

Abstract

The intention of the dissertation is an interdisciplinary study of the festival for free and improvised music "Konfrontationen", which, since 40 years, has been organized by the Jazzgalerie Nickelsdorf in the *rural idyll* of the Austrian-Hungarian borderland. The program evolved from Afro-American free jazz via European free improvisation to contemporary global improvised music. The particular trait of this "cultural hotspot of global significance"¹ is that it exists independently from the neo-liberal *zeitgeist*: it is organized and accomplished by unpaid volunteers, including the founders and curators.

The research situation is composed of the elements (1) *music*, (2) *musicians*, (3) *audience*, (4) *staff* in relation to (5) *border and political transformation* (this includes the most important political and social metamorphosis in Europe in the last 30 years: the fall of the Iron Curtain and the EU eastern enlargement). These elements are investigated separately as well as in their relationships and interactions guided by the underlying research question of how their interplay creates the resilience that is necessary for the festival to keep on existing in the way it does. The term resilience is used here as a dynamic, relational and continuous effort to keep a balance in the face of neoliberal structural pressure in order to keep up the idea of a utopia that is created during the festival.

This PhD-project integrates into the field of festival-research in the new jazz studies. It is dedicated to the interdisciplinary analysis of the place which comprises microhistorical and content-analytical examination of the private archive of the Jazzgalerie Nickelsdorf (correspondences, newsletters, programs) as well as to the investigation of the space, as a local manifestation and appropriation of global flows (*jazz* and other music) and as a site of interaction between the above mentioned elements. Central here is the role of the music – as the original reason for the festival – for the cultivation of resilience.

Empirical research is based on concepts of Grounded theory and on theories and methodology of socio-cultural anthropology (qualitative interviews, participant observation), microhistory, performance studies, sociology of space, and others. The research is stimulated by Ekkehard Jost's social-historical questions about the relation of jazz and society; its object, the festival, is explored along three lines of analysis: a) historical, b) political-economic and c) anthropological. The microhistorical approach represents one component in the development of the jazz studies towards interdisciplinarity and is highlighted here as a method to contextualize hidden and local histories with this international field. What is studied, are the people whose practices were and are strongly influenced by (free) jazz, as well as the repercussions of these practices – in our case the festival "Konfrontationen" – on the individuals and groups.

¹ Nüchtern, Klaus (2019). *Rambazamba in der Pampa. Wie ein vor 40 Jahren etabliertes Musikfestival dem burgenländischen Nickelsdorf zur Weltgeltung verhalf*. In: Falter 29/19, Wien: Falter Verlag