

PERFORMING CRITICAL VOICE: ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF CITIZENSHIP,
BELONGING, AND THE ARTICULATION OF CONTEMPORARY CRITIQUES

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Performing Critical Voice: On the Relationship of Citizenship, Belonging, and the Articulation of Contemporary Critiques

Abstract

The current age of migration and mobility has seen a rise in right-wing conservatism and renewed nationalisms, against which social and cultural movements have formed strong oppositions across Germany. Creative strategies yielded new resilience and turned the focus of debates towards new forms of democratic citizenship and new ways of signaling belonging. Shaped by the evolution of divided communities, the production of culture has become one of the few vehicles through which effective and diverse critiques can be articulated in a manner accessible to people of different backgrounds.

This account explores how the production of culture has been complicit in molding empowered speakers and critical voices from excluded communities. Drawing on my 2017/18 ethnographic study of the German brass ensemble “Banda Internationale”, this paper examines what can be learned about the formation of critical voices through music-making. I allude to the processes and practices involved in constituting a critical voice in music production, performance and activism; discuss how the practices in the band relate to the fundamental principles of immanent critique; and raise the issue that questions of citizenship and belonging are, without exception, rooted in the analysis of how voicing critique becomes possible in a climate that resists and prohibits the diverse articulation of subjectivities.

1_Setting the Stage

In August 2018, the Dresden Hygiene-Museum¹ opened a special exhibition on the topic of racism to engage with the structures and effects of systemic oppression.² In doing so, the museum sought to provide a new perspective to the ongoing political debates on difference, inclusion and xenophobic discrimination that have marked the city of Dresden’s recent history in light of recurrent protests by right-wing conservative groups. The exhibition’s opening day resounded pressing debates about different notions of belonging and freedoms of expression when different groups made the event their platform. While the exhibition introduced a new debate about racism to the city, it also made palpable the frictions between the disputants.

Controversies surrounded discussions about an incident where journalists’ freedom of press was hindered the week prior at a rally by PEGIDA,³ a local far-right political movement. The front yard of the museum held a democracy conference, at which participants recalled the incident to draw attention to how the impediment of the press’ coverage of right-wing extremism insinuates a threat to democratic principles. Speak-

ers demanded that the exposure of such extremism in the region would lead to uncovering the underlying discriminatory structures that have misrepresented cultural diversity in the city and fueled racist resentment. Participants called for a diversified understanding of people's identities and demanded that politics recognize the validity of different cultural identities and their freedom of speech.

At the same time, the Identitarian movement, a proclaimed youth organization in favor of ethnic nationalism, staged a counter-protest opposite the museum at the *Cockermiese*. The group claims the legitimacy of ethnopluralism, a popular nationalist concept used by right-wing extremists, to sustain cultural homogeneity in Germany and to argue against the co-habitation of different ethnic groups.⁴ With the slogan “Europa Nostra — Identität verteidigen — Heimat bewahren,” which means “our Europe — defend identity — preserve the homeland,”⁵ the group reinforces the notion of “us” versus “them” and conceptualizes cultural Others as enemies. Participants of the democracy conference criticized the Identitarian's inherent racist tendencies in their debates and made their response heard with the help of the local brass-ensemble Banda Internationale.

Shortly before, the musicians of Banda Internationale had held a workshop at a meeting of Saxony's “school without racism”⁶ project in the conference halls inside the museum. After teaching students how to learn about other cultures through encounters with music and dance, band members became part of the protest site. A short concert gathered conference and project attendees and other audience to march collectively closer to the fenced-in area where the demonstration of the Identitarian movement took place. Facing the enclosed protestors, the band played several songs. Surrounded by supporters dancing and swinging to their tunes, the ensemble energetically conveyed the notion of an open and shared space. The ethics of their activism was to make visible the multiplicity of relations, negotiations, and practices of urban multi-culture. It sought to demonstrate music as a tool through which participants obtained the ability to claim a right to *have a part*⁷ regardless of their illegalized identity as migrants. By performing as political subjects, band and audience members refused the political message that the Identitarians proclaimed and also articulated a critique of the perpetual systemic oppression and racism that is part of participants' everyday life.

Jacques Rancière has discussed such acts of rebellion (*la politique*), in which the disenfranchised demand a say and act against the way hegemonic structures, which

Rancière states are governed by the police (*la police*) that decides and organizes participation, cause exclusion, and voicelessness.⁸ The activism presented in this encounter was directed not only at the Identitarians, the visible opponent and representative of exclusionist discourse, but also at the larger social structure of Germany's immigration society, its integration debate, and the manner in which it silences and erases the contributions and value of refugees and migrants.

To gain further insight into how such musical activism like that of Banda Internationale can be a tool for democratization and inclusion, this article sheds light on the potentials for emancipation that are immanent in the needs and practices of the band. This discussion contributes to the ongoing debate about the integration of migrants into German society through performing alternative acts of citizenship. This notion was developed by Engin Isin to illuminate how people stage acts of citizenship to "transform themselves (and others) from subjects into citizens as claimants of rights."⁹ The aim of this article is to examine the strategies through which refugee actors refuse to accept social exclusion and make themselves visible and make residents their allies via the empirical example of the band. To understand how illegalized members of society state belonging and perform visibly like citizens, it is necessary to decipher the structural barriers that prevent the disenfranchised from *having a part*.

I place this discussion within the debate on integration to discern the inner contradictions within the practices of Banda Internationale because it is precisely the concept of 'integration' that both legitimizes and undermines the group's activist interventions. In the German context, the idea of a multi-culture is always framed as a question of Others' capacity to integrate.¹⁰ Hartmut Esser's understanding of integration is the most commonly adapted concept. It describes the social inclusion of foreign individuals on the basis of four interrelated factors: (1) the identification with the new society, (2) the establishment of personal connections through the interaction with that society's members, and the acquisition of (3) cultural and (4) linguistic competences to be able to achieve the latter two.¹¹ The interdependence of Esser's four factors reveals that integration has a specific idea of what those who *have a part* and those who *have no part* in society need to bring to the table. It promises social inclusion but only on the premise of the normative principles of assimilation.

To understand how the concept of integration influenced the development of the band, and what that means for the transformative potential of their work, I utilize critical theory. According to Craig Browne, critical theory provides the basis for social inquiry that means “to identify the potentials for emancipation immanent in the needs of subjects [and which] aims to provide an analysis of contemporary society that apprehends its developmental possibilities.”¹² Important to critical theory is the concept of “immanent critique,” which describes the “tensions between the value horizon of programmes of social transformation and the dynamics of institutionalization.”¹³ It makes lucid the tensions between normative principles and empirical development, and thus lends itself as a tool to my inquiry into the actions of band members and the dynamics of the system in which they operate as musicians.

Titus Stahl describes immanent critique as “a critique that refrains from using independently justified moral principles but instead relies on a reconstruction of the implicit normative premises of modern social practices to criticise forms of oppression and domination.”¹⁴ This approach elevates how the structures of integration impact the way in which refugee voices are silenced. At the same time, it allows to decipher how the practices of an integration project can lead to transformative action because of its inner and social contradictions. Specifically, Stahl’s ‘practice-based’ form of the term invites itself to help

[locate] the norms, which the critique employs, within the rules of common social, rather than within shared understandings. [... It] presupposes that the structures and modes of interaction in a social community contain — beyond the explicit understanding of their participants — immanent normative potentialities [... and] assumes that social practices can include normative elements, such as implicit rules, conventions or relations of authority or commitment, which a critic can refer to in order to justify demands for the change of both the actual practice and the explicitly accepted norms of the community.¹⁵

In view of Stahl’s critical theory, this present article provides an analysis of Banda Internationale that recognizes its development possibilities and points to the limitations of its organization. This case study of the band demonstrates how the disparate notions of conviviality¹⁶ and discipline that the concept of integration equally insinuates force musicians to reproduce the immanent social structures. At the same time, this study exposes how the social contradictions of integrationist political activism can lead to change.

Banda Internationale presents an example for the complex relationship between the performance of citizenship and the social requirements for belonging. This present article's inquiry into the social process of this musical ensemble uses ethnomusicological fieldwork methods to explore the links between music and the social experience of place that is derived from the production, consumption, and discussion of music.¹⁷ The immanent tensions within the band project are an example of what ethnomusicologist George Lipsitz describes as "the new social movements and their cultural corollaries [who] immerse themselves in the contradictions of social life, seeking an immanent rather than a transcendent critique."¹⁸ Through their activism, musicians validate the rules of their social practice. According to Rancière, in such moments of vulnerability, political subjectivities emerge.¹⁹ Ethnomusicologist John Street explains that "it is where music inspires forms of collective thought and action that it becomes part of politics."²⁰ The case of music in the activism context offers a unique insight into how submerged normative principles are given voice through the actions of performers. Ethnomusicologist Matt Skakeeny argues that musicians use their voices and instruments "as technologies for producing subjectivity, identity, and culture [in activist settings]. Their musical practices are forms of social action, and when evaluated as such they offer insight into agency as the exercise of, or against power."²¹

The band's transformation from a loose ensemble into a legal organization is my first starting point to address how this evolution pathologically contradicted their activist cause and how it forced modifications in practice that could accommodate diverse forms of expression instead of silencing them. In the second section, I scrutinize the group's growth from an 'integration project' into a band, examining this development in terms of the need for material reproduction of that journey and the identities of all social actors. To conclude, I discuss the implications of coming to terms with failures of activism in understanding 'integration' as a process that needs to be viewed and reconciled from the perspective of those experiencing borders, displacement, and re-settlement.

The research is based on qualitative design. It draws on ethnomusicological fieldwork of semi-structured interviews and more than twelve months of participant observations with the band. My involvement with the band began in 2016 during their last performance as an 'integration project' under the title Banda Internationale, after which I later asked to observe and document their performances at concerts, rehearsal spaces

and educational workshops in 2017/18 as part of a broader research project that looks into the deconstruction of borders for musical citizenship in Germany. Here, I reflect upon how the structures and practices of the band respond to their ethics as musical activists to understand the political potential and tensions immanent in their activist project ‘for integration.’

2_Music, Ethics and Citizenship

In the cultural industry in Germany, theater and other artistic projects have grown in volume and responded to heightened debates about belonging and citizenship and interrelations between ‘insiders’ and ‘newcomers.’²² In the context of Dresden, rising right-wing and new conservative movements spawned responses from local cultural institutions like *Banda Internationale*. For example, in response to violent encounters between neo-Nazis and newly-arrived refugees in Freital, an outer district of the city of Dresden,²³ then *Banda Comunale* staged themselves as a band project that is open to participation by refugee musicians. After inviting twenty new performers, the group concordantly changed its name to *Banda Internationale* to reflect its members’ diversity of origin during 2016.²⁴

Banda Internationale is an example of music’s role in activism, which has been widely documented throughout history.²⁵ As much as music can serve to make connections between dissociated cultures, experiences, and contexts, to bridge global and local differences, or to raise money for environmental and humanitarian crises, music is also deeply entangled in constructing narratives for people.²⁶ Activist movements have employed music to frame political messages, to accentuate the severity of a social issue; or as in ethnomusicologist John Street’s reading of Friedrich Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*: “[M]usic’s power lies in its ability to ‘give birth to myth.’ [... Because] music can be implicated in the most profound of human experience, and as such fuel the politics that respond to that experience”.²⁷ The political value of music has become most visible when attributed as a vehicle of political expression, even though “it is that expression [itself].”²⁸ He goes on to state that “how music works on us, and how we act upon music, are intimately connected to the way we think and act politically.”²⁹ Street’s in-depth analysis of the interrelations of music and politics show that musicians follow the normative principle of music’s inherent political quality, thus, easily turning the performers of its sound into able-voiced practitioners of political speech.

The notion of speech through music, and its implications for marginalized individuals loom large in the work of Banda Internazionale. Music's political quality for speech is embedded in the band's moral code and finds itself represented through their performances on stage. Part of the band's work was to promote music as a way of engaging with 'newcomers' and helping them to settle in the city. This form of artistic engagement and community-building evolved in view of controversies surrounding refugee accommodation facilities in the city that did not provide humane living conditions or means for social participation to its refugee residents. Continuous demonstrations by right-wing extremists in front of the facilities understood themselves as the extension of police to symbolize that refugees have no part in German society. Against the exercise of right-wing extremist power, the band drew on their musical performances as technologies for producing alliances with refugee residents in front of facilities.

Inviting refugee audiences to convivial practice of listening and dancing, the band lent its toolkit to residents and subverted the hegemonic structures of discipline so that illegalized migrants could visibly have a part in communal practice. The disruption of the hegemonic positions of right-wing extremists and institutions regarding refugees by Banda Internazionale can be understood as politics in Rancière's sense. Helicon player Alfred Haberkorn reflects in an interview on the precarity of refugees who were confronted with hateful chants by protesting neo-Nazis:

And it was truly strange to see this [protest], you know, for us this was foreign as well. The entire situation there. All these hopeful and, at the same time, completely intimidated people [refugees], with whom you could not communicate in any kind of way. You know? And, there everything was somehow so uncertain. Just this massive mob of Nazis standing there shouting "Get out!" and "We don't want you here!" And [...] that is where we played some music and they [the refugees] totally loved it [...].³⁰

Alfred's description shows how he and other musicians of Banda Comunale perceived their involvement in Freital as something inherently positive when viewing the devastating conditions in accommodation facilities and the social and political tensions around the area. This kind of protest politics signifies the political activism with which the band engages to create ways of democratic participation. The group draws on the social capital of its audience, a notion with which Robert Putnam describes the "connections among individuals — social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trust-

worthiness that arise from them”³¹ to emphasize forms of associational life and to mediate the relations between citizens and non-citizens. It suggests the collective performance of the right to freedom of expression as an alternative way to justify the participation of illegalized migrants. Engin Isin argues that such struggles for the expansion of rights

are irreducibly political struggles that arise from social, economic or cultural conditions in which people are situated. [... It] is important to acknowledge that when people enact themselves through such performances or acts — whatever differences may separate them in values, principles, and priorities — they are performing citizenship, even those who are not passport-carrying members of the state (non-citizens).³²

The band’s collective action focuses on what Mary McThomas describes as “the carrying out of civic duties instead of nation-state authorization.”³³ The protest against discrimination is an activist act that seeks to mediate “the art of being with others, negotiating different situations and identities, and articulating ourselves as distinct yet similar to others in our everyday lives.”³⁴ However, the structures of Banda Internationale’s activism as an ‘integration’ project, a legal organization, in 2016 complicated the very liberating potential of dynamic articulations of voice through music, which I will discuss in the next section.

3_Musical Activism as a Corporate Entity

At the end of 2015, the band encountered unanticipated challenges during the collaboration with refugee musicians when they had to negotiate the individual aspirations of actors involved. For example, sousaphone player Peter Birkenhauer emphasized in an interview how the band felt overstrained when an alternating number of refugees with and without musical talent would attend weekly rehearsals, each individually addressing different expectations to the group and each band member perceiving differently the responsibility to be shouldered.³⁵ The agency that the performances of the band symbolized relied on the performance of those social actors who otherwise would not *have a part*. Refugee performers became essential figures for communicating the group’s politics.

However, the way in which refugee actors were able to enact themselves through musical performance with Others depended on their compliance with the ideological framework of the band. The group’s primary focus was to make music together and perform community through difference. That notion of multiculturalism initially rested on

Esser's 'integrationist' principles which required cultural Others to do the work to *have a part*; it needed them to assimilate. Even though refugee performers wanted to be part of the community in which they played, their aspirations and expectations differed from those of resident performers with regard to the economic benefit to which their activism would lead.

Such disparities make palpable the manner in which the band relied on the very structures that it sought to challenge. Some refugee musicians who had worked as professional performers in their homeland demanded comparable forms of compensation for their work in Germany. Peter states that these musicians perceived their involvement with the band as labor and did not understand why they should perform for less or for free. They knew that the value of the project depended on their participation and even though they enjoyed making music with resident musicians, their aspirations that this alliance would lead to the imagined economic capital was not fulfilled. They recognized that their performance of their culture through music was also a material reproduction of their bodies within the capitalist system. Performers who were unwilling to compromise on their personal expectations for the cooperative alliance therefore left the project.

Part of the reason why compensations for performers became an issue in the band were the state regulations that prohibited resident musicians from distributing the earnings from concerts to refugee band members. Access to the labor market for refugees in Germany is restricted by laws and regulations that prevent illegalized individuals, i.e. those refugees with uncertain or denied legal status, from participating without a permission to engage in work from immigration authorities.³⁶ Furthermore, even though the band had already performed at more than one hundred demonstrations and organized their own subversive forms of resistance to the politics of PEGIDA,³⁷ the financial support that it was able to acquire for its work was very limited. As a loose ensemble, the band was not eligible to receive donations from individual corporations or financial subsidies by the state. The Ministry of Equality and Integration leads cultural policy for projects like the band who work to integrate migrants and refugees into the German society. The Ministry organizes the distribution of financial subsidies for such projects but only under the premise that receiving entities operate as legal associations.³⁸

Adopting corporate structures when becoming a private corporation in late 2015 finally enabled the band to receive financial and organizational support. It cooperated with the local *Cellex Foundation* for access to subsidies, and re-titled itself *Banda Internazionale* [henceforth *BI*], a project that followed the ‘integrationist’ agenda. The corporate structures that came with this alliance were new for band members. Clarinetist Michal Tomaszewski described in an interview how, suddenly, the band adopted the form of a branded institution with a new identity that had to deal with the new complex organizational requirements typical of a corporation.³⁹

Effectively, the band’s efforts began to be held to new standards. With the completion and approval of their funding request to realize the project *BI*, they had to construct and assign new responsibilities, such as treasury, public relations, legal team, and booking that had not existed before. They had to harmonize these corporate responsibilities with the moral intentions of their project. However, different from the constitution of an institutionalized corporation, much of the work by band members depended on voluntary work. That meant that countless hours were spent without compensation at immigration offices, in rehearsal spaces, or studying legal documents. Peter describes that “the band was at risk of overheating.”⁴⁰ New social dependencies emerged that went way beyond an idealized band project that was interested in musical exchange, but instead faced tedious, yet significant issues of administration, bureaucracy, and finance.

As responsibilities were assigned, the musicians also had to coordinate new power structures that evolved from the corporate model of operation. Alfred recalls this period as follows:

But really, who wanted what from who, and how does all of this work? You know? Right? What does this mean? Well, see you next week. No structure, you know! No structure! Who from the band would say, hey you’re in and you’re not. Well, no idea! Absolute helplessness, you know? And well, we really had to, and that was difficult for us because we are some kind of a hippie band that has a hard time excluding people, or telling people openly “well, you can’t do that!” We also had to learn that, and we’ve gotten better at it. You know, at having some clarity. Even the guys can now better deal with that clarity. Somehow this developed reciprocally.⁴¹

Alfred’s statement alludes to how resident performers perceived the process of corporatization. It introduced hierarchies to the band with which performers were unfamiliar and which they did not want to adopt. Alfred’s perception of the chaotic transition phase also mimics a clash of his personal expectations with the cosmopolitanism underlying

urban multicultural. Cosmopolitanism postulates a certain kind of hospitality that according to Jacques Derrida is the ethics upon which human relations are formed.⁴² Urban multi-culture tries to embody this notion by using the concept of multiculturalism to describe the co-existence and inclusion of distinct cultural, ethnic, or religious groups in which each group assumes equal rights and visibility.⁴³ The cosmopolitan idea links intercultural interactions in the band to the enactment of citizenship. Through the practices of everyday life, like the creative organization of participation in rehearsal spaces and the systemization of order for musical participation, the band performs citizenship. According to Isin, “citizenship, especially democratic citizenship, depends on the creative and organizing capacities of citizens whose performance of citizenship is not only the driving force for change but also the guarantee of the vitality and resilience of the polity.”⁴⁴ The musical collaboration in *BI* is imbued by the underlying normative principle of cosmopolitanism which guides how the transformation into a band project is imagined. It reveals this transition as a dynamic process that reproduced and enhanced creative forms of organization within which individuals evolved as citizen-like subjects.

With the help of organizing sponsorships, the band could better establish responsibilities for different newcomers, which, on the one hand, contributed to closer relations in smaller groups of performers, but it also led to disparities in the group as a whole. Formalizing the internal organization of *BI* produced new bureaucracies that impacted the ways the band project could serve refugee performers as an amplifier for performing civic duties. For example, as a result of refugee members’ illegalized or uncertain legal status, participation in the structural organization and development of the band could be limited. The legal restraints of the state demanded refugees’ regular visits at immigration offices and restricted their movement to a 50 km radius of their residence. These limitations prevented some refugee musicians from assuming permanent duties in the band. This development contradicted the aspirations of members to use their work as a technology of producing agency, as Sakakeeny described it, and left primarily resident musicians in charge.⁴⁵ Even though the performance of music in contested spaces as a performance of citizenship and politics gave birth to new ways of participation. Long-term structures revealed that much of the responsibility still rested on the shoulders of residents. Only they possessed the legal requirements to reperform activism, making the practice of performing politics a strenuous endeavor.

To avoid a collapse under the weight of these new responsibilities, musicians had to re-allocate power and shift from an equal distribution of tasks to a better instrumentalization of resources. Their cooperative engagement as a loosely affiliated group with shared interests became evermore a corporate community. The band had to develop an idea of their political activism that would take constraining factors into account. Its political strategies and positions had to be sensitive to the structural environment of the state and accommodate the framework of ‘integration’ in its work. Some of the musicians’ political activities, like the representation of their work as a prime example for successful integration of refugees into German communities, may have been inconsistent with internal aspirations but had future long-term advantages that allowed for coalition building with state and policy-actors. *BI* became in demand at political discussions and events at which policymakers debated strategies. This mode of operating is typical of corporations’ political activism but came at the cost of weakening the band’s mission of elevating marginalized members.⁴⁶ The experiences that refugee members made during this process resonates with Stahl’s argument that the immanent norms of social practices in which actors participate justify their demands for changes of the social structure under which they operate.⁴⁷ The following section describes the way that this claim manifested itself in the musical products that musicians created after the completion of *BI*.

4_Representations of Citizenship in Musical Products

Musicians continued to build their collaborative music-making on the principles of music’s political value. The production of musical material focused on determining where possibilities for musical intervention lied that could amplify the politics of the band. Over time, refugee members overcame linguistic barriers and acted able-voiced to express their visions and concerns in the collective. For example, Michal described in an interview that the band more and more deliberated on what their work meant for the creation of a new sense of home, and how it could contribute to it.⁴⁸ Oud player Thabet refers to this process as the development of friendships in which hospitality for each other enabled new musical collaborations and fostered the invention of new work.⁴⁹

Banda Internationale interrogated the notion of ‘home’ and belonging in their work more so than before. Inspired by the Arne Birkenstock and Jan Tengeler’s 2012 pro-

duction *Sound of Heimat-Deutschland singt*⁵⁰ that presented variations of ‘Heimatmusik’ [music of the homeland] throughout regions and genres in Germany, Michal encouraged the band to thematize the notions of home/homing/making home that emanated naturally from the musical collaboration. That thematic shift in the band’s work is particularly visible in the representations of political messages on their album covers for *BI’s Welcome to the Hotel Leonardo* (fig. 1) and Banda Internationale’s *Kimlik* (fig. 2).



Fig. 1: Album cover *Welcome to the Hotel Leonardo* by Banda Internationale.⁵¹

Illustrated on the cover is a performance of the band’s collaboration with the German punk band *Feine Sahne Fischfilet* in Boizenburg in the summer of 2016. The snapshot of that performance focuses on Ezé (third from the left), Hamid (second from the left), and Akram (sitting at the cello), captioned by the Arabic translation of the band’s name and the title of the album. The term “Hotel Leonardo” references the very first encounter of Banda Comunale with refugees in Freital because it was the name of the contested

refugee accommodation facility. The scene is superimposed by the body of an audience member in front of the stage while other band members remain in the background. The image conveys the notion that this assemblage of culturally and ethnically different actors is something unique. It frames a positive, celebratory, open musical space on stage that allows ‘newcomers’ to shine, and welcomes them with open arms in their new community in Dresden.

The illustration on the CD cover reiterates Germany’s welcoming culture that state-funded culture and language integration initiatives embody and proclaim. It insinuates Esser’s integration paradigm for which hospitality and participation are contingent on participating in the German integration system. Institutions and projects which seek to enable migrants and refugees as able participants, contributors, and benefactors of society promise belonging. However, belonging in that ‘new home’ is often much more complex. Take, for example, the experience of cellist Akram’s of living in an outer district of the city (Gorbitz), which he shared in an interview with me:

[... As] a young man, you want to do something. And then I felt like, hey, what can I even do here? [...] And then Martin [trombonist] said “Do you know Neustadt [a liberal Dresden district]?” And so I said, “Nope, never heard of it.” [...] And then we went to Neustadt and there I thought, wow, here I’m in the right place. Back then, I thought I was truly not in the right place, and that I might have to switch [cities]. That’s what was missing in [Dresden-Gorbitz], cause you notice that somehow it’s your fault, even though you know it’s not your fault, that you ended up here.⁵²

As the quote above suggests, Akram experienced discrimination and a lack of opportunities in the part of the city where he first lived. In order to *have a part* in the urban multi-culture, he needed to establish personal connections to band members like Martin, gain cultural and linguistic competence, and that way find a place in the city with which he could identify. His story drew my attention to the way *BI* provided aid structures for refugee musicians to socialize but also to how Akram’s struggle was contingent on the normative principle of assimilation to survive in the social order of the city. Him taking risks in a situation of uncertainty became his mode of innovation that would lead him to rediscover spaces within the city in which he could be visible, act, and enjoy citizen-like rights as a performer of music. Akram’s emancipation “[stemmed] from the contradictions within the social space [that he inhabited] and its power structures.”⁵³

The cover (see fig. 1) does not point to such challenges and the processual nature of making Dresden a home. One reason for that seemed to have been the constraints of *BI*'s relationship with the *Cellex Foundation* whose external expectations needed the band to produce affirmative representations. At the end of 2016, the band discontinued their contract with the *Cellex Foundation* to regain their artistic freedom as articulated in the album's booklet:

The one thing that we know after this crazy, turbulent, and also exhausting year has already become clear: We are and we do not wish to be a showcase project for successful integration and socio-cultural participation because we are a few steps further ahead: Together we have grown into a tight loud band that has fascinating ideas, specific visions, and a distinct political voice. No one wishes to be defined by his refugee status any longer.⁵⁴

Banda Internationale continued to compose new strategies for intervention in the city and larger Saxony, starting state-funded music education workshops in 2017. As a way to destabilize xenophobia towards Arabs and Others, band members Qutaiba,⁵⁵ Thabet, and Akram took on the responsibility of organizing and conducting workshop segments that emphasize their knowledge of drumming, melodies, and dance to connect with students and enter into a dialogue. Their music education concept accentuates how culture comes into being and how different cultures come into contact with each other to highlight how cultural knowledges travel across borders and throughout history. The practice of acting and representing their own histories speaks to how Qutaiba, Thabet, and Akram carved out their ways of politicizing their musical practice. In a space in which they *had no part* as refugee members of society with limited access to pedagogical interventions in the education system, these musicians, alongside other band members, performed politics against their invisibility to counter how images are produced *for them as Others*. Using lucid techniques, they point to misrepresentations of their culture and histories in the educational setting, and simultaneously explore new social spaces for cross-cultural contact. As co-producers of such counter-narratives, these musicians inverted the dominant frameworks of representation.



Fig. 2: Album cover *Kimlik*.⁵⁶

The reciprocal processes presented in workshop settings can also be found in Banda Internazionale's 2017 album *Kimlik*, which engages with experiences of borders and border crossings in a selection of fourteen songs, ranging from instrumental to vocalized pieces in a range of different languages (see fig. 2). Three additional interludes embed the music into the context of the city of Dresden and into its political debates about refugees and migration. "Kimlik" is the Turkish term for a temporary identification card issued to refugees by the UNHCR.⁵⁷ While the political message of the album primarily speaks to the crisis of refugees traversing through and living in Turkey, it also resonates with how the notion of temporary residence speaks to the work of Banda Internazionale since its departure from Banda Comunale. It calls out the discriminatory regulations of refugee movement in Germany and the narrowing legal opportunities for citizenship.

5_Conclusions

As demonstrated in the previous sections, we can learn from the experiences of Banda Internationale that even though framing its normative ethics alongside notions of an ‘integration project’ facilitated resources for the activist work, it also reproduced the exact structures of marginalization against which those ethics were directed. While this struggle for belonging and citizen-like participation might imply that “immanent processes of social development have negative or at best indeterminate consequences,”⁵⁸ the social practices of the band have shown that the social world always involves both opportunity and threat. Social action in the band is somewhat driven by normative principles of the structures of the nation-state and risk-infused future thinking. The transformative potential of the band’s work lies within this tension.

Stahl’s practice-based critique helps to understand how the dilemmas that the normative principles of assimilation, cosmopolitanism, hospitality, integration, and multiculturalism pose for the needs and practices of the band also become their modes of innovation and motor to continue to evolve and struggle through them. Beyond the explicit understanding of its members, Banda Internationale engaged with the ‘integrationist’ paradigm in the setting of the urban multi-culture in Dresden to examine and reform its practices. Through the disruptive power, the politics according to Rancière, of music, illegalized musicians perform citizenship in protest settings. They make creative forms of corporate band organization and music education their technologies of agency that produce subjectivities, identity, and culture in Sakakeeny’s sense. Their self-referential engagement with the notion of home and belonging in their music provokes contradictions in social and musical practice. By bringing this paradox onto the stage, performers act as “active subjects who organize their lives under complicated conditions of disenfranchisement”⁵⁹ but who refuse to accept social exclusion. Thus, what the activist initiative set out to achieve is realized as part of an ongoing struggle, in which a more just amplification of stories and voices awaits as the ultimate goal at the end of the road.

_Endnotes

¹ My translation: “Hygiene Museum Dresden.”

- ² Special thanks to Banda Internationale for innumerable conversations, formal and informal, and for generously inviting me into their space and working with me. I am also grateful to Dennis Schäfer and the editors of this journal for their critical comments on different versions of this article. The Mershon Center for International Security Studies, the Institute for Democratic Engagement, and the Global Mobility Group at The Ohio State University provided funding for this project.
- ³ Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident.
- ⁴ See Thomas Pfeiffer, “Wir lieben das Fremde — in der Fremde: Ethnopluralismus als Diskursmuster und -strategie im Rechtsextremismus,” in *Großerzählungen des Extremen*, eds. Jennifer Schellhöf, Jo Reichertz, Volker M. Heins, and Armin Flender (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 35–55, here: 35–36.
- ⁵ Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz Sachsen, “09.08.2018 — IDENTITÄRE BEWEGUNG in Dresden ‘Europa Nostra — Identität verteidigen — Heimat bewahren’ — Eine Einschätzung des Verfassungsschutzes,” August 09, 2018, accessed May 18, 2019, <<http://www.verfassungsschutz.sachsen.de/2069.htm>>; my translation: our Europe — defend identity — preserve the homeland.
- ⁶ My translation, German original: “Schule Ohne Rassismus.”
- ⁷ I am borrowing this phrase from Jacques Rancière, Davies Panagia and Rachael Bowlby, “Ten Theses on Politics,” in *Theory and Event* 5.3 (2001), 1–16. DOI:10.1353/tae.2001.0028.
- ⁸ See Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1999), 14, 30; Jacques Rancière, *Zehn Thesen zur Politik* (Berlin: Diaphanes, 2008), 32.
- ⁹ See, for example Fatima El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch: Die Konstruktion des Anderen in der Postmigrantischen Gesellschaft* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016); Naika Foroutan, Coşkun Canan, Sina Arnold, Benjamin Schwarze, Steffen Beigang, and Dorina Kalkum, *Deutschland postmigrantisch I: Gesellschaft, Religion, Identität — Erste Ergebnisse* (Berlin: Berliner Institut für empirische Integrations- und Migrationsforschung, 2014); Engin Isin, “Citizenship in Flux: The Figure of the Activist Citizen,” in *Subjectivity* 29.1 (2009), 367–388, here: 368.
- ¹⁰ See Ulrich Rosenhagen, “From Stranger to Citizen? Germany’s Refugee Dilemma,” in *Dissent* 64.3 (2017), 134–142. DOI: 10.1353/dss.2017.0080.
- ¹¹ See Hartmut Esser, *Sprache und Integration: Die sozialen Bedingungen und Folgen des Spracherwerbs von Migranten* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2006). See, also Hartmut Esser, *Integration und ethnische Schichtung*. Arbeitspapier 40 (Mannheim: Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung, 2001), accessed May 18, 2019, <<http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/publications/wp/wp-40.pdf>>.
- ¹² Craig Browne, “The End of Immanent Critique?,” in *European Journal of Social Theory* 11.1 (2008), 5–24, here: 7. DOI: 10.1177/1368431007085285.
- ¹³ Browne, “The End of Immanent Critique?,” 18.
- ¹⁴ Titus Stahl, “Immanent Critique and Particular Moral Experience,” in *Critical Horizons* (2017), 1–21, here: 2. DOI: 10.1080/14409917.2017.1376939.
- ¹⁵ Titus Stahl, “Habermas and the Project of Immanent Critique,” in *Constellations* 20.4 (2013), 533–552, here: 535. DOI: 10.1111/1467-8675.12057.
- ¹⁶ Urban sociologists have discussed the concept of conviviality and its application by Gilroy to the study of “cohabitation of multicultural populations” (see Sarah Neal, Katy Bennett, Allan Cochrane, and Giles Mohan, “Community and Conviviality? Informal Social Life in Multicultural Places,” in *Sociology* (2018), 1–18, here: 15. DOI:10.1177/0038038518763518) to understand how people that

- live in difference “work things out between [themselves]” (see Brad Erickson, “Utopian Virtues: Muslim Neighbors, Ritual Sociality, and the Politics of Convivència,” in *American Ethnologist* 38.1 (2011), 114–131; see also Ulrike Freitag, “‘Cosmopolitanism’ and ‘Conviviality’? Some Conceptual Considerations Concerning the Late Ottoman Empire,” in *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17.4 (2014), 375–391, here: 376.). See, for example Amanda Wise and Greg Noble, “Convivialities: An Orientation,” in *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 37.5 (2016), 423–431.
- ¹⁷ See Martin Stokes, “Voices and Places: History, Repetition and the Musical Imagination,” in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 3.4 (1997), 673–691.
- ¹⁸ George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (London/New York: Verso, 1994), 35.
- ¹⁹ See Rancière, *Disagreement*, 30.
- ²⁰ John Street, *Music & Politics* (Cambridge, MA/Malden: polity, 2012), 8.
- ²¹ Matt Sakakeeny, *Roll With It: Brass Bands in the Streets of New Orleans* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2013), 6–7.
- ²² See, for example Fazila Bhimji, “Collaborations and Performative Agency in Refugee Theater in Germany,” in *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 14.1 (2016), 83–103; Burcu Dogramaci, *Migration und Künstlerische Produktion: Aktuelle Perspektiven* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013); Abimbola Odugbesan and Helge Schwiertz, “‘We Are Here to Stay’ — Refugee Struggles in Germany Between Unity and Division,” in *Protest Movements in Asylum and Deportation*, eds. Sieglinde Rosenberger, Verena Stern, and Nina Merhaut (Cham, CH: Springer Open, 2018), 185–203.
- ²³ See Doreen Reinhard, “Rassismus als Happening,” in *Zeit Online*, June 25, 2015, accessed May 18, 2019, <<https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2015-06/freital-fluechtlingsheim-proteste-stellungskrieg>>.
- ²⁴ In the following, I will refer to the band as Banda Comunale when talking about the group’s activities from 2001–2015. *Banda Internationale* (or *BI*) refers to the group’s work as a project in corporation with the *Cellex Foundation* during 2016. *Banda Internationale* (not italicized) refers to the band that formed from the project beginning in 2017.
- ²⁵ See, for example, Carla De Tona and Elena Moreo, “Theorizing Migrant-Led Activism,” in *Migrant Activism and Integration from Below in Ireland*, eds. Ronit Lentin and Elena Moreo (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 21–41; Mojca Pajnik, “Reconstructing Citizenship for the Future of Polity,” in *Contesting Integration, Engendering Migration Theory and Practice*, eds. Floya Anthias and Mojca Pajnik (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 102–121; Wendy Pojmann, introduction to *Migration and Activism in Europe since 1945*, ed. Wendy Pojmann (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 1–14.
- ²⁶ See Cherry Muhanji and Jack C. Straton, “Activism Through Music,” in *Inventio—Creative Thinking about Learning and Teaching* 7.1 (2005), 1–26.
- ²⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. R. Guess and R. Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), quoted in John Street, *Music and Politics* (Cambridge/Malden: polity, 2012), 147, emphasis in original.
- ²⁸ See Street, *Music and Politics*, 1, emphasis in original.
- ²⁹ See Street, *Music and Politics*, 8.
- ³⁰ Alfred Haberkorn, interviewed by author, Dresden, Germany, July 31, 2017, my translation, German original: “Und es war wirklich so außergewöhnlich, das dort erleben zu können, denn für uns war dort natürlich auch fremd. So, ne? Diese ganze Situation vor Ort. Diese ganzen hoffnungsvollen

und gleichzeitig völlig eingeschüchterten Menschen, mit denen man sich verbal nicht verständigen konnte. So, ne? Und wo alles irgendwie so unklar war. Nur eine fette Horde von Nazis, die dort steht und die „Haut ab!“ und [...] „Wir wollen euch hier nicht haben“ gerufen haben. Und [...] dort haben wir Musik gemacht und das ist total angekommen [...].”

- ³¹ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 19.
- ³² Engin Isin, “Doing Rights with Things: The Art of Becoming Citizens,” in *Performing Citizenship: Bodies, Agencies, Limitations*, eds. Paula Hildebrandt, Kerstin Evert, Sibylle Peters, Mirjam Schaub, Kathrin Wildner, and Gesa Ziemer (Guildford/Hamburg/Ashville: Palgrave, 2019), 45–56, here: 51.
- ³³ Mary McThomas, *Performing Citizenship: Undocumented Migrants in the United States* (London: Routledge, 2016), 2; see Isin, “Doing Rights with Things,” 52.
- ³⁴ Isin, “Doing Rights with Things,” 53.
- ³⁵ Peter Birkenhauer, interviewed by author, Dresden, Germany, August 16, 2017.
- ³⁶ See “Access to the Labour Market for Refugees,” *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*, accessed May 19, 2019, <<http://www.bamf.de/EN/Infothek/FragenAntworten/ZugangArbeitFluechtlinge/zugang-arbeit-fluechtlinge-node.html>>.
- ³⁷ See, for example, Gruppe Neujahrsputz, public performance march, “Neujahrsputz” [New Years’ Sweeping], Dresden, January 2015; and Banda Internationale, Adam Angst, public procession performance, “Angsthasenprozession” [Processions of the Fearful Rabbit], Dresden New Market, October 2015.
- ³⁸ See “Zuwendungsempfänger sind Träger, Vereine und Verbände, kommunale Gebietskörperschaften, Träger der freien Wohlfahrtspflege, anerkannte Religionsgemeinschaften und deren Untergliederungen, Einrichtungen der Kunst und Kultur sowie wissenschaftliche Einrichtungen in Kooperation mit gemeinnützigen Trägern oder kommunalen Gebietskörperschaften.” See “Richtlinie des Sächsischen Staatsministeriums für Soziales und Verbraucherschutz, Geschäftsbereich Gleichstellung und Integration zur Förderung der sozialen Integration und Partizipation von Personen mit Migrationshintergrund und der Stärkung des gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalts (Richtlinie Integrative Maßnahmen) vom 20. Juni 2017,” *Staatsministerium für Gleichstellung und Integration* (2018), accessed May 18, 2019, <<https://www.revosax.sachsen.de>>, 2.
- ³⁹ Michal Tomaszewski, interviewed by author, Munich, Germany, May 27, 2017.
- ⁴⁰ Peter Birkenhauer, interviewed by author, Dresden, Germany, August 16, 2017, my translation, German original: “die Band drohte zu überhitzen.”
- ⁴¹ Alfred Haberkorn, interviewed by author, Dresden, Germany, July 31, 2017; my translation, German original: “Aber tatsächlich, was will hier wer von wem und wie funktioniert das? Und so, ne? Was macht man jetzt aus? Ja, so wir sehen uns nächste Woche. Keine Struktur, ne! Keine Struktur! Wer von der Band ist jetzt derjenige, der sagt, ja du bist jetzt dabei und du bist nicht dabei. Ja, keine Ahnung! Also totale Hilflosigkeit, ne? Und äh, auch des mussten wir wirklich, und da sind wir nicht gut darin, denn wir sind tatsächlich so bisschen ne Hippieband, die sich schwer tut, Leute auszugrenzen und die sich schwer tut, oder Leuten mal offen zu sagen, „ja, das geht nicht!“ Auch das mussten wir lernen, und das haben wir bisschen besser jetzt drauf. Klarheit zu haben. Auch die Jungs können jetzt auch mit Klarheit besser umgehen. Das ist gegenseitig auch einfach so gewachsen.”
- ⁴² See Geoffrey Bennington, “Politics and Friendship: A Discussion with Jacques Derrida,” (1997), accessed May 20, 2019, <<http://www.livingphilosophy.org/Derrida-politics-friendship.htm>>.

- 43 See, for example, Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
- 44 Isin, “Doing Rights with Things,” 53.
- 45 See Sakakeeny, *Roll With It*, 6–7.
- 46 See Prakash Sethi, “Corporate Political Activism,” in *California Management Review* XXIV.3 (1982), 32–42.
- 47 See Stahl, “Habermas and the Project of Immanent Critique,” 547.
- 48 Michal Tomaszewski, interviewed by author, Munich, Germany, May 27, 2017.
- 49 Thabet Azzawi, interviewed by author, Berlin, Germany, August 12, 2017, my translation, German original: “Die Gefühle zwischen einander hat sich sehr weiterentwickelt. Zu einem Familienniveau sozusagen und jetzt, jetzt ist es noch nicht vielleicht ideal, es könnte noch besser sein, aber wir sind auf dem richtigen Weg. [...] Und so erreicht man was Neues. Zum Beispiel im Jazzquartett, wenn die Posaune orientalisches spielt und ich Jazz spiele. Das ist was Neues. Das hat man nicht erlebt, nicht so oft erlebt, nicht so erwartet. Und das ist was Neues, das man mitbringen kann.”
- 50 See *Sound of Heimat-Deutschland singt*, dir. Arne Birkenstock and Jan Tengeler (2012; Germany: Fruitmarket Kultur und Medien & Tradewind Pictures, co-production with Westdeutscher Rundfunk).
- 51 See Banda Internationale, *Welcome to Hotel Leonardo*, Banda Internationale, CD cover, Cellex Foundation, 2016.
- 52 Akram Younus Ramadhan Al-Siraj, interviewed by author, Dresden, Germany, February 06, 2019, my translation, German original: “Weil als junger Mann, du willst irgendwas machen. Und da hab ich dann gefühlt, ey was soll ich hier tun eigentlich? [...] Und dann meinte Martin [trombonist in Banda Comunale], ‚Kennst du die Neustadt?‘ Und ich hab dann gesagt, ‚Nee, hab ich nie gehört.‘ [...] Und da waren wir dann in der Neustadt und da hab ich gedacht, ey man, hier bin ich jetzt an dem richtigen Ort. Ich dachte damals, ich bin wirklich nicht an dem richtigen Ort und ich müsste wechseln. Das hat mir in [Dresden-Gorbitz] gefehlt, weil du merkst, dass du schuld bist, obwohl du nicht schuld bist, dass du hier gelandet bist.”
- 53 Browne, “The End of Immanent Critique?,” 11.
- 54 See Banda Internationale, “Welcome to Hotel Leonardo,” Banda Internationale, CD booklet, in Banda Internationale, *Welcome to Hotel Leonardo*, Banda Internationale, CD cover, Cellex Foundation, 2016; my translation, German original: “Eines wissen wir nach diesem verrückten, turbulenten und auch anstrengenden Jahr schon sicher: Wir sind und wollen kein Paradeprojekt für gelungene Integration und soziokulturelle Teilhabe sein, denn wir sind einen ganzen Schritt weiter: Gemeinsam sind wir zu einer tighten, lauten Band mit spannenden Ideen, konkreten Visionen und einer entschiedenen, politischen Haltung gewachsen. Und niemand möchte sich länger über seinen Flüchtlingsstatus definieren lassen.”
- 55 Qutaiba Abu Rashed.
- 56 See Banda Internationale, *Kimlik*, Banda Internationale, CD cover, C&P Trikont, 2017.
- 57 The UN Refugee Agency.
- 58 Browne, “The End of Immanent Critique?,” 14.
- 59 Holger Wilcke, “Imperceptible Politics: Illegalized Migrants and Their Struggles for Work and Unionization,” in *Social Inclusion* 6.1 (2018), 157–165, here: 158. DOI: 10.17645/si.v6i1.1297.