Dancing Difference: Migrants, Affective Politics, and the Party Space as a Site of Intercultural Connection

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ABSTRACT

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Jessie Lauren Stein

This thesis examines the political possibilities of spaces in which there is both a confrontation with the reality of heterogeneity as well as a genuine bid for the rights of presence of migrant populations through an ethnographic case study of an intercultural party series in Munich, Germany. Developed amidst anti-migrant sentiment at the height of the so-called 'European refugee crisis', at *Plug in Beats*, an attempt is made to treat a space shared by established locals and recent migrants democratically. The crowd selects the music, with each partygoer sharing a song of their choice for the DJ to play. The format of the dance party, in combination with an active inclusion policy, aims to create a non-hierarchical safer-space for meaningful intercultural exchange. Drawing on participant observation and interviews with party organizers and attendees, I evaluate the strengths and limits of inclusive intercultural space and investigate how the sharing of space at the party influences participants' imaginings of themselves and each other. While the party itself cannot address exclusion or inequity at the root, it can provide a place for connections, and a platform for practicing new forms of social negotiation. The party format generates an affective politics which disrupts the stability of fixed judgements and relations. While the immediate transformative value of these kinds of events may be small, this thesis argues that this awareness-building process can act as a foundation for a broader political struggle.

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Merci du fond du coeur.
شكرًا من كل قلبي
Ich danke Ihnen von ganzem Herzen

Table of Contents

List of Figures

1. Introduction

In the summer of 2017, I was on tour with a band in Europe. We were passing through Munich on our way from Cologne to Ljubljana and had been graciously invited to stay in our friend Thomas' house for two nights night. I first met Thomas on the first tour that our band had done in Europe, in 2010. He was a booking agent and tour manager, and we had travelled together. All these years later, Thomas had quit touring, and took a steady job at a Munich arts and culture organization called Feierwerk.

The second night of our stay he hosted a barbeque feast. Mounds of meat, faux meat and grill-able cheeses competed with an inordinate number of condiments for space on a tipsy table leaning against the house. There were white beans swimming in pumpkinseed oil – an Austrian specialty, and salads. Thomas invited some people he called 'his new friends', young migrant men from Afghanistan, Iran, and Syria. The young men hovered around the barbeque trying various methods of getting it hot. Thomas flitted around the garden like a hummingbird; flipping steaks and sausages under his big sour apple tree.

We sat together and talked about our very different travels. Languages flew around the table – Farsi and Dari between the young men, imperceptible as different to me; German dotted with a few newly-learned Persian words flew between Thomas and one young man; newly learned German, awkward around the edges, but remarkably accomplished, shared between Thomas' roommate and the 'newcomers'. The fridge was stocked with various Bionade sodas, juices, and beer. Some people drank, some people did not. Nobody seemed to mind, and everyone seemed comfortable – used to the cobbled together phrases, and the mixed company. Thomas' roommate practiced writing his name in Farsi and received corrections from a young man who sat nearby. He was doing a "tandem", a language learning method in which two people teach each other their differing mother tongues.

My bandmates and I tried on the few German words we knew, though our incompetence (and the ongoing effects of English' colonial history) dragged the linguistic

center of gravity towards our comfort zone. Thomas was very excited about a new idea that they had just begun at the Center where he worked– it was for an intercultural dance party, called "Plug in Beats". This was a party that functioned on karaoke principles. Everyone took a number, and the attendees –a mixed bag of long-time Munich residents and refugees – each got a turn choosing a song. The music was reportedly as eclectic as the crowds, and the people came to have a context to meet and be with each other. The goal was to actively include newcomers, and to create a democratized musical space in the name of anti-xenophobia. The first editions had been massive successes. Everyone was very excited.

After leaving Germany, the story I had heard in Thomas' back yard came to mind each time I read or heard about the 'refugee crisis' in Europe. Racist, xenophobic, and nationalist anti-migrant policies and rhetoric were growing the bases of far-right parties across the continent. In Germany, by 2018, border control and integration were major government priorities. The asylum process often took years and deportations were becoming more common. Against this bleak backdrop, I wanted to investigate what a small intervention like a 'democratic' dance party does in the lives and minds of the people who participate. In the Summer of 2018 I flew to Munich to talk to people about Plug in Beats. I wanted to know, for migrants and locals, if dancing together and sharing music could disrupt preconceived imaginings of cultural others, or if it sparked new ways of imagining sharing space together.

New kinds of imagining are important, and timely, as international migration is a growing phenomenon across the world. According to the most recent UNHCR(2019) report, there is now a record high of 70.8 million forcibly displaced people on the planet. Germany is currently fifth on the roster of countries hosting the highest number of refugees in the world. Between 2015 and 2018, over 1.5 million people filed new claims for asylum in Germany, prompting the proclamation of a 'refugee crisis'(BAMF, 2019). While the number of asylum claimants has stemmed in Germany since 2017, largely due to the 2016 EU-Turkey deal and other European border-policing measures, at the time I began this research in 2018, the increased presence of

migrants had made migration a central topic of contestation in German politics. The general rift is between a left that believes more should be done for migrants, out of a historical and ethical *responsibility*; and a right that rejects this strategy as naive, stresses 'nation' first, *social control* through limiting migration, and centers the *preservation* of existing ways of life (Žižek, 2016).

On July 10th 2018, a smiling Horst Seehofer distastefully joked about the deportation of 69 Afghans to Afghanistan on his 69th birthday a few days earlier (Knight, 2018). The same day, Seehofer, then Minister President of Bavaria, German Minister of the Interior, and leader of the Christian Social Union party (CSU), unveiled his 'Migration Master Plan', which advocated for social control and cultural preservation through harsh anti-migrant legislation. On the first page of the Ministry of the Interior (BMI)'s Master Plan website is a section entitled 'Basic idea' which provides the ontological basis for the proposed measures:

> "This master plan is based on the conviction that Germany can only assume its external responsibility if at the same time cohesion within it is maintained. The receptivity of the society presupposes order and control of migration. No country in the world can accommodate refugees indefinitely. Successful integration can only succeed with a limitation of immigration. This is the core message of the coalition agreement" (BMI, 2018).

Although migration numbers had already fallen to pre-2015 levels, the plan proposed solving the 'problem' of asylum through the establishment of more 'AnKER centers' (an acronym translating to Center for Arrival, Decision, Return) for migrants to be detained in, increased and faster deportations, increased EU border protection, and other deterrence methods. These measures were approved in a deal with Chancellor Angela Merkel under threat of the dissolution of the coalition government with Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU), the CSU, and the Social Democrats. All this, in the name of "cohesion within".

Cultural preservation concerns, as championed in the BMI plan, rely on bounded notions of collective identity, and naturalized notions of 'us' and 'them'. This is epitomized in concept of *Leitkultur*, a term coined by Bassam Tibi which literally translates to 'guiding (or leading)

culture'. Originally it was conceived as a shorthand for a pan-European liberal democratic system of values to set up a tolerant society. Tibi wrote that "the values needed for a core culture are those of modernity: democracy, secularism, the Enlightenment, human rights and civil society" (1998, p. 154). But *Leitkultur* came into popular consciousness in the year 2000 when Friedrich Merz, at the time the leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party and now Deputy Chairman of the CDU Economic Council, brought it into the German political discourse in the context of increased immigration in the early 2000s. Feeding off of racist and xenophobic anxieties around growing ethnic diversity in Germany[1], assimilation into the *Leitkultur* came to represent the bar to which migrants were held in order to have 'successfully' integrated (Manz, 2004).

There was intense resistance to Seehofer's master plan. On July 22nd, a few weeks after it was launched, 50,000 people marched in Munich in the rain against "the politics of fear, the surveillance state, the restriction of our freedom and attacks on human rights" (Ausgehetzt, 2018b). Under the banner *#Ausgehetzt* (which loosely translates as 'shocked', 'outraged', or 'been incited'), the demonstration was organized an alliance of groups working on issues of migration, anti-racism, peace, LGBTI+, feminism and social issues. The march stopped at various sites around the city, and culminated in Königsplatz, the space where the Nazis once held some of their largest rallies. Local bands of all genres and citizenship statuses played their songs to the waiting crowd. The captain of a Mediterranean rescue ship gave a wrenching speech about the cruelty of EU deterrence tactics, and a migrant and German dance group led the crowd through a dabke (a traditional dance in much of the Arab world). With the music, the mud, and the crowd, *#Ausgehetzt* resembled a music festival. Among those who organized the alliance and this spectacular event was Thomas Lechner, an activist, music booker and promoter who worked for the local arts organization *Feierwerk*.

[1] Pluralism has been a fact of German life for decades now. Muslims, particularly Turkish people, have lived in Germany in large numbers since at least the 1970s (Funk, 2016). While in 2010, Merkel made it clear that her vision of *'Leitkultur'* does not exclude Muslim people, not everyone agrees. Many Germans have been riled by the potential cultural and political effects of granting refugee status to a large number of Muslims (Evans, 2010; Funk, 2016).

The *#Ausgehetzt* alliance stands in stark contrast to the BMI's Master Plan. Rather than cultural preservation, the alliance demands cultural shift. Upholding a politics of responsibility, the alliance demands "an open and free society" featuring equal rights for all. They call for solidarity, humanity and diversity to be seen as strength; and they stand "against a policy of exclusion and the dominance of a supposed *Leitkultur*". All of this is "motivated by respect for and a need to defend human rights, and democratic, constitutional, liberal structures", and a belief that the culture should shift towards more and greater inclusion(Ausgehetzt, 2018a).

Figure 1 A portion of the crowd at the #Ausgezt demonstration at Königsplatz. The festival stage is beyond the frame to the left. Source: Jessie Stein

The way the root causes of migration are understood and narrated are of great political importance, as they tie into understandings of responsibility for caring for displaced people. On the face of it, the most common issue driving all migration to Germany is war. Between 2015-2017 in Germany, the three main countries of origin for asylum claimants were sites of ongoing armed conflict: Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The UNHCR (2019) identifies the Syrian conflict in particular as the most important cause of recent migration to Europe, but war is not the only reason people have fled their homes. Along with the violence of war and political persecution,

economic injustice, unequal relations of power under capitalism, environmental and climate disasters, and social or cultural factors(Ali 2007; Thompson, 2016) may also force the decision to flee one's home. While economic refugees are not protected by international law, economic reasons are the most common explanation for migration worldwide (Lee, 1996). But thinking about responsibility extends beyond the moment when a place of origin becomes unlivable. In line with Massey's (2004) tracing of 'thinking space relationally', towards a politics of global responsibility, those who advocate for migrant inclusion do so partially because of an understanding that the issues in countries of the 'Global South' cannot be thought in isolation from their entanglements with and historical exploitation by the 'Global North'. While fully addressing the root causes and politics of responsibility of the rise of asylum claims in Germany is well beyond the scope of this study, it lingers in the background of the politics of inclusion I hope to address.

Another place where this responsibility plays out is in destination countries. Integration is a process of adjustment, usually imagined as the responsibility of individuals from 'away' to conform to a range of social or cultural norms 'here'. But if social and cultural norms themselves are also shifting things, perhaps they could be coaxed to evolve towards a wider view. Imagining what integration might look like as a process of mutual shift in an anti-racist, anti-xenophobic world is the central question behind this work. The diligent work of organizers and activists has moved the conversation along in Germany, but the work of building a better world also happens in spaces of everyday life. As a geographer, I am particularly interested in how these spaces figure in blueprinting the experimental architecture of change.

Structure of the work ahead

In order to make a foray into what Ruth Wilson Gilmore (in a somewhat different context) called "the vexing question of difference" (2007, p. 16), this thesis examines a rather smaller space than Königsplatz, where *#Ausgehetzt* took place, which attempts to be an open space for difference, and for practicing sharing space.

The place of this study is a very special dance party. Two years before the demonstration, *#Ausgehetzt's* Thomas Lechner, was working at *Feierwerk*, a music and cultural

organization in Munich, and began a monthly party series called *Plug in Beats* in response to a temporary refugee camp that was built directly next to Feierwerk's Hansastraße location. The concept was simple – to create a shared space for new neighbors to acquaint themselves through celebration and music sharing.

The thesis begins with a review of the literature on sharing space, cultural identity and migration, intercultural geographies, arts for social change, and music and migration. The literature review (Chapter two) is followed by objectives and methodology (Chapter three) and context sections (Chapter four), in which the case study is presented more fully. From there I proceed to an analysis which is divided into four chapters. Chapter five begins with a movement analysis, and charts movement within the space of the party. Chapter six addresses how affect functions at *Plug in Beats* through choosing music, dancing together, and negotiating newness. Chapter seven traces the key material consequences of the party, in order to catalog any more lasting effects the party might have beyond the affective register. Chapter eight is an evaluates inclusion at *Plug in Beats* by tracing presence and non-presence across the intersections of migration status, nationality, gender, religion, and sexuality. The analysis is followed by a brief conclusion about the relevance of the study and the further lines of research it suggests.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theories of Sharing Space

The current debate about migration in Europe is unsurprising when we consider the deep connections between sharing space and power. The varied public reactions to migration in Europe are living proof of Laclau's (1990) argument that dislocation forces a politics of difference. Hegemonic social relations rely on a systemic blindness around the contingencies that shape them. Building on Laclau, Doreen Massey (2005, p. 151) argues that it is in the antagonisms and frictions that occur in places of 'throwntogetherness', i.e. the chance of living side-by-side, which power relations become clearly visible (see also Laclau, 1990). Thus, the circumstances of our living together become "the central question of the political" (Massey, 2005, p. 151).

Across disciplines, intellectuals have endeavored to examine how cultures should (or should not) best shift in relation to each other when they meet. The fascination is such that a range of disciplines have endeavored to produce theories of sharing space across difference. The two most prominent outlooks come from the fields of cross-cultural psychology, and cultural studies. The following section will look first at John Berry's (1997) acculturation strategies, the seminal work on the matter in psychology; then Stuart Hall's work on cultural identity in sociology. These sections will be followed by a discussion of how this thinking has been incorporated into theories of interculturalism in geography.

Acculturation theory in cross-cultural psychology

In 1997, the Canadian psychologist John Berry developed his now famous four-fold model of acculturation strategies, arguing that there was a pattern to the ways people adapted to lives in new societies, with a view to influencing policy to better accommodate new migrants. This approach has been the basis for much of multicultural policy in the years since.
Berry took the name for his model from acculturation's classic definition by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936), who said that acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when "groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (p. 149). Berry

(1997), builds on this definition, but notes that, in practice, changes have significantly more impact on migrants than on hosts.

Berry's four strategies are presented as choices that both hosts and migrants must make about "how to acculturate" (Berry, 1997, p. 8). This choice is structured around a balancing of what he terms "cultural maintenance" versus "contact and participation" with other cultural groups (ibid. p. 9). The four strategies are: *assimilation*, in which there is no intent to maintain cultural identity, and contact with the other culture is prominent; *separation*, in which the maintenance of an existing cultural identity is paramount, and interaction with others is avoided; *integration*, in which there is a balancing of cultural identity maintenance and participation in other cultures; and *marginalization,* in which there is neither interest in cultural maintenance, nor the possibility of relations with others (Berry, 1997, p. 9).

Berry argues that integration, a mutual accommodation, is the most desirable of the four strategies, and he urges for policy and advocacy decisions to be made with integration as a goal. Berry argues that the integration option can only be chosen in "explicitly multicultural" societies (1997, p. 11). Also required is consensus around the importance of cultural preservation within most of a migrating ethnocultural group. Other preconditions to this option include such far ranging elements as: "the widespread acceptance of the value to a society of cultural diversity […], relatively low levels of prejudice […], positive mutual attitudes among cultural groups […]; and a sense of attachment to, or identification with, the larger society by all groups" (ibid., p.11). Implementing integration as a policy, then involves the promotion of pluralism, investment in social goods and services, as well as encouragement of ethnocultural community interaction in order to limit the stresses of acculturation (ibid.). This, to a large degree (and to the chagrin of some on the right), has been the German government's approach.

The normative issues that have occurred in practice in the German approach to the refugee crisis are reflected in scholarly criticisms of Berry. Bhatia and Ram (2007; 2009) criticize him for depicting acculturation as a uniformly experienced, linear, and finite process. Furthermore, they note how his integration strategy fails to account for conflict and asymmetries of power. For some migrants, they argue, "achieving integration may simply not be an option

and/or may be achieved temporarily only to be lost at some point and soon. The acculturation journey is not a teleological trajectory that has a fixed-end point but instead has to be continuously negotiated" (Bhatia & Ram, 2009, p. 148).

Furthermore, both the definition of integration, and the means though which it might be achieved, are unclear in Berry's work (ibid.). There is a lack of clarity around how a process such as integration might be measured and be deemed complete (and by whom?). Measures issues were also taken up by Ward and Kus, whose 2012 comparison of various means of measuring integration using Berry's criteria showed considerable differences between measurements taken based on ideal descriptions and self-reported behaviors, in which individuals are often unsatisfied with their level of integration.

Berry's framework assumes that culture is stable and implicitly conflates national identity with culture (Bhatia, 2007). Bhatia (2007) argues that a discrete, nationally bound conception of culture and ethnicity presupposes homogenous nations and forgets the effects back-and-forth movement of people across borders. This works in concert with Gupta & Ferguson's critique of multiculturalism as being a "feeble acknowledgment of the fact that cultures have lost their moorings in definite places and an attempt to subsume this plurality of cultures within the framework of a national identity" (2002, p. 7). Furthermore, Bhatia argues that "migrants, refugees, and expatriates who move from one settlement to another, putting down their roots and carrying their "culture" with them […] represent a rupture or a clear physical break between culture and nation, because they take their culture to the new homeland and reinvent and reimagine it in their new diaspora" (Bhatia, 2007, pp. 310-311).

Over time, the term 'acculturation' has come to be identified with assimilation. As an integration approach, this has led to a preference for the term interculturation. While interculturality bears a strong conceptual resemblance to Berry's, and to Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits' definitions of acculturation, a distinguishing feature between the two is that interculturation presumes the formation of new hybridized cultures. The term implies that culture is not stable, and points to shifting processes which may occur out of the mixing of people and places, spawning new cultural forms and practices, and altered identities.

Cultural Identity and Migration

Questions of identity, particularly 'cultural identity', loom large in immigration, cultural, and diaspora studies. Stuart Hall (1990) calls for a rethinking of identity as an ever-incomplete process of production, existing within representation. In Hall's view, 'cultural identity' is generally thought about in one of two ways: the first being what he calls "a sort of collective 'one true self'", an umbrella identity that binds people with a shared history and ancestry (p. 223). Cultural identity is also the object of Frantz Fanon's (1963, p. 170) notion of 'passionate research'. In such research, there is the hope of uncovering "hidden histories" with the possibility reshaping group identity in terms of both itself and its relation to others (Hall, 1990, p. 224). This first notion of cultural identity is at the core of identity politics approaches, and has been the basis of many social movements, notably the feminist, anti-colonial, and anti-racist movements (ibid.).

These histories, on top of being important to social movements, also figure largely in art. Cultural texts, images, and sounds act as sites of "imaginary reunification", as well as a means of creating a counter-narrative of resistance to representations of cultural experience constructed by dominant regimes of representation (ibid.). One expression of this notion of cultural identity came in the introduction of 'Black' as an identity, which Hall argues began figuring largely in the 1970s as an anti-racist strategy to force the issue of racism, and to decenter multiculturalism's touristic relationship with difference (Hall, 1997).

Multiculturalism, in Hall's view, was a "spectacle" rather than taking a genuine critical stance against inequality or injustice. It refused to engage with racism as such, preferring to exoticize ethnic 'others' through celebrations of native cuisines, dress or songs (ibid, p. 56). A truly *intercultural* space should extend beyond this kind of spectacle of multiculturalism. These spaces should be up to the task of reckoning with structural and material differences, a provoke a politics of solidarity in which unequal parties are willing to self-interrogate and shift towards ever-greater inclusion.

Hall's (1990) second view of cultural identity acknowledges while individuals within a cultural group may share important (and binding) similarities, there are also significant and multiple elements of difference. In this view, cultural identity is produced through continuous change, experiences of power, and the ruptures of history, which create shifts over time. The fact that culture is "subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" renders it simultaneously an important means of identification, as well as an inherently unstable one, formed within discourse (Hall, 1990, p. 225). As such, Hall writes, 'cultural identity' is "not an essence but a positioning" (p. 226).

The identities of groups of displaced peoples are necessarily diverse, and Hall argues that they continually produce themselves through and in the face of difference, constantly hybridizing, forming and reforming (Hall, 1990). This is of course true on the individual level, but also at the scale of the 'group'. At the time of Hall's writing, this positioning, rather than the idea of the essentialist notion of culture, was the new place of politics, as it was open to solidarity, difference, and change.

In a contemporary context, approaches to difference and identity based on Kimberle Crenshaw's (1991) intersectional feminist theory have further refined and complicated the way scholars understand how various vectors of difference combine and multiply to produce oppression. Intersectional approaches have been largely used in feminist geography as a means of looking at how multiple vectors of difference figure in relation to space and place (Rose, 1993; Valentine, 2007; Johnston, 2018; Kobayashi 1994b; Peake 1993; Pratt 1999; Ruddick 1996).

Plug in Beats is occurring in a moment of more developed critical awareness of how difference unevenly shapes individuals' experiences. Though this is manifest in contemporary analyses of intercultural arts events, the risk of what Connell & Gibson (2004) call the 'fetishization of marginality' remains. In their article "World music, deterritorializing place and identity", the authors explore how discourses of place and difference are part and parcel of the appeal of the commercial category of 'world music.' They argue that the existence of this umbrella genre is the result of a commercial imperative to "retain and selectively promote ethnic

and geographical differences, strategically imbue them with authenticity and market the outcome" (Connell & Gibson, 2004, p. 359). So, while world music artists may relate to their places of origin in various ways and cultivate their music in conversation with varying doses of influence from local, or transnational sources, the commodification of 'world music', frequently often involves a certain amount of co-optation and orientalism (Erlmann, 1998).

While 'ethnic' musics may be subject to commercialized or orientalist constructions of difference (Said, 1985), traces of continually re-forming identity positionings can be found embedded within them as well. Imagining music as essentially 'of' one culture (understood through the guise of ethnicity) is an impossibility. Popular cultural works are "always-already fused, syncretized, with other cultural elements" (Hall, 1990, p. 234). As such, identity, constituted within representations, such as music, constitutes displaced, and multiply displaced people as "new kinds of subjects", enabling them "to discover places from which to speak" (ibid, p. 237). Such a critique raises the need to consider the spaces in which these voices might be speak and be heard.

2.2 Geography, Interculturalism, and the 'where' of it all:

While of course there is much to be said on the level of federal and international policy, the negotiation of difference is most often felt at the interpersonal level (Amin, 2002). Geographers such as Ash Amin (2002) have called for *urban interculturalism* in plural cities faced with conflict or interethnic intolerance through the creation of spaces of real local cross-cultural engagement, where racism is silenced (Amin, 2002; Allen and Cars, 2001). Interculturalism, in Amin's sense, stresses cultural dialogue, and aims to face the importance of communication across cultural difference, without taking for granted the cosmopolitan assumption that difference will disappear over time (2002).

In some long-standing traditions of urban theory, public space is figured as the natural site of such intercultural encounter, and displays of multiculturalism and inclusivity (through events, etc.). Scholars such as Amin (2002) and Massey (2005) warn however, that in practice, this is not how such spaces function, and that genuine exchange cannot be guaranteed in many

public spaces. Contact, after all, does not guarantee exchange, encounter is not inherently a positive phenomenon, and may even at times deepen animosities (Amin, 2002; Valentine, 2008).

Massey (2005) argues that genuine exchange is difficult in public spaces as they are socially regulated, and thus warns against the impulse to "romanticize public space as an emptiness which enables free and equal speech" [as it] "does not take on board the need to theorise space and place as the product of social relations which are most likely conflicting and unequal" (p. 152). Urban public spaces also tend to be surveilled, dominated by one group, or simply spaces of transit, thus not creating the necessary conditions for substantial engagement or intercultural understanding (Amin, 2002).

Amin suggests that, in order to overcome antagonistic social relations, rather than "the pursuit of a unitary sense of place, [there is] the need for initiatives that exploit the potential for overlap and cross-fertilization within spaces that in reality support multiple publics" (Amin, 2002, p. 972). Massey (2005) calls Amin's politics of place one of "local accommodation", in that it calls for a confrontation with the "fact of difference" in the process of negotiating "rights of presence" (p. 153). This accommodation takes the form of unstable spaces where heterogeneous people have prosaic interactions that cause cultural transgression (Amin, 2002). These spaces, which Amin calls 'micropublics', might be university classrooms, sports associations, or music clubs (ibid.). While cultural exchange, even here cannot be guaranteed, Amin suggests that micropublics, which he defines as projects and spaces that are constructed to encourage cultural diversity, intercultural sociality, and to limit hostility, can be useful in disrupting assumptions about cultural others and thus the stability of fixed intercultural relations, harkening new forms of interaction (2002).

In the context of music clubs, Amin sees a potential for just such interculturalism, as they bring together diverse populations for a passionate common activity, where the night's success depends on a certain amount of group interaction (2002). Dance parties are the product of multiple individuals choosing to move to a similar rhythm in the same space at the same time. Amin argues that if nightlife spaces are to be effective places of interculturalism, the "transformational element of interaction needs to be made explicit and worked at in efforts to

make them intercultural spaces, through experiments that fit with local circumstances" (2002, p. 970).

Political theorists such as Chantal Mouffe (1993) argue that in democratic processes, it is critical to resist the urge to "erase the traces of power and exclusion", that they must rather "be brought to the fore, making them visible so that they can enter the terrain of contestation" (Mouffe,1993, p. 149). Massey (2005) brought this theoretical outlook into an analysis of the application of democracy in geography and space. In *For Space* (2005), Massey is critical of the assumption that even spaces with mandates of inclusion can ultimately be democratized. In her work on public space, she argues that goals of inclusion and democratization, while important to pursue, tend to chase "a continually receding horizon of the open-minded-space-to-come, which will not ever be reached but must constantly be worked towards" (p. 153). Citing notions like 'open-minded spaces' (Waltzer, 1995) and the 'phantom public sphere' (Robbins, 1993), which tend to be dominated by single uses/groups over time, Massey writes that the pursuit of such spaces is both 'imperative' and a 'fantasy' (2005, p. 153). Still, in Massey's view, public space plays a crucial role in democracy, because of the chaos and its tendency to dissolve markers of identity (Deutsche, 1996; Massey, 2005). The difficulty, for Massey, is *treating* space and place democratically, which requires an ongoing and critical awareness of the power structures and social relations implicit in even the best intentioned of spaces/places (2005).

This reasoning resonates with Mary Louise Pratt concept of the *contact zone,* which she describes as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" (1991, p. 34). The term is employed as a challenge to the term 'community', which, as previously mentioned, projects a false image of homogeneity and presumes a level of social cohesion that may not in fact exist. Furthermore, she suggests that when contact zones are constructed in such a way that all participants are included and equally un-safe, they assume the status of a 'safe house' (ibid., p. 39). In these spaces, with the playing field leveled, trust and authentic collaboration are temporarily possible" (ibid., p. 40). This research investigates the extent to which *Plug in Beats* may be a 'safe house' in the way that it attempts to increase intercultural solidarity (Amin, 2002) and resist the erasure of difference (if only ephemerally) (Mouffe, 1993), by attempting to treat space democratically though it may indeed be somewhat of a naïve fantasy (Massey, 2005).

2.3 Safer Spaces

Pratt's 'safe house' resonates with theorizations of 'safe space'. Broadly speaking, safe spaces are distinguished from other spaces, in that they provide respite for marginalized people and groups from the violence, harassment and erasure that regularly feature in dominant spaces (Fast, 2018). This identity politics approach grew out of feminist discourses, and originally referred to female-only spaces in which bodily and metaphorical safety could be somewhat assured (Ardener, 1993). From there, 'safe space' was developed further in discussions of spaces which served similar functions for other marginalized groups, particularly in queer and critical race contexts.

Safe space has found conceptual purchase in other settings as well. Education and critical pedagogy in particular has hosted much of the conversation around safe space. Classrooms are spaces that must work across difference. In this context, space is said to be made 'safe' when participants respect for all expressions of identity are guaranteed to be regarded equally (Boostrom, 1998). In light of the conceptual drift from separatist spaces to spaces for negotiating difference, safe space has been made a muddy term. This theoretical fuzziness has led to myriad critiques.

Some argue that space can never truly be safe, and that therefore to apply comforting nomenclature is misleading (Anzaldúa, 2002; Henry, 1993). In feminist geography, Valentine (1989), and Bondi and Rose (2003) argue that constructing some spaces as 'safe' constructs the rest of space as 'unsafe', which serves to fix dominant social relations through the masculinist regulation of women's mobilities and spatial access (Roestone Collective, 2014). Another common challenge is that safe spaces, if they are understood to be spaces in which participants can be free from non-affirmation, censor the critique and friction necessary for growth (Boostrom, 1998; hooks, 1994). The metaphoric allure of a safe space, Boostrom argues, has the problematic tendency of undermining critical engagement, and thus certain kinds of desirable growth and change. Thus managing conflict, rather than censoring critique, produces more desirable results.

But in working through these critiques, some scholars revindicate safe spaces as an important theoretical resource grounded in the experiences of marginalized groups. Stengel and Weems (2010) argue that although ultimately safety may be imaginary and reliant on forms of control, it is useful when considered as "always contested and ambiguous discursive terrain" (p. 507). Fast (2008) too defends safe(r) spaces, arguing for the necessity of moving past "static and acontextual" binary framings of space as 'safe' or 'unsafe'(1). Rather than seeing safe space as restrictive of critique, she argues that as safe space is constructed relationally, it requires a deep critical engagement in order to produce different exchanges with and support for those who are too often marginalized in dominant spaces (Fast, 2018).

In the context of performance arts spaces, Hunter (2008) argues that producing a safe space is a prerequisite to intercultural arts, which require risk-taking. In this light, safe space is seen as "a euphemism for the processual act of ever-becoming, of messy negotiations both within collaborative actions of representation and ofttimes paradoxical presentations and positionings of self" (Hunter, 2008, p. 16). Though it may not offer resolution, safe space viewed as a process transforms conflict, and makes space for experiences which may help participants imagine alternative ways of being. Hunter uses Jill Dolan's notion of 'utopian performatives': acts which "in their doings, make palpable an affective vision of how the world might be better", and act as " never finished gesture[s] towards a potentially better future' (Dolan 2006, p. 164 as cited in Hunter, 2008, p. 16). While *Plug in Beats* is not theatre, many similar dynamics are at work. The party is a relational process, predicated on the creation of safe(r) space in order to facilitate risk taking and negotiation across difference. The factors which structure the collaborative engagement of the party, and the way they gesture towards social change will be discussed at length in the context and analysis sections of this thesis.

2.4 Community Arts for Social Change

Arts initiatives with goals of social change often occur under the rubric of community arts projects. The community arts pool reflects many of the tensions of larger questions about culture and community and the meanings of these terms. The term 'community' has been challenged by various scholars (Hall, 1995; Harvey, 1989; Massey, 1994b; Young, 1990) on a number of bases, notably for its tendency to produce a "fantasy of pure identity" (Rose, 1997, p. 186). For Iris Marion Young (1990), the concept of community is flawed as it assumes the idea that people can know each other absolutely, and that the attractiveness of the idea of community goes hand-in-hand with the exclusion of those who might challenge the group's identity. Mouffe (1995) critiques another assumption: that it is possible to pinpoint a knowable, definable shared identity between individuals. Irrespective of the particulars of scholarly problems with the notion of community, a common thread in most critiques is that it facilitates a construction of difference, resulting in a dichotomy of members versus non-members, which is anathema to radical politics (Rose, 1997). Gillian Rose writes that:

> "Difference from this self-same (identity) disturbs and threatens its transparency and produces both a denial of difference and a desire for it. The different other, placed beyond the bounds of community, becomes a source of both fear and fascination: condemned and idealized, needed and negated, always exoticized, it is only ever represented through fantasies of those inside the borders of the same. The marginalized other is denied its own difference by this construction of community" (p. 185).

How then, to deal with this construction of difference at the level community arts, and what are the implications in the context of mass migration, where local populations are increasingly heterogeneous? In light of such a constricting notion of community, Rose (1997) asks how might marginalized groups redefine or reposition themselves in ways that are "legible" to power?

To answer these questions, Rose draws on Lauren Berlant (1994), who wrote that legibility to power itself is problematic, as it builds scenarios that render groups vulnerable to assimilation. As such, it is preferable to refuse self-definition, as to be known or defined makes one vulnerable to the objectification of discourse and knowledge production. In her fieldwork in

Edinburgh, she found this reflected in the attitudes of community arts workers, who expressed a certain suspicion in the "consequences of hegemonic definitions" of specific identities, and their implications for how power itself works (Rose, 1997, p. 191).

Following this logic, Rose proposes that a better way to think about community is through Nancy's concept of 'inoperative community' (1991). Inoperative communities exist only in the moments they are happening, and are formed out of communication itself (Rose, 1997; Nancy, 1991). They have no grand purpose, no designs on definition of its membership, and instead rely on participation. There are obvious parallels to be drawn between community arts, e.g., *Plug in Beats,* and the idea of inoperative community. The party space, like many community arts projects, is one where "the form of community is imagined through a fluid and multi-dimensional space, but one which remains 'vague', radically undermined by uncertainty" (Rose, 1997, p. 202).

2.5 Music, dance, and migration

The dance floor is a complex space of transculturation, politics, and possibility. It can act simultaneously as a "social haven" (Farrer, 2004, p. 660) and as one of cultural misunderstanding. Body movement as a social text is highly political, and gendered (Van Aken, 2006), and in this way, it signals membership as well as difference (Reed, 1998). As such, "out of place" music and performance can create important sites of encounter in heterogeneous communities in which prohibitions are challenged (Van Aken, 2006, p. 220). Van Aken's work on Palestinian refugees' *dabkeh* dancing in Jordan is an example of how dance and movement are further politicized through displacement:

> "The agency of the body in ritual performances remains highly political. It expresses identity and difference; it is a public marker of status; it displays terms of identity otherwise censured or implicitly silenced. Furthermore, it challenges and creates tension around accepted cultural ideas and practices of gender roles to which ideas of belonging and social borders are linked" (2006, p. 220).

Marginal dance networks can have destabilizing effects for networks of power, especially when it comes to questions of public space and gender performance; but powerful networks have demonstrated a consistent ability to subvert and co-opt dance as a practice of resistance (Thrift, 1997). Nigel Thrift argues that to focus on this mutually subversive potential is to miss the point that dance, as an expressive embodied form of *play*, creates an alternative space of being, is an experience somewhat outside of power. He argues this by saying that dance has no real 'ends' (the way work has both means and ends), and cannot be aptly contained in words, therefore rendering it elusive to power. Thrift (1997) is interested in "everyday practices and how they provide, especially through embodiment, alternative modes of being in the world" (p. 125). He uses the idea of play as a means of answering Grossberg's (1996) call for cultural studies to move beyond colonial and transgressive models of power dynamics, due to the tendency of these models (in his view) to resist alliance building, and holistically place subjects either fully within or fully outside of power. Dance as an embodied form of play makes it possible to understand the dancer's subjectivity in an alternative way, that eludes the "grasp of power" (Radley, 1995, p. 9), providing a "fantasy of change" (McRobbie, 1991, p. 192), which Thrift argues opens spaces of possibility for political shifts.

Even if this is so, of course, there is a moment when the dancing stops, and power relations, if they were ever evaded, are presumably restored. On these grounds, I am unconvinced by the notion that the way forward is to completely do away with (post)colonial and transgressive modes of looking at cultural studies. Still, the experience, the *feeling* of dance spaces as sites of transcendence, might (if temporarily) allow for some slippage in imposed subjectivities and identities. In this way, dance spaces may well be powerful tools for reimagining the self in relation to others, and perhaps in laying the footing for a new way that things could be.

There is some precedence for music and dance being used by migrants in just such a way. Sonjag Stanley Niaah's work on dancehall music traces how practices, politics, philosophies, and survival strategies come out in diasporic performance (2010). In some cases, the politicized spaces of music, dance, and intercultural encounter have been mobilized as strategic locations to address wider communities, and to establish their identity in the eyes of others (Baily and

Collyer, 2006). Building on Zheng's (1990) research on Chinese migrants in California and Glasser's (1995) research on Puerto Ricans in New York, Baily and Collyer (2006) argue that music performance creates agentic opportunities, and may help "ease some of the more painful results of migration" (p. 180).

Most studies of migrants and music tend to focus on how music operates within one specific diaspora group. In culturally enclosed spaces, the conversation shifts away from co-optation, exoticization, or commodification of transposed world music and dance traditions, towards the ways in which music and dance may be helpful to new migrants. Hannah Lewis (2010) looks at how refugee events in the UK are built around familiar cultural symbols, but also incorporate aspects of the host culture. Lewis' work, based on ethnographic research, contends that these fusions disrupt the idea that migrant community events inhibit integration (2010). On the contrary, Lewis contends that these 'community moments' are key in helping migrants negotiate their identities in a new context (ibid).

Lewis' findings are consistent with Farrer's observations of Chinese immigrant parties in Japan, where parties were used as a healthy means of dealing with traumatic experiences of migration (2004). The shared background of the people at these parties, though not necessarily generative of solidarity within the immigrant community, "affirmed a collective ethnic identity and a space of belonging" and provided "a space for immigrants to adopt individual strategies to maintain a continuity and consistency of personal identity and individual purpose" (Farrer, 2004, p. 672).

When dance and music is social (where dancers dance in an informal, party or nightclub setting), rather than performance based (where dancers formally perform for an audience), more complexities emerge for migrants and hosts alike. In his ethnography of Belfast's Latin dance nights in the years after The Troubles, Skinner (2014), found that "social dancing amongst migrants show how the use of space is linked to notions of identity lost in one moment and regained in another" (Skinner, 2014, p. 108). For migrants, dance could function as a release valve for the stress of conformity; for the Irish, Catholic and Protestant alike, it was a shareable space when they might "play at being the Other" (Skinner, 2014, p. 106). This 'play' is laden

with positional asymmetries, and most typically passed from people of colour to white people (ibid). White Irish dancers who learned Latin dances too formally often betrayed cultural misunderstanding in their movements. Without the embodied knowledge of the historical and cultural contexts of the dance moves; trained Irish dancers, skillful and exacting as they often were, were seen by Latin migrants as mistranslating the movement lexicons (ibid.). The free and sensual was danced as sexual, the spirited as technical, and the robotic quality to their mimesis could at times be disheartening for some of Skinners' interviewees (2014). Nonetheless, Belfast's Latin dance nights gave Latin transplants a chance to maintain their identities and feel a sense of belonging.

> "There are city spaces where sociality is touched upon and the masks of public living can be slipped momentarily away from the face. […] It is in these night zones that there is a 'nomadic metaphysics' of mobility – from migrants, from dancers – that we see everyday resistance to the spatialization of domination" (Cressey, 2006, p. 47 in Skinner, 2014, p. 113-114).

The following study of *Plug in Beats* seeks to engage with one such everyday attempt resistance. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted at the party, it seeks to examine what is politically possible in music spaces where there is both a confrontation with the reality of heterogeneity, as well as a genuine bid for a "rights of presence" for cultural others (Massey, 2005 p. 153).

3. Methodology

This study is a critical qualitative investigation into local and migrant experiences of interculturalism at a dance party. It differs from previous studies in two ways. First, previous social-scientific studies of the role of dance, music, and migrants, have largely focused on *intra*-cultural events and practices (Lewis, 2010; Van Aken, 2006). This study examines the *inter*-cultural, and the functioning of a horizontally organized urban social space that seeks heterogeneity. Second, previous studies have focused on the topic of integration *into* 'host' societies (Lewis, 2010). While clearly there are asymmetries in the experience of change between host and migrant populations (Berry, 1997), focusing exclusively on this kind of integration leaves the host society response out of the frame. This study is not interested in integration as a unidirectional phenomenon, but rather in relational and dialectical processes where there is the possibility of mutual recognition and perhaps political shift, on the part of both established and new residents.

I went to Germany with the following research objectives:

1. To investigate how *Plug in Beats* influences participants' imaginings of themselves and each other.
2. To evaluate the strengths and limits of *Plug in Beats* as an inclusive intercultural space.

An interest in the organizational workings of the space required a methodology that considered the structural elements of party – how institutional policy and approach figure in shaping access and behaviour norms within the space. This provided a basis on which to evaluate inclusion strategies and provides a context for participant experiences. Capturing how the shared space of the party made people *feel* is at the core of this project. I take seriously what Kathleen Stewart's calls 'ordinary affects', the "public feelings that begin and end in broad circulation" but also "the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of" (2007, p. 2). I wanted to linger on how people related to *Plug in Beats*, if and how their experiences at the party shaped impressions of themselves and others, and how these affects push and pull on their politics. From a methodological perspective, this required an appeal to a variety of methods in order to

capture the structural dynamics and the affective experiences of these structures, which may be manifested in words, of course, but also in movements, in body language, and in expressions.

Through an ethnographic case study, I look at *Plug in Beats* as a space where ever-shifting personal identities are the basis of constructing collective experiences. A case study methodology involves an in-depth examination of a contemporary phenomenon through a reliance on multiple data sources to gather evidence (Yin, 2003). The data I use in this research is drawn from observations, interviews, video documentation, press-coverage, informal conversations, audio recordings, photographs, and the everyday encounters with the generous people who received me in Munich, tolerated my sometimes-baffling German with humor, and were willing to share some of their time.

From June to August 2018, I lived in Munich, Germany. I read the newspapers (often using translation filters) and spent considerable time at Feierwerk. I volunteered when I was asked, I attended various events, and of course I was at *Plug in Beats* parties when they occurred. The timing of my trip allowed me to attend two *Plug in Beats* parties, and one offshoot party. I also was generously provided with video footage of a number of other parties, and photographs of past events. At the parties, I conducted participant observation, I danced, and I sketched and mapped the space and people's movement through it. I recorded musical selections and ambient noises, and sometimes took notes hiding in the bathroom, so as not to seem terribly out of place. I did the same on the bus on the way home, if I was on my own. This observational work had the most bearing on the movement analysis section, which is loosely based on Lefebvre's (1992) concept of rhythmanalysis.

Pinning down rhythmanalysis as a technique is a difficult thing to do. While Lefebvre wrote plenty about what he hoped it would become, clear instruction on how to *do* rhythmanalysis is frustratingly elusive (Simpson, 2012; Amin & Thrift, 2005). Here, I employ the concept as a methodological metaphor. Rhythmanalysis was conceived as a method that would capture the interplay of the spatial and the temporal, to bring together *presence* and *presents*. A monthly dance party is an ephemeral event. Like music, or language learning, to learn to *feel* a dance party, and how its rhythms (musical, social, spatial, and temporal) unfurl is

an act of attentive creation, that through process, may gesture toward understanding. I have tried, as Lefebvre implores, to be attentive in the ways a rhythmanalyst should – to write from my bodily experience at the party in order to narrate the movements I observe and felt there. Like many others that have tried to employ this method, I have bent Lefebvre's rules (Simpson, 2012). Lefebvre forbids reference to cameras or video, as it breaks the vantage point of the *felt*. I will continue in the tradition of regulatory contortion by writing the movement analysis as somewhat of a collage of my field notes, photographs, and video documentation, grounded mainly in my personal experience of being at the party. Chalk this up to my inability to take notes and dance at the same time.

The movement analysis, in Chapter five, is a reflection of my subjective experience of *Plug in Beats*. While all of the work in this study is necessarily impacted by my authorial position, this section is most explicitly so. Lefebvre famously wrote that "to grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been grasped by it, one must let oneself go, give oneself over, abandon oneself to its duration" (2013, p. 37). Rhythmanalysis involves subjective, embodied interpretation, and the use of the senses, which led René Lourau to understand it as a "phenomenological vision of rhythms" (Lefebvre, 1992, p. 8-9). While Lefebvre resists the term phenomenology on the grounds that it would objectify rhythms and decenter the critical emphasis of the approach, subjective sensorial experience remains at the heart of this style of doing and writing research.

I reinforced this observational work with formal semi-structured interviews with 18 party attendees, nine of which were with newly arrived migrants of various backgrounds who regularly attended the party, and eight of which were established locals. I also conducted three interviews with Thomas Lechner, the party's founder, and one with Klaus Martens, who has worked at Feierwerk since the late 1980s. The interviews each lasted about an hour and were done face to face in locations that were convenient to the interviewees. A list of participants names, ages, and places of birth has been provided in Appendix 1. On some occasions I went to participants' homes, and on others I met them at Feierwerk, in a café, or in a park.

In each of these interviews I asked participants about their perception of the *Plug in Beats* concept and what it felt like to be, dance, or play a song in the party space. We also discussed

the interactions they had had at the party, if they had learned anything new through at *Plug in Beats*, and whether they felt there were differences between *Plug in Beats* and other parties. Finally we discussed perceptions of the self and others in the space of the party, and whether the party was useful for creating feelings of solidarity between participants.

There were three separate interview guides (See Appendix 2)– one tailored to Thomas' specific experience as an organizer, one tailored for migrants, and one tailored for established locals. Most questions are common across the interview guides; however I added a few additional questions specific to the recent migration of certain party attendees, and the 'host' role of established locals, in order to get at the different positionalities that occupy the shared party space.

To select interview participants, I relied on a snowball technique, beginning with my existing social connections to a number of refugee volunteers and to Thomas. Through my presence volunteering at the parties and other Feierwerk events, I was also able to approach some participants unconnected to my existing social networks. In each case, potential participants were sent a letter of introduction by email or Facebook, or WhatsApp.

Unfortunately, given the exploratory nature and limited time frame of the study, the more systematic or random sampling method recommended by Jacobsen and Landau (2003) was not feasible. I agree that academic work with refugees and migrants should hold up to the "dual imperative" of maintaining academic rigor and ensuring the knowledge produced is used to protect migrants and positively influence the institutions that make a difference in their lives (ibid, p. 19). I sought to (somewhat) achieve this effect through triangulation and mixing methods.

Each interview began with an explanation of the study followed by a consent seeking process. With the exception of one participant, all interviewees signed a consent form. The one participant who chose not to sign the consent preferred to do an oral consent process, which was recorded. During this process, participants could decide whether they wanted to be recorded or

not, and whether their name would be shared or not. All participants consented to the study publishing their first name.

On a couple of occasions when it was necessary, I employed a translator. There are some potential limitations to working with a translator, especially in terms of confidentiality issues (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003), but given the relatively low risk nature of the research, I think the trade-off was worthwhile, as it enabled a broader range of interviewees. When an interviewee and I shared a language (French or English), we spoke it together. In all cases, I stored the interview data on a securely stored hard-drive, or in a notebook that I kept on my person.

Equally important was the time I spent informally with party organizers and participants. I spent many evenings in the backyard of Thomas' house, feasting or watching football with him and his friends, many of whom are people he met at *Plug in Beats*. I spoke with Thomas most days - about his high-profile political activism, his relationship to music, how all of this was connected to his politics, his activist history, and his autobiography. I volunteered my services as a translator for his organization *Gemeinsam Für Menschenrechte une Demokratie* (Together for Human Rights and Democracy) in preparation for the July #Ausgehetzt demonstration. I tried to improve my German by doing online courses, and I regularly ran in the Englisher Garten listening to songs that some of my interviewees had sent me.

Situating myself in the study

In my daily wanderings in Munich, I engaged anyone that I could about the party, about refugee relations, about life in the city and whether and specifically how they felt their lives and spaces transformed since 2015, when a large influx of migrants arrived in the city. I spent time at the Feierwerk radio station and at Bellevue di Monaco, a downtown café and residential cultural center for refugees and locals in the Glockenbach neighborhood, at one point visiting a women's refugee support group, to ask them what they thought about the party, why they weren't there, and what it would take to include them. These experiences expanded my understanding of what life in Munich was for different residents. It attuned me to how people were living their everyday lives, and how they were negotiating their days amidst the clamor of political threats to deport or otherwise detain migrants by Horst Seehofer (The Christian Social

Union of Bavaria party leader) Marcus Söder (the leader of Bavaria) and the rising far right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party.

Music has always figured very centrally in my life. I spent my 20s and early 30s as a full-time musician in Canada. In the period of my life that I spent touring, it was evident that in spite of a trend towards progressive political leanings, and an acceptance of difference, most art spaces remain relatively homogeneous. At times, this professed politics of inclusion, unchallenged by real diversity, seemed - like much of the multiculturalism discourse - to reflect little more than an aesthetics of openness. In brighter moments, however, I can see these spaces as ripe for change. This was the case when in 2016, at the height of the so-called 'refugee crisis', when I was on tour in Germany. I stayed at Thomas' house while passing through Munich, and he told me about *Plug in Beats*.

Kobayashi argues:

> "The question of "who speaks for whom?" cannot be answered upon the slippery slope of what personal attributes - what color, what gender, what sexuality – legitimize our existence, but on the basis of our history of involvement, and on the basis of understanding how difference is constructed and used as a political tool" (1994a, p. 78).

My history of involvement in this study thus stems from my long history as a musician, and as a person moving in international musical communities. My stake in this scholarly work comes from a wish to see my artistic community's values better reflected in the places and spaces we occupy. There are differences between myself as researcher, and the various people who participated in this study. I am neither European, nor a migrant. I hold a Canadian passport which allows me to travel with ease, and the advantages of education, whiteness, and economic privilege inform my positionality. I am a woman with a Jewish last name and secular beliefs. All of this surely comes to play in subtle and not-so-subtle ways in every interaction that informed this research in Germany. In a project that was about interculturalism, my hope was that whatever distance there may have been between myself and the people I encountered, it could be generative.

As a strategy for mitigating positional distances between myself and my participants, I took meticulous notes and recordings when I had permission, in order to ensure the possibility presenting participants words as they came out of the mouth. In my presentation of this research, I have attempted to convey the things people told me in as complete and unedited a fashion as possible. I include a large number of direct quotations and at times, I present entire dialogues. I have done this for two reasons. First, because it would be counter-productive to speak on anyone else' behalf. This research is interested in participants' experience of the party space, and their experiences are their own. The differences of positionality between myself and many of my respondents are quite wide, and this intensifies the imperative to be sensitive to the likelihood of misunderstanding.

Second, the specific poetics of how we narrate our experiences shine a light on the charge of everyday encounters, experiences and images. As such, I wanted to avoid the imposition of any language that could wrongly shift the weight of a phrase or alter the conversational center of gravity. This decision to reproduce conversation word for word was also prompted by the observation that often, during informal conversations and interviews, the migrants I spoke to would not name racism, sexism, or other vectors of xenophobia as a guiding factor in their lives unless explicitly pushed to. Often even then, I encountered reticence to speak in those terms. This may be because of the real and perceived differences between us, or because of a sense that something is left uncaptured by these big bold categories of oppression.

Situating my approach

David Turton, anthropologist and former director of Oxford's Refugee Studies Centre implored that "research into other's suffering can only be justified if alleviating that suffering is an explicit objective" (1996, p. 96). While *Plug in Beats* aims to be a space of celebration and inclusion, rather than suffering, the asymmetries of power that exist in the space and the relative vulnerability of migrants makes the social-justice imperative in any study of the party important to bear in mind.

My approach is to trace how political economic, social, and cultural forces are woven into everyday feelings and encounters, and might come together in a story, a scene, or a charge in

a space. I wanted to find out how and whether an overtly curated intercultural space such as *Plug in Beats* throws a wrench into everyday readings and experiences of the world. In the tradition of Kathleen Stewart, in this work I aim to point to the 'something' that undergirds the way we experience the good and the bad, the tension and release in interactions across difference. As a result, I resist naming or reifying the powerful forces (neoliberalism, racism, sexism, homophobia, etc) on behalf of my participants. My hope is to leave a rhetorical space open for the expression of affective politics, which of course, often leads back to power anyways. I recognize that *naming* power is a traditional way of *confronting* it, but perhaps sometimes as power moves through the world, it goes by other names.

The study is 'critical' insofar as it seeks to unearth the contradictions and tensions that happen in shared social spaces as expressed through attendees' readings of the space. I look at how participants narrate both inclusion and exclusions, to trace both the physical presence of bodies, but also how the self and the other are understood in a newly shared space. Kobayashi (2001) defines critical scholarship, as study which "takes a position on what is, and on *what could be* [emphasis added], as well as providing a theoretical understanding of the systemic ways in which social relations are constructed" (p. 55). The broader politics of my position is that I am especially interested in the 'what could be' that resonates in the conceptual framework for *Plug in Beats*, and the utopian vision that underwrites it. The experimental political arts of the party space can be seen as a testing ground for new ways of thinking and being – as both a miniaturized proof of the possibility of a better, less xenophobic, way of relating and sharing space, and a space to practice the shifts of perception and behaviour that would allow such a world to come into being (Amin & Thrift, 2013).

The potential of the party as testing ground stems from the role of dance as an embodied form of knowledge. Dance bears traces of identities, shared traditions, traditions altered, transcultural experiences, personal histories, steps accomplished and steps mis-stepped. Movement traditions such as dance are connected to ethnocultural communities (local, and translocal), through a simultaneously private, personal and physical experience. Sharing music and dance steps (traditional, or dear for other reasons) is an invitation (casual or not) to part-take in this intimate knowledge. When sharing music or steps that are new to others in the room,

there is a 'reaching across' that happens. It involves -to a greater or lesser degree - a leap of faith. I am thus interested in tracing the reaching across that happens at *Plug in Beats* as a kind of knowledge production to see how it bears out in the lives of participants. This tracing begins from (varied) personal experiences of the party space, through how these experiences are shaped and defined in relation to others and the space of the party itself.

In order to make this argument, I take *feeling* seriously as a register of intelligence. Nigel Thrift (2004, p. 60) has long argued for geographers to recognize affect as "a form of thinking, often indirect and non-reflective, it is true, but thinking all the same". As such, in my line of questioning, I would leave the space for interviewees go on at length about their feelings, experiences, or share stories as they saw fit through open-ended questions (see interview guide in Appendix 2). Some respondents had a lot to say, and some were more reserved. This may have been for a number of reasons ranging from the difference that I presented as an interviewee, to linguistic barriers, to personal level of interest.

This plays out not only in my choice of methods, but also in the way I have gone about the writing of this work. Along with critical analysis and transcriptions of conversations, I have included some narrations of movement in the party space, inspired by Lefebvre's (1992) example of his 'rhythmanalysis' method. What rhythmanalysis takes into account is the long and short rhythms that feature in the moment. For Lefebvre, the moment itself is charged with the possibilities that are advised by those rhythms (1992). When we take his concept of rhythm quite literally, the meaning of the bodily syncing that happens (or does not) in communal dancing also becomes interesting. The apparent sync is also disturbed by the other rhythms that may or may not be in harmony due to longer cycles less immediately apparent such as, for example, exhaustion caused by night-shift work, or the emergence of a saddening or harrowing memory triggered by the literal rhythm of a music.

Lefebvre famously argued:

> "There is a certain externality which allows the analytical intellect to function. Yet, to capture a rhythm one needs to have been *captured* by it. One has to *let go*, give and abandon oneself to its duration. Just as in music or when learning a language, one only

> really understands meanings and sequences by *producing* them, that is, by producing spoken rhythms. Therefore, in order to *hold* this fleeting object, which is not exactly an *object*, one must be at the same time both inside and out" (2013, p. 37). (Emphasis in original).

I try to enact this letting go in my movement analyses. I also include a few descriptive vignettes inspired by Stewart's *Ordinary Affects* (2007). I use this discursive device in order to animate photographs, or represent the stories offered to me as resonant sidebars. They are intended to permit a sideways engagement, especially with non-verbal media, such as songs and dance-moves.

The various data I engage with here all rotate around the central notion of varied forms of navigation 'across difference' as constitutive of everyday intercultural experiences. This addition of the word 'across' turns difference into a spatial metaphor. Vernacularly, difference is regularly presented as an object, as if it were something solid produced by a comparison. Difference can be small or large, as if it has a measurable thingness. Sometimes '*the differences between us are not too much to bridge*', and we lean across the ravine; other times we are told that '*there is a difference between us',* and we know we stand before a canyon. Difference can be reified into a problem, or ignored into one. Sometimes difference really matters, then again, not always. The quality of a difference, and our relationship to its importance, are moving targets – both a product of, and a response to, our specific geographies, histories, demeanors, and the happenstance of our encounters, and the way we tell our stories to ourselves.

Cindi Katz suggests that given the varied differences between us, affective politics might be a strategy to "pick up these disparate pulses and discern what drives and might connect them across even wild differences in experience" (2010, p. 924). The study of the affective dimensions of urban spaces is my way into critical scholarship on intercultural solidarity. As Thrift has argued, affect must be studied not only because it is embedded into all aspects of everyday life, but because it is so often deployed politically (2004). This is readily observed in the recent rise of nationalist politics across the globe, and the right-wing's mobilization of xenophobic reactions to the refugee crisis in Europe specifically (Cincu, 2016). But affect is also a tool that can be

mobilized in efforts towards inclusion, anti-racism, and human rights. It is not an uncomplicated affair. My hope is that through a combination of methods, this study offers a way of understanding how power figures, is understood, and might be interrupted or countered, when a shift is made in space to make room to negotiate difference.

4. Context

4.1 *Plug in Beats*: an intercultural dance party

Plug in Beats is a monthly dance party where the crowd selects the music. The party actively includes heterogeneous 'locals' and asylum seekers and has a monthly attendance of 50 to 200 people. The project began in 2015 when a temporary refugee camp was set up on a neighboring lot to Feierwerk Gelände, an arts and cultural institution in the Sendling-Westpark neighborhood in Munich. The party seeks to establish dialogue between new and established residents, and to create a shared space for new neighbors to acquaint themselves through celebration and music sharing.

Thomas Lechner, a long-time activist and Feierwerk's head of events, got the idea for the party when he was looking for strategies to make room for the newcomers in Feierwerk's spaces. The organizers ask participants to arrive with their mobile phones filled with music that they enjoy. Through a process of random selection, participants are called upon to select a song for the DJ to play. The process aims to mitigate for tendencies of domination or exclusion of any one style, person or group, with the goal of *democratizing* the night's soundtrack.

Orangehouse is a venue at Feierwerk where *Plug in Beats* usually happens. The space is rectangular with a small bar, and two pillars that vaguely separate the area where people dance, and the area where they do not. There is a small stage at the far end of the room where a few tables are arranged with DJ gear and a cell-phone charging station. A VJ displays technicolor videos of dancing people, and the numbers indicating whose selections are up next – who must approach the stage with their phone. The dancers assemble in different formations depending on the music. They form circles when the music calls for it. If a song from Afghanistan is playing,

some semblance of a qataghani (an Afghan dance) begins, with those who know the dance lifting their heels behind them and holding their arms out wide, crossing their legs as they take tiny graceful steps. Others do their best to mimic. They try to move their feet in better unison and are welcome to stumble along in good faith. Soon the music will change, maybe bringing a new challenge, maybe something more comfortable or immediately accessible to the body.

Many people dance, and many people do not. On the other side of the pillars people talk. Small talk – about the weather, the day, the football team; and also, other talk – about countries, the meaning of a song, of a dance. People talk about the jobs they're looking for, and their apartment searches. People try on languages that are new to them – *'Canada is a very good country'* they tell me – people search for whatever linguistic and cultural ground they might have to stand on together. People talk their way around differences. People sometimes do not want to go there. Then again, people are curious. They ask questions. People talk about home. They talk about their journeys, or what they miss, or what's different. People take phone numbers. People look at each other in the ways that people look at each other on the dance floor. People are attracted, defending against gazes, trying to come under them, and unsure of it all. People look at their feet. Some people drink, some people do not. Some people feel fine about all of this. It's a party after all.

Most of the people who do not have German passports are waiting to hear from BAMF (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge) about their asylum status. Someone lucky gets their papers, due to their brother's young age. They are going to be able to get their parents to Germany too with a little luck. Feelings of all kinds fly around the room.

4.2 Introduction to Feierwerk

Zuagroaste: Difference in the background of Feierwerk

It's 1985 in Munich, and red blooming trees stand behind an amphitheatre flanking an assemblage of young people crowded around a small stage on the water. There are far too many saxophones on stage, and small amps point toward the musicians, who appear to be straining to hear themselves. I can only assume that a mess of sound is ricocheting off the lake behind them,

but a photograph misses these details. In this particular photograph, shown to me by Klaus Martens (2018) in a presentation on Feierwerk's history (see Figure 2), it is springtime in Olympiapark. It's been 13 years since the Munich Olympics, and it appears to be early evening. Everyone is wearing a jacket. Some 200 people are in attendance, and nine young men are on stage. The crowd sits in clots on the concrete steps of the half amphitheatre - knees touching knees. Others on red-rented row boats are presumably watching the show from behind the stage, but we can not see that either. The red blooming trees frame the scene.

Figure 2 A Feierwerk concert in 1985. Source: Martens, 2018, p13 [PowerPoint presentation].

A Munich tree-guide published by the National League for Bird Protection informs me that they are horse chestnut trees. In the guide they are referred to as "Zuagroaste"- the Bavarian word for a non-Bavarian that has come to stay (LBV, 2017). A Zuagroaste can speak the language, and is a part of society, but is clearly not 'one of us Bavarians'. But history and propriety run in zig-zags. The National League of Bird Protection walks back its assessment. The trees are Zuagroaste, but they have long lost roots in the region. Horse chestnut trees actually prospered all over central Europe until the ice age crushed the population everywhere but in the mountain forests of the Balkans. They were returned to Germany as ornamental trees in the 16th century. The red horse chestnut is actually a hybrid between the common white

flowering horse chestnut, and the scarlet buckeye, an American shrub (LBV, 2017). The properly us and the properly other blur at the back of the amphitheatre. Nobody is looking in that direction but the band and the photographer. The trees are barely perceived, lived as scenery, digging their roots at their own pace.

The concert in the photograph was a production of a then-new association called Feierwerk. Today, Feierwerk is a Munich-based non-profit service company, with a mandate to empower people of all ages in cultural activities and social engagement, but in 1983, Feierwerk began as a student group project. The founders were studying pedagogy, and they were assigned to organize a youth culture project. They saw themselves as educators working with young people outside of the traditional school system in order to perform and promote cultural work (Martens, 2018). "The idea was to animate people to participate in cultural action", said Klaus Martens, the head of Feierwerk's Pop department, and the institution's support association (personal interview, August 27th, 2018). The first event was a tent concert, with bands and interactive activities. Soon after, Feierwerk became an organization – this would make it possible to partner with the city and allow the group to apply for foundation money to launch new projects.

The first initiatives were carried out on a 1970s bus. The team would drive to a park, or public space, install a temporary stage, and stage alternative youth culture events throughout the city under the slogans *"Kultur von unten, Kulture für alle"* (Culture from under, culture for all). The bus was decked with purple and red paint in hippied-out swirls and flanked by large, funkily painted letters spelling F E I E R W E R K, German for celebration factory (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 The Feierwerk bus in 1985. Source: Martens, 2018

Feierwerk is a product of a specific geographical history that made Munich a site of interest for the intersections between arts, education, and anti-fascist politics. During Germany's reconstruction after the Second World War, the Americans occupied Bavaria. A major component of their policy was to re-educate young people in the wake of fascism. Dr. Anton Fingerle was appointed the head of the first Munich school board in 1945, and immediately began using the arts as a means of doing this work (Kalb, 2016). He founded 'Youth Cultural Works Munich' the next year. Fingerle was a firm believer in cultural education, and he worked within the school board to lead young people to classical music, often by putting on youth-friendly concerts in parks.

Many of the buildings and concert halls had been bombed in the war and these were the only spaces available at the time, thus ushering in a culture of free entrance, 'open air concerts' in Munich. When the Olympics came to Munich in 1972, there were renewed efforts on the part of the city to make things colourful and to organize activities for kids. This offered further opportunities to occupy parks and to organize music and youth events in public spaces. It was this history of 'open air' concerts that sparked the idea of Feierwerk.

Youth Cultural Works Munich became the first institution to partner with Feierwerk. Much had changed since 1940s; shifts in pedagogic approaches and in the culture at large gave traction to the idea of *doing* cultural activities rather than simply consuming them. Participating in cultural creation was emphasized over learning the classical approaches to creation by 'listening to Beethoven and Bach'. 1985 was the 'Year of the Youth' in Munich, and Feierwerk proposed that the city lend them one big building for one year. It was a great big hangar in the Sendling-Westpark neighbourhood, in which the team hoped to put on concerts, workshops and all kinds of activities for Munich youth. The city agreed to loan the space, and to pay five people's salaries for the duration of the year. This was the year Martens joined the team.

After a successful first year, the city agreed to let Feierwerk continue their operations and to expand their space. Eventually, the city gave Feierwerk access to a large building complex on Hansastraße, a main throughway in Sendling-Westpark. This location became Feierwerk-Gelände, one of the 'houses', that now comprise Feierwerk, and the one that focuses most on popular music (see Figure 4). Currently 130 people work at Feierwerk's five locations (Martens, personal interview, Aug. 27th, 2018), which are dispersed around the city. The other centers are focused on supporting cultural and social activities for children, teens, and families. Funkstation and Trafixx are youth centers offering participatory workshops, and spaces to cultivate creative ideas in the Schwabing-Freimann and Obersendling neighborhoods respectively; Südpolstation is a youth center in Neuperlach South; and Tatz in Sendling-Westpark is an open club for kids and youth in the neighborhood. The important thing that binds all the houses together, Martens stresses, is that "*all projects have cultural impact"* (Martens, personal interview, Aug. 27th, 2018).

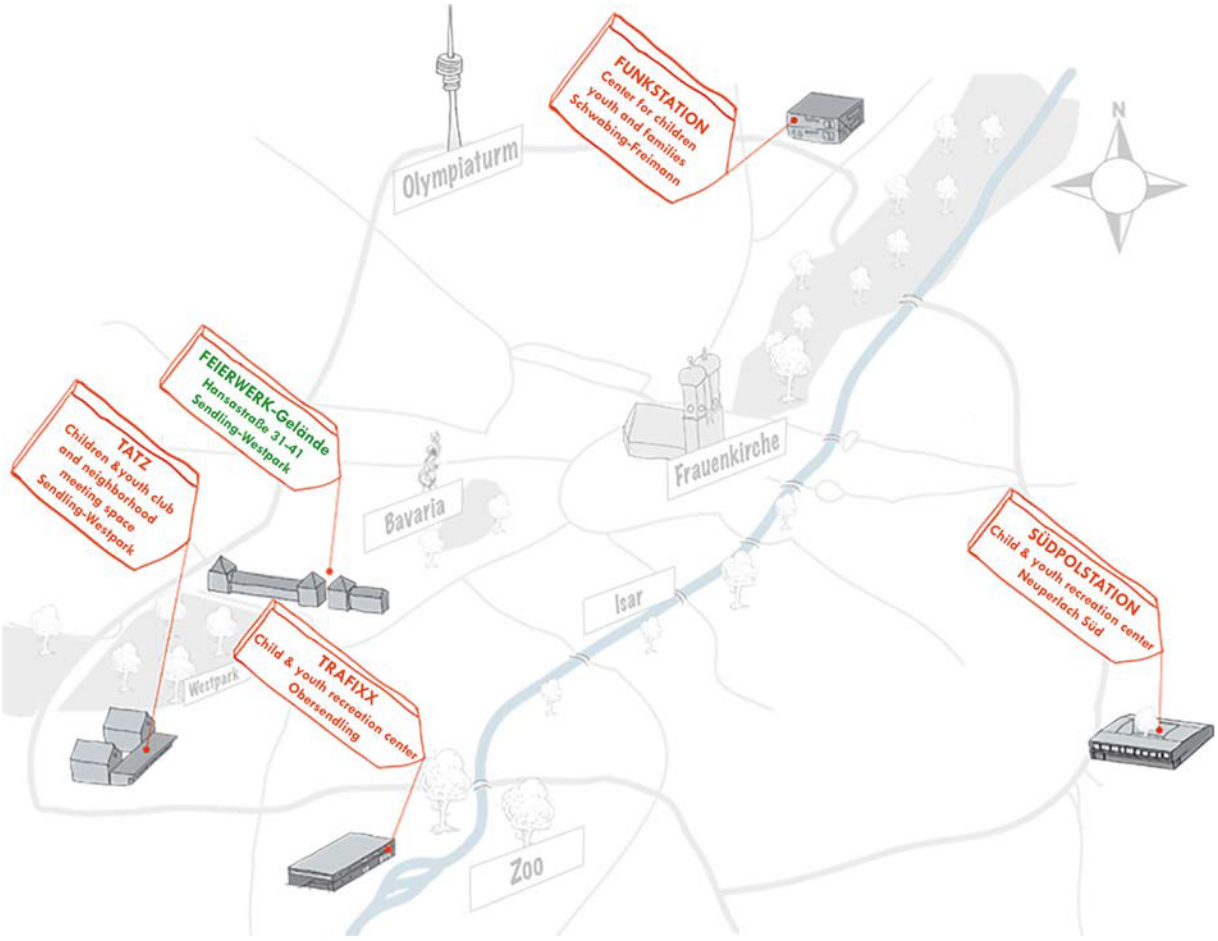

Figure 4 A map of Feierwerk's 'houses' with Feierwerk-Gelände, the site of Plug in Beats in green. Source: Feierwerk, 2019.

The team at Feierwerk were always very organized at working within existing structures. "This organization always was let's say, not punk rock," Martens told me (personal interview, Aug. 27th, 2018). From the get-go, they always secured the proper city permits and applied for city funding. This approach made it possible to build institutional legitimacy over time and resulted in substantial material benefits. Currently, the institution occupies all of their buildings rent-free, and they receive a substantial amount of city funding. The people who are employed for pedagogical reasons have their full salaries paid by the City of Munich, and the institution has access to several programs.

Feierwerk is one of the city's biggest partners and receives funds to participate in a prisoner reintegration program for low-level convicts who need to do community work in a social context. Thomas told me it has been a big success, but that nobody knows about it.

Currently, 40% of Feierwerk's budget comes from municipal grants, and 60% is from ticket sales. The Bavarian government also contributes a small amount of money annually.

A tour of Feierwerk

June 2018, I arrived by bus in Sendling-West at Feierwerk-Gelände. Thomas met me in front of his office, in the Fachstelle Pop building on Hansastraße. Fachstelle Pop is Feierwerk's pop office, where they offer support to musicians, bands, artists, and other actors who operate in the music scene. We began walking East, past Orangehouse towards a small, underground punk rock venue. Above the punk bar sits a multi-generational house which provides space and programming for senior-citizens, families, and youth. It has an art gallery and art-making spaces. Beyond this building is where the temporary camp for asylum seekers was before it was destroyed, Thomas told me, pointing to an empty lot (see Figure 5). We turned around and walked back past Fachstelle Pop. On the top floor, there is a community radio station called Radio Feierwerk, the first non-commercial radio station in Germany.

The long Hansastraße 39 building also contains two larger music venues. On its western edge there is a skate park - one of the first legal ones in the city. As Thomas explains, "creative stuff belongs to youth culture. [At Feierwerk] we do not separate between party, music and sports when it belongs to youth culture" (personal interview, June 15th, 2018). Behind the skate park is Farbenladen, the visual arts building. Farbenladen contains another gallery, which hosts monthly shows with vernissages and finissages. Thomas says that when the camp was next to Feierwerk, they had a big exhibition of photos and videos that the migrants took on their journeys. Apparently the art show was a great success.

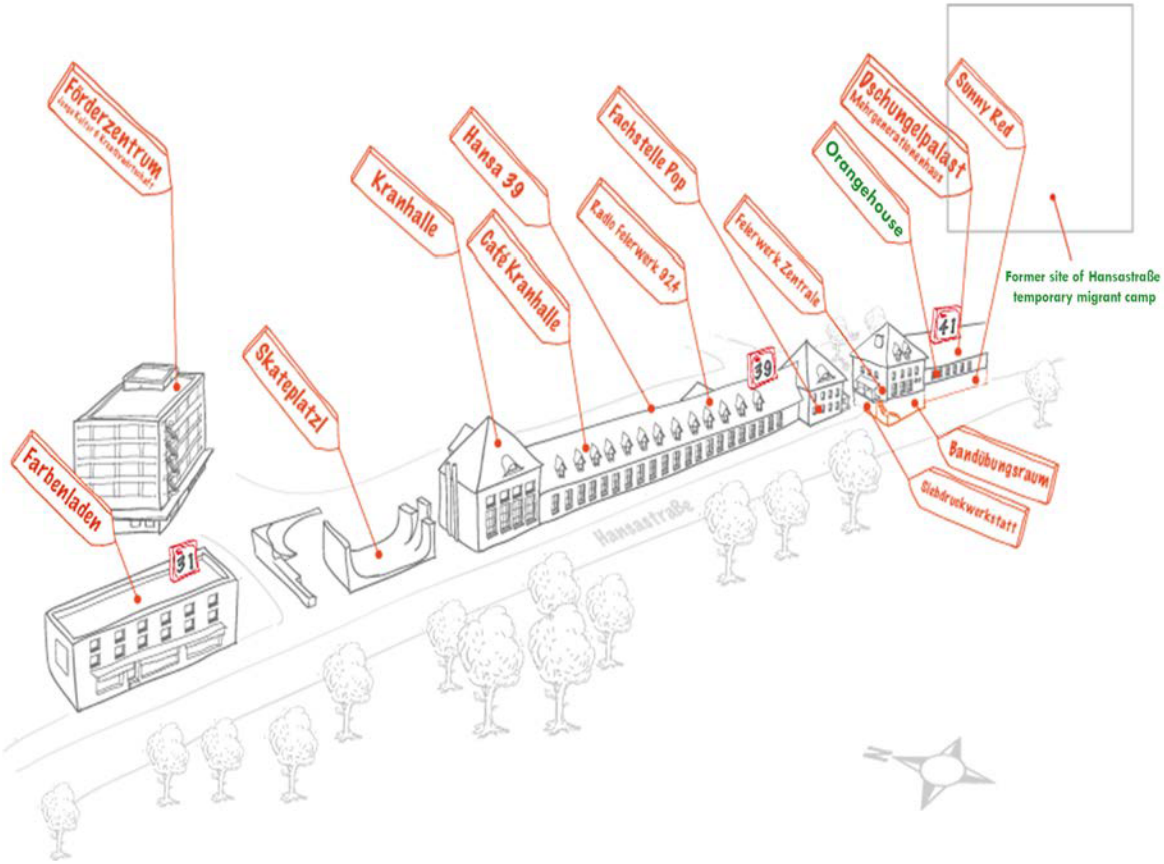

Figure 5 A map of Feierwerk-Gelände. Orangehouse and the site of the former migrant camp are indicated in green. Source: Feierwerk, 2019.

Thomas took me along the path to a tall building a bit set back from the main road. To the left sat a large building, and to the right a field where Feierwerk has plans with the city to build affordable rehearsal spaces. The plan is to charge one euro per hour per head. This would resolve a real issue for Munich musicians, as high rents and a lack of housing has meant that affordable studio space is nearly impossible to find. It would make music-making more accessible to newcomers as well. For now, the project is on hold, but Thomas expects it to be built soon. There are also plans for a creative work-share spaces for short-term projects.

Feierwerk occupies three floors of the space in the tall building next to the field. It is called the Förderzentrum, a support center for young cultural and creative industries. The

building holds a store and the carpentry department, which builds what is needed for the rest of the center and teaches the craft to anyone who is interested in learning. There are also studios that teach sound engineering, booking, and bookkeeping. *"For us its always very important that [there is] not a hierarchy of knowledge"*, Thomas told me on the tour (personal interview, June 15th, 2018).

On the third floor of the Förderzentrum there is an archive, and a group of people who work on studying the tendencies of far right-wing movements. This group is called FIRM (*Fachinformationsstelle Rechtsextremismus München*). They hold workshops and also research the developments of fascist and xenophobic tendencies in music. Each year, these researchers hold a meeting with the whole Feierwerk staff on the new iconography associated with the far-right music scene, so that they can be aware of far-right bands and their logos and slogans. The ability to identify this iconography is key to being able to challenge discriminatory attitudes in order to ensure inclusion. How this is executed is further elaborated in section 4.3. FIRM quietly keeps watch over Feierwerk.

Welcome at Feierwerk

There are posters pinned neatly to bulletin boards at the entrances of most of Feierwerk's buildings (see Figure 6). Amongst event notifications and programming advertisements, a colourful graphic for the center's inclusion policy is visible in most every space. The poster, printed in both German and awkwardly-yet-dutifully translated English, states:

> *"No matter who you are, who you love, what you look like, from where you are, in what you believe, from where or what you flee, who your parents are, here's no place for hatred, racism, sexism and homophobia. Welcome at Feierwerk."*

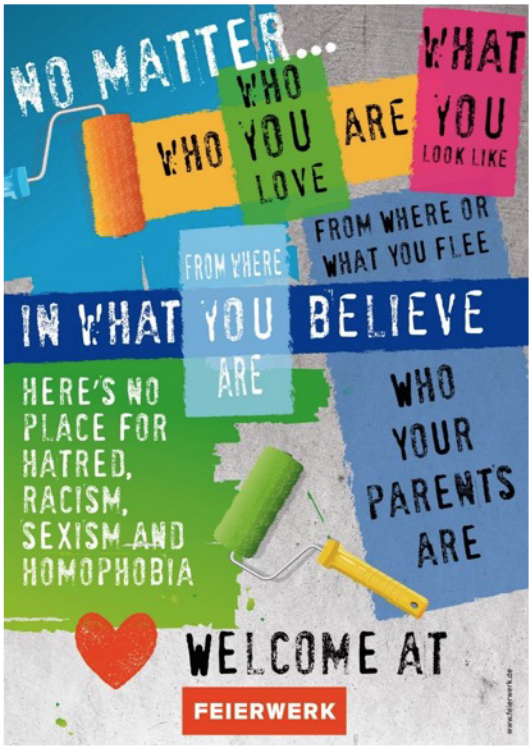

Figure 6 Feierwerk's system of values poster is pinned around all of its venues. Source: Feierwerk, 2019.

Feierwerk's original mandate remains to support and afford space to youth culture, so a wide-ranging programming approach is seen to make logical sense. In a musical context, supporting different styles of music, or scenes, can mean supporting multiple publics usually, but not always, at different times in one space. To do this in a meaningful way in a diverse and continually diversifying urban context, the principle of providing space for varied genres is seen as extending an inclusive approach to all 'others'.

Klaus Martens insists that Feierwerk, while inclusive, has "no direct ideology" (personal interview, Aug. 27th, 2018). To a certain degree I found this position unrealistic. Throughout the summer, I knew that left-wing alliances were holding meetings at Feierwerk spaces to prepare for a number of anti-right-wing demonstrations. FIRM was also on site and active in researching and disseminating information about the tides of fascism and right-wing extremism in youth culture. Other initiatives happening on the premises, e.g. promoting refugee inclusion and holding queer parties, also suggested a certain stance. As I knew that Feierwerk provided spaces for political organization and that it was a part of their mandate to provide resources and to encourage political activism in young people, I asked Martens if the space was open to people cultivating more right-wing ideas:

"What we wanted to do was to give room to many different activities, and not to manipulate what they're doing. So in a certain range of possibilities you can do what you want, and we give you the room, we give you technical support, we give you know-how if you want, [you can] ask us how to manage things. Especially [with] young people, [the approach is] to accept them as partners, not to be pedagogic. It's a kind of pedagogy but without pedagogic impetus. There were other organizations here in town who said 'what you are doing is not really youth work, you do not care about the problems of young people. They are drinking too much alcohol, taking drugs' - but come on playing in a band is better than drugs, [and holding] some crazy ideas. That's not our way. We give room" (Martens, personal interview, Aug. 27th, 2018).

In order to facilitate inclusion, however, there must be a hard limit to openness. Martens maintained the space would be open as long as there was no hate speech. He mentioned that in the past it has happened that some parties stopped cooperating with Feierwerk's policy and as a consequence, Feierwerk revoked their access to the space "because of too much let's say right-wing ideology. Not really political stuff, but the message is in the grey zone, for example if you write the word KASSE (with SS bolts) – no way." When I asked Martens where the line was his response was this:

> "The line has always to be discussed. There is no written thing, you have to discuss. In some cases, yes, it has to be negotiated. But there are not many really difficult decisions to make, because people know for 30 years what we are standing for. Provocations are rare" (Martens, personal interview, Aug. 27th, 2018).

The foggy space of being understood as 'standing for' *something*, points to the way spaces shape what Kathleen Stewart (2007) calls 'ordinary affects'. These are the feelings, the 'vibes', the accumulations of significations and poetics that animate into a soft sense of meaning. This rhymes with Michael Walzer's writing on 'open-minded spaces' (1995). Walzer stresses that beyond the known purposes of a space, that "design and character stimulate (or repress) certain qualities of attention, interest, forbearance, and receptivity." So understanding what a space like Feierwerk stands for, and how to *be* within it is influenced not only by the known purpose (a music event), but also "because of what others are doing, because of what it means to be "there," and because of the look and feel of the space itself" (Walzer, 1995, p. 471).

People who enter Feierwerk come to floating understandings of what the place is about, and what kinds of behaviours and attitudes are expected. These understandings can have consequences which shape attitudes in subtle or not-so subtle ways. Stewart writes of subject formation as a channeling process, "formed by the coagulation of intensities, surfaces, sensations, perceptions, and expressions, […] composed of encounters and the spaces and events it traverses or inhabits. Things happen. The self moves to react, often pulling itself someplace it did not exactly intend to go" (Stewart, 2007, p. 79).

What *Feierwerk* stands for is knowable when you come up against its limits (and get kicked out), but you are likely to sense it before you get to that point of confrontation. More often, moving through the space might shape your behavior. This happens relationally, as well as through more concrete measures. You might just as easily get a hint of Feierwerk's 'open-minded attitude' in a conversation, as by seeing a poster stating the system of values. The space projects a character through the people that are present and not-present, and how those people hold themselves in the space. If you are an artist, the anti-fascism clause in your contract makes the inclusion policy very clear, but just as easily, and possibly more tellingly, you might get the sense of the inclusive system of values by observing how the institution gets along with the neighbours, or how it responds when there is conflict.

Institutional approaches to conflict: What to do about the goths

One pertinent example of how Feierwerk reacts to conflict is found in the big debates about far-right, xenophobic movements infiltrating music in the goth scene in Germany in 2002. Feierwerk organized workshops on the subject, and later there were meetings with other promoters in Munich to find a strategy against the intent of these movements to intrude into youth cultural scenes. This led to an addendum in Feierwerk's artist contracts requiring all performers to comply with certain conditions, or else risk the contract and concert being cancelled. If an artist misrepresents the character and presentation of the show; violates law or perturbs law and order; or if active participating members of the contracting party (artists and their crew), "express racist, homophobic, sexist or other incriminating statements and/or behaviour before or during the performance" (Feierwerk standard artist contract), the event may be cancelled or interrupted without remuneration to the artist. In addition to creating a legal framework for controlling concert content, the conversation around goth music that brought about the contractual addendum also set the precedent for a culture of public conversation about hate-speech and discrimination in cultural texts. This approach was used again when Feierwerk organized city hall discussions about homophobia in Reggae and Rap a decade later.

4.3 Framing Diversity at Feierwerk

The mission statement on Feierwerk's website proclaims a "basic attitude to support, without dogma and ideology, diverse cultures in their independence and dynamism, while constantly taking up new ideas. We enable and promote affiliation, regardless of age and generation boundaries. That is why all our events and offers are open to different milieus, cultural scenes and age groups" (Feierwerk, 2019).

By qualifying the mission statement as an *attitude,* the statement gains some fluidity, and opens the door for experience. The caveat of being *without dogma and ideology* functions at once to project a neutrality of politics and normalize the inclusivity statements that follow it.

A mission statement is a textual performance which may or may not be taken up in the politics and practices that make up institutional daily life. Formalizing cultural diversity through such a statement is a way to name diversity as an *aim* (Ahmed, 2012). Ahmed (2012) argues that the language of diversity itself tends to be "used as shorthand for inclusion, as the 'happy point' of intersectionality" (p. 14). But as a strategy towards meaningful inclusion, it may be contradictory. Diversity tends to be associated most strongly with race, and beyond this, can background other axes of difference. Ahmed insists, it is a mistake to conflate legislation in favour of equality with equality itself (2012).

Public statements of institutional identity may exist specifically to conceal existing imbalances of power. Even mission statements that are written in earnest, without pretenses towards obfuscation or self-promotion – are riddled with contingency. An *aim* is a statement of direction, a moving towards a goal which is yet to be fully realized and settled into the 'givens' of institutional thinking (Douglas, 1986). In such an analysis, Feierwerk's mission statement, and the posters that are pinned to Feierwerk's walls, are not only reflections of a proposed collective way of being in the space – the need for such texts belies an atmosphere in which the banishing of hatred, sexism, racism, and homophobia are not yet taken for granted as a collective 'institutional second nature', at least with respect to Feierwerk's public (Ahmed, 2012; Jacoby, 1975).

Interestingly, Feierwerk staff narrate the formation of the institution's inclusion policy as a natural shift from aesthetic diversity in *programming* to a politics of the social inclusion of cultural 'others'. The initial impetus for an appeal to 'diverse cultures' is told a means of defending a diversity of musical styles in their programming. Feierwerk staff often communicate this in a tone implying a natural alignment of alternative arts with broader progressive ideals, even though they are acutely aware of pop music's potential to be co-opted by fascists, xenophobes, and bigots of all stripes. Still there is a flow from programming to social inclusion in how people talk:

> "[Cultural inclusion] was always one of our principals. We made big events with very, very different cultural projects: theatre, heavy metal, we have very different types of people. There are some punks, there are some girls who make classical dancing, there's a very broad spectrum. Of course, it's also about sexual orientation, and colour, and whatever, so that's one of our main principals: no discrimination. It's in all of our contracts we have with artists, that people would interrupt if they put anything on the stage that does not accept (diversity)" (Martens, personal interview, Aug. 27th, 2018).

Framing diversity in this way may have a less obvious function. Martens told me: "we are not as an organization left-wing, but tendentially [staff are] more Green Party (a center-left party) than CSU (the leading conservative party), of course" (personal interview, Aug. 27th, 2018). This differentiation between the organization and the people that make it up creates an interesting dynamic. The focus on programming makes it possible to maintain plausible deniability around having a direct ideology, while maintaining the ability to be reflexive to future challenges. At the same time, this position may be productive to progressive goals (more traditionally associated with the Green Party) if it results in the ability to maintain a welcoming space for a wide range of residents irrespective of the level of xenophobic hostility that may or may not exist in a given political moment.

Breaking the (social) contract

Happily, to date there has never been any occasion to interrupt a performance. Rarely have concerts been cancelled in advance of a show due to incriminating statements. In January

2019, Thomas reached out to tell me that the venue had cancelled Michal Graves' (Misfitz) concert, on the basis that he was promoting far-right activists online. The cancellation of the show, and the maintenance of the 'open-minded' character of Feierwerk, was possible due to the contract structure and was implemented because of the social structure of Feierwerk as a community institution. A person who formerly worked for FIRM notified the Events staff of Graves' positions. According to Thomas, over the years FIRM has become a kind of a network in the background of Feierwerk's daily activities. This notification led to conversations and ultimately the cancellation of the show. Cancellations are rare because usually the bookers have a sense of artists' general attitudes before confirming a show. In the case of Graves, after the tour was confirmed, he began releasing far-right materials on his social media.

A much more common occurrence is to deny entry to people who are wearing xenophobic logos on their clothing. The entire Feierwerk staff receives an annual training session by FIRM, so that they are able to recognize band names and logos associated with far-right, neo-Nazi, or fascist projects. According to the center's policy, attendees who are wearing such logos must turn their shirts inside out, or are denied entry depending on the 'level' of xenophobia. Feierwerk employees must negotiate the decision of where an offending representation falls on the spectrum of unacceptability. A soft distinction is made between the 'grey zone', which would require a shirt to be turned inside out, and other more discriminatory kinds of iconography that would mean barring a person's entry.

Attitude

Feierwerk's commitment to diversity in programming is set out in principles that are embedded in the institutional self-characterization, enacted in contracts and security practices, and then *lived* in what many in the staff refer to as the 'open-minded attitude' of Feierwerk. The potentially contradictory commitment to openness, and simultaneous rejection of ideological definition, makes room for an imaginary of a truly inclusive space. This imaginary has pragmatic supports. It is reproduced and made enforceable by a lattice of practices, including organized community conversations and policy.

Attitude, as a structure of feeling, may be a means of socially reproducing an implicit politics of place (Williams, 1977). The space of equivocation between an optics of rejection of ideology and the inclusive attitude that is spoken about as a byproduct of programming makes it possible for a liminal space to emerge in which meaningful exchange between multiple publics might just slip into the cracks of institutional thinking (Douglas, 1986).

4.4 Thomas Lechner

Thomas Lechner is the Head of Events. When I arrived to do our first interview, he sat in his new small office, only three months old, and already filled with records and papers in milk crates, a Redbull mini-fridge, and a coffee machine that he excitedly referred to as 'the best thing about my own office'. On a corkboard next to his desk, there was a printed-out image of Horst Seehofer (CSU), Angela Merkel (CDU) and Martin Schulz (SPD) standing at sleek, minimalist podiums, under the supertitle "*Worst Kraftwerk Gig Ever*". Another poster has a good-natured looking bunch of laughing older women in a sauna with the caption "*I cannot help it getting older, but I can stop myself from being boring*". There's a laminated certificate from the Guinness book of world records for the longest continuous music open-air music festival, an achievement of the 2000 edition of the Theatron Summer Music festival, and crates full of wires and records. The certificate has a big red star on the bottom with Thomas' name written in sharpie beneath it.

He stared at his computer screen, apologizing that he just needed to finish a few little things. Thomas seems to always be receiving ten messages at a time. He is ever being beckoned on numerous platforms, pulled by a range of beeps and dings that he is ever trying to quiet. Thomas is now in his mid-fifties, and a veteran of the Munich music scene. For even longer he has been an activist and organizer for various human-rights and social justice causes in Bavaria.

At the time of our first conversations in the early summer of 2018, on top of his responsibilities at Feierwerk, he was busy with community organizing work. He was especially focused on planning the #Ausgehetzt demonstration with an initiative that he heads up called Gemeinsam für Menschenrechte und Demokratie (Together for Human Rights and Democracy). The initiative describes itself as a private non-partisan group that emerged from Munich citizens involved in refugee aid. The demonstration's press release presents a "call to action against society's massive shift to the right, the surveillance state, the restrictions on our freedoms and attacks on human rights" (GFMUD, 2018). At this point, Thomas was working on rallying actors from various associations, civil society groups, religious networks, volunteer refugee organizations, trade unions, educational institutions, anti-war and environmental activist networks, and LGBTQI+ to come together in a united mission against the rightward shift in society embodied in the policies of the far-right party, the AFD, as well as populist-influenced conservatives in the Bavarian government and in Berlin. The objective was to oppose the use of fear mongering, hatred, and exclusion in their politics and a bent towards undemocratic, human rights-hostile policies. Thomas was hoping to have at least a couple of thousand people marching in July, and he could not yet imagine the huge numbers that would ultimately attend.

Thomas was born in Tieschen, a small town in the hills of Styrian Eastern Austria. As a schoolboy, his father got a job as a computer programmer and Thomas moved as a *Gastarbeiterkind* (a guest worker's child) to Munich with the rest of his family. Thomas fell in love with music at an early age and travelled around Europe as a member of a Catholic boys' choir. He credits Marvin J. Chomsky's 1978 NBC mini-series '*Holocaust',* which first aired in Germany in 1979, as the beginning of his political life.

Everyday life as seen on TV

> *Through fictional depictions of everyday life, 'Holocaust' - a somewhat pulpy American television-series - is seen as having played an important role in changing collective ideas about what happened in Nazi Germany. The four-part fictional series, starring Meryl Streep and James Woods, tells the story of the genocide of the Jewish people through a soap opera about two families, one Jewish and one Gentile, in Nazi-era Berlin. The series was initially viewed by some 25 million West Germans (Bösch, 2007).*

While the series has been criticized for being essentialist, trivializing, and inadequately depicting Jewish resistance; it was immensely popular and sparked much public conversation. Tangible results of the popularity of 'Holocaust' include the inclusion of Jewish voices in accounts of the second world war in German history curriculums and the addition of the word 'holocaust' to the German language (ibid.). While various efforts had put forth the case for a reckoning with Germany's history of genocide under national socialism, 'Holocaust', in spite of valid criticism, is widely credited as having been key in garnering interest in a meaningful confrontation with this somber part of German history. Some people really took it to heart. For whatever reason, the soap made people care.

This prompted Thomas to read many books about resistance, survival, and activism against "this massive system". Thomas told me that he wanted to learn how to deal with these kinds of large-scale problems, and he roots this interest in his experience as an Austrian-German:

> "Maybe being German, knowing our legacy and our history, plays a big role. 'Never again' [is] not just a political, empty sentence. […] I think our diverse society is reacting to the whole development in the world of movements as a challenge for humanity, as I've said before, but the thing is, to think globally, but act locally. And that's exactly what we do – we see what's happening out there – you can't change the movements in the world, the globalized movements, migration you can't change that, but on a local level you can react to it and make things happen to heal problems, I would say" (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th, 2018).

A Community Person: Thomas' activist history

After his awakening to politics, Thomas began to go to demonstrations and participate in direct actions with Munich's left-wing movements. After finishing secondary school, he went on to study translation with a focus on Spanish and English. His translation work was largely centered on the intersection of arts and politics. Among those he translated for were musicians who had survived the holocaust; travelling members of the Tupamaros as they gave speeches in Europe, including ex-political prisoner Graciela Jorje; Fernando Birri, the father of new Latin American cinema; workers from a mine in Bolivia; Spanish civil war anarchists; and for the

Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, the mothers of those who were disappeared during the Argentine military dictatorship of the 1970s and 1980s.

Despite moving in left-wing circles and being an established part of Munich's resistance culture, it was only at the age of 27, in the full swing of the AIDS epidemic, that Thomas was ready to admit to himself that he was gay. In an interview with Thomas in the Süddeutsche Zeitung, Thomas reflected on his coming out, and what coming to terms with being a part of a minority group meant to him and already bridging his alterity in terms of his sexuality with his identification as an immigrant to Germany: "In the end, I felt very good in my minority status, I always had a different way of thinking, I am a *Gastarbeiterkind* from Austria - and I'm gay" (Schwarzenbach, 2011). He began to participate more actively in queer politics and party spaces in Munich, always with an eye toward making room for heterogeneity within sometimes very exclusive queer scenes. One of the expressions of this was to create queer events and to support queer artists featuring alternative musics.

In the 1990s, Thomas found work at various booking and concert promotion companies. He began DJing at Radio Feierwerk in 1996. Around the same time, drawing on the technical experiences he had in big concert promotion as well as his activist background, in 1997 he began his own booking company called Queerbeat, with a mandate of supporting queer alternative artists in their tours of Europe. Through Queerbeat, Thomas booked bands, many of which had queer members, all over Europe, and promoted music and queer culture events in the greater Munich area.

In 1999 Thomas began *Candy Club*, Europe's first alternative queer dance party night. It was here that he learned to read the crowd, to make people feel comfortable, and to create a collective emotional experience.

> "It was a big adventure, an unknown journey when I started it. It was really important all the time watching how the audience was reacting when I started, because I was mixing the whole time, like opening the ghetto for the queer scene, but still everyone needed to feel comfortable. And I found out that talking with music, it's something that I do, because

you watch how people react, and you talk to them because you want their reaction. It's an interaction that I really like. So that's why the mixture of putting music and dancing to it is a very important thing for me in a world that's directed by thoughts, by intelligence, by whatever, but there's also an emotional part of it that you sometimes can't even explain why you're reacting to it, but it works – you can see the effect" (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th, 2018).

Candy Club's logo reads *"sweets and beats for Queers and friends"*. The party was started in response to an observation of homogeneity in the Munich queer scene of the time. It was important to Thomas that the night present an alternative musical experience to the gay nightlife mainstream aesthetic. It was also critical that the space be inclusive of all people, including heterosexuals. The invitation's choice inclusion of "and friends" is emblematic of Thomas' ethic, which is based on a commitment to human rights, and his belief in allyship between all those subject to discrimination:

"I have lived all these weird phases of society where we had to hide – to live our lives in the dark. As a queer activist I was fighting against that and we almost – we made it somehow. My immediate reaction was: now I can use my energy to deal with other parts of society. I think it's the most logical. Because I have experienced discrimination myself, so it's the most logical and evident thing to work against discrimination in another field. I'm totally disappointed how few other queer people see it the same way. There's a surprisingly high number that are racist. So what happened in the past few years, I kind of got lost. I kind of got disappointed and lost interest in the queer scene. It doesn't really matter to me. I do not feel the bonds that I had. For 20 years I was a community person, I worked on gay pride, I invented the city hall party, I did the proclamation on gay rights, I did the first queer continental European night, I did the biggest queer alternative music festival that ever happened in Europe with 2500 people (Queerbeats festival). So I really had strong bonds, and there was a micro-community being built around all those activities, and I kind of lost that community in the last few years. I am finishing the *Candy Club* in January. I'm doing the last ones – there are some friends still there, but I do not really feel connected anymore. If people are so one-sided, that now [they can say to themselves] I am

fine, I'm doing well, I do not need to convert my experience into working with other people and helping other people, I'm so disappointed in that that I do not even want to be friends with them somehow" (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th, 2018).

Somewhere amidst all of this action, Thomas was taxi driver for nine years. He knows his city like the back of his hand. When Thomas tells me about his past, his stories are lost to clocks. The number of projects he has been a part of defy easy chronology, and yet all seem to build toward a politics of inclusion, rooted in his personal geography. He took his first job working in Feierwerk's booking department in 2001. After his years away, he returned in 2014 to work at Faschtelle Pop. He coached bands in the local music scene and organized workshops and did some booking. He occupied this role until mid 2018 when he got his current position as Head of Events.

4.5 The Camp Next Door

In December 2015 the temporary refugee facility was set up right next to Feierwerk-Gelände. A nearby medical center, Feierwerk, and district politicians organized together to provide support to the camp. At first the camp was one big tent, housing some 170 people. There was a smaller catering tent that could feed 30 to 40 people and some containers for washing and showers. German classes were held in the medical center, but there was nowhere for people to stay during the day or hang out.

Martens explained that negotiating an approach to dealing with the camp was complex and done on a neighborhood support basis, building from the same "open-minded" pedagogical approach upon which Feierwerk was built. The approach was not to help the new migrants specifically, but rather to continue to provide a space for artistic and cultural expression and experiences to a now-expanded demographic.:

"It was a not easy discussion, because we said that's not our job, we do not get money for that, and we do not want to build up any new branch of activities. There are other

institutions and other organizations who are specialized in [migrant support work], or concentrate on that, but we have to manage the neighborhood. They are some hundred young men and we have concerts and parties, and we have to find out how to organize this – to find a system that works. So that was the approach" (Martens, personal interview, Aug. 27th, 2018).

Martens maintained that the more direct attempts at active inclusion of migrants were largely a result of Thomas's input, although his personal efforts are difficult to differentiate from the institutional enablement of them.

"That's a personal approach by Thomas, but not quite in the context of this organization, but it's Thomas. That's important to know. But you can't really--- if it's together somehow" (Martens, personal interview, Aug. 27th, 2018).

The way Thomas explains it, the arrival of the camp prompted a change of narrative in Feierwerk's approach to programming. He explicitly identifies Feierwerk as a progressive venue and one ultimately responsible for an imperative of active inclusion.

"Before the migrant camp was set up Feierwerk said 'we program culture for everyone'. Everyone is welcome. That doesn't necessarily mean that everyone shows up. It's a very passive attitude, so we changed that into something more active – and as a progressive cultural venue we did not want to exclude, but we had to learn the way to approach others" (Thomas, personal interview, July 4th, 2018).

There is a bleed between Thomas' politics and his work within Feierwerk. I asked Martens if there had been any challenges or tensions there:

"Sometimes it's difficult, but in my personal opinion he's very engaged, and it's very positive engagement. Sometimes the energy is more this way and some people say 'hey, we need some more energy in what we are doing (here)', but it's working. Sometimes there are some little conflicts, but it's working" (Martens, personal interview, Aug. 27th, 2018).

The mandate of the community arts space made it possible to consider it natural to have a conversation about accommodating a group of people as they unexpectedly appeared. In line with this 'open-minded' neighborhood approach, it was possible for actors with initiative (such as Thomas) to fit an integration of newcomers in the space into the existing institutional mandate through the side door. The 'making space' of Feierwerk made this possible, even though Thomas's personal approach may have been the machine's motor.

With Thomas at the helm, Feierwerk staff took certain measures to fill this void and to create a space for connections between newly arrived migrants and more established Munich communities. For Thomas, it was clear that the venues needed to be made accessible to the camp residents. He was asking, from the outset, what could be done to encourage participation, and give people access to Feierwerk's venues. He explained his approach to other concert promoters in the language of a plan based on active inclusion, accessibility, and creating welcoming and *desirable* platforms:

> "First we need to actively approach certain target groups. We need to find out where they are, who they are, what their background is, and we must approach them. Sometimes it's difficult. In our case it was because there was a refugee camp installed right in front of our venue. So we did not even have to look for refugees, they were our neighbours. The new citizens were our neighbors, so we started thinking about how to enable access for the new neighbours to our venues. The next thing is we need to create specific platforms. We need concepts and ideas, and I would always say play around. Try it. Trial and error, where individual knowledge or different cultural backgrounds and experiences are seen as something useful, as something appreciated, and wanted. And not as a difference – not as something that disturbs the majority of the community" (Thomas, personal interview, July 4th, 2018).

The first project the team put together was *Kultur Begleiter,* a cultural companion initiative in which Thomas offered the regular Feierwerk guests of the venue free entry to shows under the conditions that they hang out the night with a group of five refugees. It was agreed

that all of Feierwerk's shows would have at least 12 tickets set aside, and a system was set up with the camp where migrants could apply for the tickets.

Other projects popped up in tandem with *Kultur Begleiter* - Farbenladen organized an exhibit of the films and photos that the camp residents took during their migration. People from the radio station went down to talk with the residents of the camp, and regularly invited them to come use Feierwerk's spaces. Thomas started a radio program called Babel FM – a Multilanguage radio show which regularly features people who lived at the camp. In October 2015, Thomas DJ'd at a big welcome party for refugees in a large venue in the city center. This is where the idea for *Plug in Beats* was born.

> "I saw my job as doing something that [the migrants would] really feel well with – like – [I wanted to do] something with their music. […] I went through the pages of The Voice of Arab, the Arab Voice, which is the pop idol from the Arabic countries, and I found some tracks, the winning tracks, so I took them. I think it was the second track that I played. I started grooving with something, and the second track was the winning song of the Voice of Arab. And there was a big yelling and shouting, and 80 people ran to the dancefloor from little children to adults and they started to really crazily freaking out, and I immediately started crying, because it was so unexpected that they would react that way. It was really – I have a recording of it, I can show it to you. And right after the song, for sure the other songs were not as good, because I did not know about the world, but all these kids between 15-18-19 I would say, were standing around me, showing me their cell phones. I did not know at first what they wanted, but then I understood that oh! I should plug it in. That's a very interesting idea, but I just had to say I can't -because you can't just plug in a cell phone. And that made me think about that this could be an interesting idea" (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th, 2018).

Two months later between Christmas and New Year's, the refugee camp opened next to Feierwerk. The venue organized a meeting with the residents of the camp. "We invited everyone to explain our venue and what we work and what can do together. So we got to know those people – or part of them. Besides that, there were projects that we started. And [through

all of this] I got easier access. And then when I said, 'hmm maybe you wanna try a party with your music' and they said, 'oh sounds amazing'. We did the first try" (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th, 2018).

4.6 The space of the party: Stepping in to Orangehouse

Some 100 meters from where the Hansastraße temporary camp once stood, is the southeastern-most building of Feierwerk Gelände. Like most of the buildings in Munich, it is stuccoed and painted in a yellowish off-white, its roof topped with terracotta tile. You can see this style of construction all over Bavaria – beige walls, tiled roofing.

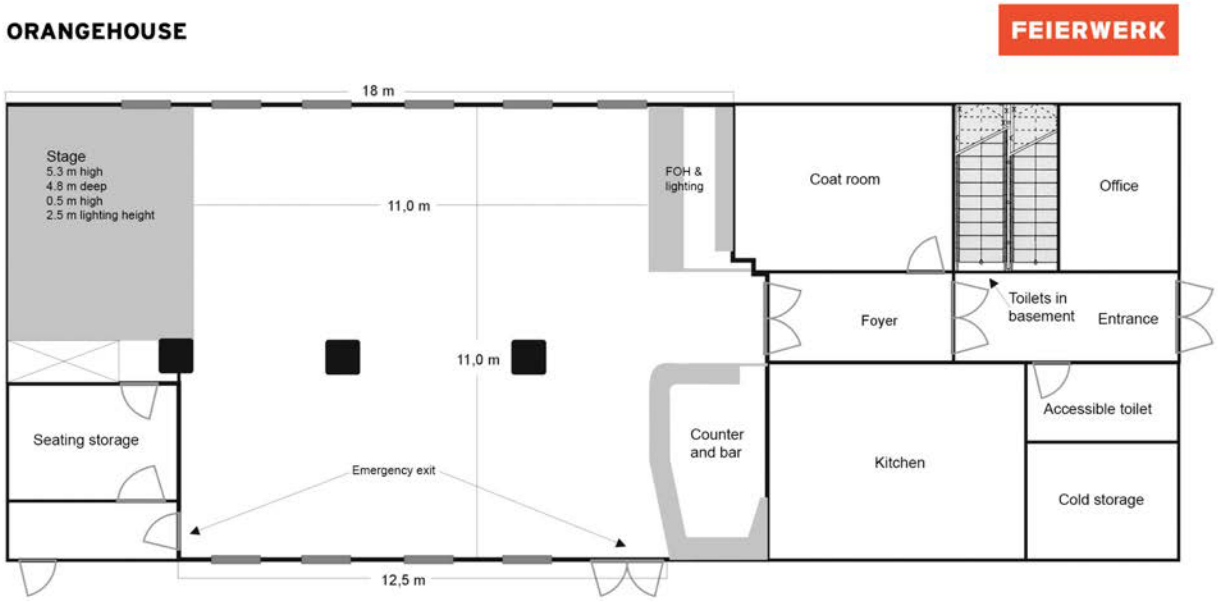

Figure 7 Floor plan of Orangehouse

Plug in Beats is almost always held at Orangehouse, Feierwerk's second smallest venue. The club is in the western half of the structure. As you can see in Figure 7, Orangehouse is a boxy, 250 capacity room. The bar is bent around a corner between the entrance and an emergency exit most commonly used for smoke breaks. A sign on the refrigerator suggests you should order a Becks. Fresh oranges sit on the bar in what might seem to be a reference to the

room's name, but probably isn't. In Germany, fresh orange juice is sold everywhere. You can even find it in gas stations. Against the wall, there is a small television playing a football game. Yesterday the world cup began. It is June 2018, and I am sitting on one of five chrome stools, lined up neatly against the bar, as the staff prepare the room for a *Plug in Beats* party. To get to this perch, I used my mobile phone to establish a route. I took the U-Bahn five stops and transferred to a 12-minute bus ride which deposited me right outside of the doors. The transit in Munich is right on time, almost to a fault.

The heavy entrance doors are kept open after 8:00pm, but because I arrived early – at 6:30pm or so – Thomas needed to let me in with his key. A short hallway led me to the party space. We passed a wheelchair-accessible bathroom to the left of the door, and a small office to the right. The white hallway walls were, as always, dotted with evenly spaced frames containing posters for upcoming events, and the club anti-discrimination policy poster. '*Hor dir was Anderes*' (hear yourself something different) proclaims one sign at the top of some stairs leading down to the main washroom facilities.

A set of double doors opened onto the party room. To the right of the door, a front of house booth where the sound and lighting systems are controlled. To the left, the bar where I now sit. From here I can see there are a few cream coloured chairs in front of the sound booth, facing the stage and the dancefloor. It's quiet for now – just a few staff members readying for the night. A man and a woman behind the bar are putting away clean glasses and watching the match. Thomas runs across the dancefloor from the front of house to the stage where he has set up a folding table with the cell phone station, and then back again to the sound booth, testing the sound, which emerges from the speakers in starts and bursts until the room is tuned and everything is working.

Figure 8 Orangehouse's bar. Source: Thomas Lechner

Fresh air blows through the place. Windows flank either side of the room. They are open whenever possible. Eventually they will be closed when the speakers are turned up to volume, so as not to disturb the neighbors, and risk losing the club license. Parquet wood floors trace a zigzag pattern in broken lines from the entrance to the stage. The wood tiles are greying from use everywhere save around the perimeter of two large rectangular beams. The beams have been fitted with a loop of shelving at a perfect height to rest a bottle (Becks?) or an empty Schorle[2] glass. Underneath the shelves, the oaky brown of the wood shows through in rings – relatively un-trodden upon – a proof of time – a history of free movement and impingement.

> "This object is not inert; time is not set aside for the subject. It is only slow in relation to our time, to our body, the measure of rhythms" (Lefebvre, 2007, p. 20).

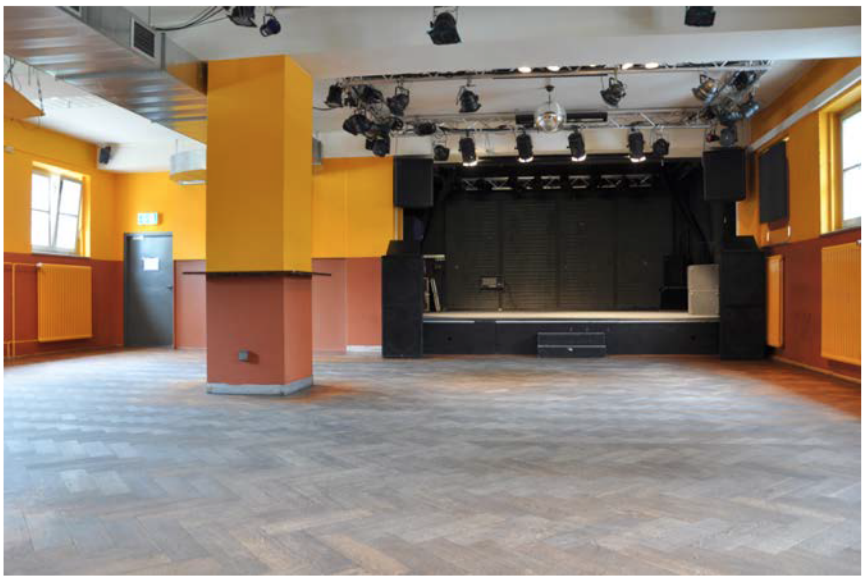

Figure 9 The stage and the dancefloor. Source: Thomas Lechner

The building is not new, but it has been well maintained and cared for. For a bar, the smell is faint – a testament not only to the windows, but also to systematic cleaning, consistently funded. The bright ochre of the walls teems in on the space, making it feel smaller, closer. Above, a mirror ball hangs inert, reflecting the room back to itself: the milk chocolate colour on

[2] Schorle is a very commonly consumed drink across Germany. It is made by combining soda water with juice, or in the case of Weinschorle, with wine. Juice based schorles are a popular choice for people who abstain from consuming alcohol.

the lower walls, feigns wainscoting. The look of the place is not unlike a 1970s living-room, but modern technologies hang from the ceiling: new speakers, LED lighting, and industrial A/C. You can not smell smoke in here anymore.

Thomas is playing with the EQ settings over Ipek Ipekcioglu's 2016 remix of Ibrahim Özgür's 'Son Nefes'.

Song analysis 1[3]:

> *Ipekcioglu is a Berlin based, Turkish born queer-migrant activist, author of books on migrant experience in Germany, and a DJ. Without knowing any of this, you can hear displacement in time in the piece in the aesthetic tension between the old sample and the contemporary electronic beats. Without any knowledge of the track, you can also hear hints to the transculturations that make it up. Özgür is known as the first star of Turkish tango. The Turkish language is beautiful for singing tango although it is traditionally sung in Spanish. Upon further research into this music, the complexity of entangled geographies, movements of peoples, colonial violences and vigorously lived and embodied resistances that make up this music only deepen. Tango itself is at once emblematic of specific places, and inherently transcultural.[4] Now Özgür's voice beams, through Ipekcioglu's production, in this room in Bavaria. The melody is clear. The meanings elusive, but alluded to, open to translation. There are generic blueish pendant lights hanging above me. I cannot place their provenance or read them.*

The pillars imply two spaces in the room: the bar and the dance floor, but for now it does not matter. Nobody is here to dance or drink yet. On the bar side of the room, benches are set

[3] To listen: https://soundcloud.com/djipek/ibrahim-ozgur-son-nefes-last-breath-elektrotangoedit-by-ipek-ipekcioglu

[4] Tango emerged out of Buenos Aires and Montevideo from a mix of musics of working-class European settler colonists and enslaved Africans. Of the genre, Argentinian political theorist Marta Savigliano wrote: "[Tango] is my womb and my tongue, a trench where I can shelter and resist the colonial invitations to 'universalism', a warm, sad place in a 'happy' space flooded by maniac denial, a stubborn fatalist mood when technocrats and theorists offer optimistic and seriously revised versions of 'alternatives' for the Third World'[…]Tango is my changing, resourceful source of identity. And because I am where I am– outside [of Argentina, Savigliano was writing from the US]- tango hurts and comforts me" (1995, 16).

up in two U formations for people to sit on. At the far end of it is a stage. The stage is in a recess – its floors, walls, and ceilings painted black. It is a half a meter high and appointed with human-sized steps that make it easy to get up and down, provided your legs function with ease. A new man enters and begins setting up the projectors and screens. The room, already bright, flashes with a bluer light as the screens come on and begin to display short looped videos of cartoon figures dancing in cycles that do not quite match the songs that are coming out of the loudspeakers. Thomas is playing something louder now. The windows must be shut. From my perch at the bar, I am jotting things down in a Rhodia notebook whose colour matches the walls perfectly.

5. Overview and Movement Analysis

In order to begin an evaluation and discussion of *Plug in Beats*, and how it is experienced by its diverse attendees, it is useful to have a sense of the physical space of the party. This analysis will begin with a narration of movement within the party, on the level of flows and clusters of people within the space, and also at the level of individual bodies. This chapter will be written after the style of Lefebvre's (2013) rhythmanalysis of Rue Rambuteau, and le Centre Pompidou. I hope to provide some context for participant experiences, which are discussed at length in chapters six, seven, and eight. The objective is to offer a description that provides a different angle of insight on the intercultural dance party as a site of co-constituted, evolving and (foot)loose socio-political praxis.

Following the spatial analysis, I will engage my research questions through the experiences of party participants. This discussion will center on their affective experiences at the party, and different presents and presences in the party space are framed in relation to personal geographic histories, and relationships to everyday life in Munich. Understandings of self, and identity are shifting, contingent, and mediated through spaces and social relations. At *Plug in Beats*, the animating concept of a party space *for* difference often (though not always), amplifies or distorts negotiation of the self and the other. In this chapter I will trace how *Plug in Beats* shapes (and sometimes does not shape) participant imaginings through dance, music, and confrontations with difference, and how this impacts imaginings of the 'other'. For some participants, the party acts as a space of forgetting – for others, it is a space where through music and dance a '*redistribution of the sensible'* ephemerally suspends the usual power relations, opening up the possibility to practice belonging (Rancière, 2000; Thrift, 1997). At other times again, participants experience feelings of un-belonging, or ambivalence to the party. In rare cases, there is conflict. Through participant impressions, I stitch together a portrait of how imaginings of the self and the other are lived through *Plug in Beats*.

Because of the deliberately articulated *presence of different others* at *Plug in Beats*, the self and the other rock back and forth in a tricky dance. As one might expect when dancing an unfamiliar dance, there is always the possibility of stepping on other dancers' toes. Affect has a

material bearing on the world, and exists alongside, and in conversation with more readily observed physical reality, with its variegated presences and absences. This is especially so in a space containing actors with significant power differentials - be they built along the intersecting lines of class, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, or migration status, the possibility of exclusion, hostility, or erasure (however unintended); presence and absence, erasure, and appropriation must be continuously investigated. In the final analytical chapter, I evaluate *Plug in Beats*' inclusivity. I will begin with a discussion of what inclusion entails beyond access, and then proceed with discussion of the practical, social, and material relations that develop (or do not) as a result of the party. I will go on to a discussion of the party's demographics and repertoire in relation to official narratives of party aims, and the institutional inclusion policy of Feierwerk, and attendees' experiences of mutually sharing space, movement, and song. In each case, I will critically analyse *Plug in Beats*' inclusion strategies by putting participant experiences of the party into dialogue with safer-space narratives.

5.1 Movement within the space

Back at Orangehouse they are still setting up for the party. The staff periodically take smoke breaks. Every half hour or so, they accumulate on a landing outside of the emergency door next to the bar. A babbling sound fills my left ear. They are talking about football, music, and Thomas' most recent activist work. A young man named Abi enters and Thomas gives him a token which can be exchanged for a beer. Abi has a dreaded mohawk and a t-shirt that reads *'I'M A CLASSY MOTHERFUCKER'*. We've met before. He is from Tehran and wants to be a DJ. Thomas has been teaching him the ropes. The cluster on the balcony breaks up after a few minutes, and Abi assists Thomas in the parsing of cables on the stage. It is still bright out although it is close to 8:00pm.

A few more people begin to enter. Mostly young men. They arrive in ones and twos, and cluster in front of the bar, saying hello to each other, and introducing themselves. They flow from the front door and hover in the space in front of the bar, contemplating the projector screen, which for now is playing the Morocco vs. Iran match. Some people kiss hello and relax quickly

into Dari (the Afghan dialect of Farsi). Some people shake hands and speak to each other in German in various accents. The mood is relaxed. It is still bright out.

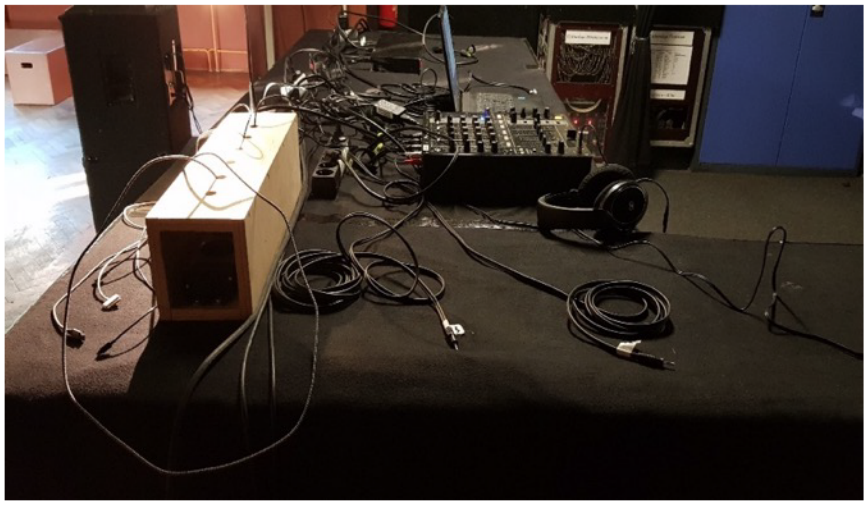

Figure 10 The DJ setup features a charging station (left) and a mixer and computer to balance the music (upper-right) which is plugged into the 1/8" cables (lower-right). Source: Thomas Lechner

Two men, one younger, one older, settle near me at the bar. Thomas introduces us. The younger man speaks very strong English. His name is Waseem, and he tells me the other man is his uncle, who smiles profusely and speaks little English and rough German. Waseem's German is seamless to my ears. He tells me he has a sister now living in Canada. He's in school now, learning programming. He's 19. He tells me that he and his uncle migrated from Sinjar in northern Iraq. I compliment his language, and he refuses the compliment, saying he is not very good and has everything to learn.

More people have entered the room, but nobody is dancing. For now, Thomas is playing some light beats, and the game is still on. Yesterday was Eid, and this in combination with the World Cup is not very good for party attendance. We are about 15 people now. A few young Afghan men hover near the U-shaped benches, where they can see the projector playing the end of the football match, and others smoke outside. Maria, who I met at the radio station earlier in the day, appears and joins me at the bar, chatting merrily. I order a gin and soda. So far, the two of us and the bartender are the only women in the room.

Its slowly getting darker out, and the match is almost over. A few more people filter in. When the game is done, Thomas starts handing out numbers to the people in the room. Abi sets himself up by Thomas' side on the stage, and although we have been here for some time, only now does the night really seems to begin. It's near 10pm, and finally dark. Numbers begin to appear on the screen: *one…two…three…*, and three people head to the stage to cue up their songs. A few of us head to the dancefloor, and I find myself dancing in a slightly forced way. There is no crowd to hide in, and it feels to me that for now we are dancing in order to encourage each other.

Figure 11 Simple laminated numbers are distributed to determine the order of songs. Source: Thomas Lechner

Somebody chooses a song, and 10 or so people begin dancing to an Afghan qataghani:

Song analysis 2[5]:

The song is 'Yak Qadam Pesh' by Jawid Sharif. Most of the Afghan people at the party seem to know this dance. The young men float their arms out at shoulder height, turning their hands to face up and then down. Sometimes an arm moves behind their back or to a hip for a moment. Now touching their shoulders, elbows puffed out, now extended out like a soft airplane, they turn in slow steps, chests puffed up, smiling. By Western dance music standards, the song is slow – some ten beats per minute (BPM) slower than the standard 120 BPM you would hear in most of the clubs in Germany, and it is in B flat Phrygian, a mode rarely used in Western pop music.

For the uninitiated, the footwork in the qataghani dance is deceptively tough to imitate. The back heels stay lifted most of the time, until it lands in time with first and third beats. The front foot more often lands flat, or on the heel with the toes are slightly lifted. The dancers' hips are still, as they carry out detailed work in the feet and arms. It all looks

[5] To listen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nscK5ndyUdc

easy, but my body feels inaccurate as it moves. I try to grasp the rhythm – it has commonalities with Balkan music that I've heard before, but where Balkan rhythms go umbriaka-umbriaka this song goes taka-taka-taka-taka-taka. Underneath it all is a strong four on the floor, but the rhythm is punctuated with emphases on the first beat, and on the first 16th note of the one. I am pulled by the steady four-four rhythm, but others around me seem to be finding different inflections. My body tries to approximate their bodies. I hold my arms out. I find the four-four but cannot find the polyrhythms that the more experienced dancers flick their heels to. We keep a certain distance between our bodies, though we are dancing in a circle. I settle into a movement that works for me, mimicking the distance kept by those around me, doing what I can with my arms. We are moving to different rhythms at a shared tempo, all the dancers are generously smiling, and as far as I can tell, its fine.

Figure 12 The party in full swing as seen from the bar corner of the room. The VJ screen appears to be blank due to the unfortunate low-quality of the photo. Source: Thomas Lechner

I take a break to jot some things down, hiding in a bathroom stall downstairs. You can hear the feet pounding overhead, but its pleasant and muffled through the floorboards. I return to the bar to grab a schorle. Thomas is taking a smoke break and introduces me to a number of his friends on the patio outside of the emergency exit near the bar. They come from Syria, Pakistan,

Nigeria, Iraq. Everyone is friendly and smoking in tight circles, speaking first, second and third languages. People ask each other questions about their lives, their work, their citizenship, their music. After relatively short conversations, some people exchange numbers on WhatsApp and contacts on Facebook. When smokes are finished, people filter back inside.

There is a steady circulation of people into and out of the space. These flows are guided by the rhythms of cigarette cravings, by musical likes and dislikes, by conversation breaks. I return to the dancefloor. Abi is taking care of the cell-phone station while Thomas talks to people around the room. Someone has picked 'La Hafla' – *the party* - [6] from Acid Arab's first record *Musique de France*.

5.2 Tracing space and place in songs

When a recorded song begins to play, its notes pass in a predictable succession, at a determined pace. Prior to the invention of multi-track recording, audio recordings were replicas of a real period of time, in a specific space. While contemporary recording technology complicates the way time and space figure in recordings, once a song has been made into a product, it still stabilizes a particular arrangement of molecules vibrating in past spaces. So, in a very literal sense, when a song is played, it re-represents that time and place. When a recorded song is amplified in a new room, it warps to its shape. Timbres shift as soundwaves refract off of hard surfaces or are absorbed into porous ones. Sound is bent by its context. This new context consists of registers, ranging from the measurable and physical (volume, rhythm, timbre, lyrical and musical content) to the social (where it fits in a sequence of other songs, in the history of music, the associated politics of place). The already nuanced experience of listening to a song is further modulated by what we as listeners bring to the experience. Once a song is heard, it recrystalizes in the imagination, and warps again. Meanings, emphases, and accents are understood through a filter of personal, cultural, and place-based experiences. Culture, language, melody, harmony, and rhythm, they all shift underfoot.

[6] Acid Arab (2016). **La Hafla** [Acid Arab Feat. Sofiane Saidi]. Acid Arab is a Paris based techno group who collaborate regularly with Middle Eastern and North African artists, combining analog techno and Arabic musical sensibilities.

Song analysis 3[7]:

'La Hafla' is still playing in the room, and I am dancing, watching, trying to remember. I am having fun, and I do not know the name of the song until I take a breath and Shazam it behind one of the great big pillars. Later in the evening, back in my room, I learn that Acid Arab is a collaboration between Guido Minisky and Hervé Carvalho, neither of whom have Arab roots, but who grew up in multi-ethnic Paris. Their album contains collaborations with many Arabic speaking artists – in the case of 'La Hafla', Algerian singer Sofiane Saidi pulses atop of Minisky and Carvalho's house beats. Saidi grew up singing in the legendary Raï clubs in Oran, before moving to France in his late teens. House music, the genre that Minisky and Carvalho reference most directly in their production, emerged in the early 1980s in Chicago, at a club called the Warehouse which catered mainly to Black, Latino, and gay people. Obviously, it has since spread around the world. In a 2018 interview with Farah Bahgat, Carvalho responded to a question about whether their music was cultural appropriation:

"We called the album the Musique De France because it is not a fantasy of the oriental world from the vision of white people…it is the vision of the French society which is a mixed society. I am a son of a Portuguese immigrant and my friends were sons of Moroccan immigrants and Serbian immigrants…We are not like 'having fun' with oriental stuff, we are also speaking about [the society] we live in."

It is beyond the scope (and focus) of this research to meaningfully evaluate these comments. Cultural appropriation and cultural sharing live on a slippery slope. One thing is clear - the music itself is difficult to place. At Plug in Beats, we all know that someone chose this song. The song streams out of a mobile phone, into cables, a computer, and out into the room. In the moment it washes over us, as if its source were the speakers, and somehow the bass seems to emanate from somewhere underneath my sternum.

[7] To listen: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlkbMHNOAN4

Music creation has a long history of mixing sounds from across the world. Sometimes this has occurred through collaboration, sometimes theft. Genres have always bled out into other music across along trade routes, through colonial relations and in manners sometimes amenable to and sometimes subversive of capitalist flows. This is an ongoing process, which occurs as a part of and in tandem with the imperialist policies and capitalist mode of production that are among the most important root causes of current movement of people from the so-called countries of the global South into Europe. These movements of people have resulted in increased cultural diversity in European cities like Munich. To make a music that speaks to a hyper-diverse place, risks re-inscribing uneven power relations or orientalising cultural others. It is rarely as neutral a phenomenon as it intends or pretends, but nor is it always a brutal injustice.

A hip-hop song comes on, and the crowd shifts into a freestyle dancing pattern. There are now more of us on the dancefloor. Some people cluster in circles, but the shapes remain fluid and open up to new people easily and often. We face each at new angles, borrowing what we can from each other's moves. Some people keep their movements small and close to the body; others flare their arms. Some people flutter around the edges of the dance floor, shifting their weight uneasily. An older woman, who looks to be in her 60s is sitting on the beige upholstered seats by the sound booth. She is smiling broadly, watching the dancers.

A Syrian tune comes on and a young man named Khalaf encourages everyone onto the dance floor for a Dabke (a Middle Eastern line dance). People leave the bar for the dancefloor and begin to form a large circle, rotating counter-clockwise. Everyone is following a couple of Syrian men that are leading the dance. The steps come easily to those at the front. They cross one leg over the other, and back. There's a shimmy, a kicking, and skipping, a knee lifts for a stomp on the one. Feet and the shoulders move in tandem in the Syrian style, pants make a swishing sound, unheard over the music. Those who know the dance seem to float. The rest of us are decidedly earth bound, studying feet, or improvising some approximation of the movements in order to stay in the circle. Dabkes are long – for almost 10 minutes we go around. At one point a German woman pulls me out of the loop to show me the steps. She begins talking to me in German until she realizes that I do not understand. Then in English: *'It's like this…then*

step here…hop, and…' These words, though comprehensible, do not make the dance any easier. I return to my freestyle version, watching Khalaf's feet.

All the while people have been referring to their numbers, checking the VJ screen, and making their way to Thomas and Abi on the stage. Someone has chosen the Macarena. I ready myself to leave the dancefloor, as I have done every time, I have heard the song's opening beats ever since I have been 15 years old, but I am surprised to see the dancefloor remains full. We stand in lines, smiling at nearby dancers. Now, the German girls and I move easily in tandem, and Khalaf watches us closely, his movements sometimes a moment behind. When the *Hey Macarena* arrives, some people turn to the right, some to the left. I normally despise this dance, but in this moment, somehow, I am happy to have something to share. However cheesy, however corporate, the movements take on a shared humor, a hopeful charge. These charges indicate a certain politics, that I am not quite yet sure how to name. There are myriad reasons that we dance, and the specifics of the place we dance, the movements and sounds that we encounter make a difference.

Around midnight people start to filter out, saying goodbye before they go. At the peak of the party we had been 35 people or so – a small showing, but unsurprising given the game and yesterday's holiday. The landing outside the bar becomes crowded with last smokes and final conversations. A last song plays, and the remaining dancers bring their glasses to the bar.

PIB is a monthly event, the party itself is both ephemeral and repeating. Tonight the room will empty at about 1 o'clock. Thomas, and the staff will clean up the room, shut off the speakers and roll up the cables. Everyone will make their way back onto their bikes, or onto the U-Bahn. Thomas will ride his scooter home, and sleep until nine in the morning. In one month, the room will fill again.

6. Feeling the space: Affect at *Plug in Beats*

The dance floor is a complex space of transculturation, politics and possibility. It can act simultaneously as a place of connection, as well as one of cultural misunderstanding. Body movement as a social text signals membership as well as difference (Reed, 1998). As an embodied practice, dance can temporarily cause feelings of slippage in externally imposed subjectification (Thrift, 1997). While international musics may be subject to orientalist constructions of difference (Said, 1985), they also contain traces of continually re-forming identity positionings. The goal of *Plug in Beats* and the political question at the heart of study is the same one that Massey dubbed central to all politics: how to live together in light of our "*throwntogetherness*" (2005, p. 151).

Yoko Ono's 1973 album *Feeling the Space* begins with a song called 'Growing Pain'. In this song she sings: "I'm a woman without country or state / Opening her head to the universe / Hundred thousand people in me / Every day they're growing / Every day they're feeling." How we feel in a space, and the growing pains of how we open ourselves up to our surroundings, as we ourselves shift in relation to character of the spaces of our lives, and the varied characters who populate these spaces, is tracked by also shifting feelings. Lessons from scholars of affect urge for close attentiveness to the weave between politics and affect (Stewart, 2007). How partygoers stitch together their feelings about the *Plug in Beats* can tell us something about whether the space produces the trust and collaboration that Pratt (1991) saw as features of the best contact zones.

One of the risks of a critical study is missing the forest for the trees. *Plug in Beats* is a party, but it is also a space for grappling with difference– even through celebration, pluralism can produce variable experiences and reactions. I want to dive into the trees of the particulars to be sure, but first, I think it is important to begin with the forest: *Plug in Beats* is a good time. Every single person that I interviewed, or spoke to, was a fan of the party. The eclectic soundtrack leads to wild-style, spirited dancing, and everyone I interviewed reported feeling safe at Orangehouse. Of course, having a good time does not preclude moments of grappling with

difference, feelings of ambivalence, or evidence of imperfect social cohesion, but participants' overall impressions of the party were consistently positive.

By and large, people enjoy hearing new music, learning a new dance, and having a moment to play their music over loudspeakers (something that is impossible to do while living in a refugee camp). The migrants that attend generally expressed a sense of belonging in the city while at the party, in contrast to many of the clubs in Munich, where racist door policies mean that it is more difficult to enter if you are not white. Time and again interview participants perceived the space as being 'open-minded'. All of the Germans I interviewed enjoyed the party, and most professed in various ways that the particular sociality at the party had brought about or added to an existing sense of their own need to shift in order to bring about a world in which the unidirectionality implicit in normative approaches to refugee integration is challenged. Overall, *Plug in Beats* resonates with Spivak's suggestion that what is required for a more-just world is a situation in which "both the dominant and the subordinate must jointly rethink themselves as intended or interpellated by planetary alterity, albeit articulating the task of thinking and doing from different "cultural" angles" (2013, p. 347).

6.1 Music at *Plug in Beats*: Choosing a song, representing the self

Handing agency over the music to the crowd is one of the main innovations that sets *Plug in Beats* apart from other parties. The intention is to make space for self-representation through the democratization of the DJ role. In order for this to work, people have to feel comfortable enough at Feierwerk to feel comfortable assuming control of the speakers. Khalaf connected his love of sharing music at *Plug in Beats* to his feeling accepted in the space.

> "[Being at Feierwerk is] a good feeling. I meet really good people, they have helped me very much, they are nice people. People are open. There are no prejudices. We dance together, and nobody has ever said to me 'what are you doing here, you are an 'Auslander' (foreigner). I am with the people that I really like" (Khalaf, personal interview, July 29th, 2018).

Khalaf said his song choice was always an expression of his culture: "I always play something from my culture – and I'm very happy when people can ask me question about my music - it's nice to show how it is beautiful and how you can dance to it." Khalaf rushes the dancefloor whenever a dabke begins. He shows people the moves. Khalaf's sense that Feierwerk is open-minded gives him a feeling of belonging and makes him want to contribute, and this in combination with his ability to share his musical culture and knowledge allows the party to function as a "social haven" in his life (Farrer, 2004, p. 660). Feierwerk, he told me, is where he feels best, where he made all his friends.

The shared responsibility for the soundtrack gives the people in the room an opportunity to collaborate in setting the sonics of the space, and an implication in the quality of the night. Arif has been to over 20 *Plug in Beats* parties. He prefers *Plug in Beats* to regular nightclubs, because he enjoys different music to what he usually finds in Munich clubs. He likes the intercultural aspect of getting to dance with diverse people to music from elsewhere in the world, everyone sharing something of themselves or their culture. When he chooses a song, he also usually chooses what he calls 'Heimat music' (homeland music) from Afghanistan – frequently an Afghan Qataghani track, which is his favourite dance style.

At first Arif was unsure that his songs would get people dancing in Germany. *"I was very surprised and* excited that [a party in Germany] works when there is also music from other countries" (Arif, personal interview, July 9th, 2018). In our interview he told me that the best thing about the party is that turning the DJ role over to the crowd gives each person a chance to contribute to the joy of the night: "When you put on a song and other people dance it's a great feeling" (ibid.).

DJ Abi Luck

I met Abi at the Thalkirchen U-Bahn station at noon on a late June day. He had suggested we meet for out interview at the Isar (Munich's river), which was where he hung out most days of the summer anyways. We stopped into a grocery store for some sodas and snacks and started over the bridge to cross into a park on the east bank of the river, where there is a smooth stone beach.

Abi's dreads were pulled back under a black headband, his right wrist wrapped in entrance bracelets from four or five Goa music parties he'd been to in the last months. Everything about Abi projects subculture: the dreads, the antagonistic tee-shirt, the piercings and tattoos. He told me that he knew it informs how people see him. As soon as we left the grocery, his backpack started producing beats from a small portable speaker that Thomas had helped him find on the internet. Abi is never without music. It had been the same the night after my first Plug in Beats, when Abi showed me how to get home on the U-Bahn.

That night on the platform he had his speaker. It reminded me of young people on the subway in New York, who turn on boomboxes and start breakdance routines in the cars for change. Playing loud music is a claim on space. Abi was not asking for money, but by playing his music, he was amplifying and forcing the issue of his presence, in a way demanding everyone around him to decide how they would react to it – with joy? With ambivalence? With disdain?

We walked down to Abi's preferred area of the beach. I fumbled with my recorder, and we talked, not realizing that I'd set it on standby. I took notes too, fortunately.
Abi told me that music was the most important thing to him. He likes many styles, but Goa is his favourite. He likes hard and fast techno, and downtempo 'chillout' music as well. Growing up in Tehran, he used to have friends over and informally listen to music in a manner not too dissimilar from Plug in Beats, with everyone taking a turn. It was only after coming to Germany that he began to think about becoming a real DJ. Abi has been volunteering at the Plug in Beats ever since the second edition. Now he DJs around town and sometimes on Radio Feierwerk.

'It feels good to make people dance and to be responsible for their good time' he told me. He likes the Plug in Beats concept, and thinks it's a great idea, though he does not always like the music. He does not like it when people play music that you can not dance to at the

party, and he does not really like Farsi music, but he never says a word. He knows it's more important to accept people's taste than to impose his own.

'Dancing is forgetting your troubles', he told me, and Abi has some. But dancing helps Abi empty his mind, it puts him in the present. It helps him not care about anything, he told me. Abi talked about how he would like to take back what he has learned to Iran. He told me he has learned a lot, especially from Thomas, who had taught him the DJ trade, about radio, and how to build an audience. But Abi was also working on other aspirations– he loves kids. He was thinking of applying to do a care work Ausbildung (vocational training program). At the time it was work in progress. We chatted about this and that. Our interview turned into a regular conversation.

Since the Hansastraße camp was dismantled, Abi had moved to another refugee residence in the southern part of town. He was waiting on his refugee status, but the chances aren't great for Iranians. Family members kept asking him when he would have status, but did not understand how long it takes, and what hoops there are to jump through. Abi knew he had to wait.

Some months later at a barbeque at Thomas' house, Abi talked about going to an interview for the childcare Ausbildung. The woman who interviewed him asked how his behaviour would be with girls. The assumption that he would be sexist pissed Abi off. Migrants so often confront this kind of racism. He got mad and messed up the interview on purpose because he did not want the job anymore. Why should he play the 'good refugee'?

To exert some control over the character of a space, to share something of yourself, and have it appreciated by others are all things we do when we are making homes for ourselves. To be the DJ is to welcome people on to the dancefloor, and into your world. People do this in different ways. Some participants choose songs in an effort to convey a message about their attitudes, aesthetics or politics. Vio, who grew up in Germany, said she liked the feeling of

choosing a song because she considered her music to be "very positive" and fun for other people. When she chooses a song, "it needs to be danceable and fast, happy and loud, and not-anti."

Nina, who grew up in Munich with an Italian father, commented that as a German mindful of German history, the reification of national identity, even through music, felt strange. While she did not choose a song at the party we attended together, she told me that if she were to choose one, it would have been an Italian track. She would have wanted to convey the multiple cultural elements within Germany, and the fact that her family members travelled and built up new lives in a different place.

Outside of wanting to send a message, most attendees connected the good feeling of sharing their music to the fact that they were contributing to other people's joy. Khalaf said that it made him happy when he could tell a lot of people shared his taste in music, it makes him glad to see them moving. The continued movement of the dancers is affirming in various ways, and many participants enjoyed the feedback on their taste. Farshid said that when lots of people dance to a song he put on; he gets a really nice feeling which is difficult to explain. When everybody is freaking out to your song "you feel something comfortable", he told me. Waseem, in reflecting on his experience of choosing a song, said that the process caused him to reflect on differences between people more generally:

> "[Choosing a song at Plug in Beats feels] cool! Because [other people] dance in a whole different way than me, and I found that very, very, cool, because I was thinking at that moment, that there could be only one way to dance with this music, and I figured out, no I was wrong, and everyone can dance the way he wants… It's awesome. […] I thought that there was only one way to dance with that beat and that music, but no, I was wrong. And the people showed me how they dance, and how they manage it, and how they rock" (Waseem, personal interview, July 18, 2018).

Mutual enjoyment can have a galvanizing effect in bringing people together, as it creates a context for relationships that otherwise might be non-starters. Maria reflected on how the pride

and happiness associated with having chosen a song that people dance to, leads to conversation between individuals:

> "If someone is playing their tune, and you're dancing, (often) the people are really proud, and come to you and say, 'that's my song, I played it, and you're dancing, that's cool!' And then you get talking, so I really like that" (Maria, personal interview, June 29th, 2018).

Other participants reflected on this same phenomenon at the scale of larger groups, which might otherwise not have much contact: "The communication is really nice between the nationalities", Arif told me, "because people can put on a song, for example an Afghan can put on a song and a Syrian might say: 'Hey, I like your music!', and then they have a point of connection through music" (personal interview, July 9th, 2018). Arif has made many new friends at the party, not close friends, but pals, nonetheless. "The people at the party all come from different corners," he told me in our interview, "we hardly meet elsewhere, but we always meet there… [At Plug in Beats] I feel really good, I see people, I have lots of friends around, we dance. Once a month we dance together" (ibid.). The familiar space of the party facilitates a monthly musical togetherness, an 'inoperative community' strung on communicating songs and beats (Rose, 1997; Nancy, 1990). People assemble on a Friday night, they briefly hold the space together, then disperse to different locales and social realities. Arif feels that this coming together at *Plug in Beats* teaches attendees respect for difference and appreciation for what other people think, and while attendee paths may not cross elsewhere in life, he believes this encourages greater tolerance which radiates in participants lives outside of the party.

The theme of musical togetherness, leading to a broadening of tolerance in general, came out in many of the interviews I did throughout my time in Germany. Laura felt that the party makes people from different cultures feel closer to each other. Her sister, Mira agreed: "I like that even if there are some people you do not talk to, you still feel connected in a certain way. Or that's how I feel. Everyone who is at the party somehow belongs together" (personal interview, Aug 21, 2018).

For many participants, *Plug in Beats* was the place they made friends and acquaintances outside of their regular networks – this can be hard to achieve in Munich, where most migrants have been settled outside of the city center, and work and education opportunities are often limited to specific programs. These spatial segregations limit certain kinds of social interaction that, for at least some people, are desired. *Plug in Beats* creates a place and moment of meaningful encounter in otherwise rarely intersecting orbits. As a space of encounter, for many of the migrants I interviewed, *Plug in Beats* provided a space to work out how to relate to German norms in relation to where they were coming from. Often the first articulation of this was placed in body, through dance.

6.2 Dancing at *Plug in Beats*

München Dabke

Ayman loves Dabke. He was born in Aleppo, but he lived in Damascus prior to migrating to Germany, where he was studying pharmacology. Ayman learned to dance during university. Back home, they danced dabke and another choreography called Arab Arab. Arab Arab is a slower dance, whereas dabke is quicker, with faster movements in the feet. These dances are "special for Arabic people," Ayman told me, "but I teach the people here." When he sees people dancing to his songs at Plug in Beats, he feels like he's at home. "I think, I am in my country! A lot of people like to learn my dance, and that gives me a lot of motivation. Happy and motivated to teach people." And teach people he does. Ayman and some fellow Syrian friends began a group to teach anyone who would like to learn, how to dance Dabke. The group, called 'München Dabke' meets once a week, and sometimes does flash mobs in urban spaces. Once they gave a lesson at the beginning of a Plug in Beats party. Since then, many regular attendees can do a version of the dance. Ayman, it turns out, taught the German woman who tried to teach me dabke steps at my first party. He believes dancing together helps Germans and migrants understand each other better: "First when people dance together, they speak, they learn each other, and they try to understand another person, and they think how another person is thinking"(Ayman, personal interview, Aug. 21, 2018).

Plug in Beats is distinct in that it makes space for all kinds of difference to exist and coexist. German respondents in particular were insistent on this. Regular Munich clubs feature lots of drinking, lots of showing off, and lots of trying to be seen. At *Plug in Beats*, the emphasis is on the dancing, and with everyone a little off-balance from the stylistic heterogeneity, there is little room for judgement of dancing ability. This was disinhibiting for most German interviewees. In my interview with Laura and Mira, the two women reflected on the difference in the dancing:

> Laura: "In a regular club, everyone just dances a certain way, [whereas at Plug in Beats] everyone feels that they can dance whatever way they like. It's like a safe dancing place. No one will laugh at you if you dance in your way or a different way."
>
> Mira: "And also we often stand in a big circle, and everyone's dancing together, and you do not do that in a normal club."
>
> Laura: "It's true. And [at regular Munich clubs] people you do not really know like to dance together – in smaller groups. If someone comes on their own [to Plug in Beats], they're more likely to just, yeah, chill and dance with people than somewhere else" (Laura & Mira, personal interview, Aug. 21st, 2018).

In the space of the party, dancing different dances involves risk-taking. This requires a certain feeling of safety. The diversity of the music and dancing styles shares the risk throughout the group. Nobody knows all of the moves, and everyone is forced at one moment or another to improvise. The sharing of the low-stakes risk of embarrassing dancing not only requires the feeling of a safe space (Hunter, 2008), but also feeds back on itself, and makes the space feel safer. Dancing in the midst of difference is not necessarily performative in the same way that professional intercultural dance is, but it is emancipatory-feeling for both migrants like Waseem and for established locals like Mira and Laura.

In Waseem's case when he chose a song, it expanded how his imagining of how people could understand a rhythm, and move their bodies. In Mira and Laura's case, they felt a too-rare feeling of freedom to move differently than others around them. In each case what emerges is an affective politics which imagines a preferable world in which difference is not a problem but rather a source of richness which enables greater and better shared feelings of freedom. The relational construction of the party can build affect into critical engagement (Fast, 2018). In this sense, Plug in Beats is a site of 'utopian performatives' (Dolan, 2006).

6.3 Dancing out of your comfort zone

Arif is a regular attendee and migrated to Germany from Kabul three years ago. He told me that he was not that good at dancing, which I strongly contest, but that Afghan music is 'easy' and 'slower' to dance to than German pop music. Farshid shared a similar sentiment. He dances to most of the music at Plug in Beats, but not all. "Some musics you cannot dance to," he told me, "the movement that you know is not the same as the beats for the music, so you cannot dance" (personal interview, July 29th, 2018). Many participants talked about dance being hard or easy relative to their own movement traditions, and the awkwardness endemic to trying on other peoples' movements.

Afghan party interviewees all explained that upon their arrival in Germany, it was a new idea that you do not need a reason to have a party. Farshid, who is Afghan, explained: "Here, every weekend you can go to parties. Every night if you want, there's a club open you can go to. In Afghanistan it's not like that. If you have parties, you have to have a reason to have a party. Why are you making a party? Is it a birthday? Is it New Years? A Wedding" (ibid.). Farshid went on to explain that this was true for all but rich men who can afford security - they might occasionally have parties, he ventured. If the consensus around the newness of the concept of party among Afghan participants seems to slip easily into what Glick Schiller and Çaglar call "methodological nationalism", the differentiated responses to this newness among Afghans disrupt any easy ethnicity centered analysis (2009).

If dance shows us how we do and do not fit, it is also an instance in which not fitting is not usually grave. There are ways of getting along, and this can feel fruitful, and freeing. Not everyone dances to Maria's songs – but Maria dances to everything. The music she loves to dance to best is western guitar music, which can prove challenging for some other people at the party:

> "It's probably my westernized ears that are really used to it", she reflected in our interview, "Sometimes I wonder how to move to African beats – there are a bunch of different cultures where the rhythms do not come naturally, but I just try and laughs at myself. It's really nice, because it feels like everyone is just happy. I'm on the dance floor and I feel like people do not mind how it looks. It's more about just being there and dancing" (Maria, personal interview, June 29th, 2018).

The new moves we invent can be a kind of pidgin that gets us along together, a way of showing support for those others around us that find other elements of the evening challenging. In this way uncomfortable dancing is a kind of embodied solidarity.

Iraq has thousands of regional dabke choreographies. Waseem, who grew up in Iraqi Kurdistan, noticed a difference in his dabke from the Syrian dabke that people had been teaching at Plug in Beats, but he does not mind: "You dance to it, that's it. The most important thing is that you dance to it, because there could be also some other dances that you cannot do, but the other person can, and it's not fair that you guys do not [make the effort to dance as well] match it" (personal interview, July 27th, 2018).

The intercultural context of *Plug in Beats* underlies the way people move in the space. The reason people come to the party is to have music and dancing space for their traditions, but also to find a way to share that space with others. Taste takes a backseat to the politics of place, which encourages an open-minded attitude to difference, that makes it easier to get to one's feet.

This comes out in Nina's reflections on her recent first experience at *Plug in Beats*:

"At [Plug in Beats], even the music – sometimes there were songs that usually you wouldn't dance to, or like not listen to it on the radio in your car, but it was like – let's dance! I think it was really nice. But maybe also because, there is always this knowledge about the context of this party- so it makes a difference. I do not know if I would have felt the same if I hadn't known that it was a party concept to reunite people, no matter where they are from, and things like this, so maybe [that] also formed my perspective on this party. [My feeling at the party of] – ah, that's a good energy! - maybe if it was just a random party I would have thought, it was boring, or what do I do here? It's also this knowledge of: why do we do this? Why are we here? And trying to have this welcome attitude somehow" (Nina, personal interview, Aug. 1st, 2018).

6.4 Forgetting your troubles, suspending the self

Just like Abi, who uses music as a tool to forget his troubles, many participants, irrespective of origin or status, talked about music and dancing as a means of escape. Daouda, is a young man from Mali. "For the moment I'm a person who is alone in life," he told me, "so for me music is important for forgetting. If I do not listen to music, I am always nervous – I am always thinking about what is happening in my life, I'm always angry, and it hurts me, and so for that, I like music and meeting people to help me change my ideas" (personal interview, July 31st, 2018).

Katharina, who was a *Betreuer (a migrant youth supervisor)* in the early days of the party, said that the party lifted the spirits of the youth she was supervising:

"Our boys, they all had depression, and they went there, and they could do their own music, and it was so good to see them. I was one there, and there were two boys who were in the clinic before, and they were not talking, and then we went to the party, and they were just smiling and dancing, and it was so great to see. The community [at Plug in

Beats] is different…all my depressive boys were dancing, and everything was away" (Katharina, personal interview, Aug. 20th, 2018).

Plug in Beats is a space to ephemerally embody an alternative mode of being. Having a space to mentally escape the feeling of state power over those same bodies can provide a much-needed break, which may aid in sustaining mental health, and help people carry on through ongoing challenging experiences. This is also the case for many of the Germans I spoke with. Ines, who volunteers in a refugee camp stressed the importance of the party for volunteers as well:

"Often the volunteer work is so depressing. There was a time when I came back from the refugee camp, I just lay in bed and cried because it was so depressing- you hear about all the bad news and the boys, all of them, all of my friends, were very depressed. And of course, you get depressed as well and you're afraid as well that one of them will get deported, or something like that happens(…)The party always was a place where we had fun, and where all of us could forget about the depressing situation" (Ines, personal interview, Aug. 10th, 2018).

6.5 Negotiating Newness

The temporary respite of the party is valued but can be easily interrupted. In line with critiques of Thrift's (1997) notion that the *play* of dance makes room for experiences outside of power, some participants made it clear that such affective bubbles are liable to burst. Daouda, though he loves the party, admitted that sometimes he could not sustain his good feeling, and he became emotionally overwhelmed. "When I go [to Plug in Beats] and I dance it gives me pleasure, but sometimes at the beginning when I enter, I'm happy, I dance well, but the moments especially near the end – because I always imagine bad things happening – [I get upset] and I never want to do anything hurtful, so I just go home" (personal interview, July 31st, 2018).

Omid had a similarly complicated relationship to the party. He thinks it is a smart idea, and hopes it continues, but told me it was sometimes hard to remain in the party spirit. Omid

initially told me that listening makes his troubles fall away. He has always liked dancing, especially at weddings, but Omid worried that other people from Afghanistan would 'think he was a bit crazy' and assume that he drinks when he goes to the party, though he does not. He told me he asks himself what it means to go to this party as a Muslim, as people drink and there are women there. Sometimes he feels he should not dance with them, although he does.

Omid told me that he no longer felt like dancing. The party does not exist in isolation, and although Omid had not personally had bad experiences with Germans at the party, the anti-refugee feeling in Germany has an impact. Omid told me that he stopped dancing "because German people are disturbed by a foreign person dancing, so he did not want to do it anymore" (personal interview, June 28th, 2018). And that it's hard to dance when one is unhappy and has problems. Omid could not be happy as his family is still in the refugee camp in Tehran where he lived from the age of 4 to 16. People at the party reminded him of the trouble in the world. Still, he thought the party was useful to building solidarity because most people were there to connect to others and ask questions. German people ask a lot of questions about who he is and what he is doing, and what music he listens to, but they are always the same questions.

In the grand scheme of a migration process, extra celebrations are not the most drastic of culture shocks, but the gendered and embodied aspects of mixed gender dancing and being around alcohol consumption is complicated for some attendees. Participants' feelings about these new experiences varied. For some people, no matter how welcome they felt in the space, the context of the party provoked feelings of out of placeness (Van Aken, 2006). For Omid, the contrast between his values and the norms at *Plug in Beats* left him conflicted, for others the experience was banal.

This was the case for Arif. Arif's experience as an urbanite with access to good education contrasts with Omid's who was not born in the capital, and who spent most of his childhood in a refugee camp in Tehran without access to formal education. Because of his specific experiences in urban Afghanistan, the mixed gendered dancing was not a particularly complicated experience for him:

"[In Afghanistan] men and women can't dance together. They can't dance in the same room. I danced two or three times when I went to mixed parties at school in Kabul. This happens in Kabul but it's not a thing in other [Afghan] cities. So for me it was normal [to dance with women], because I'd been to parties in Kabul where men and women were together, organized by the French embassy. I was the only one with eight other Afghan people, from my school, because I was in a theatre group. The other people there were form other countries. There were a lot of bodyguards and security. So dancing with women was normal for me but for my friends it was a really new thing" (Arif, personal interview, July 9th, 2018).

Even dancing itself was new for some attendees. Munawar, who has applied for asylum from Pakistan, told me repeatedly that he did not know how to dance before *Plug in Beats*. In his northern village of 600 people, dancing of any kind is not allowed. Munawar always loved music. He used to sneak out to a neighboring Punjabi-speaking town on foot to learn their songs and music, although it was difficult, because he did not speak the language, and his family disapproved.

Munawar is an observant Muslim, but was unsure why dancing is a problem in his home town. He told me that through *Plug in Beats* he discovered Arabic music, and that dancing is a part of the culture in Syria, Afghanistan, and other Muslim-majority countries. This reinforced the feeling for him that dance is not incompatible with his religion. After his first party, he went home and started practicing Spanish and Afghan dance moves on YouTube. He learned Dabke. Now he often goes to local clubs in the city. When he talks about learning dance he stresses the importance of patience and effort, just like learning language or a new culture.

Munawar describes the initial difficulty he faced at *Plug in Beats* as a "culture problem." He loved the party, but it brought questions he had about culture in both Pakistan and in Germany:

"In Pakistan people aren't allowed to do everything. Not just wrong things, but also right things. In Pakistan if I dance, everybody says hey that's not good. Everybody can punish me, attack me. Everyone is allowed. But here if I dance *Munawar makes a sign of

thumbs up*. If someone makes problems with me, I call the police and it's no problem. But if they make a problem in Pakistan the police will say 'hey why are you dancing? Are you Muslim'?[...] I am also a Muslim. I wake up every day at five o'clock. Sometimes maybe I sleep long. I wake up and pray, and then I go train [at the gym]. But the other people I see [at parties]– they drink alcohol, and I do not know, but this is not my problem. I believe in myself and I believe in God, but I do and what I am doing is good. If somebody talks to me, I think for me whether its positive or negative. If it's positive then I remember. If it's negative, I let it go" (Munawar, personal interview, Aug. 12th 2018).

Negotiating newness at *Plug in Beats* was a common theme in many of the interviews I conducted over the course of the summer. Many of the people I interviewed described the gender dynamics at the party as a learning experience – and as a place to safely negotiate the way gender 'works' in Germany.

Daouda told me about one such learning experience:

"In Bamako girls and men dance together, no problem […]My friends sent me an SMS asking if I wanted to go dancing. There was music that in Mali we call "musique zuku': it's love music. If there's a woman, and it's not your girlfriend you can dance even if there's nothing between you. You're in a disco, or at a party, you can dance to the music. But there was a [German] friend and he said: 'here in Europe this music, you can't dance with people if you're not together.' He did not say why, but I just respected it. He's a friend of mine, I've known him for a long time. We do things together – everything that's good and everything that's not good, he explains it to me. So I did not ask why, but I told him that for us it wasn't a problem. So, the next time [at Plug in Beats], I asked my friend Ines to dance, and with her it was no problem. I wanted to dance with Ines to see the limits, and with her it was no problem."

New experiences for both Munawar and Daouda shaped their imaginings of themselves and others, but learning how to *be* in an intercultural context was not limited to migrant party participants. For many of my German interviewees, *Plug in Beats* provided the first social

occasion to meet a newcomer. This was the case for all of the non-volunteer Germans that I interviewed. For each of them, *Plug in Beats* was the first opportunity they had to socialize or converse with new migrants. Maria, who grew up outside of Munich, did not know any migrants before the camp was built next to Feierwerk, where she works at the radio station. In the summer of 2015 at the height of the so-called 'refugee crisis', she went with a colleague to a refugee accommodation and brought clothes, but it did not feel like it was enough. "I did not really connect," she told me (Maria, personal interview, June 29th, 2018).

She was excited to have that entry point through the party. At first, the male-heavy attendance made her feel a little off-balance, and unsure about dancing with strangers, but the familiar space of Feierwerk made her feel safe, and very quickly led her to feel that her initial discomfort was ridiculous and wrong. She describes it as a major personal shift in her outlook:

> "Over the past few years really something changed in my head. And it's just because now I know a lot of people who came here because they had to. Most of them when you talk to them, they want to go home but they can't. For me, it's really hard for me to accept people talking about refugees when they [haven't ever met one]. Have you ever spoken to a refugee? Do you know what's going on? I have only a handful of [migrant] people that I know and have spoken to and know a little bit more about, but I think I was more able to judge people before. I do not know what [migrants] have been through, so [now] I just shut up and listen. It's also that you have this idea of 'these people' – I never imagined that [migrants] would be so similar to me. It is actually quite easy if both sides are interested in talking to each other and finding similarities and connecting, and then you can connect" (Maria, personal interview, June 29th, 2018).

Alex said that while most of the time at the party he is just enjoying himself, the conversations he has had with migrants caused him to feel his own privilege as a German citizen, and to empathize more directly with the struggles facing migrants:

> "[At first] you're only dancing, making friends and then you talk to [a migrant] – you ask what's your name and what's your story, and then they walk you through their journey –

and that's very interesting and very eye opening. We all know that the people – [recently migrated] people – had rough experiences – but when you hear this first hand, then you really know how privileged we are here in Germany, or in Munich especially" (Alex, personal interview, Aug. 20th, 2018).

Alex feels that getting to know each other is at the center of neutralizing antipathy towards refugees, and that parties such as *Plug in Beats* are the best way to build solidarity between locals and migrants.

"When we meet in this frame of dancing, then you automatically have something in common, so it's very easy to talk to this person and to get to know each other (…) it is very necessary for Germany now to find peace in this whole debate, and not to produce more hate, where there is already a lot of hate and a very, very difficult relationship with migrants right now" (Alex, personal interview, Aug. 20th, 2018).

Nina, felt the party was good for generating solidarity as well, but that she also believed that "feeling connected to a tragedy doesn't necessarily really change anything" (personal interview, Aug. 1st 2018). Clearly, music and dance sharing is no panacea against xenophobia or power inequalities, and spaces like Feierwerk must not be used to brand cities as welcoming, when more important aspects of their needs, and human rights remain unanswered for.

6.6 Thomas' reflections on the Party as Political and Affective Space

Thomas thinks to a certain degree, these kinds of projects can challenge the prejudices and indifferences to cultural others. He takes care to mention that at *Plug in Beats* this happens in a small reduced form, but he believes it happens. Party attendees come to *Plug in Beats* to share of themselves and learn something from or about each other. While the party is not overtly a reckoning with the injustices faced by migrants, it is also more than a 'spectacle' of difference (Hall, 1997), as the soundtrack, the feeling of the night, and the politics it provokes is built together, not in the name of exotic consumption, but in an effort to find a way to be together, and

share control over space. Through this process, participants practice a mutual kind of belonging that creates the space to jointly imagine what Spivak called a "more just modernity" (2013, p. 347). This could serve as a foundation on which to develop a broader politics.

But organizing the party is an affective rollercoaster for Thomas as well. When I asked him about it, he sighed and began to tear up.

> "It's a very weird mixture – trying to be on one side a friend, and being really happy, wanting to see the happy faces, and just sharing this awesome experience, but at the same time, as I know more about our country and the future, I am totally afraid about what's coming, and losing all of these victories. Sorry. So you see, it's a very emotional thing for me as well. With the work I flee out of fears that I have, so it's my answer – working on a creative level, and with music, it is the only way I can handle it – I can deal with the situation, and try to be part of the positive – of the smaller percentage of the world that's being positive, which is sometimes, it's really hard – but there's so many lovely beautiful moments between where I would never want to miss, but they also make my worries more." (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th 2018).

Most of Thomas' migrant friends, like many of the migrants I interviewed, have been denied asylum and are in appeals processes. In the last year or so, a new wave of xenophobia and racism have been gaining ground, which puts 2015's Willkommenskultur (welcome culture) into stark relief.

> "It felt like a revolution, now two years, two and a half years later, it felt like there were some doors opening about how a society could be, how you could deal with even strangers, people living in the city – how you could deal with a moment of crisis. There were so many moments of solidarity, so many beautiful things. And this is already completely gone, now we're really fighting, like even with friends getting racist and former supporters saying – 'yeah, we do all for them, but we can't expect…'" (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th 2018).

For Thomas, fear at the party manifests in two ways. First, there is the concrete fear of losing friends to an unknown future. For instance, there have been a large number of unreported

migrant suicides.[8] The second is losing the fight for a more humane and open approach to migration politics.

> "Losing those people means losing all of the victories of the past years that we have had. The progressive development of our society being open. I mean the world is one world now, it's globalized. We need to get rid of all these stupid nationalist concepts. It is about humanity and it is all of us who need to find solutions about how enabling and getting together in all ways – even if we do not want to, it's the only way and so it's two fears: the one is very concrete, and one is losing the political battle. And I have moments when I think, oh right now thank god I am 57 I do not have that many years anymore because I see such a dark future that I do not want to live it myself. So I'm still trying to fight against that dark side" (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th 2018).

[8] Thomas told me about two specific suicides. During the course of my writing this thesis, one of the interviewees also tried to take his life. Thankfully he survived.

7. The material consequences of *Plug in Beats*

A dance party is not an intuitive site to consider when tracing shifts in the material conditions of migrants' everyday lives. However, while the most important part of this project has been to take seriously the affective dynamics at work at the party, it is also critical to keep an eye trained on the material shifts that emerge out of social life at *Plug in Beats*. This brief chapter addresses a few concrete gains achieved through the party such as social connections, language skills, employment seeking through the party, and housing opportunities.

The vast majority of party participants were still in the asylum process during the period of my research, and even those whose applications had been approved experienced various forms of material insecurity. While all of the migrant men I interviewed had been in Germany over two years by the time we spoke, seven out of nine were still living in camps. Those who were asylum seekers, had become eligible to apply for a work permit after three months waiting time, after which various internships and specific labour options became open to them, but this often left them with barely enough money to survive. While asylum claimants are as likely to be employed as refugees, they are limited to significantly lower paying, low-skill jobs. Even for those people whose refugee status has been approved and who are legally eligible for any job, BAMF reports a significant gap in average monthly earnings between full time employed refugees and general employment in the country (2019). In 2017, the average refugee in a full-time job made 1600 euros per month, which equates to approximately 55% of the average income of all full-time employees. Many other refugees are completing internships or training, and as such, work part-time jobs, so the average employed refugee in Germany makes just under 1,000 euros (BAMF, 2019).

These material inequalities, although not directly visible, are well understood at *Plug in Beats*. Poverty among new migrants are the reason that the party has no admission fee, and that water is always offered for free, which is atypical in Germany. The principal of free entry removes one barrier to participation, but unemployment and underemployment among migrant populations results not only in poverty, but also in more limited social interaction with established locals which may have the rippling effect of limiting other opportunities.

7.1 Making friends at *Plug in Beats*

The main focus of *Plug in Beats* is to create an opportunity for meaningful contact between migrants and locals alike. Far and away, the most important contribution cited by all of the people I talked to at the party was the opportunity to meet new people. Every person that I interviewed had had both speaking and dancing interactions with new people at the party. How and whether these interactions developed into relationships varied greatly. Of the 18 party-goers I interviewed, all nine new migrants said they had made new friendships. Six of them considered these to now be close friends, and three described the relationships as friendly, but as being confined to spending time together at *Plug in Beats*. Of the eight German party participants (excluding organizers), three spoke of having made close friendships at the party, one had made moderately good friends, that she would occasionally text, and three met new people they now considered acquaintances.

7.2 Language learning at *Plug in Beats*

These relationships resulted in specific gains for many migrant party participants. Omid did not have any German friends before *Plug in Beats*. Meeting Thomas, and attending the party was his first opportunity to connect with Germans, to meet some German people, and this was helpful in his language learning. While the German government offers language classes for newcomers, many participants noted the key role that social interactions at *Plug in Beats* had played in putting their language skills into practice. Five of the nine migrant participants mentioned language practice as a side-benefit of party attendance.

Khalaf stressed the importance of sociality in language learning: "It's actually been the biggest help. I learned German in school, but speaking with people – with contact with people has been the biggest thing" (personal interview, July 29th, 2018). Munawar was adamant that getting to know German people was a critical aspect of his integration process. In contrast to

some of his friends who do not go out, he feels that attending events like *Plug in Beats*, and speaking with Germans was fundamental to his skill acquisition:

> "I have a lot of time with friends they're not going outside, going to parties, or doing sport. It's boring. If I can't talk with German people, I can't learn German. If I am sleeping, I'm eating, I'm just staying at home, I'm not learning" (personal interview, Aug. 12th, 2018).

Today most of the attendees at *Plug in Beats* speak strong German, but in the early days of the party, many of them could not speak at all. Predictably, language learning did not come up as a major topic with German interviewees, though Thomas learned a bit of Farsi in order to be polite. He would often greet Afghans and Iranians with "*Salām, chetori? (hi, how are you)'*. One other person mentioned they had learned a few Persian words at the party at a time that they had been doing a language tandem.

Some German respondents mentioned the fact that dance is a non-verbal communication form as a factor that helped establish friendship dynamics with refugees before they could really talk to one another. Laura put it this way:

> "In the beginning when we were just trying to help teach German, A1 level – very basic, and we could not like, talk so much and so on, so it helped to have kind of a more friendship relationship if we danced together, which you can't have yet if you can't speak to each other. In the meantime everyone learned more German, and we were able to talk to each other, and some knew English, but yeah, that was very nice to communicate in another way basically" (Laura, personal interview, Aug. 21, 2018).

7.3 Looking for work at *Plug in Beats*

Party connections also sometimes played a role in establishing employment, or dealing with unemployment. Three of the nine migrants I interviewed talked about gig-work or job opportunities they had secured by talking to friends at the party.

A BAMF report released in January 2019 documents a longitudinal study of refugee employment in Germany since 2013, and highlights the importance of personal relationships especially with Germans in the procurement of employment. 43% of refugees who had worked in 2017 found their first job in Germany their social networks, as compared to 27% who found work through employment agencies. Of this 43%, more than half of the jobs were found through German friends and acquaintances (BAMF, 2019).

This happened for Arif at *Plug in Beats*. Arif, who has full refugee status, ran into a man named Yuri, who worked at the job center, at the party. The two had met before but reconnected socially at *Plug in Beats*. This led to Arif joining Yuri one week later on a trip to Berlin for a job fair. He described the experience as a very good one. Arif is now working as a media designer at the company Oberlander.

Working at the party itself has also been an entry point into work for some participants. Abi began as a regular party attendee, but swiftly became a part of the volunteer team. Thomas taught him how to run the DJ gear, and as his competence grew at *Plug in Beats*, Abi has begun DJing at clubs around Munich. Thomas has been helping Abi establish himself in the DJ scene in the city, and co-organizes another monthly party called Waving Iran, which Abi DJs exclusively.

7.4 Finding housing at *Plug in Beats*

Eine Wohnung

From the first day I met him at Plug in Beats, Khalaf was incredibly friendly and open with me. He spoke very limited English, and I a similar amount of German, but we managed a kind of stumbling but sweet way of communicating that resulted in a loose friendship which continues to this day. From our first conversation at Feierwerk, Khalaf let me know that he had been looking for 'eine Wohnung' – an apartment – for the past two years. In the

summer of 2018, three years after his arrival in Germany, he was still living in a camp and sharing a room with a few other young men.

Like many Syrians, Khalaf had had his refugee status approved, and was completing an Ausbildung (training) in welding, with very strong prospects for continued employment after the program's completion, and a living wage. However, the combination of Munich's dire housing shortage and his limited social network meant that his ability to pay rent had not been enough to secure housing.[9] *Throughout the summer, when we would hang out socially, see each other at demonstrations, or at Plug in Beats, Khalaf repeatedly asked me or anyone that I introduced him to about housing opportunities.*

I had found my housing for the summer – a somewhat affordable studio apartment sublet in Schwabing, through a German friend prior to my arrival in Munich with relative ease. My Canadian passport, my whiteness, and my existing relationships with and proximity to German whiteness removed obstacles that likely would have otherwise been in my path. When the end of the summer came, I spoke to the landlord on Khalaf's behalf, and set up a meeting between the two. I also spoke to Thomas and the German friend who had referred me to the apartment – they had both met Khalaf at the party and I asked them to be character references for him in the case that the landlord had doubts. Happily, this backup was not needed, and the landlord agreed to the rental. Khalaf was very happy to move into the apartment after my departure.

Without our meeting through the party, and the fortunate fact of my departure, Khalaf's path to independent housing would very likely have been longer. *Plug in Beats* created a context

[9] Munich has the most expensive housing and rental market in Germany. A 2018 Deutsche Bank report showed that prices had more than doubled between since 2009, and left the city with a vacancy rate of 0.2%. This shortage has created stiff competition for affordable housing, which is especially difficult for migrants to access given limited social networks, capped income, and their racialized status. In an interview with Reuters, Stephan Duennwald of the Bavarian Refugee Council stressed that while the housing shortage is a generalized problem, it disproportionately impacts migrants, "Landlords want to have a 'proper German couple'… because there are so many people searching for apartments, refugees have no chance" (Meaker, 2018).

for camaraderie to develop, destabilizing the more frequent patterns of personal geography, which would have normally kept our paths from crossing.

Operating with an equivocating pragmatism, I opted to further bolster Khalaf's candidacy through appealing to other mutual friends with white skin and good jobs. In the absence of other short-term options to help him with his housing problem, I found myself re-inscribing the racist notion of whiteness and citizenship as markers of trust-worthiness. While the party itself contributes to destabilizing the dynamics between migrants and locals, certain material gains garnered through party connections may sometimes require the contradictory reliance on normative assumptions tied up in 'good refugee' narratives associated with more unidirectional concepts of integration, in which the migrant integrates *into* a society, and proves their goodness through their connections to hegemony.

8. Evaluating inclusion

Until 2015, Feierwerk's institutional approach to inclusion rested on an attitude of open-mindedness, embodied in the slogan *'Kultur von unten, Kultur für alle'(Culture from under, culture for all*). This attitude was a reorientation away from earlier arts and culture institutional norms which had a top-down approach to arts practice and made arts production an elite and restricted endeavor. Feierwerk's bottom-up approach proposed a new norm: a norm in which 'everyone is welcome'. This was upheld in various ways and included attention to certain forms of accessibility. For instance, there was varied and accessibly priced programming, and inclusive physical infrastructure such as wheelchair ramps. However, it also entailed a blindness to other forms.

Ahmed writes about two kinds of diversity work within institutions: the work that explicitly aims to transform the institution, and second "what we do when we do not 'quite' inhabit the norms" (2012, p. 175). Thomas operates in a liminal space between the first, the overt, as he has proposed policy shifts and held countless meetings in order to redefine Feierwerk's approach to deepening institutional inclusion; and the second, in the sense that he is employed as a programmer – it is his own difference (not just his queerness, but his personality, and his activist history and his personal politics) that pushes at the limits of the 'open-minded, open door' approach.

In 2015 with the mass arrival of migrants, the limits to this approach began to surface. Everyone being welcome is a passive approach. Open-mindedness and an open-door exist comfortably and self-satisfied when difference does not have the address, and thus may never come knocking on the door. To borrow again from Ahmed, "if privilege means going the way things are flowing, then letting things flow will mean that's who ends up going" (2012, p. 179). Thomas saw the 'way things were flowing' as an 'integration approach', reliant on those who are outside the existing social catchment of the institution to make their way into it, both socially and practically. The 'integration approach' according to Thomas, presumes the existence of a relatively homogenous dominant majority; watches carefully for differences, and places the burden of shift on those outside the dominant group to adapt in order to become full members of

society. Rather than upholding integration as the best of four possible acculturation options (Berry, 1997), Thomas argues that it intrinsically promotes 'othering'; and problematically offloads the responsibility for integration onto the individual. While this former approach had gestured at inclusion, it had not considered invisible barriers to accessibility. This, in effect, limits the possibilities of participation for some would-be users of the cultural institutions, tends to encourage total assimilation, leading to invisibility rather than diversity (Lechner, 2018).

Out of workshops with community organizers and support workers, the Feierwerk developed a system of values to try and challenge these tendencies, and to move towards deeper inclusion. In a presentation at a music industry conference in Angoulême France, Thomas defined the diversity/inclusion approach as one that:

A) *Regards human beings as absolute equal individuals, who play a part in the whole entity, independent of their potential personal preconditions or characteristics.*
B) *Does not create rankings for individual preconditions and characteristics, but comprehends diversity and the heterogeneity of society as a basic matter of course.*
C) *Therefore it's not the individual that has to adapt to the system but rather the social framework that must be flexibly arranged in order to enable (or even better empower) social participation of each particular human being.*
D) *Understands that enabling access to society is the duty of the society itself (!) (Lechner, 2018)*

In the context of Feierwerk, this meant actively reaching out to newly arrived migrants, finding out what they might want and need from the cultural space, and creating concrete platforms that speak to these issues and desires. *Plug in Beats* was one of these attempts. The extent to which intentions correspond to actual diversity within and accessibility to the party is a different matter. In the following section I will look at presence and non-presence at *Plug in Beats* in order to evaluate the extent to which efforts to be inclusive and to diversify the space have been successful.

Presence and non-presence

For the purposes of analysis organization, I will look at presence and non-presence through the lens of the following axes of difference: citizenship/migration status in Germany, nationality, gender, religion, (dis)ability and sexuality. While I am dealing with each of these axes separately in order to chronical party attendance, these markers of difference operate through each other in complex, contingent, and compounding ways (Crenshaw, 1991). I choose these frames because they speak most directly to what I observed, and through the accounts of the party from long-time attendees. In each case, I also evaluate attempts that have been made to specifically include the target group in question, and reflect on the strengths and limits of the approach. I will not talk at length about age as a vector of difference, as it was spread consistently across groups, and reflective of the kinds of representation expected at a nightlife event. Almost all attendees appeared to be between 16 and 35 years old, with the exception of Thomas and three to five people in their 40s, 50s, and 60s at each party. There were no children present at any of the parties I attended.

This analysis is in no way complete, and my position as a privileged outsider very possibly made me blind to certain dynamics in the room. *Plug in Beats* has an immediately visible different demographic than other events at Feierwerk. If it is a reflection of a nascent reorientation towards deeper institutional inclusion, this is a preliminary attempt at understanding what those inclusive efforts do and do not do.

It is normal that not everybody wants to go to a dance party. Rather than pretend to explain why some individuals and groups do not attend *Plug in Beats*, I take the approach of using each axis of difference as a window into the way presence and non-presence of certain groups is narrated (or not), noticed (or not), and understood. The way party-goers narrate their understandings of presence and non-presence at the party is instructive in two ways: first, because frequent attendees can confirm or complicate the generalizability of my personal observations, and second, because their explanations often expose their personal politics and assumptions about others, which shines some light on the reality of the different worldviews that shape the dynamics of the room and challenge and support the 'openness' of the space.

8.1 Presence and non-presence: citizenship/migration status

At each party I went to, there were more migrants than locals.[10] At the first party the attendance was approximately 10% established locals, and the rest of the attendees had migrated since 2015. At the second party, the proportion of established locals made up approximately 30% of the crowd. Thomas told me at these events, German attendance had skewed low, and that typically, the balance between new migrants and established locals had been split more (though not entirely) evenly. Usually, he told me, there were only slightly more newcomers than longstanding residents at the party. A few respondents noted disappointment in the relatively small proportion of Germans in the crowd. Khalaf believes that the lack of German attendance limits the potential for what would otherwise be a more effective platform for correcting misunderstandings between migrants and established locals. "It's a very good program", he told me "[a very good] way to make people understand each other, but not so many Germans come. It's very important that [Germans] meet refugees – because most Germans have not ever met or spoken to a migrant. It's important for more German people to understand that [migrants] are not coming for just economic reasons, but because of the civil war" (personal interview, July 29th, 2018).

One of the party's goals is to disrupt the construction of migrants as problematized others, and this makes attracting German attendance a major challenge. Ines (28, German), who began coming to the party when she was volunteering at the Hansastraße camp, expressed dismay at the difficulty she experienced in encouraging her German friends to join her at *Plug in Beats*.

> "[It is] sometimes a bit disappointing, especially my best friends. […] I invited them [to Plug in Beats] very very often, and they like to party, maybe not as much as I do, but still we go to parties together – so it's not that they never party, but they never come to this

[10] It is evidently not possible to discern a new migrant from an established local by looking at the phenotypic characteristics of party-goers. Ethnicity varied in both locals and new migrants. I was able to verify this by asking around because the parties that I attended were small enough (25-45 people) that most people there were known to Thomas, known to another acquaintance, or easily approachable for a chat. According to a 2017 microcensus by the German Federal Statistical 23.6% of Germans come from a "migration background" – which is defined as having migrated, or having at least one parent who migrated (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2018).

party. But its hard to tell why, I cannot really tell why. They are open minded in the way that they would never say something against refugees or people from other nationalities, but I think, but it's just a guess, that there is some kind of fear inside them, otherwise I can't explain it. Only one of the girls came once, and she liked it, but still she only came once. And then I told my colleagues quite often, because I work at a very cool place, I work at a consultancy, and they are very open minded and it's a very cool place and we party a lot together. And some of them came also once. I'm not sure how much they liked it. Of course they said they liked it but I do not know. I think it's a difference between saying you're open minded and being open minded, and I think a lot of people are not as open as they say they are" (Ines, personal interview, Aug. 10th, 2018).

Ines reads her friends' lack of interest as evidence of latent fear – or a discrepancy between professed and actual open-mindedness. Going to *Plug in Beats*, a new and different party, is a choice that might take a backseat to other more conventional options on already full dance cards. Two other German respondents in their 30s mentioned that their German friends were difficult to convince to attend but understood this as a reflection of the plethora of nightlife and migrant justice opportunities in Munich.

There is an inertia to confronting the shifting the patterns of the rhythms of everyday life. Whether it is fear, habit, or any other number of factors that prevents a shift, if we imagine our personal geographies as deep grooves in a record, then skipping out of the groove might be experienced as a disruption of the usual tune. Attendees are attuned to *Plug in Beats*' potential for disruption, and the social relations that maintain the usual grooves might be reproduced again even for people who find their way into the party space.

Arif has hesitated to invite the German people he's made friends with through school, work, and activism, although he's invited many of his migrant friends. He was not sure why, but he told me that he thought that his German friends might not understand the concept, and that besides, many of the Germans that he knows are work colleagues. He is not that close to them, so he does not invite them. The maintenance of discrete social categories of work and leisure

companions is understandable, and for Arif would require the building of closeness and understanding for transgression across these spaces to be likely.

Inclusion strategies

Plug in Beats' main strategies for ensuring a mix of migrant and local attendance was to make the party accessible to all (through free admission), and to invite people through both migrant and local networks. Migrants and established locals alike could find out about the event through press in local weeklies and daily newspapers, on Radio Feierwerk, and through social media networks in various common languages (German, English, Arabic, Farsi, French, Spanish). For anyone who does not speak one of these languages, promotional materials such as the poster and party-logo convey various kinds of expressions of diversity (see Figure 13).

Figure 13 A Plug in Beats poster showing people with different origins, styles and sexualities. The fact that the party is free is conveyed in six languages. Source: Feierwerk

For those migrants who did not yet speak German, or were otherwise unconnected to local networks, before the first parties, organizers would go to camps, explaining and re-explaining the party concept in multiple languages. With the temporary camps now dismantled, Feierwerk's social media, radio, word of mouth, and online migrant support networks are the main tools for inviting new migrants to the party.

The initial strategy was quite effective with migrants and migrant support workers, but it was limited in its ability to appeal to a broader German public. As time has gone on, the party has shrunk in size, this is no doubt in part due to the fact that as migrants spend more time in Germany, their lives become busier with work, school, and other obligatory activities. The closure of the Hansastraße camp also puts some distance between housing and Feierwerk, and now the party requires more effort to visit.

Thomas sees the difficulty of engaging locals as the biggest issue that *Plug in Beats* faces:

> "It is still a big disappointment if there are not many Germans. Now after two years, [the migrants] kind of have arrived. The first phase is over, so they are citizens of Munich now, but they still have loads of problems to get in touch [with Germans] outside of the volunteer scene […] Those people are easy access, but on a normal daily, everyday basis it's still hard, and it's still hard also because you can feel how the racism is growing, and how the prejudice is coming that wasn't there at the beginning" (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th, 2018).

It has been difficult to find solutions to this attendance problem. While some respondents mentioned the advertising approach could be stronger, funding for such activities is somewhat limited. Other interviewees offered that growing the party comes with risks and might even be undesirable. The smaller party size and consistent base of repeat attendees makes it possible for organizers to manage any conflicts or misunderstandings, which are a part of all nightlife, but take on an extra level of importance when participants are so mixed, and where a majority of them are potentially marginalized, over-policed, and in the process of dealing with so much that is new. The demographic balance as it stands also has the upside that Germans, though far more numerous than migrants in the general population, do not dominate the physical or aesthetic space of the party, which in itself is an inversion of the 'integration approach' norm.

8.2 Presence and non-presence: nationality.

The demographics of those migrants who ended up in Munich are such that some nationalities – Syrians and Afghans particularly - are more represented than others. Germany's statistical office released a summary of protection seeker demographics in summer 2018[11], detailing what the Central Register of Foreigners (AZR) had collected from all those who were currently holding a protection seeking status at the end of 2017 (Figure 14). Syrians, Afghanis, and Iraqis are the most common protection seekers. This is reflected in the party attendance, as well in the proportion of Afghan and Arabic songs that make up the party music.

GERMAN PROTECTION SEEKERS IN 2017 BY PROTECTION STATUS, MOST FREQUENT COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN						
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	PROTECTION STATUS					
	PROTECTION SEEKERS	OPEN FILES	ACCEPTED			DECLINED
			TOTAL	LIMITED	PERMANENT	
TOTAL	1,680,700	348,640	1,154,365	888,355	266,010	177,700
Syria	507,190	27,570	476,025	467,825	8,200	3,590
Afghanistan	204,180	83,600	104,945	94,130	10,815	15,635
Iraq	174,400	38,390	127,275	98,075	29,200	8,730
Russian Federation	63,930	16,485	37,365	6,965	30,400	10,080
Iran	59,265	17,900	38,065	25,910	12,155	3,305
Eritrea	53,920	7,875	44,505	41,790	2,715	1,545
Turkey	52,970	10,350	38,590	11,335	27,250	4,030
Kosovo	49,630	1,570	36,825	12,290	24,535	11,235
Serbia	41,100	1,690	25,855	12,470	13,385	13,560
Ukraine	35,655	4,145	29,730	2,015	27,715	1,780
Pakistan	32,750	16,945	7,775	4,970	2,805	8,030
Somalia	29,880	9,470	17,540	15,595	1,945	2,870
Nigeria	27,840	18,285	4,505	4,105	405	5,050
Bosnia and Herzegovina	20,915	490	17,030	4,070	12,960	3,400
Albania	17,025	2,855	2,600	1,975	625	11,570
Armenia	16,610	7,565	4,995	3,620	1,375	4,045
Lebanon	16,445	4,130	8,005	5,065	2,940	4,310
Azerbaijan	15,990	6,250	7,015	3,360	3,655	2,725
Macedonia	13,385	1,580	4,360	2,815	1,545	7,445
Stateless	12,970	1,285	11,145	8,615	2,530	540
Unknown	37,275	5,240	27,265	23,345	3,920	4,770
Without indication	5,400	1,100	3,260	3,105	155	1,035
Demography of those seeking protection on 31.12.2017						

Figure 14 Source: De Statis via AZR, 2018

[11] Data includes refugees and asylum seekers of all statuses that were seeking protection at the end of 2017 (DeStatis, 2018).

Nationality and ethnicity, in the music

The prevailing pro-refugee politics in Germany are based on a foundational narrative of responsibility towards migrants on the basis of understanding the history of unequal relations between nation states. In these important formulations, the West has accumulated its wealth and stability through the exploitation, dispossession, and destabilization of the Global South. This approach centers nationality as the key vector of difference in a way that can be homogenizing of complex social dynamics within and between countries of origin. This defense of humane migration policy has the effect of 'methodological nationalism' (Schiller and Çaglar, 2009). Geraldine Pratt and Caleb Johnston define methodological nationalism as "the tendency to disregard social and cultural divisions within a nation-state and to prioritise ethnicity over all other forms of identification through a so-called 'ethnic lens'" (2019, p. 72). While methodological nationalism must be disrupted, it also has a material basis. Germany is a destination for migrant flows beginning all over the global South, and gives preferential access to pathways to asylum to certain nationalities over others. The material difference experienced by protection seekers according to nationality further animates it as a vector of difference between migrants at *Plug in Beats*.

The high number of Syrians and Afghans has a rippling effect on the dancefloor. Thomas explains it as a *'mathematical question'* and says the regional distribution of migrants further intensifies the tilt towards a high presence of West Asian and Middle Eastern music at the party.

At early parties, the country of origin from each song was displayed on an overhead projection during each dance. This practice has since been done away with, but I was interested to know how the demographic balance in the room was reflected in the chosen songs. In the two hours at the height of the dancing from 10pm to midnight at *Plug in Beats* in June 2018, I left a tape recorder in a corner of Orangehouse. I then analyzed the audio using Shazam to identify songs I did not know, and researched the background of each artist. Figure 15 lists the songs played during that two hour time period.

SONGS PLAYED BETWEEN 10PM & 12AM BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AT *PLUG IN BEATS*, JUNE, 2018

SONG TITLE	ARTIST	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
Twilight in Tankwa	Be Srendsen	Denmark
Masalei Ni	TM Bax	Denmark (Iranian)*
Alors on Danse	Stromae	Belgium (Rwanda)*
Augenbling	Seeed	Germany
Gonjeshkake	Valy	Germany (Afghan)*
Ya Salam	Kurdo	Germany (Kurdistan, Iraq)*
Main Tera Boyfriend	Arjit Singh, Neha Kakkar & Meet Bros	India
Naz Nakon	Kouros	Iran
Bigharar	Moein	Iran
Toy (live)	Netta	Israel
Gamar	47 Soul	Jordan (Palestinian)*
Nach Lain De	Abrar Ul Haq	Pakistan
Kalemba (Wegue Wegue)	Buraka Som Sistema	Portugal / Angola**
Boroboro	Arash	Sweden (Iranian)*
Hoptek	Sinan Yilmaz	Turkey
Move on Up	Curtis Mayfield	USA
Swalla	Jason Derulo ft. Nicki Minaj & Ty Dolla $ign	USA
Jooni Joonom	Leila Forouhar	USA (Iranian)*
Ameneh	Andy	USA (Iranian)*
Echame La Culpa	Luis Fonsi & Demi Lovato	USA (Puerto Rican)*
Mi Gente	J Balvin & Willy William	USA (Colombian)/France*,**
? (Persian lyrics, Afghan quataghani)	?	?
? (Arabic lyrics, dabke track)	?	?
? (German lyrics, indie rock)	?	?

* parentheses indicate the artist biography mentions personal migration history.

** a slash indicates an international collaboration

? indicates the song was not identifiable

Figure 15 A selection of songs from a two-hour recording of Plug in Beats in June 2018

This data is by no means a full picture of the diversity of styles that have been played at *Plug in Beats*. Many frequent attendees communicated that parties vary significantly from month to month, both in terms of music and in terms of diversity of attendance. However, it reflects a tendency towards a large proportion of music from Middle-Eastern and West Asian musical and linguistic traditions.

An interesting feature of this data is the proportion of artists who identify as members of diaspora communities or who have migrated themselves. If we include Luis Fonsi, who moved with his family from the culturally-distinct US territory Puerto Rico to Florida, nine of the twenty-six tracks are by artists who have their own experiences of migration and publicly identify as part of a diaspora. Other artists in this list are second-generation immigrants. Stromae, who was born in Belgium, is the son of a Rwandan refugee, and regularly speaks about this in relation to his work.

The distinction between the music of a diaspora and music made in countries of origin is not something that came up in any of my interviews, but some tracks deal indirectly with the concept of migration, through transcultural lyrics, and allusions to diaspora experience. A particularly salient example is Kurdo's 'Ya Salam'.

Song analysis 4[12]:

Kurdo is an ethnically Kurdish rapper who was born in Kurdistan Iraq and who migrated to Germany at the age of 8 during the Iraqi Kurdish civil war. His rhymes are mostly in German, but include some lyrics in Arabic and Spanish. In the chorus (here translated from German), he greets various European cities in Arabic with 'salam' (peace/hello), and encourages all to dance like Munich footballer, Franck Ribéry:

Amsterdam, ya salam, ya salam
Paris, ya salam, ya salam
Berlin, ya salam, ya salam
Bruxelles, ya salam, ya salam
Frankfurt, ya salam, ya salam
Hamburg, ya salam, ya salam
Ah, do the Ribéry dance
Greetings to the slums, ya salam, ya salam

The lyrics display a masterful intercultural, multi-lingual fluency, at once opening up tensions around assumptions around cultural difference, re-appropriating pejorative terms, and pulling from symbols from yet other cultures and intercultural situations. "Ich

[12] To hear song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcuQpbs0yT0

bin Kanake und kein Gringo" – (I am Kanake[13] not a Gringo) he sings, borrowing the later word from the Spanish speaking Americas' word for non-Hispanics. The irreverent use of symbols and people groupings disrupts the normativity of ethnic groupings and the assumptions that are sometimes associated with them.

Kurdo pays special attention to unsettling expectations around Muslim behavior (in this case by following the praising of God with a sip of Hennessy). The tension is somewhat resolved through the tone of the song, and the transcultural, multi-lingual playfulness which is always winking an eye.

In one verse he raps:

Wie's mir geht? Hamdulillah, muy bien	*(How am I?, praise be to Allah, I'm O.K.)*
Ah, trink' ein Schluck von dem Hennessy	*(Ah, take a sip of the Hennessy)*
Und lächel' in die Kamera wie Kennedy	*(And smile into the camera like Kennedy)*

Because many of the tracks played were composed by diasporic artists in stylistic and linguistic traditions that were reflective of a cultural origin, the language of lyrics rather than country of origin is a more useful means of reflecting on the way musical traditions were represented at this one particular party. Of the 26 songs that I recorded at the first party, nine were primarily sung in Persian, versus three in Arabic, three in German, and three in English. Two songs were sung primarily in Spanish, one song was played in each of Bengali, French, Portuguese, and Turkish. One song was instrumental (see Figure 16).

[13] Kanake is a derogatory German language term for a German national with Arab, Turkish, Persian or Southern European backgrounds. Much like the pejorative terms 'n----r', or 'queer', Kanake has been re-appropriated as a self-denomination (Trost, 2010).

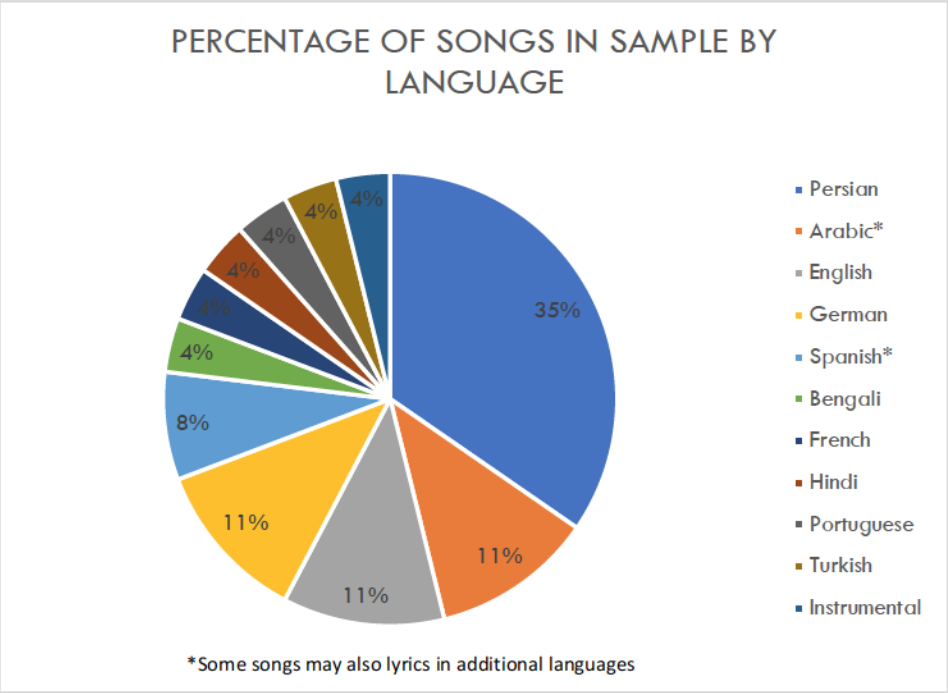

Figure 16 Songs in Figure 15 by language. Compiled by author.

As compared to the Germans that I interviewed, migrants were more likely to play a song. Of the eight German people I spoke to, half said they always chose a song at the party, one said sometimes, and three said almost never. All of the migrants I interviewed said that they had chosen a song at *Plug in Beats* before. Everyone but one respondent, Daouda, said that they always chose at least one song. Daouda told me he had only played a song once and had since decided not to take numbers.

> "When there are a lot of people, it's a bit complicated," he told me, "I like all the music at the party, so usually I do not choose a song. Friends try to encourage me to choose a song, but I says, no, no, I like it how it is" (Daouda, personal interview, July 31st, 2018).

For many attendees, the process of choosing a song is informed not only by stylistic preferences but also by the geography associated with the music. Besides Daouda, six of the eight migrants I spoke to mentioned sharing something of their own cultural origins as an important aspect in their choice of song, and thus they usually or always chose a song from what

they considered to be their culture. For Afghans, this sometimes included Iranian songs, and for Syrians, it may include songs from other Arab countries. Other times, the music they chose reflected something about migration trajectory. Two Syrian respondents told me about their love for Turkish music. For each of them, Turkey had been one of their stops on the way to Germany.

Those German respondents who do choose to play music, all gave examples of Western music that they had played at the party. The fact that migrant and non-migrant participants who choose songs tend to usually choose music that loosely matches their cultural background suggests that the above pie chart can provide a general idea about the intercultural mix in the room at the time. As Thomas explained, the night was somewhat dominated by Persian and Arabic songs.

Representation and intercultural friction

At times, the concentration of Persian and Arabic music has contributed to frictions, particularly with some African party attendees. The relatively smaller proportion of Africans, and African music, specifically Eritreans, who are quite numerous among Munich's new migrants, was noticeable. Laura was upset at this particular imbalance, though she was not sure how to change things:

> "African migrants that were sometimes coming in the beginning, kind of stopped coming, and I have a feeling it's because there was more Persians and Arabs and somehow, they did not feel comfortable anymore" (personal interview, Aug 21st, 2018).

This is not true of all people coming from African countries. In my personal *Plug in Beats* experiences, I met people and had conversations with Africans from Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria, many of whom had come to the party multiple times. Daouda who is from Mali told me about when he first heard about the party:

> "I was with friends, other friends from Mali when [Thomas] explained the party, and they were not interested but I was. I love music and I like meeting with people. So I said, ok, well I do not know about the music, but I'll go check it out. If I do not like it, I won't go

again. When I started the first day, I saw the music – I liked it, and you could take a number and choose your music and play your music. With the music from Afghanistan, Arab, and African – for me I dance to everything. It was really super. Sincerely, it pleases me, I really like it" (Daouda, personal interview, July 31st, 2018).

Inclusion strategies

Plug in Beats' main strategies for ensuring a mix is based on the party concept itself, which attempts to represent all of the people in the room by handing the DJ role back to the crowd. There are moments when the party structure is not enough to make everyone feel welcome or enticed to participate. It is of course fine to opt out of participation – one of the party's strengths is that it does not make any demands of attendees, but in making space for everyone, it is important to recognize inter-group dynamics and to attempt to mitigate for exclusions resulting from them.

The team has a strategy in order to deal with these moments. Organizers keep a keen eye out for anyone who appears dissatisfied or is not contributing songs, and make sure to rearticulate the participatory structure of the party. While this sometimes remedies the situation, at other times people did not wish to participate, simply were ambivalent to the music or the setting, and chose to leave.

Thomas' interpretation as to why this has happened, particularly with people who have migrated from Africa, is two-fold:

"On one hand I think there's a different culture, because in countries like Afghanistan, such things as parties and dance nights do not exist that much, for [Afghan people] it's a new experience, and they do not have expectations about what they want. They say: this is good, and then they go with it. Whereas I think in Africa generally there is a huge culture of partying, and so you go (to Plug in Beats) and you do not get the music you like, so you're disappointed."

But Thomas also saw the reluctance of some African participants towards returning to the party as being related to the particular racialization of black Africans in predominantly white Germany. For Thomas, this, coupled with the option of going to other parties oriented exclusively around Black musical traditions, plays a role in limiting attendance and participation at *Plug in Beats*:

> "I think the notion of being [Black] in a predominantly white society, [one may become] sensitive about anything that could be a racist reflection, and going to a party where you hear Arabic music, you hear music from Iran, and you do not hear African music - just emotionally, Africans might already feel pushed back, so we need changes. We need to talk to [African attendees] more actively. When we say you're new here, do not you want to take part?' they say, 'yeah but it's only Arabic music'. We have to explain that that's because [the audience] decides about the music. If you do not put your music on, it's not going to happen. And some of them let themselves be convinced, and then they really are happy, maybe even more than the others, when other people dance to their music, because they do not expect that. They do not expect Arabic people to dance to the African music. And then it's like OH! Really crazy, really good! But they come back much less often. Very often it's an experience for one night. They go through the journey, but the motivation is not that high to come back […] because there are Black music parties, there are reggae parties, and Black music and reggae parties, for sure have a higher percentage of Black people, so they feel good there, and they do not have that many issues at those specialized parties, to get in. So they have somewhere they can go to" (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th, 2018).

Thomas also always chooses a few songs during the night. He has a computer on hand in case something does not work so that the party flow continues no matter what. The choice of what song to play in the inevitable moments of confusion is always chosen in an attempt to bring more diversity into the nights' playlist:

> "The song I choose is always chosen by what has not happened tonight – which community has not been addressed yet? Which community do I need to motivate? For example, when I see that there are Black people who haven't taken a number yet, I might

play an African song, to motivate them – to see – ok your music is taking place here. And now after two years I know some hits from all the areas, like choosing a hit that really makes them want to dance." (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th, 2018).

This approach gets at the heart of the complications related to reification of ethnically, nationally, or in this case continentally-based constructions of cultural norms. This idea, which the party in some ways skirts by making it first and foremost about individuals choosing what they like, in practice often creates a context where attendees play music 'from their culture'.

When Thomas chooses a song from Africa, it starts with the intention of reaching out to some people in the room. However well-intentioned the act, essentialisms spring forth like water out of a barrel shot through with holes. First there is the racializing assumption that the black person is from Africa, and that they would feel more welcome if they heard 'African' music, no matter where in Africa that individual is from, or what kind of music they connect with. Second there is the interpretation of silence as requiring external motivation from a German D.J. The approach is limited in that it replicates the original problem that *Plug in Beats* seeks to solve – the offloading of responsibility of integration onto the individual.

This form of space making is messy. Professional DJs like Thomas learn to read a crowd. However problematic, often, this approach works. Not a single interviewee complained to this effect, however this possibly reveals a methodological limitation of this study. Regular attendees are unlikely to have major problems with the party. Is it possible that the effect of a culture of playing music 'from home' is too territorializing, too general, too reifying of ill-fitting nationalisms, too exoticizing, or too much of a parade of multiculturalism for some would-be party goers? It is beyond the scope of this study to know for sure.

8.3 Presence and non-presence: gender

From my first observations at the party, the most glaring demographic fact lies at the intersection of gender and citizenship/migration status. At the first party I attended, there were only five females besides myself throughout the night, all of whom were white and held German

passports. At the second party, and offshoot parties, approximately 20% of attendees were women. Some of them were German women of colour and there were a few migrant women in attendance. Thomas and many interviewees confirmed that this was a normal feature of the party. I will come back to this later.

German men were comparatively rare, though present in small numbers. There is little doubt that the space is inclusive of German men – it is advertised through outreach networks that are accessible and successful in attracting male attendance for other events, it is organized by a German man, and it is in a space that is regularly frequented by German men. The question is why established local women are more interested in the party than men are, rather than whether men have access.

Thomas is deeply involved in Munich's queer community, and he and I did not encounter any trans or gender-queer people at the parties I attended. I hold open the possibility that we misread the gender expression of some individual attendees. Queerness at the party will be addressed more thoroughly in section 8.5.

Anti-harassment, and making space for gendered learning curves

Dance is associated with a certain erotics, and dance parties are often used as spaces of romantic pursuit. Alcohol, music, and bodies in movement makes it a difficult duty for party organizers to create a safe space for attendees of all genders to party without unwanted attention or flirtation. *Plug in Beats*, like any other party, must manage this duty, but some migrant attendees' inexperience with alcohol or mixed gender dancing requires some special attention. This is not because migrants are more likely to commit harassment than their German counterparts, or because women are more vulnerable at *Plug in Beats* than at other parties (every woman I interviewed said that the experience of low-level harassment such as unwanted touching, or exaggerated flirtatiousness was comparable or lower than what they'd experienced in other Munich clubs), but because of a general attitude of 'better safe than sorry'. The importance of efforts to make *Plug in Beats* an especially safer-space in this regard are key in light of the often draconian, collectively experienced repercussions for any individual behavior. Racist discourses of refugee men as rapists regularly add fire to the flames of the anti-migration

German right wing. For many young migrant men, *Plug in Beats* is a space where they learn to navigate German norms, especially those relating to interacting with women, so measures must be taken to make this possible. This is especially important because beyond the already important risks to (usually) women in nightlife spaces, the xenophobic tendency to generalize individual incidents of violence by migrants (which are rare), to the entire protection-seeking populations means that any incident could come at a great cost to all migrants.

The primary way this is managed is through vigilant supervision by Thomas, volunteers, and Feierwerk staff. When an individual is behaving inappropriately, staff approach the situation through conversation, de-escalation and explanation of any borderline behavior. Thomas sees his job as one of balancing the rights of all attendees to feel safe in the space, with the right for newcomers to have a space to acclimate to standards of behaviour in a new context.

> "When we did the first parties, for sure there [were migrants who were] dealing with alcohol for the first time, and trying it out, or finding out how to approach women – but that is what we (…) we allow our young kids to learn in puberty, between 14 and 18. [German youth] have the chance to go to parties, and they explore the limits, and sometimes they even go over the limits. How to deal with other sexes, how to deal with flirting, how to deal with alcohol… I think people who are coming from a different culture, where they do not have this time, even if they're 22, they have the right to experiment the same way. If it's constructive, if it's not harassment (which is the atmosphere we guarantee) then they have the right to explore that and to find a way to deal with these things" (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th, 2018).

Inappropriate behaviour results in expulsion from the space (for a certain period of time depending on the act, initially followed by a conversation, then followed-up with a written explanation in the person's own first language if necessary). Happily, thus far there have been no instances of sexual harassment at the party, though occasionally there have been instances of 'exploring the limits' that were successfully addressed.

By clearly establishing that respect of all people and their wishes in the space, *Plug in Beats* establishes a space with a certain collective culture which functions as a kind of neighborhood watch on the dancefloor. At one edition of the party, Thomas went outside for a cigarette to find some of the regulars in a heated conversation with some first-time attendees. Thomas learned that one person had tried to approach women in an inappropriate way and the regulars were telling them their behavior was unacceptable. Thomas saw this as reflective of the system of values having created a sense of belonging to the space. "Because they see it as a safer space," he said, "they see it as a space where they are welcome, and therefore they start defending it, and they start defending the values" (Lechner, 2018).

The question of German men

Some German men attend *Plug in Beats*, though they generally make up a smaller share of the locals in attendance. This was explained by almost all the people I spoke to as an issue of German men not being too big on dancing. At regular clubs in Germany, interviewees reflected that women dance significantly more often than men. Thomas is not entirely sure what accounts for the smaller numbers of German men, he wonders if it has something to do with differences in men's and women's socialization. As he sees it, In German society:

> "Women are more social and [are] more easy-going with trying [things] out, approaching people, and men they really are more often thinking about do I have an advantage, what can I get from this. And not even consciously, I think there is, what we see here is not only the friction that we see in the community of new citizens, it's also our own one. (… [When German men attend]), their approach is celebrating their music, and putting it on" (Thomas, personal interview, June 26th, 2018).

If this is the case, it is not reflected in Alex's (21, Germany) experience of *Plug in Beats*. Alex was the only male German attendee that I interviewed. He said there were German men at the nine or so parties he has attended, but he very often came in a group of friends that he invited himself, which may account for his impression. I asked him what feedback he got from his friends and he said they liked it a lot, for both for the opportunity of getting to spend time with

migrants, and for the musical mix. Whatever the reason, the scant number of German men always outnumber migrant women.

Non-presence of migrant women

At most parties, migrant women are not present, or are very few in number. Scarce attendance by migrant women is not altogether surprising, as most migrants that arrived in Germany since 2015 were young men. Popular narratives of migrant demographics often overemphasise the share of young migrant men among newcomers in Germany. I found this to be the case with many of the Germans I interviewed, many of whom explained the absence of women at *Plug in Beats* as another 'mathematical question'. These respondents commonly estimated the proportion of migrant men that had come to Germany, since 2015, citing 80% to 95%.

MIGRATION STRUCTURE AND DEMOGRAPHY OF PROTECTION SEEKERS IN BAVARIA									
STATE	PROTECTION SEEKERS								
	TOTAL NUMBER	SHARE OF POPULATION (%)			AVG AGE AT 1ST ENTRY	AVERAGE AGE	0 to 17	18-64	over 64
		TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	in years				
Germany	1,680,700	2.0%	63.6%	36.4%	22.9	29.2	25.7	70.5	3.8
Bavaria	201,985	1.6%	66.1%	33.9%	23.2	29.2	23.5	72.4	4.1
Migration structure of the protection seekers on 31.12.2017									

Figure 17 SOURCE: DeStatis b (2018) via AZR

In fact, just over a third of new migrants in Bavaria are registered as female (see Figure 17, DeStatis, 2018). While some of these females are children, many are between 18 and 35, the typical age range of migrant men who attend *Plug in Beats*. What is clear is that party attendance is noticeably smaller than the share of migrant women in Germany.

Figure 18 There are more male than female protection seekers in Germany, though people of both genders are present at all ages.

In my ignorance, I had been very surprised at the gender imbalance at the party, but for everyone else it was a matter of course. I asked Ines (28, Germany) if she had been surprised to find that there were so few migrant women at the party. She was not. The party was relatively reflective of the gender balance she had experienced when she gave language classes in the refugee camps. The women in the camps that she worked with did not seem to like to party or did not want to come. When asked why she thought this was the case she said that it seemed to her that shifting to German cultural norms seemed more difficult for women.

Various differences in the structural realities of women migrant's lives impact their manner of adjustment to life in Germany. Women's roles in social reproduction often mean that family obligations[14] frequently delay or limit their participation in various state-run integration platforms. This holds true across many state-run integration platforms, language courses,

[14] Though there is no comprehensive, representative study has been done, the BAMF (2017) states that the vast majority of adult migrant women are married and arrive with families including a husband and children.

vocational training programs, and other educational programs as well (BAMF, 2017). A 2017 BAMF report on female refugee labour market access and education showed that refugee women often have less labour market experience than men in their country of origin, and that this continues in Germany, where they are much less likely to be employed. The lower rates of participation in education programs and the labour market has the result of slowing the development of social participation, and German language proficiency. Because some female migrants may not want to, or be able to, take part in these formal channels, the BAMF report concludes that "opportunities for social participation beyond the education and employment systems are of equal importance" (2017, p. 12).

Important as social participation may be, various cultural aspects also shape women's experiences of adjustment to life after migration, and their interest in or access to an event such as *Plug in Beats*. When I asked other party-goers why they thought it was that migrant women so rarely attended the party, migrant men especially cited cultural and religious practices that were different from German norms. One interviewee, a young migrant man, said the party had taught him some negative aspects of German culture as related to gender. The translator, a German woman, asked him what in particular, and he hesitated to answer. The translator was a German woman and a friend of the interviewee. When pressed by the translator, to satisfy her curiosity, he said he'd rather not. I offered him the option of telling his story off the record, so for the purposes of the following vignette I will refer to him as "he/his". While the story itself will remain private, as requested, the gist of what negative things he had learned shows the gendered complexity of intercultural encounter.

He relayed these thoughts in a thoughtful and complicated way. The essence of his quandary was that when women from his country see how German women live, and how they experience their freedom, it often results in family ruptures. In his view, women leave their husbands (and sometimes their children) for a German style of freedom, which he reads as negative if it is damaging to families.

His understanding of migrant women's choices exposes a tension between gendered relations in his home country and Germany, and gestures to the expectation that migrant women

should absorb the impact of cultural difference by resisting certain forms of integration. His account points to how certain double-standards for gendered behavior can exist within diaspora communities. It is indicative of attitudes that exist within the space of the party which may act as a social barrier for some women's attendance at *Plug in Beats*.

Other participants made this point as well. Katharina, who worked for a while in a residential facility for unaccompanied migrant minors, observed gendered social pressure within migrant communities as a factor that unevenly impacts female migrants.

This is Germany, I can do what I want:

> *"I think if a refugee girl goes to a party and dances – which is forbidden in their country – the men [from the same country] going there would tell them that it's not ok. Even if they [migrant men] are quite open-minded at the parties, because they are men and they are allowed to do this. Even if they are normally not allowed to drink alcohol – but they are men. If there would be a girl with a hijab and dancing, they would tell her 'it's not ok, go home', even if they do not know her. Because in this case [between them] they are still in their old culture."*

> *Katharina had not seen this kind of behavior at Plug in Beats, but she had experience with the boys in her house dictating behaviour standards to girls.*
> *"Upstairs, there isn't 24/7 supervision, and there are some African girls and they do not wear hijab, and they are doing Ausbildung (an internship program). In the beginning it was hard for them to explain to the group that 'sorry, but we are now in Germany, and I will do this'. And sometimes in our group the boys, when we are outside, would comment on women's behavior and clothes. Even to me- they'd tell me that I shouldn't smoke because I'm a woman. But I'm like I'm sorry this is Germany I can do whatever I want" (Katharina, personal interview, Aug. 20, 2018).*

Katharina thought this may explain migrant women's scant participation at *Plug in Beats*, but her generalization of her experience at work to the demographics of the party floor gives me pause. Her account rhymes uncomfortably with the Male Storyteller's, but her essentializing

language resonates with western imperialist constructions of cultural others. Katharina makes it very clear that on the issue of gender, she expects migrants to swiftly conform to German standards. *"We can't talk it away, their picture of women is not the best"*, she told me. As a woman, and a feminist, I embrace socio-legal frameworks that push towards gender parity and dismantle gendered systems of oppression that enable the (raced, classed, and otherwise differentiated) domination of women, or encourage dominating modes of behavior. But who is this 'they' that we can't talk away? 'They' is a deeply problematic shortcut that sometimes dances at *Plug in Beats*.

What talking to people about the dearth of migrant women at the party taught me was that people at the party are bringing different, complicated gendered assumptions into the room. On the dancefloor so much is held in tension, so much is in suspense. Non-presences - just as much as presences - can lead to productive contemplation and expose difference.

Inclusion strategies

In order to be gender inclusive, various steps have been taken to actively reach out to migrant women. At one point, volunteers put up posters in women's bathrooms in various spaces in the city that the team knew held migrant women programming. Thomas extended invitations through his political organizing networks and in his meetings with the other houses of Feierwerk, and he reached out to various people who run programs specifically with migrant women, so as to create more links. But the difficulty of getting directly in touch with female migrants has persisted as a factor limiting Plug in Beat's ability to include more migrant women.

On the last Sunday in June 2018, there was a Cultural Festival in the outdoor area of Feierwerk. Because it was an outdoor, daytime, family event, there were many more people than those that would normally attend a *Plug in Beats* party. There were food stands from all over the world, and a very mixed crowd of people. In the end of the evening, to close off the festival, there were some bands, which were to be followed by a mini-version of the cell phone party, which ran for only 90 minutes. On this occasion there were a quite a few women, and everyone was dancing together. This caused Thomas to reflect on his own assumptions about gendered presences and non-presences at *Plug in Beats*:

"There were two or three women from Syria [at the Cultural Festival edition of Plug in Beats], and they had a lot of really amazing tracks on their cell phones, and I told them, you need to come [to the regular party]! That was also interesting, when [during an earlier moment in the night where a spontaneous dance party began on a street corner] they stood up and started dancing. It was mixed crowds; it was the first time ever I saw this. Syrian women and Syrian men together, because usually all the things I have seen before – I mean for sure when German women come, they are a part of it – but in their own culture its basically I only saw them dancing separately so far. So that was a really interesting observation. So there is – I do not know if [these individuals had] a more progressive background or whatever, but there are so many stereotypes to get rid of. Every way of thinking is there also" (Thomas, personal interview, June 26th, 2018).

Thomas' main strength as an organizer is that he is constantly reflecting on how to make things better and is willing to modify his sense of things when he learns new information or sees something he did not expect. In reflecting on the Cultural Festival, he thought about what elements he might incorporate. He thought that rebranding the party as a 'celebration' rather than a party because in a lot of places the concept of 'party' does not exist. He brainstormed about holding the party outdoors and providing food:

"I thought, ok, keep this in your head, that really to get a special peer group activated you have also to think about these details. What do you need to feel comfortable? Is it really too much to ask two to three people to make Bolani or whatever? Because that's celebrating as well. It's not only dance, it's also food and getting together, and dancing and eating. So let's see if we can make that happen" (Thomas, personal interview, June 26th, 2018).

While like everybody else, they are welcome, nobody wants to force migrant women to come to *Plug in Beats*. Every time a party is held, it is attractive as an evening plan for some potential attendees, and unattractive to others for various aesthetic, structural, spatial, gendered, cultural, and religious reasons. This is expected and understood. The strength of the welcoming

approach taken at the party rests on a continued reflection on possible invisible barriers, so as to be constantly checking for any blind spots that might be leading to the exclusion of people who could be interested in taking part. This is a tricky dance in and of itself because the temptation to generalize based on initial observations, combined with limited time and funding for advertising and the need for a crowd to make the party work, can lead to strategically placing more promotional effort in targeting groups who seem more likely to attend.

A substantial amount of the party promotion is done by Thomas and a few male migrant volunteers. Their male subjectivity may limit their access to certain gendered spaces and makes active outreach to migrant women a more complex endeavor.

In light of this, and in the spirit of reflecting on possible invisible barriers to access, I hatched a plan with Thomas to reach out to some women's refugee support groups to see if they were interested in the party concept, and if so - if there was any extra support they might need in order to make their attendance viable.

Café Juno

One evening in August, I joined a women's refugee event called Café Juno, a bi-weekly, women-only cooking and eating event held at Bellevue di Monaco. Sitting along a long table eating Eritrean food, I had the opportunity to meet some of Munich's migrant women and their children. I introduced the party concept to the group, and chatted to organizers about whether they would like us to organize a party of this kind for the group.

None of the women had heard about Plug in Beats before this time. Some reactions were tepid, and others were excited. One of the organizers suggested that perhaps going as a group outing would be an option. Many others requested holding the party at Bellevue, which was a well-known space to the group, rather than at Feierwerk (which for most of the women remained an unknown). While some women were open to sharing the space with men, others predicated their interest on the maintenance of a women-only space. Many women said that the provision of childcare, and holding the party in the afternoon would encourage their attendance. One particularly excited woman was already planning

out a menu for the food she planned to cook for the event. The menu would include salt – 'Germans do not put enough salt on things! I always have to bring my own', she told me, producing a box of the stuff from her bag!

While there was not enough time to organize this party prior to my departure from Germany, plans are still in the works for the future. My meeting with the group at Café Juno led me to believe that more outreach about the party through specific women's groups may be an effective way of accessing more migrant women, though only a few among the women would attend the party in its current location and format. The need for childcare, or a child friendly setting[15], the night time setting and for some, the open-door policy for people of all genders keeps Plug in Beats from being accessible for certain women.

8.4 Presence and non-presence: religion

Religious affiliation is a key vector of difference between many migrants and locals. Both migrants and locals come from various religious backgrounds and organizing *Plug in Beats* requires an awareness of religious pluralism. At the party, I met people who told me they were Muslims, Christians, atheists and Yezidis. To my knowledge, I was the only person of Jewish background present in the room. While, as has been accounted for in earlier parts of this analysis, gendered religious practices may limit attendance for some people at the party and at times participation in nightlife events caused party-goers to reflect on how it fit within their belief systems and traditions, none of the interviewees I spoke to reported feeling *excluded* on the basis of their beliefs.

Making specific accommodations to cater to the specifics of a religious practice can be complicated by the fact that the daily practices of religious beliefs vary from group to group and from individual to individual. Despite this complication, in one of our conversations, Thomas

[15] Though Feierwerk is officially an all ages venue, in practice, small children do not attend the nighttime events.

reflected on having recently learned the importance of keeping religion in mind for the party. A spinoff party, Waving Iran, had been held during Ramadan, and next to nobody came. Thomas was determined to be more aware of important holidays that might impact *Plug in Beats*.

Other than cultivating a general awareness of religious difference, the party's overall approach has been to treat the space as secular, and to allow individuals to opt in or opt out of things that may challenge their religious convictions.

The decision to serve alcohol is the most obvious way in which the party has chosen to create options rather than cater to one group. In the early days of the party, some people suggested making the event alcohol-free. Though Muslims make up a large proportion of new migrants in Germany and many among them do not drink, Thomas saw it as problematic and paternalistic to make this decision for attendees. Though alcohol provoked some soul-searching for some attendees, nobody I spoke to said they wished it was not served.

8.5 Trauma and Conflict at Plug in Beats

As Thomas narrates Feierwerk's trajectory from integration to inclusion, he often makes reference to the importance of dealing with invisible barriers to accessibility versus the "obvious ones" such as wheelchair ramps. Though Orangehouse is a wheelchair accessible venue, there have been no wheelchair users at any *Plug in Beats* parties, to date.

A more frequent challenge at *Plug in Beats* has been to develop strategies to deal with conflict, often stemming from individuals suffering from trauma. Many migrants live through traumatic experiences in their country of origin, during migration, and are at risk of suffering Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression in Bavaria (Georgiadou, et al., 2018). Post-migration stress factors related to acculturation processes, discrimination, and poor living conditions may increase these risks (Laban, Gernaat, Komproe, van der Tweel, & De Jong, 2005).

Arif sees the party as helpful in mitigating mental illness:

> "It is such a good program it's great that something like this is happening here, because a lot of refugee people are sitting at home and doing nothing, and they get mentally ill from it, or have mental problems from sitting around, and this is really good, to get people out of their camps" (Arif, personal interview July 9th, 2018).

While nightlife staff are in no position to evaluate the mental health of attendees, there is a general awareness that trauma and PTSD can manifest in various negative ways in the party space. Some individuals may exhibit self-destructive behaviour, and aggressive outbursts, though uncommon, have been known to occur. These kinds of behaviours are risks for any party, involving migrants or not, but the imperative of maintaining a safe party space is especially important at *Plug in Beats*, because in a political climate that is hostile to migrants, the cost of any mishap may have detrimental consequences for all those seeking protection. For this reason, Feierwerk staff must manage excessive drunkenness, aggressivity or other kinds of inappropriate behaviour in a way that honors the inclusive system of values, protects the people in the ongoing party, is respectful of the traumatized individual and that does not reproduce narratives of migrants as criminals.

Thomas was all too aware of the risks:

> "At the beginning I was nervous really often, because I was like – 'am I too brave? Am I too optimistic?' And you also need a little bit of luck, when you do stuff like [Plug in Beats] – I mean if you have bad luck and you have just the three wrong guys there, they can destroy all the thing, but we had good experiences with that – and the little awkward moments [where we had to deal with traumatized people] were the ones to learn how to deal with that on a very individual scale – to see that as an individual problem, and kind of find a way to save the party, but without making it the big image about "the refugees bla bla bla doing this and that" because it's always similar" (Thomas, personal interview, July 4th, 2018).

In the months leading up to the first party, Thomas and Feierwerk's staff had tuned into the reality that trauma was an issue for some of the migrants, and there were two or three '*difficult figures*' who would require extra supervision. Rather than pathologizing particular individuals who appear to suffer from a problem, the approach is to deal with behaviours humanely, in the awareness that any attendee may be suffering from trauma or mental health difficulties. In a similar process to dealing with sexist inappropriate behavior, if an attendee is too drunk or aggressive, staff escort them out of the space, explain the situation privately, and follow up with them, so that the individual has a chance to understand why they are being excluded from the party:

> "We had some awkward moments [with some traumatized individuals] but then with the team and the staff we just took them home to the other side of the street. [We told them] 'Your party ends today, you need to be sober in the party, you can't be like that' – but very individually, it was not a public scandal" (Thomas, personal interview, July 4th, 2018).

Inclusion strategies

Dealing with bad behavior on an individual level is key to *Plug in Beats*' approach to managing conflict. This approach was strengthened in the wake of the New Year's Eve attacks on women in Cologne in 2015/2016. While Thomas condemns the attacks themselves, he sees the political and media response as responsible for a problematic turning point away the pro-refugee feeling in Germany. Thomas sees the perpetration of wrong acts as connected to the failure of the state in mitigating existing structural inequalities linked to class and socioeconomic status, and stresses the importance of being aware of trauma and the possibility of re-education or rehabilitation of the 'certain percentage of assholes' that exist in every population (migrant and local alike).

> "I think it's an important question of education. And we failed a lot in educating people, and we can tell that even without any people from other countries, […] but if you come from a 'socially weak'[16] context, the chances to get up to the middle class are almost non-

[16] This is a literal translation of the common German P.C. term *'sozial schwach'*, which was developed as an alternative to the term 'lower class'. While the language is contested on the basis that poverty is not a weakness, it is commonly used in attempts to respectfully refer to socioeconomic disadvantages.

existent. […] There's a good and a bad side [to the aftermath of Cologne]. Sexism and harassment came into public discussion as a problem for women, and it's crazy and weird that nine months after I think we had a new law that strengthened the 'no means no' attitude. So there's a new law that did not exist before. The problem is that it always comes together with a racist connotation" (Thomas, personal interview, July 4th, 2018).

Thomas' approach uncouples the 'no means no' protections from the racist and universalizing constructions of migrants by dealing with problematic behaviour personally. He attributes his ability to do this productively to the fact that he had spent time building a respectful and reciprocal relationship with the people in the Hansastraße camp.

"I always tried to explain the situation. We did not talk about the rules of Feierwerk, but we talked about our own history [at Feierwerk], how we learned to have respect for all different scenes that we're dealing with – from the electro community to hip-hop or whatever, and that is the main attitude in our venue: that we respect all the people, and we expect that from everyone. And [we explained that] we expect that also from you, we expect that you respect all the other different forms that you do not know. The good side for you is, that if you have any problems on your side with racism or whatever, we are your partner in this, and you can come to us and we'll help you with that. So that was the dialogue."

Usually this approach works, and results in reformed behaviour. Some respondents told me of an attendee who went through this process for inappropriate behaviour was not allowed at the party for a time, and then came back and continued to enjoy the party:

Mira: "We had some trouble with one guest in the beginning. I brought him actually. He came a few times, and it was alright at first, but then he started being annoying actually. Like he wanted to dance with every woman, and did not know when to stop."

Laura: "He was drinking – like really drinking."

Mira: "But I think that that happens at all parties."

Jessie: "How did the party organizers deal with it, or how did you deal with it?"

Mira: "I knew him, so I just told him when I was pissed, but then Thomas talked to him. At first, I think, but he did not really get it. Then Thomas talked to him again, and brought someone who could translate, and he still did not get it. And then he wasn't allowed to come to the party for the rest of the year, which I think was eight months. And Thomas wrote him a letter in his language to explain why, and now he's allowed to come again, and its better now" (Mira, Laura, personal interview, Aug. 21, 2018).

Thomas takes on the responsibility of finding the balance of making *Plug in Beats* safe(r), sustainable, and aligned with the Feierwerk system of values: "as we want the party and our venue to be a safer space, I'm always on duty to take care of it. I'm always responsible. And therefore to any strangers, I look with excitement, with expectation – is this someone I need to attract to [the party], is this someone who could become a regular guest?" On one unfortunate occasion, this approach did not work out as desired:

"Two months ago we had issues – there was a whole group of really lovely young people coming with their social worker, and there was one guy and he wanted alcohol, and our bar staff refused him, because you can't give alcohol to minors, and he freaked out. Part of the team wanted to kick him out, and I said, let's negotiate first, and give him [a chance]– because he was so already aggressive and so I said let's cool him down [bring him outside and have a talk] – give him a chance to understand. And in the end, it ended badly because after he had left, he came back and went to the security guy and wanted to punch him, and then the security guy called the police. But he was like, even the social worker had said he was a difficult guy, who had just come to the group one week ago, he's very aggressive all the time, and she can't even handle it. So, it's one of those percentage moments. So that's

always – so the little part is being attentive to potential disturbances, but it's more the excitement [of] new people, new person!" (Thomas, personal interview, July 4th, 2018).

The major strength of *Plug in Beats*' approach to conflict is that it balances protecting the ongoing party with making room for learning opportunities when things go awry. It avoids racist generalizations but maintains an awareness of mental health vulnerabilities among participants in order to keep everyone at the party safer. The party is limited in what they can do to help people with the root causes of their traumatized or otherwise violent or inappropriate behavior.

8.6 Presence and non-presence: sexuality, safer space, and lessons from the queer party

To Thomas' knowledge, none of the migrants who attend *Plug in Beats* are queer, but some local attendees are gays and lesbians. Nobody that I spoke with at *Plug in Beats* identified themselves as LGBTQI+. There are a number of specifically queer migrant spaces and events in Munich, and a friend who provided psychotherapy at the queer migrant center suggested that coming out in certain diaspora communities may be too risky an endeavor for some migrants. I hold open the possibility that people who are both queer and seeking asylum protection may experience exclusion from the party in ways that are difficult to trace from their absence. I spoke with some lesbian migrants from Nigeria at a community organizing meeting one evening at Bellevue di Monaco, who seemed interested in the party, but never came.

In spite of the fact that *Plug in Beats* has few queer participants, Thomas sees his political solidarity with migrants as flowing from his experiences of marginalization as a gay man. While *Plug in Beats* itself cannot be considered a queer party, Thomas' long-standing implication in the queer party scene – in particular his organizing of *Candy Club* – informs the politics and approach of the party, as well as its approach to working towards a safer space.

The concept of creating safe or safer spaces, has been a major topic of interest for scholars of geographies of sexuality. LGBTQ communities have been key sites for research on safe space

creation, and how the ensuing safety frequently protects individuals unequally, often reproducing wider intersecting gendered, classed, raced, heteronormative power relations (Oswin, 2013). According to Hartal (2017), safe spaces should facilitate feelings of security, and sustain inclusion and diversity. Safe space is physical, social and emotional, it is "a metaphor for the ability to be honest, take risks, share opinions, or reveal one's sexual identity" (Hartal, 2017, p. 4; see also Hartal, David, & Pascar, 2014)".

Learning from Candy Club: impossible spaces

While safety is always an important goal, one of the challenges of maintaining open spaces for various axes of difference at once is negotiating and defending against the real possibility that these spaces may sometimes become less safe. When the Hansastraße camp was opened, Feierwerk's system of values meant that Feierwerk's queer events were opened to migrants. The difficulty was finding literal and cultural language to communicate what a queer party was to newcomers, so that they knew what kind of space they were entering. The second challenge was in creating open communication with the established *Candy Club* crowd, who come to the party with the expectation of a safe space, which some attendees understood to mean exclusive of heterosexuals. When migrants were invited to the queer party, there were criticisms that the open-door policy would be destructive to local structures and would be to the detriment to queer safe spaces. Some moments of conflict at *Candy Club* made this threat very real.

Breaking Bottles at Candy Club:

> *One time a young man, covered in scars, walked into the queer party. He did not speak any language that anyone else spoke. Something was off in his behaviour. Thomas sensed he was unwell, or traumatized, or something. He was acting strangely childish, playing around and making funny faces. This would have been fine, but from one moment to the other, he could be triggered. The young man was standing just outside the venue when for an unknown reason he became suddenly aggressive. He whacked a bottle against some surface and broke it, and began waving it around. Thomas managed to de-escalate the situation – not knowing his language, he talked to him, and managed to take the bottle away, and had to find a way of communicating to the young man that he had to leave, and why.*

There is a risk of breaking bottles at any party, and de-escalation is an important skill for anyone who works in nightlife security, but this experience at *Candy Club* reveals some of the difficulties of sharing space across difference. It also speaks to some of the tensions that are in play at *Plug in Beats*' approach to inclusion. Thomas acknowledges that a limit to inclusion policies is that they can generate a false sense of security. "It starts already simply when you say 'no sexism'", he said in one interview, "you already create the notion for some people that this is a safe space. But it ain't. It's just creating awareness" (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th, 2018). These experiences at the queer party taught Thomas about the relativity of safety, and the importance of communicating the limits to security, which now inform his approach at *Plug in Beats*.

> "There is no such thing as a safe space," he told me "that's one thing, and the other thing is that even dealing with safer spaces in certain peer-groups, you need to know that, creating a safe space for one peer group already reduces the possibilities for the other one. So there is no possibility to resolve that in the society as it is nowadays. I think in the future there is, because I'm still optimistic. But as it is nowadays, it's a conflict, there's no solution for that. So you need to decide on one or the other project – which is the more important safer-space for that moment, and then you need to communicate that to the potential audience. So everyone knows where he or she goes" (Thomas, personal interview, July 5th, 2018).

If the *goal* of a universally inclusive society remains elusive, considering inclusion as an *ongoing process*, rather than as an endpoint, is perhaps more immediately useful. Moving towards better inclusion means remaining committed to continuous reflection and retaining an openness to adaptation. In an ever-changing world of shifting demographics, inclusion as a constantly pursued direction, rather than an accomplishable fact, provides better long-term assurances, in the sense that the task can be never considered complete and thus be dismissed from consideration. Furthermore, the community engagement and negotiation necessary to strengthen institutional approaches to inclusion, as demonstrated in the case of Feierwerk and *Plug in Beats*, does not happen in a vacuum. In addition to improving access to commonly held

spaces, better inclusion in shared spaces such as Feierwerk has the added effect of broadening local conceptions of who makes up 'society' and models the broader strategies and critical auto-reflexive attitudes such a society might take on, in order to move towards a more-harmonious way of sharing physical and political space.

9. Conclusion

At *Plug in Beats*, sharing space, and the conflict and contestation that are endemic to creating open spaces for difference, hangs on a particular vision of social justice and community responsibility – one grounded in a somewhat universalist vision of equality. Complications in materializing just such an equality are expressed in the presences and non-presences that make up the party. While persistent efforts are made to actively include as many people as possible, questions remain as to why some groups have not, as of yet, been regularly attending.

The findings of this study suggest that Germans are less likely to attend than migrants; and that gender and race persist as challenges to be negotiated in the party space. Migrant women were especially unlikely to attend the party, and while German men participate, they are found in significantly lower numbers than German women. Africans who came in stronger numbers in the first days of the party quickly stopped attending. This prompts questions about other kinds of spaces, activities and programming that could be incorporated , and suggests the need for further research.

The party's formulation of inclusion overlaps strongly with human rights discourses, stemming from the liberal democratic logic which, however well-intentioned, should not be mistaken for being either natural or neutral. If when speaking of the challenges of catering to multiple publics within *Plug in Beats*, Thomas sees currently irresolvable conflict between groups that hopefully in the future will be solvable, it is because as of yet the ideal of an equal and open society has not yet been realized.

Important criticisms have been leveled at Human Rights approaches to universalizing justice, accusing the framework for its cultural relativism. At the time the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights was proposed, the executive board of the American Anthropological Association warned that the proposed it risked ethnocentrism, which was even more problematic given ongoing legacies of colonialism (1947). For migrants, human rights are contingent in specific ways. Hannah Arendt, a stateless refugee herself of the Second World War, famously pointed out at the time how a universal "right to have rights" required the

willingness of nation states to enforce them (2004/1951, p. 376). Human rights, she argues, are thus predicated on citizenship.

The interculturalism at *Plug in Beats* exists within the limits of these human rights perspectives. In the space of the party individuals share equal rights so long as others' rights of presence are not infringed upon. This in a sense, is an integration approach, in that it falls into line with a certain brand of Western ideals. Migrants are expected to adapt to liberal democratic multicultural principals as they are understood by progressives in Germany, and cultural practices of sharing space in a secular way. This approach has strengths and limitations. It is broadly if imperfectly inclusive, encourages and models respectful treatment of 'others', and provides many opportunities for cross-cultural communication and hashing-out. Like Massey's "imperative fantasy", it chases the "continually receding horizon of the open-minded-space-to-come" (2005, p. 153).

On the other hand, if dancing's transcendent qualities might help us manage to *feel* temporarily outside of systems of oppression (Thrift, 1997), and by dancing together in heterogeneous groupings we may sometimes be able to suspend our disbelief just long enough to cultivate a space together in which to make a practice of living in the world that is a genuinely less xenophobic place, then we find ourselves in the liminal space between a fantasy of now (in which the world is better than it is) and a future made brave by that fantasy (in which the outside world could catch up).

But what do these "fantasies of change" do (McRobbie, 1991, p. 192)? The answer very likely varies by case. If a fantasy enables a push for change, is there something in the particular organization of people and structures that makes it especially effective? Can a fantasy actually build to a substantive politics of intercultural, anti-xenophobic, anti-racist solidarity?

While these are all open questions, *Plug in Beats* has much to add to this ongoing conversation. On a personal note, participating in and thinking about *Plug in Beats* has given me great heart, and led me to think more broadly about art and music as a useful means for generating solidarities. Countering tendencies towards the privileging of the commercial within

the music and arts scene would require an active effort, but such efforts would be worth their whiles if it enabled a more progressive sociality and politics. Practices born in arts and music spaces might be built upon, and I hold the hope that they may provide grounds for a politics (or attitude) which invites complexity, cultivates conversation, rejects xenophobia, and has the imagination and optimism to drive towards social change, and the fight for it when roadblocks inevitably occur.

As we have seen, *Plug in Beats* itself cannot address exclusion or inequity at the root, but it can provide a place for connections, and a platform for practicing new forms of social negotiation. This awareness-building process is a critical foundation for a broader political struggle. In the space of the party, an attempt is made to treat a space shared by established locals and recent migrants democratically. As Massey (2005) forewarned, there is a fantastic element to this essential effort, but the valiant efforts of organizers and participants at the party go a long way to answering my first question. Many interviewees spoke about the party as a place that changed their attitudes, and their ways of relating to themselves and others. That all participants stated that time spent at *Plug in Beats* increases solidarity between migrants and established locals indicates that participation brought about a shift in politics. The fantasy of change built by *Plug in Beats* helps participants imagine a more inclusive world in which mutual accommodation is foundational – emotionally reckoning with the fact that we will all need to shift is an integral part of inclusive politics.

What makes *Plug in Beats* effective in this regard? The particular structuring of the party allows for this politics to emerge through social and organizational practices. Through concrete measures such as active inclusion, the establishment of an inclusive system of values, specialized staff training, and the participatory format of the event, the organizers and infrastructural setup at Feierwerk structure *Plug in Beats* to be a safer space. These structures work through and are maintained by the social dynamics of the space, which both produce (Fast, 2018) and require (Hunter, 2008) critical reflection. This reflection may at times be more recognizable as feeling than as thinking – as affective politics (Stewart, 2007). What *Plug in Beats* shows is that by shaping spaces in particularly effective ways, people can be encouraged to see themselves and others in new lights. This could have a small role to play in preparing the world for the

reflexivity and flexibility required to humanely and responsibly deal with increasing and ever-shifting pluralism.

In light of the rise of far-right groups, ethnonationalism and hideous forms of supremacist ideologies, it is an urgent time examine all possible avenues that can provide tools to dismantle xenophobia. Further research might look at the role of 'arts' within more pro-active political interventions, protests and social movements, and how the palpable but often immaterial affective politics associated with the arts at times concretizes into more unmistakably political forms.

9.1 From Affective Politics to Actual Politics

The success of Thomas' activist and community work led to him being increasingly called upon as the representative of inclusive, socially-oriented and pro-migrant politics in Germany. Alongside his work at Feierwerk, he consulted with other organizers across the country, hoping to build on his approach to inspiring people to get out on the streets. In July 2019, a year after the #Ausgehetzt demonstration and three years after the *Plug in Beats* experiment began, Thomas was elected as the mayoral candidate representing *die Linke* (the Left) for the 2020 Munich municipal elections. He is running on a platform called "*Wem gehört die Stadt?"* (Who does the city belong to?). He was nominated as the party candidate with an unprecedented 93.1% approval (Die Linke, 2019).

The nomination announcement read:

> *"With Thomas Lechner, we are not simply sending another party candidate into the race. We want a fundamental change of policy - for the elections and beyond: we do not want to make a proxy policy, but to change the city together with the people and take it with them. For decades Thomas Lechner has stood for a policy directly out of the urban society. He is the perfect candidate for a much-needed policy change from the bottom up" (Die Linke, 2019).*

In Thomas' contribution to the statement, he mentions how parties have been a place of politics building in his life:

> "For almost 40 years, I have been advocating for an open and solidarity-based society outside parties and parliaments. We currently have so many active and committed people in Munich, who band together and fight for a better city for all, as rarely before. This potential should be used and not slowed down" (Thomas Lechner, Die Linke, 2019).

Figure 19 Thomas accepting his nomination as the mayoral candidate of Die Linke party in July 2019. Source: Die Linke, 2019.

Whether at a party or in a parliament, the question of how to live together hangs in the air. For those who are a part of *Plug in Beats,* the party is at once just a party, and a model for being together which may spark new ways of relating. However imperfect the party's inclusion, and whatever its Western bias , the comparatively hostile or feeble approaches to adjusting to migration in wider German society puts *Plug in Beats* into stark relief. Thomas is right to want to build on this momentum. This potential should be used and not slowed down.

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Appendix 1 – List of Participants

Name	Age at the time of the study	Gender	Place of birth
Abi	23	M	Tehran, Iran
Alex	21	M	Munich, Germany
Arif	18	M	Kabul, Afghanistan
Ayman	27	M	Aleppo, Syria
Daouda	20	M	Bamako, Mali
Farshid	20	M	Wardak, Afghanistan
Ines	28	F	Munich, Germany
Katharina	27	F	Bad Säckingen, Germany
Khalaf	24	M	Aleppo, Syria
Klaus Martens	50s	M	Witten, Germany
Laura	30	F	Munich, Germany
Maria	30	F	Munich, Germany
Mira	25	F	Munich, Germany
Munawar	26	M	Northern Pakistan
Nina	35	F	Munich, Germany
Omid	21	M	'Small town Afghanistan', via camp in Tehran
Thomas Lechner	57	M	Styria, Austria
Vio	22	F	Munich, Germany

Waseem	19	M	Sinjar, Iraqi Kurdistan

List of all interviewees with ages, gender, and place of birth. New migrants are indicated in blue, whereas long-term residents of Munich are designated in green.

Appendix 2 – Interview Templates

Interview Guide for established locals

Introduction and ethics

1. Welcome and provision of brief background information on the researcher.
2. Brief explanation of the project.
3. Explanation of the interview process – how much time is allotted, the recording and the note taking, and the opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions, in case they feel a need for clarification.

Face sheet info

1. Name/Pseudo/Anon
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Tell me a little bit about yourself…
5. Where did you grow up? (if not covered)
6. How long have you been in Munich? if not covered)

Interview questions

1. How did you first hear about *Plug in Beats*?
2. What was your initial reaction to the idea/concept?
3. How many parties have you attended so far?
4. Have you ever volunteered at a *Plug in Beats* party?
5. Before attending the party, what were your impressions about refugees in Germany?
6. Did you have any relationships with refugees before the party?
7. Before your first party, what did you expect it would be like?
8. Before your first party, who did you imagine would come to *Plug in Beats?*
9. Once at *Plug in Beats*, was there anything different in terms of which people you had imagined would be there?
10. Why did you decide to go to the party?
11. How has your experience at *Plug in Beats* parties compared to your expectations?
12. Is the space appropriate? Benefits to the space? Drawbacks? (if not covered)
13. How did you feel in the party space?
14. Is the location accessible? Safe? (if not covered)
15. How were people interacting around you throughout the night?
16. Have you met any new people at *Plug in Beats?*
    (if yes) a. Can you tell me about your interactions?

b. Have you made any friendships?
c. What did you talk about at the party?
d. What is your friendship about now?

(if no) *a*. Why do you think that is?
b. Did you want to speak to/dance with anyone?

17. How does *Plug in Beats* compare to other parties you've been to in Germany?
18. What do you think about the party's rules?
19. What is your process for choosing a song to share?
20. How does it feel when a song you chose is playing?
21. How do you feel about the other music you have heard at the party? (Prompts: Have you enjoyed it? Have you been exposed to new kinds of music?).
22. Do you dance at *Plug in Beats* parties?
23. When you see other people dancing to your music at *Plug in Beats*, how does it feel?
24. Is your perception of strangers different inside the party space than outside of it?
25. Do you feel people see you differently inside the party space than outside of it?
26. Have you learned anything new through the *Plug in Beats* parties?
27. How does it feel to be **you** in the party space? Which parts of your identity are most present at the party?
28. What role does music play in your life?
29. What role does dance play in your life?
30. What kinds of music/dance do you love most?
31. What do you think are the greatest challenges that refugees face after arriving to Germany?
32. Do you participate in any activism around refugee issues?
33. In your opinion does *Plug in Beats* contribute to creating solidarity between Germans and refugees? Why, or why not?
34. What do you think *Plug in Beats* does best?
35. Is there anything that you would change about the party, or your experience at it?
36. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Closing the interview

1. Verify contact information.
2. Tell the interviewee when you expect to complete your research project and how that will be communicated to them.
1. Thank the person for the interview.

Interview Guide For Migrants

Introduction and ethics

1. Welcome and provision of brief background information on the researcher.
2. Brief explanation of the project.
3. Explanation of the interview process – how much time is allotted, the recording and the note taking, and the opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions, in case they feel a need for clarification.

Face sheet info

1. Name/Pseudo/Anon
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Tell me a little bit about yourself…
5. Where did you grow up? (if not covered)
6. How long have you been in Germany/Munich? if not covered)

Interview questions

1. How did you first hear about *Plug in Beats*?
2. What was your initial reaction to the idea/concept?
3. How many parties have you attended so far?
4. Have you ever volunteered at a *Plug in Beats* party?
5. Did you have any relationships with German people before the party?
6. Before attending the party, what were your impressions about German people? German culture?
7. Was music meaningful to you before you came to Germany?
8. Was dance meaningful to you before you came to Germany?
9. Was music meaningful to you when you first arrived in Germany?
10. Was dance meaningful to you before you came to Germany?
11. What kinds of music/dance do you love most?
12. Before your first party, what did you expect it would be like?
13. Before your first party, who did you imagine would come to *Plug in Beats?*
14. How has your experience at *Plug in Beats* parties compared to your expectations?
15. Once at *Plug in Beats*, was there anything different in terms of which people you had imagined would be there?
16. How did you feel in the party space?
17. Can you describe *who* you saw at the party?
18. How were people interacting around you throughout the night?
19. Have you met any new people at *Plug in Beats?*
    - *(if yes)* *a.* Can you tell me about your interactions? Positive and negative? Can you provide concrete examples?
      b. Have you made any friendships?
      c. What did you talk about at the party
    - *(if no)* *a.* Why do you think that is?
      b. Did you want to speak to/dance with anyone?

20. How does *Plug in Beats* compare to other parties you've been to in your home country?
21. How does *Plug in Beats* compare to other parties you've been to in Germany?
22. What do you think about the party's rules?
23. What is your process for choosing a song to share?
24. How does it feel when a song you chose is playing?
25. How do you feel about the other music you have heard at the party?
26. Do you dance at *Plug in Beats* parties?
27. When you see other people dancing to your music at *Plug in Beats,* how does it feel?
28. Is your perception of strangers different inside the party space than outside of it?
29. Do you feel people see you differently inside the party space than outside of it?
30. Have you learned anything new through the *Plug in Beats* parties?
31. How does it feel to be **you** in the party space? Which parts of your identity are most present?
32. Do you participate in any activism?
33. In your opinion does *Plug in Beats* contribute to creating solidarity between Germans and refugees?
34. What does the party mean to you?
35. What do you think *Plug in Beats* does best?
36. Is there anything that you would change about the party, or your experience at it?
37. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Closing the interview

1. Verify contact information.
2. Tell the interviewee when you expect to complete your research project and how that will be communicated to them.
2. Thank the person for the interview.

Interview guide for Thomas

Introduction and ethics

1. Welcome and provision of brief background information on the researcher.
2. Breif explanation of the project.
3. Explanation of the interview process – how much time is allotted, the recording and the note taking, and the opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions, in case they feel a need for clarification.

Face sheet info

1. Name/Pseudo/Anon
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Tell me a little bit about yourself…
5. Where did you grow up? (if not covered)
6. How long have you been in Germany/Munich? If not covered)

Interview questions

1. Can you talk about your relationship to music and dance, and what they mean to you?
2. How did you first come up with the idea for *Plug in Beats*?
3. What were the steps that followed after coming up with the idea? What did funders, Feierwerk friends think about it?
4. Why did you choose Feierwerk as the party space? What are the benefits? Drawbacks?
5. How is the party funded?
6. How many parties have you thrown so far?
7. Before throwing the party, where were your impressions about the status of refugees in Germany?
8. Did you have any relationships with refugees before the party?
9. Before your first party, who did you imagine would come to *Plug in Beats?*
10. How has the experience of throwing *Plug in Beats* parties compared to your expectations?
11. Were there any challenges in organizing the party? (prompts: Logistics, location, space, funding)
12. How do you feel in the party space?
13. How do people interact around you throughout the night?
14. Have you met any new people at *Plug in Beats?*
    - *a.* Can you tell me about some of most memorable interactions?
    - *b.* Have you made any friendships?
    - *c.* What did you talk about at the party?
    - *d.* What has your relationship been about subsequent to the party?
    - *e.* Is it harder to meet some people than others in the party space?
15. Have you received any feedback from partygoers since the party began?
16. How does *Plug in Beats* compare to other parties you've thrown in Germany?
17. What was the process for developing the party's rules? Were they developed in consultation with others? What is motivation for developing them? Have you adapted them over time? Please provide concrete examples.

18. Can you talk about any divisions you perceive in relation to the party space?
19. How would you describe the profile of attendees? In terms of age, ethnicity/race, gender? Are there certain people who are easier to attract to the party? Are there certain people who are harder to attract?
20. Are there any social limits to accessibility to the party?
21. Are there any physical limits to accessibility to the party?
22. What is your process for choosing a song to share?
23. How does it feel when a song you chose is playing?
24. How do you feel about the other music you have heard at the party?
25. Do you dance at *Plug in Beats* parties?
26. When you see other people dancing to your music at *Plug in Beats,* how does it feel?
27. Is your perception of strangers different inside the party space than outside of it?
28. Do you think people see you differently inside the party space than outside of it?
29. How does it feel to be **you** in the party space? Which parts of your identity are most present?
30. Tell me a bit about your history in the music industry.
31. Let's talk a bit about your history as a queer activist.
32. Can you speak to your activism around refugee issues?
33. How do these personal histories (about music, LGBTQ, and refugee activism) connect?
34. In your opinion does *Plug in Beats* contribute to creating solidarity between Germans and refugees? Please explain.
35. What do you think the party does best?
36. Is there anything that you would change about the party, or your experience at it?
37. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Closing the interview

1. Verify contact information.
2. Tell the interviewee when you expect to complete your research project and how that will be communicated to them.
3. Thank the person for the interview.