me to think deeper about my positionality and the epistemological framing of my research, but also called into reflection the very practical decisions of how to write and express things concretely. I had to be particularly wary about how to put in writing categories of identification and descriptions of my research participants’ backgrounds that contain vital information for my analysis but that might simultaneously reify precisely such normative systems of regulation I seek to contest. By normative systems of regulation, I mean ascriptions of particular ethnic, cultural, religious or national identities as well as socio-legal concepts such as citizenship. Following Hall (1989: 222), I champion an understanding of ‘identity as a “production”, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation’ and thus do not intend to render processes of gender, ethnic or cultural identification static or bounded in any way. Yet, I recognise that descriptions such as ‘Turkish’, ‘German’ or ‘Turkish German’ do not represent the complexities of fluid and complex identities but bear essentialising tendencies. I tried to at least negotiate these risks by asking my research participants how they would identify themselves and thus used their own accounts in

my own writing. I deem these self-identifications as particularly important in the context of citizenship and migration discourses.

As I have argued elsewhere in this thesis, the notion of citizenship in Germany is deeply intertwined with racialised and essentialist ideas of Germaness. As El-Tayeb (1999) specifies, racism in Germany (and Europe more broadly) would therefore work precisely through the ‘externalization of racialized populations’. This externalising process also shows in the very phrase ‘with migration background’ that, as Nobrega (2016: 186) discusses, ‘is a category that is not based on people’s self-definition but an administratively and discursively constructed external ascription’ and that is even applicable to people who do not have a direct migration history themselves. Moreover, Nobrega (ibid.: 186) continues that

‘the category “migration background” risks producing inaccurate measures for the implementation of “diversity in the arts” policies as people of colour from Turkey, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East are mostly less privileged with regards to their racial and class status compared to those with a white European migration background, who can “blend in” easier’.

Against this backdrop, I decided to adopt the category ‘migration background’ if self-identified by my research participants and to be specific about their respective migration heritage (i.e. using descriptions such as Turkish, Arabic or Polish) to capture and account for the crucial differentiations of lived realities based on complex intersections of ‘race’, class and citizenship status. Nonetheless, the risk of reifying systems of power by continuing to deploy their terminology remains.

The problem of formulation, and the ethical risks thereof, similarly pertains to hierarchies of class and cultural distinctions. The empirical focal point of this thesis is Project X and in particular, its embeddedness at the opera institution as part of Berlin’s Western art music sector. My interest in this specific institutional setting is sparked by

the fact that, in Germany and elsewhere, Western art music is seen as part of highbrow culture and, as such, is not only ascribed a distinctive cultural value but is also legitimatised through considerable public subsidies. In this context, my thesis is concerned with exposing the reproduction of hierarchies of value and legitimacy and wishes to unsettle the very dominance of notions of highbrow culture as privileged sites of cultural knowledge production and meaning-making. To that end, I need to name the problem – that is, *Hochkultur* is treated differently to other forms and organisations of culture – but am simultaneously concerned that repeating this term reifies precisely the artificial distinction between highbrow and popular forms of culture with which this thesis finds fault.

However, only using alternative descriptions like the subsidised art sector, for instance, risks concealing the still prominent differences of social and financial power ascribed to different cultural institutions and thus risks disguising the reproduction of cultural distinctions, capital and class inequality. I therefore decided to instead use the terms ‘Western art music sector’, ‘highbrow music sector’ and ‘classical music sector’ more or less interchangeably (I do try to use the different terms to highlight different analytical emphases) throughout this thesis, despite acknowledging their respective terminological fallacies.⁶⁸ These discussions around issues of racialisation and objectivation show that the ethical risks of research are not constricted to the fieldwork period but figure at every stage of the research process. In clarifying my

⁶⁸ As I point out in Chapter 5, the term Western art music is inherently limited, because it cannot appropriately capture the global reach of its consumption and production practices. Instead, the term overstates the significance of a historic-geographical location for definitions of musical genre, aesthetic traditions and their wide-spread institutionalisation. Other authors therefore propose the term ‘classical music sector’ to avoid such entanglements. However, using classical music as a stand-in for Western art music comes with its own issues as well. ‘Classical’, here, becomes not a marker of particular epochs or aesthetic traditions characteristic of different music histories (see e.g. Türünz, 2017; Stokes, 1992, Stokes, 2008 for more details of Turkish classical music, for example) but is primarily associated with Western musical developments. As such, the term is not only imprecise but might reinforce Orientalist paradigms of knowledge production by overwriting the complex development of other musics from a Westernised perspective.

methodological and terminological decision for readers of this study, I wish to take such risks seriously and to at least mitigate the ethical dilemmas they bear.

Building on this, I am also aware that there are certain challenges that go beyond the research process itself and that might have significant consequences for the researcher and her fieldwork participants. Fortier highlights in particular the ‘personal involvement with members of social groups’ which might cause the researcher ‘anxieties that [she] needs to mediate throughout the fieldwork and beyond’ (1988: 57). As Herbert Gans (1968: 316) argues, these moral reflections will not ‘vanish once the field is over’ but are especially significant when exiting the field to write up and publish ethnographic research. As my thesis is based on a study of a contemporary music project organised by an existent institution, the publication of my work might have tangible consequences for my research participants. In line with LSE’s Ethics Code, I have stored all fieldwork data securely and have not shared any personal or private information that could lead to the identification of my participants or could put them otherwise at risk. I therefore carefully anonymised and changed my participants’ names, ages and, if not analytically important, their professions, institutional positions and in some rare cases even their gender. Moreover, as the opera’s directorship ultimately did not agree to be named, I had to change both the institution’s name as well as the actual title of Project X. Hence, while I did indeed get consent to use the real names of some of the Project X organisers and of the involved composers and musicians, I nevertheless had to change all of their names, too. Generally, I would like to stress the fact that this thesis is by no means intended to be a review of Project X. Rather, I sought to engage with the larger debates around inequalities in cultural production and with the role of intercultural music-making *using the example of Project X.*

While I certainly hope that my research participants understand my thesis as a supportive ally and might even gather some helpful practical insights from my observations, there is also the small but considerable risk that my study might be used ‘against’ Project X and the opera institution. While this study should certainly not be understood as a mainly negative account of Project X in any way or exploited as a justification for the withdrawal of financial or logistical support from Project X or the opera institution, once academic work gets published, it is very difficult to control its use and indeed its misuse. Both the Project X team and the opera institution directorship have been very open-minded and supportive of my research project which I value as a clear sign for their strong work ethic, sense of public responsibility and commitment to ongoing diversity in the arts debates. Working with them has been a fantastic and inspiring research collaboration. Secondly, in line with my epistemological standpoint, I once again wish to highlight that all parts of my analysis are inherently bound to my own positionality. My thesis is hence not to be read as an objective account of interculture at the opera institution, but reflects my subjective observations, understandings and judgements.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the epistemological, methodological and ethical issues of my study. I not only offered a comprehensive discussion about the scope and the limitations of my fieldwork but also provided a critical reflection of my own positionality in and beyond the field and its impact on the research process. Building on that, I drew out the particular significance of postcolonial thought and reflexive ethnographic methods for studying the production site of Western art music through a critical and provincializing eye. I finally discussed the ethical risks of ethnographic

research and of my project in particular, considering the practices of data collection, analysis and writing as well as possible implications of my study for broader political and cultural debates in Germany.

With the above in mind, I conclude Part One of this thesis to move onto my data chapters, hoping that they can contribute to ongoing diversity in the arts debates in Germany and elsewhere and develop insightful contributions for a sociology of cultural production. In the following four chapters, I will investigate different yet related fields of tension brought about by Project X which not only help clarify the ways in which Project X's aesthetic and organisational practices (re)construct particular notions of cultural legitimacy and difference but also push for a further theoretical engagement with issues of highbrow music production, urban multiculture and social inequalities in Germany's contemporary political moment.

PART TWO

Chapter 5: Toward a postmigratory aesthetic imaginary? Power, practices and subjectivity in intercultural music-making

‘How should we conceive of difference in music? The kind of difference invoked when music, that quintessentially nonrepresentational medium, is employed (paradoxically) so as to represent, through musical figures, another music, another culture, an other?’ (Born and Hesmondalgh, 2000: 1).

On the very first page of the introduction to their volume ‘Western music and its others’, Born and Hesmondalgh lay out a crucial issue which will guide this chapter’s explorations: How, in an intercultural setting, are particular notions of difference constructed through musical practices and how do these relate to historic representations of Otherness that shape power relations and inequalities not only in the sphere of cultural production but in wider public discourse? Following this question, in this chapter, I will begin by zooming into Project X’s organisational and aesthetic practices of intercultural music-making itself, looking closely at processes of commissioning, composing, rehearsing and performing in the context of the two Turkish German children’s operas that have been commissioned within the frameworks of Project X. I thereby seek to develop a keener understanding of how the project’s intercultural perspective is constructed in and through musical practice. In exploring what kinds of creative conventions and institutional constraints inform the musical process, I wish to trace how specific power relations, quite literally, play out in the music-making itself and form particular musical representations. In so doing, I will think through questions of musical subjectivity, authorship and appropriation – questions thrown up by the creative practices that stand at the core of this chapter’s analysis – and set them against broader public discourses of Otherness that dominate public debates on migration and belonging in Germany.

While I show how Project X indeed opens up spaces for creative agency and for the emergence of what I call a *postmigratory aesthetic imaginary*, I also suggest that these transgressive musical representations are ultimately shaped and contained by the institutional structures imposed by the opera institution. Despite recognising moments of creative independence developing in Project X's framework, which challenge dominant concepts of musical value, I therefore ultimately argue that the opera institution inherently bears and reproduces hegemonic notions of musical genre that determine the ways in which intercultural music is being done. In consequence, the institutionalisation of intercultural music-making within a Western highbrow frame risks undermining its unsettling potential by feeding disruptive musical representations back into a Western musical frame, leaving overarching discourses of (musical) Otherness untouched. Against this backdrop, Project X ultimately runs the risk of re-inscribing cultural hierarchies between the West and its constructed others which extend into broader debates of difference, identity and belonging in Germany.

Issues of authorship in practices of commissioning

The ways in which the institutional workings of the opera institution have impacted forms of intercultural music-making are clearly exemplified by the commissioning processes of Project X's children's operas. Arda (2011) and Ozan (2017) both composed an intercultural children's opera for the opera institution in the context of Project X. These operas were set to be 'Turkish German'; that is, both were based on children's fairy tales well known in both countries – *Alibaba and the 40 thieves* and the *Bremen Town Musicians*, respectively – and their libretti included both German and Turkish text. The opera directorship was moreover keen to commission works

which would bring into dialogue Turkish and Western-European musical systems. A Murat elucidates,

‘the opera institution commissions children’s operas every few years anyways. So, when Project X started with the intercultural opening of our in-house children’s choir, our director said that it would be great to commission our first intercultural opera accordingly. This meant for us to find a Turkish composer to reflect this choice not only in the authorship of the opera but also to find a particular intercultural sound. The same idea guided us the second time around’ (interview September 2017, Berlin).

Murat’s introductory comments indicate that the commissioning of the two Turkish German children’s operas was part of Project X’s larger intercultural strategy aimed at reviewing the opera institution’s organisation, both aesthetically and in respect to the cultural producers in charge. Thus, he highlights questions of both ‘authorship’ and ‘sound’ as important choices to make when seeking to put an intercultural perspective into musical practice. He thereby establishes a connection between the composers’ ethnocultural backgrounds and a particular intercultural aesthetic paradigm that the opera institution envisioned for the commissioned pieces. Here, the choice of Turkish composers seemingly sought to circumvent issues of cultural appropriation which historically have shaped Western art music’s dealings with non-Western musical cultures in ways that ‘treat culture as an autonomous and politically innocent domain of social life’ from which to freely borrow from without, however, reflecting the ‘power-imbued nature of musical appropriation’ (Born and Hesmondalgh, 2000: 5) in a critical manner. Instead, Murat’s comments hint at the idea that choosing ‘the right’ composer would innately solve the issue of appropriation and authorship, somewhat avoiding the deep-rooted ambiguity that is otherwise inherent in representations and negotiations of musical difference.

However, the meaning, role and function of authorship in the context of the two operas are much more complex and uncertain. While it is neither my aim nor my

argument to undermine the composers' creative agency independent from the opera house's institutional impact, I do want to build on Born and Hesmondalgh's call to 'revisit the question of *authorial agency*' by integrating 'an account of discursive formations, cultural and ideological systems, including those systems specific to music history, with an analysis of musicians' subjectivities' (ibid.: 38; emphasis in the original). Before I take a closer look at the musical trajectories of the composers themselves, I will hence first discuss how the opera institution as a Western highbrow institution subsumes a particular author function (in the Foucauldian sense) itself by decisively shaping the commissioning process of the respective musical works.

As Peter, one of the house's main dramaturges, who has been working in and around Project X since its beginnings admits:

'The very terms interculture or Turkish German of course raise certain musical expectations – internally for us as an opera house and externally for the audience and broader public. While I see that these terms are not very sharp and group many things together, it was important for us to communicate to the public that these operas were not supposed to just be contemporary Western music but that we were searching the dialogue with Turkish music. Internally, you also need to justify why you commission a particular work to a particular composer. So, when we said Turkish German, we needed to find something or better someone who would compose accordingly. In the end, however, it's the creative contents that matter, not the labels. And regarding the content, we wanted to refrain from forcing people into a specific musical corset and we tried our best not to do that. However, by the mere fact of commissioning opera music for a Western art institution, the musical choices so to say are always already skewed to an extent. It's a numbers game actually. Both composers integrated Turkish instruments, but they are only a few whereas our orchestra holds over 60 musicians – so the few need to adapt to the many in a sense. It's just how it is.'

Peter's comments indicate a subtle uneasiness about the terms interculture or Project X's Turkish German frame which he seems to recognise as reductive and vague generalisations. However, according to him, such labels would have been nonetheless necessary for external and internal marketing purposes in order to mobilise audiences and to justify particular commission choices to the opera institution's in-house management. While it is certainly understandable that musical programming of any

kind requires some sort of marketable labelling in order to mobilise funding, institutional support and audiences, such labels are not just innocent depictions but bear a performative function. Especially with regards to intercultural productions, labels can therefore not just be seen as reflections of the cultural works in concern but actively contribute to their making. That is, they not only shape the ways in which cultural difference is being presented in an intercultural frame but can steer the institutional and aesthetic workings in ways that construct particular notions of difference in the first place.

More specifically, as Saha (2018: 138) shows in his analysis of commodification processes in the cultural industries, the ‘assemblage of processes, apparatus, rationales and logics that are embodied in each stage of production’ would entrench a ‘rationalizing/ racializing logic of capital’ into the cultural production process precisely through practices of ‘(self-)formatting, marketing and packaging’. The actual author of the cultural text would thus be ‘just a component’ (*ibid.*: 115) of the wider authorial assemblage. While Saha recognises commodification as an ambivalent process, he nonetheless stresses that ‘within the neoliberal conjuncture’ it would be ‘mostly constraining and reductive in terms of labour and ideology’ (*ibid.*: 113). When considering intercultural material or cultural works created by minority producers, these institutional commodification processes would therefore most often act ‘as technology of racialised governmentnalities’ (*ibid.*: 113) by relying on and drawing value from static notions of Otherness. Such ambiguities of commodification similarly play out in Project X and particularly crystallise in the ways in which the opera institution approached the marketing of the two commissioned operas. While the explicit Turkish German framing of both pieces helped push for their realisation, it also draws a distinction between the house’s standardised, canonised programme and

these *other* exceptions. As such, the opera institution not only takes on a decisive role in relation to the marketing of the two children's operas but, in so doing, also risks reproducing reductive accounts of musical difference: While Project X is keen to stress the fact that people of Turkish descent make up an elementary part of Berlin's urban spaces and German society, such discreet groupings between the norm and the *other* tie in with exclusionary discourses of citizenship and belonging – after all, 'Turkish' is marked as the exception against a 'German' normality.

This re-inscription of cultural binaries does not only show in processes of marketing but also manifests in the production stage of commissioning. As Peter acknowledges, labels like interculture or Turkish German would not only be useful and necessary for marketing reasons but would indeed come with specific expectations of what such musics should sound like. Thus, he points to underlying preconceptions of certain aesthetical outcomes that the opera institution's directorship seemed to be looking for when selecting a particular composer. In this context, he even addresses a risk of aesthetic bias when reflecting in more detail how the very frame of Turkish German interculture creates particular expectations around musical genre and sound. Peter therefore critically argues that it would be crucial for intercultural music-making to provide an open-ended creative space which allows artists to approach their work in an independent manner. Yet, he states that in the case of the two operas, there would have been an *a priori* musical imbalance skewed towards the musical capacities and requirements of Western symphonic music. Such imbalances, however, are not incidental or innocent biproducts of intercultural production but decisively shape the power relations playing out in the music-making itself. As Stokes (2004: 61) puts it, in cases of intercultural music production

‘one must distinguish between a variety of different ways in which styles, genres, instruments, and sounds perceived as different are brought together: Which constitute foreground, which background? Which subordinate which other musical elements to it? Which are deformed to fit a new musical environment? Which elements mark cultural difference, and which signify or engage with modernity? Which elements blend seamlessly, and which generate a frisson of difference?’

Thinking through the aesthetic outline for the two children’s operas, it becomes clear how musical paradigms associated with Western art music constitute the ‘foreground’, while musical elements that divert from Western symphonic music are pushed to the ‘background’.

While Peter seems to be aware of such unequal power relations, he somewhat packages his criticism in the practical language of technocratic unavoidability – ‘It’s a numbers game actually [...] It’s just how it is.’ The institutional workings of the opera institution seem indeed to be recognised as the ultimate aesthetic boundary; yet, Peter does not draw the connection between such seemingly technocratic facts and broader racialised inequalities that prevail in the Western cultural industries and that also extend into broader public debates of cultural value and legitimacy in Germany. He hence does not seem to acknowledge the innate tensions that arise when intercultural works are predominantly formulated by and channelled through a Western music institution which has itself been built around particular musical histories and hierarchies and, as such, roots in a cultural and ideological system that has been far from ‘race’-neutral. Instead, he plays the importance of labels and underlying aesthetic preconceptions down and argues that, in practice, it would be the ‘creative contents that matter’.

However, in line with Saha’s (2018) argument, I suggest that Peter’s responses demonstrate how the opera institution as an institution adopts an overarching authorial function by setting out the aesthetical and organisational frame in which the composers have to produce their works. While I am aware that every process of commissioning

is inherently guided by specific aesthetical or organisational parameters, which at least contour the musical character of the respective work, this holds special significance in the context of minority cultural productions or, indeed, in so-called intercultural contexts like Project X. Here, the complexity and ambiguity of authorship precisely goes to show that one cannot easily extrapolate critical debates of representation and appropriation by simply choosing *an other* composer to write *other* musical works. Moreover, it proofs that ‘labels’, as Peter puts it, are indeed not just harmless descriptions but are very much part of discursive formations and, as such, are already part and parcel of broader practices of cultural production and representation. Nevertheless, his comments point us to an important research avenue for examining processes of (inter)cultural production: That is, in order to fully explore how particular musical representations are being produced and how interculture as a term of creative practice translates into musical sound, one needs to develop a keener comprehension of the concrete organisational and aesthetics practices that underwrite the very production of musical representations.

Negotiating interculture in practices of composing

Building on this, in the following, I turn towards practices of composing and look at how the two composers have negotiated the opera institution’s institutional workings in their own musical approaches. More specifically, I examine how the composers have navigated their personal musical trajectories and subjectivities in relation to the opera institution’s commissioning parameters. As I will discuss, both works raise critical issues of subjectivity, authenticity and appropriation and thus become pivotal sites of power where cultural hierarchies are being expressed and negotiated. I argue that both compositions illustrate that intercultural music-making can indeed open up

a productive musical space that pushes for more transgressive genre boundaries and challenges hegemonic notions of aesthetic value and musical identity. As such, they grapple with and unsettle reductive notions of musical Otherness in their own terms, respectively realising what I coin *a postmigratory aesthetic imaginary*.

Arda (2012) and Ozan (2017) seem to have developed quite different musical subjectivities shaped and informed by their distinct social, musical and migratory trajectories. Arda, who describes himself as a Kurdish Alevi, was born in Bursa (Turkey), learned the bağlama as a child and only got in touch with Western art music in high school where he started to play the violin. He moved to Berlin after his graduation due to political unrest in Turkey and went on to study composition at the *Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin*, one of Germany's most renowned conservatories. As Arda states, 'I love contemporary Western music but I'm not just a contemporary classical musician. My composing style is fundamentally informed by all different kinds of Turkish folk and art music and bağlama remains my musical root and passion' (interview September 2016, Berlin). When the opera institution directorship approached him,

'they told me that I had a particular hybrid sound they were seeking and that many other Turkish composers here in Berlin are only educated in the West and therefore sound too German, you know. I however am well-versed in two different musical systems. It comes naturally to me. I don't think of myself as an intercultural composer because I don't approach composing like an exercise of fusing Turkish and Western music, but it's just how I think musically.'

Arda identifies his music as inherently bringing together two different musical systems; yet, he does not understand his composition as a translation effort but rather as an innate expression of his own musical identity shaped by multiple cultural cross-roads and experiences. While he seems reluctant to describe his music in terms of interculture or fusion, his opera does indeed dialogise instruments, playing techniques

and musical elements that stem from different musical systems. In his opera, Arda combines instruments such as kaval, zurna and bağlama as well as makam-based melodies and rhythmical patterns, while overall adhering to Western compositional techniques suited for a Western symphonic orchestra. As he puts it, ‘I couldn’t overwhelm the orchestra with too much non-Western stuff that they don’t know how to play, but I composed passages where it is only us playing [the group of Turkish instruments and percussions], so I still got to showcase the musical range of these amazing instruments’.

While aware of the aesthetic constraints embodied by the opera institution’s in-house orchestra, Arda still aimed to exploit the degree of creative freedom he held as a composer to showcase the technical and musical range of the non-Western instruments to its fullest. As Berat, the kaval player who was involved in the opera production, remembers ‘I didn’t have the feeling that I had to adapt. You could see that Arda really knows what my instrument is capable of and he utilised that well. While he referenced Turkish folk music, he actually composed much more contemporarily. This was quite enjoyable to play’ (conversation in September 2016, Berlin). Following Berat’s comments, Arda’s composition managed, at least to some degree, to bend the aesthetical constraints imposed by the opera institution and challenge the subordinated position of non-Western instruments and playing techniques. It so seems that Arda’s music opens up a ‘hybrid’ musical space in which different musical elements encounter one another. This, however, throws up critical discussions around the very notions of authenticity and hybridity – notions that bear with them long-standing processes of othering themselves.

As Stokes (2004: 59) criticises, while ‘the language of hybridity and diaspora is conceived in opposition to the theory and practice of authenticity, authenticity and

hybridity are, from a discursive point of view, more complexly entangled concepts'. As such, concepts of hybridity would often still be based on somewhat reified ideas of authentic musical elements in-between which hybrid musics could evolve. Thus, as Stokes rightly objects, '[t]he perpetuation of notions of authenticity through an authenticating discourse of hybridity is one of the means by which world music discourse continues to mediate Northern metropolitan hegemony' (ibid.: 59-60; see also Frith 2000). Here, Nooshin (2003: 250, 251) specifies that in today's postmodern era 'a whole new series of binary dualisms in which "ethnic others" were romanticized and represented (and indeed represented themselves) as spontaneous, natural, authentic, free of the trappings of modern life, and so on'. She continues that

'[w]hilst this clearly indicates an important shift from earlier discourses, it would be naive to imagine that the new, apparently more sympathetic discourse was any less a Western construct than the old and, indeed, it could be argued that it served a similar purpose [...] to perpetuate difference and in particular for European art music to maintain its "others"' (ibid.: 251).

Such constructions of musical Otherness rooted in reductive and marginalising claims of authenticity did not remain without contestation, however. As Scherzinger (2004: 584) argues, the increasing transnational interconnectedness of people, capitals, goods and technology brought about 'a world in which once-secure musical boundaries became highly porous [...] indeed, a world in which "polystylism" was itself considered a representative hallmark of a postmodern condition that challenged the very concepts of cultural authenticity and artistic originality'. Arda's musical trajectory, shaped by his Kurdish Alevi background as well as by his migratory experiences and situated in the long *durée* of East-West musical exchanges, seems to represent precisely this 'polystylism' which Scherzinger points to.

While Arda's composition does not seem to rely on static notions of musical authenticity (as Berat's comments indicate, for instance), the way in which the opera institution's directorship framed his composition is indeed more problematic. Talking me through his collaboration with the opera institution, Arda mentioned that the directorship liked his 'hybrid' sound which they contrasted with the 'too German' sound of other Turkish composers living in Berlin (see Peter's comments above). Here, his Turkish German hybrid musical identity is actively presumed and set precisely in opposition to notions of German music – while the latter seems to be recognised as a true expression of contemporary German culture, the former is relegated to the outskirts of German cultural identity. This process of essentialising complex and fluid musical subjectivities into bounded binaries of (non)belonging also mirrors in debates around migration and citizenship more broadly. The Turkish German frame of Project X, although trying to foster intercultural dialogues, actually seems to mark the Turkish German (musical) subjectivity as an ethnocultural counterfoil against which the construction of a 'truly' German (musical) identity is upheld.

Yet, it again appears that Arda achieves to challenge such dualist framings by developing a musical narrative that articulates exactly the in-betweens of his musical trajectories. As such, his composition style is inherently shaped by intercultural musical encounters, which do not obscure the overarching power relations between Europe's programmatic modernity, Germany's art music sector and binary understandings of Turkish and German music, but precisely enunciate and negotiate them. To help make sense of his composition as an intercultural intervention into Western hegemonic notions of genre, I build on Born's writings on music and temporality (2015) as well as on her work on social aesthetics (2017). Arguing for a

deeper understanding of the ‘multiplicity of time in cultural production’ (Born, 2015: 362), she outlines four ways in which music relates to and produces time.⁶⁹ For the purposes of my analysis, I will focus on the second temporality put forward by Born which

‘is produced by the dynamics of retention and protention proffered by the musical object as its own past and future (or virtuality), where retention points to the making and remaking of genealogies by each object or event, and protention to how each anticipates new openings—potential musical futures’ (*ibid.*: 372).

Bearing in mind my own background in Western classical music and my comparatively limited knowledge of Middle Eastern music which certainly affected my own listening and judging of Arda’s piece, I propose that the specific retentions generated by Arda’s children’s opera enunciate both the composer’s personal musical and migratory trajectories as well as their situatedness in broader cultural, political and socioeconomic histories with regards to both Germany and Turkey. That is, by foregrounding musical elements and instruments stemming largely from Anatolian Alevi and Kurdish traditions, Arda subverts homogenous ideas of Turkish music and of Turkishness itself, pointing towards the inadequacy of any dualist interpretation of Project X’s Turkish German frame. On the level of the musical text, through his use of instruments such as *bağlama*, *kaval* and *zurna*, Arda not only builds on the material histories of the particular instruments intimately entangled with Anatolian folk music traditions, but also integrates corresponding playing techniques which show in his use

⁶⁹ Here, I draw on Born’s theory of a social aesthetics (2017) as well as on her work on musical temporalities (2015). To reiterate, in her approach to a social aesthetics, she provides ‘a measure of rigor for those concerned with theorizing art’s multiple social mediations’ (2017: 43) and proposes four planes of musical mediation – the microsocial, the power to animate imagined communities, the ability to refract wider social relations and hierarchies and the broader institutional forces that provide the ground for music’s production. In her work on time, Born (2015) again draws out four distinct temporalities to examine how music produces time, ranging from the microtemporal unfolding of the musical object and its dynamics of retention and protention to the temporality of genre and broader questions of temporal ontology.

of makam-structures, micro-tones and improvisatory segments. Compared to the genre of opera in the West, such references to Kurdish and Alevi folk music in particular also bring a different genealogy of music into play, one which critically links to particular local geographies, expressions of ethno-religious identities in Turkey and practices of worship and political resistance (Aksory, 2014; Kastoryano, 2002; Neyzi, 2002; Markoff, 1994; Dinçer, 2004; Öztürkmen, 2005; Kaya, 1998, 2007).

Yet, while these retentions to his musical upbringing remain, Arda's work is ultimately an opera piece following contemporary Western parameters – a compositional process which results in a musical signature that is inherently shaped by his multifaceted encounters with diverse Western and Turkish musical systems. I suggest that, in his work, Arda seems to sonically articulate his own musical and migratory trajectories across both Turkey and Germany; an aesthetic engagement which moreover shows in his physical transnational trajectories between Bursa, Istanbul and Berlin. As such, Arda's work also opens up musical protentions in the form of melodic and harmonic developments which could be deemed unexpected to a standard opera audience in the West. In that sense, Arda's composition develops musical protentions that go beyond Western notions of genre and that might signify a 'new aesthetic form of the global imagination, an emergent way of capturing the present historical moment and the total reconfiguration of space and cultural identity characterizing societies around the globe' (Erlmann, 1996: 468). Through the specific dynamics between retention and protention, I therefore believe that Arda's work can be read as creating a space of musical rupture in which complex musical and migratory histories are articulated in the present of the musical event and which pushes towards new aesthetic openings that can indeed engender possible musical futures.

Such futures, I hold, are inherently tied to Germany's postmigratory society. Crystallising in musical practice, migration itself has become an active site of creative engagement, of interaction and negotiation. It so seems that, in the context of Arda's piece, the formation of a diasporic, transnational musical alliance was unlocked, and this unsettles established Western-dominated approaches to music-making. As such, his work proffers not only musical but social pretensions. By musically mediating his own musical pasts and present, his opera piece challenges hegemonic notions of genre institutionalised by the Western art music sector in favour of what I want to call *a postmigratory aesthetic imaginary*: Similar to the genre of postmigratory theatre, Arda's work makes a postmigratory story audible within Germany's Western art music sector, engendering the potential to disrupt hegemonic notions of genre and of musical representations of Otherness. In the context of contemporary Germany, where the country's imperial legacies continue to inform discourses of racialised difference, Arda's musical work might thus present a postmigratory intervention into a sector, which otherwise still upholds ideas of authenticity upon which racialised notions of 'national culture' are based (see Hage, 1998). Problematising the totalising and homogenising conception of national (musical) identity – with regards to both constructions of Germany and Turkey – a postmigratory aesthetics might enunciate precisely 'the "inter"—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between', to put it with Homi Bhabha's (1994: 54) words. In that sense, Arda's composition indeed has the potential to challenge hegemonic constructions of cultural value and legitimacy.

In contrast to Arda's musical upbringing, Ozan, who lives in the Turkish city of Antalya, started out as a classical Clarinet player and then moved on to composition

in his youth, studying in Paris, Istanbul and Michigan to further develop his composition skills.

‘I’m trained in Western classical music, not in Turkish music. I think it is really a problem that these two musical systems are still taught separately in Turkey. I had to do a lot of autodidactic research on Turkish music when I took on the opera’s commission to write a children’s opera. Peter [the dramaturge] came to see me in Istanbul and Antalya. They wanted me to compose a Turkish German opera which should also be reflected in the choice of instruments. So, I had to really familiarise myself with Turkish instruments and feed this into a score for a Western symphony orchestra’ (interview in September 2017, Berlin).

Ozan, himself trained in Western compositional technique, approached the composition of his children’s opera quite differently to his predecessor. Like Arda, he included Turkish instruments – specifically kanoon, oud, zurna and bağlama – in his instrumentation, but he did not compose according to the Turkish musical system.

‘I didn’t include microtones or something like that. It’s very much composed according to Western contemporary music. But I work in the hicaz-makam here and there. Not in its traditional form, but I built tetrachords from it which occur throughout the entire work. But I think through integrating four instruments that you do not usually hear in a symphonic setting, there is a particular sound to the music anyways.’

Ingo, who conducted Ozan’s piece and therefore knows it in great detail, agrees and tells me that ‘the musical challenges in this work do not lie with the borrowings from Turkish music. The whole piece is very rigorously structured and through-composed [*durch komponiert*]’ (interview October 2017, Berlin). Finding fault with Ozan’s Western composition style, Ali, who played kanoon, and Lila, who played zurna, recount that ‘this opera wasn’t really composed for our instruments at all’. Ali specifies that ‘[i]t was really hard for us to play, especially for me as the kanoon player because the score required to change the tuning keys constantly. This is a lot of work but doesn’t really showcase the great qualities of this instrument.’ Rifat, the oud player, equally says that he felt more like ‘adding sonic colour’ to the music than

anything else, ‘it’s a Western opera through and through’ he concludes (interviews held between September and November 2017, Berlin).

Thus, Ozan’s opera seems to stand in stark contrast to Arda’s work. While the latter bears moments of musical rupture that unsettle hegemonic notions of musical value, Ozan’s piece appears to simply follow a contemporary Western style. His composition clearly favoured Western aesthetic paradigms and subordinated other musical elements which were adjusted and changed to fit their new musical and institutional environment. As such, his work brings about crucial questions of appropriation and musical Orientalism. Given the comments by Rifat, Lila and Ali, it seems that Ozan did not approach the opera’s Turkish German frame as a critical dialogue between two musical systems but ended up simply borrowing from an envisioned Turkish sound. In this regard, Ozan comes close to a process of ‘domestication’ (see Stokes, 2000) which was characteristic of Western art music’s *alla turca* invention. The manner in which he adapts the hicaz-makam to a Western musical language or utilises the non-Western instruments can be judged as an illustration that Ozan’s piece does not develop the same musical disruption as Arda’s work does.

However, while Ozan’s composition can be criticised for underusing non-Western instruments and for subsuming different musical elements into Western art music’s genre hegemony, his work nevertheless illustrates a crucial point of critique raised by Stokes (2000) in his discussion of musical Orientalism. Following Stokes, even postcolonial and post-imperial critiques against musical Orientalism would often remain ‘firmly in the world of a representing “us” and a represented oriental “other”’, who would again be pushed to the outside of the representational frame and

continuously be rendered ‘solent, marginalized, and ultimately irrelevant to questions of analytical significance’ (ibid.: 214, 215). As Stokes argues, such a

‘critique of Orientalism thus has a way of reproducing the very voicelessness that the critique itself diagnoses and problematizes. These same others themselves engage with, reproduce, and manipulate colonial representations, diverting them toward more localized struggles of power, accommodation, or resistance, nuancing and adding to them [...] These are important to understand, especially as they come to bear, with increasing cultural insistence, in the Euro-American metropolis’ (ibid.: 215).

Keeping these arguments in mind, I suggest that Ozan’s composition does actually challenge the hierarchical relationship between Western art music’s and *other* musics and musicians; namely, the Eurocentric centre-periphery dichotomy that has shaped discourses around Western art music’s geographical and cultural nature by bringing himself as a composer into the very frame and process of representation. According to Nooshin (2011), while the term *Western* art music would still be widely used, it would actually require a critical reinvention. First, Western art music’s reach and its international re-interpretation in different national and cultural contexts around the world would be hard to grasp with such restrictive geographical and cultural determinants. Second, according to Stokes (2008: 211), these descriptions would furthermore represent ‘a deeply normative idea of Europeaness in music based on the idealization of an extremely narrow selection of musical practices (principally Austro-German and nineteenth century)’ and as such, would carry with them essentialist and totalising tendencies. Nooshin (2014: 10) therefore clarifies that

“western art music” is ideologically loaded, since it claims exclusive ownership of a cultural space whilst denying the existence of “others” who have been and continue to be central to it and who are rendered invisible by the dominant discourses. Whatever its historical legacy, clearly “western art music” is (solely) western no longer.’

In a similar vein, Yara El-Ghadban (2009) maintains that the Western art music sector would make it very difficult for artists not considered Western themselves to gain recognition and to establish themselves amongst its artistic community. This difficulty would especially pose itself for contemporary composers who already find themselves at the margins of the Western art music sector. As she postulates,

‘in Western art music, a highly canonized tradition (like most art traditions), power dynamics that involve musical identity and authorship, on the one hand, and postcolonial tensions that might destabilize its sense of boundaries and community, on the other hand, are kept in check through rituals and rites of passage such as recitals for performers and composition competitions for composers’ (ibid.: 154).

While she does not specifically mention the practice of commissioning, I argue that, for Ozan, being chosen by such a prestigious institution in the field of classical music like the opera institution precisely counts as such as ‘rite of passage’: He himself describes his appointment as ‘a big honour. I never worked in Germany before and the opera institution acclaims of course an international name and status in the music world.’

In this context, El-Ghadban does not only point to the boundary-drawing mechanism such rituals perform but also highlights that ‘[r]itualization, as a process, helps Western contemporary art music overcome its own marginality within the larger Western music tradition (incl. popular music) by endowing certain practices with a specific status’ (ibid.: 154). However, while she acknowledges that these rituals are almost inevitable preconditions to ‘earn “citizenship”’ in the Western art music community, she critically notes that both the boundary-affirming and the status-affirming character of such rituals would neutralise ‘potentially destabilizing factors, such as the postcolonial identity politics that are born out of the transnationalization of Western art music’ (ibid.: 155, 154). Hence, she stresses the need for ‘agency [...]

to transcend power structures, in this case, the rituals of contemporary Western art music, through performativity, creativity, and imagination' (ibid.: 155; see also Rapport and Overing, 2000). Agency here is meant to capture 'the individual capacity of young composers to overcome their liminality not only to gain recognition and legitimacy within the world of contemporary music but also to call into question the rules of the game, so to speak' (ibid.: 155).

Drawing on El-Ghadban, I suggest that, for Ozan, both aspects seem to play a crucial role. While he certainly aims to establish himself in the Western art music sector, he also seems to contest the hegemony of particular interpretations of the Western art music tradition – both in Germany as well as in Turkey:

'I think it is a real problem that Western art music has still such a dominance in many places in the world to the extent that it doesn't wanna exchange with other musical systems. In Turkey, for instance, you have separate schools for Turkish and Western music. I'm very much a product of that one-sided system myself, but I'm interested in Turkish culture as well as that's my identity, too. I'm only at the beginning of getting to know and work with Turkish music, too. But ultimately, I think that these cross-musical exchanges will come. Western music represented almost everywhere around the globe, but everywhere are also other musical cultures and creatively, I believe we all gain if we interact with one another.'

While Ozan reflects that his own musical trajectory clearly links to Western art music's hegemonic position 'in many places of the world', his musical identity is also accompanied by the creative desire to learn more about and dialogise with Turkish musical cultures. This 'urge to contest the hegemony of Western art music through various strategies of affiliation and disaffiliation, identity discourses, and compositional expressions of authorship' could, according to El-Ghadban (ibid.: 155), ultimately empower 'the composer as postcolonial subject'. Ozan's own work, musical trajectory and creative objectives seem to precisely articulate the crossroads between affirmation and critique pointed out by El-Ghadban. Hence, by challenging the binary power relation between the West as its cultural centre and the East as its

periphery, Ozan's composition within the Project X framework engenders its respective version of a postmigratory aesthetic imaginary by bearing the potential of disrupting Eurocentric boundaries that have been built around Western art music. Similar to Arda, then, Ozan, sheds a critical light on hegemonic notions of musical value and subjectivity and challenges reductive constructions of musical Otherness.

The question of power in practices of rehearsing and performing

However, as I will show in the next section, the unsettling potential engendered by the two composers remained largely unexploited due to the ways in which the practices of rehearsal and performance that led to the operas' realisation have been structured. I argue that the composers' creative approaches have become significantly complicated by being ultimately situated in a rigid and highly ritualised institutional frame which holds an authorial authority on its own not only in regard to commissioning and marketing practices but also with respect to processes of rehearsal and performance. Thus, the institutional workings of the opera institution ultimately risk undermining the composers' artistic position in their own rights. As the premiere of Arda's opera was a few years before I started my fieldwork, I was not able to collect ethnographic data but had to rely mainly on interviews with the composer and orchestra musicians who were involved in the rehearsal and the performance of his work. With regards to Ozan's opera, I was not only able to sit in rehearsals and performances but could also speak to the participating musicians as the rehearsal process went along. My data reveal in significant ways how particular organisational structures and aesthetic expectations are inbuilt in the opera's institutional logics and have both shaped and clashed with Arda's and Ozan's musical signatures.

In particular, issues surrounding notation, conducting, scheduling and aesthetic critique have become central sites of tension where the opera institution decisively shaped the production process of both operas, putting a considerable burden onto the cultural minority producers. When I asked the dramaturge Peter about his reflections of the rehearsal process for Arda's opera, he remembered that the orchestra as well as the répétiteurs had some trouble with his way of notation. 'I sat in the vocal rehearsals and the répétiteurs would always say "I think this might be wrong, this must be a mistake" while pointing at the score, but it was just Arda's rather unconventional style of notation.' Asking Bernd, a bass player in the orchestra, about the rehearsal process, he equally pointed out notation issues as a pivotal problem:

'The notation was a quite awkward in parts. That's perhaps because he does not have a lot of experience with Western symphonic music. For instance, he wanted us to play short notes which he notated as 64tel. That meant that we had one bar per page which is really uncomfortable because you need to constantly turn the page. But it wasn't just the layout. We had to count through every note and see aha okay, so this is one quarter note here, this is one there. He could have notated the exact same rhythm through punctuations which would have been much easier to read and play.'

These critical remarks concerning Arda's notation style seemed to be widely shared amongst the orchestra musicians with one violinist even adding that the whole rehearsal process 'was really stressful, to be honest. I really would not like to experience something like that again'. Such comments illustrate that the manner in which Arda deployed staff notation was judged as not fully agreeing with a classical notation style which made it difficult to play for Western trained orchestra musicians. When, in a conversation with a few orchestra musicians, I mentioned that this surprised me as Arda had studied contemporary Western music as well, some people seemed to frown a bit and one eventually said:

‘That might well be true, he is a great musician, no doubt about that, but at the point of composing he had never composed for a big symphonic setting before. Not only do his musical roots lie in another musical system, but it was also his ever first opera. I’m sure he will get it better next time around.’

What is interesting about such comments is less the fact that the musicians all mentioned the opera’s notation style as a difficulty to get used to, but that they were implying that this would have been ultimately the result of Arda’s musical inadequacy. I certainly do not want to claim that there have not been any challenging issues with the notation as such. After all, such negotiations are part and parcel of intercultural musical encounters especially between systems where one is historically shaped through oral transmission and one via staff notation (see e.g. Aksoy, 2015; Bayley, 2018; Bayley and Dutiro, 2016). Rather, I would like to stress how the notation problem has become a site of boundary-drawing between a Western opera genre and Arda’s intercultural approach.

First of all, Arda’s ‘musical roots’ have been mostly raised as explanations for his compositional shortfalls and thus put on the same level as his inexperience with symphonic works. While not clearly articulated as such, it seems as there were moments of judgement creeping into the accounts of the musicians, somewhat implying a pejorative relationship between (homogenous ideas of) Turkish music and Western musical standards. Second, the musicians did not seem to understand the problems that arose during the rehearsal as immanently intertwined with intercultural musical endeavours but interpreted deviations from the Western genre standard as ‘mistakes’, as ‘wrong’, as ‘not hav[ing] a lot of experience’. There seemed to be no awareness for the intricacies of intercultural music-making, but the persistence of a clear distinction between a Western centre of cultural production and its othered cultural peripheries which would ultimately need to adapt to its aesthetic parameters. The musicians’ comments therefore illustrate how, in the practice of rehearsing, long-

standing notions of Otherness were re-inscribed through the ways in which people reflected on and accounted for the tensions and difficulties that arose in the musical process.

Another site where such hegemonic genre relations manifested was the playing according to a conductor's beat. As a bass player from the orchestra mentioned, 'besides the notation, we also lost quite a lot of time in rehearsal because the Turkish instruments weren't used to play according to a strictly notated rhythm and had trouble to rigorously follow the conductor'. Like notation differences, these difficulties arise from the significant distinctions between Turkish and Western musical histories. While particular styles of notations and a conductor-led play reflect standard procedures in Western symphonic music (see. e.g. Green, 2011), especially Turkish folk music (in whose history the *bağlama* plays a crucial part) is more often than not played by ear in smaller ensembles, thus without the help of notated scores or conductors (see e.g. Karahasanoğlu, 2012). Whereas the negotiation of these distinctions is again very much part and parcel of intercultural musical engagements and, as such, can present highly interesting and intricate moments of musical encounter and aesthetical exploration, in the case of the opera institution, the negotiation was mainly a call for Arda and the other freelance musicians to adapt to the musical practices of the in-house orchestra.

I suggest that the boundary-work performed through standardised approaches to notation and playing techniques was furthermore enhanced by the opera institution's unawareness and inflexibility regarding rehearsal planning and scheduling. Felix, a bass player, addresses exactly this aspect:

'I already told the dramaturg and the conductor one season before the opera's premiere that we should organise a reading rehearsal with the first-chair players and the composer to find out where difficulties could arise and to work on those before even starting the

normal rehearsal process. You know, this opera was scheduled just as any other opera. That means that the orchestra gets the score around three to four weeks before the premiere and by that point you simply don't have the time to address arising issues in-depth. If we had had more time or if we played in a smaller ensemble, I think we could have done a better job' (conversation in June 2016, Istanbul).

His reflections show how the opera house as a highly specialised and professionalised organisation has established a particular institutional time according to which a strict plan of rehearsal and performance is scheduled. This institutional time, I suggest, is centred around standardised genre expectations of Western opera. The opera management therefore provides exactly as much resources in terms of rehearsal time and logistics as needed to bring a Western work to a perfect performance. However, as soon as the musical works deviate from a standard repertoire and demand more room to get used to, experiment with and ultimately perfect, this well-oiled machine that is the opera institution does not provide the necessary flexibility.

While this tension is to be expected to a certain extent, it is rather the ways in which the opera house was unable or unwilling to change particular protocols and rearrange the time schedule to allow for a more earnest engagement with intercultural music-making that is important here. Bernd, for example, criticises that 'there are offers for us to partake in training workshops on baroque playing technique, for example... Why can't we organise similar trainings for non-Western music?' Again, it is not about the eradication of tension, contention or conflict. After all, this is one of the symbolic and aesthetical strengths of intercultural musical approaches. Yet, it is about whether or not such approaches are being taken seriously or if the arising tensions are only superficially addressed, which can lead to unsatisfactory aesthetical results that often become a burden specifically carried by the intercultural producers themselves instead of being acknowledged as insufficiencies of the institution itself.

This process of boundary-drawing through standardised notation and playing techniques as well as through inflexible institutional time was even more pronounced in the case of Ozan's opera. While Ingo, who conducted Ozan's piece, explained to me that 'his opera was strictly composed according to Western standard notation which made it easy to study for the orchestra', he did point to the challenging rehearsal process he had with the four non-Western instrumentalists involved in Ozan's production:

'The musicians we first hired for the parts of oud, kanoon, zurna and bağlama were all absolutely virtuoso on their respective instruments. However, we had a lot of trouble with two of them because they couldn't really read staff notation and also couldn't quite stay in tune with my conducting. We even scheduled extra rehearsals with them long before the orchestra rehearsals started actually. But it just didn't work out, so we had to let them go and hire new people' (conversation in September 2017, Berlin).

Ingo's responses again starkly demonstrate the dominance of the Western musical system of which staff notation and conducted play are pivotal parts. While the opera institution seems to have approached the rehearsal process with a greater flexibility this time around than compared to the first Turkish German opera – for instance, by providing the logistics for more, earlier and more focused rehearsals – its musical flexibility was quickly exhausted. Being able to adapt to a Western notation system and concert format became a precondition for employment and thus the determinant factor for either inclusion or exclusion from the entire production process. When I asked Lila, one of the instrumentalists who were hired as replacements, about her experiences of the rehearsal process, she rather amusingly answered that in her experiences it was

'rather bizarre as I had to learn to play the zurna from scratch just for this opera work. I play both the ney as well as the Western flute. So, I grew up with staff notation of course. I know that, for this composition, the house had initially hired musicians of Turkish and Arabic music who were great instrumentalists but didn't read staff notation very well –

so they were let go and the music director asked me if I could quickly learn the zurna. It's not a very hard part to play in this piece but still it was a risk for them and for me. I only really managed to play well just before the premiere. But still, they rather took a risk with me than hire someone who had trouble to read the exact score' (interview in September 2017, Berlin).

Lila's example shows how the opera institution's musical direction weighted up different risk-takings against one another. While it was judged impossible to properly integrate the two instrumentalists, who were ultimately let go, into the Western playing technique, it did not seem inconceivable to ask Lila to learn an instrument she previously did not know how to play. While it is surely a testimony to her exceeding musical talents and her dedication that the directorship had such confidence in her learning progress, there might have also been a subtler explanation at play that roots in an unequal appreciation for musical styles. Ingo's interview responses seem to illuminate this latter aspect. As he says, 'we couldn't take the risk of keeping on musicians who couldn't really play with the others. The whole musical fabric of this piece would have been on edge.' However, this seriousness was not replicated when he talked about the risk of having Lila learn the zurna from scratch: 'Yes, that was not really what you usually do. But we were sure that she could manage.'

There seems to be a certain 'easygoingness' when Ingo talks about the zurna incident. It almost seems as if he did not care as much if the zurna parties were a bit wobbly but was instead very concerned that the 'orchestral tightness', as he puts it, would get lost had they kept on the two instrumentalists. On the one hand, it is very understandable that his conducting rather focuses on the entirety of the musical performance than on one instrument. On the other hand, however, the fact that the zurna part is accepted as a site of risk-taking might also reflect a subtle underappreciation of its musical quality. Most importantly, however, Ingo's and Lila's reflections further express how the practice of rehearsal has become a site of

contestation and power where cultural hierarchies between Western art music and its Others are being played out and, ultimately, are confirmed and reproduced.

Such hierarchies not only show in aesthetic and technical negotiations of rehearsal but, at times, have also shaped the social relationships between the musicians. This becomes especially clear when considering how aesthetic judgements and critique have been articulated in relation to the opera performances. As already insinuated above, the formulation of aesthetic critique was not set in a context of intercultural music-making but followed 'highly ritualized processes of evaluation and recognition' which, as El-Ghadban (2009: 140) observes, reflect standardised Western genre expectations and, as such, perform crucial boundary-work. Instead of reflecting upon the intricacies, challenges and even potential failures of intercultural musical encounters, most aesthetic critique focused on the creative performance of the minority producers only. This not only showed in the processes of rehearsal but also pertained to the final product, the performance. For instance, with respect to Arda's opera performance, Bernd remembers, that he

'felt that Arda's aesthetic vision wasn't quite implemented. There are so many intricacies in Turkish music, especially tonal specificities like untampered tuning, that you just can't grasp with staff notation, let alone communicate to people who do not have that musical background. The exciting thing about Arda's music is precisely that he opens up so many musical in-betweens, but I felt that such in-between spaces were not really filled out. So, the overall aesthetics was a bit flat. Only when the groups of Turkish instruments played by themselves, I felt like oh yes, this is how this music is supposed to sound' (conversation in July 2016, Berlin).

While it is well understandable that Arda himself was less critical with regard to his work's realisation, he nonetheless said something to me which somehow encapsulated accounts like Bernd's: 'You know, Kristina, while I felt that the musical collaboration worked much better during the second season⁷⁰ than the first time around, they [the

⁷⁰ The opera was performed during two sequential seasons.

orchestra] will never play my piece as well as they play the magic flute for example.'

In this statement, Arda seems to sum up all such technical and aesthetical difficulties, such translation efforts, that Bernd talked about.

Surprisingly, when I spoke to other musicians and artistic staff from the opera, it seemed that these translation efforts were not really interpreted as a reciprocal process but rather as a one-sided adaption effort. For example, asking her for her opinion about Arda's work, a violinist from the orchestra merely commended the conductor after the opera's premiere as 'she had a quite hard time with this piece in the beginning. But she was great, she really pulled everything together eventually.' The conductor is here especially recognised for her efforts to 'pull together' Arda's difficult composition, which in turn is identified as the source of such initial musical problems. In line with the violinist's judgement, many of the musicians I talked to did not critically reflect upon the opera institution's institutional workings but rather insinuated that it was Arda who would still need to learn to better adapt. Whether or not people thought positively or critically about the implementation of Arda's piece, the majority of my respondents seemed to centre their answers around his composing capacities only. Statements like 'I think he did a quite good job, honestly, I know some people weren't that fond of his piece, but for a first opera, he did a great job' or 'Personally, I never really gotten a real access to his piece, some parts were just quite odd to play' indicate that aesthetical judgments were placed much more on Arda's work as a composer than on the way in which the opera house as an institution was equipped (or not equipped) to adapt to his particular musical vision. Thus, the playing techniques associated with Western symphonic music were not only set as the guideline for the rehearsal process but also extended to judgements of the performance quality.

With respect to Ozan's opera performance, judgement and critique were merely directed towards the four non-Western instrumentalists. Lila, for instance, recounts that

'both during rehearsals and performances, I felt rather uncomfortable to play the zurna. Partly because I wasn't initially able to portray this instrument perfectly, but also due to the fact that the other musicians in the orchestra didn't really appreciate my play. The zurna is very loud, it's used in Middle Eastern culture for entertaining very large crowds of people, but in an orchestra pit its sonic strength is even further channelled. So, yes, I understand that it is loud, but a lot of people really reacted strongly, shielding their ears with their hands, making faces, laughing. In the beginning I laughed it off but after a while I was like, come on, get it together, you know?' (conversation in October 2017, Berlin).

Like Lila, Ayaz who played bağlama in Ozan's production equally stated that he sometimes felt out of place. 'I think people just found our instruments a bit strange, I think they don't know a lot about them and Ozan's piece didn't really showcase their capacities. I sometimes felt as though some of the other orchestra musicians just really didn't like our sounds' (conversation in September 2017, Berlin). What Lila's and Ayaz's comments so clearly show is that specific genre expectations are not only built around particular playing techniques and conventions but around the very idea of what sounds are considered pleasant and which are being judged as disagreeable, funny or even unbearable. Moreover, such expectations not only manifest in institutional workings, such as time management, rehearsal scheduling and performance practices as I elaborated above, but can also inform the informal social relations and communications between the individual musicians. Aesthetical judgements are here not only reflective of the musical quality of an instrumental performance but are based on unequal ascriptions of musical value between Western and Eastern sonic expressions.

Subsequently, the production processes of both Arda's and Ozan's operas demonstrate that the opera institution as an institution did not fundamentally depart

from genre expectations associated with Western art music which decisively complicated the rehearsal process and led to performances that left particular aesthetical visions and experiences at least in parts unfulfilled. That is to say, the opera institution upheld a certain genre authority even in moments of intercultural musical production. As Said (1978: 19-20) reminds us, however,

'[t]here is nothing mysterious or natural about authority. It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces.'

Thus, the fact that Arda's and Ozan's works were ultimately compressed into a rather rigid Western musical institution not only sustained the latter's organisational and aesthetical authority but further reproduced Western hegemonic discourses of cultural value and legitimacy.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the aesthetic and organisational practices that underwrite intercultural music-making in the context of Project X. More specifically, I examined to what extent such processes of intercultural music-making challenged hegemonic notions of cultural value and legitimacy and produced transgressive musical representations. Drawing from ethnographic and interview data, which mainly focussed on the production process of the two Turkish German children's operas that have been commissioned by the opera institution as part of Project X, I not only discussed the practices of marketing and commissioning itself but also zoomed into the practices and socialities of composition, rehearsal and performance. Drawing out the complex interplay between institutional structures and aesthetic agency, I aimed

to take seriously the musical text but also wished to situate the aesthetic discussions within a critical reflection of the broader organisational and aesthetic workings of the opera institution. My analysis suggested that the production of the two Turkish German operas indeed bore moments of creative independence which challenge Western hegemonic concepts of musical value and which I grasped by developing the notion of *a postmigratory aesthetic imaginary*. However, overall, I argued that the O opera institution inherently carries and reproduces hegemonic notions of musical genre that determine the ways in which intercultural music is being done. Such notions reproduce historical constructions of (musical) Otherness rooted in both Orientalist discourses and marginalising debates around migration which not only shape the sphere of cultural production but extent into larger public debates in Germany. As such, the creative practices underpinning the two opera pieces mirror wider integrationist dynamics that have shaped the relationship between Turkish German communities and hegemonic discourses of belonging and citizenship in Germany. Ethnocultural difference, while a certain cultural value might indeed be drawn from it, is therein merely seen as a problem to manage and to control. Inclusion, in this sense, is contingent upon assimilation.

In being situated within a Western highbrow frame, Project X's intercultural endeavours thus jeopardise their unsettling potential by ultimately relegating disruptive musical representations back into a rigid Western musical frame. The project therefore leaves untouched the broader histories and workings of Western art music production as well as the overarching political regulations and market dynamics that produce and uphold hegemonic notions of musical value and legitimacy. In that sense, we can observe how intercultural efforts are being outsourced to minority cultural producers rather than implemented by the opera institution more widely. I

subsequently contended that Project X risks re-inscribing hierarchical binaries between the West and its constructed Others both in its creative practices and in its underlying ideological orientation. For intercultural music-making to fundamentally challenge hegemonic musical representations, it would be necessary to delink it from standardised workings of Western cultural institutions. Only then a creative open-endedness as the basis for musical negotiation, translation and contestation could be achieved. From a methodological point of view, this chapter proposed that it is through the interplay of institutional structures and the micro-practices and micro-socialities of music-making itself that we need to analyse and understand how hegemonic notions of cultural value and legitimacy are being formed, upheld and reproduced or, in some instances, even challenged and disrupted.

Chapter 6: Curating difference – Orientalism, gender and the challenge of public reflexivity

‘All knowledge that is about human society, and not about the natural world, is historical knowledge, and therefore rests upon judgment and interpretation. This is not to say that facts or data are nonexistent, but that facts get their importance from what is made of them in interpretation [...] for interpretations depend very much on who the interpreter is, who he or she is addressing, what his or her purpose is, at what historical moment the interpretation takes place’ (Said, 1981: 154).

Having previously looked at aesthetical and institutional power structures in intercultural music-making, this chapter will turn towards Project X’s curation practices with a particular focus on how difference is visually curated through representations of the body on stage. More specifically, I will discuss the ways in which Project X’s curation logics relate to Orientalist systems of knowledge production with a special interest in how discourses of gender, ‘race’ and migration intersect in bodily representations of difference. Drawing from archival data as well as from fieldwork observations and interviews, I show that Project X’s stage curations have clearly reproduced stereotypical depictions of ‘Oriental’ Otherness in the early stages of the project’s lifecycle, but that, increasingly, the Project X team aims to consciously avoid such reductive notions of difference. However, I will suggest that Orientalism as an epistemological regime continues to permeate Project X’s curating practices as it becomes re-invoked in discussions around and in representations of the body, even when treated in a progressively critical manner.

I hence argue that Orientalism continues to reflect the imaginative and institutional constraints – the epistemological boundaries – within which Project X is situated and with which its producers have to constantly grapple when seeking to stage difference differently. This is due to the stickiness of Orientalist figurations of ‘race’ and gender that have not only been co-produced and consolidated in the history of the

opera genre in the West but have also manifested in German public discourse more widely. As I will furthermore demonstrate, it is especially the curation of the female body in Project X's performances which exhibits the durability of and anxiety around Orientalist tropes of Otherness. This hypervisibility of the female body on stage interlinks with the hypervisibility of women in constructions and narrations of the German nation which, especially in the current political moment, push othered women to the fringes of citizenship and belonging. However, Project X nonetheless bears a critical energy which, if unlocked, can indeed break through and unsettle the persistence of Orientalist logics. By putting forward the notion of *a public reflexivity*, I especially highlight how the Project X team treats both rehearsals and performances as open-ended, unfinished processes which invite not only internal but public critique to unfold and to be taken on board in a critical, reflexive manner.

The (dis)continuances of Orientalism in Project X's stage curations

The ways in which Orientalist epistemes have persisted in Project X's curation work are particularly clearly documented by archival data that I have encountered a couple of years before starting my PhD research in 2016. As I have outlined earlier on in this thesis, Project X was founded in 2011 and, in 2012, the opera institution decided to commission its first Turkish German children's opera on the basis of the fairy-tale *Alibaba and the 40 thieves*. The fairy-tale was chosen, as the Project X team later told me, because of its origins in the Middle East and its wide popularity in both Turkey and Germany; yet, such a decision inevitably brought about difficult aesthetic choices to manoeuvre. While I was of course not doing fieldwork at the time and cannot provide any insights into potential behind-the-scenes debates and decision-making processes, I can however speak about my reflections when I first saw the opera

performance on tape. From a musical point of view, I felt that the piece opened up transgressive aesthetic formats and indeed a certain intercultural sound, or even a postmigratory aesthetic imaginary which I thoroughly appreciated and which I discussed in the forgoing Chapter 5.

However, from a visual perspective, the stage and costume design corresponded all too well to what I had sceptically expected from a production about Alibaba in a Western opera house. This is, for instance, illustrated by the photo below (see Figure 1) which captures a moment in the opera performance where the choir children take the stage as the 40 thieves dressed in highly stereotypical ‘Oriental’ attire, wearing turbans and carrying moustaches and sabres. Similarly, on the cover of the opera’s CD recording (see Figure 2), we can see a drawing of Alibaba, again equipped with turban and beard, carrying a bag full of treasures like a bulbous golden can, and being accompanied by a donkey – all visual tropes that are deeply entrenched in Orientalist imagery.

Certainly, the donkey plays a role in the original fairy-tale and yes, we are dealing with an intercultural children’s opera which not only seeks to communicate the storyline in a child-friendly, visually accessible way but which also aims to highlight precisely its non-Western setting in all components of the performance – in the music, the libretto⁷¹ and of course in the stage and costume design. However, I suggest that it is precisely this direct association between seemingly ‘accessible’ approaches to Turkish German interculture and such stereotypical visual cues which indicates how deeply Orientalism as a system of cultural knowledge production is ingrained in the Western idea of the East.

⁷¹ To reiterate: The opera libretto was written in Turkish and German.

Orientalism's long-standing entrenchment in the West has certainly also had a long tradition in Western art music and theatre. As already elaborated elsewhere in this thesis, especially during the late 18th century, Western art music and in particular the genre of opera was shaped by an ambivalent fascination with the Ottoman Empire. Partly taking crude inspiration from war reports about the Ottoman army, partly drawn from travel logs and journey diaries written by Western travellers, merchants and artists, Western cultural producers came to think of the Turks as simultaneously repulsive and enticing (see e.g. Kabbani, 1986; Khalid, 2011; Mehdid, 1993; Mora, 2009; Tiryakioğlu, 2015). From the well-known *alla turca* style to opera plots about harems, bazars and combats, abduction and seduction, mostly centering around the white European saviour versus the Turkish barbaric, irrational, backward or hypersexualised Other, an Orientalist framework for story-telling and aesthetic dramaturgy established itself that 'at one and the same time [is trying] to characterise the Orient as alien and to incorporate it schematically on a theatrical stage whose audience, manager, and actors are for Europe, and only for Europe'⁷² (Said, 1978: 71-72, for musical Orientalism see Chapter 2 esp. Nooshin, 2003; Scott, 2009; Stokes, 2008).

Against this backdrop, it seems that the very process of curating difference in the context of the children's opera *Alibaba* has to a certain extent been bound by such Orientalist epistemologies that have so prominently figured in Western art music production and opera. In this vein, I suggest that the intercultural framing of the

⁷² See, for example, Said's (1978: 6) discussion of Flaubert in which lays bare his association between the Orient and sexuality and his construction of 'a widely influential model of the Oriental woman'. As Said (1978: 187) writes, in Flaubert, 'the oriental woman is no more than a machine; she makes no distinction between one man and another man [...] she never spoke of herself, never represented her emotions, presence or history. He spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was typically Oriental.'

children's opera not only falls short in deconstructing long-standing Orientalist imaginations but actively contributes to their re-inscription. As such, the opera's stage curations, particularly the costume designs, serve as an involuntary example for such critiques against concepts of hybridity and indeed interculture that precisely stress the ways in which these often rely on and reproduce essentialist and reductive ideas of difference (see e.g. Hall, 2000; Huq, 2006; Sharma, 1996; Stokes, 2004; Werbner and Modood, 1996). In this vein, the stage curation of the opera institution's first intercultural children's opera pronounces precisely what Project X overall intends to overcome – reductive depictions of (Turkish) Otherness from a Western viewpoint that too often operate in the Western highbrow sector and that underpin and sustain systems of racial inequality in Germany and beyond.

This clearly visible endurance of Orientalist imagery in Alibaba takes on an acute racialised dimension when tied in with reductive representations of the gendered body, specifically the female body. This is especially exhibited in an anecdote about the rehearsal process of Alibaba described in a book that the Project X producers published in 2013 following a symposium on *Interkultur im Hochkultursektor* [interculture in the highbrow sector] to recapitulate the first few years of their work.⁷³ The publication recounts one incident in particular which strikingly brings the intersection between Orientalism and the question of gender to the surface of representational politics: The storyline of both Alibaba's original fairy-tale and its opera adaption contains a market scene which the opera institution's director team

⁷³ I was able to take part in the symposium which was hosted at the opera institution and organised by the Project X team and which was meant to provide a realm for cultural organisations, political actors and activists to discuss 'interculture in the highbrow sector'. Following the symposium, the opera institution published a compilation of the presentations and discussion papers offered at the event and added a review of their own experiences with Project X (see Brandt et al., 2013). Reading through the book, I was particularly interested in the latter part. For one, I was keen to read about the development of the project from its administrative origins to its present work. And second, I sought to consider the ways in which the Project X team reflected on such developments and on the challenges and problems that arose during these first three years.

sought to stage in the contemporary urban present, capturing the hustle and bustle of a ‘typical’ bazar-like market as one can find in the Berlin districts of Kreuzberg, Neukölln or Wedding. To that end, the director team equipped some of the female extras, who were meant to represent market costumers, with big plastic bags and shopping carriers which in colloquial German are often referred to as *Türkentaschen*⁷⁴ ([Turk bags]).

This creative decision understandably raised concern among the mothers of some of the choir children of Turkish heritage who had observed the rehearsal process. Identifying the women in the play as representations of themselves they were shocked that ‘this seems to be what the Germans think of us’; ‘no wonder, this is how we often look like’, one woman added (see Brandt et al., 2013: 106; my translation). The women expressed their concern to the director team which took their critique on board and adjusted the costume design accordingly before the opera premiered. While less than one page of the book is dedicated to this incident, it speaks volumes about the ways in which Orientalist imaginations are intimately tied in with discourses of gender and how, in turn, depictions of gender are always raced and classed as well. Emphasising the prominent role of gender in Orientalist discourses, Ziauddin Sardar (1999: 48) describes how ‘symbolically, the violent and barbaric Muslim male and sensual, passive female, come together to represent the perfect Orient of the Western perception: they fuse together to produce a concrete image of sensuality and despotism and thus inferiority.’ The original staging of the bazar scene, which depicted the market-goers as almost exclusively female, modestly dressed and performing house work duties like grocery shopping, seemed to tag onto and reproduce precisely such

⁷⁴ The very term ‘Turk bags’ shows the deeply racialised and classed discourses imposed on Turkish Germans.

Orientalist narratives that mobilise – at least implicitly – the image of the passive, docile, obedient other woman.

As the stage design of the Berliner bazar scene (inter alia comprising stands full of spices, groceries, the women's big shopping bags and plastic carriers) further insinuates, such Orientalist imaginations of othered women are moreover conflated with racialised and classed stigmatisations of urban migratory spaces and of migrant women themselves; that is, specifically of Turkish women as the accessory choice of 'the Turk bag' crudely indicates (for an in-depth discussion of racialised discourses around urban space and migration in Berlin see e.g. Çağlar, 1998; Göktürk et al., 2005; Hunning and Schuster, 2015; Soederberg, 2017). I suggest that these reductive representations lay bare how Orientalist epistemes persist and reproduce in Germany by being imposed onto the figure of the Turkish migrant woman⁷⁵ as presumably low-skilled, family-bound and lower class. As Erel, Reynolds and Kaptani (2017: 57) put it,

'[r]acialized migrant women, in particular, are often denied recognition as legitimate members of the society they live in. Their belonging to the nations of residence is seen as tenuous, and their social positioning as racialized, gendered "Other" mean that they are cast as "incompetent citizens" with inadequate cultural capital and relegated to low skilled, low paid jobs with minimum legal protection.'

Put on stage by the opera institution's director team and immediately decoded by the women who observed the rehearsal, the costumes of the female market-goers appear to have precisely mirrored and replicated the raced and classed figure of the Turkish

⁷⁵ In writing Turkish instead of Turkish German, I here would like to draw attention to the figure of the Turkish woman which is being constructed by and treated as outside of nationalist discourses of citizenship and belonging in Germany. This crudely goes to indicate how even if legal citizenship is long-achieved, Germans of Turkish background are often blatantly described as 'Turks' only, thus being continuously denied a dual sense of belonging or even the very ability to ever be a full member of German society.

migrant woman. I borrow the term figure from Imogen Tyler (2008: 18-19) who deploys the notion

‘to describe the ways in which at different historical and cultural moments specific “social types” become overdetermined and are publicly imagined (are figured) in excessive, distorted, and caricatured ways [...] it is through the repetition of a figure across different media that specific figures acquire accreted form and accrue affective value in ways that have significant social and political impact’.

Building on Tyler and specifically looking at the German public sphere, Holzberg, Kolbe and Zaborowski (2018: 540) argue that ‘[t]hese figures become intelligible through the repetition of already established assumptions about particular groups of people in public discourse’ and in particular highlight the discursive stickiness of the figure of the Muslim migrant woman.

This figure of the Turkish, Muslim migrant woman is so omnipresent in Germany’s public sphere that the very legibility of the characters on the opera institution’s stage depend on such representational regimes. That is to say, rather than judging the specific aesthetic choices offered by the director team of the children’s opera as reductive and Orientalist, I want to suggest that we need to understand such curatorial imaginations within the broader discursive context in Germany and within the institutional legacies of Western art music productions in particular. My argument therefore stands in line with Gray’s (2016: 248) work on ‘race’-making in the cultural industries in which he finds fault with theoretical accounts to cultural production that assume ‘that the source of inequality and racism rests with individual preferences and dispositions of showrunners and directors’ rather than understanding ‘race as a practice of knowledge/power’ that is endemic to cultural organisations.

In this vein, the Alibaba rehearsal incident illustrates in a poignant way how stage depictions are themselves not just individual replica of long-standing reductive

imagery but active enactments of Otherness that produce and perform particular discursive representations. The director's choice and the women's reaction to it clearly reflect how the practices of embodiment on stage do not proceed in a vacuum but, in various ways, relate to broader discourses and stratifying categories of, among others, gender, class, 'race' and citizenship, circulating in and shaping the public sphere. Therefore, as the performance scholar Diane Taylor (1997: 21) writes, such staged 'representations are not innocent, transparent, or true. They do not simply "reflect" reality: they help constitute it. Theatre, as one system of representations participates in the larger cultural network.' That is, the theatrical stage in the context of *Alibaba* establishes a realm in which ideas of and around the othered body are not only represented but produced and reproduced precisely by deciding on how to portray a specific character, how to enact a persona, how to embody someone – the gendered and raced body on stage is thus both a performance and a performative act. As such, the staging of orientalised bodies needs to be understood as the result and simultaneous performance of more than just theatre – it highlights, enacts and reproduces expectations and norms that have circulated and manifested in everyday social processes, cultural practices and institutional structures.

It was with this first archival analysis of Project X's curation practices in mind that I started my PhD research in 2016. When I initially met the broader Project X team at the beginning of my fieldwork, I remember asking my research participants about the first Turkish German children's opera as I was curious to see how they would view and reflect on its curatorial choices in retrospect. Most of them had not been directly involved in the dramaturgy, the curation or the staging of the piece but all of them had already worked at the opera institution at the time. While almost no one spoke about Orientalism in concrete terms, almost every person I asked

about Alibaba raised concerns that the very choice of that fairy-tale would have brought with it certain stereotypical associations which, as one of my participants put it, ‘might not have been the best way to think about interculture from a contemporary point of view’ (fieldnotes April 2016, Berlin). Based on such cautious comments, I was interested to see how Project X’s current performances would relate to or disassociate from these previous, highly visible Orientalist curation logics. While my data certainly show how the Project X team of 2016 (and onwards) approached the question of the staged body with a lot more care and thoughtfulness and sought to not fall into any ‘Oriental’ stereotypes, I nevertheless suggest that we can still observe the stickiness of Orientalist representations as they become re-invoked as the curators’ source of anxiety, thus being ultimately reaffirmed as their epistemological boundaries of imagination.

The first rehearsals and performances I got to join during my fieldwork took place in the context of Project X’s Minibus-programme⁷⁶. During the rehearsal process, I not only witnessed discussions about the musical development of the music theatre story but also observed debates about character embodiment, stage décor and costume designs. What seemed to be particularly at stake in these rehearsal conversations was the staged enactment of somebody else or, in other words, the staged representation of an Other. In such debates, I generally witnessed a genuine carefulness and sensitivity among the different cultural producers – from the director and the dramaturge to the stage and costume designers. For instance, right from the

⁷⁶ As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the Minibus-project has been organising regular music theatre performances with two singers and three musicians from the Opera institution at local organisations and neighbourhood initiatives in Berlin, travelling especially to Kreuzberg and Neukölln. The music theatre performance draws inspiration from Turkish migration histories to Germany, particularly from the so-called guestworker route, and aims to tell these stories via the means of opera music. I provide further details about the Minibus-programme, its contents and its urban relationships in Chapter 8.

start, the dramaturge introduced the rehearsal by highlighting that ‘we are trying a new format with this piece [the Minibus-project]. From the storyline and the music to the audience, we are exploring the histories of opera and of Germany’s guestworker migration in an intercultural context’ (fieldnote March 2016, Berlin). Seconding her colleague’s statement, the director added that ‘this definitely requires a lot of reflection on our part. We need to think how to put these histories on stage in a way that does justice to the story and the characters as well as to the musical material’ (fieldnote March 2016, Berlin). Such reflexive efforts certainly shaped the rehearsal atmosphere which was generally rather interactive and egalitarian with the singers, the director, the costume designers and the dramaturge exchanging and discussing ideas of how to put the Minibus-story on stage. In this context, it was specifically the debate around costumes that crucially revealed the question of how to stage difference in an intercultural setting.

Looking through some first costume sketches presented by the costume designer, the director, for example, explained to me that ‘the two singers – one soprano and one tenor – each play a set of different characters, so it is through the different costumes that the audience recognises their character shifts’ (fieldnotes April 2016, Berlin). While the storyline and characters take inspiration from experiences and stories of people (mostly of Turkish heritage) who themselves travelled along the guestworker route, the dramaturge claims that

‘we do not try to tell someone else’s story. That’s not what we want or even could do. We searched for such deeply human motives and moments that shaped people’s experiences along this route and looked for such feelings in narratives of opera music. So, we try to reconfigure such stories through our own means, the means of opera’ (conversation in April 2016, Berlin).

However, despite this intention to abstract from other people's experiences and to reassemble narratives of leaving, arriving, longing and self-searching through opera music, the Minibus-performance is still a *staged* performance; that is, a music theatre story with embodied characters who need to act and sing, moving both the music and the storyline along. While the tenor's costumes seemed to be fairly easily decided upon [he gets dressed in 70s style shirt, trousers and leather jacket], the director's team seemed more cautious about the soprano's stage appearance.

'We really need to think about how to dress her. Basically, she first plays the mother or grandmother of the son who leaves to work in Germany, then she plays a hard-working female worker, who is self-assertive and strong, but also feels homesick and somehow in-between worlds. When she sings 'Dağlar Dağlar'⁷⁷ she is again someone else. Or rather, she is not so much a person as such but a memory, an encouraging spirit of home that captures her stage partner [the tenor] in a moment of homesickness and longing. And then finally, she plays his girlfriend or lover and together they imagine this unsure but hopeful future – so you see, there are so many characters that need to become clear on stage but how we do that is of course difficult. We need to be careful here. You don't want to fall into any stereotypes, yet you need to communicate her roles to the audience in an immediate way' (conversation with the director in April 2016, Berlin).

As the above interview and fieldnote snippets document, the Project X team seemed increasingly aware and critical in regards to the question of how to stage difference in relation to gender and migration, with questions of how 'to abstract from other people's experiences' and to 'reconfigure such stories through our own means' standing at the core of aesthetic decision-making.⁷⁸ While I did not witness any in-depth debates about Orientalism, racism or Islamophobia during the 2016 Minibus-

⁷⁷ The song 'Dağlar Dağlar' was composed by Mehmet Barış Manço (born Tosun Yusuf Mehmet Barış Manço, 2 January 1943 – 31 January 1999). Known by his stage name Barış Manço, he was a Turkish rock musician, singer, songwriter, composer, actor, television producer. He was a pioneer of rock music in Turkey and one of the founders of the Anatolian rock genre. Manço composed around 200 songs and is among the best-selling and most awarded Turkish artists to date. Many of his songs were translated into a variety of languages including Arabic, Bulgarian, English, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Persian, Romanian and Urdu, among others.

⁷⁸ While I cannot say anything about the rehearsal discussions around gender representations in the context of the 2012 opera (as this was prior to my own fieldwork), I can certainly state that such debates were central to the rehearsal process of the Minibus-performance in 2016.

rehearsal process, these issues seemed to nevertheless be present in the director's concern to be 'careful' and to not reproduce particular stereotypes, especially with respect to the soprano's roles. As such, in contrast to the 2012 opera production, the Project X team of 2016 seemed to be much more conscious of their representational practices.

However, despite this increasing awareness amongst the Project X team, I want to caution that the historical legacies of Orientalism in the Western art music sector and in Germany more broadly cannot entirely be circumvented even if the cultural producers are wary to indeed not use stereotypical character depictions. In other words, Orientalist imaginations of Otherness risk to persist in Project X's curation logics even while its producers consciously try to avoid them. This becomes especially clear in the ways in which the director juxtaposes the worry 'not to fall into any stereotypes' with the equally-held concern that 'yet you need to communicate her roles to the audience in an immediate way'. I propose that we can here once again see the durability and popular acceptance (even if treated critically) of reductive notions of Turkish, Muslim Otherness: In the imagination of the director, communicating the soprano's roles in a directly comprehensible way would come dangerously close to particular stereotyped narratives that one would need to avoid. Thus, while aiming to distance herself from any charged stereotypes, her comments indicate a certain insecurity about how to visualise the soprano's multiple roles differently.⁷⁹ This insecurity illustrates the latent persistence of Orientalism in Project X's curating and

⁷⁹ I actually think that the final costume choices for the tenor and for most of the soprano's characters were well thought through and indeed did not reproduce particularly reductive Orientalist imageries (I have added photos in Appendix 6). The fieldwork data at stake in this chapter, however, are mostly concerned with the ways in which discussions around costumes and characters indeed show how Orientalism as an epistemological system constitutes the limits of how to think about and imagine difference in Western cultural production and, as I argue, is thus always at risk of coming to the fore again.

representational practices as it seems to endure in the form of a hegemonic system that structures and limits how we think about difference and against which one has to work: It is precisely the anxiety and difficulty to imagine otherwise that lays bare how an Orientalist othering logic is constantly re-invoked and re-established as the outer limits of the aesthetic imagination of the Other, who therefore *remains* othered. As Said (1978: 14) puts it, '[w]e can better understand the persistence and the durability of saturating hegemonic systems like culture when we realize that their internal constraints upon writers and thinkers were productive, not unilaterally inhibiting'.

The director's association between reductive representations of Otherness and the audience's presumed understanding of the roles therefore again highlights how Orientalism as a system of epistemological regulation continues to be at work in Germany and how it steers the very legibility of gendered and raced difference. This discursive stickiness appears especially powerful given that the envisioned (and *de facto*) audiences of the Minibus-performances most likely have themselves migrated from Turkey or would be the children and grandchildren of Turkish immigrants. Here, we see strong parallels between the mediatory immediacy of stereotypes assumed by the Minibus-team in 2016 and the incident of 2012 in which the women of Turkish descent appeared to *recognise themselves* in the staged representation of the female market-goers. Thus, similar to 2012, the critical discussion of how to stage difference in 2016 must still be read against the broader hegemony of reductive figures of Otherness, which at once reveals the continuity of Orientalist thought and its entanglement with racist depictions of migration that circulate in the German public sphere. While the curation practices in 2012 were visibly entrenched in such Orientalist imagery, for the Project X producers of 2016, Orientalism seems to enact itself as the external constraints of their aesthetic imagination and thus continues to

risk reproducing precisely the objectifying othering logics that underwrites Orientalist knowledge production in the first place.

The state in the body – the hypervisibility of Othered women in constructions of the German nation

Building on the above, I furthermore hold that we can see Orientalism's obstinacy particularly clearly in the producers' intensified awareness towards the staged female body. This hypervisibility of the female body on Project X's stage has to be read in parallel to the hypervisibility of women (most notably of Othered women) in discourses of the nation. I suggest that it is primarily through the figure of the Muslim Turkish woman that discursive boundary-work around citizenship, national identity and belonging is performed in the current postmigratory moment in Germany. The worry of the Project X producers about how to represent *her* needs to be set against this broader political backdrop.

The Project X producers' heightened awareness toward the female body on stage is best exemplified by the director's costume concerns which appeared to be especially directed towards the soprano with the question of 'how to dress her' causing much more discussion than the tenor's costume which was quickly agreed upon. As already outlined in the previous section of this chapter, Project X's Minibus-programme intends to create a music theatre plot that is not meant to represent but to reconfigure experiences of Turkish migrants, telling their story through the lens of the guestworker route and through the means of opera music. While the main male character portrayed by the tenor takes the audience on his own journey from Turkey to Germany, most of the soprano's roles similarly depict Turkish women, either a loved family member

staying behind in their home country or a guestworker in Germany⁸⁰. Given its specific plot, what is at stake in the Minibus-performance is therefore not the representation of just anybody but of Turkish bodies.

However, while the producers did not seem to worry much about the costumes for the tenor and selected a rather neutral 70s style attire, the soprano's costume choices caused considerably more reflection and caution and were set in direct relation to the producers' worry about charged stereotypes. I was not immediately sure how to make sense of these gendered differences showing in Project X's representational practices until I spoke to Murat at one point during my early fieldwork who told me the following anecdote:

‘A friend of mine who owns a baclava shop was asked to do the catering for an event organised by a major German bank. She of course accepted – it’s a good gig. When she phoned the organisers, they asked if the waitresses would be dressed like belly dancers, in Oriental chick, so to say. She then declined the job. You know, that’s the images we are dealing with as Turks in Germany, specifically women. It’s either the Neukölln headscarf-mum or the seductive woman who jumped straight out of a “thousand and one night” story. I think it’s with these images in mind that people in the German mainstream justify their racism, why they think of us as not really German’ (conversation in May 2016, Berlin).

As Murat’s story so vividly captures, it is particularly in the construction of the figure of the Turkish Muslim woman that we can see how discourses of gender, ‘race’, migration and religion dangerously intersect in German public discourse to constitute the country’s outer inside, carving out the fringes of belonging to the German state and society.

Thinking through the role of gender in constructions of nation-states, Nira Yuval-Davis (1997: 39) generally holds that ‘gendered bodies and sexuality play

⁸⁰ As I described earlier on in this chapter, the soprano also enacts non-human characters, like a positive spirit or a memory in the tenor’s imagination. However, for the purposes of my argument, I concentrate my analysis on the soprano’s human roles.

pivotal roles as territories, markers and reproducers of the narratives of nations'. Here, George L. Mosse (1985) further explicates that it is especially the female figure that would operate as a symbol for 'those elements of the nation which were supposed to safeguard continuity and cultural longevity' (see also Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989; Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991; Bezanson and Luxton, 2006; McClintock, 1995; Erel, 2011). As Umut Erel (2018: 174) therefore specifies,

'[w]omen play an important role in constructing national identities: on one hand as symbols of the nation, embodying its values, on the other, in their role as mothers, women transmit culture and values to the next generation, as well as biologically reproducing the group'.

The symbolic role of women would be mobilised in a particularly powerful way '[a]t a moment, where culture is becoming a central marker of difference and justification for racialization in discourses of the nation' (ibid.: 174; see also Yuval-Davis, 1997). Importantly, then, '[g]endered identities do not exist independently of other factors, and must be viewed as intertwined with, for example, race or ethnicity if we are to understand the hierarchical organisation of identities' (Khalid 2011: 19). Thus, Yuval-Davis (2006: 203, 201) elaborates that despite their ontological differences, social divisions such as gender, class, sexuality and 'race' need to be understood as intersecting 'social power axes' which 'shape people's lives in most social locations' and perform particular inclusionary and exclusionary boundaries – '[c]onstructions of the body [...] are crucial in constructing those boundaries'.

In light of the above, I argue that the hypervisibility of the female body in Project X's curation practices needs to be understood in the current context of German politics and, more specifically, within the frameworks of current nationalist boundary-work which specifically operates through marking out the othered woman, thus making her hyper-visible. As Murat's comments above clearly demonstrate, it is in particular the

racialised and orientalised figure of the Turkish Muslim woman through which discourses of (non)belonging and difference, citizenship and identity operate. This figure becomes particularly violently mobilised in Germany's current political moment in which we can observe how a recognition of the country's postmigratory reality is being met with a growing resurgence of right-wing extremism that places the pursuit of Germany's cultural and ethnic homogeneity at its core. The antagonistic simultaneity between the critical advancement of postmigratory discourses and the increase of racist, *völkisch* [nationalist] backlashes seem to characterise the current political moment in Germany as a society in transformation whose self-depiction moves beyond being a country of immigration and emigration and towards becoming a society that negotiates its self-image beyond the migratory. However, this transformation is highly volatile and precarious in nature which precisely manifests in the ways in which migratory Otherness is made hyper-visible in current discussions around citizenship, identity and belonging with often violent consequences for those marked as outside the ethnic, cultural or religious norm. Following Foroutan (2016: 234),

'[t]his is where the initial assumption of the postmigratory concept comes into play, that is, the obvious omnipresence of the metaphor of the migratory. The metaphoric lies in the fact that "the migratory" no longer refers to the factual description of a person's change of residence, but that this term primarily goes hand in hand with the production of the Other through his [or her] foreignness.'

Such othering processes are especially clearly exhibited by the antagonistic debates around Islam: Following Gözde Yurdakul (2016), ever since the first migrants from Turkey entered the country, citizenship debates in Germany have merged a racialised and classed discourse around Turkish migrants and their children with a general anti-Muslim discourse, constantly reinventing and re-adjusting the very same question 'of

whether the largest religious minority in Germany – the Muslims – belong to the collective German “we”, continuously casting doubts about ‘the ability of Muslims to integrate into German or generally into Western culture’.⁸¹ According to Canan and Foroutan (2016: 1909), this question would furthermore be differentiated by gender: The ‘Muslim man is widely perceived as violent and patriarchal whereas the Muslim woman is perceived as imperiled and backward’.⁸²

However, it seems to be specifically the figure of the Muslim Turkish woman that gained prominence in German public debates, running in parallel with growing Islamophobia across Europe and North America specifically in the aftermath of 9/11 and ‘the war on terror’. The discussion of women as the carriers of culture and thus as the ones responsible for the reproduction of social problems has a long history in Germany. For example, debates around the headscarf have continuously treated Muslim women as both victims of presumably patriarchal cultural practices and simultaneously as the spreaders of these same practices (Korteweg and Yurdakul, 2014). Such debates somewhat escalated in 2011 with the publication of Thilo Sarrazin’s⁸³ book in which he makes highly derogatory, racist statements about *Kopftuchmädchen* [headscarf girls] whose children would ‘overpopulate’ formerly ‘German neighbourhoods’. As Korteweg and Yurdakul (2014: 166) reflect, ‘in this way he reduced Turkish women to their reproductive capacities and blamed them for

⁸¹ Please see Chapter 3 for a closer analysis of how racist, classist and Islamophobic discourses around Turkish immigrants and their children have been constructed in German public debates around citizenship, identity and belonging (e.g. Ansbrock, 2010; El-Tayeb, 2016; Mandel, 2008; Meng, 2015; Reisenauer, 2012; Rindisbacher, 2013; Yilmaz, 2015; Yurdakul and Yükleyen, 2009).

⁸² See also Ehrkamp (2010), Kofman, Saharso and Vaccelli (2015), Razack (2004).

⁸³ Thilo Sarrazin is German politician and a member of the Social Democratic Party [SPD]. Between 2002 and 2009, he was the senator of finance in Berlin before he took on a position at the German Federal Bank [Deutsche Bundesbank]. He made headlines in 2011 when he published a book entitled ‘*Deutschland schafft sich ab*’ [Germany abolishes itself]. Due to the racist content of his book and of his other public statements, the SPD has explored the possibility of formally excluding him from the party. In July 2019, the SPD has been notified that such an exclusion would indeed be legal.

what he called the “self-abolishment” of Germany’. While his book was certainly met with a massive backlash from the left and the liberal center, the public reach of this discussion (debates about the book dominated the German media landscape for over a year) demonstrates how instable the acceptability of ethnic and religious difference still is in German society: ‘As demonstrated by the *Sarrazin* debate, media reporting and political discussions oscillate between encounters with the realities of Germany’s social, political, and historical diversity, and deeply held desires for an imagined homogeneity, especially around questions of Muslims immigrant integration’ (ibid.: 167, emphasis in the original). Again, drawing back to Murat’s above-mentioned anecdote, it seems to be primarily through the female body that such questions have been posed.

I hence suggest that we need to read the heightened worry about the staged female body in Project X against this broader discursive backdrop. While we have seen that women are positioned at the forefront of discourses around the nation in general, in Germany, these debates moreover strongly conflate with migration, ‘race’ and religion and render the figure of the Turkish Muslim woman the focal point of national boundary-drawing. Project X therefore finds itself not only within an institutional context which has been itself heavily entangled with Orientalist representations of Otherness but moreover in a national context where discussions of identity and belonging pend between racialised notions of German homogeneity and an acknowledgment of Germany’s past and present ethnocultural and religious diversity. Germany seems to find itself at a specific discursive moment where culture as the marker of both citizenship and difference comes to the fore with new force. Project X is hence situated precisely at this broader discursive crossroad. On the one hand, the project seeks to subvert racialised and exclusionary representations of

Otherness; on the other hand, it is haunted by a general discursive anxiety and long-standing legacies about migration and difference in Germany. The hypervisibility of the female body on stage is therefore at the same time a consequence of a broader anxiety around the Other in debates about the nation as well as its continuous evocation. It is through the gendered and racialised female body that discourses of citizenship and national belonging are invoked on stage.

Doing it differently? Mobilising a public reflexivity in Project X

Despite having discussed how Orientalism and reductive notions of Otherness risk to endure in Project X's curation practices and especially show in discussions around and representations of the staged female body, both the archival data as well as my fieldwork data also document moments of critical intervention and reflexive negotiation that evolve as part of Project X's rehearsals and performances and that may disrupt hegemonic ideas of difference. In such moments, the Project X producers were faced with criticisms stemming from members of the audience or from rehearsal observers who took issue with the visual representations on stage. Instead of ignoring the critique, the Project X team took their reservations on board and aimed to adjust their curation practices accordingly. In treating both the rehearsal and the performance as an open-ended and unfinished process, I hold that the Project X producers may indeed unlock what I call a form of *public reflexivity* which goes beyond the private sphere of the theatre and reflexively incorporates a public sphere of critique and revision.

To that end, let me first zoom back into the incident of 2012, when the women who observed the rehearsal process of the children's opera objected to what they saw on stage. Most of the women were mothers of choir children, who have been part of

the opera performance, and have either migrated to Germany as children themselves or were born to first-generation immigrants from Turkey. As mentioned earlier on in the chapter, they not only read the female market-goers on stage as representations of themselves, or rather as dominant representations of themselves that circulate in German public discourse, but simultaneously took a critical distance to such representations – ‘This seems to be what the Germans think of us?’ (see archival note on p. 179). In confronting the director team with their objections, the women not only initiated concrete changes to the costume design, but in doing also intervened in the dominant imaginations about themselves as Turkish German. Moreover, by making their voices heard the women interrupted the standardised dynamics of the rehearsal process and of institutionalised approaches to Western cultural production in general. That is, they affirmed their position as the subject of cultural knowledge production by breaking through their position as observing outsiders and claimed an active stance towards the work of the opera institution’s directing staff.

Taken even further, I would argue that their interference into the creative decision-making process takes on a wider discursive intervention into excluding discourses of citizenship and belonging in Germany. Using participatory theatre methods to explore the creative interventions of migrant mothers into racialised conceptions of citizenship in the UK, Erel, Reynolds and Kaptani (2017: 57) ‘emphasise the significance of embodied and affective meanings for challenging racialized citizenship. The theatre methods allow participants to develop collective subjugated knowledges challenging racialized, gendered and classed stratifications of rights, burdens and privileges of caring citizenship.’ While neither the opera institution in general, nor Project X in particular conduct participatory theatre in that way, what we can similarly observe in the 2012 incident is the active engagement of Turkish

German women in constructions of cultural knowledge, specifically with regards to representations of themselves. As such, they indeed participate in ‘challenging hegemonic narratives of who can legitimately claim to contribute to citizenship’.

Hence, similar to Erel, Reynolds, and Kaptani’s study, in the context of Project X

‘theatre becomes not only a critical site of negotiation, but a site of active citizenship, collective mobilization and empowerment by migrant women experiencing marginalization and inequalities [...] theatre created a collective space allowing for the creativity of self, challenging narrow representations of migrant mothers’ (*ibid.*: 59).

However, what is equally remarkable about this incident is the self-reflexivity with which the opera institution team reacted to the women’s critique. While I have already laid out above how revealing it is that the visual representations in concern have made it on stage in the first place, it is also noteworthy that the cultural producers were actually open to external critique. While it is not uncommon to let observers into the rehearsal room (see e.g. Atkinson, 2016, 2010; Bull, 2014), it is certainly not routine to listen to such observers and to take onboard whatever critical suggestions they might have. Thus, despite its discursive positioning as part of the highbrow sector and in the context of larger racialised debates in Germany, Project X seemed to mobilise a form of public reflexivity which rendered a critical engagement with exactly such reductive discourses possible – even during the rehearsal process of the children’s opera in 2012.

Building on this, I detected a similar discursive opening during my ethnographic fieldwork. While I had witnessed the initial rehearsal of the Minibus-performance in 2016, I came to see the performance many times during my fieldwork and even after I had formally exited the field. At one of such occasions, in late November of 2017, I was astonished to see that some of the soprano’s costumes had changed and her bodily enactment of a few roles seemed different as well. On the one

hand, the performing singer had changed by this point, which of course always means that the new interpreter can give the characters a different touch. Yet, it seemed that something more fundamental had changed, especially with regards to the soprano's presentation of the song 'Dağlar Dağlar'. In the original version that was rehearsed in 2016, the soprano sung the piece with a lot of sensual fervour, twisting her arms wrists in sinuous moves and rhythmically shaking a tambourine wrapped around her ankle. In late 2017, however, the tambourine was gone, the dress seemed less sparkly and the singer just modestly moved her shoulders in sync with the music. After the show, I looked for the director to ask her why they changed the soprano's performance. The director explained that

'after we saw the role portrayed for many times in the original version, we actually felt we needed to make some changes. Partly, because you always see a piece differently, when you can actually see it in action on stage and not in the rehearsal room. And partly, because we sensed that there have been some members in the audience who didn't feel that our interpretation of the role actually fit the more melancholic atmosphere of 'Dağlar Dağlar'" (conversation in November 2017, Berlin).

When I asked her if they had experienced any confronting audience reactions in that regard, she shook her head and said:

'Not really confronting. But people in the Q&A would comment on how much they liked the song and what it meant to them. And we then asked ourselves if we really portrayed the song appropriately. You know, we especially thought that this [she turns and twists her arms and hands in a wriggly fashion] was a bit too "Oriental" [painting quotation marks into the air], so we changed that.'

Not only speaks this conversation to the endurance of Orientalist imagery in Project X's curation practices that I drew out earlier on in this chapter, but it also implies a certain critical reflexivity held by Project X's producers who paid close attention to audience reactions and aimed to work these into the Minibus-performance.

Following the director's comments, it thus feels as though the audience members of the Minibus-performance would have unconsciously become what Augusto Boal (2000) coins 'spect-actors'. That is, while the audience members are evidently the spectators of the performance, they also play an acting role in it which was not only allowed for but fostered by the Project X producers. First, by including a Q&A session between the performers on stage and the audience members as part of each Minibus-performance, the Project X team purposefully opens up a communicative realm in which ideas, reactions and questions surrounding the performance can be addressed. Secondly, the audience become a spect-actor by implicitly commenting on aesthetic choices portrayed on stage, which in turn made the cultural producers questioning and adjusting such choices. The Minibus-performance, while not designed as participatory theatre *per se*, therefore still bears some analytical parallels inasmuch as '[t]he performance creates a liminal space where everyday norms are suspended, the familiar is de-familiarized and multiple realities can emerge' (Erel, Reynolds and Kaptani, 2018: 63; see also Kaptani, 2011). In this sense, theatre and in particular music theatre can bear and unlock transformative potentials because performances can open up a plurality of interpretation and meanings and can thus contribute to the emergence of new perspectives and the development of new ways of listening, viewing and understanding the world. In deciding not to ignore the audience's reactions to the Minibus-performance but to revisit their original aesthetic choices instead, I suggest that the Project X producers can indeed mobilise a critical reflexive energy that make it possible to disrupt some of the Orientalist tropes on stage.

These practices of correction and self-correction furthermore illustrate a dynamic relationship between the public setting of performance and the more private

setting of a standardised rehearsal process which usually proceeds more or less ‘behind closed doors’. On the one hand, the Project X team seems to treat the Minibus-rehearsals as a dynamic, open-ended process that works with and not only towards the moment of performance. On the other hand, the performance setting itself becomes a realm for public critique and self-reflexive practices on behalf of the cultural producers and, as such, is equally characterised by a certain structural incompleteness that allows for a continuous, critical engagement with Project X’s representational politics. By opening themselves up to both external critique from viewers and audience members as well as to critical moments of self-correction, the Project X producers establish a discursive arena in which reductive curation logics around gender, ‘race’, class and citizenship can be contested even if, or rather precisely when, they still make their way onto the stage.

Subsequently, due to the structural incompleteness of Project X’s rehearsal and performance practices, instances of correction and self-correction can take place in which hegemonic structures of knowledge production can at least be unsettled. I suggest that it is precisely the cultural producers’ acceptance of critique ‘from the outside’ that can unlock a form of public reflexivity in Project X which may indeed subvert dominant representations of Otherness. Therefore, while I have previously argued that Project X is bound up with reductive epistemes of Otherness that are deeply ingrained in Western curatorial practices, the project might also open up such a liminal space where reductive curatorial logics can be addressed. It is especially because of the active critique put forward by rehearsal observers and audience members that things on stage can change. Through their intervention, the othered objects of cultural production become themselves active co-creators of cultural knowledge and critics of hegemonic representational decisions. By taking their

interventions on board in a self-reflexive manner, Project X might indeed challenge the Orientalising logics historically engrained in Western art music production.

However, the question remains how robust this circuit between public feedback and actual change really is within Project X and the opera institution more broadly. For instance, during my fieldwork time, I did not observe any explicit mentioning of Orientalism, Islamophobia or of the ways in which Western cultural production and especially the genre of opera has been implicated in racialised constructions of Otherness. While it might certainly be the case that such debates were led in moments where I was not present, I would nevertheless like to briefly reflect on this presumed absence of a direct discussion about such legacies of the Western art music sector. I believe that if not explicitly embedded in a fundamental engagement with Western art music's role in Orientalist knowledge productions, a project like Project X can never fully reckon with the broader entrenched biases, conventions and norms within which it is inevitably situated. As discussed at various times in this thesis, representational practices need to be understood in the broader context of discursive histories and hierarchies. Only when facing such histories and their legacies head-on, institutional structures and dominant representational discourses can be changed. Despite the critical and reflexive moments opened up by Project X, Orientalism and racialised ideas of difference remain enshrined in the history and overarching logics of the Western art music system as well as in the wider citizenship debates in Germany and, as such, are always at risk of creeping back to the stage again.

Conclusion

This chapter was concerned with Project X's curation practices and the ways in which these relate to Orientalist epistemes of Otherness. More specifically, I looked at staged

performances taking place in the context of Project X and discussed how ideas of difference have been visually curated on stage through representations of the body. To that end, I considered both archival data about the opera institution's first Turkish German children's opera in 2012 as well as ethnographic and interview data that I collected during my fieldwork from 2016 onwards, particularly focusing on Project X's Minibus-project. As such, my data allowed me to look at larger aesthetic debates and discursive (dis)continuances that crystallise in the question of how to approach and depict difference in an intercultural context. I suggested that Project X's curation practices exhibit the durability of Orientalist logics despite the fact that its producers have increasingly strived to avoid stereotypical depictions of Otherness. I argued that this is because Orientalism presents a hegemonic system of knowledge production, which has not only had a long trajectory in the genre of opera itself but in German public discourse more widely and which continues to constitute the outer limits of how non-Western difference is perceived and rendered legible in Western highbrow culture. I furthermore showed that Orientalist epistemes specifically proceed and persevere in the curation of the staged female body and argued that this needs to be understood against current political discourses in Germany where the figure of the racialised Turkish, Muslim woman has become a key mobiliser in nationalist discourses of citizenship and identity. However, in emphasising how the Project X team treats both their rehearsals and performances as unfinished and on-going processes, I also maintained that the project can indeed unlock critical spaces of public reflexivity in which reductive and racialised constructions of Otherness can be unsettled.

In the wider context of my thesis, this chapter has not only brought practices of stage curation to the analytical fore but, in so doing, problematised the wider

question of how to visually represent difference in an intercultural context. I showed that intercultural productions that take place in the Western highbrow sphere cannot simply circumvent the historical legacies of their specific institutional, aesthetic and political context and the ways in which these have co-constructed reductive notions of Otherness. If projects like Project X, which specifically seek to be intercultural, do not critically reflect on their wider frameworks of production, they run a close risk of thwarting interculture's liminal energy and instead might perpetuate essentialist notions of difference. On a more theoretical level, this chapter thus exposed the inbuild paradoxes of interculture as both a theoretical concept and a term of creative practice. While seeking to overcome bounded ideas of cultural and ethnic identity, interculture still seems dependent on emphasising difference and, as such, carries the inherent risk of reproducing precisely what it aims to supersede. For cultural workers as well as for scholarship in cultural sociology interested in the ways in which processes of cultural production are implicated in the remaking of social inequalities, it is therefore crucial to critically take into account the wider institutional and political histories that shape their aesthetical and organisational frame.

Chapter 7: Practices of mobility and reproduction – Project X and the social commodification of interculture

‘We are in the midst of the marginalization of the centre: the de-centred dominant is displaced from within the margins, but the power relations between the centre and margin remain intact’ (Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma, 1996: 18).

Whilst the previous data chapters were concerned with Project X’s musical and visual production practices, this chapter will discuss processes of social mobility and reproduction in Project X and the ways in which these relate to and shape the project’s intercultural frame. More specifically, I will focus on ethnographic and interview data I collected with regard to Project X’s children’s choir initiative⁸⁴ and analyse how the workings of the choir as intercultural activity reflect both practices of institutional change and social mobility as well as of exclusion and reproduction. I argue that the choir initiative opens up a space in which Project X’s producers, the choir members and their families can claim different interpretations of interculture and pursue differently located possibilities in the realms of cultural representation and social reproduction. As I will show, these objectives vary between grounded approaches to institutional change and more strategic ideas of mobility, intercultural learning and emerging forms of cultural capital.

My analysis suggests that intercultural projects like Project X can indeed serve as spaces for institutional change, conviviality and social mobility but equally for the reproduction of class privilege and institutional whiteness. The children’s choir

⁸⁴ As much of the classical opera canon contains musical parts specifically envisioned for children’s ensembles, many opera houses host and train an internal children’s choir. At the Opera institution, the admitted children receive a free musical and theatrical education and gain prominent stage experience as they not only partake in some of the main musical productions but also perform one specifically commissioned children’s opera annually. To enter the choir, children need to audition and, according to their age, have to demonstrate considerable musical and vocal skills. In the beginning of Project X in 2011, the producers sought to promote an intercultural opening of the choir to which I refer in this chapter as the ‘children’s choir initiative’.

initiative precisely illustrates how cultural interventions that are located in the Western highbrow sphere have to operate on a deeply hierarchical terrain and thus have unintended social consequences, even if they set out to achieve something more progressive. As such, intercultural initiatives within the highbrow sphere run the risk of being *socially commodified*: They perpetuate hegemonic power relations of ‘race’, ethnicity and class by ultimately using the rapprochement to urban multiculture as a way to reaffirm the highbrow as the dominant site of cultural and social legitimacy.

Interculture as institutional change

In what follows, I firstly show how especially Project X’s leading producers Murat and Nicolai argue for a critical intervention into highbrow space itself which not only displays itself in their conceptualisation of Project X but has also shaped the practical ways in which the children’s choir initiative was implemented. I suggest that the choir reform has been partially successful in challenging the standardised workings of the opera institution by promoting an intersectional understanding of urban multiculture and by pushing for a greater representation and participation of minority cultural producers, specifically Turkish German children. Yet, the children’s choir as intercultural activity nevertheless bears the tendency of outsourcing intercultural labour to the children and parents of Turkish descent and hence fails to rework the racialised hierarchies that permeate the Western art music sector.

The ways in which the Project X producers sought to initiate a broader institutional change through the lens of interculture clearly show in Murat’s and Nicolai’s motivation for reforming the opera institution’s children’s choir and in the practical approach they adopted in its pursuit. This approach starts from the fundamental acknowledgment that the highbrow sector as a manifestation of a classed

and racialised account of German cultural traditions would be anachronistic to contemporary Berlin as a postmigratory, multicultural city society. For instance, Murat elaborates how it was first and foremost imperative for him to ground Project X in conversations and engagements with Berlin's different neighbourhoods and with the city's Turkish diaspora in particular:

'When we started Project X, we first wanted to know what people in the city actually wanted from an institution like the opera institution. I believe it is so much about personal contact to get a feeling for what's really needed, so that you get to know each other, meet eye to eye and don't talk at cross purposes' (interview June 2016, Berlin).

In order to 'meet eye to eye' and to not 'talk at cross purposes', Murat and Nicolai conducted a qualitative survey in the beginning of Project X in 2011, which they specifically took into the neighbourhoods of Kreuzberg, Neukölln and Wedding, knocking on doors, listening to local migrant cooperatives, family hubs, Turkish cultural centres and neighbourhood associations, always asking people about their expectations for an intercultural programme at the Opera institution. Moreover, central figures of Berlin's Turkish communities, including representatives of the city's Turkish Media and neighbourhood managements as well as teachers and community workers, were invited to the opera institution to discuss ideas about how Project X could take shape. The survey data as well as the outcome of these networking sessions primarily indicated a wish for more youth activity in the cultural realm.

As such, the results seemed to resonate well with observations the two Project X producers made for themselves at the opera institution. For instance, when I asked Nicolai about the idea behind the children's choir initiative, he immediately turns towards the institutionalised biases and hierarchies he sees at work in Berlin's highbrow music sector:

‘Cultural institutions are often only interested in broadening their audience. But even if this has been one of our goals, Project X has become so much more than that. One needs to really want to understand why opera risks be out of touch. Berlin has so much going on – it’s a truly Turkish German place. For example, the opera institution has already different outreach programmes in place, like collaborating with schools and so on. During these school workshops, you of course recognise that basically half of each class consists of children of foreign, mostly Turkish, background. But when looking around the opera institution audience or our children’s choir, you couldn’t see one of them. I think you need to be really willing to call yourself into question, you need a fundamental change on the institutional part. To really reach different people means that we have to initiate a self-reflexive process within high culture itself’ (interview September 2017, Berlin).

Explicitly using the term ‘high culture’, Nicolai points to the opera itself as ‘out of touch’ with the city of Berlin that he characterises as a ‘truly Turkish German place’. He seems aware that there is indeed an issue of audience-widening at stake in Project X but states that the project’s main focus would lie on a much more ‘fundamental’ and ‘self-reflexive’ process of rethinking the nature and organisation of the opera institution as a highbrow institution. He describes the children’s choir reform as a first attempt to do just that. This need for an inward-looking approach to institutional change crystallises in an even more bleak way when Murat and I were discussing the current set-up of Germany’s highbrow music sector:

‘German high culture often acts as a hypocritical ivory tower which claims that its doors would be open. Well, if they were, we would have had a least one child of foreign origin in the choir when we started with Project X in 2011. But this wasn’t the case. Turkish people are not seen as part of the German culture although our histories are so intermingled. These ways of thinking do not only play out in musical or cultural terms, but Turkish people often just don’t have the same standing in Germany. So, for us it made sense to start with the children’s choir and therefore with the opera institution as an institution. We specifically wanted to reach those children of socioeconomically less advantaged backgrounds who would otherwise never have the chance to express themselves in such a public forum’ (interview October 2016, Berlin).

Associating the highbrow sector in Germany with a ‘hypocritical ivory tower’, Murat not only recognises its inbuilt inequalities but also insinuates that these are not just an organisational default but are actively reproduced precisely by the sector’s rhetoric to be open-minded and welcoming without, however, reviewing its exclusionary institutional workings. Thus, Murat interprets the ‘high’ in highbrow not only as a

social category – inferring a classed division between highbrow and popular forms of culture – but moreover highlights its entanglement with racialised accounts of ‘German culture’ which would ignore Berlin’s long-standing migration histories, leading to a marginalisation of the city’s Turkish communities. In this vein, he draws a clear connection between hierarchical relationships panning out in the cultural sector and broader racialising discourses that circulate within Germany’s ‘public forum’ and to which Turkish Germans are particularly subjected. Moreover, he appears to locate the marginalisation of Berlin’s Turkish German communities in the cultural sector at the intersection between processes of racialised exclusion and people’s often ‘socioeconomically more problematic backgrounds’ which are rooted in the particular modalities of Turkish labour migration and Germany’s corresponding guestworker policies between the 1960s and 1990s. Based on these reflections, Murat puts forward the need for an intercultural intervention into the highbrow sphere which recognises the systematic inequalities experienced by the Turkish diaspora in Germany as a regulatory regime of both class and ‘race’.

Against this backdrop, he argues that ‘it made sense’ for Project X to start the entire project with an intercultural reform of the opera institution’s children’s choir. As Nicolai similarly recalls, ‘it seemed to be a logical consequence to specifically open up the choir for more children of Turkish, Kurdish or Arab heritage to try and redefine the current and future voices that we normally hear in an opera setting’ (conversation October 2017, Berlin). By including and training more and more children of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds to become an active part of the classical music sector, Nicolai therefore hopes to ‘change a traditional view of what opera and music theatre can do for people and who is in charge of doing it’. Receiving a free musical education and gaining prominent stage exposure in one of Germany’s

most renowned opera houses certainly opens up the possibility for young people of Turkish descent, whose voices have often been systematically ignored and dismissed in the German highbrow sector, and helps them establish themselves in the long run as independent cultural producers in the classical music world. As Murat elaborates: ‘It’s a great opportunity for the children. Maybe they go on and become musicians, maybe directors or critics – or something completely unrelated to music – but whatever they end up doing, they will have a huge amount of experience under their belt’ (conversation April 2016, Berlin). Assessing the highbrow as a deeply unequal realm and collaborating with local families and representatives of Berlin’s Turkish diaspora, I suggest that Project X’s grounded approach to reflecting Berlin’s urban multiculture in an intersectional sense goes beyond a mere inclusion of ‘diversity’ into the highbrow sector but indeed reflects the aim to change the institutional representation of artistic voices and creative practices within opera itself.

Such a notion of interculture as institutional change not only holds from a conceptual point of view but has also manifested in the concrete organisational practices that have constituted the choir reform and had a decisive impact on the opera institution’s standardised workings in relation to the children’s choir. For instance, the ways in which the opera institution sets up choir auditions have been changed considerably as part of Project X’s intercultural initiative. Instead of just publishing specialised audition invitations through the opera institution’s usual communication channels (e.g. through particular music schools, Berlin’s mainstream newspapers or word of mouth), the Project X team translated the casting calls into Turkish and Kurdish language and distributed them via Berlin’s popular Turkish media outlets and through postings in schools, local community centres and youth clubs across the city. Murat and Nicolai were especially keen on spreading the choir’s casting call across

diverse and less privileged areas of Berlin, which I suggest stands in line with an intersectional understanding of multiculture. As Nicolai explains,

‘during our survey, people often told us that they would have never even thought of going to the opera institution, or any other opera house for that matter, because these places can have an alienating appearance. So, taking that onboard, we tried to spread the casting call as wide as possible, you know, so that interested people would not shy away because they might think “it’s not for me”’ (interview September 2017, Berlin).

These comments illustrate how the Project X producers have been keen to mitigate the elitist presentation of the opera institution and to work against potential geographical, socioeconomic and linguistic barriers which were previously unacknowledged in the children’s choir’s organisation and outreach work.

Besides changing the ways in which the choir auditions are publicised, the Project X team has also worked in close collaboration with the choir directorship and decided that children responding to the casting call would no longer need to present a certain canon of classical pieces as was previously the case, but could sing whatever song, genre and in whatever language they felt most comfortable. According to the choir conductor, ‘it was interesting for us who’re mostly used to the traditional opera repertoire. Many children auditioned with Turkish or German folk songs or popular melodies they know from the charts. That was definitely an adjustment on our part’ (interview June 2016, Berlin). The ways in which the opera institution amended the conditions of admission were elucidated in more depth by a father of two choir children whom I interviewed during my fieldwork and who recounted the following: ‘When my older son joined the choir before 2011, the audition process was quite intense in my opinion, many rhythmic and melodic exercises. I would say you definitely needed some formalised musical education prior to applying. When my

younger one auditioned, which coincided with the start of Project X, they didn't have to fulfil such strict admission criteria.' As the conductor further explicates,

'we aren't necessarily interested in any vocal pre-education, but just want to see the child's musical potential. [...] Adapting the admission criteria was the right choice, I think – with regards to every child no matter their background. But I also believe this might have contributed to the success of the choir initiative as around one third of the choir's members are currently from a Turkish cultural background with many of them not having had any exposure to classical or any other musical education before' (conversation in March 2016, Berlin).

Building on the above, I propose that these measures taken by the opera institution to help accommodate children, who might not have had a (Western) classical music education prior to applying to the choir, do indeed contribute to mitigating inequalities of access to formal music learning which often benefit children from more established middle-class families (see e.g. Bull, 2014).

However, Project X's children's choir initiative has not only been about reviewing and widening possibilities of cultural access and musical participation; it has also aimed to change the institutional workings within the opera house more widely. Here, Murat especially refers to a change in the social environment of the opera institution:

'Sometimes it's hard to convey to people in the industry why the cultural sector needs to change. You can see that with the orchestra, singers and dramaturges, they're musicians, not sociologists. Obviously, it's hard for them to imagine that the environment they've trained in their whole lives is not designed for everybody and needs to change' (interview October 2017, Berlin).

He continues that 'when talking diversity in the arts, most of the opera staff can learn more much from the children and their parents than vice versa. They're all embodied "interculture", you know. They carry very different experiences of Berlin into this institution' (interview October 2017, Berlin). In highlighting the potential of the choir

families of Turkish descent to set in motion a reflexive change of atmosphere at the opera institution more broadly, Murat certainly breaks through the assumption that the choir initiative would only provide unilateral benefits to the Turkish German children but draws attention to the ways in which the opera as an institution can indeed ‘learn much more’ from them ‘than vice versa’.

Having talked to many of the choir children and their parents throughout my fieldwork at the opera institution, it is clear that the choir initiative has certainly opened up a space for children from different parts of Berlin and of different ethnocultural backgrounds to form close interpersonal relationships with one another which might have changed the overall atmosphere in the choir. Indeed, while talking and listening to the children, the wide range of their geographical backgrounds came to the fore. Amongst the children I talked to, most of the children of a white German background appeared to live either in the central and rather wealthy areas of Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg and Schöneberg or the more family-friendly suburbs, whereas many children of Turkish and Kurdish descent seemed to come from areas with long-standing migration and working-class histories, such as Kreuzberg, Neukölln and Wedding. As the choir takes up most of the children’s free time, the opera institution becomes not only a place of rehearsal, of creative practice and production, but the centre of the children’s leisure activity where collegial rapport can turn into long-standing friendships. Based on my conversations with the children, it seemed to be precisely these interpersonal connections that many of them enjoy most about the choir, several even stating that they met their best friends at the opera. For instance, as 12-year old Esma told me: ‘I didn’t know anybody in choir when I joined as we don’t go to the same schools and often live quite far apart. But when you work on something together almost every day and then perform it on stage and you see what

you achieve together, that's a great feeling and you become friends very quickly.'

Similarly, 11-year old Emre said that he was 'very proud of what we do here together.

It's lots of work but mostly fun as you get to sing with your friends' (fieldnotes March – June 2016, Berlin). Through these processes of working, playing and singing together the children's choir indeed provides a social arena in which the children's leisure activities connect experiences of creative self-expression to a collective musical achievement.

Moreover, it seems to be the particular affective qualities of music-making itself which shape the children's relationships to one another. As the 12-year old Tom, for example, quite poetically puts it: 'I cannot really describe it but singing together has something really magical. It's like we all are different leaves and together we make up this beautiful flower... the first moments on stage when we all start singing together with the orchestra buzzing beneath us, it's the best feeling.' And Lina (13 years old) reflects: 'What I like about the choir is that you get to know people who all like doing the same thing which is music. I think singing together is a very special feeling, it's a bonding experience, like, it makes you stick together' (interviews September 2016, Berlin). According to the Berliner music sociologist Christian Kaden (2013: 156), by bringing different agents together in a communal setting, music-making and especially singing establishes a specific form of aesthetic communication through 'the creation of commitments and interactive connections, based on shared availability of cultural meaning'. He explicates that this musical '[c]ommunication between the participants takes place from behind: by integrating into an order of time and space of cosmic dimension [...] it [music] offers a frame, a net, a tag line of human action'. As the children's comments above illustrate, it is the specific materiality of music and its aesthetic form of communication which render the children's choir into a space which

not only supersedes geographical distance, but which also opens up new forms of affective engagements between the children no matter the background. Difference, in this context, becomes to a certain extent meaningless. In no interview did the children explicitly raise issues related to Germanness, Turkishness or even interculture but solely talked about their musical development and friendships. This ‘indifference to difference’ (Amin 2013) practiced by the children is a lived expression of everyday convivial multiculture which Gilroy (2004: xv) describes as ‘the process of cohabitation and interaction which have made multiculture an ordinary feature of social life’. In the context of the intercultural choir, music-making serves a vessel for conviviality to the extent that interculture itself becomes unimportant.

These convivial interactions do not only emerge between the children themselves but also extend to the opera’s daily workings more broadly. The children’s choir in its different constellations rehearses between two and five times a week plus additional general rehearsals and performances. That means that almost each afternoon, there are groups of children with their parents and siblings sitting in the cafeteria, talking, playing, eating, doing their homework. The cafeteria (see Figure 3), where the opera institution directors and managers mingle with the musicians, set designers, technicians and extras, is the house’s central meeting point and probably the location I frequented the most during my fieldwork.

‘Everyone goes through here at least once a day for sure’, laughs one of the bar tenders of the cafeteria, ‘it’s a nice working environment, people come here for lunch, meetings or after show parties’. As one of the choir mums explained to me, ‘we have to be in the opera a lot... I mean a lot. Here, we can catch up on everything. We discuss issues concerning the choir or other things currently going on. It’s nice to see the interactions of the kids with the other opera staff. With the adult choir or the

soloists. There is a sense of community for them' (conversations in May 2016, Berlin). These impressions seemed to be confirmed by my fieldwork observations at the opera institution, where I witnessed a lot of joking around, playing and teasing each other between the children and the adult opera staff with many of them stating how they enjoy working with the children's choir. As one soprano said, for instance: 'I've been working with them for a while now, it's impressive to see them grow. They are really on their way to become great musicians.' And a tenor adds, 'it's very beautiful to see them develop, not just musically but in general. Some of these kids I met when they were six or seven years old and now, they are about to finish high school. We are in the opera so much that we really take part in each other's lives this way.'

Following these observations, it seems that through processes of rehearsing, performing and mundane interaction, the children as well as the parents seem to fulfil a specific communicative function within the opera itself. To reiterate Murat's comments above, most of the opera staff has been in and around the classical music sector for a long time, often since early childhood, and have been working within corresponding institutions all of their professional life. For Murat, it is therefore important that 'the children and their families have a place to hang out in the opera. Not just for logistical reasons, but because they shape the entire atmosphere here, they change the space. Intercultural exchanges then become hopefully more and more a normal standard' (fieldnotes May 2017, Berlin). In this vein, Project X's children's choir initiative has indeed carved out convivial spaces and set in motion processes of institutional change that allow for more participation from people of diverse background who often are excluded from classical music production in Germany.

However, in primarily concentrating on the ways in which the choir children and their families of Turkish descent can change institutional cultures at the opera

institution, Project X's choir initiative also runs the risk of outsourcing the intercultural labour to those who suffer the most from Western art music's institutional inequalities. Instead of first and foremost addressing the latter, it seems that the main burden of redesigning the institutional culture at the opera institution is placed onto those for whom the institution has not been designed in the first place. For instance, some of the choir parents of Turkish heritage told me that they felt they had to make extra efforts to build a comfortable atmosphere with the other parents, some even recounting that they felt particularly scrutinised in the beginning. 'I don't know, it's hard to put into words... It just felt like we first had to prove that we are valuable additions to the team', one mum stated. And another mother added: 'I think it really helped that the first children's opera we all did together had Turkish lyrics in it. So, you know, our children and we were able to help the others with the pronunciation and stuff like that, you know, interculture in action, so to say [laughs]' (interviews in September – October 2016, Berlin). Following these reflections, the children's choir initiative seems to precisely illuminate what Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma (1996: 18) describe as 'the marginalization of the centre': While the dominant workings of the opera institution as a Western highbrow institution are partly displaced from within the multicultural margins of Berlin, the wider power relations between the centre and its peripheries stay in place. As such, despite critical efforts from the margins, Project X's choir initiative ultimately continues to reside within a hierarchical relationship between the Western highbrow centre and its Turkish German Others whose acceptance into the highbrow frame appears to decisively hinge on their performance of interculture. Thus, the children's choir partly continues to operate on a hierarchical system of 'race' and class even after or precisely due to its intercultural reworking.

Interculture and social mobility

I will further unpack this point in the following section. Whilst I will first discuss how the children's choir initiative also offers choir participants of Turkish descent a path to upward social mobility and cultural recognition, I will equally show that the notion of interculture in this context bears a deeply anachronistic meaning. That is, the possibility of social mobility for choir participants of Turkish descent follows a rather binary Turkish German paradigm which risks emphasising and re-inscribing bounded constructions of difference. Thus, whereas it is certainly significant that Project X seems to promote a greater representation of and mobility for Turkish German actors as part of the German highbrow cultural profile, these genuine intentions do not necessarily translate into equally progressive outcomes but actually risk reactivating highbrow legitimacy with all its endemic inequalities.

As the following interview snippets with choir participants show, some of the children and parents of Turkish descent seem to evaluate the children's choir's intercultural reworking as an effective trajectory to upward social mobility and cultural recognition. Asking Gözde, a 17-year old girl from Berlin Neukölln who has been part of the choir since 2011 about her decision to audition for the opera institution, she recounts the following:

'I knew that opera was something more prestigious, so I thought carefully about the song I wanted to present. In Turkish culture we don't have an opera tradition as in Germany, so I didn't really know what to expect [...]. My parents came to Berlin as guestworkers. They're not musicians or anything. But Project X made it possible that even the talented girl from Neukölln can make it, it's a springboard really' (interview September 2016, Berlin).

Gözde's reflections are mirrored by Oktay, whose two sons joined the choir a few years later.

‘Almost all of us came as factory-workers.... That doesn’t mean that we’re not musical though. When I heard of Project X in the radio, I was happy. Seeing my children performing on such a great stage is really an honour. It also means that people might finally get another image of Turkish people’ (interview September 2016, Berlin).

The elaborations by Gözde and Oktay illustrate a similar approach to Project X’s choir initiative: climbing the sociocultural ladder. Similar to Murat, Gözde was born in Kreuzberg-Neukölln, the same part of Berlin where Oktay first settled after arriving in Germany from Turkey. Now, however, both live a bit further out of the city. ‘Better schools’, says Gözde. ‘It is more family-friendly’, says Oktay. When talking to Gözde and Oktay, both seemed eager to stress the school successes and diverse interests of their families. ‘I auditioned with my best friend from Neukölln but he dropped out because it was too much work. You know, he’s hyper-intelligent and already audits lectures at university. My brother also wanted to audition. But he’s very good in gymnastics and spends a lot of time training. My talent is definitely singing though’ (Gözde). As she told me about her future career plans, Gözde specifically underlined her good grades in school that would allow her to study law, but that she was also entertaining the idea of applying to a music conservatoire and become an opera singer. Evidently proud of his children’s achievements, Oktay equally emphasised their good school performances and various leisure activities. ‘My sons are very active. They are good in school and play football, enjoy reading, but singing is their favourite hobby.’ When he heard that I was living in London and was enrolled in a PhD programme (the doctorate title bears quite a symbolic prestige in Germany), he became very interested in my curriculum vitae and career plans. ‘I want to take my boys to London as well. I have never been, but it seems to be a great place... And certainly, a great place to improve their English.’

His view clearly directed towards the future of his children, Oktay personifies the exemplary story of a guestworker of lower socioeconomic status who has come to

Germany from a small village in Anatolia to provide better opportunities for his family: 'I never had the chance to do any of it when I was younger but my children do.' Like Oktay's sons, Gözde represents the second generation, the children of the Turkish people who often came to Germany as labour migrants. Her parents started off with a little corner shop in Neukölln which has over the years developed into a bigger export/import business. As Gözde recalls, her parents came to Germany to pursue more prosperous socioeconomic possibilities; she herself appears as the embodiment of a gifted girl with the strong ambition to 'make it': 'My parents were always very supportive of everything my brother and me did. My mum is very proud', she smiles.

For both, then, the children's choir of the opera institution represents 'a springboard', a further advancement of their sociocultural profile and an opportunity for upward social mobility. In this context, the opera institution is seen as holding both social prestige and cultural value; being part of this musical world is identified not only as a way to claim cultural but also social recognition. This evaluation of belonging to the highbrow sector stands very much in line with a Bourdieusian understanding of embodied cultural capital as 'the form of what is called culture, cultivation, *Bildung* [that] presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a lab or of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor' (Bourdieu, 1985: 48; emphasis in the original). For Gözde and Oktay, these future-oriented commitments of investing their time and effort to accumulate cultural capital have been externalised to the opera institution which they identify as an institutionalised form of cultural capital. 'If I'm not in school, I'm at the opera', Gözde recounts confidently, 'I'm involved in almost all choir performances and take voice lessons as well. It's lots of work for sure.'

In a similar vein, Oktay explains that he and his wife had to work in opposite shifts to ensure that someone can get their children to rehearsal in time whenever required. ‘We sometimes barely see each other. But it’s worth it I feel. The kids love the choir and I think it is a great education for them. They learn to be disciplined and independent.’ Oktay’s assessments resonate well with the comments of other parents and children. As one mum states: ‘The choir has made my daughter more organised. She has to be structured both in her music and her other life, school and so on, so that she can focus on rehearsals.’ And Andreas, 13 years old, agrees that ‘we have to be disciplined. It’s definitely fun, but we also need to put in a lot of work to learn the songs and get them right before we go on stage. That can take a lot of time and energy.’ As Anna Bull (2014: 38) explains, the ‘ideas of correction or “getting it right” in classical music practice can have an ethical and affective association’. Referencing Bev Skeggs (2003), she suggests that ‘the accumulative, resourced, entitled, middle-class self [...] is both *assumed* in classical music education, and also actively *formed* through its norms’ (Bull, 2014: 25; emphasis in the original). Importantly, this process of cultural accumulation ‘must be about a projection into the future of a self/space/body with value. We only make investments in order to accrue value when we can conceive of a future in which that value can have a use’ (Skeggs, 2003: 146; cited in Bull, 2014: 25).

This orientation towards the future comes to the fore in the interviews with choir parents, who seek to plan ahead for their children’s lives by investing in their classical music education, as well as in the interviews with the children, who recount the ways in which their musical training is directed towards achieving a certain musical standard and to be ready for future performances. It is hence not only the logistical but also the aesthetical formation of the classical music sector which

emphasises the importance of individual discipline, restraint, effort and abstraction and, as such, correlates with the norms and practices of an accumulative middle-class identity. Furthermore, by putting so much work and dedication into the choir, the parents and children assume and actively inscribe a particular cultural value in classical music. The highbrow music sector is confirmed as both a legitimate creative practice *and* a legitimate social arena which makes investing in it ‘worth it’.

Interestingly, however, the underlying idea of cultural value and legitimacy which Oktay, Gözde and others ascribe to the highbrow sector is not only evaluated within the context of a system of social stratification but appears to be integrally linked to the idea of a specific German cultural capital. Following Hage’s (1998) work on Western cultural distinctions within multicultural societies, there seems to be a form of ‘national cultural capital’ at work which separates certain legitimate forms of culture from others and underpins broader patterns of racialised inequality experienced by minorities. Hage explains that in diverse societies, majority groups hold specific socioeconomic and political advantages that derive from their feeling ‘at home’ with a certain national cultural canon. As Bennett and Silva (2006) point out, this national cultural capital operates across conventional differentiations between highbrow and lowbrow/popular and thereby brings an additional stratum of distinction into play. These national distinctions are precisely recounted by Oktay:

‘I think that an initiative like Project X is especially important in Berlin today because we’re so many Turks here, but we’re not often really accepted. People hear my accent and think I’m not cultured or something. But opera has such a high standing in Germany and this initiative makes it possible for us to be part of it.’

Gözde notes that she herself has never really experienced such hostility but that

‘the wider debate on immigrants is very frustrating. I’m from Berlin and I feel at home here but in the media, for example, people often paint a very negative image of Turkish people. Some people don’t think of us as part of Germany. I hope things like Project X might eventually change that.’

In view of on-going structures of discrimination and racism, Project X is thus assessed according to its institutional association with Germany’s legitimate cultural establishment and thereby seen as a productive realm for seeking a nationally acclaimed cultural standing. Both Gözde and Oktay recount their frustration with the historic and current public debates in Germany which have constructed the Turkish diaspora as the monolithic, eternal Other and as the stable counterpart to homogenous ideas of German citizenship, identity and belonging. Against this backdrop of exclusion, it is precisely due to its traditional highbrow positioning that Gözde and Oktay seem to value Project X as a way to gain cultural appreciation and combat processes of marginalisation.

Mirroring such racist dynamics within Germany’s public realm, Oktay recalls that a few parents were so afraid of a Turkish *Überfemding* [foreign infiltration] of the choir that they took their children out of the institution⁸⁵. Concerned he ascertains that

‘those people have very deep-rooted prejudices. It is this stigma of us Turks as uneducated and uncivilised. They see us as trouble-makers or scroungers, I guess. However, the very big part of the parents did obviously not share this stereotype and specifically welcomed us.’

Indeed, the blunt and unhidden racist and classist attitudes towards the new Turkish German participants held by such parents who left the choir was by no means shared by the parents I interviewed. However, other interview respondents told me that a

⁸⁵ It is noteworthy that despite a small number of choir de-registrations there were many more newcomers, from both Turkish German and white German families, who specifically joined after the Project X launch.

small portion of the remaining parents nevertheless articulated the worry that a rather sudden inclusion of presumed formerly untrained children of a different musical heritage could slow down the rehearsal process and thereby impair the overall musical evolvement of the choir. As a Turkish German choir mum states: ‘I don’t know why some people think that just because we’re Turkish, we have less musical education. Before joining the choir, my daughter has already started to dance and was about to pick up piano lessons’. And as another Turkish German choir child adds, ‘I think some people thought that the new kids wouldn’t have any pre-knowledge in musical terms. Or that our families wouldn’t share the same musical traditions’ (fieldnotes November 2016, Berlin).

The underlying notion that children of Turkish descent would be without any noteworthy musical education or talent follows a classic paradigm of a racialising dichotomy between ‘the civilised’ and the ‘uncivilised’. In making culture a contemporary terrain of categorising groups of people and of constructing differences between majority and minority cultures, formerly overt racist structures are being relocated into the more obscure sphere of presumably liberal postrace discourses (see e.g. Ali, 2003; Kapoor, 2013; Kundnani, 2007; Lewis, 2007). Within such discursive trajectories, questions of structural inequality and marginalisation of minority groups are not addressed in a holistic context of historic, social and economic conditions, which would take account of the implicit institutional racisms at work but are played out in terms of racialised framings of cultural identity and difference. By phrasing problems of segregation and inequality as problems of an assumed cultural difference, neither the systemic conditions of discrimination, nor the hidden ways everyday racisms are still played out are sufficiently addressed. In this way, Gözde and Oktay seem to recognise the children’s choir as bearing the possibility to access and pervade

an accepted national cultural canon and thus as providing a way to claim increasing symbolic legitimacy. Hence, Oktay's and Gözde's identification of the children's choir initiative as an opportunity for upward mobility is intrinsically interconnected with a claim to cultural recognition in a wider societal context in which Germany's Turkish diasporas continue to be stigmatised as 'a signifier of instability and anxiety' (Mandel, 2008: 4).

Within this context, however, the notion of interculture carries a dialectic meaning. Certainly, Project X's choir project portrays itself as a way to symbolically challenge patterns of cultural inequality that still permeate Germany as an ethnically plural society. Therefore, it is indeed noteworthy that Project X represents and specifically fosters people of Turkish descent as part of the German highbrow cultural profile. Such an understanding, however, might in turn also reaffirm the essentialising view of Turkish minorities on the one hand, who despite their (most of the times) German citizenship tend to be regarded as an outside cultural group who have to prove and include themselves, and on the other hand the country's majority, who continue to be seen as 'really' German from both an ethnic and cultural point of view. The choir initiative as intercultural activity might thus succeed at promoting the symbolic representation of cultural producers of Turkish background, but only on the basis of two conditions. First, this only seems to work when precisely underlining and activating their Otherness as a static category which has to be incorporated into an equally stagnant idea of what constitutes an accepted German cultural frame. And second, representation here strongly relates to the adaption of a specific middle-class standard which is not questioned but reconfirmed through the organisational and aesthetic nature of the choir's workings.

Therefore, instead of Murat's and Nicolai's understanding of interculture that emphasises institutional change and everyday encounters of multiculture, interculture as a vessel for social mobility risks repeating what it sets out to call into question – the rigid and hierarchical classification between minority and majority cultures – leaving unquestioned the overarching social power relations that underpin the specific institutionalisation of national culture(s) in the first place. This ambivalent realisation of interculture subsequently continues to mark the highbrow sector as a particularly relevant arena for processes of legitimate cultural value-making. Hence, although potentially presenting a site where institutional change can proceed, the highbrow sector is nonetheless evaluated according to a classic Bourdieusian understanding of a national cultural field. Without a comprehensive contestation of its own social position, the representation of diverse cultural contents and actors into the sector's cultural spectrum might even provide a form of intercultural legitimisation to reaffirming itself as an unremittingly elitist focal point of cultural formations. In this way, the institutionalisation of interculture not only points towards emergent forms of cultural capital but also confirms Saha's (2018: 22) critique against diversity in the arts campaigns as fulfilling an 'ideological function that sustains the institutional whiteness of the cultural industries'.

Interculture and the (re)making of privilege

It is this latter argument, standing in stark contrast to conceptualisations of interculture as put forward by the Project X managers, which becomes even more pronounced when considering the reflections of some of the white German parents I interviewed. For many of them, the intercultural opening of the children's choir seems to be largely pitted against the idea of intercultural learning and the accumulation of emerging

forms of intercultural capital. In identifying the choir as a productive realm in which the children are exposed to different cultural backgrounds and characteristics while still being part of the highbrow sector, the Project X initiative seems to establish a reproductive trajectory for white German participants of mostly middle-class background to remake their privileged position within a more diverse and multicultural context. This focus on the remaking of middle-class values within an intercultural frame can result in an ignorance of the intersection of cultural and social inequalities, leaving problems of social mobility, elitism and racism unexamined. I contend that this disregard towards individual positions of privilege culminates in a liberal form of multiculturalism which continues to reside in a system of white middle-class power instead of questioning the very basis of racial inequality.

Irmgard, a middle-aged white woman from Berlin whose 11-year-old daughter joined the choir three years ago, explains that

‘we live in a multicultural world, it’s important to know about diverse cultures. Why then should I worry about kids from other cultural backgrounds joining the choir?! On the contrary, I think it’s an enriching and interesting experience. It’s intercultural learning in a fun setting, exactly what you would think of as a successful intercultural dialogue’ (interview November 2016, Berlin).

Irmgard is undoubtedly in favour of the Project X initiative. It is the special interactive setting that she identifies as a ‘successful intercultural dialogue’. Following her statement, the latter would be especially important in view of today’s ‘multicultural world’ in which ‘intercultural learning’ would take on an important societal role. She thus ascribes not only a ‘fun’ leisurely character to the choir, but also a more strategic ‘learning’ function wrapped up in an ‘interesting experience’. Moreover, she adds that this initiative would not only be educational for the children, but also for the parents:

‘For example, when I had to go to the Middle East for work, another choir mom showed me how to dress in a culturally appropriate fashion, how do fold the headscarf and stuff. These moments are great and indeed quite helpful.’

These descriptions of the choir as both ‘enriching’ and ‘helpful’ mirror the future-oriented, accumulative approach followed by Gözde and Oktay in an up-side-down manner. Whereas the latter appear to strive towards the accumulation of a national cultural capital which, as their comments suggest, would reside with Germany’s highbrow cultural sector, Irmgard’s focus seems to lie on learning about society’s pluralities instead – ‘it’s important to know about diverse cultures’.

The view that intercultural training would be an important cultural resource in today’s increasingly globalised society seems to be widely shared amongst the choir parents. As documented by my interviews and fieldnotes, a number of choir parents repeatedly highlighted how the intercultural choir would be a great opportunity for all the children ‘to form relationships and gain knowledge across their own culture’, how the choir would provide ‘an insight into today’s multicultural world’ and how such ‘intercultural exchanges are important because they also train children for their future lives’ (fieldnotes and interview transcripts September-December 2016, Berlin). Such comments show how opportunities for intercultural dialogue seem here to be primarily evaluated as opportunities for developing a cultural profile which is assumed to enable children to take part in today’s global social networks – a form of intercultural proficiency, so to say. These findings thus stand in line with Prieur and Savage’s (2011, 2013) theorisations that emerging forms of cultural capital would be increasingly tied to cosmopolitan attitudes and life-styles. Or, as Friedman et al. put it, the formation of a ‘cosmopolitan cultural capital [...] whereby cultural capital is intimately connected with a “cosmopolitan” orientation that is outward-looking and able to stand outside any one national frame, culturally’ (2015: 6; see also Pöllman,

2013; Sullivan, 2007; Wenhong, 2015). As such, intercultural exchanges as promoted by Project X's choir initiative seem to become themselves an indicator of social distinction and a dimension of cultural capital.

Hence, the notion of interculture held by Irmgard and other choir parents, which highlights its enriching potential by ascribing a positive liberal value to cultural diversity, stands in contrast to the assumption of burden inferred by the parents who were sceptical of the Project X initiative. Instead, Irmgard clearly acknowledges the changing character and organisation of emerging forms of (inter)cultural capital and thus of (inter)cultural value. Drawing on Heidegger's discourse of value, Hage (1998: 23) however reminds us that the articulation of this 'discourse of cultural enrichment concerned with the valorisation of ethnic cultures [...] reveals a white-centred conception of the nation grounded in the White nation fantasy'. As he elucidates,

'[v]aluing requires someone to do the valuing and something to be evaluated. The discourse of enrichment operates by establishing a break between valuing negatively and valuing positively similar to the break which the discourse of tolerance establishes between tolerance and intolerance. [...] While the dominant White culture merely and unquestionably exists, migrant cultures exist for the latter' (ibid.: 120, 121).

It is in this sense that the discursive notion of enrichment is linked to and further sustains the unequal positioning of racialised minorities within a 'white multiculturalism' (ibid: 116). Within a system of white multiculturalism, Hage explains, 'certain cultural forms of white-ethnic power relations remained omnipresent in a multicultural society, and were reproduced by the very ideologies of cultural pluralism and tolerance that were supposed to transcend them' (ibid.: 15). To him, it would be through the 'ritualistic "immigration debates"' – which can range from exclusionary right-wing attitudes through to welcoming liberal positions – which would make the acceptance and valuing of cultural minorities dependent on certain

conditions that the white majority feels entitled to define, thereby rendering passive ‘the voice of the “ethnic other”’ – ‘Ultimately, it is the debate itself [...] which marginalises’ (*ibid.*: 17).

These processes in which the white majority would enact their capacity to manage diversity are ever more sharpened when taking the social biases of the children’s choir initiative into closer consideration. As the choir’s conductor recalls, in the beginning of the Project X launch there were quite a few Turkish children whose families had to struggle in socioeconomic terms:

‘They were really talented kids, but many left the choir quite early on again. The parents weren’t really able to provide the logistics for it. The kids didn’t come to rehearsal regularly or they were always too late. We tried to get in touch with the parents, but there was little response. It’s really a shame that they then left altogether, but we don’t have the means and it’s also not our purpose as an opera choir to provide more focused social work’ (conversation in October 2016, Berlin).

Similarly, Irmgard told me that ‘initially the initiative attracted children of very diverse family-backgrounds, but most couldn’t cope. The choir demands lots of organisational efforts from parents. When children are young especially, you always have to be there or at least organise their commutes.’ Another choir mum further explains that ‘either you have free time or a functioning network full of grandparents, neighbours and friends who can cover “choir shifts”. I work, as does my husband, which is quite a challenge, especially when you have more children.’ As the choir is part of a much larger institutional arrangement in the realm of cultural production, it can be subjected to last minute rehearsals, cancellations, postponements and so forth. ‘We sometimes get emails the same morning letting us know that the kids have to be there for a specific rehearsal or something. It is up to the family to sort that out’, complains a choir dad (see fieldnotes and interview transcripts from September to December 2016, Berlin). Here, Murat intervenes that he tried hard to keep everyone

on board, especially the families of Turkish backgrounds who, for example, do not always speak perfect German; ‘but I can’t be everywhere to help everyone all the time… The opera has no other system in place unfortunately.’ Thus, there appear to be pertinent organisational issues at play that render the social bias of opera institution as an institution into concrete logistical obstacles for families of less socioeconomic privilege.

Moreover, the ways in which parents who could not comply with the intense logistical demands of the choir are individually being made accountable for their children’s dismissal mirrors precisely the individualist spirit of contemporary neoliberalist market societies. The parents were seen as ‘not really able’ to foster their children’s talents or ‘couldn’t cope’ with the opera’s organisational requirements, and thus have to bear the consequences of their incapability. As Irmgard articulates, ‘this is not about culture as much as it is about social things. You need the right background for it [the choir].’ This underlying notion of self-inflicted destiny, however, shifts the responsibility from the structural to the individual sphere. The latter is herein presumed as being the decisive factor for allowing or restricting social mobility. In this vein, inequalities are increasingly seen as the result of individual actions and become delinked from systematic issues around class, ‘race’ or gender. To Khan and Jerolmack (2012: 12, 13), such a discourse of meritocracy would be particularly championed by the social elites as it reflects ‘[t]he combination of rhetorically embracing openness while practicing protection’; that is, ‘saying meritocracy but doing privilege’. By implication, this also means that the families of different cultural and social backgrounds who persisted and progressed within the frame of the Project X initiative are seen as good examples and proof of social mobility by embodying the imagination of an open, fair and mobile society.

We can therefore again detect an intrinsic connection between the structures of classical music education and the production and remaking of a particular middle-class self-formation. As Diane Reay et al. (2011: 6) illuminate, although the middle-classes can certainly not be understood as a homogeneous social category, they would nevertheless have in common ‘a strong commitment to education as key to middle-class cultural reproduction’. Besides a particular set of norms and values encompassing, for instance, ‘a sense of entitlement, educational excellence, confidence, competitiveness, hard work, deferred gratification’, such reproductive work would also manifest in ‘an ability to erect boundaries, both geographically and symbolically’ (*ibid.*: 12). It is this latter aspect of active boundary-drawing which is rendered obscure in Irmgard’s and other parents’ similar statements by transferring the question of choir participation merely into the sphere of neoliberal conceptualisations of individualism and meritocracy. Interculture, in this context, becomes *socially commodified* as an active trajectory for the remaking of elite formations.

Furthermore, these sustained inequalities of class intersect with racialised inequalities in that the Other who is either not making the cut into the choir or has to drop out eventually is constructed as both too socially disadvantaged *and* too culturally different. In devaluing people of diverse backgrounds as less capable or less appreciative of making use of equivalent opportunities and resources, a hierarchical relationship between the dominant and the marginalised is perpetuated which spans not only the distinction between middle and lower classes but also infers racialised ideas of undeservingness. This leads to the normalisation of racialised and classed exclusions prevalent in European high culture which, in turn, disguises the fact of how deeply a system of middle-class Whiteness operates in its realm. Consequently, aiming

to embrace urban multiculture but leaving overarching power relations around class and ethnicity untouched, Project X's choir initiative has lent itself (at least in parts) to the middle-class pursuit of emerging forms of cultural capital which, somewhat ironically, continues to manifest in the highbrow music sector. As such, the choir initiative as intercultural activity also resonates with a critique of white multiculturalism because it remains firmly situated within a hegemonic system of Whiteness, however in explicitly liberal disguise: It ultimately shares in the conviction that the white German middle-classes were, in one way or another, the 'masters of the national space' (Hage, 1998: 17) and thus in a position to regulate who can be part and who is excluded from that space.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I looked at Project X's children's choir initiative in close detail to examine how the project's different interpretations of interculture as well as the daily workings of the choir itself reflect not only practices of inclusion and mobility, but also of exclusion and reproduction. I discussed how, within the context of the children's choir initiative, differently positioned cultural producers pursue different intercultural trajectories which link practices of cultural representation with socioeconomic profiles. I have shown that there are indeed moments of intercultural change in which the choir initiative promotes critical and convivial interventions into the social hierarchies championed by the highbrow musical sector in favour of reflecting the multicultural configurations of contemporary Berlin. However, I equally demonstrated how the choir initiative also implies a (re)making of values connected to the socioeconomic standards of German middle-classes. This has become especially evident with regard to the Turkish German choir families and their particular history

of labour migration who clearly identify their children's choir participation as an active path of social mobility into a more established national cultural arena.

In this context, the highbrow sector continues to act as a pivotal site for defining and accumulating a specific national cultural capital. This accumulative attitude towards interculture is equally evaluated as bearing opportunities for intercultural enrichment and cosmopolitan forms of emerging cultural capital sought after by some of the white middle-class choir parents. However, this strategic and commodifying approach to interculture also reaffirms such sets of middle-class values and norms which constitute the idea of individual responsibility and meritocracy in relation to the children's choir project. By turning away from a critical and structural assessment of the opera's cultural and socioeconomic biases, I established that overall the choir's intercultural negotiations take place in a socially biased space, which makes use of liberal notions of interculture to maintain and further reproduce (white) privilege in both social and cultural terms.

In consequence, the case of the children's choir initiative illuminates how highbrow cultural interventions, including ones which are intended to encourage progressiveness, necessarily operate on a hierarchical terrain and thereby have unintended social consequences. Hence, although the children's choir initiative has indeed been pushing for more and more cultural openness and diverse representations within the highbrow sector, it has done so while continuing to play on the same social field as the opera institution more broadly. That is, while the children's choir has indeed become more diverse in terms of its participants, the requirements to either belong or adapt to the norms and canon which underpins the classical music sphere let such processes of intercultural dialogue proceed only within the social frame of a specific middle-class setting. Subsequently, I contended that the representation of

Berlin's urban multiculture as captured by the children's choir risks being reduced to a cosmopolitan celebration of diversity within a reproductive and exclusive social system. Despite its critical efforts, the children's choir project continues to reflect a specific sociocultural standard and, as such, fails to substantially call into question the very basis of systemic forms of social and racial inequality. Even more so, I showed how the very framing of Project X as a Turkish German intercultural project *enables* a system of liberal multiculturalism in which hegemonic relations of power are sustained precisely by incorporating difference in a controlled, standardised and hierarchical manner.

Chapter 8: Musical performances as critical encounters – the complexity of convivial practice in the postmigratory city

‘Conviviality is a social pattern in which different metropolitan groups dwell in close proximity but where their racial, linguistic and religious particularities do not—as the logic of ethnic absolutism suggests they must—add up to discontinuities of experience or insuperable problems of communication’ (Gilroy, 2006: 40).

In the previous chapters of this thesis, I analysed how interculture is performed in various spheres of Project X; that is, how social inequalities and notions of difference are not only articulated but constructed in the organisational and aesthetic practices that underpin the project. Having so far looked at aesthetical and institutional power structures in intercultural music-making (Chapter 5), negotiations of Orientalism in visual curation practices (Chapter 6) and processes of institutional change, social mobility and reproduction (Chapter 7), this chapter pays more deliberate attention to Project X’s relationship to the wider city of Berlin and to the ways in which the project seeks to create moments of encounter with its urban surroundings. I am interested in the relationship between contemporary cultural production, musical practice and issues of urban multiculture, particularly with regards to Berlin’s long-standing histories of migration and the ways in which intercultural music production works with and constructs particular notions of difference.

In light of the above, I examine how Project X addresses, articulates and therefore seeks to perform Berlin’s postmigratory character in creating moments of urban encounter between the cultural producers and wider city publics. More specifically, this chapter sets out to critically interrogate what kinds of encounter are actually being opened up by the opera institution and Project X and how those relate to and shape discourses of urban inequality and Otherness. Based on ethnographic data of performances and post-performance conversations that I collected during my

fieldwork, I will show how musical performances as spatial, social and affective sites of encounter do not necessarily become a vehicle for convivial relationships (between the people involved as either producers, performers or audiences) but can actually perpetuate hegemonic power relations that shape Berlin's urban environment.

Thinking further about a theory of urban encounter in the context of contemporary Berlin and about the role music production and performance might play in this regard, I hence put forward the notion of *critical encounters*, highlighting that urban encounters are always sites of ambivalence and ambiguity and, as such, involve both mutual understanding, rapprochement and exchange as well as rupture, contest and even closure and failure. I suggest that even if hegemonic constructions of Otherness or patterns of urban marginalisation can be disrupted in the moment of encounter in favour of more convivial multicultural relationships, new articulations of inequality are being remade simultaneously. Thus, I suggest that conviviality as a mode of multicultural urban sociality can never be a fully accomplished 'result' of urban encounters but is always in process, always contingent and contested. With regards to musical performances as urban encounters, I posit that the extent to which these might open up moments of convivial rupture, which work against spatial, racialised and classed hierarchies imprinted in the urban landscape, crucially depends on whether or not the cultural producers allow for such ambiguity and contestation to arise as part of their engagement with the multicultural city. That is, only when ongoing urban conflict is faced head-on within the context of the musical performance can the latter become a site of urban encounters that might unsettle hegemonic relations of power and proffer a more sustained commitment to urban conviviality.

Theorising urban encounters

As already outlined in the theory chapter of this thesis, sociological scholarship and urban theory have long discussed the notion of urban encounters, either celebrating urban life for its saturation with encounters of difference (see e.g. Simmel, 1950; Lefebvre, 1968; Young, 1990; Sennett, 1970, 2018; Merrifield, 2012) or depicting the urban as a conglomerate of civil unrest, disorder and deprivation (see e.g. Fyfe and Bannister, 2006; Phillips and Smith, 2006). More recently, there has been a strong resurgence of scholarship that sets out to highlight urban life as a site of progressive socialities (Thrift, 2005), new forms of solidarity and everyday multiculture shaped by ordinary cross-ethnic and cross-cultural interactions that challenge fixed notions of identity and difference (see e.g. Amin, 2006, 2012; Gilroy, 2004; Hall, 2000; Hall, 2015; Jackson, 2019; Neal et al., 2013; Watson and Saha, 2012; Wise and Velayutham, 2014). However, critics argue that the focus on the syncretic and hybrid nature of urban sociality risks exhibiting ‘a certain descriptive naivety’ (Valluvan, 2016: 205), particularly finding fault with those writings that favour the appraisal of cosmopolitan forms of identity and politics over a sustained critique of urban inequalities (see e.g. Simonsen, 2008). As Matejskova and Leitner (2011: 721) therefore interject, while a ‘cosmopolitan turn’ in urban scholarship would certainly have to be appreciated for challenging the political hostility centred around notions of the deprived city, we nevertheless need to be attentive to and critical of its ‘troubling undercurrent’.

In this connection, Valluvan (2016) argues for a more sophisticated, critical angle on everyday multiculture and urban socialites in general. Drawing from Gilroy (2004), he maintains that convivial multiculture should be understood as ‘a more radical ideal of urban interaction than ordinarily appreciated [...] opposed to being a concept which simply names everyday practices of multi-ethnic interaction,

conviviality speaks uniquely to a sophisticated ability to invoke difference whilst avoiding communitarian, groupist precepts' (ibid.: 204). He specifically finds fault with 'the very sociological inclination to weigh the prevalence of conviviality contra conflict' which he deems 'unhelpful' for understanding contemporary urban multicultural conditions (ibid.: 205). Building on this, Ahmed's elaborations in 'Strange Encounters' (2000) further encourage us to think through encounters in the postmigratory city as innately involving and invoking unequal power relations and historic legacies of imperialism, colonialism and class structures. According to Ahmed, encounters would nonetheless never be fully determined but would bear productive moments of conflict and surprise which can renegotiate processes of in- and exclusion.

In light of the above, I suggest that urban encounters can contain moments of both power assertion and violent appropriation as well as of rupture, contestation and exchange. It is hence imperative to note that urban encounters in the postcolonial, postmigratory sphere are not only inescapable but are always sites of antagonism, ambivalence and historical legacies of inequality. I hence argue for a more radical idea of urban encounters and of the forms of convivial multiculture these might unlock – one which neither silences the material expressions of unequal power relations that crystallise in the urban sphere nor the long-standing discursive histories of Otherness that stand at their basis. In putting forward the notion of *critical encounters*, I hold that cross-ethnic and cross-cultural interactions in the postmigratory city can only initiate convivial relationships when such power relations are acknowledged without, however, resorting to inferences of communitarian, groupist understandings to difference. I furthermore suggest that the notion of critical encounters might help us grasp the innate incompleteness and contingency of urban encounters with difference.

That is, it accentuates the fact that while particular manifestations of urban inequality might be exposed and unsettled in the moment of encounter, new forms of boundary-work can be re-enacted simultaneously. As such, not only are urban encounters never without ambiguity and contestation, but I moreover posit that conviviality as a mode of multicultural sociality can never be assumed as their fully-accomplished ‘outcome’ but must itself be recognised as inherently processual and in constant negotiation with the changing social, spatial and affective conditions of urban life.

Set against this notion of critical encounters, I want to probe how the musical performances and conversations taking place in the context of the opera institution and of Project X in particular can be thought of as simultaneously comprising processes of in- and exclusion, of boundary deconstruction and reconstruction and, as such, can oscillate between re-enacting rigid scripts of difference and unlocking glimpses into a more radical urban conviviality. To that end, I want to examine how Project X’s music performances and post-performance conversations establish particular social, spatial and affective conditions that are

‘important to the facilitation of multi-ethnic interaction, including the cultivation of an “indifference to difference” ethos, the negotiation of identity mixture and ambiguity, the proximity of conviviality to conflict and also the role of space in both enabling and limiting convivial interaction’ (Valluvan, 2016: 206).

When thinking through music performances as urban encounters, it is moreover important to take seriously the social qualities of music and musical mediation itself. To that end, I turn back to Born’s (2017) theory of a social aesthetics in which she proposes four planes of musical mediation, ranging from the most immediate social setting of music-making to its broader institutional and social arrangements. While this chapter is not primarily concerned with an analysis of music’s social qualities per

se, Born's work nevertheless helps develop a more critical analysis of urban encounter and of the role music and its mediation can play in its context.

Project X and Berlin's urban sphere

At the core of Project X stands the objective to review the relationship between the opera as an institution and the city's wider public. As the website text below demonstrates, in so doing, the project seeks to shed a particular light on Berlin's long-standing migration histories and intends to create opportunities for encounters in the multicultural city:

‘»Project X!« takes literally the [opera's] self-definition as an opera house for everyone, and seeks to create *occasions for encounters* between the city's inhabitants and the opera. The intention is to strengthen the links between the opera house and the people of Berlin in the long term and thus contribute to a better culture of peaceful co-existence. Sensitising people with regard to »self« and »other« acts as a stimulus to *shed ingrained patterns* and to become open to a wider definition of cultural learning. Here the focus is not on the traditional »educational mandate«, which frequently seeks to »elevate« those being educated to a »higher level« – instead, the emphasis is on *communal experimentation and action* [...] it also means crossing our own threshold and *going out into the city*, including through projects such as the »opera minibus«. The work on stage also reflects the results of our continued engagement with the topic of »multicultural (city) society«’ (Project X website 2017, my emphasis).

While the opera institution is portrayed as seeking to be ‘an opera house for everyone’, the text equally insinuates the need to ‘strengthen the links’ between Berlin’s urban spaces and the institution. Thus, it also indicates an oppositional relationship between the opera and ‘the city’s inhabitants’. Against this backdrop, Project X is positioned as a platform and vector to interrogate precisely this relationship of opposites between the opera as a detached institution and the city as its more diverse counterpart. Project X’s main purpose then seems to ‘create occasions for encounters’ between the opera and the city through ‘communal experimentation’, aiming to ‘shed ingrained patterns’ such as prejudices and stereotypes that root in long-standing scripts of Otherness. To that end, Project X wishes to supersede the opera’s institutional ‘threshold’, intending

to design projects and performances that would go ‘out into the city’. The threshold here not only seems to involve a spatial dimension – literally meaning, to leave the opera house and enter other localities of Berlin – but also invokes a critical assessment of the opera’s social and cultural exclusions in favour of pursuing an ‘engagement with the topic of the “multicultural (city) society”’ and of rejecting a discourse of cultural elevation (i.e. formation of cultural capital) that is often captured in debates around arts education and participation. Project X’s self-set objectives hence seem to culminate in the breaking down of the very distinctiveness – both in a spatial and social sense – that is assigned to the Western art music sector in Germany in favour of more open-ended, convivial forms of musical encounters and urban sociability.

There have been several ways in which the opera institution and Project X in particular have tried to engage with broader histories and developments going on in the city of Berlin. For instance, through various initiatives and partnerships with education hubs, schools, cultural foundations and charities, the opera institution regularly invites different social groups, which so far have not been regular attendees of opera performances, by offering them free tickets to performances, organising tours through the institution or holding workshops on music theatre and specific opera performances. While these initiatives are not technically part of Project X, they do however follow a similar objective. As one of the opera institution’s music theatre pedagogues recently explained in an interview, the general aim of these efforts is to ‘experience something together and to create something diverse’ (Berliner Akzente, 2018), somethings that interrogates the elitist histories of highbrow culture and highlights the opera institution’s open relationship to the multicultural city.

Project X takes these efforts even further, particularly in the context of its Minibus-programme, which puts into action the opera institution’s objective to ‘go out

into the city'. As I already elucidated elsewhere in this thesis, the minibus-project was launched in 2012 as part of Project X. Since then, a minivan (see Figure 4) has been taking two singers and three musicians from the opera institution on regular visits to local organisations and neighbourhood initiatives in city districts with a high percentage of residents from all manner of cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds with a particular focus on Kreuzberg and Neukölln (see Figure 5).⁸⁶

In a musically condensed form, the five artists present a 45-minutes long musical theatre story that takes inspiration from Germany's guestworker histories. As such, it tells the story of (im)migration, of departure and arrival, of optimism and despair, of love and pain, of being in between worlds and of feeling at home. This journey through emotional motives and themes is at the same time a musical journey through 500 years of operatic history, as the musicians act out works from the renaissance epoch through to contemporary music sung in seven languages (parts of the repertoire has been translated into Turkish for these purposes) and drawn from across Western and Eastern Europe, including Turkey.

These performances usually take rather intimate form in places such as migration hubs, neighbourhood centres, family cafés, senior centres and alike; I myself experienced performances with audiences ranging from five to more than 50 people. Adapting to the logistical conditions of each host organisation, the performances mostly take place in small rooms with an improvised performance set-up, usually on ground-level and thus without any separation between stage area and audience (see Figures 6 and 7, for example).

⁸⁶ This map documents the urban distribution of the Minibus-performances in contrast to the locations of Berlin's three opera houses. I created this map with QGIS based on 2017 data provided to me by the Opera institution.

After each performance, the audience members are invited to a casual Q&A session in which they cannot only voice their experiences, thoughts and opinions about the performance but are also invited to ask the musicians anything they would like to know. Collaborating only with organisations that specifically *invite* the Minibus-team to give a performance, the musical minibus has travelled to approximately 80 different locations in Berlin to date and has even completed concert tours via Munich, Vienna, Belgrade, Sofia to Istanbul in 2016 and to Brussels via the Ruhr region in 2019. As the performance is not ticketed and entrance is free (the funds for the Berliner Minibus stem from the regular opera institution budget for Project X), the aim of the Minibus is not only to showcase opera music and music theatre, but also to establish new forms of connections between the opera institution and the city of Berlin (mainly) by specifically presenting and debating the city's histories of migration. 'It is about the music, but it is about encounter in a broader sense as well', says the main dramaturge in charge of the Minibus-performance (fieldnote April 2016, Berlin).

In comparison to the more standardised urban outreach programmes offered by the opera institution, Project X's Minibus seems to engender an aesthetic and organisational broadening beyond the traditional boundaries of Western highbrow institutions. In this vein, Project X might be read as a critical revision of traditional boundaries of highbrow institutions and might indicate the changing nature of cultural legitimacy away from highbrow distinctions and in favour of a more open-ended, participatory engagement with multicultural urban life. However, even though from a purely geographical perspective, the Minibus-performances might be able to create more meaningful encounters with the urban sphere than the more standardised community initiatives of the opera institution, it has yet to be examined how such encounters are indeed different or to what extent they are equally shaped by the

unequal power relations and the long-standing inequalities of race and class that have shaped the city of Berlin.

Musical performance as urban encounters and the complexity of convivial multiculture

Against this backdrop, I suggest that Project X presents a site where we can precisely see the complexities and ambiguities of urban encounters play out. Foregrounding the notion of critical encounters, I argue that its musical performances become spaces for both convivial multiculture as well as power assertion. I moreover hold that the extent to which the performances might unlock the former depends on the extent to which the Project X producers themselves allow for tension and critique to arise as part of Project X. Only when letting moments of conflict be part of the musical performances, dominant notions of raced and classed Otherness might be disrupted and a more grounded commitment to urban conviviality realised. As such, the Project X performances illustrate how we need to think of urban multiculture not as a seamless ‘result’ of urban interaction but as an ongoing, contingent and critical process of urban sociality.

In the following, I will turn towards my fieldwork site and discuss ethnographic data drawn from a number of music performances and post-performance conversations that I took part in either as an audience member or as a participant observer. Based on these data, I will critically compare three different moments of encounter that I have witnessed in this context. The first encounter is situated at the opera institution in the context of a workshop with urban youths, while the second and third examples took place in the context of Project X’s Minibus-project and are located in the city districts of Istanbul Beyoğlu and Berlin Neukölln, respectively. All three examples not only show the interweaving of social, spatial and affective factors in

distinctive ways, but also illustrate the manifestation and disruption of power relations and urban antagonisms to different extents. As such, they lend themselves in insightful ways for a critical advancement of the notion of encounter in relation to music performances in the multicultural, postmigratory city.

How musical encounters with the multicultural city can easily become sites of dominance and power assertion, especially when social conflict is played down or ignored, is clearly exhibited by my first data example that I collected in the context of a youth workshop at the opera institution. The following fieldwork note records a post-performance conversation between the youth and some opera singers after a regular opera performance. As such, it did not take place somewhere ‘outside’ in Berlin but literally ‘inside’ the highbrow. While this post-performance setting did therefore not technically supersede the institutional boundaries of the Western art music sector, it was nonetheless aimed at creating a space of encounter between the opera institution and Berlin’s multicultural realities by inviting urban youths from various ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds to an unconventional Q&A with performers involved in the preceding production. However, I quickly realised that, instead, the conversation became a site where classed, racialised and spatial hierarchies endured and reproduced.

Fieldnote 1 (September 2017, Berlin)

We find ourselves all cramped together in the private room of the opera institution’s cafeteria, some pizza crusts still lie on the tables, all chairs are occupied, many sit on the floor as do I. We are here with a bunch of Berlin youths from a foundation that works with ‘disadvantaged young people’ in the city, many of whom have arrived in Germany less than four years ago, most of them high school students. The foundation collaborates with different firms and institutions, *inter alia* the Opera institution, so that the students can learn about different apprenticeship options and professional careers. We had a two-day workshop behind us, Anisha had asked me if I wanted to be part of it and help out. She mentioned that these projects would be important for the opera institution and share Project X’s aim to open up meeting points between the institution and Berliners who might not regularly attend opera performances. In the workshop, we were introduced to the different jobs that an opera house contains, learned about the interplay between the

music, the staging, the light and the costumes and were closely discussing the opera performance we then got to see. Tonight's performance was a new production of Rossini's Barber of Seville. Now, after the production, we had pizza with five of the singers who wanted to discuss the performance with the youths. In the beginning, people seemed very shy but, with every piece of pizza, opened up more and more. Most young people were interested in the singers' careers, how they learned to sing this well, how they liked acting, where they were from. But then Hasan, a, 16-year-old who has come to Germany from Syria not even two years ago, asked the singers about the director's choice to present some characters on stage as what he identified as Taliban fighters. 'I was baffled by this, I have to say. The characters, they imitated to pray, and they carried praying carpets and so on, but also rifles. But for all of us [he points to some of his fellow youths] it was so obvious that these were Taliban. I found that not to be a good idea, because [he pauses for a bit] many people here in Germany think of Muslims already in these terms, as terrorists, and I don't want this image to continue'. Looking around, quite a few of the students, many of them having fled wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, nodded in support. Carolina, the soprano, sets out to answer: 'According to the director, this portrayal was meant to unmask the stereotype held by many Germans. So, it was a conscious play on such stereotypes you mentioned.' I'm a little struck by the rather abrupt tone of her answer, but Hasan doesn't let himself be discourage from following-up. 'I don't know [he hesitates] I mean, sure, that might be the case, but I don't think the audience understood that. You know, being a Sunni myself, I definitely felt that people have prejudices and ...', before he can finish his thought, Carolina interrupts and says: 'Rest assured. The people who come to this opera, they can differentiate that.' The conversation is over.

This fieldnote excerpt provides a clear example of how urban encounters risk failing to challenge reductive discourses of Otherness when the people involved ignore the different inequalities at work and attempt to avoid conflict rather than facing critical and potentially uncomfortable conversations openly. What started out as a friendly chitchat over pizza quickly turned into a moment of conflict and rupture which clearly exposed the durability of unequal power relations that shape multicultural, cross-ethnic encounters in the postmigratory city. While the music performance did indeed serve as a starting point for a critical confrontation of Orientalist and Islamophobic representations and stereotypes held firmly in many spheres of German public discourse, the discussion itself was rapidly 'contained' by an affirmation of power, personified by the singer Carolina, that worked against such productive moments of rupture. Thus, while we can observe moments of resistance and contest, primarily embodied by Hasan, these are quickly squashed down by the sheer social and spatial hierarchies that shaped this encounter from start to finish. As such, instead of focusing

on and working through the conflictual parts of the conversation, the musical encounter became a site of prevailing scripts of difference and unequal power relations. These worked not only through ethno-cultural hierarchies but through class-based ones as well.

Most notably, the youths' age, their often uncertain legal and political status, their subsequent daily experiences of precarity and common experiences with racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia put them in a particularly vulnerable position – one which did not seem to be very much respected by Carolina as soon as a more conflictual issue was raised by Hasan. Thus, the switch in the atmosphere from a friendly, relaxed conversation to a defensive, abrupt argument emerged precisely in the moment when Carolina did not want to let any conflict arise and refused to seriously engage with Hasan's point of critique. While Hasan's comments regarding the director's choice to portray a particular stage character as what the young people immediately identified as 'Taliban' could have been an opener for a deeper engagement with issues of Islamophobia, racism, and even of satire and political critique in the arts, the conversation was quickly undercut despite Hasan's continuous attempts to clarify his point – 'You know, being a Sunni myself, I definitely felt that people have prejudices and ...' In stark contrast to Hasan, Carolina's protected political status, her high socioeconomic status as an opera singer at one of Germany's most prestigious institutions, her ethno-cultural background that allowed her a privileged pass through life and her adulthood secured Carolina such an advantaged position that she even felt able to blatantly interrupt Hasan before he could finish his thought. Unwilling to take his objections and personal experiences seriously and rather than letting his testimony stand for itself, Carolina reacted in a clearly patronising way by telling Hasan to that people coming to the opera would be able to 'differentiate'.

This assertion of power over a conversation and the disregard of someone's personal experiences and opinions strikingly show privilege in action. Carolina's reluctance to deal with conflict thus paired up with an unwillingness to recognise her own privilege and the institutional power afforded to her. Her reactions are hence exemplary for the persistence of institutional whiteness and class privilege in the Western state-funded cultural sector. In order to challenge such institutional power relations, Howard (2006: 59; see also Morrison, 1992) argues that the dominant groups would first of all need to learn to 'articulate their accountability and experiences of grappling with whiteness' but not only in a detached fashion as part of a broader structural critique but by 'openly grapp[ing] with his/her own implication in whiteness'. In the encounter at hand, Carolina refused to acknowledge her own privileged position which so clearly ruled the conversational proceedings between her and Hasan, nor was she willing to recognise the structural persistence of racialised stereotypes as identified by Hasan.

In addition, the very content of Carolina's responses is equally indicative of persisting class and 'race' hierarchies that continue to underpin images of a respectable, educated and cultured European middle-class which would certainly be capable to 'differentiate' a conscious play on Orientalist stereotypes from the very stereotype itself. Hasan's scepticism is thus not only dismissed as a misunderstanding of or oversensitivity to a provocative depiction of an opera character, but as an unjustified misreading of the standard opera clientele as such. Thus, his very ability to read and properly understand opera as an expression of high culture is being denied. Instead of letting the opera performance set the context for discussion and artistic critique beyond traditional cultural distinctions, Carolina keeps the wider institutional forces of highbrow production intact and 'reserves' opera for the European middle-

classes who are implied as well-versed in the genre and who are thus ascribed the rightful authority of its aesthetic judgement.

However, Carolina's firmly held idea of the infallible, innocent urban middle-class, of precisely '[t]he people who come to this opera', reflects in itself a process of misrecognition. Misrecognition, as coined by Bourdieu (1984)⁸⁷, designates a social process by which the power dynamics that structure a particular social event are not recognised for what they are, thus misrecognised. In consequence, power and class dominance become perpetuated precisely due to their concealing. Carolina's portrayal of Berlin's middle-classes as indisputably legitimate cultural and political authorities obscures precisely the intersection of class and racial inequalities which so crucially shaped the encounter between her and Hasan. Hence, she furthermore affirms the social distinctiveness of the European highbrow sector which the youth workshop wished to unravel and instead confirms the opera institution as a dominant site of cultural legitimacy.

Such social hierarchies furthermore took on a spatial frame which confirms Valluvan's (2016: 219) argument that particular '[f]igurations of space' can act 'as key mediators in both realizing and limiting convivial formations': While, on first glance, the immediate setting in which the encounter took place, seemed somewhat conducive to establishing an interactive, interpersonal mode of communications – the small room, the cosy sitting arrangements, the relaxed atmosphere over shared pizza, a general post-performance enthusiasm – this intimate setting was constantly interrupted and ultimately swallowed up by the institutional dominance of the opera

⁸⁷ The concept is hence closely related to Bourdieu's notion of 'symbolic violence', designating 'the fact of recognising a violence which is wielded precisely inasmuch as one does not perceive it as such' (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992: 168). As Bourdieu puts it, misrecognition therefore reflects 'an adherence to relations of order which, because they structure inseparably both the real world and the thought world, are accepted as self-evident' (Bourdieu, 1984: 471).

institution. Although the youth workshop was meant to break down traditional hierarchies between the urban and the highbrow, the latter was nevertheless reaffirmed as the dominant site of cultural meaning-making, taking on both a spatial reference as well as an embodied representation through Carolina, who seemed to speak with such affirmation and confidence as if she had the entire opera behind her. In contrast, the majority of the youths that took part in the workshop had never been to an opera house before and had only been exposed to the workings of the opera institution specifically for the two days of the workshop. The interconnection between social power and spatial self-assertiveness, which eventually led to a complete breakdown of communications, could not have been stronger.

At the same time, however, Hasan's comments were identified as a potential risk, a threat to such self-evident relations of power. By interrupting Hasan's train of thought, Carolina performed a disciplining function as she clearly communicated and thus reinforced the social boundaries between Hasan and herself. In so doing, she moreover delineated spatial boundaries by implying Hasan's non-belonging to the opera, making him the stranger out of place. Accentuating this interconnectedness between the social and the spatial, Ahmed (2000: 29) elucidates that

‘the very encounters that take place between others involve the forming of both cultural and spatial boundaries: that is, [...] the (mis)recognition of others as strangers is what allows the demarcation of given spaces within “the public domain”, but also the legitimation of certain forms of mobility and movement within the public, and the delegitimation of others.’

The encounter between Hasan and Carolina exhibits exactly such boundary-work, relegating Hasan to the edges of spatial belonging and social legitimacy and leaving long-standing relations of power unchallenged. While this post-performance encounter might have borne the potential to engender a critical discussion about

historical constructions of Otherness, current Islamophobic discourses performed in Germany and the role of art in society, it thus became a platform where scripted identities and social inequalities not only remained untouched but were reproduced.

Such a process of boundary-drawing not only manifested in the Q&A session but was also observable in the context of the opera performance itself. As I stated above, the children who took part in the workshop had mostly not been to an opera house before and were generally very enthusiastic about their first day at the opera institution. Having done a lot of research on the Barber of Seville during their workshop sessions, the children were excited to finally go see the piece on stage and seemed to be fully captured by the pre-performance ambience in the opera atrium, by the golden sealings, the heavy stage curtains and the soft seats in cardinal red, the cacophonic sound of instruments being tuned, the slightly dusty air mixed with the smell of the wooden stage and the perfumes of audience members. As I was sitting down in the theatre amongst the group, I could see the teenagers eagerly chatting with their friends in the neighbouring seats, pointing to decorative details in the atrium, nestling with their phones to take a photo. Some others tried to calm their peers cautioning them that the show would be about to start and that we would now all need to be quiet, but they had only partial success. And although there were yet another good five to ten minutes to go until the start of the performance, the first snide looks from other audience members around us did not take long to wait for.

People looking back over their shoulder, furrowing their brows in annoyance, shaking their heads, then turning back front whispering something into their neighbour's ear. While I did not hear anyone address the teenagers directly, I overheard a few irritated comments from the audience in front of me, angry at how those kids just wouldn't know how to behave in an opera setting or just pointing out

their ‘disrespectful’ conduct. While I certainly understand that any group of 20 teenagers in a theatre can be a challenge for the other audience members as well as for the performers onstage (I am here thinking back to the class theatre trips we undertook in high school), I felt that those comments meant to communicate much more than just rebuke a group of youngsters. For instance, in turning around and visibly glancing up and down the children’s clothes, some of the other audience members appeared to make inferences about the group’s social and cultural background, seemingly having their feelings confirmed that those children would clearly behave ‘inappropriately’ and not fit in an opera context. It was similarly striking how not one of the audience members, while being obviously annoyed, actually addressed the teenagers in a direct manner friendly asking them to quiet down, but instead just seemed to hope that they would pick up from these passive micro-aggressions and ‘correct’ their comportment themselves.

I suggest that these interactions again illustrate the ways in which certain people, certain bodies, are rendered outsiders in Western highbrow cultural spaces and how these forms of exclusion are deeply connected to classed and racialised ideas of difference. As the workshop group remained very composed and silent during the actual opera performance, I did not observe any further interaction with the wider audience until the end of the evening. But when the lights went back on and people assembled their belongings from underneath their seats, I saw how a few of the people, who previously took note of the teenagers, now fully turned around seemingly trying to get a clearer picture of who was sitting behind them, or rather, getting *their picture of them* confirmed. Looks and corroborating nods were exchanged with other audience members, visibly signalling that no one seemed surprised by what or rather whom they saw. Evidently, a group of young people, many of them of colour and in street clothes,

seemed to confirm their expectations about who would behave in what they considered to be such inappropriate ways. Revisiting the notion of urban encounter in this context, this incident clearly exposes the ‘naive assumption that contact with “others” necessarily translates into respect for difference’ (Valentine, 2008: 325; see also Valluvan, 2016; Vertovec, 2007; Watson, 2006) and instead proves that racialised and classed scripts of Otherness can endure and even harden.

The two examples above hence demonstrate how encounters in the cultural sphere can become active sites of boundary-work. Neither championing an ‘indifference to difference’ (Amin, 2013) nor dissecting the inequalities at work, hegemonic constructions of raced and classed Otherness became reaffirmed and set in contrast to the opera institution as a space of both social, spatial and cultural legitimacy. While these instances show in particularly trenchant ways how the realm of musical performances, even if meant to open up urban convivial encounters, can merely act as a site of power perpetuation, I have also observed several other moments in which the social hierarchies at play remained unreflected. Such examples are certainly less explicit than the ones previously discussed, but they nevertheless indicate how firmly an assumed superiority of the highbrow sits within its institutional ranks. For instance, I took note of several times in which members of the Project X team underlined how great it would be that initiatives like the Minibus or the youth workshops would make it possible for different people from Berlin to finally see and experience opera in action. Expressions like ‘we have the opportunity to share the power of opera with people who have never experienced it before’ (fieldnote April 2016, Berlin) or ‘I’m so happy that we were able to show them how wonderful opera can be’ (fieldnote October 2017, Berlin) still insinuate a somewhat unilateral and hierarchical relationship between the opera as a culturally valuable experience and

Berlin's not-yet-experienced populations which still need to be shown the way to opera appreciation. As such, these rather mundane comments similarly demonstrate how cross-ethnic and multicultural interaction does not necessarily unlock forms of convivial encounter but can also fail to recognise the underlying binaries and hierarchies that constitute its frame.

However, as much as urban musical performances can be a way to bolster social boundaries, they also hold the potential to be critical encounters that can interrogate broader inequalities at work in urban space. This is illustrated by the two subsequent examples, both of which are located outside of the opera institution and occurred in the context of Project X's Minibus-programme. The first one took place on the Minibus-concert tour in a cultural hub in Istanbul Beyoğlu, while the second instance captures a regular Minibus-performance at a neighbourhood centre in Berlin Neukölln. Both instances show how hegemonic discourses of migration, citizenship and urban spatial stigma can be effectively exposed and challenged within the context of musical performance, if the leading cultural producers allow for such contestations to arise. Yet, they also illustrate how new forms of inequalities and othering discourses are being reconstructed simultaneously. As such, the two instances show how encounters, even if treated in a critical manner, are inherently unfinished and contingent and as such require continuous critical efforts. Consequently, they illustrate how conviviality as a mode of urban sociality cannot be assumed as the 'fixed' outcome of urban encounters but must itself be understood as an ongoing social process. Hence, both examples underpin in crucial terms the usefulness of the notion of critical encounters as a helpful lens for cultural projects like Project X, which seek to engage with the multicultural city in a meaningful and sustained way.

Fieldnote 2 (June 2016, Cultural centre in Istanbul Beyoğlu)

After the applause that followed the last duet of the performance, Murat takes the stage to open the floor for questions and discussions. In Turkish, he again greets the audience who have come to this cultural centre to see one of the two guest appearance of the Minibus-project in Istanbul. A woman probably in her mid-30s, raises her hand and asks Murat a question. With his usual attentiveness, he nods, signalling understanding, and then responds at quite a length, but his answer doesn't seem to satisfy her. They continue to converse in Turkish for a few seconds until she interrupts the flow of the conversation and asks the following question in English, looking around herself, looking towards all of us who are part of the Project X team, putting us on the spot (this is how I felt at least): 'But why did you come all the way to Istanbul to show this piece to us? I already said that I loved it, the music was just exquisite, but the guestworker story... It's not really a Turkish story, it's a German story!' The director takes another try at answering. She says that yes, of course, it's also a German story and that's why they wanted to put on this piece in the first place, but that Turkey and especially Istanbul would still reflect such an important part of the story as well. Still, the woman doesn't seem satisfied. She nevertheless nods, a little hesitantly though, perhaps in resignation. The situation diffuses but her question had raised a tension that could not be easily dismissed. Murat remained silent after that dialogue. He later told me that the distinction between Germany and Turkey would be hard for him to relate to: 'I have always been in an in-between, I guess'.

The musical encounter between the Project X crew and the Istanbul audiences demonstrates how cross-cultural, transnational encounters can result in productive social ruptures. Such ruptures, prompted by both the Minibus-crew as well as the audience, led to the formation of a kind of critical encounter which interrogated scripted constructions and long-standing narratives of the German nation and thus at least formed a basis for the emergence of a convivial engagement with Germany as a postmigratory society. More specifically, the musical encounter engendered a critical interruption into a racialised narrative of the German nation which establishes 'non-migration as the norm of intelligible national and European belonging' (Tudor, 2018: 4) and as such relegates people with a direct or indirect migration history to the outer margins of German history, memory and identity.

The Project X producers, designing their project precisely to challenge this very discourse, chose to conceptualise the Minibus around the so-called guestworker route in order to highlight 'this important part of German history which however is often ignored by Germany's majority society' as the dramaturge describes (interview May

2016, Berlin). Aiming to show the historic and current transnational connections between Turkey and Germany, in both a social and geographical sense, the Minibus travelled along the guestworker route with guest performance in neighbourhoods in Vienna, Sofia and Belgrade before ultimately arriving and performing in Istanbul. While Murat described the final performance in Istanbul as ‘if the Minibus would finally come home’, not everyone in the audience seemed to share that understanding. Instead, the woman who asked why the Minibus would have ‘come all the way to Istanbul to show this piece’ seemed to draw the conclusion that the guestworker history would be portrayed as a Turkish rather than a ‘German story’.

Her comments precisely exposed the dominant framing of Germany as a non-immigration country, in which particularly the Turkish German minority has been placed as the eternal immigrant who is continuously assigned the category ‘with migration background [...] until generation x’ (El-Tayeb, 2016: 8). As El-Tayeb (2016: 9; own translation, emphasis in the original) puts it in a nutshell,

‘just when the panic around the Turkish minority abated and a hesitant discussion started whether this group would indeed be a *German* minority, the panic around Muslims came in – a group, whose foreignness could now be discovered anew, even though they had already been discovered in panic first as “guestworkers” and then as “Turks”’.

Going back to Born’s (2017: 43) analysis of music’s socialities, we can moreover observe how music-making and performance are deeply ‘entangled in and refract[] wider social relations, from the most concrete to the most of collectivities’. On the one hand, the heightening tensions in the post-performance Q&A forcefully pronounced ‘music’s instantiation of the nation, of social hierarchies [and] of the social relations of class, race, religion, ethnicity’ (ibid.: 43). On the other hand, it is precisely due to this critical pronunciation that the Minibus became a platform on which such racialised narrations of the German nation and its Turkish minorities could be scrutinised. By

pushing for the ‘guestworker story’ to be acknowledged as ‘a German story’, dominant discourses of national memory, identity and belonging could be addressed and, at least in the momentarily, unsettled. In this vein, the woman’s comments might also be interpreted as a coded statement against German theatre companies coming to Istanbul and ‘giving culture’ which, while certainly not Project X’s intention, still forces the director team to sit with and reflect on such readings of their work.

Against this backdrop, the musical encounter engendered a critical debate of precisely these long-standing othering discourses; however, it did so not by glancing over such racialised narratives of the German nation but in a conflictual way – that is, the dialogue between the audience member and the Project X producers sparked this particular debate in the first place. Here, we can see how conflict and contest can indeed create productive settings in which scripted ideas of identity and difference can be addressed. More specifically, it seems to be the very ability to let conflict unfold as part of the musical performance and the Q&A session, even when it puts the cultural producers in an uncomfortable position, which makes the interrogation of hegemonic power relations possible. This, I suggest, allows for a more sustained commitment to urban conviviality (even on a transnational level), one that does not ignore persisting inequality but aims to expose and challenge it.

Strikingly, however, the woman’s focus on (re)assigning a specific migration history to a particular national body, may this process be ever so critical of dominant narratives of the German nation, still very much hinges on the acceptance of ‘the nation’ as the political and cultural determinate of belonging and identity. The audience member’s rejection of accepting Germany’s guestworker histories as a part of Turkish history as well seemed to make Murat rather uncomfortable, even to that point that he fell silent completely. Telling me afterwards that he didn’t quite

understand the strict distinction between these two countries in discussions about migration indicates that, in his everyday life as part of Berlin's Turkish diaspora, the decision to be either German or Turkish cannot be answered in such a clear-cut way. Instead, Murat's hesitant reaction signalled precisely the in-betweenness of 'diasporic identity formation as a negotiation between cultures and epistemes' (Moorti, 2003: 364), which is inherently characterised by the blurring of national boundaries, histories and cultural and ethnic identities (see also Brah, 1996; Fortier, 2000; Georgiou, 2006; Hall, 2000). It however appeared that in the process of critically reviewing Germany's racialised narrative of itself, there was no space (place) left for narratives such as Murat's which could not be grasped by a dualist representation of nation and immigration.

As Ahmed (2000: 78) describes, the central significance of the nation in dominant debates around identity and belonging would position diasporic groups as constantly out of place, as perpetually homeless:

'[t]he narrative of leaving home produces too many homes and hence no Home, too many places in which memories attach themselves through the carving out of inhabitable space, and hence no place the memories can allow the past to reach the present [...] The movement between homes allows Home to become a fetish, to be separated from the particular worldly space of living here, through the possibility of some memories and the impossibility of others. [...] In such a construction, the strangers are the ones who, in leaving the home of their nation, are the bodies out of place in the everyday world they inhabit, and in the communities in which they come to live.'

On the one hand, then, the Minibus-performance stimulated a musical encounter which exposed and unsettled racialised constructions of German memory and identity and as such might have established a basis for more convivial relationships to arise. On the other hand, however, concepts of memory and identity continued to be framed in national terms, fetishising both the very concept of national belonging and of its counterpart, the diasporic stranger. The musical performance was thus shaped by

simultaneous processes of deconstruction and reproduction: While it indeed resulted in a critical interrogation of particular national narratives, established scripts of the nation as such prevailed.

It is this innate contingency of cross-ethnic and cross-cultural interactions that the notion of critical encounter aims to encompass. That is to say that even when engrained constructions of Otherness might be disrupted in the moment of encounter, thus building a crucial foundation for the emergence of a convivial mode of urban sociality, other forms of inequality might be re-enacted. I argue that it is imperative to acknowledge this innate unfinishedness of urban encounters to avoid romanticising notions of urban life that ignore the lasting and changing spatial, racialised and class inequalities that shape the multicultural city. For Project X's cultural producers who seek to open up urban encounters, it is hence crucial to recognise and continuously allow for moments of contest and conflict to arise.

In order to function as critical encounters, performances of multiculture moreover require the formation of affective relationships and alliances. The following excerpt precisely demonstrates how Project X opens up a space for postmigratory solidarities to form and be articulated. However, it also illustrates how urban encounters, even when resulting in convivial processes, can concomitantly become sites of the re-inscription of hierarchies that play out in the wider urban environment. While it is the forgoing data example which most clearly testifies to how Project X's Minibus can establish the social, affective and spatial conditions that allow for a convivial multiculture to unfold, it also indicates how such convivial moments are fleeting, ambivalent and unstable. Thus, it again speaks to the processual nature of critical encounters that need to be understood as an ongoing social commitment rather than as a singular cultural intervention.

Fieldnote 3 (November 2016, community centre in Berlin Neukölln)

It is a late afternoon in early November. Today, we are guests at a community centre in the Rollbergkiez in Neukölln. About 30 people sit in the centre's main event room, I see a lot of families with small children, some elderly couples. Like in most spaces the Minibus-team has been to, there is no stage and no backstage, improvisation is key. Where to do the costume changes and how to arrange the stage equipment can only be decided once we arrive at the place of the performance around an hour before its' start. Like in most performances, Alicja's (soprano) delivery of the popular Turkish song 'Dağlar Dağlar' was one of the most celebrated moments of today's show. I saw people swinging along with closed eyes, forming the lyrics with their lips. In the post-performance Q&A, an elderly man raised his hand: 'Thank you so much for this... Dağlar Dağlar is so beautiful – you brought tears to my eyes. It means so much to hear Turkish music sang on stage. I didn't know opera people would do that'. Someone else, a young woman in her early twenties, took over and asked if it was tough for Alicja to learn the Turkish lyrics. 'It took a while', she admitted, 'I just moved here from Poland and have to learn German and now Turkish also, I hope I pronounced everything correctly', the elderly man claps his hands, 'you did well, and you will learn German quickly, I'm sure'. 'It's a tough language', Alicja says and a few older people in the audience nod in agreement. After the Q&A we're all served tea and cookies that some of the organising women at the centre prepared. It's a relatively chatty atmosphere, many audience members continue to engage in conversation with the musicians. You hear a multitude of languages, my ears catch bits of German, Turkish, Arabic, Farsi, some Greek. I am joined by Michail, the tenor of today's performance who had just joined the Minibus-team. Asking him how he liked his first Minibus-performance, he unexpectedly does not talk about the music at all, but instead tells me the following: 'Remember that last time I saw you at our rehearsal I told you that I didn't really have any expectations for this project? I didn't know what this was really about and just took on the role because they told me to at the opera. But it weirdly feels like an identity trip, to be honest'. He smiles and shakes his head. 'You know that my parents are Russian, right? We came when I was three because they didn't feel safe in Russia because of their Jewish faith... So, ironically, they came to Berlin. I always felt at home here, but most of my friends growing up were just German [his fingers draw quotation marks into the air], I was always Michail, the guy with the migration background. But today... I don't know, I got to chat to so many people here, you know, and they all have some other background. I'm Russian, most of the people here seem to be of Turkish or Arabic descent – but actually, it doesn't seem to matter where your family is from precisely, because it's just normal that everyone has a history somewhere else. It's weird, I lived all my life in Berlin, but I have rarely been to this particular neighbourhood actually. It's very different to the opera.' Me: 'Different in what way?' Michail: 'Hmmm... I don't know, here it seems like real city life, you know. Districts like Neukölln have a bad rep often, in the media and stuff, but it's not like that, people are so nice, and it seems very communal.'

The ways in which this musical encounter resulted in convivial relationships are particularly well exhibited by the elderly man's reaction to Alicja's 'Dağlar Dağlar' interpretation. The song seems to activate a deep emotional reaction on his part to the point that it 'brought tears to [his] eyes'. This might of course partly be due to personal memories and sentiments he connects to this song or frankly due to the song's aesthetic qualities – 'Dağlar Dağlar is so beautiful'. His comments, however, also imply another layer of meaning that stems from moments of surprise and astonishment. To him, '[i]t means so much to hear Turkish music sang on stage' because he 'didn't know opera

people would do that'. Here, surprise seems to stem from the fact that he believed Turkish music to be absent from or located outside of Berlin's highbrow music institutions.

His reaction mirrors other participants' reflections, which I have discussed in previous chapters of this thesis (in particular Chapters 3 and 7) that point to the exclusivity of opera institutions as representative of a broader German cultural discourse. Exclusivity here bears a double-meaning. First, it highlights the excluding character of a cultural discourse that ignores certain voices, misrepresents or even actively works against them. Secondly, exclusivity refers to Western art music's perceived social standing as part of Germany's *Hochkultur*, which implicitly consecrates both racial and class hierarchies in discourses of cultural capital, value and legitimacy. The elderly man's comments in the post-performance Q&A can be read as an exposure of exactly such power relations.

Yet, his reaction is a congratulatory, empathetic one – the immediateness of the musical performance and the personal contact between the audience and the musicians themselves seemed to establish a closer way of dialogue that allowed for new alliances to be formed. Music, in this context, established a means to aggregate 'its listeners into affective alliances [...] or publics based on musical and other identifications' (Born et al., 2017: 43). This became especially clear in the subsequent conversation between the audience members and Alicja who admitted that, having recently moved to Berlin from Poland, she had a hard time learning both German and Turkish in preparation for this performance. This experience of language-learning seemingly shared by her and some of the elderly people in the audience, whose nodding indicated a certain familiarity with Alicja's story, unlocked new forms of understanding that not only disrupted the distinction between artist and audience but also created moments

of a postmigratory solidarity that me and other people from the Minibus-team without migration histories could not be part of in the same way.

Here, solidarity ‘as a normative and ethical concept but also as a practice, that is an emotional orientation’ (Nobrega, 2016: 158-159) was formed around what Juliet Hooker (2009: 5) describes as a ‘fellow feeling’ stemming from different yet shared experiences of migration. Despite critically taking note of the dissimilarities in migration histories and the endured racialisations and labour positions respectively inhabited by Alicja and the different audience members, their common experience of language-learning created at least fleeting moments of a postmigratory solidarity⁸⁸. The music performance therefore engendered potential ‘social imaginaries that are assembled or affectively constituted specifically by musical practice and musical experience’ (Born et al., 2017: 43) and that enabled the formation of new alliances across diverse migratory biographies.

The Minibus-performance thus opened up convivial avenues for a pronunciation of Berlin’s everyday multiculture. This point is further elaborated by the comments Michail shared with me after the performance. Describing his first Minibus-experience as an ‘identity trip’, he especially recognised that most of the audience members ‘all have some other background’ which would put them into a similar position to himself whose parents moved to Berlin from Russia. He thus insinuated a feeling of commonality between him and the audience members that he seemed to lack with his childhood friends, most of them being ‘just German’. Moreover, Michail’s

⁸⁸ As Hooker (2009: 29-30; cited in Nobrega, 2016) further points out, solidarity would need to be understood as ‘a normative orientation that moves us to action on behalf of others’. I therefore describe these moments of solidarity as fleeting only as it remains unsure if solidarity here can be any more than a momentary connection. When solidarity is mediated through racial differences, Hooker further points to the ‘seemingly paradoxical dynamic: existing racial injustice and inequality pose a fundamental obstacle to the development of solidarity, while it is also precisely the absence of such solidarity that makes it seem improbable, if not impossible, that racial justice will ever be achieved’ (2009: 5).

observations seemed to interrogate the very demarcation between being German without and ‘with migratory background’, still so commonly performed in German public discourse (see El-Tayeb, 2016, 1999; Nobrega, 2016; Steyerl and Gutiérrez Rodriguez, 2012).

He instead took note of the very ordinariness of urban multiculture when he observed that ‘it doesn’t seem to matter where your family is from precisely, because it’s just normal that everyone has a history somewhere else’. It is this acknowledgment of Berlin’s everyday multiculture paired up with a certain ‘ethos of indifference to difference’ (Amin, 2013) that precisely corresponds to a ‘radical conviviality’ emphasised by Valluvan (2016: 218) as the capacity to invoke difference while averting groupist maxims. As such, similarly to the conversations between the audience members and Alicja, Michail’s reflections illustrate how the musical performance as a vehicle of critical encounter exposed the racialised nature of German public discourses on national identity by convivially confusing the very distinctions between citizen, migrant and citizen of migratory background.

These convivial processes also bear a spatial dimension. For the conversation between the audience and Alicja to take place, it needed precisely such an intimate and immediate setting as provided by the Minibus. As for most performances, the collaborating neighbourhood centre did not have the spatial possibilities as venues that put on cultural events and concerts on a regular basis (see Figures 8 and 9).

Like in most venues, the pictures show that there was neither a stage, nor a designated backstage area. This physical absence of a distancing stage, the close spatial contact between the musicians and the audience, the instantly powerful music (you can literally feel the instruments' vibrations in your body), the interactive dramaturgy (in many moments of the show the two singers purposefully engage in close interactions with the audience to break the fourth wall) are signs for Project X's objective to play with and break through more formalised approaches to music theatre performances. Overcoming the boundary of the stage in these ways made it possible to overcome boundaries in a more discursive sense as well.⁸⁹

Michail himself reflects on urban boundaries again in a more geographical way when he highlights that despite growing up in Berlin, he had rarely been to Neukölln; an area that he conceives of as 'very different to the opera'. After asking him to specify what he meant by it, he said it would seem 'like real city life'. Contrasting the negative stereotypes, the 'bad rep' that areas like Neukölln would often be subjected to in public discourse, Michail objected that 'it's not like that', that the people he met 'are so nice' and that the atmosphere at the centre seemed 'very communal'. During my fieldwork, I have witnessed numerous performances of the Minibus in Berlin, with the vast majority of them taking place in districts like Neukölln, Kreuzberg and Wedding which are known for their long-standing working-class cultures and migration histories. Following many of the conversations I had with the Project X team in these contexts, Michail's comments seemed to get to the heart of a more general view held by most of the cultural producers involved in the Minibus-project. That is, I was often told that it would be important for them as Berlin-based cultural producers 'to see

⁸⁹ Konzel's (2017) analysis of the social aesthetics of contact improvisation in dance could provide an interesting read for those interested in thinking through spatiality of performance and audience/artist confusions.

different sides of the city' (interview with Murat in September 2016, Berlin), 'to break through stereotypes that are imposed on these inner-city neighbourhoods' (interview with Nicolai in June 2016, Berlin) or 'to get out of your own comfort zone and really see Berlin in all its wonderful multifacetedness' (interview with a contrabass player in June 2016, Berlin).

These comments seem to express a shared objective among the Project X team to challenge the negative discourses around the migratory and economically disadvantaged areas of Berlin, precisely by crossing urban spatial boundaries. Despite such critical efforts, however, I suggest that they still risk performing a different kind of discursive marginalisation: While the above-noted comments all reflect the overarching aim of the Minibus to challenge marginalising discourses of place by performing in urban areas to which most of the opera institution's cultural producers have only seldomly been, they are also accompanied by such 'romanticising tendencies' (Valentina, 2008: 235) that Matejskova and Leidner (2011) identified as the 'troubling undercurrents' of some urban scholarship.⁹⁰

To clarify this further, let me draw back to Ahmed (2000) and her book *Strange Encounters* in which she grapples with and deconstructs the figure of 'the stranger' which, so Ahmed argues, has become fetishised. That is, its construction becomes dehistoricised and cut off from a critical discussion of the socio-economic and political histories that have underwritten its construction in the first place (i.e. imperial and colonial legacies, racialised citizenship debates, Germany's particular migration policies, rising housing prices in Berlin, gentrification processes). As such, the fetishisation of the stranger results in a bolstering of Western identity and agency at

⁹⁰ Before discussing this aspect further in the following, I want to make clear that these tendencies have been mirrored in many different conversations I had with different research participants throughout the entire fieldwork processes; Michail's interview snippet simply serves as an illustrating example.

the expense of ‘other others’, who are in turn being rendered fixed, static, and reified. Following Ahmed, the figure of the stranger can be marked as both dangerous and to be repelled and excluded (see e.g. the negative discourses around Neukölln) or as worth celebrating, to be welcomed and included – ‘it is the processes of expelling or welcoming the one who is recognised as a stranger that produce the figure of the stranger in the first place’ (ibid.: 3).

We can see this dialectical process most clearly reflected in Michail’s attempt to challenge the idea of a Neukölln as a *strange place* that evokes fear and resentment by pointing out the communal, convivial atmosphere at the neighbourhood centre. It is this discursive turn, the very process of familiarisation, which continues to hold the stranger in its Othered place. As Ahmed elucidates (2000: 3), whereas “‘stranger danger’ discourse may work by expelling the stranger as the origin of danger, multicultural discourse may operate by welcoming the stranger as the origin of difference’. Thus, while the Minibus-team seems to be concerned with challenging the danger discourse around Neukölln and similar neighbourhoods in the city, they also run the risk of simultaneously reproducing the figure of the stranger (or of the strange place) as a fetishised, de-historicised object of knowledge. This process therefore clearly breaks with the ethos of conviviality: As Valluvan (2016: 207) maintains, conviviality would precisely not require ethnic differences to be accommodated ‘vis-à-vis the white majority, but should simply cease to require scrutiny and evaluation in the first place’. According to him, ‘[f]ailure to rework multiculture within a framework of conviviality [...] is likely to result in epistemologies which continue to presume identities of difference to be both ontologically authentic and culturally separate’ (ibid.: 207). In this light, the Minibus-performance discussed above precisely illuminates how social and spatial boundaries can be unsettled and reconstructed in

the same instance of urban encounter and underlines the meaning of music as an important vector for multicultural, cross-ethnic interaction. On the one hand, the musical encounter opened up moments of conviviality by breaking through a dualist migrant-citizen discourse and by forging new postmigratory alliances that critically interrogated marginalising narratives of Berlin's inner-city neighbourhoods. On the other hand, however, the urban space became somewhat fetishised as the multicultural Other and as the exoticised counterpoint to the more homogenous, exclusive (German) opera house.

This constantly ambivalent even paradoxical process of boundary de- and reconstruction is not only detectable in this particular instance of music performance but, as I already suggested earlier in this chapter, is an innate feature of the very nature of urban encounter. Hence, even encounters that seem to critically unsettle hegemonic relations of power in favour of convivial multicultural relationships are still characterised by antagonism and contingency. As this third fieldwork episode signifies, it therefore follows that conviviality as a mode of urban sociality has to be recognised as always in process, always requiring to be renegotiated anew. For cultural producers such as the Project X team, who seek to critically engage with the multicultural, postmigratory city, it is pivotal to reflect on their work in the broader historical and political context that has shaped particular discursive and spatial configurations in the urban sphere in the first place. Decoupling their cultural engagement from such critical reflections will make it impossible to escape ultimately marginalising discourses of Otherness, may it be in spatial or social terms, which undermines the very possibility of convivial multicultural relationships. Instead, (inter)cultural projects that set out to contest and challenge racialised and classed

discourses manifesting in the urban space might ultimately contribute to their perpetuation.

Conclusion

This chapter was concerned with Project X's objective to interrogate the dualist relationship between the opera institution as a highbrow institution and the wider multicultural city by creating moments of urban encounter. As my data examples illustrated, urban encounters do not necessarily result in convivial processes but can just as much, and often simultaneously, become sites of power assertion and of marginalising scripts of difference. In putting forward the concept of *critical encounters*, I therefore aimed to capture the ambiguous, contingent and unfinished nature of urban encounters as inherently shaped by and emerging from long-standing relations of inequality and power. Based on my analysis, I further argued that we need a more processual understanding of convivial multiculture itself that pays attention to the ways in which urban inequalities can be at once challenged and re-invoked in the moment of cross-cultural and cross-ethnic encounter. Conviviality, I suggest, cannot be seen as a fully accomplished mode of urban sociality but needs to be understood as a continuous commitment to critically negotiating the ongoing antagonisms and contingencies of urban multicultural life.

For the Project X producers and the opera institution more broadly, it is hence imperative to carefully examine how the spatial, social and affective dimensions of their musical performances allow for certain kinds of cross-cultural and cross-ethnic interaction to take place and how they foreclose others. What emerged as most striking from my analysis is that the extent to which Project X was able to unlock convivial multicultural relationships depended not only on the interweaving of social and spatial

dynamics but also on the willingness of the cultural producers to allow and encourage critique and contest in the first place. In this vein, it is pivotal for urban cultural producers to interrogate their own work as part of the broader political and socioeconomic histories that have shaped the postmigratory city. When intercultural projects such as Project X fail to develop a self-reflexive and historically grounded approach to urban inequalities, they risk re-engaging in precisely the marginalising discourses of racialised, classed and spatial Otherness they set out to disrupt. While Project X does indeed unlock moments of a postmigratory conviviality, I nevertheless contend that the project's creative linkages with the multicultural city can never be freed from antagonism, ambivalence and unequal power relations and as such lead to cultural interventions that simultaneously unmake and remake urban inequalities. I contend that the extent to which productive critical encounters might be unlocked by urban musical performances crucially depends on the reflexive capacities of the cultural producers themselves.

Chapter 9: Conclusion – performing interculture in contemporary Berlin or: ‘One Turk does not make a summer’

[D]iversity in the arts translates differently into the practices of theatres in Berlin, depending on whether diversity is understood as a commitment to social and racial justice and equality or serves as an additional profile of the venue, in which hegemonic, conservative and anti-Muslim discourses are reproduced under the banner of “cultural difference” rather than challenged’ (Nobrega, 2016: 45).

Restaging Project X

This thesis investigated how interculture is constructed in the context of Project X. As a contemporary music project organised by the opera institution Berlin since 2011, it has aimed to interrogate its social and cultural position as part of Germany’s Western art music sector and work especially with Turkish German artists and communities in Berlin. As such, Project X has been developed in the midst of larger debates about the social and economic legitimacy of state-funded highbrow art institutions and, connected therewith, about diversity in the arts (or rather, lack thereof) that take place in Berlin and Germany more broadly. That is, Project X provides insight into Germany’s traditional highbrow art sector, into the social and economic pressures facing its institutions and into the ways in which these aim to maintain their social position as hegemonic sites of cultural legitimacy. The project hence exemplifies current discourses in cultural sociology which are concerned with the remaking of cultural distinctions and with the emergence of new formations of cultural capital: The ways in which Project X’s relationship to reviewing the aesthetic set-up of the opera institution in favour of the multicultural city can be grasped from this post-Bourdiesian angle therefore speak to broader discussions of the reproduction of social inequalities and cultural elite formations under conditions of the 21st century.

Within this relationship, Project X specifically links to larger debates around diversity in the arts which run in close parallel to wider discourses around a multicultural, postmigratory German society and which have aimed at making the cultural production sector – especially the state-funded institutions – more accessible to artists, audiences and narratives that have been ignored by and excluded from Germany's cultural and institutional mainstream. However, as I have discussed in this study, critics on both the practitioner and the scholarly side note that the notion of diversity has become an empty signifier, a term designating everything and nothing and ultimately a lens through which systematic power structures tend to be concealed and reproduced not despite but precisely because of the translation of diversity agendas into institutional life. As such, diversity initiatives would not be taken seriously as a call for a fundamental institutional reworking and a critical confrontation with society's systematic racialised, gendered and class-based exclusions. Instead, a formal recognition of diversity would often run the risk of serving as an institutional and political justification for not addressing more deep-seated inequalities in the cultural sector and society more broadly. Even more so, by being deeply tangled up with commodification processes and institutional workings that derive value (monetary or otherwise) from ethnic and cultural difference, diversity initiatives would ultimately sustain endemic logics of 'race'-making that center around institutional whiteness and that keep reductive constructions of Otherness in place.

The tension between a reproductive approach to and a more profound, reflexive understanding of diversity also relates to notions of interculture or multiculture and is further heightened by wider urban developments and overarching discourses around the postcolonial, postmigratory city. As my thesis elucidated, Berlin again provides an exemplary case study of a city which, on the one hand, is significantly shaped by urban

multicultural developments and long-standing migration processes and is home to a vibrant and rich arts scene, while on the other hand, has either ignored or strategically exploited its urban diversity as a city-branding strategy: As the city's slogan literally puts it – 'be Berlin, be diverse'⁹¹. This marketisation of Berlin's urban diversity particularly focuses on the city's creative industries and its districts with long-standing multicultural and working-class histories, without however protecting such neighborhoods from the socioeconomic pressures of an increasing privatisation and gentrification that is its consequence. Subsequently, most of Berlin's diversity policies either follow integrationist agendas, and thus fit into the broader political objectives of a state-centered multiculturalism, or are tied to cosmopolitan conceptions of the city fit for diversity-seeking consumers, the international creative class and global business to move in.

Yet, Berlin's (state-funded) cultural sector has certainly not stood idly by but has opened up profound and critical approaches to urban multiculture and postmigratory socialities. For instance, led by artists of colour, the work of the *Ballhaus Naunynstraße*, the *Gorki Theater*, the *SAVY* gallery, *Berlin Postkolonial*, *Werkstatt der Kulturen* or *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* has further pushed for a more reflexive investigation into Germany's colonial and imperial pasts and into institutional racism in cultural production, while at the same time being committed to highlighting and exhibiting the long-standing creative contributions by minority cultural producers and artists of colour, both locally and transnationally. Whereas for these cultural organisations the objective to diversify the arts means to fundamentally review cultural production's institutional structures and explore new creative routes,

⁹¹ For more information behind this city-slogan, please see: <https://www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/kulturpolitik/kulturelle-teilhabe/kulturelle-vielfalt/artikel.626848.php>

talks about cultural diversity have simultaneously become a signifier for a wider debate about Germany's grappling with its own imperial and migratory histories and with the political, social and cultural legacies currently playing out in society.

Debates about Germany as a postmigratory, multicultural and multi-religious society have hence crucially shaped contemporary public debates around citizenship, belonging and identity. This goes hand in hand with a growing discussion about the persistence of racism expressed in Germany's institutional systems and everyday interactions. Public initiatives such as #metwo (inspired by the #metoo movement) have called critical attention to the quotidian experiences of racism to which Germans of colour are continuously subjected. Moreover, following the 'long summer of migration' in 2015, migrant solidarity initiatives, civil society activism and anti-racism marches have experienced new heights across the country. At the same time, however, the high number of attacks against refugee homes and Islamophobic hate crimes⁹², the 2018 Chemnitz riots⁹³ of the extreme right, the widening support for the AFD and, most recently, the assassination of the local politician Walter Lübcke⁹⁴ drastically evince how rightwing extremism is working its way back into Germany's political mainstream. Berlin as the country's capital has certainly been a focal point of such anachronistic developments with many activists, artists and scholars based in the

⁹² Following statistics published by the German *Bundeskriminalamt* [Federal Criminal Police Office], the magazine for Migration in Germany 'MIGAZIN' (2019) stated that, in 2018, there have been attacks on refugee homes almost every second day, trend decreasing. In 2015, violence against refugee homes reached a cruel peak of 1.031 registered attacks; a number that only slightly decreased to 995 incidents in 2016.

⁹³ The Chemnitz riots took place on 26 August 2018, after a fight broke out at a local city festival which led to the death of a Cuban German man and to two other people being seriously injured. Four immigrants of Syrian, Iraqi and Kurdish background, respectively, were stated as suspects. The incident resulted in a mass protest against immigration and spawned riots throughout the city. These were followed by anti-racist counter demonstrations culminating in the music festival 'Wir sind mehr' [we are more] which took place on 3 September 2019 and drew over 65.000 visitors to Chemnitz.

⁹⁴ Walter Lübcke was a German local politician and member of the CDU in a town called Hesse. He was murdered at his home on 2 June 2019 by the neo-Nazi Stephan Ernst who has expressed hatred for Lübcke because of his support for refugees and migrants.

city working towards a profound recognition of Germany as a multicultural country, while the AFD was voted into the *Landtag* [federal state parliament] (see Abgeordnetenhaus 2016) as well as the *Bundestag* [national parliament] (see Deutscher Bundestag 2017) with 14,1% and 12,6%, respectively.

In the context of this volatile political moment, ‘Germany’s polarising “Turkish issue”’ (Özvatan, 2019) has returned once again as signifier for racialised debates around the country’s ethnic and cultural self-perception. Deteriorating bilateral relationships between Germany and Turkey – exemplified by the heated discussions around Merkel’s EU-Turkey refugee deal and by Erdoğan’s electoral success amongst Turkish voters living in Germany – put the controversy surrounding Turkish German citizenship and identity back on the map of domestic politics, with a number of politicians and public commentators calling into question the legitimacy of the dual citizenship arrangement and Turkish Germans’ overall loyalty to Germany. This revitalisation of the ‘Turkish issue’ has been most shockingly exemplified by AFD co-leader Alexander Gauland’s verbal attacks against Aydan Özoguz (SPD), the then Federal Commissioner for Immigration, Refugees and Integration. After she had published an article declaring that ‘a specific German culture, beyond the German language, is not identifiable’ (Özoguz, 2017), Gauland responded with a statement in which he called for her to be ‘dispatched’ back to Anatolia. While his words were instantly condemned by politicians from across the political spectrum, the timing of Gauland’s attack shows how widely shared such racialised notions of German identity indeed are: Whilst Özoguz’s article already appeared in May 2017, Gauland chose to publish his statement only around three weeks before Germany’s national elections in September 2017 which marked the AFD’s first entry into the national parliament.

What does it mean for a project like Project X to take place at this current moment, creatively and politically? How does Project X's intercultural approach fit into this larger push for a more diverse arts in the state-funded cultural sector and how does it relate to the remaking of inequalities of 'race' and class? And, looking back at the specific focus of this thesis, how does the project construct itself as an intercultural, Turkish German project against the backdrop of contemporary Berlin? In light of such questions, I thought through the aesthetical and organisational practices that underwrite this project to analyse how particular notions of interculture are being enacted and how those relate to broader discourses of cultural value, legitimacy and Otherness that shape inequalities in Berlin's cultural sector and beyond – in short, I examined *how interculture is performed* in the context of Project X.

Against this backdrop, I was interested in the relationship between contemporary music production, musical practice and a politics of representation, particularly with regards to Berlin's long-standing histories of migration and the ways in which intercultural music production works with and constructs particular notions of difference. I closely looked at the musical, dramaturgical and visual materials themselves but also linked such aesthetic discussions to the broader institutional workings of the opera institution. As such, I aimed to situate the analysis of the micro-practices and micro-socialities of cultural production within the wider institutional logics and aesthetic histories, patterns of urban inequality and overarching discourses of 'race', migration, class and gender that operate in Germany's public sphere. In Part One of this thesis, I introduced my research project (Chapter 1), discussed my theoretical framework (Chapter 2), established the wider context of this study (Chapter 3) and outlined my methodological approach (Chapter 4). In Part Two, I zoomed into different fields of tensions raised by Project X's intercultural approach, looking

closely at practices of intercultural music-making (Chapter 5), visual curation practices (Chapter 6), processes of institutional change, social mobility and reproduction (Chapter 7) and forms of urban encounter (Chapter 8).

My study revealed how Project X indeed partly succeeds to provide an aesthetical and social space of encounter in which hegemonic notions of difference, cultural value and legitimacy can be addressed and negotiated. Working through different dimensions of the project's intercultural approach, I not only showed how Project X initiates a critical engagement with the highbrow sector's elitist histories by encouraging access and interrogating its relationship with the wider urban spaces of Berlin, but also discussed the ways in which Project X formed disruptive Turkish German narratives by unsettling dominant representations of Otherness in both the musical material itself as well as on- and offstage. However, I equally drew out the ways in which the project's intercultural efforts fall short, how it reifies rather than disrupts the standardised practices of Berlin's Western art music sector and under which conditions it re-inscribes classed and racialised inequalities and hierarchies that not only shape cultural institutions but that also extend into wider discourses of citizenship, identity and belonging in Germany.

My overall analysis thus exposed how the project, despite the genuine efforts of its producers and collaborators to critically engage with inequalities in Berlin's cultural sector, nonetheless reproduces marginalising discourses of racialised and classed Otherness when it relegates transgressive musical representations back into the dominant production logics of a Western art music institution. However, when musicians and participants are granted autonomy and the space to be critical, Project X succeeds at challenging the highbrow German socio-cultural order – it is when institutional imperatives step into the intercultural process that it fails to do so. That

is, while Project X's efforts to push for critical Turkish German interventions in the highbrow sphere have been partly successful, the institutionalisation of the project's rapprochement to urban multiculture ultimately generates a form of 'emerging cultural capital' that subscribes to and sustains a system of 'white multiculturalism': Reified constructions of raced and classed difference and exclusionary ideas of urban and national identity are indeed being challenged, but the overarching, unequal logics of who is in control of that (re)construction work, who defines its purpose and who can reap its benefits remain firmly in place.

Key findings

This thesis bears theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions for the field of cultural sociology. I specifically hope that my study provides a useful perspective and framework for researchers concerned with critical cultural production literature, urban, migration and citizenship studies as well as for scholars with a keener interest in music and its social significance. Empirically, my study enhances the knowledge of a cultural production site often understudied in both qualitative sociological and ethnomusicological research by directing the ethnographic focus towards the Western art music sector. In both cultural studies and cultural sociology more generally, scholarship on cultural production and the politics of representation has favored investigations into the market-oriented popular cultural and media industries.⁹⁵ Urban-oriented research has similarly rather focused on the popular culture scene, which supposedly gives a better insight into the fast-pacing innovations of urban arts and their multicultural groundings as well as into their entanglements with broader

⁹⁵ For notable exceptions, see e.g. Born (1995), Bull (2014), Nobrega (2016), Saha (2013), Scharf (2019).

socioeconomic inequalities as showing, for instance, in gentrification processes, global cultural industries or urban resistance.

Against this backdrop, my thesis presents a crucial empirical addition. As I suggested throughout this thesis, an ethnographic investigation into highbrow cultural production can produce important understandings of the ways in which its aesthetical and organisational dynamics interlink with broader discourses of representation and patterns of inequality. Such an approach proves particularly helpful for tracing possible changes as well as continuances of highbrow institutions as markers of cultural distinction and social power by looking at how processes of inclusion and exclusion, of mobility and elitism are being negotiated in creative practice. As I laid out, such an investigation bears a particular significance for a contemporary cultural politics in Berlin where the state-subsidised art sector still claims a form of ‘national capital’ but is at the same time increasingly forced to react to growing socioeconomic pressures and challenging diversity in the arts debates. Analysing how the social legitimacy of highbrow culture is called into question and how it is remade or reformed thus gives insight into overarching cultural developments and into debates of distinction, identity and belonging that shape contemporary Berlin and Germany more widely. In a similar vein, my thesis speaks to a larger critical debate in ethnomusicology to review its colonial gaze by investigating Western art music production with the same reflexivity, rigor and scrutiny historically directed to the study of othered musics. As specifically put forward in Chapter 4, in this sense, I hope that my research adds to a provincialization of Western art music histories and institutions and, as such, contributes to the larger postcolonial project of ‘provincializing Europe’.

From a methodological perspective, my thesis further expanded upon recent scholarship⁹⁶ that proposes an analysis of the concrete practices and socialities of cultural production itself as a constructive way of researching and understanding how particular cultural representations come into being and how these link to broader patterns of exclusion, marginalisation and racialised notions of Otherness. Having conducted an ethnographic study that combined participant observation, qualitative interviewing and musicological reflections, I especially sought to bring an exploration of the aesthetic into the realm of sociological research and set it against a broader institutional and discursive analysis. For instance, by zooming into the processes of music-making in the context of Project X's opera commissions, I not only showed how disruptive musical representations in the form of *a postmigratory aesthetic imaginary* have been created but also how hegemonic notions of genre have been perpetuated through standardised institutional approaches to commissioning, rehearsing, compositing and performing (see Chapter 5). Moreover, I discussed how the conversations and decision-making processes around Project X's visual stage curations became a site of epistemological negotiation that simultaneously exposed the persistence of Orientalist logics and the emergence of a self-reflexive, liminal form of *public reflexivity* (see Chapter 6).

Building furthermore on music sociologists and social anthropologists⁹⁷ whose work has long been dedicated to further understanding the aesthetic/social nexus, my study also sought to unravel the social qualities and mediations of music that unfolded in Project X's creative practices. For example, particularly considering Project X's children's choir and the Minibus-programme (see Chapters 7 and 8), I examined how

⁹⁶ See e.g. Born (2010), Gray (2016), Hesmondalgh and Saha (2013), Nwonka (2015), Saha (2018).

⁹⁷ See e.g. Born (2010, 2017), DeNora (2001), Hennion (2016), Hesmondalgh (2016).

music-making and music performance become deeply affective social contexts within which convivial relationships could open up. While these allow for the subversion of fixed notions of ethnocultural, social and spatial difference, I equally showed how such musical mediations have been contained and limited by enforced institutional and social hierarchies.

Engaging in the qualitative assessment of aesthetic and organisational practices of cultural production against overarching institutional and discursive structures also bears methodological implications for a sociology interested in the contemporary reformation of forms of cultural distinction and the role these play for broader patterns of social inequality. While there has been an increasing interest, particularly within post-Bourdiesuan literature⁹⁸, in mapping the cultural profiles of urban elites by closely looking at people's cultural consumption patterns, such studies have predominantly offered quantitative evaluations and have favoured the consumer angle over an assessment of cultural production itself. By turning deliberately towards the sphere of cultural production, my thesis intended to contribute to a better comprehension of the ways in which hegemonic representations of cultural value and legitimacy are being formed, reproduced or disrupted in creative and institutional practice and how such dynamics interlink with social inequalities more broadly. Such a research approach presents an especially helpful perspective for those strands of sociology that are interested in the reformation of cultural capital and in what this can tell us about contemporary processes of social reproduction, mobility and the remaking of elite formations.

⁹⁸ See e.g. Friedman et al. (2015), Hanquinet, Roose and Savage (2014), Savage et al. (2018).

From a theoretical point of view, I developed an interdisciplinary approach appropriately equipped to address the nuances and complexities of contemporary music production as revealed by my ethnographic study. Most notably, I argued for a critical analytical recognition of hierarchical relationships around ‘race’ and class in theorisations of emerging forms of cultural capital, urban multicultural production and intercultural music-making. More specifically, I not only highlighted the crucial significance of cultural work for broader discourses of difference, citizenship and belonging, but also stressed how the very process of cultural production is indeed not innocent but deeply embedded in systems of political economy, citizenship and migration regulation, urban development and imperial histories. As such, my thesis sheds a critical light on how the institutional and aesthetic workings of a Western art music organisation can reproduce hierarchical representations of cultural value and legitimacy that are deeply rooted in long-standing reductive notions of racialised and classed difference, even if intercultural dynamics and diversity in the arts are promoted (see Chapters 5 and 6).

In this context, I demonstrated how considerations of interculture as a term of creative practice can vary between grounded approaches to everyday multiculture and strategic ideas of mobility, intercultural learning and emerging forms of cultural capital which lead to *a social commodification* of interculture by sustaining hegemonic relations of class, ‘race’ and ethnicity (see Chapter 7). My thesis thus illuminated how highbrow cultural interventions, including ones which are intended to encourage progressiveness, operate on a hierarchical terrain and thereby have reproductive social consequences. Thinking through the relationship between (intercultural) musical practice and urban multiculture, my thesis furthermore established how urban conviviality cannot be conceptualised as the fixed, fully accomplished result of urban

musical encounters, even if convivial moments develop in these contexts, but that we need to understand these *critical encounters* as inherently processual, contingent and unstable (see Chapter 8). I hence contended that intercultural work in the urban space can never be ‘finished’ but needs to be continuously rethought and adjusted in relation to its changing urban environment. It is through locally grounded, sustained and long-term commitments to urban conviviality and social equality that cultural productions concerned with urban multiculture should be conceptualised and put in practice.

Research implications

Thinking beyond this thesis, more research would be needed on how European cultural institutions deal with the increasing social and political pressures to review their entanglement with colonial and imperial pasts as well as with current geopolitical power relations. i.e. in terms of migration and visa regulations. Such research avenues should not only consider how these pressures are put forward and dealt with in institutional life by examining corresponding cultural funding and policy decisions but also how they translate into the creative and organisational practices themselves. It would be particularly important to investigate how such responses link to and negotiate the meaning and construction of notions of ‘heritage’ and to examine the ways in which these might be mobilised in initiatives for institutional change and in broader political discourses around postcolonial reconciliation and reparations.

These questions should certainly not only be posed at the transnational sphere but also consider dynamics on the local level: In Germany, negotiations of the country’s postmigratory state have well impacted the sphere of cultural production and have pushed for further research into the relationship between cultural institutions and everyday forms of multiculture. In this context, a wide scope of far-reaching and

important scholarship has hitherto been dedicated to discourses around ‘diversity’, ‘decolonisation’ or ‘provincialization’ of cultural, political and educational institutions. While I think that all these avenues present significant ways forward, it would also be important to draw out the theoretical nuances and differences of each of these conceptual approaches and examine their respective empirical consequences for contemporary cultural and political life.

Such investigations would also need to pay attention to the ways in which the economic conditions of art and cultural organisations are changing and how such challenges might impact on the ways in which raced, classed and gendered exclusions can be addressed institutionally and creatively. For instance, it would be important for future research to examine the consequences of public funding reductions and deep-cutting austerity measures for the accessibility to and the very notion of ‘public art’: Given the ways in which more and more arts funding is diverted away from public spending making cultural institutions increasingly depend on private and corporate sponsorship, more research into the re-positioning of the arts away from its location in a distinctive public sphere and towards elite private privilege is needed. In this context, it would also be crucial to reflect on the aggravating consequences such neoliberal funding developments might bear for an already precarious field of labour. Especially for minority cultural producers, a further privatisation and precarisation of cultural work might not only lead to economic insecurity but may also further strengthen ‘marketable’ expressions of Otherness that are based on reified and reductive understandings of ethnic and cultural difference.

Lastly, I would like to encourage more research into the ways in which the social mediations of music and music-making can be grasped sociologically. As ‘a technology of the self’ (DeNora, 1999), practices of music production and

consumption constitute forms of self-experience and self-regulation – psychologically, bodily and socially – and thus provide insights into agentic processes of subjectivity formation. At the same time, as I have documented at various points throughout this thesis, music-making and listening are embedded in and simultaneously produce wider social, institutional and material assemblages and are hence deeply collective in nature. Whilst there has been a range of groundbreaking scholarship precisely dedicated to problematising the relationship between music's social mediations *in situ* and its wider macro-level context, it is due to the sheer immeasurability of musical forms and practices that such a project is inexhaustive and continues to present us with new and changing research challenges. Qualitative methods and in particular ethnographic approaches are not only uniquely positioned to expand on this exploration between the micro and the macro of musical dynamics, but can also draw out how an investigation into music's social mediations can provide insights into wider sociological concerns, such as questions of subjectivity, agency and affect as well as the role of cultural heritage, memory and distinction for social and political relations.

Interculture's creative and political implications

With regard to the broader implications of my study, this thesis hopes to be an ally to those artists, producers, activists and scholars that have long been dedicated to a fundamental reworking of the cultural production sphere and who still have to battle first hand with institutional racism, discrimination and marginalisation. In this sense, this thesis is especially indebted to Turkish German cultural workers in Berlin and elsewhere whose long struggle for equality and justice has achieved so much in the theatre scene and beyond. On a more practical level, my thesis not only offers a critical

review of intercultural efforts made in Berlin's cultural sector but also suggests a way forward for cultural projects that seek to engage with the multicultural city more broadly. In particular consideration of diversity programmes in the Berliner arts, my study of Project X demonstrates that it is not only about policies that focus on bringing more diverse bodies and narratives into the sphere of cultural production, but it is equally about the very concrete aesthetical and organisational practices that make up the institutional process of cultural production. In this sense, my analysis revealed how intercultural endeavors are marked by on-going structural ambivalences, contradictions and liminalities that manifest at every stage of the production process.

My thesis not only revealed how Project X itself offers both moments of critical disruption as well as moments of reproduction, but also indicated in more general terms that projects that seek to be diverse or intercultural, even when put in place by cultural producers with genuine efforts, often have reproductionist consequences. For such projects, it is vital to develop a detailed understanding of how interculture is being done in practice to understand how particular representational politics are constructed (willingly or not) in the cultural production sphere. This also demands for a conscious reflection on the ways in which Western cultural production is tied up with broader discourses of difference, imperial histories and unequal power relations in the public sphere more widely. Especially when intercultural programmes are put forward by the Western state-funded art sector, cultural producers have to tackle their interconnections with broader policy debates and political agendas and have to take into critical account how their own institutional positioning is not innocent but deeply entrenched in broader histories of power.

Moreover, I showed how intercultural programmes bring together people not only of diverse backgrounds but with different interests. That is, the cultural

production process, even if on the surface targeting an intercultural ideal, is a multilayered and interpersonal process in which the meaning of interculture can be massively disputed. Such meanings can vary from an understanding of interculture as a deep and critical commitment to reworking institutional legacies and hierarchies to strategic interpretations of interculture as a tool for social mobility or even as a means to secure institutional power and social privileges. In the latter case, interculture has clear reifying consequences not despite but because of its institutional recognition that diverts critical intervention away from challenging the histories and current manifestations that underwrite unequal relationships in cultural production in the first place. For cultural producers, it is hence pivotal to provide a space in which these different formulations of interculture can be shared, so that their differences and contradictions can at least be discussed. Moreover, intercultural work should as far as possible be delinked from the overarching production logics of highbrow institutions in order to mitigate the aesthetic, organisational and social boundaries otherwise imposed by such standardised institutional workings. I recognise that this poses a particularly difficult challenge for cultural producers as they have to negotiate spaces of creative freedom, while also being dependent on institutional resources. It is hence primarily the responsibility of the institutional directorship to provide as much flexibility and adjustment as possible to accommodate critical intercultural production processes.

Furthermore, for cultural producers who seek to particularly engage with urban multiculture, my analysis of the relationship between contemporary music production and discourses of the city elucidated how urban intercultural encounters always carry with them historical legacies of Otherness and invoke wider urban inequalities. I hence suggest that meaningful encounters can only occur when the particular hierarchies at

work are not ignored, concealed or played down but faced head-on. Only when opening up a space for contestation, conflict and (self-)critique, cultural producers can come to terms with their own positions and privileges and create moments of encounter that truly reflect a realm for the convivial articulation and negotiation of urban multicultural life. This first and foremost requires cultural producers to develop a clear knowledge of the local conditions, the particular urban histories and spatial issues that underpin their engagement with the city. To that end, cultural producers should consult and collaborate with different local partners to get a clearer sense of the local politics instead of conceptualising their creative approach in a detached, top-down manner.

As a term of creative practice, this thesis therefore showed how interculture demands a constant grappling with its linkages to discursive histories and politics which steer the ways in which intercultural work can be both constructed and perceived. These practical complexities equally expose deep-seated theoretical ambiguities and political paradoxes that the concept of interculture bears: Seeking to supersede reified notions of difference by accentuating the blurring of trajectories, subjectivities and histories might fall into the conceptual pitfalls of hybridity that present such negotiations as seamless and non-hierarchical; however, trying to highlight the often unequal starting positions underpinning intercultural negotiation by emphasising its ‘distinct’ components might in turn lead to the essentialisation of difference and thus might ultimately stabilise precisely what it set out to dismantle. To mobilise an intercultural lens in a profound way therefore demands an historically informed analysis of the unequal power relations at play in any intercultural partnership, while also allowing for intercultural work to be open-ended and to unfold its transformative potential in unexpected and surprising ways. By sitting with the

tensions and contradictions that intercultural work entails, the latter might just become a productive space of contestation and negotiation that indeed allows for a review of systemic inequalities and for a disruption of the hegemonic notions of difference that stand at their core.

For Project X producers and the opera institution more widely, it will be paramount to continue their work through such lenses and to unremittingly strive for equal opportunities, a wide display of creative forms and a critical representational politics for all who make up today's society in Berlin and Germany more broadly. In so doing, Project X has to come to terms with its own position both as part of Berlin's highbrow music sector and as a timely intervention into Germany's current political moment: The postmigratory crossroads at which the country presently finds itself attaches a particular urgency to the cultural sector and to intercultural projects in particular, which locates Project X not only at the forefront of contemporary musical theatre but of political and social responsibility. I want to end this thesis on a short conversation snippet which I believe gets to the heart of Project X's intercultural approach, its relationship to the opera institution and to the city of Berlin and precisely illuminates the project's past and future challenges.

The conversation took place after the Turkish music festival which was hosted at the opera house in September 2016 with sold-out performances and enthusiastic media reviews. Given the event's apparent success, I asked Murat whether the Project X team would like to organise a festival like this again in the future. 'There certainly seems to be an audience for it. You know, this festival showed us how much demand there is for a more diverse programming, even here in Berlin, and especially at an opera house.' But then he added in a more tentative manner:

‘I don’t know if we will have another one like this any time soon though. It’s so much work and it’s outside of the normal opera institution schedule. Finding a free weekend here at the opera and compiling the programme from scratch, it takes a lot of time and planning. And besides, maybe the next event could be something completely different, something we haven’t even thought off yet. There can never be a final idea of interculture. Of course, there is more to be done in terms of Turkish music but there are also other angles to explore. I believe that interculture should go where the city goes, like who lives here, for whom are we making music? These questions need to be asked again and again.’

‘So, do you think that Project X could go on forever then?’ I asked. Murat replied:

‘Look, at best, at some point, a programme like Project X will no longer be necessary because the cultural sector and Germany as a society will have come to terms with its own issues and biases. Sometimes I do think we have already come quite far with Project X. But sometimes, I look around the opera institution and still feel like an outsider myself. You know, this has to be just the beginning. As I like to say: *One Turk doesn’t make a summer.*’

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Flyer for Project X's predecessor programme 'Turkish – Opera can do it!'

Appendix 2: Official Minibus-poster '*In zwei Heimaten zuhause*' [At home in two homes]

Appendix 3: List of Minibus partnership organisations in Berlin 2015-2017

<i>Name of institution</i>	<i>address</i>				
Seniorenfreizeitstätte	Gitschinerstr.	38	10969	Berlin	
Begegnungsstätte	Cuvrystraße	13	10967	Berlin	
Elterncafé Otto-Wels-Grundschule	Alexandrinienstraße	12	10969	Berlin	
Frauencafé e.V.	Löwensteinring	22d	12353	Berlin	
Kulturnetzwerk Neukölln e.V.	Bat-Yam-Platz	1	12353	Berlin	
Nachbarschaftstreff Mittendrin	Sonnenallee	319	12057	Berlin	
Caritas-Seniorenzentrum					
St. Johannes	Wilhelmstraße	122	10963	Berlin	
Nachbarschaftshaus Urbanstraße	Urbanstraße	21	10961	Berlin	
Aufbruch Neukölln e.V.	Uthmannstrasse	19	12043	Berlin	
Quartiersmanagement Brunnenviertel-Ackerstrasse	Jasmunder Straße	16	13355	Berlin	
Gemeinwesenzentrum Heerstrasse	Obstallee	22a	13593	Berlin	
gesoplan/ Mieterberatung	Arndtstraße	32	10965	Berlin	
Begegnungsstätte am Mehringplatz	Friedrichstraße	1	10969	Berlin	
Begegnungsstätte	Charlottenstraße	35	10969	Berlin	
Begegnungsstätte der Berolina	Neue Jakobstraße	30	10170	Berlin	
Bacim e.V.	Oldenburger Straße	22	10551	Berlin	
Deutsche Bank Filiale	Hermannstraße	256	12049	Berlin	
AG SPAS e.V.	Großgörschenstraße	39	10827	Berlin	
MadonnaMädchenkult.Ur e. V.	Falkstraße	26	12053	Berlin	
AKARSU e.V.	Oranienstraße	25	10999	Berlin	
Familienzentrum Wattstraße	Wattstraße	16	13355	Berlin	
CrossKultur Auftakt / HUZUR	Bülowstraße	94	10783	Berlin	
Maria-Montessori-Grundschule	Friedrich-Wilhelm-Straße	72	12103	Berlin	
Buntes Haus	Hellersdorfer Promenade	14	12627	Berlin	
Hugo-Heimann-Grundschule	Hugo-Heimann-Straße	20	12353	Berlin	
Gustav-Falke-Schule	Strelitzer Straße	42	13355	Berlin	
Telefonseelsorge Berlin e.V.	Nansenstraße	27	12047	Berlin	

Schweizerhofgrundschule	Leo-Baeck-Straße	28-30	14167	Berlin
Jens-Nydahl-Grundschule,	Kohfurter Straße	20	10999	Berlin
Hartnack Sprachschule	Motzstraße	5	10777	Berlin
Rudolf-Wissell-Grundschule	Ellerbeker Straße	7	13357	Berlin
Flüchtlingsheim	Großcurtstraße	33	13125	Berlin
Begegnungsstätte Falkensteinstraße	Falkensteinstraße	6	10997	Berlin
Bürgertreff Arndtstraße	Arndtstraße	12	10965	Berlin
Soziale Stadt/ Senatsverwaltung				Berlin
Sprachenschule Schöneberg	Kleiststraße	24	10787	Berlin
Interkulturelles Seniorendomizil Panke	Koloniestraße	23	13359	Berlin
Quartiersmanagemnent Zentrum				
Kreuzberg	Dresdener Straße	12	10999	Berlin
Lenau Grundschule	Nostitzstraße	60	10961	Berlin
Adolf-Glasbrenner Grundschule	Hagelberger Straße	34	10965	Berlin
Sherazade Mutter-Kind-Treff	Roseggerstraße	9	12043	Berlin
Frauen Computer Zentrum Berlin e.V.	Cuvrystraße	1	10997	Berlin
Theodor Sturm Grundschule	Hobrechtstraße	76	12043	Berlin
dtz-bildung & qualifizierung/gemeinnützige	Hasenheide	109	10967	Berlin
Rixdorfer-Grundschule	Donaustraße	120	12043	Berlin
Kreuzbergmuseum	Adalbertstraße	95a	10999	Berlin
	Hermann-Schmidt- Weg	4	13589	Berlin
Siegerland Grundschule	Dieffenbachstraße	1	10967	Berlin
Vivantes Klinikum am Urban	Schadowstraße	12	10117	Berlin
Kunstssammlung des Deutschen	Bellevuestraße	1	10785	Berlin
Bundestages/ Schadow-Haus,	Emser Straße	41	12051	Berlin
Charta der Vielfalt // c.o. Palmenhof	Weinmeisterhornweg	122	13593	Berlin
Nachbarschaftscafé Loislane	Bat-Yam-Platz	1	12353	Berlin
Grundschule am Amalienhof	Kopischstraße	7	10965	Berlin
Interkultureller Treffpunkt im	Schulenburgring	7	12101	Berlin
Gemeinschaftshaus Gropiusstadt	Morusstraße	18a	12053	Berlin
DTK-Wasserturm	Bergfriedstraße	24	10969	Berlin
Grundschule am Tempelhofer Feld	Oraniestraße	34	10999	Berlin
Haus der Begegnung	Urbanstraße	48	10967	Berlin
Kiezstube am Kastanienplatz	Motzstraße	5	10777	Berlin
Stadtteilzentrum-Familiengarten des Kotti	Frankfurter Allee	110	10247	Berlin
e.V.				
Dütti-Treff	Jahnstraße	3	10967	Berlin
Hartnacksschule	Gitschinerstr.	38	10969	Berlin
Bayouma-Haus	Rohrdamm	23	13629	Berlin
Türkischer Frauenverein Berlin e.V. /	Michelstädter Weg	49	13587	Berlin
Berlin Türkiye Kadınlar Birliği	Groß-Berliner			
Begegnungsstätte Gitschiner Straße	Damm	148	12489	Berlin
Sozial-kulturelle Netzwerke casa e.V.				
Charlottes Treff				
Gemeinschaftsraum der Charlotte				

Villa Klassik/ Dolu-Leibfried	Richard-Strauß-Straße	22	14193	Berlin
Ulme 35	Ulmenallee	35	14050	Berlin
Quartiersmanagement Ganghoferstraße	Kirchgasse	14-17	12043	Berlin
Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin	Augustenburger Platz	1	13353	Berlin
MadaMe	Mehringplatz	10	10969	Berlin
Türkisches Konservatorium	Bergmannstraße	29	10961	Berlin
Markthalle 9	Eisenbahnstraße	42-43	10997	Berlin
Stiftung Genshagen	Am Schloss	1	14974	Ludwigsfelde
Schule für Erwachsenenbildung	Gneisenaustraße	2a	10961	Berlin
Paul Klee Grundschule	Konradinstraße	51	12105	Berlin
Pettenkofer-Grundschule	Pettenkofer Straße	20	10247	Berlin
Galilei-Grundschule	Friedrichstraße	13	10969	Berlin
Mark-Twain-Schule	Auguste-Viktoria-Allee	95	13403	Berlin

Appendix 4: List of music pieces used in the Minibus-performance *Auf den Spuren der Gastarbeiterroute* [Following the traces of the guestworker route]

Appendix 5: Programme of the Turkish Music Festival

Appendix 6: Exemplary photos of the Minibus-costumes